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History Of Louisa Barnes Pratt

S. George Ellsworth

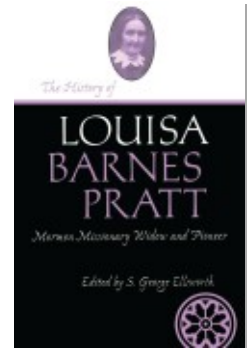
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CHAPTER EIGHT

Mission Begun, Salt Lake City to Sacramento

Memoirs, 7 May 1850 to July 1850

[Mission Begun, Salt Lake City to Sacramento]

After exchanging tears and adieus, six wagons started on, 24 persons in all, expecting to overtake a small company at Bear River.¹ We found the Weber very high, the water running over the middle of the bridge. We got safely over, called at Brown's Fort, where dinner was prepared for us, by a good sister, whose name is Abigail Abbot, a neighbor in Nauvoo. She made me a present of a good cheese. Her daughters accompanied us on horseback several miles. We came to Ogden river, had a almost perpendicular hill to come down. The men let the wagons down by the help of ropes. Had a severe time in crossing the water. After we crossed the bridge the wagons mired; the men were in the water up to their waists, more than an hour.

Mr. Tompkins was wroth because some who got over first did not come back to help others. He had cause to be angry. After we were out of the water it began to rain severely. We travelled three miles and camped at Brother Chase's to wait for fair weather. We heard the Weber bridge washed away the night after we crossed over. Who can say we did not cross in the right time. We came to Bear River, found President Clark's company waiting for us. With great exertion we got the cattle over. Camped on the bank.

13th day we crossed Malad Creek, one of the most intolerable places my eyes ever beheld! Cattle and men up to their backs in mud for twenty rods, and more. What a world is this, thought I. Men will travel over it however impossible it may be! We got out of the mud at last, camped at two o'clock. I have a great aversion to camping before night. I cannot feel well when a good day's drive has not been accomplished.

In the afternoon the company was organized. Passed resolutions to keep the Sabbath day. Likewise to have morning and evening prayers. H. Clark President, W. Huntington, Counsel. We have music in the camp, two violins and a flute, besides there are many singing birds in this country, which delight me very much. Now 24 miles from Bear River, a place of hills and dales. Sister C. C. and I walked out among the hills. As we were returning two bullets whistled by our heads. We started with fear! We came to camp found Hanks and Moses had been firing guns for sport, not knowing anyone had gone out. They were admonished to be more cautious. The evening was spent in singing hymns, and spiritual songs. How comforting to hear prayers in this lonely spot of earth! What an idle life to travel with ox teams. And yet no other would do so well on such roads. I gaze around me, see the wagons all corraled, cattle lying down at night. Scenes of other days come vividly to mind. What wandering pilgrims we have been!

18 day. Travelled 20 miles camped at three o'clock. I walked alone; climbed upon a huge pile of rocks. From their heights I had a full view of the surrounding country. I called to mind the lapse of ages those cragged rocks had remained there. They were covered with moss of various colors. I examined every part of them with intense interest. I gazed towards the valley where I had left the saints, an ardent desire sprang up in my heart that I might live to return to them.

[City of Rocks]

23d. On account of the Cazyer river being too high to be forded we had to go round the mountain, came to camp at 4 o'clock, called the place City of rocks. We all went out on an exploring excursion, returned fatigued, but much amused. The beautiful white rock resembling marble made us wish they were in some location where they could be made available.

21st. We have been traveling over mountains all day the most delightful scenery my eyes ever beheld. Ridges of hills of all sizes and shapes variagated with shrubbery, mostly cedar. The hills resemble the orchards of New England. What a prospect for a painter! I found stones I called connelion, white clay, of which the boys made pipes, was found in quantities. A snow storm overtook us, we could not start till one o'clock. Mr. Tomkins found a sheet iron stove; gave it to me. I found it very useful.

30th day. Started very early. Travelled a short distance, come to a stream of water called Martin's Fork. We found written on a board, "Too deep to ford, remove your loading, prepare a wagon bed for a boat." We did so and all got safely over with hard labor. Very deep mire

on both sides. The brethren were all merry, making a scene of amusement of it.

31st. Crossed one of the tributaries of St. Mary's. Made a bridge of willows, drew the wagons over by hand. When the last wagon was over the men commenced hallooing to the top of their voices. The next crossing was effected by doubling teams.

1st day of June. Crossed Martin's Fork. Water being high we took everything from the bottom of our wagons and piled them on our beds, by that means we got safely through. The same day one of the Indian boys belonging to the company put a can of powder into my stove. Not for mischief, but coming in from hunting, the stove being tied on the outside, he thought to remove it as soon as we came to camp. Boy like, he forgot it. I built my fire put my kettle on. Once I removed the kettle and leaning over stirred the fire. My cow was grazing a little way off, an impression came to me, as if some one had whispered "walk out where your cow is, and look at her." I did so, and while I was standing there I heard a report like a canon fired. I returned immediately, found my stove blown over the top of a covered wagon! It was crushed, as with a sledge hammer.

My kettle was set upon the ground badly bruised. The boy was severely reprimanded, and I had serious reflections the remainder of the day. The fact of my being warned to walk away from the spot an instant before the explosion, caused me to realize that a protecting arm was held over me, and that my guardian angel must have been very near me for which I felt thankful. Some there were who felt as I did, were serious over the affair, the more giddy portion were disposed to ridicule the effect it had upon me, and in their foolhardihood would laugh at the idea, of being solemn at the instance of so marvelous an escape.

June 1st. This day seven years since my companion started on his mission to the Pacific Islands. A day of days was that to me! Had I known on that day what seven years experience would bring to me it seems to me, one glimpse of it would have struck me out of existence in an instant. It was wisely hidden from me. Sorrows mountains high have rolled over me, and yet I have withstood all the storms of adversity, am still alive and on my way to the Islands of the seas, to teach the poor, dark people the gospel that has cost me so much.

2d day. Awnings are spread in front of our wagons where we are to hold public worship. Elder J. Busby made some spirited remarks. All the speakers acknowledged we had been signally blessed on our journey. The brethren decide on a frolic, to help them over the impassable gulphs, rocks, and dust, almost to suffocation. I told the Captain if he should send me ahead to explore I should return with an evil report and declare it impassable to go that way. St. Mary's River flows in grandeur here. Dust we must have while we travel near it.

[Along St. Mary's (Humboldt) River]

12th day. Horn sounded at 4 o'clock. Camp started before breakfast, travelled a short distance. Stopt for the day to enjoy a good rain which we have long wished for.

14th day. A beautiful road all day. Found a splendid camping ground, large shrubbery on the banks of the river, good wood. Emigrants overtook us from Ohio out of provisions. The company invited them to breakfast. Sold them breadstuff.

15th day. Made a blunder, travelled ten miles in a wrong direction, a level road, but deep sand, came upon Capt. Smith's company. Camped to spend the Sabbath. Emigrants attended our meeting at 8 o'clock. Brother Clark preached the gospel sermon very much to the purpose. Elder Busby bore testimony with great warmth, and readings of expression. After meeting two strangers called upon us, said they were from Nauvoo. The very sound of the name thrills through my nerves, recollection of the past rushes to my mind. Emigrants from all parts are thronging the way to the mines; little or no provisions; poor worn out animals.

17th. A country of desolation have we passed today. 25 miles without feed or water. Barren sandy plains. Camped on a slough fed by Mary's River. Our wagons stand on a ridge of rising ground, our fires blazing high below. The reflection on our white houses on wheels presents a romantic sight. The moon shines with unusual brilliancy. The scenery in the evening is delightful.

19th day. Started on the desert. Filled everything with water. The country presents an exceedingly singular appearance, perfectly level: has every sign of having been the bed of a mighty river. The ground has a yellowish cast, without a particle of vegetation. Under the lee of the mountains there is the appearance of water, very deceiving to the traveller. As we approach, it recedes from our view, [and] we are reminded of what we have read and heard of an oasis, so alluring to the poor thirsty men and teams.

[Salmon Trout River]

We are at length safely over the desert, travelled till two o'clock, rested the cattle till daylight. Started on again through deep sand. I walked from sundown till eight o'clock. I went into my wagon slept awhile, then walked again, all of us, till we came to Salmon Trout River. Ten o'clock we saw the water. The poor cattle could scarcely be kept from rushing into the river with the wagons. The men gave them water in buckets, all they dared to let them drink.

Badir the Socialist has made trouble in the camp by coming without supplies. Mr. Mills the phrenologist who hired his passage with him, is

now destitute; likewise a family he engaged to take through. Although the two men above mentioned are not of our faith, the brethren will not see them want for food.

Just over another 20 miles desert, without feed or water, camped on the bank of the river, a most delightful place. The trees are large and standing in close proximity [with] heavy foliage. Here the young men (about nine in the evening) blackened themselves and had an Indian war dance. The old Socialist being far in the rear, the artificial Indians started back with a view to frighten him, were defeated in their plan, returned disappointed, went down the river with a view to use water as a means of turning back to white men. Spent one whole day in settling difficulties. Got them all settled, retired to a grove and made a swing. Had a large rope suspended from a high tree. The moon arose about nine, in all its beauty. I have never witnessed grander scenery. The towering trees, the murmuring waters, the clear blue sky bespangled with stars, the grand queen of night, all combined to make the scene strikingly lovely.

Better than all, we had agreeable company. The following day travelled through deep sand not so rough as common. The mountains on one side covered with large pine trees growing quite to the summit, from which flow out several beautiful streams of swift running water. Thick shrubbery growing luxuriantly on either bank, the broad prairie adorned with green grass, resembling the meadows of New England. The whole scenery is exquisitely beautiful. We have not seen on the whole journey so rich a growth of grass. Farewell to the deserts. We have prophesied a settlement here in future. 100 miles from the mines.

28th. Started early and came to the mammoth pine trees. I stood beneath the shade of one tree, which would make lumber enough to build two common houses. To see such astonishing trees growing out of sand and gravel not a particle of soil, filled every beholder with wonder and admiration. We passed today beautiful streams of water flowing down from the mountains, cold as ice, and clear as crystal. We have overtaken Mr. E. Hanks' company who left S.L. Valley three weeks before us. They have travelled on the Sabbath, we have not, and have gained on them.

29th. This morning men were sent ahead to explore the road over the mountains. Met travellers coming from the other side, who reported the road passable. They concluded to relinquish the excursion and to stop here several days. The heat, though excessive, is rendered more endurable by the cool breezes from the mountains. Emigrants are coming to our camp half starved. We are compelled to feed them, cannot resist their entreaties.² Elder Moses delivered a lecture on the doctrines of our church, to which the strangers listened with apparent interest.

[Ascending the Sierra Nevada]

Now at the base of the mountains of rocks, covered with immense trees. What supports the roots I cannot imagine, not the least appearance of soil. Seven miles we traveled through the canyon a road too intolerable to think of. No person looking at the opening would suppose for a moment that wagons could pass without being broken in ten thousand pieces. But we came over safely, not a thing broken. In crossing a bridge where the water was running very swiftly one of the cows fell off and floated down the river as fast as the current could carry her. The men ran with a Lorryette, hauled her out badly bruised.

July 5th. Now over the first mountains. To describe the road in justice would be impossible. Snow, rocks and much perpendicular heights, declivities deep and dangerous, yet we got safely over, with only a few trifling accidents.

I rode up the mountain on horse back. With great exertion I clung to the horse. I rode down in the wagon which fatigued me more than walking would. Is it possible that men can love gold to that degree that they will climb these mountains to obtain it? Oh, I pity the poor cattle! How faithfully they serve men, who are often unkind to them.

6th day. Now on the top of the second mountain, travelled over snow in some places thirty feet deep. The wind is blowing a heavy gale, cold as Greenland. The cows are left behind, a sad mistake.

7th day. Rumbling down the mountains all day. I had to lie in bed sick. Was not able to sit up. I hope I may never pass another such day.

8th day. One of the horses gone. Oh, the crowds that throng this highway going in search of gold, crowding about our wagons to be fed. We must feed them either for pay or without. They must have starved to death had we not been here with provisions and we only brought what we thought would serve us through. I wonder our stores are not exhausted.

[Tragedy Springs]

Today passed "tragedy springs" where three men on their way to S. Lake were murdered by Indians for their horses and clothes.³ They were found and buried by their comrades, who in a few days overtook them. A bag of gold was found on the neck of one, which the Indians in their fright had not discovered. It was taken to the man's family and great lamentation was made over him who had toiled to gather the gold. Their graves are near a spring of clear water, and carved on the trunk of a large tree is the account of their sad fate. Many travelers there pause to gaze upon the spot, read the inscription, and sigh over the sorrowful end of their fellow men. The spring thus derived its name, Tragedy.

9th. This morning the men started in pursuit of the lost horse. They soon got on track of Indians. They took the squaws prisoners in hopes the Indians would bring back the horse. They were ensconced in the brush. The white men dared not venture in. The two Spanish boys well armed rushed down. One old Indian pitched battle with them. They shot at him but not to kill. He ran screaming. The squaws cried bitterly. Four guns were heard at camp. The white men returned. The boys were left behind, horse not found. Then we felt sure the poor boys were killed. Some said no they are not killed, have we not prayed that all our lives might be preserved. After a length of time the boys returned alive to the great joy of the whole company. They were good Spanish boys.

10th day. Roads unaccountable! Up and down like the affairs of life. Met traders with flour and groceries for the poor emigrants. The men went out in search of gold, found enough to buy some wine and brandy, to rejoice over the event of getting safely over the last mountain. We shouted glory halleluiah! Some of the crowd thought as did the father of the prodigal son "It was meet that we should make merry and rejoice." They wanted a jubilee.

[Into the Gold Country]

18th day. The horn sounded for preaching. The people assembled, prayed and sang hymns. In the midst of the exercises, Mr. Gilbert (outside the camp) commenced whipping his boy unmercifully. The meeting was interrupted. One of the brethren commanded him to desist, which he resented. They called him to an account. A few there were who sought to justify him. The women soon after engaged in a lengthy discussion on the government of children, not however, till the meeting closed. We all "got the case." Now we are fairly in the gold country. A land of desolation, a barren desert. The poor diggers look forlorn. Behold, two men I saw from the State of Illinois. From the immediate vicinity of my brother, whom I have not seen for many years. They knew him and could inform me of his welfare.

I have been truly homesick today. May the Lord speed us on to our place of destination. Oh, what a dismal country! no feed no green thing growing, nothing here but gold.

16th. Camped in an oak grove near Brown's a fictitious name for Porter Rockwell. Found a spring of clear cold water.

17th. Today arrived Mrs. Amasa Lyman, C. C. Rich whom we all were most happy to meet. They brought me a letter from my husband dated April 14th. The same day he set sail at San Francisco for the Islands. The heat is almost insupportable! Several old friends who came to this country before us today called to see us. Men are reckless in this country.

There is great want of female influence. Filth and confusion throughout the whole country. Sister C. C. and I visited Browns and Stewards. They treated us kindly, made us presents. They make money by selling liquors and provisions to emigrants. To be obliged to see drunkenness and hear profane swearing, to earn a livelihood, and that without cessation, how can they endure it!

Preaching today by Bros. Rich and Lyman. To see their faces and hear their voices proclaiming the truth so far from home, is comforting to the soul.

23d Camped six miles from Sacramento. The publick buildings are made of cloth. Br. Crosby sold his oxen and wagon for \$225.00.

24th. One year ago today we attended the great celebration in S. L. Valley. Oh, we hope they will remember us today and drink us a toast. We are camped on the north Fork of the Sacramento River. Water clear and soft. The brethren who went back to the mountains after ice and snow for S. F. market have just returned, tired, themselves and teams worn out. The price has fallen from one dollar, to five cents per lb.

[Sacramento]

25th. Came down to the Great City, that has made such a raise in the world. A great city it is, for the age of it, but so filthy it is dangerous for people to stop there.