

SARAH BROWN



Born: 1 Jan. 1834, Henderson, Jefferson, New York, daughter of Harry Brown and Rhoda North

Died: 9 May 1909, Smithfield, Cache, Utah.

She was the 3rd of 7 children; the last to be born in New York. Her family had joined the LDS Church before her birth. On Mar. 17, 1834, her father was appointed to visit the branches in the Black River country with Parley P. Pratt to raise means to assist the persecuted Saints in Missouri. A month later, he accompanied Wilford Woodruff to Kirtland, where they both enlisted and participated in Zion's Camp. The following Feb. (1835) her father was ordained a member of the 1st Quorum of Seventies, and subsequently became the 1st missionary companion of Wilford Woodruff to the Southern States. The Brown's made their home in Jefferson, Ashtabula County, Ohio, where 4 more children were born to them between 1837 and 1845. Sarah attended school until she was 16, She was considered well-educated and was awarded a teacher's certificate.

In 1852, on their way west to join the Saints, the Brown family was aboard the steamboat "Saluda". After leaving Lexington, Missouri on Apr. 9, the engineers let the boilers get dry and red hot, and when the engines started and the pumps forced cold water in, the boilers burst in a terrible explosion. About one hundred passengers were killed or injured. Sarah was struck on the head by a flying object knocking her to the floor unconscious. Her father was severely injured and died 3 weeks later. Her brother Ira's leg was broken and his front teeth knocked out. The battered family transferred to another steamer and proceeded on their journey. On July 14th they departed Council Bluffs for the journey across the plains. At Laramie, Ira's badly infected leg had to be amputated. All of the family, except Sarah, remained at Ft. Laramie for the winter. Sarah pushed on and arrived in Salt Lake City on Oct. 1, 1852 in the Henry Miller Company.

On March 13, 1853 she and Emma Smith were wed as plural wives to Wilford Woodruff in a marriage ceremony conducted by Brigham Young. Sarah was 19 at the time, Wilford 46. Sarah's mother and family arrived that summer. They only spent one year in the valley. Discouraged, they returned to Ashtabula, Ohio, which was also the home of her mother's family. Sarah never saw them again.

Sarah gave birth to a total of 8 children, born between 1854 and 1873. All were born in Salt Lake City, except her youngest. Her 2 youngest children died in infancy. Two other children, living to ages 20 and 36 respectively, did not marry, and had no posterity. The remaining 4 lived to maturity, married and had families. In 1855 Sarah taught school in Weber County. Returning to Salt Lake the following year, she taught in the 14th Ward. She learned to make gloves which she sold to stores. Some were silk embroidered and sold for \$7-\$15 /pair. She also made straw hats and bonnets, which were displayed at the fair.

Wilford's wives initially lived together in the Valley House, on the southwest corner of South Temple and West Temple. In 1871, Wilford Woodruff moved Sarah Brown and her family to Randolph, Utah. His oldest son, Wilford Jr. moved there also. Father Wilford purchased a 20-acre farm for the 2 families. He made several trips there to work, fish, and hunt with his sons and grandsons. He purchased an additional forty acres of land and constructed a house for Sarah in 1872. In the late 1870s, David, Sarah's son, asked permission to trade some cattle for a home and 40-acres at Smithfield in Cache Valley. He moved there with his mother. In the early 1880s, Wilford Woodruff attended to the construction and dedication of the Logan Temple and stayed at Sarah's home. Prior to her passing, Sarah also spent some time with her daughter, Mary, in Provo and her daughter Arabella in Smithfield, where she passed away. She is buried in the Woodruff plots at the Salt Lake City Cemetery.

[Alan J. Hill, 5-31-20]

Sources

Alexander, Thomas G., Things in Heaven and Earth, the Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet. Signature Books, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1991.

Cowley, Matthias F., Wilford Woodruff. History of His Life and Labors as recorded in his daily journals, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah., c. 1964. 7th Printing 1978.

Gibbons, Francis M., Wilford Woodruff, Wondrous Worker, Prophet of God, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1988.

Handley, Sylvia Moses, Sarah Brown Woodruff, 4th Wife of Wilford Woodruff, published in Our Pioneer Heritage, Vol. 10, pages 234 and 236.

History of the Church, Vol. 2, Chapter 13, pages 203 and 204.

LDS Vital Records from the LDS Family History Suite 2

Treasures of Pioneer History, Vol. 1, pages 443 and 444.

Wilford Woodruff "History:", MS 27 (1865), pages 183 to 231.

Woodruff, Sarah Brown, Life Sketch of Sarah Brown, Smithfield, Utah, April 15, 1909.

Discrepancy

Family Group Sheet shows Edward Randolph as born in Salt Lake City. Matthias Cowley book indicated birth and death in Randolph, Rich Co., Utah.

Further Detail on the Sinking of the Saluda

The Saluda was a dilapidated side-wheel paddle steamboat (223 tons, 179' by 26', built in 1846 at St. Louis, Missouri) chartered by Elders Eli B. Kelsey and David J. Ross to take a company of Saints up the Missouri River to Council Bluffs. On the 30th of March (1852) she sailed from St. Louis with about 175 persons on board, of whom about 90 were Saints. When the boat arrived at Lexington, Missouri on Sunday, April 4th, she was met by immense masses of ice. Captain Francis T. Belt, her master and owner, made repeated attempts to steam beyond without success. They were compelled to cross the river and tie up for the night on the opposite side from Lexington. On Friday morning, April 9th, 1852, the ice stopped running, and *the Saluda* made another effort to get underway. Captain Belt ordered the fireboxes filled and the boilers fired. Although warned that the steam pressure was very high, he was determined to get up enough steam to round a point just beyond Lexington. The engineers carelessly let the boilers get dry and red hot; and as the engines started, the pumps forced in cold water. As the paddles were making their second or third revolution, the boilers burst with a thundering explosion heard all over the city of Lexington. The hull disintegrated. Human bodies, machinery, two iron chimneys, bales, splinters, wreckage and steam shot heavenward. Captain Belt's body landed on a bluff above the river. A 600-pound iron safe, a watchdog, and second clerk, Jonathan F. Blackburn, were hurled into the sky and came down 200 yards upstream. Two pilots were blown into the water and disappeared. Mangled bodies, blood, and debris were scattered over the wharf and river. The gruesome spectacle, the screams and sobs of the injured, and the pitiful wailing of babies horrified witnesses. The boat sank ten minutes after the explosion. The number of killed and badly wounded was probably about one hundred. It was the worst disaster in the navigation of the Big Muddy. Having arrived the night before, the steamboat *Isabel* was tied up a short distance away from *the Saluda*. Her passengers and crew saw the bodies and wreckage flying in all directions. Heroically they tried to recover the corpses as they floated past, without much success. The citizens of Lexington and vicinity promptly assembled to adopt measures for the relief of the sufferers and such survivors as were stripped of their goods and supplies.