



Alice CLEGG 1846-1920

A Brief History of Alice Clegg, Mormon Pioneer.  
By DeAnna Adair Hansen (Second great-grand daughter).

Henry Clegg Sr. was the second man baptized in England. He lost a foot race to a younger man for the privilege. He was baptized in the river Ribble near Preston, England on 30 July 1837. That simple act of faith, one man being emersed in a river raised up a mighty wave of faith that is still rising today; but it is not Henry's story I tell here, but that of his little granddaughter Alice Clegg. My grandmother Dora McDonald Hair made her story most poignant to my child's mind.

Alice was born on 23 October 1846, in Farrington, Lancs., England to Jonathan Clegg and Ellen Walmsley. That little baby had no notion she was born to a life of danger and high adventure. This was to be her lot simply because her family loved Jesus Christ.

I can't truly write her story, because at this point in time I only have bits and pieces, things I've stumbled on to and that which Grandma told me. History is precious and any part no matter how small is a treasure.

Jonathan Clegg followed his father into the waters of baptism on the 26th day of September 1837 Preston, Lancashire, England with Joseph Fielding as officiator, this is according to the Minnie Margets membership card index also the Utah Federal Census of 1860.

When the Clegg's made the fearful decision to gather with the saints to Zion this must have been agony for Henry Sr., because the evidence is that only one other son Henry Jr. joined the church in life. At length, he too went to Zion. The work was done for Henry Sr.'s, wife Ellen Cardwell and the remainder of his children after their deaths.

Jonathan's little family sailed on the 25 of May 1856 on the Ship "Horizon" 1600 tons, under Captain Reed. The Cleggs were members of 633 Perpetual Emigration Fund Passengers. They sailed in Steerage. 516 adults, 103 children 14 through 8 and 16 infants. There were a total of 856 passengers on board. Elder Edward Martin was President of the Company with Jesse Haven and George P. Waugh as Counselors. The ship's log gives the Clegg's home address as 2 Spring Street Wensley Fold, Blackburn, England, and listed Jonathan and William, who was 14, professions as weavers. They arrived in Boston on the 30th of June 1856.

This parting was terrible for Jonathan's family too, not only did they leave living dear ones behind, but also three little boys buried in English soil. Joseph born 22 Feb 1844, died 1846, Henry born 11 Sept 1845, died same year, and William, born 1 April 1840, died 1842. Their oldest son James is also not with them on the roll of the Martin Handcart Company. Source: "Hand Carts to Zion" by Le Roy R Hafer and Ann A. Hafer. The Roster of the 5th handcart company under Edward Martin reads: Clegg, Jonathan, with family, Ellen (40) wife, William (14), Alice (9), Henry (3), and Margaret E. (3 months). (This is in error Margaret Ellen would have been 6 months old when the "Horizon" left Liverpool). William and Henry are the second sons by that name in this family.

The Perpetual Emigrating Fund establish in 1849 was running low on funds. In 1855 President Young wrote to Frankin D. Richard's, who was of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the president of the European Mission.

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"We cannot afford to purchase wagons and teams as in times past, I am consequently thrown back upon my old plan-to make hand-carts and let the emigration foot it--".

Latter in the year, President Young brought the plan to consummation. He instructed the gathering Latter-day Saints in Europe to sail from Liverpool to sail to New York or Boston and take the train from there to Iowa City, and "walk and draw the luggage" overland to Utah.

I can imagine the thoughts of these people at considering turning themselves into oxen and facing rivers, plains, mountains, elements and Indians on foot across a continent. The bottom line for them was the Prophet said it could be done, so they would do it.

There was 576 people in the Martin company, 146 handcarts. There were ox drawn baggage and commissary wagons about one for every twenty handcarts. There were public tents each able to shelter about 20 people. Adults were allowed 17 pounds of baggage, children 10 pounds and this was mostly clothing and bedding. To say they gave up everything for God was not an understatement. Many words have been written and could still be written as to why these people would be caught in early winter storms and suffer terribly, but the real reason was they were committed that nothing would stop them, so the adversary of all, had to try.

Little Alice was apart of all this. The handcart was meant to be pulled by two people and Alice would help her brother William. Often the rivers were so deep her feet wouldn't reach bottom so she had to hang tight to the cart handle until her little feet could find a footing again. Getting dry was always bad, sometimes her skirts froze about her legs before they dried out. She been told by men who wore buckskins, the leather clothes' got so cold they could stand them by the fire and pass them off as people. She thought she might try that with hers, but mother always got the rocks hot, and rolled them all over the wet things until they pressed dry. It was wonderful to get into them before the heat could get away. Once the heat left it wasn't so good, because mother had to work on everybody, and nobody really got dry.

Once when she was asleep, her braids froze into the mud. Alice had to lay there frozen to the earth until her parents heated enough melted snow to melt her loose. They poured hot water on her hair until they thawed her free. Then there was the problem of getting her dry again. Out came the rags and the rocks and she got pressed dry too, with her hair rolled in rags to prevent its scorching. She tried to be pleased saying she gotten her hair washed.

Pioneers used rocks for every thing. Very strict instructions for rock warming has come to me from my families past. The best rock for heating is twice the size of a brick, too big and the rock get too hot, and takes to long too get that way. Granite is preferred, but any hard rock will do, except one from a stream bed, they blow up when heated. The rock when hot, must be rolled in wool, not cotton. Wool will smolder, but it won't burn. A person doesn't want to catch their bedding afire, especially with them in it. Hot rocks were a true luxury, finding enough fuel to get food warm was a challenge, let alone heat bed rocks. That is if you had food to warm. Not enough just kept getting less and less. Alice recounted

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her mother made their flour ration into tiny hard cakes they would suck on to stave off hunger. When that was gone they sucked on rocks, little pebbles. Alice would try to find a very smooth one so she could pretend it was candy.

On October 23 1856 the Martin Handcart company camped at Red Buttes where the trail left the North Platte River. William Binders Reminiscences, ( had at the Historical Department, Archives Division of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), reads as follows: "During our sojourn at this camp we were placed under very trying circumstances: being reduced to very low ration of flour, a scant supply of clothing and in addition to these evils, it became our painful duty to bury very many of our friends and traveling companions". It was Alice's 10th birthday.

I often think of that little family in such miserable circumstances trying to hold up each other's faith on that dreadful day. Although there is no record of it, I believe the only present they had to give that little girl, that day was love, and I believe that love was vocalized in a father's blessing. I further believe that blessing promised Alice that rescue would come, and the family would live and see the valley of promise together, and Alice would live to become a mother in Zion.

Between the 19th of October and the 28th of October when the scouts of the rescue party reached them fifty-six members of the company died. Alice recalled seeing many people buried together in the frozen earth. Josiah Rogerson wrote: "The aged and worn-out seemed... to relinquish all their desire for life, passing away like an infant in slumber." ( The Martin Handcart Company 1856, Salt Lake Herald, 17 Nov. 1907).

The three scouts who reached them at the Red Buttes camp lead them back to Devil's Gate, where they took refuge in a spot of ground surrounded on the three sides by rock ridges and a high sandy mound in the center. This place would become known as Martin's Cove. Then the scouts sought out the wagons which were still farther behind.

Ephraim Hank's would find them at the cove on November 10th. He came like Santa Claus, one child would remember. By answer to prayer, he had two buffalo he had shot, sliced thin and wrapped in their hides.

His journal reads as follows: "About sundown, I reached the ill-fated handcart camp, and the sight that met my eyes was enough to rouse the emotions of the hardest heart. The starving forms and haggard looks of those poor, dejected creatures can never be blotted from my mind. Flocking around me, one would say, 'Please give me some meat for my hungry children'. Shivering urchins with tears streaming down their cheeks would cry out, 'Please, mister, give me some', and so it went. In less than ten minutes the meat was all gone, and in a short time every body was eating bison with relish that did one's eyes good to behold." (Quoted in Solomon F. Kimball, "Belated Emigrants of 1856", Improvement Era Feb. 1914, 292, punctuation adjusted).

Alice was one of the little children who received buffalo meat from the inspired rescuer Ephraim hanks. What testimony must have swelled this little families hearts, as they understood the Lord had truly been mindful of them.

Two days latter they would face the Sweetwater.

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The beauty of Devil's Gate rising 400 feet above the river beyond has been extolled by other passers-by, but what was great beauty to others, were barriers of bone wrenching horror to those beleaguered saints.

The letter dated 3 November 1856, and sent by courier from Captain George D. Grant, the rescue party leader to President Brigham Young read: "You can imagine between five and six hundred men women and children, worn down by drawing carts through mud and snow, fainted by the wayside, children crying with cold, their limbs stiffened, their feet bleeding and some of them bare to the frost. The sight is too much for the stoutest of us, but we go on doing our duty, not doubting, not despairing. Our party is too small to be of much of a help.. We have prayed without ceasing, and blessings of the Lord have been with us". (As quoted in Improvement Era, Jan. 1914, 209).

Solomon F. Kimball continues: "Those of the hand cart people who were unable to walk were crowded into the overloaded wagons, and a start was made, the balance of the company hobbling along behind with their carts a best they could.

"When (they) came to the first crossing of the Sweetwater west of Devils Gate, they found the stream full of floating ice, making it dangerous to cross, on account of the strong current. However, the teams went over in safety... When the people who were drawing carts came to the brink of this treacherous stream, they refused to go any further..., as the water in places was almost waist deep, and the river more than a hundred feet wide..(they) remembered that nearly one-sixth of their number had already perished from the effects of crossing North Platte, eighteen days before... They... cried mightily unto the Lord for help...

"After... every apparent avenue of escape seemed closed, three eighteen-year-old boys belonging to the relief party came to the rescue, and to the astonishment of all who saw, carried nearly every member of that ill-fated handcart company across the snowbound stream. The strain was so terrible, and the exposure so great, that in later years all the boys died from the effect of it. When President Brigham Young heard of this heroic act he wept like a child, and later declared publicly, "that act alone will ensure C. Allen Huntington, George W. Grant, and David P. Kimball an everlasting salvation in the Celestial Kingdom of God, worlds without end". (Improvement Era Jan 1914, 209-11; Improvement Era Feb. 1914, 267-68). The Martin company crossed the Sweetwater the 12th of November 1856. On the 30th of November 1856 they arrived in Salt Lake City to the waiting arms of the saints. The Clegg's had survived, one and all, in answers to many prayers and blessings. An exact count of the dead was never certain in the Martin Company but it is believed to have been between 150 and 175 people.

I know other stories about Alice Clegg told me by my Grandma. Once she hid from Indians in a hay stack and prayed they would not burn it. Once as a married woman she was sweeping her door yard when a small war party rode in upon her. She stood in the doorway of her small cabin holding the door shut to protect her two little children, while warning the war party off with her broom. The indians wanted food, and threatened her to get it. Having no food to give them she continued to threaten them with her broom handle, until they found it so

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funny they rode away laughing, the leader declaring he needed many warriors with this woman's brave heart. He didn't know the half of it.

To be descend of this woman of brave heart is my honor, and being descended of many ancestors of such stout hearts is a great privilege. It becomes all of us, who are so honored and privileged, to live our lives so that when we meet on eternity's shore we will have fought the good fight and overcome evil as they did hardship. Thus rejoicing we will embrace with wonder in each other.