

A TRUE PIONEER MOTHER

Ann Rigby Webster, daughter of John Rigby, was born in St. Helens, Lancashire, England, April 12, 1805. She was nearly 20 years when she married Henry Webster of St. Helens, on the 15th of March 1825 at Prescott, Lancashire, England. She was the mother of fifteen children, all born in Lancashire County, England.

The message of the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ brought to them by missionaries of the newly founded church under the leadership of the Prophet Joseph Smith, was gladly accepted by her and her family. This was about the year 1845-46, when her last two children, James and Sarah, twins, were a year and a half old. She had lost four little girls before this, Elizabeth, Mary, Betsy and Hannah, all under eight years of age. The oldest, a son, John Rigby, age 19, was the first to accept the gospel and was baptized April 13, 1845 by Elder Simpkins. Ann was the next to join the church and was baptized November 21, 1847. Three of the girls, Rachel, Mary Ann and Margaret were baptized March 21, 1848 and two boys, Henry Edward and Thomas Grover were baptized on 18 March 1849. The other four children, Joseph, Williams, James and Sarah were under eight years of age. The father was baptized 3 February, 1850 being the last to enter the waters of baptism.

During these years of embracing and enjoying the spirit of the new gospel and the new way of life that it brought to them, their minds were filled with a desire to join the body of Saints in Utah in the free land of America. The time soon came to take care of emigration of the Saints from foreign lands. The Webster family embarked on the ship Josiah Bradley, one of the ships chartered by these agents. This ship with 263 passengers sailed from Liverpool, England, February 18, 1850. Elder Thomas Day was the president of the company and his two councilors were Abel Evans of Wales and Daniel Baxter of Kilbirme, Scotland. After a fine and pleasant voyage of eight weeks and four days, the company arrived in New Orleans on April 18, 1850. Their ship was manned by Captain Mansfield.

The parents with their ten children sailed up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, Missouri. The oldest daughter, Lydia was living here. She had crossed the ocean in 1849. She was married here on March 10, 1850, to James Simpkins Brooks who had lost his wife, Rebecca Franklin Crump, on July 10, 1849 in St. Louis. The Webster family did not remain here long but traveled on to Kaneshville, Iowa and joined the Saints there to prepare for their long journey across the plains. The father died here on December 16, 1850 of cholera and their daughter Rachel, age 18, died on the 30th of the same month.

John Rigby, now a widower, (name of wife not known), found another mate at Kaneshville, Miss Mary Scott, to whom he was

married on Tuesday May 3, 1851 by Elder T. D. Brown. John Rigby Webster [The Webster must be an error] and his wife did not join the Saints going west but settled in one of the Middle States.

In July 1851, Henry Edward age 13 1/2, died from the effects of a sunstroke. The mother now bereft of a third member of her family since leaving England, and this, too, being the oldest son now with her, it seemed that the throes of adversity were ever present to hinder her from gaining her sought-for goal of reaching the valleys of the mountains. It was too late now for her to reach Utah this year; she would have to spend another winter in Council bluffs. She kept her oldest daughter Mary Ann with her and let Margaret go to work for the family of David Dixon. He wanted her to accompany them across the plains. She told him she would have to get permission of her mother who lived some distance away. Dixon replied that he would go see her about it. When he returned he told Margaret that her Mother had given consent, which she found later was a falsehood. Margaret was now gone. This was the spring of 1852 and Ann Rigby Webster with her six remaining children were making final preparations to start across the plains.

There were 22 companies of emigration in 1852. The Websters came in the sixteenth company of that year under Captain Uriah Curtis. It was a company of 356 saints from Pottawattamie County, Iowa which had been organized by Elders Jedediah M. Grant and Ezra Taft Benson on June 24, 1852. They left the Missouri River a few days later and arrived in Salt Lake City, October 1, 1852.

After arriving in the valley, Ann had difficulty in finding her daughter Margaret, but finally one of her brothers met her on the street. She then went to live with the family who had settled at Big Cottonwood. Mary Ann became the fifth wife of Milo Andrus in December, 1852. Margaret married John Esplin in November 1853 and they went to Nephi to settle. Thomas married Mary Elmer and settled in Juab County, Utah. William married Pleasant Cazier in 1879 and settled in Nephi and later Arizona.

The Brooks family (Lydia) crossed the plains in 1856 in the John Banks Company that left Florence, Nebraska, June 14, 1856 with 300 souls and 60 wagons, and arrived in Salt Lake City, October 1st of that year. They had four children; James S. Jr., son of the first wife, who was a year and a half old when Lydia became his step-mother, and who was loved and cared for by her on an equal basis with her own children. The other children were Lydia W., age 4, Rachel, age 2 and Erastus Milo, one-year-old. They went to live at Big Cottonwood near her mother and family. They lived here until 1862 when they again took a journey westward, this time to San Bernardino, California. Ann Rigby Webster with her three children Joseph, Sarah and James, accompanied them and they reached San Bernardino on Christmas Eve,

1862 after a long covered wagon journey. Here they established a new home. On February 15, 1879, Ann Rigby Webster passed away, age 74 years.