History Of Louisa Barnes Pratt

Ellsworth, S. George

Published by Utah State University Press

Ellsworth, S. George.  
History Of Louisa Barnes Pratt.  
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/9346.

For additional information about this book  
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/9346

For content related to this chapter  
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=202764
CHAPTER FIFTEEN
San Bernardino I
Memoirs, December 1852 to April 1856

[The Move to San Bernardino, December 1852]

Mr. Pratt came down from San Hosa, and we prepared to go on board the *Freemont*, Capt Erskine. We sent our goods to the steamer, the day previous staid on shore to meet our friends again. Mr. Crisman was present, said everything encouraging about the settlement in San Bernardino. It cheered our hearts and made us feel stronger. On Monday A.M. in Dec. 1852 we walked down Broadway to go on board. We met the Capt, he told us we were belated; and only for his having forgotten some item of business we should not have had time to call on our daughter at Mrs. Haskins. She walked with us to the boat. After our having commended her to the watch care of that lady, and receiving her promise, that she would be true to her trust.

Brother Christie came to us at the wharf, helped us into the small boat, the Steamer having been hauled off. He was to accompany our daughter back to her home. We gave them the parting hand and thought to see them no more. After we were seated in the cabin, to our surprise they both came in! Mr. C. said as they were walking back to town Ellen commenced grieving. He then proposed hiring a small boat and taking her to the steamer before she set sail. After having repeated her adieus she went away quite cheerful. Frances our second daughter remained at San Hosa to live with her Aunt Crosby, and come with her to the church [San Bernardino], as was contemplated, the following year.

The first day out I was sick in bed the whole day. The cabin was full of Spaniards and some were smoking cigars, drinking wine, playing cards. The Capt was very kind and polite. No illness is more unbearable and prostrating to the body and mind, than that induced by the motion of a vessel.
The third day out at 9 o'clock p.m. we cast anchor in Santa Barbara. There we lay for three days in a cold rain storm. The Capt had business on shore. The dullness was intolerable! We could not leave the vessel, and constantly in fear of being driven on shore! All the time a pelting storm. The Spanish gentlemen were merry and good humored; urging us to drink wine and lemonade. Little Ephraim was amusement for the whole ship's company. At last there came a bright sunny morning, and we thought to sail again; but the Capt had difficulty on shore and did not come on board till late in the afternoon. The weather was fine the following day, and we had a tolerable trip to San Pedro. We had good eatables, and sick as I was I could sometimes make a lengthy meal, and invariably when cabbage was brought on my appetite would revive.

We tried to amuse ourselves by singing songs to the Capt who assumed to be pleased, perhaps thinking poor music better than none. About this time our little boy was taken violently ill with a fever. For several days he had been unusually interesting. It somehow occurred to me that it was an unlucky omen. We landed at San Pedro and Mr Pratt went on shore to find a team to take us and our goods to our destination, a distance of 90 miles; He did not return till late in the day. In the meantime the little boy continued very sick. The Capt. had been trying to learn him to repeat verses. As long as he could speak audibly he would rehearse; at length in a low faint tone he would try to repeat, and crying out, "mumu sick sick."

When Mr. P. returned to the vessel he brought news that forty elders from Salt Lake were at San Pedro waiting to get a passage to San Francisco; going on missions to different parts of the world. It was very exciting news. As I learned that many of them were our old friends whom we had known in Nauvoo, we were in high hopes of meeting them early the next morning; but to our great disappointment the wind arose, the waves ran so high, we could not get on shore. The vessel began to roll, and I was compelled to take my berth, and there remain one painful day and night. The next morning was fine, and we hurried on to shore, met our friends and spent several hours with them. They looked so familiar it brought fresh to mind the days of Nauvoo; the building of the Temple, the fearful tragedy, when the prophet and patriarch were slain! We blessed them in the name of the Lord, and prayed they might be prospered on their missions. Brother Samuel Wooley helped to pack our goods in David Harris' wagon; who had agreed to take us to the camp of the Saints.

[The First Days at San Bernardino]

We then set our faces towards San Bernardino. The first day we made De Los Angelos. Called at a Mr. Hunter's where we met Capt. [Jefferson] Hunt, on his way to the Legislature. We spent a pleasing evening there.
William Perkins and his wife were in our company. The same who had been to the Sandwich islands; they too were going to San B. The little [boy] continued very bad, I had every hour to hold him in my arms; as he would not be contented with any one else. The succeeding day it commenced to rain, and the air was cold and damp. I was troubled with fear that the child would take cold. We rode in the rain, the roads were very bad. At night the rain came down in torrents! We called at a Spanish house to stay over night. The house had neither doors or windows; nor fireplace in the house. What to do we did not know. There was no better place near.

How could I sleep in that damp house with my sick child was a subject of solicitation. We prayed, and commended him and ourselves to the mercy of our Heavenly Father; made our beds on the ground floor and laid down. The next morning was rainy. The Spanish cooked our food out doors and brought it in; we were cold and hungry, and it did us good. We started with fresh hopes that we should be in camp that night and share the hospitality of our friends. The driver left the wagon for a few moments; his younger brother took the lines. There was a deep stream to cross. One wheel sunk in the quicksand; from which it was impossible to extricate it.

The driver soon came up. He ordered the wagon unloaded, the goods carried by the hands of men across the stream to the opposite side; the women and children were carried on the backs of men. The box was taken off and three quarters of an hour of hard tugging was spent in getting out the wheel. The driver said the team should have been driven over in a hurry not giving the wheel time to settle in the sand. Mr. Pratt was not an expert teamster, and the brother was young. When the wheel was raised, it was discovered that the tongue of the wagon was broken. That was "terrible" the driver said for the teams had gone ahead which carried tools to make repairs. I found a shade in some shrubbery and sat down on the ground, my two daughters beside me [Lois and Ann Louise], and my sick boy in my arms.

We waited two hours for the wagon to be mended and reloaded. They had to send ahead several miles for tools. While sitting there I revolved in mind the many scenes of a sinister nature I had encountered in my long journeys across deserts and plains. Well I said, "I can bear it as one bears the pain of an old sore; it pains a little harder for being probed open." We were soon on our way again, all in good spirits. Mr. Pratt was talkative with the boys, and they seemed pleased with his company. We traveled fast, made the Fort at eleven o'clock that night. The younger brother ran ahead to inform his mother of our arrival and have supper prepared. His mother though in bed, made haste to get up, and provide a comfortable meal for us; which we partook of with thankful hearts.
The people in the house were very kind. Some slept on the floor that we might have their bedstead. I laid down feeling comforted that I was among friends, and where I could nurse my poor boy. For several days our goods remained in the wagon, while we were trying to find a vacant room. I was tied to the sick child, and no one seemed interested to examine the goods, which had been exposed to the rain. There were no vacant rooms, every house not inhabited was filled with grain. There was no lumber to build with. The people all lived in adoby forts, roofs covered with willows, straw and dirt. At length a brother by the name of Hiram Blackwell succeeded in getting a portion of grain moved out of a room, so we could barely put our things in, but no place to set up a bedstead. Brother and sister Harris kindly offered us to come there and sleep at night and have the comfort of a bedstead.

Accordingly we did so. After spending the evening at home, I would cross the Fort, sometimes when the weather was cold and damp, to my lodgings; by that means, caught a cold which nearly proved fatal; having a cough seated on my lungs, very severe for two months. We struggled on the best we could with all our things in one room. At length Mr. Blackwell had compassion on us and proposed to sell us his house, which was near ours though not adjoining. It was a large room 18 x 20 altogether unfinished. The price was sixty dollars. I then had a job on hand to get the room finished. Mr. Pratt engaged in farming, had not an hour to spare towards fitting up rooms for comfort. With great exertion I accomplished the finishing of the house, which made it the pleasantest room in the whole Fort. I felt like beginning to live.

Mr. Blackwell a young man from Mississippi was a man of stern integrity. A faithful friend he was to us in time of need. I gave him in part pay for the house $20.00 in gold a present from our friend Christie. Mr. P. gave his note for the remainder, which was redeemed in due time. He presented us with several bushels of wheat for family consumption. The brethren contributed and bought us a cow, which cost seventy dollars. Then Brother Stark who moved there from San Hosa put in a crop for us. Mr. P. asisting some by his labor, though he had neither team or seed. Bro. L. harvested 70 bushels of wheat for us and put it in a bin. It was truly gratifying to us that our missionary labors were appreciated, and that the hearts and hands of the saints were open, to give us another start in the world.

There were colored men in the place from the South country; who though free, still remained with their masters. I made friends of them by sometimes having a little wine or cherry bounce and treating them when they would do me a favor. Leisure days and evenings they would come when their tasks were done at home, and work for me. Sometimes I prepared a good dinner for them. In that way I made improvements without
hindering Mr. Pratt from his regular business. I put up bedsteads and cupboards in a style peculiar to myself; fashions I learned from reading journals. I even constructed a table which answered a good purpose, till mills were built and lumber sawed. The people made narrow pine boards split out with a "fro" and mallet; of such we made doors.

I got much credit for my skill and ingenuity in the construction of my backyard and outhouses. I often called to mind the many times I had fitted up places and left them for others to enjoy. At times my heart was ready to fail, but there was no alternative, I could not endure to live in a shabby manner; improvements I must make though I might not enjoy them one year. I made my home pleasant, could invite my friends to visit me and entertain them with satisfaction to myself, and those who were my guests.

[The Grouard Family]

Bro Grouard and family lived in a log room adjoining ours. Mr. G. went to Salt Lake; soon sent a letter to his wife containing a photograph of a person he had chosen to be his second wife. Nahina his island wife seemed in no way displeased. She remarked, "if the woman is not proud and will teach me and the children I am willing." We were all pleased with the spirit she manifested. He at length returned but did not bring the woman he had married; as we were all expecting to be gathered there in due time.

Bro W. Stout was the school teacher in San B. He needed an assistant; and we were induced to send for Ellen to come from San Francisco where we had left her, and engage in the school. She was expected on every boat for six weeks; and great preparations were made for her reception. The time of her arrival being protracted to an indefinite length a male teacher was hired in her stead. We soon however procured a vacant room which we fitted up for a juvenile school, and she taught with great credit to herself, for several successive terms. The number of pupils increased and I assisted her. We drew our pay from the county treasury, which enabled us to live well. Our school increased to the number of fifty pupils. The children were taught to sing, and some developed sweet voices. The school was visited and highly commended; which was great encouragement.

Our little island boy continued long in a feeble state, but recovered at last. At one time he was so low, the elders refused to administer to him; could not have faith to believe he was destined to live. My husband was preparing to go on a hunting excursion with Lewis Newell. It grieved me that he should leave home at such a time. I said to him what if the child should die in your absence? He replied, "You must get the neighbors to help bury him." He spoke so unconcernedly I felt distressed; and was led
to reflect on the contrast between a father and mother even towards an adopted child. He went away, evening came and the child’s fever raged terribly! As I stood by his bed I called to mind the blessing Bro Young pronounced on my head previous to my leaving S. L. to go to the islands. He says, "You shall have power over the destroyer to rebuke him from your house and none of your children shall be removed by death, and you shall return in peace." I thought now is the time to claim the promise in behalf of my sick boy! I told my intentions to my youngest daughter the only one at home. She fully coincided, and says, "mother it is right you should claim that blessing." So she kneeled with me, and we called on the Lord. I laid my hands on the head of the child, annointed him with consecrated oil, rebuked the disease in the name of the Lord, and by virtue of the promise I had faith to believe the healing power would descend upon him and so it was. He began to amend from that very hour, and in due time was fully restored.

When Mr. Grouard returned from Salt Lake having married him a wife there, he was cordially received by his first and all went on well for awhile. We at length discovered that his faith was weakened in regard to many principles pertaining to the gospel. Some incautious remarks were made by him in the hearing of persons disposed to "make a man an offender for a word." It came to the ears of men who in the absence of the Presidents were appointed to preside, and they spoke of it in publick. Sharp and severe things were spoken and Mr. G’s feelings were badly injured. He commenced from that time to manifest a disaffected spirit. At length the Presidency returned and reassumed the reins of government. Those who had chastised Bro G. were reproved, and he was reinstated in the minds of the people; still it did not seem to heal his wound.

He had imbibed a hard spirit, and appeared unhappy. In consequence of this his wife became discontented. She expressed a wish to return to her native country. Jealously on her part increased till she became irritable and angry. Her husband having lost the good spirit could not console her. He went to the leading men, and they advised him to let her go to her island home.

It was then proposed the Bro’s Pratt and Grouard should return to their missionary labors and take the woman to her friends. It was a trying time for us all.

[A Third Mission, 1853–54]

[The official call from Apostles Lyman and Rich to Brothers Pratt and Grouard to undertake another mission came in late October. The elders were to return Nahina and baby to Tahiti and strengthen the Saints. But money was scarce. Brother Horner could not help them though with good luck he thought he could purchase “a
small ship and start them off on their missions in a way that they will be safe.” But good luck failed them and they went to work to earn passage money. At San Francisco they heard only discouraging words from the islands, that the French opposed foreign influences and that if they landed they would likely be put into prison. Even so, the elders offered to go “at all risks” if sufficient money was raised. But that failed, and without hope for better Franco-American relations the mission effort was abandoned. Nahina and baby were placed on a ship and returned to Tahiti where she married a Polynesian.

While the elders were in San Francisco, there must have been much talk about the missionaries, the mission, the Mormon Church, and San Bernardino. Friend Henry Christie wrote Louisa Pratt from San Francisco that “it was current that Br Pratt and Grouard was dissatisfied with the people at San Bernardino and they were going to try and get there families away as soon as possible . . . .” This kind of talk may have raised notions in some minds about the two missionaries. For this or other reasons, the two were challenged. In conducting a meeting Chapman Duncan called on Grouard to speak. He declined. The meeting went on, and Duncan called on him again. Again he declined. Finally Grouard agreed to offer the benediction, which he turned to a defense of his life and faith. The next Sunday, Brother Duncan repeated his tactic but on Brother Pratt who was ready. Brother Christie reported the meeting:

[Brother Pratt] rose up and spoke long and well he recounted all that he and his family had passed through for this Church told them to Judge of the fruits then asked them all Boldly Which of them all accused him of Sin. Said that he had truly suffered much and in all Honesty almost Prophesied that Br Pratt would bee a Great Greet Man And surley he would be a king so Br Pratt console himself with that and all Preasant said Amane; they were all Satisfied with Br Pratt.

If the Pratts and Grouards were displeased with San Bernardino, were they justified? Louisa concurred. “There are many good meaning people here, and some ‘Mighty’ rough ones . . . .” She was vehement over one public speaker, “in looks and actions a demon and his sonorous voice and profane oaths make your ears ring with horror, and fill you soul with disgust; while at the same time you have the happy reflection ‘I am living among the Saints of God.’ . . . I do not love those who profane his name and ridicule the idea of being religious.”

As for material comforts, she said, “We own not a roof on earth but a dog and a few chickens.” That was 8 June 1855, three years after their homecoming. (LBP to Sister Hutchinson, 8 June 1855, APFP 6.)

Trials of adjustment were overshadowed by the all-consuming issue of plural marriage. Though the subject was of the most profound significance to Louisa, she did not mention it in her journals. Persons in that time could choose from four options: (1) accept the teaching and practice it; (2) accept the teaching but avoid
practicing it; (3) say nothing, and do nothing about it; and (4) oppose the doctrine and practice and likely leave the church because of it.

While Pratt was in the upper country he and his friend Henry Christie had many talks on the subject and Christie sought Mrs. Pratt's reflections on the subject. (Henry Christie to LBP, San Francisco, 31 December 1853, APFP 7.)

Sister Pratt i should like to hear your opinion on Mormonism as in some of its Peculiar Points. Br. Grouard and I was up at Sister Lincoln's about 10 days ago and Daniel Baldwin was present and the Plurality System came up. We were all of one opinion about it; And that was; that it was a damnable device . . . it is a barbarous and uncivilized Custom.

He Simply sought her position, wanted all people to be free to think and act as they wished. He wanted freedom of discussion and action. We do not have her answer at this time; this only shows us the widespread discussions taking place, and surely what Louisa's reflections were.

Elders Pratt and Grouard were in the San Francisco area until March when they returned to San Bernardino, taking Frances with them. On 28 April 1854, Christie sent a letter to Addison Pratt who had witnessed offensive behavior of some sort, "not worthy of the name of man." "Who would act such as you say they did?" Whatever the provocations, Pratt remained silent as to his position, unless it shows through in this Christie letter (Henry Christie to Addison Pratt, San Francisco, 28 April 1854, APFP 5):

your independence of mind and a consciousness that you have always done you duty. Must raise and keep you at all times far above the Ignorant Crowd; as must have been there at the Mission; But Br Pratt it might have happend for the Best; for it is almost impossible for you to remain Happy, away from the Church and how could you, a great portion of your life has been spent in its service, your intrest your treasure your all is there. Man wants a religion; And i Will say that Mormons as Good as any other; perhaps, a little Better; only i should recommend that in all Cases We should use our own judgement; this to me is the Standard by which our faiths And acts Will be tried; But Br Pratt Whatever religion you Belong to you ar the same to me; I esteem all mankind as i know them; each to perform their respective parts in the Great drama of life i will never ask What is there religion.

I was not reconciled to Mr. P's going. Mr. G. gave his wife her choice to take her eldest or youngest son, as she could only take one. She chose the youngest. When Franklin saw his father and mother get into the carriage that was to convey them to the sea coast, he commenced to scream. He was determined to follow them; we were forced to hold him with great exertion while his cries were deafening!
Oh! how I felt for that mother! Long must those cries have sounded in her ears! Her “first born,” was very dear to her. The one that had been given to me, she showed no reluctance in leaving. When they were fairly out of sight I undertook to comfort the poor boy. I led him about the town, took him to the store and bought things to amuse him; after a long time he ceased his sobbing. The boy was then past five years of age. The sister, older wept loudly on account of her brother’s grief, but was not so inconsolable. From that hour I have decided against taking children from a mother. Happy had it been for us all had we determined to let the poor woman take all her children, even the step daughter back to their own native isles; where they would have been free as the birds in the air, and never known the want of food or clothing.

They arrived in San Francisco; there they learned that the French Governor would not permit elders to land on Tahiti or on other islands under his protectorate. Accordingly they procured a passage for “Nahina,” and they gave up the mission. The two men stopt in San Francisco four months, and returned to the lower Country. Our second daughter Frances came home with her father.

Previous to this event we had taken into our house an emigrant lady, who by accident had her arm shot through; and having traveled five weeks with nothing done for it except to keep on wet cloths, it was in a terrible condition. The flesh was nearly all off the inside of her arm. Dr. Burress undertook the care, and discharged his duty faithfully as skillful surgeon. The lady suffered severely under the first operation. In coming off the plains the Mormon settlement was the first reached by the invalid lady. She was terrified at the necessity of having to stop with Mormons.

She soon expressed herself happily disappointed; her arm had the best of care, and she grew happy and contented. She could not dress herself for months. Ellen was her constant attendant mornings and evenings, being in school through the day. She was a very agreeable lady, seemed much attached to our family and especially to Ellen; always expressing the most heartfelt gratitude for her kind attention, in her helpless condition. At the expiration of seven months her arm was healed, but not strong like the other. She often referred to her happy disappointment in coming among the Mormon people; who were to her like kindred; sympathizing friends in the day of her calamity.

Two months before she left us another invalid was brought to the house. A young man who in crossing had eaten poison berries. The bishop requested me to take him in. I told him there was no man about the house, my husband was gone from home and we already had a helpless person in the family. I went to the wagon to see the poor fellow. Oh! said he, “I’m a poor sick boy. I entreat you to take me in, you make me think of my mother.” I was moved with compassion, and allowed him to
be carried in. I had a back bedroom where I fixed his bed, and the same Doctor attended him. Two watchers every night, a fire and lights to be kept burning; my rest was broken, the task a severe one. Besides the poor boy had no money, but I believed he would pay me if he ever recovered and was able to labor. In three weeks he was able to wait on himself. Soon went to work and paid me honorably. Always appeared grateful for what I had done for him. Then there came a relief for me. The lady’s arm grew stronger, the two little Tahitian boys had both been sick, they were well, and prospects brightened on every hand. Mr. Rankin paid us honorably for taking care of his wife. A present was made to Ellen in the settlement of a beautiful heifer from Mr. Ra’n who was a stock holder from Pennsylvania. It soon made a splendid cow, of great account in the family.

Previous to Frances returning with her father we had heard of her poor health; but had not imagined she could be so wasted in flesh. The sight of her gave me great pain. Her emaciated form spoke plainer than words that the destroyer was aiming at the main spring of life, and marking her for his victim. She would not allow a word to be said about her ill health, or her wasted form. She was full of life and animation, at times, occasionally a look of sadness would pervade her countenance; shades of sorrow would come and go which distressed me to witness. She would never take medicine. She rode horseback, kept in active exercise, sought cheerful company, used the plainest diet, according as the best physicians advised.

My sister Crosby still remained in the upper country on a farm. She was often writing to Frances soliciting her return; as the warm climate was not likely to benefit her health. She went to Los Angelos on a visit. Her friends in Francisco hearing she was there offered to pay her passage on the Steamer, and she embarked without giving me any previous information. When I learned the fact I was surprised and grieved. I felt that a wrong had been committed against me. Soon however a letter came that she was safe with her aunt, and that her return had occasioned great joy.

Mr. Grouard had been gone to Salt Lake three months, and we were looking for him to return with his new wife; amid varying scenes my mind was diverted. The eldest boy Franklin was left with a Mr. Hill, a friend of his father’s; he would not be contented, would run away, sleep out all night in some wagon box, occasioning great uneasiness. Whenever I heard he was missing I would search for him; perhaps find asleep in some sly corner. Young as he was not seven years old, he evinced forethought and caution. One night he wandered away, went into the schoolroom, and after securing both doors by placing benches against them he crept into the book box and fell asleep. Finding the doors fastened we forced one open, found him and took him to the house. He continued to cry till he saw me make him a bed on the floor; when his tears ceased at once,
and he chatted away as merry [as] a cricket. I would not send him away again, but kept him with his brother, till his father returned with a good kind mother for him. Just before their arrival news in a letter came from Tahiti that Nahina had married a man of her own color and kind, and was apparently contented and happy. This was cheering news to Mr. Grouard. They soon went to housekeeping took the children home and in due time had a daughter born to them. Pure american blood, she was the pride of the house.

[A New House]

In Aug. 54 Mr. Pratt commenced building a house on a city lot which he purchased for $100. He was a carpenter, could do much of the inside work. It was built of adobies. Mr. G. laid up the walls.

We taught the larger scholars, she the juvenile classes. Our school was in high repute. We often had exhibitions to which spectators were invited. The children were instructed in answering general questions, which made them interesting; questioned with regard to their moral and social habits and many things aside from merely their book lessons. It was a labourious task for me; as many of the larger pupils required great attention, and compulsory measures for their advancement.

In Jun 55 we moved into our new house, feeling thankful for our success in once more being in possession of a respectable home. A vineyard was immediately planted, fruit trees of great variety, shrubbery, plants and flowers. No place in town had such beautiful shade trees. I raised a nursery of black pepper trees, which were scattered over the settlement. They grew very high with extended branches, and remained green through the winter. They bore a red berry which enchanced the beauty of the tree, but I knew not how to prepare them for use. Lower California is a delightful climate. San Bernardino was a very desirable location. A better class of citizens could not be found in that state. Two good and efficient men presided. We felt that we had begun life anew.

Fate had decreed that pain must follow on the train of pleasure. A day of sorrow was drawing nigh. In the spring of 55 Sister P.B. Lewis came to us from the Sandwich Islands, where she had been with her husband on a mission. She was a relative of mine, we had been warm friends in the days of Nauvoo. Her health declining on the Pacific isles, her husband had thought it wisdom to send her to California. I soon discovered that the consumption had fastened its deadly fangs upon her frail system, (from a child she had been delicate). She was strong in the belief that she should recover her health; was displeased if any one expressed a doubt. I could see a gradual decline but dared not mention it. The heat being oppressive in the summer she resolved to go to the high mountains,
where were mills, and several families living. The air was cool there, and
cold spring water to "quench her raging thirst."

I was all the time fearful of the consequences. She was conveyed up
the steep mountain in a carriage, on a bed. The families living there were
not prepared, if inclined, to give her the attention she needed. Word
soon came to us that she was failing. Ellen was disposed to dismiss her
school and go to her relief. It was as I feared, she soon closed her earthly
existence, and was brought down the mountain twelve miles in her coffin.
A few brethren followed, and Ellen on horseback. The procession came
up to my door past 9 o’clock p.m. It was a solemn scene! Thus ended her
high anticipations, that her companion would return from his mission,
she should go with him to the valley of the mountains, where her hearts
best affections were centred. While her remains lay in my house I was led
to reflect deeply upon her brief but suffering life! Great domestic trials
had fallen to her lot! An invalid in her early youth; she had been miracu-
lously healed by the administration of the elders in our church, previous
to her baptism. She was an orphan before her first marriage, which
proved an unhappy one.

All these events revolved in my mind, and I sorely lamented her
fate; that she could not have survived as it was her ardent desire, till her
companion returned, the man to whom she was devotedly attached. Her
faith in the gospel was firm and unshaken to the last. I had loved her
from our first acquaintance, which was in Nauvoo. She left her kindred in
N. York state and came to the church when she was but eighteen years of
age. I never knew a more energetic, ingenious, persevering girl. Her par-
ents afterwards joined the church, came to Nauvoo before her first mar-
riage, and both died there. It devolved on me to write to her husband.

Her sister in San Francisco afterwards came to the place; the
antipode of the dear one gone. To awaken scenes and reflections occa-
sioned by her arrival would be to resurrect long buried agonies and put
them again on the rack, to throb and bleed! Let oblivion cover it all, till
we meet in presence of her we mourned, and before Him who knows the
hearts and tries the reins of the children of men! Brother Ludington, a
missionary to India, preached the funeral sermon. He spoke in a most
touching manner of the probable return of her husband; and of the
uncertainty of all earthly expectations. For days my house seemed like a
sepulchre; from which all living beings were departed. At length I
resolved to rise above the gloom, and try to rejoice, that my dear friend
had gone away to a peaceful home, as I believed. What had she here, to
induce her to remain? Nearly all her life she had been afflicted with pain
of body or mind. A calm came over me, and I felt comforted.

In Aug 55 the elders began to return from the Sandwich Islands. A
sermon was preached in the Hawaiian language. We could understand
something by the spirit, and some by the tongue resembling the Tahitian. Then came missionaries returning from India. Bro’s Finley and Fotheringham. They cheered us by their company, and their faith. Bro. Davis and wife were beautiful singers. They added much to the life of our social circles. They tarried with us a while, and then went on to S. Lake. At length Brother Lewis arrived, husband of the departed. He seemed at first sad; afterwards considering all the circumstances, her feeble health and prospects of trials to come, he remarked, “it is all for the best!”

[The Crosbys and Frances Arrive, November 1855]

Towards the last of Nov news came that my sister from Francisco, and my daughter Frances were in Los Angelos on their way to our settlement. All was excitement and joy! Ellen and Ann Louisa went in the stage to meet them expecting they would be coming up in the coach. They however had their passage engaged in an open wagon which they must do or wait two days for the stage. Accordingly they all came together seventy miles. It was a time of general joy; they had come to make a home! Now thought I, my weary spirit will revive! My longing desires are gratified; my sister and daughter have come in answer to my prayers. All seemed cheerful for awhile. But my poor girl was not well; there was a trembling at my heart. Memory brings back past scenes of my life so indelibly stamped on my mind. I shudder in view of the reoccurrence of similar ones.

[Family Life in San Bernardino]

Dec 25th at length came around. It carried me back to the days of my youth, my father’s house, and kindred ties. In those days we were accustomed to have publick worship in honor of the Saviour’s birth; there in San B. it was only a dancing party. We were invited to see the assembly, and hear the music. Frances sailed about the Hall like a bird in the air! The music was soul-stirring; I staid a short time, went home and prepared supper for a few persons. Mr. Pratt had no taste for amusements of that kind. To go forth with his dog and gun, and shoot wild game, was more sport for him. There were pleasure parties in all directions, and some to which I was opposed.

One evening Lois went on horseback. After midnight she was brought home in a frightful condition; having been thrown from the horse. I was dumb with astonishment when she was brought in. She could not speak distinctly, her jaw was dislocated, joint twisted, and the sight of her was truly alarming! the young man who had taken her from home seemed deeply concerned. He said the horse had always been considered one of the gentlest kind, but for some cause unknown to him he had
taken fright at that unfortunate moment, threw Lois over his head, her
clothes caught on the horn of the saddle, tore every thing from her but
her under garments. The horse then fell to the ground, with his head
against a tree. Frances was terribly alarmed! Was certain she did not
breathe for several minutes. She was brought home in a carriage and
nothing could exceed F's attention to the injured girl, till she was wholly
restored. A physician was called, the jaw replaced, and brother C.C. Rich
came and laid his hands upon her head, and blessed her in the name of
the Lord. He did not reprove her, but said, "be cautious in future." It was
the last of her riding horseback to evening parties, in the dark, and over
bad roads.

Mr. Pratt worked faithfully on the lots, pruning grapevines and set-
ting out trees. A young man by the name of Wm McGary came to the
place, bought a lot adjoining ours, and began making improvements. He
was a tasty workman, the house was roughly built, there was soon a
change for better.

A Mr. Grinelle from upper Cal. brought me a little girl five years
old. His wife had left him and married another; from her he stole the
child. He wished me to take her either as my own or to be paid for my
trouble. I advised him not to give away his child, he might repent it in a
coming time. I took her under my care. Emma Grinelle was the sweetest
and best child I ever saw in my life. There seemed from the first some-
thing unearthly about her. Oh! how I pitied her mother! I took her to my
arms and felt it was a precious charge. I sometimes feared I could not be
watchful enough, as I had never had a tender delicate child like her. She
had a cough from the first. I often asked the question to myself why did
such a gentle spirit come to this cold hard world? Was it merely to get a
body, then suffer and die? The whooping cough came to the neighbor-
hood. As soon as I heard of it I trembled with fear. I tried in vain to keep
her from exposure, but a careless girl brought a little one to the house,
which did the cruel deed. Ellen dreamed. She saw three little fields of
wheat, half grown in height, but fully matured. The reaper came with his
scythe to cut them down. It was an omen to me. There were two other lit-
tle girls younger than mine, but strong, fresh and blooming, all smitten at
the same time. Our dear little Emma seemed sensible she could not live.
When I would ask her to take medicine that she might get well, she would
reply, "I cannot get well." As Ellen was holding her in her arms, She says,
"sing to me." E says, "what shall I sing?" "Sing me a farewell song!" Oh!
the beauty that is laid beneath the dust! Mother earth takes the lambs to
her bosom, to shield them from the storms of life! Her father came, but
not in time to see her buried. I gave him a lock of her hair, he took it and
went to a retired place. I knew for what purpose. Most sorely did he feel
the loss. She would often cry out, "Mother! Mother! come here!" I would
run to her and ask what she wanted? She would answer "nothing, go and lie down." Her mother at that time had gone behind the vail; and who knows but she was calling her child?

No human being could be more lovely in death! I gazed long upon her tranquil features, and thought of her poor father! ignorant of the sad event then passing, when his only child would soon be removed from mortal sight! Oh! how we all missed her, but I knew she had gone to add one to the cherubian to sing songs with the redeemed so well did she love singing. I was soon called to the death bed of sister Layton’s little girl with the same disease. So fleshy and bright. She said in her native tongue, “that child was the only sun of my soul!” We buried her under the shade of a tree on the lot where they will build a house. The birds will sing on the tree, and change the funeral requium; the murmuring of the rivulet that runs near the grave will often fall on the fond mother’s ear a farewell song to the dear one gone and make her think of her island home and kindred. We returned from the burial, and in a few hours another one was gone; and the dream was interpreted.

Mr. Pratt, though unusual for him, was at home on his fiftieth birthday. Feb 21st. We recounted the scenes of his past life, an eventful one it had been, during his short pilgrimage on earth. Travels by sea and land, storms and tempests, hunger and cold; isolation on the islands of the sea, separation from family and friends, and a thousand nameless things. But he says “my health is good, and I hope to live many years.”

I went to visit Frances Clark, once the wife of Heber C. Kimball. She had a young babe two weeks old. She had buried her first little girl over two years of age. I had hoped the birth of the second would have in some degree healed the wound. But no, she was still inconsolable! I never saw a more afflicted person. The child was a peculiar one, and very beautiful to look upon! ’Tis such the angels want.

I had thought my own grief great beyond endurance even for a child not mine by birth, but when I saw that mother’s sorrow I knew the wound was deeper. We need all our treasures to make our lives here endurable; in this cold and uncharitable state of existence. Oh, will the destroyer be disarmed! When can we shout victory over death and the grave! These lovely children were destined to go early! They are taken from the evil to come. When we tried to exercise faith to have them healed, just when the prayer was on our lips, “Oh, Lord heal them;” with the next breath, “thy will O, Lord, be done.” He wants them to replenish his kingdom. There are those around me who have trials, and sorrows more pungent than those caused by death. A man who in Francisco was eloquent, ardent, valiant, in testimony, in declaring the fullness of the gospel revealed to the martyred prophet. Now intimidating his family with oaths and curses! Surely the evil one has possession of him, and leads him captive at his will.
The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt

My domestic sorrows I forbear to mention. I carry them in my own bosom, and bear my injuries in silence.

While mourning over my lost treasure there came a brother Owen, from San Francisco. He was full of faith and zeal for the gospel. His conversation quickened my spirit and lightened the burden from my heart. I felt that I could sing a new song, even praise to our God! Brothers Lyman and Rich were good reliable men, and every thing prospered under their administration. Beautiful vineyards were in bearing. Peaches could be had in two years from the pit. The people lived in harmony, so we had no lawsuits, every difficulty was settled by bishops or teachers. Plenty crowned our labors. We had means to help the elders to go out on missions and when they returned we could assist them on their way back to S. Lake.

William McGary of whom I have spoken was a frequent visitor in our family. He was a friendly agreeable young man, and a good musician. The 6th of March in 56 was the anniversary of his 23d birthday. Lois was 19 the same day. So I made them a dinner, and invited company. Lois was inclined to be merry, while he was silent and sober. I knew now why it was, but learned afterward. He had entertained hopes which were likely to prove fruitless. We had depended on him for company, were cheered with his music, and I regretted that any thing should have transpired to mar his peace, and make him moody and silent. He at length went to San Francisco on business, made a short stay and returned; soon went to houskeeping with his Aunt Morse, appeared reserved and melancholy. Brother C.C. Rich had a very sick child; he called for Mr. Pratt to go with him to the council House; where was an upper room dedicated to prayer; where the brethren assembled in cases extraordinary, when great faith was required.

Thither they repaired to call on the Lord, and seldom did they fail to obtain answers to their prayers. At length came the 25th anniversary of our wedding day, the 3d of April 1856. Mr. P. was very sick. There was an oyster supper at Wm McGary’s but he could not attend. So we brought some to him, of which he is very fond, and it did him good. The day was spent in deep thought on my part. I reviewed my wedded life, and marvelled that I had been enabled to endure so much! I thought of the covenants I then made at the altar; had I fulfilled the promise, to “love honor and obey?” I had done what I could. Why should we be required to make solemn promises when it depends all on circumstances whether we can fulfill them. No woman ever felt a stronger sense of duty, than I have.

The 6th of April, was an important day. Ann Louisa’s birthday. 16 years old. We remembered it with interest for its being the birth day of the church, of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. When it was organized with six members, in the town of Palmyra State of N. York. A L’s uncle made her a present of a beautiful little work box. Many years should she
live, she will keep it as a mememto. That day the Church was 26 years of age. A conference was held, I reckoned how old I would be should I live 26 years longer, 79 years. I said, “should I live to that age I shall see much of the gathering of Israel, and the enlargement of the kingdom of God.” Who can fathom its progress, through blood and tears! Who can tell the numbers that have been made to rejoice, that the Lord the God of Israel, has spoken from the heavens in this our day!