

History Of Sarah Ann Howard Laney Pioneer of 1847--by Her Son, H.S. Laney

Sarah Ann Howard Laney, a Utah pioneer of 1847, was born near the Blue Licks, in Nicholas County, Kentucky, September 16th, 1822. She was the second child and second daughter of Samuel Howard and Elizabeth Discher Howard. Her father was a prosperous farmer and stockraiser.

When Sarah was about seven years of age, or about the year 1829, her father sold all of his belongings in Kentucky and moved into southern Illinois. Her Grandfather Discher accompanying the family.

Mrs. Laney still remembered when seventy years of age how she road as a little girl all the way from Kentucky to Illinois behind her grandfather, on a stallion. These two could travel faster than the rest of the family in the loaded wagon, so rode on ahead and procured accommodations for them at the isolated farms and taverns.

Her father settled finally on a large tract of land near what became the town of Carlinville, Macoupin Co., Ill. It was in this county where Abraham Lincoln settled about this time. Chicago was now only a small frontier village.

Mr. Howard belonged to no church but leaned to the Universalists, while his wife was a hard-shell Baptist.

Her older sister, Elizabeth (Betsy), and her younger sister, Mary (who married a Snow), and her brothers, Lord Nelson and John, grew to maturity.

When the Howards settled in Illinois it was still Indian country and when the "Sacs" and "Foxes" were moved to the reservation west of the Mississippi river in 1825. "Black Hawk" refused to go and brought on the "Black Hawk War." Mrs. Laney's father and Abraham Lincoln volunteered from the same military district. The nearest market town in these days was St. Louis, 75 miles distant. Here they took their hams and bacon to trade for store goods--anything that was not produced on the farm or the home spinning wheel and hand loom. It was here they first saw town clocks and watchmen on their beats calling the hour and all is well. Here they saw the slave marts, for Missouri was slave, while Illinois was free.

Thus near Girard, Macoupin Co., Ill., Sarah Ann Howard grew to womanhood with the average culture and training of the women of that time and place. Books were few and newspapers fewer. Schools were attended only in the winter and all any of them learned was the three "R's". They all read their Bibles and attended camp meetings and this with their home training developed a high order of intelligence. News was supplied by Circuit riders, and settlers passing through, going to the West.

March 25th, 1841, she was married to Isaac Laney at the home of her father. The young couple soon moved out upon some wild land they had leased. This was at a considerable distance from her people and for one season they were without neighbors and very much isolated. The next season they moved onto a piece of land nearer civilization, which was owned by her father and which her husband contracted to buy. Here their first child, Margaret Elizabeth, was born January 13th, 1843. And here, on November 22nd, 1844, their second child, a son, George Culbert, was born.

In this year, 1844, Isaac Laney, her husband, became very restive and determined to sacrifice his holding and start for the West. He was at that time a Mormon, though it was not

known by his wife. It was, however, strongly suspected by her and her parents. The state of civil war existing about Nauvoo made it evident that the Saints would have to move to the West.

The Laney's, after holding a public auction at their farm in the fall of 1845, loaded the rest of their belongings into two farm wagons and started for Nauvoo. Mrs. Laney dared not bid farewell to her family lest they suspect her of going with her husband to join the Mormons. She never saw any of her family after. Her father disinherited her.

They arrived in due time at Nauvoo, where they spent the winter of 1845-46, and where Isaac Laney's twin brother, William, had lived for some time. They left Nauvoo and crossed the state of Iowa to the Missouri over bad roads and through almost unspeakable storms, early in the exodus.

The Laney's were accompanied on the journey to the valley by an old hack-woodsman and hunter from Indiana, named Leonard Stump. Thus they were well provided with game to round out and give variety to their larder. This was also added to by honey secured from bee trees, located by the old hunter. The trees were cut down and the bees driven away with smoke. These trees were often far from camp and the bee hunters often stayed away all night, leaving Mrs. Laney alone in camp with only the howl of the wolf or hoot owl to break the silence.

Having two wagons the Laney's were especially fortunate and were thus enabled to bring many cherished possessions that would have otherwise have been left behind, discarded. To one wagon was hitched two yoke of oxen and to the other was hitched a fine Kentucky saddle horse named Kit, and a blue roan horse called Nig. Kit, being unused to heavy draft work, balked and otherwise inconvenienced the driver. The horse was a fine animal and a present from Mrs. Laney's father. They also had a small herd of domestic animals consisting of a few sheep and chickens, a cow and calf and a young heifer.

The horses, after a short time, became useless because of the poor forage and lack of water. The oxen were then divided up and one yoke hitched to each wagon. At the start, Mr. Laney drove one wagon and Mr. Stump the other, Mr. Laney, however, was soon stricken sick and during the remainder of the journey Mrs. Laney drove. Being a gentle woman and unused to handling oxen, she had great difficulty controlling them. When crossing streams it was sometimes necessary to cling onto the horns of the ox and beat them in the face with her sun bonnet to keep them in their course. On one occasion they cramped and overturned the wagon and the contents, including her son, had to be fished out from the water.

Soon after her arrival in the valley she wove the first piece of woolen cloth made in the valley, having prepared the wool while en route across the plains, on a spinning wheel she brought along. The loom used was made by her husband from native maple and other woods, soon after reaching their destination.

They joined in the general move south, ten years later, going to Spanish Fork, where they remained during the period of uncertainty. Upon their return they went back to their home on the corner of 6th South and 9th East, in Salt Lake City, which, for many years, was the last house southeast in the city. Here she spent the remainder of her days living, dying a gentle woman, a good neighbor, and a true Latter Day Saint.

She was the mother of six children and her wedding dress made with hand run tucks was made over into a christening dress in which three generations of her descendants were blessed and named.

In 1897, the State of Utah presented to the living pioneers of 1847 a gold pin made by Tiffany of New York. She, with her daughter, Margaret Elizabeth (who married James Malin), and her son, George Culbert, were among those receiving this honor.

Among the personal and household goods Mrs. Laney brought with her to Utah are several articles still preserved and treasured as heirlooms. Mrs. Annie Malin Baldwin, a granddaughter, has a pair of brass candlesticks, a gift to Mrs. Laney from her father, for which he had exchanged a splendid yoke of oxen. One of these still bears the marks of damage done it when her baby George threw it out of the wagon while on the way across the plains when it was run over by the wagon wheel.

Her wedding dowry contained coverlets for which the Kentucky pioneer women are famous to this day, she had colored the wool with home-made dyes and woven them with the help of her mother and sisters. She also had a beautiful linen table cloth she had made when 14 years of age, designing and weaving it herself from flax grown on their own farm and prepared by herself.

A small chair she brought with her was made by her husband and was originally made with a cow hide seat. When this wore out it was resealed by Mrs. Laney with a rope of twisted corn husks.

She also brought a neckerchief given her by Grandmother Howard, which was brought to this country by relatives and though it is three hundred years old, it is still well preserved and is now a prized possession of Mrs. Hazel Malin Black. She, Mrs. Black, also owns a small spinning wheel of the type used to take on visits and social calls, being small enough to carry on horse-back. Much of Mrs. Laney's trousseau was a product of this wheel. Spoons she brought with her were, according to collectors, beyond doubt made by the Paul Revere family. They are of fine pewter and of beautiful design.