

# Peter and Sarah Farr LeCheminant and The 1854 Mormon Emigration from Europe to the Great Salt Lake Valley



by  
Wilford Hill LeCheminant

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Special thanks is given to my aunt, Sarah LeCheminant Johnson, who encouraged this account of the 1854 Mormon emigration as it relates to the LeCheminant family. She also supplied the pictures of the family members. "At the last minute" her biography of Sarah Farr LeCheminant became a welcome addition to this publication. Additional LeCheminant family history is found in *A Century of Utah LeCheminants* by Wilford Davis LeCheminant, my father.

The cover picture is *Council Bluffs Ferry and Group of Cottonwood Trees* by Frederick Piercy from *Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley*. Courtesy of the Utah State Historical Society.

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## Peter and Sarah Farr LeCheminant and The 1854 Mormon Emigration from Europe to the Great Salt Lake Valley



Sarah Farr LeCheminant

In 1839 Peter LeCheminant married Sarah Farr, and during the next ten years they had five children: Elizabeth, Peter, Osmond, Edmond and Agnes. Peter was a ships carpenter and lived on Guernsey, one of the several small Channel Islands off the coast of Normandy, France. These islands have been British for more than 900 years, since the time of William the Conqueror. The name, LeCheminant, is a French word meaning "the traveler" or "the walker" and is a "grand old Guernsey name." It is virtually unknown as a surname in France. Many generations of Peter's forefathers had lived on the island, but Sarah, her brother, and her widowed mother had come to Guernsey from England only nineteen years earlier.

On the 19th of August, 1851, Peter and Sarah and their older children were baptized members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and thus began a remarkable family adventure. The family responded to the compelling call of the Church leaders in America for



the faithful to hasten to Utah, to gather to the valleys of the mountains. However, Peter died of tuberculosis on Guernsey in February, 1853. Despite this tragedy, Sarah was determined to emigrate. She was 38 years old when she obtained financial help from the Church's newly established Perpetual Emigrating Fund, and with her five children between the ages of four and thirteen years, joined the 1854 Mormon emigration to Utah.<sup>11</sup>

Since Sarah kept no diary or journal, her experiences can only be approximated by reconstructing the story of the 1854 emigration from the diaries of other Mormon emigrants and from the printed news of that eventful year. These accounts also help one understand the conditions in Europe for many Mormon converts and some of the forces that influenced these pioneers to leave Europe that spring.

#### AN OUTLINE OF THE JOURNEY

Several stages of the seven-month, 8,000-mile journey can be closely located and dated. Sarah and her children were among forty-three members of the French Mission who left the Channel Islands, Guernsey and Jersey, on March 11, 1854. A. L. Lamoreaux, president of the French Mission, escorted the group to Liverpool where they arrived March 17th. The English sailing ship scheduled for them had been reassigned to transport British soldiers to the Crimean War in Russia. They waited two weeks in Liverpool until an American ship, the *Marshfield*, was chartered, and together with 360 other Mormon passengers they boarded the *Marshfield* about the 31st of March. The ship sailed the 8th of April and had a pleasant voyage of fifty-one days, arriving in New Orleans the 29th of May. The *Marshfield* company was then divided between two Mississippi riverboats, the *John Robb* and the *Grand Turk*, on which they reached the St. Louis area. They were required to stay on Quarantine Island near St. Louis for several days before other riverboats carried them up the Missouri River to Westport (now Kansas City). They were assigned to the William Empey wagon company, the last of the season's Mormon emigration. It was an unusually late start in the year as their wagons rolled out onto the prairie from Westport about July 20th. Erastus Snow, enroute east, camped on the plains with the Empey company on August 15th. He noted they had more than 1,000 miles ahead of them and foresaw the risk of cold weather and snow hampering the last stage of the trek. However, the storms came late that season, and they reached the Great Salt Lake Valley without serious mishap October 24th, more than seven months after leaving Guernsey.

#### THE CALL FROM ZION

In 1854 there were 30,000 Mormons in England and most were resolved to move to Utah. James Linforth describes the situation:



Willard Richards



Brigham Young



Heber C. Kimball

*The anxiety of thousands of Saints to gather to Utah had become intense, so much so that . . . much prudence and caution were now required to restrain the overflowing spirit which the Saints were giving way to, and at the same time to promote the emigration of as large a number as practicable. . . . The Seventh General Epistle of the First Presidency . . . exhorted (the Saints of Europe) to gather to Utah speedily by tens of thousands. The language was, 'Let all who can produce a loaf of bread, and one garment on their back, be assured there is water plenty and pure by the way, and doubt no longer, but come next year to the place of gathering, even in flocks, as doves fly to the windows before a storm.' This needed no interpretation but was reiterated by hundreds of elders throughout the country and gave fresh vigor to the desire already burning in the breasts of thousands to emigrate.* 16

#### THE L.D.S. CHURCH ON THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

On June 3, 1851, two months before the LeCheminant family joined the L.D.S. Church, the Channel Islands (Guernsey and Jersey) were transferred from the British to the French Mission. At this time the islands had a total L.D.S. Church membership of 270, and in the previous six months thirty-nine had been baptized, nine had emigrated, two had died and seventeen had been excommunicated. 12b

In September, 1852, Elder Curtis E. Bolton, a French missionary, wrote that the Sunday before he arrived on Jersey the L.D.S. "meeting had been mobbed. A brother and sister seriously injured and one of the mob most killed and three of the mob in prison."

Bolton records three visits with the LeCheminant family on Guernsey. (His omission of the article, Le, before the name is a common spelling practice in the Channel Islands.) On August 2, 1852, Bolton recorded, "Slept at Bro. Cheminant's who has the liver complaint. He has a little daughter about ten as near an angel as human nature can be. I found the Saints here rather cold in good deeds but they are a good people. I find this island very unhealthy, few healthy persons and no fat healthy children. I am much troubled with bronchitis since I arrived." The elder returned to Guernsey the next month, and September 10th he writes, "Found almost all the Saints sick, spent four happy days holding meetings almost every night, eight of them have been baptized since my last visit and some more speaking of it. Bro. Raddon very ill--Bro. Cheminant no better. Dear little angel Elizabeth, his daughter, well and learning fast. Gave her some lessons in writing--visited much of the island--went blackberrying--got about 8 or 9 quarts of rich ripe Yankee blackberries."

On January 5, 1853, Bolton went to Guernsey again and made his



St. Peter Port, Guernsey - 1930

last visit to the LeCheminant family just a few weeks before Peter LeCheminant died, sometime in February. Bolton says, "I laid hands on Bro. Cheminant and blessed him and ordained him an Elder and bid him farewell. . . . Dear little angel Elizabeth has worked me a beautiful piece of Crochet work--a dove with its wings spread and an olive branch in its mouth--it's a beautiful thing--All the brethren and sisters are in good health but Bro. Cheminant, he cannot last long, he has consumption."<sup>2</sup>

Elizabeth, Peter's and Sarah's oldest child, was twelve years old then. She may well have needed Bolton's writing lessons. Education in the Channel Islands was described by Phillip DeLaMare, a generation older than Elizabeth. He was from a substantial family, yet he remembered that in his childhood, "he had in common with the children of . . . Jersey very limited educational opportunities and at ten years of age began work on a farm." DeLaMare was a missionary to the Channel Islands in 1861, when he wrote, "There are in these islands many that had been in the Church, and went to Utah and returned. Finding that the riches did not come so fast as they expected, they came back here . . . and brought a spirit of slander with them and that took better with the people than the truth. . . . It is lonesome to be here."<sup>18,15</sup>

A few months after the departure of the 1854 emigrants the Church had legal difficulties in the Channel Islands. The specific problem is not completely identified in President Franklin D. Richards's letter to Brigham Young, October 31, 1854:

*Great things were just a going to be done with much noise and smoke (in the French Mission), until its president (Andrew L. Lamoreaux) was fined by the Royal Court at St. Heliers (Jersey) for libel and defamation, twenty-five pounds and cash. Of course, rather than that my brother should go to prison, I paid it and from that put my hand on the gun. Elder Spencer spent nearly three weeks in the Channel Islands cleansing the elements, and we have now been three months trying to find out how the business of the Mission stands. I shall straighten it out as fast as possible. . . . Elder Lamoreaux has requested permission to return home which has been granted.<sup>22</sup>*

Andrew L. Lamoreaux died the next spring in St. Louis enroute home as president of an emigrant company. He contracted cholera and died within three days.<sup>7</sup>

The Guernsey Branch roster for 1854 lists the LeCheminant family and John Ball, Sarah's 75 year old step-father. This record notes Peter's death and that Sarah and her children left for Utah



March 11, 1854, with many other members of the branch. John Ball remained in Guernsey.<sup>11</sup>

#### POVERTY AND THE EMIGRATION

In 1854, of the 30,000 Mormons in England, many, probably most, were poor. Mormon elders were appalled at the dire poverty in the tenements and saw the laboring classes as living in abject misery. Beggars seemed to be everywhere. The poverty, a product of the Industrial Revolution, helped spawn the political theories of the German socialist, Karl Marx, who then lived in England. Elders were not only preaching Mormonism but were also extolling the great advantages and opportunities of living in America.

Samuel W. Richards, British Mission president until July, 1854, wrote Brigham Young in November of 1853:

*The past year has been very unfavorable for the Saints generally to accumulate means for their emigration. Many strikes have occurred throughout the country, and . . . many of the Saints have been out of employ. . . . The question of war between Turkey and Russia has had the effect of raising the prices of almost everything which the poor require to live upon. The price of bread is more than double what it was six months since, which is a specimen of the difficulties which are increasing upon the poor almost daily in this country. Many of the Saints feel quite punished, as it were, that they cannot be counselled to go to the States, when they look at the gloomy prospects which are before them, for a chance even to live, and keep their families alive. I find that a man has to harden his heart sometimes to be able to withstand the entreaties of those who plead to go by the (Perpetual Emigrating) Fund, when they tell how they and their families have to go without bread. We read about the miseries of the damned, but this world certainly presents a picture most awful to look upon. It presents a scene of wretchedness which depicts the miseries of the damned. When I seriously contemplate the scene I almost loathe my being in such a world, for I cannot but feel for my fellow creatures--for the sufferings of humanity.<sup>22</sup>*

Not all Mormon emigrants were converted to the Gospel. The *Millennial Star* comments, "It is a fact that hundreds who have . . . emigrated for the land of Zion have never made their appearance at the headquarters of the Church. Some have been scarcely heard of after their landing in America; . . . others still have become offended at



something or other, and have turned back their faces to the starting place, bringing with them little else than evil reports. Another notice reads, "We are much surprized to learn . . . that persons have left the country in a disgraceful manner by evading their creditors. Such conduct is extremely reprehensible, calculated as it is to bring reproach upon the Church from those who are not particularly anxious to discriminate between innocent and guilty. 13a, 13c

The 2,034 Mormons who sailed in 1854 were a small part of the emigration to America. That year 460,470 persons came to the United States from foreign ports. 328,000 of these landed in New York City. The major countries of origin were 49,000 from England, 102,000 from Ireland, and 206,000 from Germany. That year American authorities learned that "various German governments were clearing their prisons by granting pardons to convicts on the condition of their shipping to the United States. 14a, 13o

#### THE PERPETUAL EMIGRATING FUND

The Perpetual Emigrating Fund was first used to send Mormon emigrants from Europe to Utah in 1852, the same year the Church publicly acknowledged practicing polygamy. Two years later of the 2,034 who went under the auspices of the Church, 1,073, including the LeCheminants, were financed by the P.E.F. It was also called the Poor Fund. That the LeCheminants used the P.E.F. suggests they were poor. Yet, the family history tells that they owned their home and sold it before leaving for Utah. Guernsey was and still is essentially rural. The poverty there was not that of the sordid slums of the cities of Europe. 10

The P.E.F. had its beginnings in Nauvoo. There, previous to leaving, "the Latter-day Saints entered into a solemn covenant in the temple that we never cease our exertions . . . till all the Saints who were obliged to leave Nauvoo should be located at some gathering place of the Saints. 18

In Salt Lake City at the October Conference of 1849, with this promise in mind, the Church voted to raise money first to bring to Utah the 10,000 Saints still living in the Pottawattomie lands of Iowa. Many of these had lost everything in their exodus from Nauvoo. Brigham Young explained the fund was to be raised and continued by donations, and when the Saints helped by the fund reached Utah they were to repay the loan as soon as their circumstances permitted. Money also entered the fund from such sources as divorce receipts, the sale of stray livestock, and fines for various civil offenses. Block teachers were also used to encourage contributions. 1,16a

Interest on the loan was generally not required, particularly if there were attempts in paying the principle or if misfortune had occurred. Many of the P.E.F. pioneers were slow in making payments.



The poor in Europe often remained poor in Zion, and Brigham Young regularly reminded the debtors of their obligation. Each year the block teachers reviewed the indebtedness to the fund with the families in their districts. In 1887 when the Church was disincorporated by the Edmunds-Tucker Act, the fund had assets of \$417,968. Virtually all of this was outstanding as uncollectable promissory notes, and at this time the Church released all from their indebtedness to the fund. In its thirty-seven years the P.E.F. spent over \$2,000,000 in cash and with donated equipment and services, its total expenditures to bring the poor to Zion are estimated to exceed \$10,000,000.<sup>9</sup>

Sarah Farr LeCheminant spent many years in repaying her debt to the fund. Andrew Jenson, a Church historian and a close friend of the LeCheminant family, told Sarah LeCheminant Johnson, a granddaughter of Sarah Farr, that the family had completely repaid its P.E.F. debt.

#### ECONOMIC AND MANPOWER GOALS OF THE MORMON EMIGRATION PROGRAM

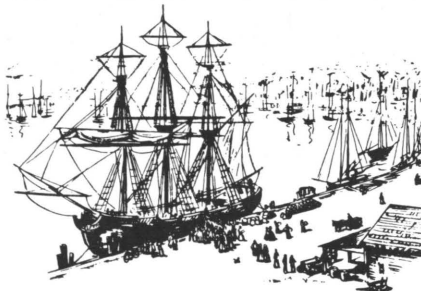
In March, 1850, when Elder Franklin D. Richards introduced the concept of the Perpetual Emigrating Fund in England, he emphasized that the fund was to accomplish economic goals for the kingdom in Utah. Skilled artisans, mechanics and laborers of all kinds were needed to build up the society and develop the resources of a new country. Often veteran members of the Church waited years while more recent converts with needed skills were hurried on their way to Utah. A formal application required noting one's occupation. Those to be emigrated by the fund were selected by the presidents of the conferences and branches of the Church. They were instructed to base their choices first on integrity and moral worth and secondly on occupation.<sup>1</sup>

On the passenger lists of Mormon ships most adults are identified by occupation. However, Sarah Farr LeCheminant has no such notation. Other fatherless P.E.F. families with young children are also listed without occupation, suggesting other factors were also considered.

#### CONDUCTING THE EMIGRATION

Members were repeatedly warned against emigrating on their own. However, one 1854 Mormon emigrant received advice from a friend in Utah to join a California wagon train when he reached the frontier as they were considered better equipped and moved faster than the Mormon companies. Nevertheless, as part of the Church emigration program, the LeCheminants were well cared for. Each segment of the long journey was supervised. James Linforth describes the usual procedure:

*Arrangements had been made to assist the emigrants while in Liverpool, and experienced elders had been sent with the vessels to superintend the voyage. . . . The time selected for embarkation has been . . . from January to*



*April, which enables the emigrants to arrive upon the U.S. frontiers between April and June, sufficiently early to cross the plains and mountains before winter sets in and the mountain passes are partially filled with snow.*

*It is often the case that one conference or district furnishes a shipload or the greatest part of it. . . . In contracting for the vessel, it is agreed that the passengers shall go on board either on the day of their arrival in Liverpool or the day following. . . . It saves the ruinous expense of lodging ashore and preserves many an inexperienced person from being robbed by sharpers, who make extensive experiments in this port on the unwary.<sup>16d</sup>*

Emigrants were advised to take good firearms, especially rifles, for use on the plains and afterwards, but were told no powder or other combustibles were allowed on shipboard. Good warm clothing was stressed, and passengers were to furnish their own bed and bedding and cooking utensils. They were cautioned against the common practice of taking too much luggage. Frederick Piercy reported that "during the first half of the (overland) journey the soles and heels of boots do not suffer much, but the toes are very soon cut out by the strong sharp grass." He recommended using coverings over the toes of the boots to prevent this. He also recommended goggles to protect the eyes from the dust of the trail.<sup>16f</sup>

In 1854 the British House of Commons was studying emigration practices in order to legislate improvements in the living conditions aboard passenger ships. Thousands were sailing in the usually squalid steerage class to America. The Mormon program also used steerage class accommodations, but was known for its cleanliness and well ordered discipline. The sailing ship captains preferred Mormon companies and allowed them privileges usually not given other groups of emigrants. Because of this superior reputation of Mormon ships, Samuel W. Richards, president of the British Mission, was invited to Commons on May 23, 1854.

*On Tuesday, says the London correspondent of the Cambridge Independent Press, I heard a rather remarkable examination before a committee of the House of Commons. The witness was no other than the supreme authority in England of the Mormonites, and the subject upon which he was giving information was the mode in which the emigration to Utah, Great Salt Lake, is conducted. This curious personage is named Richards: he is an American by birth; is a dark,*



rather good-looking man; I should judge of fair education, and certainly of more than average intelligence. He gave himself no airs, but was so respectful in his demeanor and ready in his answers, that, at the close of his examination, he received the thanks of the Committee in rather a marked manner. According to his statements about 2,600 Mormonite emigrants leave Liverpool during the first three months of every year. They have ships of their own, and are under the care of a president. The average cost of the journey to Utah is about thirty pounds--that is, to steerage passengers. On arriving at New Orleans, they are received by another president, who returns to Mr. Richards an account of the state in which he found the ship &c. They have then 3,000 miles to go, and after leaving the Mississippi, 1,000 miles are traversed overland in waggons. . . . According to Mr. Richards, the great hope of the Mormons is to form a nation by the Great Salt Lake. At any rate there is one thing which, in the opinion of the Emigration Committee of the House of Commons, they can do--viz., teach Christian ship owners how to send poor people decently, cheaply, and healthfully across the Atlantic.<sup>131</sup>



Samuel W. Richards, British Mission president, who supervised the 1854 Mormon emigration from Europe. From a portrait by Frederick Piercy Courtesy of the Utah State Historical Society.

#### THE JOURNEY--PHASE ONE, THE CHANNEL ISLANDS TO NEW ORLEANS <sup>1854</sup>

The LeCheminants left the Channel Islands March 11th. Andrew L. Lamoreaux, after seeing the members of the French Mission safely aboard ship and out to sea, wrote President Samuel W. Richards, April 8, 1854 from Liverpool:

Just returned . . . after escorting a company of Saints under the presidency of Elder William Taylor, on board the splendid ship Marshfield bound for New Orleans, all in good health and spirits. . . . The company numbered 43 and arrived in Liverpool from the Isle of Jersey on the 17th of March. . . . The Marshfield is not inferior to the best as to cleanliness and convenience. . . . Captain Torrey appears to be a man well adapted for the situation he holds, as also the First Mate, and I believe they will do all in their power to make the Saints comfortable.

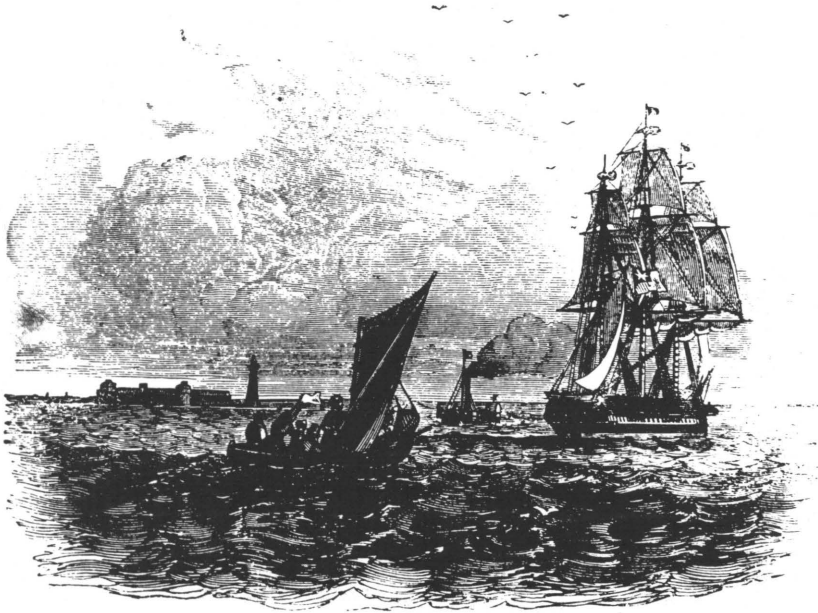
The ship weighed anchor about 9 o'clock this morning and was towed by steam tug into the open sea, when Brother James Marsden and myself took leave of the Saints and returned with the steamer.<sup>13b</sup>



After boarding, the emigrants were organized into eight wards. The president of the entire company was William Taylor. His counselors were Thomas Fisher and Gilbert Clements. Each ward was assigned a part of the ship. Married couples usually occupied the center of the ship, and the single men and single women were placed at opposite ends of the ship. Strict discipline required passengers to arise early, make their beds and clean the ship. Services were held daily. Activities such as concerts, dances, and contests occupied the time. Various classes were held and non-English-speaking members were taught English. Good quality English canvas, unavailable on the frontier, was made into tents and wagon covers while at sea in preparation for the overland trek.

Excerpts from Thomas Fisher's record of the voyage follow:

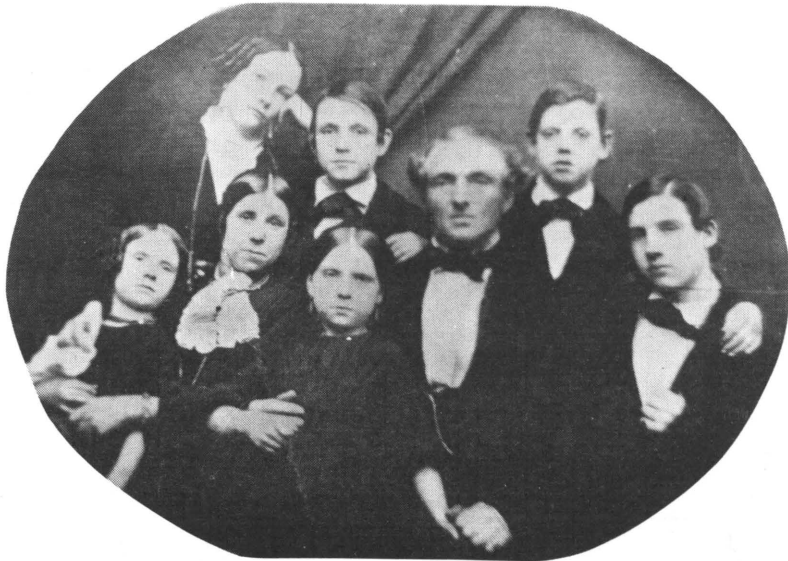
*Embarked on board the American ship, Marshfield, of Bath, U. S. with my wife and five children, lying in the Victoria Dock, Liverpool, on Friday, March 31, 1854.*



*Steam tug leaving Emigrant ship in open sea at the mouth of the Mersey River, Liverpool. Drawing by Frederick Piercy, Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley. Courtesy of the Utah State Historical Society.*

Wednesday. 5th (April, three days before sailing) the passengers underwent medical inspection, the results terminating in the rejection of Sis. Jane Hunder, from the London Conference, on the grounds of her being a coloured woman or (of) the Negro race. It appears that New Orleans, the capitol of the slave state, Louisiana, and that coloured persons emigrating there are liable of being kidnapped on the plea of being runaway slaves.

Thursday, 6th - This morning my brother, Elder William Fisher, came on board, laden with presents of bread, oranges and a variety of other things. May the Lord bless him for all his kindness to me and mine.



*The Thomas Frederick Fisher Family  
 Back, (L to R): Miss Clements (then engaged to  
 Thomas Fisher), William and John.  
 Front: Georgiana, Jane Christton, Mary Ann,  
 Thomas Frederick and Thomas.  
 Courtesy of Irving and Norma Alter, Bountiful, Utah.*

*Saturday, 8th - All hands called up at half past 5 a.m. Captain just came on board with orders for sailing. Saints passing general muster on deck, meantime between decks and ship generally rummaged to detect stowaways. None found. One-half past six anchor weighed and ship underway in tow of a powerful steam tug. Eight o'clock had the pleasure of entertaining Elder Marsden to breakfast who sailed out with us 20 miles and left with Elder Lamoreaux. All well and in first-rate spirits.<sup>6</sup>*

Most of Fisher's entries describe the weather, condition of the sea, and numerous religious meetings. Sea-sickness was a common complaint for several days. Passengers ate together by wards; each ward was assigned its turn in using the galley. The second day out he reports that, "Measures were used in lieu of weights in the distribution of some of the provisions. . . . Some of the mistrustful

weighed their provisions and finding the legal measure did not correspond with the weight, gave way to a spirit of grumbling which was unfortunately fanned to quite a flame by one of the priesthood. A council was called and the matter apparently resolved." A testimony meeting was then held in which all expressed sorrow for the sins of the day. During the second week, Fisher describes heavy seas and luggage breaking adrift in the berths which caused alarm. On April 22nd he notes that the days were getting warmer, and conditions on deck were very pleasant. On that day were seen a small whale, a large shoal of porpoises and many Portuguese Men-of-War. The only death of the voyage was on the 23rd of April. Orson Nield, five months old, died. On this day the ship was 2,000 miles from Liverpool. On the 25th of April the journal ends with still over a month at sea until New Orleans.<sup>6</sup>

However, extracts of a letter from Thomas Fisher to his brother, William, May 29th, the date of arrival at New Orleans, describe the fifty-one day voyage as more like an "excursion from London to Margate or Herne Bay than a voyage across the vast Atlantic. I presume that I shall be perfectly safe in saying that a more pleasant, healthy, and happy voyage has never been known in the history of trans-Atlantic emigration." However, a few problems occurred from which Fisher concluded, "You would be astonished to see the wickedness of some men and women calling themselves Saints, when they are, like us, thrown into close quarters."<sup>13f</sup>

John Johnson Davies sailed two months earlier on the *Golgonda*. His colorful account of life aboard a Mormon emigrant ship retains his spelling:

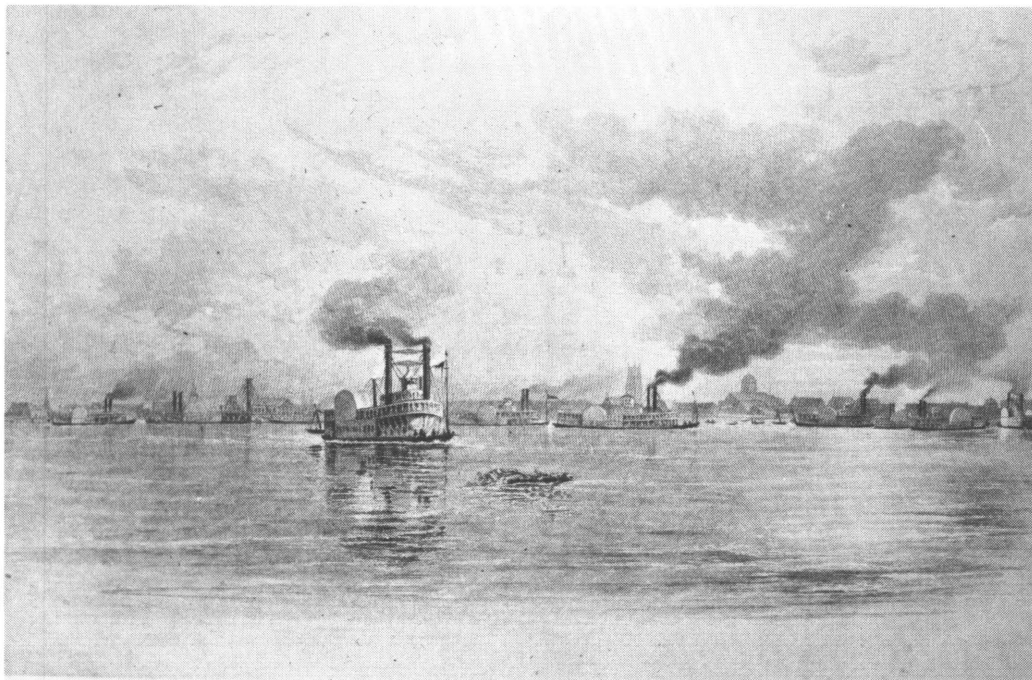
*After the steamer left us, the Ship was in full Sail and Sher looked handsome. We had a good brese and She ploughed the main very fast. It was very cold when we left Laverpool and in a few dyas we got to a warmer climet and we was Comfrotable on deck. It was a Site to us to See the Ships an Sailing on the Sea. We had a brass band on board and I was one of them. All Walesch. There was a choir on board and I was one of them and also a string band. They played for dancies, we had dancing on Sea. There were some Elders along with us returning from their Mission. There was a few batchalors on board. They had a place by themselves. They called it batchlors hall. They made lost of fun to us on Sea. The Captain was very kind to us, espeshily to the Sick. But very little Sick-ness we had on Sea and only one death and that was an infant and indeed it was a Sollum time, when the cild was droped into the Sea.*

We enjoyed our Selves very good while traveling on Sea. Our President was Elder Curtis, he was returning from his Mission. He organized us and apointed teachers to look after us. And we had meetings every Sunday. We had a good voiage and but one Storm and that was a fearfull one and I Shall never forget it. It lasted aboute 4 hours and I was on deck to See it all. The waves as big as moun-tains. The Sailors got all the Sails fasten befor the Storm was very bad. The thunder and lightning was terable and the rain a pouring down but the Ship done well but She Sprung a leek, but it was Soon Stopt. The Storm quit aboute dark. The next day the Ship was in full Sail again and we all felt to rejoice for fine whearth once more. . .

We had the pleasure to See a weding on Sea. The brid was tide to a chair. She was hoisted up the mast quite a ways. The Captain Said What a brave Woman. Then She took her handcerchief and waved it in the breze. The bridsman was caried around the Ship in a chair by four Batchilors. They made it for that purpose. This took place the first of March, 1854.<sup>5</sup>

Eight sailing vessels carried Mormon emigrants the 5,000 miles to New Orleans from Liverpool in 1854. Each voyage was unique and some had serious problems. The *Marshfield* was the next to the last ship to leave Liverpool, four days after the *Germanicus*. However, it arrived in New Orleans three weeks before the *Germanicus* which was in "an almost dead calm for twenty days under a blazing sun, the thermometer standing at 120 on deck in the shade, between decks 110." She stopped at the island of Tortugas five days to take on additional provisions. The *Windermere* left Liverpool on the 22nd of February and fifteen days out smallpox infected thirty-seven passengers and two crew. Twelve, mostly children, died in the epidemic. Two were the sons of William and Elizabeth Davis. Sarah Davis, a sister of the victims later wrote, "My two brothers, Rhuben and Levi, both died from this dreadful disease and were buried in the sea. It almost killed my mother to see those two darlings, with weights attached to their feet, slide into those shark-infested waters." A bride of three weeks, Emma Brooks, was also one of these victims.<sup>4, 13d, 13g</sup>

Before reaching New Orleans emigrants often saw islands of the West Indies, such as Santo Domingo and Cuba, and as they approached the anchorage in the mouth of the Mississippi River, they noted the deep blue color of the ocean was mixed with the light muddy water of the river. At the anchorage they were met by a pilot boat, a large Mississippi steamboat, which took hold of the sailing vessel and



*Riverfront view of New Orleans in 1853. Drawing by Frederick Piercy. Courtesy of the Utah State Historical Society.*

carried it over a bar of shallow water and up the river to New Orleans, a distance of 90 to 100 miles. The ship stopped at the quarantine station and doctors boarded to examine the passengers. The experienced Mormon leaders also prepared for the "boarding house runners", who usually scrambled aboard ship at New Orleans. Guards stationed at each hatchway were instructed to allow none but passengers to go down. This precaution was to protect the passengers from thieves. The "boarding house runners" often assumed the pretense of having a relative on board, usually claiming a cousin with a common Irish name such as Pat Murphy. So common were Irish immigrants that the thwarted runners could not believe there was no Pat Murphy aboard. <sup>16e</sup>

#### THE JOURNEY--PHASE TWO, NEW ORLEANS TO KANSAS

A Mormon agent received the emigrants at New Orleans and generally



gave them a few hours to visit their first American city where, Piercy wrote, one could enjoy a moderate meal for five cents. On May 31st the *Marshfield* company was divided between the riverboats, *James Robb* and *Grand Turk*.<sup>10</sup>

John Johnson Davies vividly describes his riverboat ride on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers:

*We was crowded. Now we are going, yes faster and faster. The Steam boat a puffing and Snorting and pushing hard against the Stream, but oh, what a dirty watter for us to use. We dip it up for to Settle it but donet get much better. Never, mind, we will do the best we can with it. I must drink it, anyhow, because I am very thirsty. And what a rackity noyes it made me Shudder. The Captain a Shouting and the watter a Splashing and the band a playing and Some of us Singing and Some of the Sisters a washing and the babs a crying and the Sailors a talking and many of them Smoking. And all of us trying to do Something and the boat a tugging and Snorting When traveling up the Missouri River also the Mississippi indeed it was a great Site to us to See Such forest of timber and land. What a wonderful Stream this is going in Such a force taking down Some very larg logs. They Some times Strik the boat with tremondus blows but we got through all right.*<sup>5</sup>

Frederick Piercy saw these riverboats as:

*Floating palaces, open to, and for the use of all who can pay, negroes excepted. A coloured man, however well educated or wealthy, dare not show his nose in the saloon, he must confine himself to the deck, with the deck hands and deck passengers. The boats are propelled by two engines, one on each side, under the superintendence of two engineers. The small house on top of the boat is the pilot house. Here a wheel is fitted up, connected with the rudder by means of ropes, so that, although very much elevated, the pilot has perfect command of the vessel. Speaking tubes and signal bells pass from the pilot house to the engineer's department, so that the engines can be stopped or reversed at a moments notice. The house just described is placed on the hurricane deck. . . . In fine weather it forms an agreeable promenade and affords a most commanding view of the river and generally of the countryside on each side. The deck below this is occupied by the first cabins and the ladies' saloon, which, in boats of the first class,*

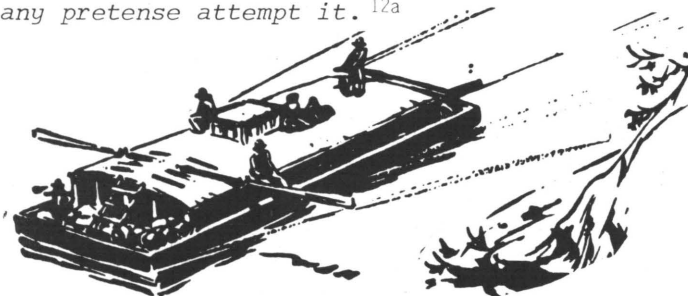


are most luxuriously fitted up. The food supply is of the best description and in great abundance, leaving nothing to be desired in this respect. The second cabins are of course of an inferior description, and the deck is as bad and poor an accommodation as the saloon is excellent. All that is paid for and guaranteed is a passage. Ordinary passengers are obliged to be content with lying on the boards; sometimes a berth may be obtained, but not often. Special arrangements are, however, made for L.D.S. emigrants, who are (as I myself saw in two or three instances) better provided for. . . .

Emigrants, crowded into steamboats, find the difficulties of cooking anything but slight. Those will come the best off who instead of tea and coffee, are content with cold water. Some people say that the waters of the . . . rivers are unwholesome, but I invariably drank the Mississippi water fresh the stream, and never experienced any inconvenience from it. It is certainly muddy. . . . However disagreeable this water may be to the palate, I would always recommend it in preference to whiskey, which is abominable stuff, and far more likely to injure than to benefit. Women should be careful not to attempt to draw water from the river in buckets. The current is so rapid, that when added to the speed of the steamer through it, it requires the strength of a man to procure water with safety. . . . In most of the boats there are pumps fixed, so that there is seldom any real necessity for drawing water by hand. <sup>16e</sup>

The deck for ordinary passengers was just above the water line. Piercy's warning to not use buckets to get water from the river in a moving steamboat is emphasized by the tragic story of a Mormon woman:

In attempting to draw a bucket of water from the stream while the boat was running ten miles an hour, Sister Shelley was suddenly plucked into the water by the force of that mighty current. She floated for a moment and then sank to rise no more. The engines were stopped immediately and a boat manned and sent in search of her. But it was unsuccessful in obtaining the body. . . . It is the work of the strongest man to reach water from the mighty current of the Mississippi, especially when running against the stream at so rapid a rate; and no female should on any pretense attempt it. <sup>12a</sup>

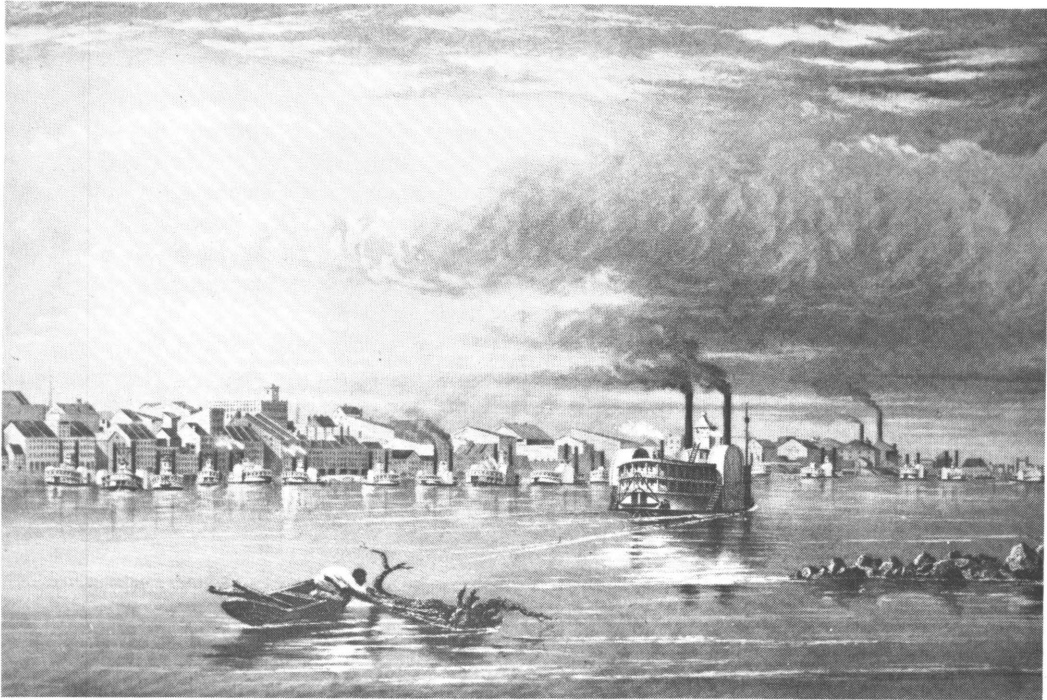


The timing of the emigration was designed to avoid the warm season on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers when dysentery and fevers flourished. In 1854 cholera was a world-wide problem. The *New York Daily News* said, "It has been the most unhealthy summer the United States has known for a whole generation. The cholera has spread all over the country, carrying off thousands. . . . The alarming symptoms have been so generalized, that few persons on the Continent have entirely escaped." Of nearly 700 Mormons to leave Denmark that year, 150 to 200 died of cholera while still in the river country. Strong men suddenly took ill with dysentery and within a few hours were dead. Crude coffins were sometimes made on the riverboats. The boat would halt at a remote shore. Its engines still churned while men scrambled to dig a grave in the tangle of grass and bushes of the river bank before the boat whistle signaled them back on board. Often the coffin could be only partly buried, all realizing that the next wash of a wave from the river might dislodge the box and carry it downstream. Near St. Louis was a quarantine hospital, where emigrants stayed for several days. Many died of cholera here and were buried in crude graves.<sup>10, 13k</sup>

1854 Rasmus Neilsen, his wife and five children, left Denmark for Utah that year. In March as they traveled from New Orleans to St. Louis, they came down with cholera and within three days the parents and three of the children had died. The older of the two survivors was Kerstina Maria, fourteen years old. "These two lonely orphans watched the bodies of their loved ones as they were wrapped in sheets, and without coffins, laid side by side in shallow graves on the banks of the river. Rasmus, sensing death was near, had placed the children in the care of a trusted friend. This man took charge of all the family belongings, which were sufficient to last for a long time, as well as a large sum of money sewed into a leather belt that Rasmus wore under his clothing for safe keeping." The orphans walked most of the way across the plains. On reaching Utah their guardian was called to settle in Sanpete County. He left the children, who did not speak English, with some bedding and promised to return. This he never did. They were adopted and reared by the Roger Farrer family in Provo.<sup>10</sup>

From St. Louis Elder Curtis wrote, "The *Marshfield* company arrived in St. Louis June 15th. Some were to start that evening and the remainder June 17th in three boats for Kansas. One child died in St. Louis, two more at quarantine there, and I was sick when writing. The Saints in camp were in good health."<sup>13e</sup>

It was probably near Westport awaiting their wagons that cholera again broke out in the Mormon camp. Two of Sarah's children, Peter and Agnes contracted cholera. Sarah was warned of her children's impending sickness in a dream in which she found elders to administer to them.



*Riverfront view of St. Louis in 1853. Drawing by Frederick Piercy. Courtesy of the Utah State Historical Society.*

Shortly after the dream, the children did actually become sick and "it was only through the great faith of Sarah and her determination that they should not die," writes W. D. LeCheminant, "that the lives of these two children were saved. Through her faith and prayers and the administration of the Elders of the Church, her children, who had been given up to die, were restored to immediate and complete health." <sup>10</sup>

However, Mary DuFresne, another widow with five children who left the Channel Islands with the LeCheminants, was not so fortunate. Two of her children died here of cholera. <sup>19</sup>

The prices of riverboat passage, wagons and supplies had all gone up over the previous year because of heavy emigration to California and Oregon. Long delays in getting adequate numbers of wagons and oxen were experienced by the early boat companies from Scandinavia.

Many of the Danes camped near Westport for over two months waiting to be outfitted. The *Marshfield* group waited about three weeks. <sup>13h</sup>

John Johnson Davies describes his sojourn at Westport:

*The distants from St. Louis to Kansas is about 400 miles. This was a trading post in them days, one or two Stores and a few houses and after we got on Shore we camped close to the river. The Cholera was very bad amongst us by this time and in a few days we moved from here to Mr. Magee's plantation. Now we had a good place to camp in. We buried quite a few of our Brethren and Sisters in this place. It was here I buried my Father and Mother-in-law. We stayed in these camps Six weeks. We went from here to west port and Stayed here a few days to get ready to Start on the plains.* <sup>5</sup>

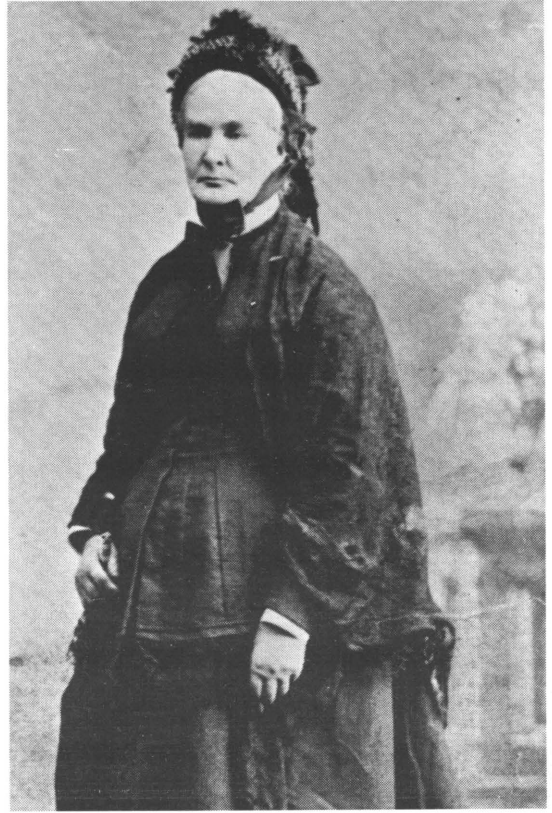
#### THE JOURNEY--PHASE THREE, OVERLAND TO UTAH

William Empey was the coordinating authority at Westport for organizing and outfitting the Mormon wagon companies and getting them underway. He then became the president of the eighth and final wagon train of 1854. His counsellors were William Taylor and Dorr Curtis and in one of the 42 wagons of his train traveled the LeCheminant family. Their trail experiences, in the absence of an Empey company journal, are constructed from other reports, especially from the journal of the Campbell company written by Thomas Sutherland. The Campbell company started July 18th, one or two days before the Empey train. Six weeks later, Empey passed the Campbell train at Ash Hollow and arrived in Salt Lake City four days ahead of them. <sup>21</sup>

On July 14, 1854, William Empey presided over the organizational meeting of the Robert Campbell company, at which the president and counsellors of the company were named, followed by the appointment of the captain of the guard, the wagon master and his assistant, the captains of the first and second ten, and the historian. Resolved and accepted by vote were several regulations. No gun was to be fired within fifty yards of the camp under penalty of one-night's guard duty. No man was to take his gun out of his wagon without permission from his captain, and all were warned to take the cap off any gun before carrying it in a wagon. The captains were to awaken the head of every family at 4:00 a.m. They were to be ready to roll out at 7:00 a.m. as circumstances allowed. All were to go to bed at 9:00 p.m., and every man from 16 to 60 years of age was to take turn at guard duty.

Empey instructed the company historian, Thomas Sutherland, on the importance of making a record of everything that occurred on the journey. From this, one must believe that each wagon train had a historian. It is regrettable that a record of the Empey company is not

*(Right) Sarah Farr LeCheminant*



*(Left) Sarah Farr LeCheminant  
with son, Peter, and eldest  
granddaughter, Sarah (Sadie)  
LeCheminant Brockbank*

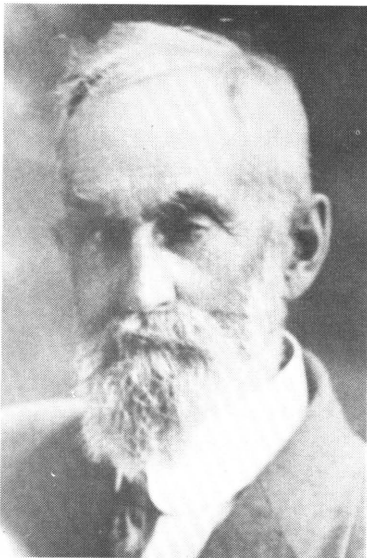




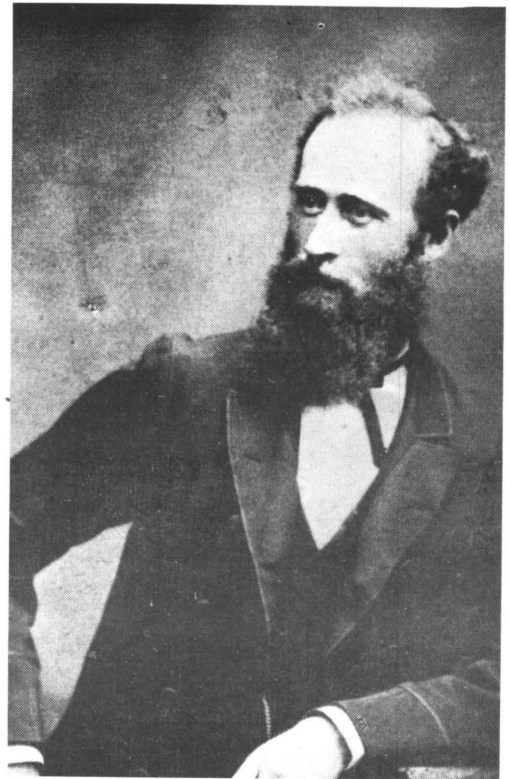
ELIZABETH



AGNES

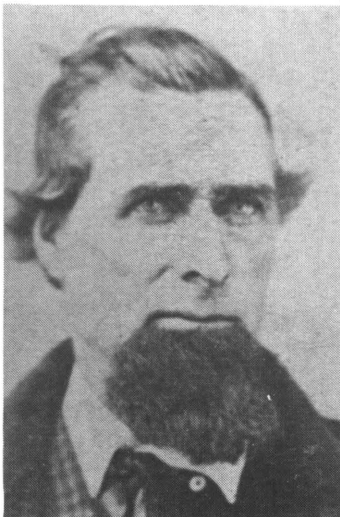


OSMOND



EDMOND



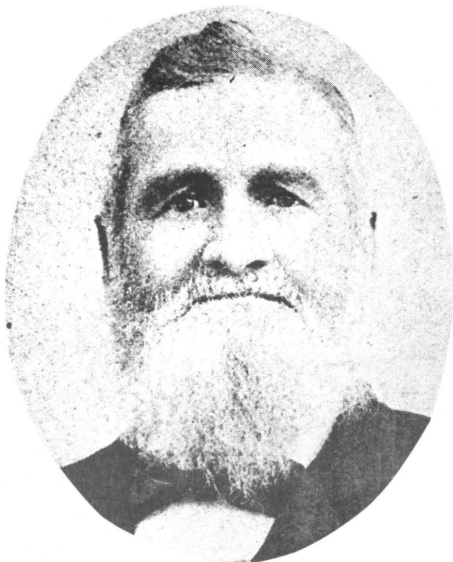


Robert H. Porter

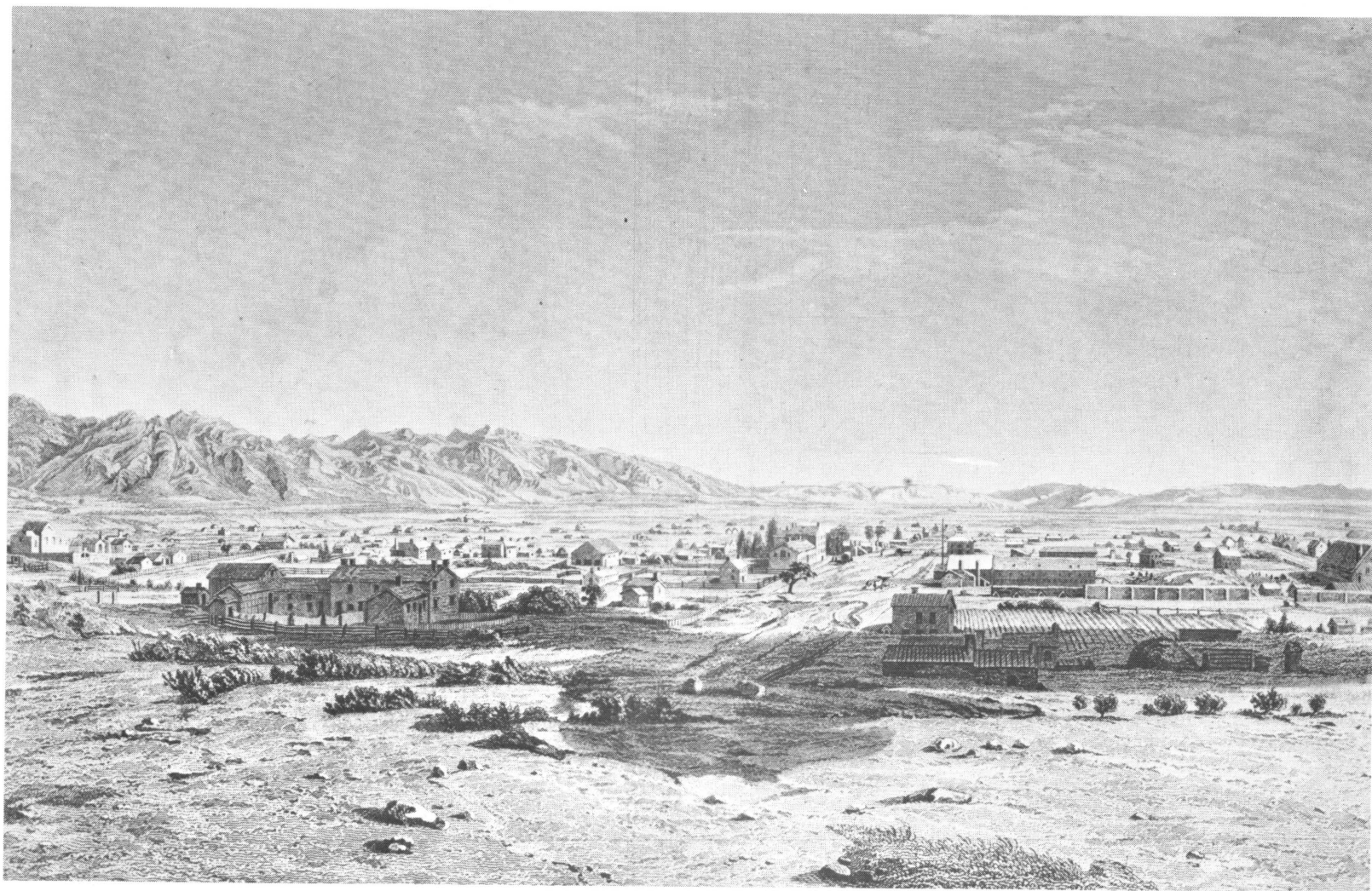


Mary Elizabeth

*Robert H. Porter and Mary Elizabeth Mallet Porter*  
Robert H. Porter married Sarah Farr LeCheminant in 1855, soon after she reached Utah. About four years later they separated. He later married Mary Elizabeth Mallet, who was also from the Channel Islands, Jersey, and came to Utah in 1854 on the Marshfield & with the Empey wagon company; she was five years old in 1854. Photographs courtesy of Shirley Rizzuto.



Dorr P. Curtis  
Wagon Company Counselor  
to William Empey

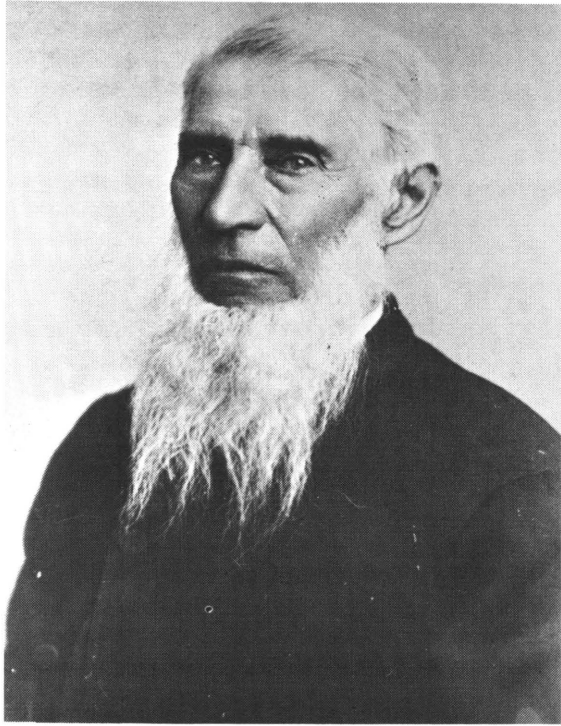


*Salt Lake City, 1853. Drawing by Frederick Piercy, Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley. Courtesy Utah State Historical Society.*

available today. Most of Sutherland's record describes the terrain, weather, and the availability of water and feed for the animals each day as they proceed across the plains and mountains. Very little of the people and their experiences in camp and on the trail are reported.

Sunday evening, July 16th, final preparations of the Campbell company required the captains-of-ten to check the provisions of each family. All were well supplied except three families who were prepared to buy additional provisions at Fort Laramie, where they later found supplies to be very expensive. A drill in the use of firearms was held for all men from 16 to 60 years. Carpenters were sent to the woods to bring timbers for four spare axle trees, and each ten was to have a strong rope to hitch extra teams when needed for difficult crossings. <sup>21</sup>

The task of learning to handle the oxen teams by the inexperienced Mormon emigrants is told by Frederick Piercy in 1853.



*William Empey, president of the wagon company in which the LeCheminant family traveled. Photograph, courtesy of the Utah State Historical Society.*

*Operations were commenced early in the morning and then began the yoking of refractory cattle, and the initiation of "green horns" into the art and mystery of teaming. The whole of the cattle were driven into the "corral" and then with yokes and bows in hand, it was the business of the teamsters to catch and yoke their teams. . . . Many of them had never touched an ox before, so that the wide-spreading horns of the untrained steers seemed to produce a most uncomfortable nervousness. The consequence was that Elders Miller and Cooley (leaders of the company) had to do nearly all the work. . . . At length we started. . . . The road was rather rough and so were the cattle, and in the hands of raw teamsters, nearly unmanageable.*

. . . "Geeing" and "Hawing" were most forcibly taught and, of course, learned in proportion to the ability of the pupil. The teamster should drive with the team to the right. When he cries "Gee", the team should go from him and when "Haw" comes toward him. . . . The consequence is that whenever a piece of rough or difficult road is encountered, the shouts and cries of "Geeing" and "Hawing" and cracking of whips are most terrific. And in a large company voices of all kinds and modulations mix up in the most curious manner. When a slight movement to the left or right is required, the command to "Gee" and "Haw" is given in a mild tone, but when there is danger of running across a rock or getting a wheel locked in a tree, the command is sure to be given with the full volume of the teamster's voice. During the first few days the teams and the teamsters were constantly at variance. Nearly every man had the worst team in the company. <sup>16f</sup>

John Johnson Davies was in a wagon company which left Westport about three weeks ahead of the Empey company. He writes:

Now coms the labor and toil for people has no Experience what ever for to travel, yes, more than a thousand miles across this great plains and also thos great mountains, oh yes, we had a fine time to See the Negros breaking the young Stears for the Company. . . . We started on the plains on the first of July 1854. We traveled along the best we new how for many a day. . . . The first night we camped it was at Indian Creek and between twelve and one o'clock in the night my wife gave birth to a daughter in a tent at Eight o'clock in the morning we rould out again we traveled 25 miles and camp for the night. Now I will tell you about the Sircuse that we had the first few days on the plains. Our captain tould us to get up early in the morning for to get redy to Start in good time. After breakfast was over we got the cattle together and tryed to to yok them up. I can assure you that was quite a task for us and after we got them itched to the wagons we Start-ed out now coms the Sircuse and it was a good one. The Captain was a waching us and telling us what to do. He tould us to tak the whip and use it and say whoa duke gee brandy and so on. Now the fun commenced. Then we went after them prety lively and when the Cattle went gee too much we Would run to the off Side and yelling at them woah and bunting them with the stock of the whip. Then they



would go ha to much and we was a puffing and Sweeting and if you was there to look on you would Say that it was a great Sircuse. This was a great experience and a tuff one and by the time we got half way accross the plains we could drive an ox team as well as you can Enny day. There was 10 persons to Every wagon. There was 6 men in my wagon. Three of them left me at for Kearney and Two sick in the wagon and one died on the road. We buried hime next morning. I had to drive the team a lone accross the plains and Mountains. I had a big red boil under my right arm which gave me great pain. We had plenty of grass and water but very little wood on the plains. The women gathered Buffaloe chips to mak fier to cook by to give us Something to eat.<sup>5</sup>

The Campbell company journal notes evidence of new farm development and settlement for several days after leaving Westport. Kansas and Nebraska became territories and were formally opened for settlement in 1854 by the Kansas-Nebraska Act. On the 27th of July they passed several surveyors marking out farms. This was about 100 miles from Westport, and two days later they used a ferry boat to cross the Caw River. The next day they camped at Cross Creek where there were two houses. One was used for a store to sell provisions. Here they used a bridge to cross the creek and were "obliged to pay a small sum for the crossing of same." On August 2nd they were still in farm country and commented on the severity of the drought and the despair of the local farmers.

The next day they discovered that one of the teamsters had run away with a pony. He was a sailor on the ship from Liverpool and did not belong to the Church. On the 6th of August after a heavy rain with lightning they saw the prairies catch fire about fifteen miles away and watched the fire burn rapidly through the night. As it came within a half mile of camp, favorable winds directed the fire into the nearby woods. On August 10th they met a man with his family, two wagons and about 100 head of cattle on his way to California. Since he was going through Salt Lake City and being afraid of Indians, he asked to join the company and indicated a willingness to comply with all the camp regulations. The company voted to take him in with them.

On August 11th, John Pons, an Italian member, forgot earlier advice. While he was withdrawing his loaded and capped gun from his wagon, something caught the cock and he was shot in the arm and hand. Ten days later he was left at Fort Kearney with the Army doctor.<sup>21</sup>

At this time Erastus Snow and four others from Salt Lake were en-route to St. Louis. Snow was to assume leadership of the Church there and to coordinate the emigration for the next year. On August 14th





between the Big and Little Blue Rivers Snow camped with the Campbell company. The next day he met with the Empey company. The emigrants seemed in excellent condition, but Snow noted, "they were only 200 miles on their journey, and had 1000 yet before them. Unless the Lord stays the snows later than usual, they will have some cold fingers before they cross the last mountain." The emigrants were happy to hear favorable accounts of the anticipated harvest in Utah. A week earlier, sixty miles west of Fort Kearney, Snow had met Samuel W. Richards, who with his companions was hurrying west in a carriage at the rate of sixty miles a day. The wagon trains averaged ten to twenty-five miles a day. Richards, recently released as president of the British Mission, took only forty-nine days to go from Liverpool to Salt Lake. He arrived in Utah well ahead of the emigrant Saints he had sent forth from England months before he himself had embarked for home. <sup>13j</sup>

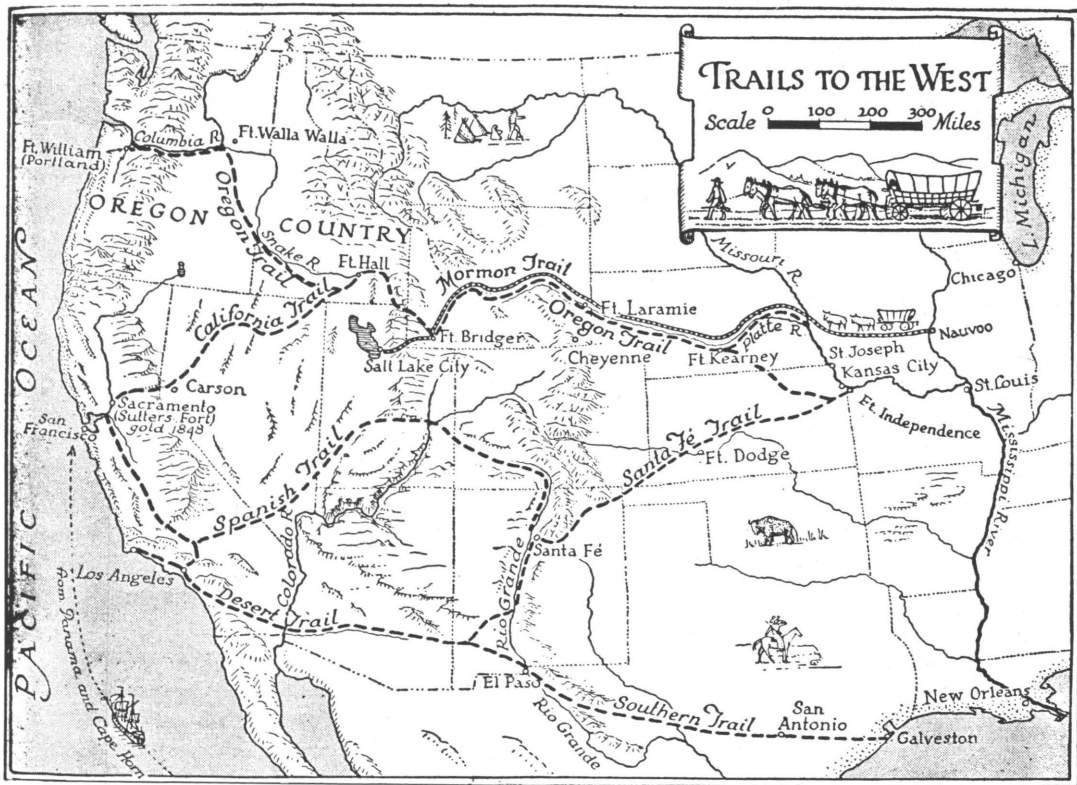
Elder Snow also confirmed the reports of heavy migration to California and Oregon. It was much greater than previous years and these groups had large herds of livestock. He met one outfit moving more than 10,000 cattle to the coast. Snow added that the entire prairie was extremely dry. A withering drought scorched the whole United States. It was the driest summer on record to that time. Most of the nation received no rain from early June until late August. <sup>13k</sup>

One of the Mormon wagon trains that year carried supplies for the Church and had few, if any, emigrants. It had a large herd of cattle which stampeded near the South Fork of the Platte River and fled into the sand hills among the buffalo. About 120 head were lost and this was of great concern. The heavily laden Church wagons were virtually marooned. Ira Eldridge and Ezra T. Benson, leaders of the train, went to the emigrant companies for help. Two months later at the next General Conference of the Church Elder Benson told of his plight. "What did the captains of the companies do when I went to them for cattle? I said, 'The Church train stands on the plains, what do you have to say about it?' They said, . . . 'Tell us the number of cattle you want and the bill shall be filled.' Did I feel like blessing them? I did." <sup>3</sup>

Two elders found fifty of the lost cattle at Fort Kearney in the possession of a trader named J. W. Woodward. Some were yoked to his wagons. He asked \$5.00 a head for their return, but the elders had no money. He agreed to wait a few days at the fort while they went back for money. However, he left later the same day moving the cattle directly away from the main trail. <sup>13n</sup>

On August 19th Sioux Indians killed a troop of soldiers near Fort Laramie. John J. Davies reports how he learned of the massacre:

*The night before we came to Larime we camped a few miles from the Fort. The Fort . . . being 550 miles west of*



the Missouri River. In the morning we rould out towards the Fort in a short time after we Started We passed a larg camp of Siux Indians. We passed the Fort and camped by the platte river for noon. The Danish train that was behind us came along the Same day. The Indians kild one of their cows. Danish Captain tould the millitary captain aboute it the Captain of the Fort Sent some of men to See the Indians aboute it. They got to disbuite and the Soldiers fired at them. The Indians kild some of the Soldiers and burnt the Fort. The danish Captain tould our captain to wait untill his train came along and he Said that the Indians was on the warpath. The trappers also was coming towards us for dear life. We all Crossed the river all right. We had a large camp. That night we thought we would haft to fight but the Indians had their reveng. We camped together for a few nights then we sapparated. I believed that the Lord over ruled it for



our good. We did not see Enny more Indians until we came to Salt Lake City.<sup>5</sup>

On August 27th, eight days after the massacre of Lieutenant Gratton's troop, the Campbell wagon company (and presumably on the 28th, the Empey company) met three mountaineers who were carrying the report of the disastrous encounter from the commanding officer at Fort Laramie to Fort Leavenworth.

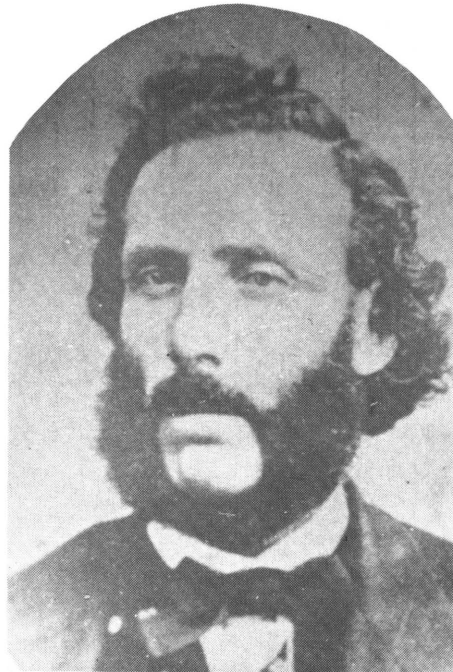
About the 13th of September the LeCheminant family would have passed the mass grave of the massacre victims. By this time the Empey company was about a day ahead of Campbell. The Campbell wagon train reached Bordeau Station September 14th and identified it as the "place that the Indians killed the twenty-nine soldiers with their officer, they are buried close by the road. . . . Some of the men's heads are not even covered." The Campbell company journal continues, "It was the settlers that buried them as the remainder of the soldiers could not leave the Fort, being few in number. There was also a man's face lying on the bank with the teeth firm in the jaw bone and the flesh appeared recently taken off. Several military gloves were lying on the grass close by. We traveled on four or five miles and met two settler's houses where biscuit and beans were sold. Indeed, one of the houses has a signboard with 'Bakery and Refreshments' written on it."<sup>21</sup>

The *Millennial Star* followed with interest the Gratton massacre and its aftermath and a year later summarized the events. Some twelve hundred Sioux warriors, with their women and children, had assembled near the American Fur Company post four or five miles east of Laramie, awaiting a government annuity payment, which was late. A lame cow from a Danish company was left behind. The Indians, thinking no harm, killed and ate her. After the wagon company had camped, the owner went back for his lame cow, and upon learning the Indians had killed her, thought no more about it. The next day the story was told to soldiers at Fort Laramie, more for its amusing nature than for anything else. In the absence of the senior officer, young Lieutenant Gratton gathered a company of twenty-nine soldiers and an interpreter. They rode directly into the Indian camp and demanded of Chief Big Bear that he give up those who had taken the cow. The Indians offered to pay the value of the cow from their coming annuities, but would not yield up the men. Whereupon, Lieutenant Gratton ordered his men to fire. The chief was shot four times and died, and the incensed Indians promptly killed all of the soldiers except one, who died within twenty-four hours. The excited Indians then fell upon the trading post and helped themselves to their annuity by taking whatever suited them.<sup>14b</sup>

The episode became a national issue with Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, demanding that Congress activate several regiments to



avenge the soldiers and teach the Indians a lesson. At Congressional hearings top-level generals argued against this action and maintained the soldiers were in the wrong. Little Congressional action was taken until the closing sessions when a bill was hurriedly passed authorizing the Secretary of War to raise two or more regiments for which \$2,500,000 was appropriated. Just over a year after the Gratton massacre near Fort Laramie, the U.S. Army, in reprisal, attacked a large camp of Brule (Sioux) Indians. In the early morning darkness General Harney held a diversionary parley with Chief Thunder Cloud while his troops surrounded the Indian village. At dawn the soldiers fell upon the Indians killing and capturing many men, women and children. Spoils looted from the American Fur Company post were found among the Indian possessions. <sup>14b, 14c</sup>

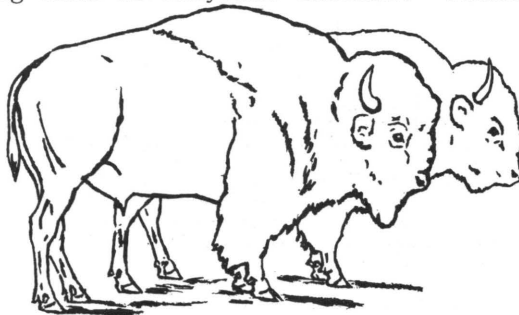


*Robert Campbell, his wagon train traveled closely with the Empey company. He is the grandfather of Mrs. Eli (Jean Campbell) LeCheminant. Photo, Utah State Historical Society*

At the time of the Gratton massacre the Campbell and Empey companies were just reaching the Platte River. On August 18th the Campbell company journal reads, "We felt regret at leaving the Little Blue River, it being so beautiful and abounding with everything necessary for travelers. Birds of every description seemed to haunt the woods and water. We have seen large flocks of them as we passed along."

On the 25th, "Brother Campbell found a very excellent pony with bridle and saddle and some meat and provisions tied on its back. It probably belonged to some California emigrant." The next day the road was crowded with buffalo. "Thousands of buffalo throng each side of the road; all the horses, ponies, and horsemen have been busily engaged riding before the wagons, keeping the road clear of them."

The 31st of August was a day of excitement and suspense. The Campbell and Empey companies were virtually traveling together when they encountered a warring band of Cheyenne Indians. Sutherland describes:



*This morning was beautiful and cool for traveling. After dinner we continued until an hour in the night. Brother Campbell, being in front, fell in with a party of Cheyenne Indians, and from their appearance he considered them not inclined for peace. They brandished their fire-arms when they saw him. We camped here for the night after a drive of 22 miles. Six Indians with their chief, Neumas, immediately came to the camp. They were treated kindly. Having received plenty to eat and drink they made signs that they wished to go to sleep. Brother Campbell gave his tent to them. Our cattle, having been corralled at the time, took a stampede and ran for some distance, but fortunately no harm was done. Immediately after, the Indians left the tent and went away, we could not tell where, but all men in camp were on guard all night.*

*(The next morning) Our camp did not roll until 9:00 a.m. Brother Taylor's company of 42 wagons with Brother Empey and Curtis were then behind us in view. We did not move far until we met the Indians on every side of us. They were all on horseback and well armed. They blockaded the road in front of us, but every man in camp carried his rifle loaded on his shoulder and we drove right through them. Brother Campbell exchanged hands with them after which he made a call on every wagon to give them a portion of sugar which was at once given. They kept following us until dinner time and stated they were going to war with another nation.<sup>21</sup>*

It was the next day that both the Campbell and Empey companies crossed the South Fork of the Platte River. On September 3rd both companies camped together at Ash Hollow where the scenery was described as gorgeous and most picturesque. The next day the Empey company continued on while Campbell decided to let the sisters wash and the carpenters acquire extra axle trees and spokes for the wheels. Just as the sun went down, they started out and drove for five miles through heavy sand by moonlight.

On September 6th they met an Indian agent who warned them to look out for Indians who had left the Fort Laramie area after the massacre of the soldiers and whose whereabouts were unknown. Several mornings a cow or a steer, usually a sick or lame one, was found dead and partly eaten by wolves.

On the 7th Empey transferred a Brother Roubt and eight passengers to his company because they were (Perpetual Emigrating) fund



passengers and their teams were failing. Thus, the two companies were traveling close enough for the leaders to be in contact.

On September 19th at LaBonte Creek as Thomas Fisher's wagon suddenly went down a hill, his eight year old daughter, Georgiana, who was asleep in the wagon, fell out and was run over by the wheel of the wagon. "Blood came from her ears and she died." The day after the accident, "Brother Fisher's child was buried previous to us starting this morning. The grief of the parents on this occasion can be better understood than expressed, as the child was interesting, being well educated and nicely accomplished for her years." (See page 12 for picture of the Fisher family) A few miles beyond LaBonte they noted toads with horns and tails, and later that day they met between 20 and 30 Cheyenne Indians, all on horseback, who camped overnight with them and seemed peaceable. The next day they met Elder John Taylor and a company of brethren from Salt Lake going on missions to the States. His group was traveling with ten wagons.

The weather continued to be warm. It seemed as if it were mid-summer when they passed Independence Rock in late September. On September 30th Campbell told the company he had learned that a relief train with supplies from Salt Lake was waiting for them at Green River but was reluctant to come further because of reports of hostile Indians. Campbell sent Richard Cook ahead to ask the relief party to move promptly to meet them.

As they moved into the mountains, more and more time was spent repairing wagons, and their oxen began to give out and die on them. However, they seemed to find just about as many stray oxen along the way as they lost.

On October 4th, a severe frost produced ice one inch thick on the water. On the 8th at South Pass, the continental divide, they met Richard Cook returning with the relief party from Salt Lake under Captain Samuel Gates. He carried a letter from Brigham Young who explained, "The flour and other provisions sent back belonged to individuals, and those who are benefited by them must pay for the same, on receipt or arrangement to do so at some future time as the parties may agree. Flour is worth six cents a pound in this market and one or two cents advance a pound for each 100 miles it is hauled back is thought to be reasonably moderate and equal under all circumstances." The relief party also brought fresh cattle and the journal describes the distribution of these animals.

On the 17th of October they passed Fort Bridger. The mountain roads were particularly hard on the wagons. On the 26th from the summit of a hill they had a view of the south end of the Great Salt Lake Valley. Friday, October 27th, a snow storm was experienced for the first time on the trek and the morning was "dreadfully cold." (By the time of this first snow the LeCheminant family with the Empey



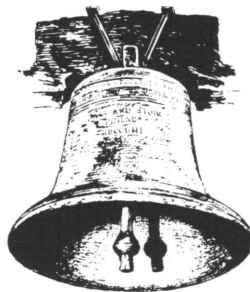
company had already arrived in Salt Lake, October 24th) On Saturday the Campbell train traveled seven miles and entered the Valley. As they first viewed the Valley, they halted to hold a meeting in which President Campbell gave a lengthy speech commending the company and expressing his gratitude and pleasure for being with them. He indicated that "his presidency would cease when he would corral them on the north side of the city." They were corralled for the last time in the afternoon of October 28th, 1854.<sup>21</sup>

The family had at last reached its destination. The 1854 Mormon emigration was completed and a few thousand more souls had gathered to the new land of promise. By any measure, Sarah Farr LeCheminant had done something heroic. Yet, her greatest act of courage was probably the decision, the decision to come to a new land and to commit her young family to such a bold and potentially hazardous venture. It was a long hard trek, but they were not alone. Once the big decision was made, they had experienced help and protection throughout the journey and they were carried along by the organizational machinery of a concerned church.

Sarah Farr's decision also required a commitment to a hope, a hope for something better. Did she find something better? The next few years were filled with hardship and uncertainty. She married Robert H. Porter and they endured the famine of 1855. They lived out of their wagon and moved from place to place. In 1859 after leaving Porter, the family settled in Pleasant Green and went about the day to day task of pioneering a homestead from virgin land. A small log cabin was their first home. Rooms were added and eventually a nice farm house was completed.

In this home Sarah Farr had what she called the "pretty room". This was upstairs and belonged to her alone. Here she kept a collection of needle work, porcelain figurines and the little gifts her children and grandchildren made especially for her. Lorena LeCheminant Harline remembers as a young girl the excitement of a special invitation to the pretty room to share her grandmother's souvenirs, which included the colored Easter eggs she and her brothers and sisters had given to grandma.

Sarah Farr LeCheminant lived nearly fifty years after her move to Utah, long enough to witness one of the results of her decision, a growing posterity.



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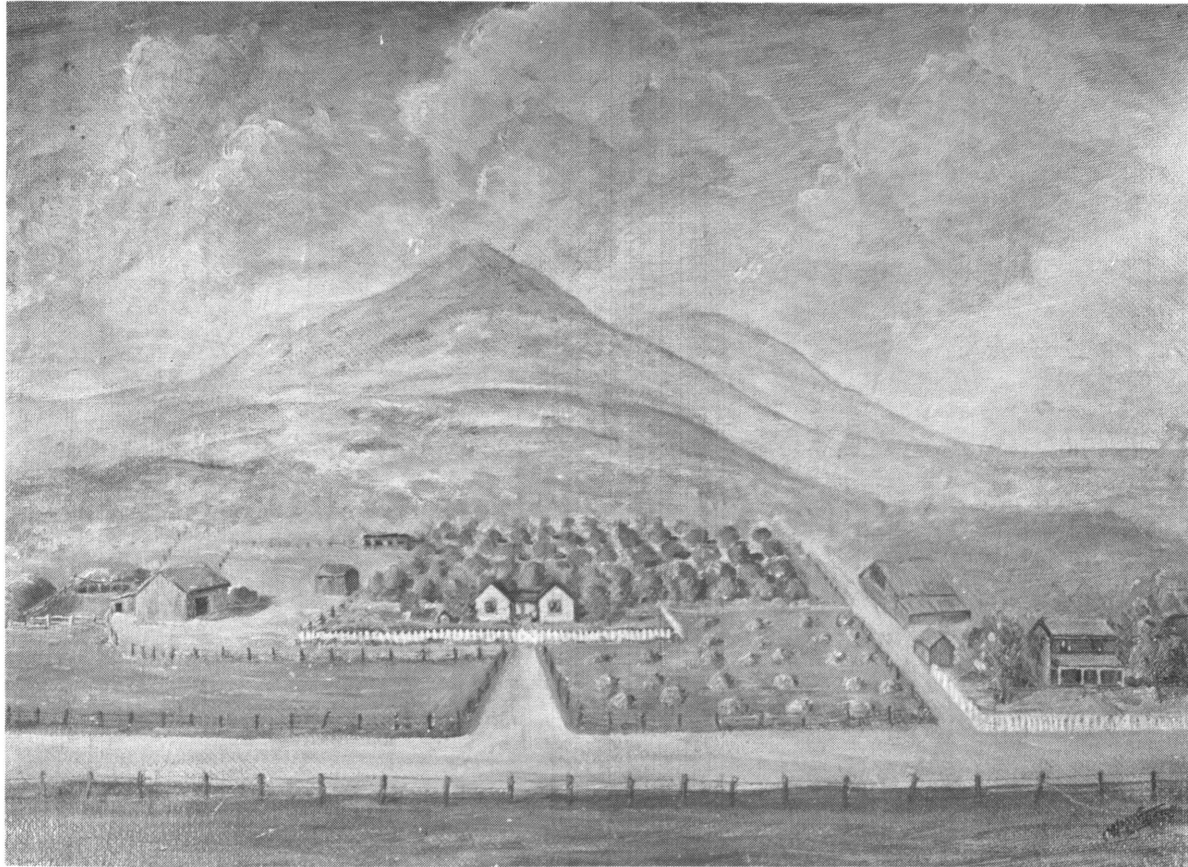
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LeCheminant Homestead, Pleasant Green, Utah    about 1895  
(Magna)



Sarah LeCheminant Johnson, her  
treasure chest and young fans

## BIOGRAPHY OF SARAH FARR LeCHEMINANT

By

Sarah LeCheminant Johnson

Written 1934

Revised 1940 & 1963

Sarah Farr was born in Lang Port, Sommerset, England on February 24, 1816,<sup>1</sup> a daughter of Captain Edward and Mary Ann Durnham Farr. Her father, captain of a British vessel, was lost at sea, leaving his widow with two small children, Sarah and her younger brother, James Carey Farr.

In 1820 an incident in the history of England was to change the course of Sarah's life. The following narrative explains why Sarah was taken from her birthplace in England to spend her girlhood on the Island of Guernsey.

At this time King George IV, an immoral, unscrupulous ruler, was endeavoring to divorce his wife, Caroline. She was his cousin whom parliament had selected twenty years before to be his wife. He had been dissatisfied with the selection and had deserted her soon after their marriage. Upon his father's death, he became king, and he was determined to divorce Caroline and get another queen. The queen held the sympathy of the people of England. So, when in November of 1820 parliament refused to grant the king a divorce, the news was hailed with tumultuous joy.<sup>2</sup> The people thronged into the streets and manifested their feelings with much noise and hilarity.

A relative of Sarah's mother held the pastorship in a Parish church. The young mother, Mrs. Farr, with several other women, obtained the keys, climbed the belfry tower, and rang the bell. The king, angry at the manifestations of love and sympathy for the queen, ordered everyone arrested who had made any public demonstrations. When word was received that officers were looking for the women who had rung the bell, Mother Farr took her children and rushed to the dock nearby. With only a small bundle of clothes and her two children, seven and five years of age, she boarded a small fishing boat which was ready to leave. She didn't know where the boat was headed for, but when it stopped at St. Peter Port, Guernsey (an English island off the coast of France), she landed and proceeded to find a home for herself and her small family, Sarah and James Carey.

Later Sarah's mother married a Mr. John Ball and made Guernsey her permanent home. Sarah's brother, James Carey, followed in his father's footsteps. He became a sea captain and he, too, was lost at sea.

Sarah's early life was spent near the sea, and she was educated in the custom of the people of that time. She enjoyed reading the Bible and became quite a student of religion. She possessed an aptitude for doing fine sewing and embroidering and spent much of her time in this way. In 1839 she married a handsome young Frenchman, Peter LeCheminant, who was born February 22, 1818. To this union were born five children: Elizabeth, Peter, Osmond, Edmond, and Agnes.

While the LeCheminant family was living in Guernsey, several Latter-day Saint elders came to St. Peter Port to preach the gospel. Sarah and her husband were among the first to accept their teachings and join the Church. They were baptized on August 19, 1851.<sup>3</sup> From that time their home was ever open to the elders. It was said, half a century later, at Sarah's funeral by Elder William Taylor, who had been one of the first elders to teach her the gospel, that it was people like her that had made it possible for the gospel to be preached in that land.

Plans were being made to come to Utah when Peter, the young father, a ship carpenter by trade, met with an accident. This caused a long illness during which time he developed tuberculosis, resulting in his death in February, 1853.

Sarah was now left the care and rearing of her five small children, the oldest of which was thirteen and the youngest five. A comfortable home but no income was her unfortunate lot. She found work binding boots in a boot (shoe) factory. This was work in which she was proficient because she had worked at it for several years while her husband still lived. The work paid well, but it kept her from being with her children a great deal. So, in order to be with her family more, she began doing fancy sewing and embroidering for Lady Carey, who showed much kindness to the widowed mother. This lady was especially fond of Elizabeth and she took the girl into her home whenever the mother would permit. From this relationship Elizabeth received educational advantages which she couldn't have obtained otherwise.

For a year Sarah saved all the money possible for the delayed trip to Zion. Then she sold her home and through the influence of friends was enabled to take her family and emigrate to Utah. They left Guernsey March 11, 1854.<sup>4</sup> She helped finance their trip by a loan from the Latter-day Saints Church. At this time the Church maintained a loan fund, The Perpetual Emigrating Fund, which was used to help pay the way of worthy Church members to Zion.

The LeCheminant family crossed the Atlantic Ocean in a sailing vessel called the *Marshfield*.<sup>5</sup> It left Liverpool on April 8, 1854 and arrived in New Orleans on May 29, 1854. William Taylor was in charge of the 366 Latter-day Saints who comprised this company. From New Orleans the company took a steamer up the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers.

At this time cholera and yellow fever were raging. Because of this, they were quarantined on an island called "Quarantine Island", situated three miles below St. Louis. (This was the middle of June, 1854.) Here they camped in an old steam boat that was anchored to the bank. While here they witnessed many horrible sights. It was a daily occurrence for the steamers coming up the river to pull up to the old boat and leave the dead and dying on the island before landing in St. Louis. These afflicted persons were carried through the boat where the company of emigrants camped. The sick were taken to the "pest house", the only abode on the island, while the dead were simply thrown into a hole and covered over with dirt. (Quoting Peter LeCheminant, "Like you'd bury a dog.")

After being released from quarantine, the company went up the river a short distance from St. Louis and camped in tents, awaiting the outfitting of wagons to take them across the plains. Here the cholera broke out in camp and took many lives. A number of victims lived only a few hours after being attacked.

One night during their stay here, Sarah dreamed that two of her children, Peter and Agnes, contracted the dreaded disease. In her dream she saw herself moving along the train of wagons, hunting for help. A man came to her and asked her if she needed assistance. She took him back with her and he administered to the children, an ordinance of the Latter-day Saints Church for the healing of the sick. The children were restored to health.<sup>6</sup>

When she awoke, she was overjoyed to find her children well. But, it was only a few hours until first Peter, then Agnes fell ill. Remembering her dream, Sarah left her children with friends, who warned her that Agnes would soon die. She prayed to God for help. Then, with explicit faith that her dream would come true, she ran up the line for help. On and on she went, many wagons ahead, looking for someone - she knew not whom - a man she had seen only in a dream. But her search was not in vain for she soon spied him coming toward her as if anticipating her mission. She quickly told her story and the two hurried back. The children were near death, but through the administration of the elder and the faith of the God-trusting mother, the children were restored to their normal health.

When the company was ready to start, the sick were put into wagons pulled by oxen, and the trek over the rough prairie was begun.<sup>7</sup> William Empey was captain of this company. William Taylor, brother of President John Taylor, was assistant captain. Through his kindness to the fatherless family, a friendship was formed that lasted throughout their lives.

The journey was filled with new, exciting and often dangerous experiences. But after many weeks of travel across plains, over mountains, and through rivers and valleys, the train of emigrants came through Emi-

gration Canyon on October 24, 1854.<sup>8</sup> Ahead lay the little settlement, and a few miles beyond it the big blue lake sparkled bright and clear in the sunlight. Looking down into the peaceful valley of Salt Lake, the weary, trailworn pioneers felt the realization of their dreams, a home in the tops of the mountains.

They were met by kind friends at "The Cedar Trees" who took them into the settlement and provided food and shelter for them. They were taken to the "Eighth Ward Square", a camping ground provided for the newcomers on the site of the present City and County Building, to wait for the order from President Brigham Young as to where they should make their home. They lived here at "Eighth Ward Square" in a camp wagon during that first winter of 1854-1855.<sup>9</sup>

An incident often related by Hiram T. Spencer, an early settler in Pleasant Green, occurred at this time, an incident which depicts the maternal instinct and motherly love of this brave woman. While the mother with her family was living at "Eighth Ward Square" in a camp wagon, Daniel Spencer, uncle of Hiram Spencer, came inquiring for a boy to work for him in exchange for board and room. He was told that a widow with five children was staying down on the square and would most likely be glad to let her oldest boy go for the winter. Hiram Spencer said that he, then a boy of 19, went with his uncle to interview Sarah LeCheminant. When she was asked if she would permit her boy to live with him for the winter, she answered, "I cannot let them be separated. I have held my fatherless children together so far and the Lord will help me find a way to continue to keep them with me." And she did keep them together where she worked for them, guided them, and taught them the word of God.

The LeCheminants were given the homesite on North Temple between Second and Third West, where they built a crude log house. Later this was replaced by an adobe which they occupied whenever they were in Salt Lake City. It was on this land that many years later Edmond built a four-apartment house in which he and his sister, Elizabeth, spent their last days.

By the spring of 1855, Sarah had married Robert Porter as his plural wife. At this time she moved with him and her family to the Jordan River. Then in the fall of the same year they moved up on the Weber River near Ogden. They were living here during the famine caused by what is known as the "Grasshopper War." At one time during the famine they went without bread, living almost entirely on roots and occasional small portions of meat, for three months.

In the fall of 1856 they moved into Rush Valley at what was called Rush Lake. (Rush Lake has since dried up.) They lived on the west side of the lake at the "Hickman Ranch." As the place was on an untraveled road, sometimes a week would pass without their seeing another person. They had lived here but a short time when Mr. Porter was given charge



of the Church herd, cattle given to the Church in payment of tithing. This work took them to the east side of the lake to what was known as the "Old Steptoe Barracks". When Mr. Porter gave up this work, he bought a small farm in Shambip, now known as Clover. While living here, the people of the community were attacked by Indians. One young man named Joseph Vernon, who lived with the Porters, was killed. After this assault, the Church authorities advised the people to vacate the settlement and move to Tooele.

They were living in Tooele when the move south was called. This was caused by the coming of Johnson's army in 1857. So the family moved to Lehi and camped there until the call came to move back. Leaving Lehi, they moved to Fairfield near Camp Floyd, the camp founded by Johnson's army.

Here they kept a boarding house during the winter and following summer. There was naturally a boom in business while the troops were stationed at the camp, so Sarah took advantage of the opportunity and in addition to keeping boarders, she made and sold bread, pies and other delicacies for which she was paid fabulous prices. However, with this boom a rough element was introduced into the community which was not an environment in which Sarah wished to raise her family.

She was tired of moving from place to place with Mr. Porter and wanted to establish a permanent home for her children near Salt Lake City. So she left Mr. Porter and, again taking her first husband's name of LeCheminant, she moved in 1859 to the northeast point of the Oquirrh Mountains which is fifteen miles west of Salt Lake City. She homesteaded a piece of land, which the members of the family added to as they became of age until they had acquired a tract about a mile by one-half mile, 320 acres. This reached on the south to the present Main Street of Magna, east to what is now Spencer Avenue (changed in 1938 to 8800 West Street), west almost to the Magna Mill, and north to what is now the tailing pond of the mills. They also took up ten acres in the "Meadow Land" (now covered by the tailing pond, which is waste materials run off by the Utah Copper mills).

They gained their livelihood by stock-raising and dry farming. The first home they built was made of logs, with a dirt floor. It consisted of one room. The cracks between the logs were filled with mud. Cloths and skins were used for the windows and doors. The roof was covered with dirt. Soon after, another room was added. Then the boys built a lean-to for their bedroom. This room was so low that the boys, now grown to manhood, were obliged to stoop when entering it. A crude abode, but to this pioneer family who had endured so many hardships, it was an adequate and much appreciated home. Later, a more comfortable home of seven rooms was built, and in this Sarah LeCheminant spent the remainder of her days.

Prior to the winter they spent in Fairfield, they had been able to

pay very little on their emigration debt. But now that they were permanently established, though times were hard and money was scarce, they found it possible to continue the paying of the debt they had incurred for their trip to Zion. Within a few years, they had acquired a number of cows and a fair-sized herd of sheep. Now that they had produce to sell, Sarah was determined to get their emigration debt paid as soon as possible. So, for many years she used the cash obtained from the sale of butter and cheese for this purpose. Money they acquired from the sale of wool was also applied on their debt. However, cash was not plentiful at this time and it was often necessary to trade produce for clothing, furniture, and other necessities. As the boys grew older, they spent much of their time cutting down trees in the canyons and hauling them to the city to sell. The money they received for this timber was paid on the loan they had been so grateful to receive.

The paying of this loan and their determination to meet the obligation in full depicts a characteristic of honesty and fairness that predominated the lives of this woman and her family. Never was a debt slighted nor neglected. (I, the daughter of Osmond, have seen this trait of honesty and fairness brought out in many ways in the life of my father.) This was a valuable lesson to Sarah's family, one they never forgot.

It is a historical fact that many of the Church emigrants were unable to pay this debt, then had it cancelled by President John Taylor in 1880.<sup>10</sup> During the "Mormon Jubilee" the debts of those who had been unable to pay them were cancelled. This included many debts to the Perpetual Emigrating Fund. (I talked with the Church historian, Andrew Jensen, about this in 1934. He told me that no records had been kept as to who did and who did not pay this debt, but that he, as a friend of the family knew the LeCheminants had paid it in full.)

Situated at the point of the mountain on the main traveled road where people passed frequently going to and from Salt Lake City. the LeCheminant home became somewhat of a "halfway house." Many and often were the times that friends dropped in to say, "hello", or perhaps to stay over night or longer. Sarah's home was always open to anyone who needed shelter or protection or a friendly word. She was never happier than in the hospitable role of hostess.

Although she had left Robert Porter, a polygamist, Sarah took two of his children when their own mother died in childbirth. These children, a newborn baby girl, Sadie, and a two year old boy, Will, were cared for and supported by Sarah and her family for ten years. When Mr. Porter finally came for them, the LeCheminants were broken hearted for they had come to love the children as their own.<sup>11</sup>

"Grandma LeCheminant" as she was affectionately known to all the old settlers, was a friend to everyone, and all who knew her, loved her.

Through her natural skill as a nurse and her unselfish desire to help others, she did much good wherever she went. She was the first midwife in Pleasant Green, and for many years she was the only person west of the Jordan River who could be called for such services. At this time most of the babies in Pleasant Green, as well as many in Salt Lake City, were delivered by her.<sup>12</sup>

This woman, who had succeeded in her determination to bring her children from the old world and establish them in a home where they and their progeny could enjoy the opportunities of a free country and a sound religion, proved herself to be an unusual leader and organizer. Her family worked as a unit, with her as their adviser and leader. She was never domineering, but to her dying day her family all looked to her for counsel and advice. Even after the marriages of Peter and Osmond, the boys, guided and directed by their mother, continued to run the farm together, all doing the work, pooling assets, and dividing them equally. Many of their friends, those who knew them most intimately, often remarked about the congenial way in which this family worked together without discord.<sup>13</sup> It was not until 1896, when Peter was called to fill a mission in England, that the property was divided and each member became a separate unit, working for himself. After this, even though the property had been divided, they worked together helping each other with the planting, harvesting, building and in any other way possible. And as long as their mother lived, she was their counsellor and guiding influence in all they did.

To the last of her 85½ years, she was mentally alert and physically active. Late in her life cancer developed in her breast, which caused her much distress and finally occasioned her death. On July 19, 1901 she passed away, a true Latter-day Saint, with a testimony of the truth of the Gospel and an assurance of life eternal.

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2. Cross, History of England and Greater Britain, p. 873.
3. Guernsey Branch membership records, Book 154, LDS Archives.
4. Ibid.
5. Film Utah 26 No. 6184 pt 1, Emigration Records from Liverpool office of the British Mission, 1851-1855. This Marshfield passenger list confirms Sarah Farr's birthdate as 1816.
6. This story of Sarah's dream and the miraculous healing of Agnes and Peter was told me by my mother, Osmond's wife, and by Sarah LeCheminant Brockbank, Sarah Farr LeCheminant's oldest grandchild. The facts are recorded as related to them on many occasions by Grandma LeCheminant.
7. In a short biographical sketch of Sarah Farr LeCheminant, written by her son, Peter, in 1913, he called the oxen "wild."
8. Letter to Wilford Davis LeCheminant from William Lund, assistant Church Historian, in June, 1947. Also from L.D.S. Archives.
9. Facts verified to me by Andrew Jensen, Church Historian, and by Fannie Brown, early settler in Pleasant Green, and close friend of the LeCheminant family.
10. Whitney, Orson F. , History of Utah, Vol. III, p. 103.
11. Fannie (Mrs. Austin) Brown verified this.
12. These facts were stressed by Fannie Brown in 1938. Though 90 years of age, she was mentally alert. She told me many things at this time about Grandma LeCheminant.
13. Ibid.