

*A life sketch of*

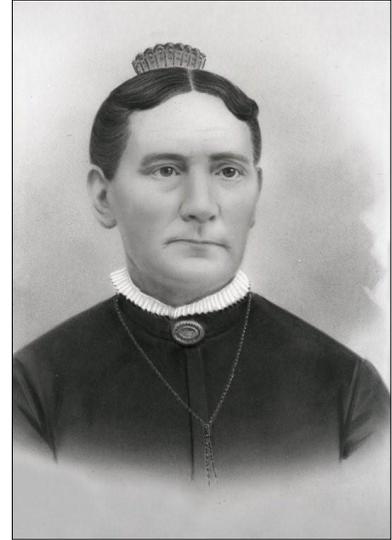
# Margaretta Unwin Clark Call

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1828-1908

Margaretta Unwin Clark was born May 26, 1828 in Nottingham, England. Her parents, John Clark and Mary Unwin, welcomed her, their sixth child, to a family that would grow to a total of nine children.

Margaretta's life was that of a typical English girl. Basic education and learning to work at a young age was an essential part of the lifestyle of the young men and women of her class. When she became of working age, Margaretta acquired employment at a large lace and stocking factory. The daily routine seldom varied for Margaretta. She woke early, helped with morning chores, walked to work through the streets of Nottingham and then spent long hours at her work station, followed by the walk home to help with chores before evening.



It was on such a typical day that Margaretta's life was changed forever. After a tedious day at the factory, she was walking the familiar path to her home when a street meeting caught her attention. The singing was different than the chanting she was used to. There was a message in the hymns that touched her. The preacher was dressed like a commoner, and his manner was not at all like the clergy she knew. His topic held her attention and set her mind to serious thinking. The entire situation had a magnetic power over her that she could neither explain nor understand.

Her continued interest in this new logic led her to further investigation and she learned for herself that the message the missionaries taught was true. She hugged to her heart the new found truth with such fervor that her mother and her sisters, Ann, Mary Ann and Eliza all accepted the revealed religion and all remained true to it throughout their lives.

Margaretta was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, September 9, 1848, by Elder Charles Lees. She was eager to learn and study, and found that her

understanding of the Gospel grew quickly and her testimony became very strong. Although she was a full-fledged member of the church, the idea haunted her that she needed to join with the body of Saints. The desire to have a close association with other church members in Zion was an idea she could not set aside. The idea also proposed the monumental challenge of immigrating to America. At such a young and tender age the thought of leaving her familiar surroundings, her country and her loving family were almost more than she could bare, especially when she knew the separation from them would likely be permanent.

Margaretta struggled with the desires of her heart and the consequences it would bring for eight years. During those years she continued her employment and saved all that she could spare from her meager wages. Those years also helped condition her, as well as her family, for the inevitable. These years also provided her with time and opportunities to study the Gospel. She put her energies into supporting the missionaries and helping the Church grow in her hometown. Great personal growth was achieved while she exercised self-control and patience, and carefully planned for her future.

Finally the day came. A large group of church converts, who were also committed to immigrating to America, had saved and planned as Margaretta had. They gathered at the docks of Liverpool full of excitement as they anticipated their future. Many of those gathered had combined their savings with those available through The Perpetual Emigration Fund. This fund had been organized by President Brigham Young and other church leaders at Salt Lake City with the soul purpose of financially helping emigrants from Europe who could not otherwise afford to cross the Atlantic Ocean and travel westward to Utah. Passage was purchased and people from various countries, speaking a variety of different languages, joined together and began one of histories, most challenging adventures.

It was the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 1856. With mixed emotions Margaretta bid her family and friends goodbye and then stepped aboard the packet ship Horizon. One day before her 28<sup>th</sup> birthday, this young lady mustered all of her courage and with faith sailed towards her new life.

For days and weeks Margaretta and her company of new friends wandered on the waves. She was lashed to the rigging in the brow of the ship so that she might experience the full rise and dip of the waves. This she did so that she could overcome the seasickness more quickly. Margaretta had received eight weeks of nurse training in England and felt she could

put her skills to work helping the sick and caring for the basic medical needs that occurred on the voyage.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 1856, the steamer Huron towed the Horizon into Constitution Wharf at Boston, Massachusetts, where the emigrants debarked. From there they boarded railroad cars bound for Iowa City, crossing the Hudson at Albany, and passing through Buffalo, New York on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. They reached Iowa City on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July. Her excitement mounted as she realized she was among Latter-Day Saints who shared her goal to follow the trail to Zion. With each day she moved a little closer.

By the early 1850's, leaders of the Church were considering economic ways to move thousands of European converts to Zion. Most were poor and lacked sufficient funds to purchase a wagon, team of oxen and the required provisions for the long trip from Iowa to Salt Lake. In 1855, Brigham Young proposed the concept of handcarts. Each cart would carry only the necessary provisions needed for a family, but no more than 17 pounds per person. Since handcarts traveled faster than slow oxen, it was felt that handcart companies could travel to Salt Lake with fewer provisions and at a faster pace than wagon trains.

Margaretta's company fell into the category of Emigrant Saints who would travel best by using the human powered handcarts. They busied themselves in the making of handcarts and doing other preparatory work for their journey west. On July 28<sup>th</sup>, the handcart Saints moved nearly a mile and then camped again. They were divided into two companies; one under Edward Martin and the other under Jesse Haven. Margaretta was assigned the Martin Company and, being single, teamed up with the small group that she would travel with.

Many of the carts had wooden axles and leather boxes. Some of the axles broke within a few days and mechanics were busy at night repairing the accidents of the day. One wagon with mule teams and two wagons with ox teams were apportioned to the company to carry the major provisions, tents, etc. The last of the Handcart Company arrived at Florence, on the west bank of the Missouri, on August 22. This was the site of the great Mormon camp called Winter Quarters. Because of the lateness of the season, the important question was debated whether the emigrants should winter at Florence or continue the long and wearisome journey to the Salt Lake Valley.

The Emigrant Saints had waited so long and were so eager to join the body of the church that, unfortunately, good sense gave way to their burning commitment to reach Zion. The decision was made to finish the journey. The two handcart companies consolidated into one and Edward Martin was made captain. On August 25<sup>th</sup> these walking pioneers lifted their heads, steeled their nerve, and called on their faith as they looked westward and marched forward to meet their destiny.

The company traveled across the plains of Nebraska, where the feed for the cattle grew extremely scarce. The rocky, hard ground took its toll on the handcarts, causing them to fail rapidly.

At one point the company was terrorized by a band of Indians. These war-like Indians made a lasting impression on Margaretta as she had only imagined what life would be like on the western plains. She had heard stories of Indian raids and such, but she never assumed she would come face to face with them. Buffalo herds, that easily numbered in the thousands interfered with their travel. The site of these massive, animals left her speechless. Fresh meat and time for extra rest was welcomed, as they had to move off the trail and wait for their turn to cross the open plains.

The company camped near Fort Laramie, Wyoming on October 8<sup>th</sup>. The trip had already used much of their supplies and energy. With miles to go and cold weather upon them, many items were traded or sold to help restock their dwindling food rations and prepare for the days ahead.

Up to this time the daily pound of flour ration had been regularly served. The flour rations were mixed with water to make gruel. This meager, tasteless dish was never enough to stay the stomachs of the travelers. The longer they were on the plains and in the mountains the hungrier they grew. As they left Laramie, it was deemed advisable to curtail the rations again in order to stretch their supplies as far as possible. The pound of flour quickly fell to three-fourths of a pound.

By now many in the Martin Handcart Company were hatless, shoeless and weary. They knew now that their food supply could not last them to the Salt Lake Valley. Heavy grade, rough roads, snow, increased sickness and death among them became daily occurrences. As the oxen or cattle starved and fell along the trail they were drug into camp, and out of necessity

used for food. Daily, snow had to be scraped away so beds could be made on the ground. Often they would wake covered with a fresh blanket of snow.

At Deer Creek on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, their situation only became worse as they approached the crisis brought on by diminishing rations, colder weather, and dying animals and friends. Baggage, including bedding and cooking utensils, was reduced to ten pounds per adult and eight to five pounds per children. Good blankets and clothing were burned as a heat source, since they could not be carried further. There was at least four hundred miles of winter travel to go through and their situation was grave. The next day the company slowly moved on through the snow and camped again near the Platte River at a point where the road forked for the Sweetwater River.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of October, the company crossed the North Platte River at Red Buttes, about five miles above the bridge. That was a bitter cold day. The river was wide, the current strong and the water exceedingly cold. The riverbed was covered with cobblestones, which made the crossing very dangerous. The more able men carried the sick and children on their backs or in their arms. Margaretta tied up her skirt and waded through the icy water as she had done numerous times before. As the last of the company pulled themselves out of the water snow, hail and sleet fell, and a piercing north wind began to blow. In clothes wet and freezing, Margaretta was chilled to the bone. She struggled to help make camp and sought warmth from the wet wood she helped gather. It was a nippy night to say the least and it told its tale on the oxen, as well as the people. It was a miracle any survived.

It snowed for three days. The teams and many of the people were so worn down that they stayed in camp and rested. Margaretta and the survivors of her group huddled around their handcart for shelter. They hoped the snow and cold would prove only a foretaste of winter and prayed the weather would moderate. This did not happen.

In Salt Lake City, The Prophet Brigham Young became aware of the extreme conditions being faced by the Handcart Company. He gathered the brethren around him and reminded them of a covenant they had made in the Nauvoo Temple. Then calling on them to go and rescue those suffering Saints, he said, "Let the fire of the covenant...burn in your hearts like

flame unquenchable.” With that, immediate preparations were made to organize a rescue party and ‘bring them in’.

Anson Call, who at that time was filling a colonizing mission at Carson, Nevada, was in Salt Lake with two wagon teams when the call was issued. He loaded his wagons with supplies and left for Wyoming, determined to help his suffering brothers and sisters.

The Willey Handcart Company, which was the other group of Saints also stranded and suffering, was some distance ahead of the Martin Company. They were the first group found at Devil’s Gate. Their condition was serious when Anson arrived with what had grown to a ten-wagon party. Efforts to warm them, feed and encourage them were urgent. Some of the men from Utah felt as though this company’s needs should be met, but that would tax their ability to relieve those further down the trail. Anson, with his characteristic firmness said,

“This company with a little help and a lot of encouragement will reach the valley, those following never can. We must push on. My teams start now.”

He pressed forward to find the Martin Company.

By this time the shoes of many of the emigrants had ‘given out’. Feet wrapped in blood-soaked rags offered little help to those who suffered severe frost bite and trail worn injuries. Margaretta had acquired a pair of men’s work boots from a lady whose husband had died on the trail. Although her feet were protected better than most, her wardrobe was thin and tattered. What she could wear was all she had between herself and the unsympathetic elements. One night, the temperature dropped to eleven degrees below zero. She felt blessed to have survived it as she learned that thirteen of her fellow travelers had not. She witnessed them being wrapped in blankets and then piled together at the side of the trail. The ground was so frozen to dig graves and provide a proper burial.

The 28<sup>th</sup> of October, was a red-letter day for this handcart expedition. On that memorable day men on horses, unexpectedly galloped into the camp. The men were an express party from the relief company that had left Salt Lake. They brought news that wagons were on their way to offer assistance and transportation to the stranded Saints. They found a desperate and destitute people, but they also found the fire of faith burning in their hearts so brightly that

no amount of cold, no amount of hunger, no amount of suffering could extinguish it. It was the same fire that burned in the hearts of those that left their warm homes and mounted one of the most amazing rescue efforts in American history.

Encouraged by the rescuers, the Handcart Company moved on the next morning. They passed through the Avenue of Rocks and rations were again reduced to four ounces of flour per day, per person. There was a foot to eighteen inches of snow on the ground. As there were only one or two spades in camp, the emigrants had to shovel with their frying pans or tin plates or anything they could use to move the snow so they could pitch their tents. The ground was frozen so hard that it was almost impossible to drive the tent pegs into it. Some of the men were so weak that it took them an hour or two to clear the snow and raise their tents.

The passage of the Sweetwater River was a severe operation for many of the company. It was the last river they would be required to wade through. The water was only two feet deep, but it was intensely cold. The ice was three or four inches thick and the bottom of the river was sandy mud. The stream was thirty to forty yards wide. Women, children and some of the weaker men were carried over by men in the rescue party. While in the river sharp cakes of floating ice, just below the surface, struck against bare shins, inflicting wounds which never healed until long after their arrival in Salt Lake. Before the crossing was completed, evening closed in around them and the temperature dropped rapidly.

They moved on past Independence Rock and reached Devil's Gate November 2<sup>nd</sup>, where six rescue wagons, with flour and other necessities, met them. On they went as quickly as their pathetic conditions would allow.

The Handcart Company rested at Martin's Cove, though under the shelter of the northern mountain, it was a cold place. One night the gusty wind blew over a number of the tents and it was with difficulty that the emigrants kept from freezing.

When Anson met the Martin Handcart Company, Margareta was close to her breaking point. She was placed inside one of his wagons, as her condition had grown very serious. Half starved and thinly clad she waited in his wagon and gnawing on a frozen squash, which had been intended for the horses. When Anson saw the situation through the back of his wagon he knew that this passenger was freezing to death. He told her of her condition and she replied in her English accent,

“Oh no sir. I have been quite cold but I am comfortable now.”

When he took her by the hand she said, “old on sir, my hand is a bit sore and you ‘urt it’.”

As she struggled against him, he said,

“I calculate to hold on.”

With little effort his strength quickly pulled her out of the wagon and she landed in the snow. With the help of another man Anson ran her up and down in the snow to induce circulation. He knew she had passed the suffering point in a freezing death and if left to herself her mortal life would soon be a thing only of memory. Although she later had to admit that he saved her life, she always maintained that a gentleman from England would have been much gentler and not so very persistent.

The Rocky Ridge and South Pass were crossed on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November, which proved to be another bitterly cold day. The snow fell fast and the piercing wind blew from the north. For several days the company had met more relief wagon trains. With the extra wagons it was now possible for everyone to ride rather than walk. The traveling was now more rapid.

On Sunday the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 1856, the Martin Handcart Company came off the mountain and entered the Salt Lake Valley. It was about noon. The event should have warranted celebration, but the satisfaction of having survived was enough as many collapsed from pure exhaustion.

The ravages of disease, starvation, cold and deprivations had reduced the number in the Martin Company from roughly 622 to 413. When the rescue party came upon them they were in deep snow without hope, food, or warmth, unable to even care for their sick or bury their dead. Many had suffered trailside amputations of fingers, toes and legs due to frostbite; others took years to mentally overcome the hardships they had faced. They had struggled hard and though they felt that they were almost within calling distance of the Zion of their God, they knew that they had reached their limit of endurance. They had almost ceased to struggle. Now they stood on the hallowed ground of Zion – they were home.

After a few weeks of recuperation and easing into her new surroundings, Margaretta found a home with the Taylor Family, formerly from Nottingham. Brother Taylor was a

storekeeper. Margaretta made two men's shirts each day, which were placed into the store's stock. She thought this was an acceptable way she could pay for her keep. The storekeeper became interested in her and asked for her hand in marriage. Her reply was that she would not consider a proposition of that kind from any man until she had been in Zion one year.

In the meantime, Brigham Young advised Anson that he should marry two of the handcart girls. As Anson had carried Margaretta in his wagon to Salt Lake he had seen her smile and he knew that she had his heart. He frequented the Taylor's store and found that her homemade shirts fit him just right. He invited her to his home and enjoyed their growing friendship. On The 7th of February 1857, President Brigham Young married Anson Call and Margaretta Unwin Clark in his office in Salt Lake City. Mary, Anson's first wife was the witness. The Endowment House was closed at the time, but Margaretta received her endowments and was sealed to Anson in the Endowment House on March 28, 1857.

Their wedding supper was a dish of cornmeal mush with lots of fresh milk. All the hired help were invited and life on the farm began in good earnest. Anson was a man of affairs, and one of the most successful farmers in the country, and Margaretta was delighted to be his wife.

It was not an easy thing to transform this factory girl into a farmer's wife. Her long, life-threatening trip from England had left her homesick and longing for her family. Margaretta was thousands of miles away from all she had ever known. When correspondents were prompt it was often a year between letters. One little envelope carried the information that her mother, brother-in-law and her niece, who was named after her, were dead.

When she had lived six months as a farmer's wife, the time came when the Latter-Day Saints had lived in Utah, ten years. The Saints engaged in a great celebration in Cottonwood Canyon. In the midst of their band music, their singing and their speaking, two men rode into camp. They were disheveled, road stained and noticeable under great tension. After a short conference with President Brigham Young, they were told that the United States Army had been sent to Utah to contain the Mormons and at that moment they were at the borders. President Young said,

“But, brethren there is no time for argument; we will place ourselves on the defensive. If those soldiers come into these valleys with hostile intent, they will find us as we found them. Every house shall be burned, for the fruits of our ten years of hard labor the enemy shall not enjoy.”

Right then and there the whole community decided to ready their homes for burning, should it be required.

The northern Utah settlements were abandoned. Anson moved his families south to Provo where they spent the winter and spring along the Utah River. This temporary community was called Shanghai. It was here that Margaretta gave birth to her first child. During the next ten years the number of children grew to six, a total of four girls and two boys:

Mary	born May 24, 1858 at Provo
Cylista	born April 9, 1860 at Bountiful
Samantha Evaline	born November 28, 1861 at Bountiful
Cynthia	born February 20, 1864 at Bountiful
Willard	born April 25, 1866 at Bountiful
Aaron	born July 3, 1868 at Bountiful

Margaretta was an attractive lady with hazel eyes, and brown hair who stood almost five feet tall. Once she arrived in Utah she was content to sink her roots deep in the soil of Bountiful and spent her next 53 years there.

While in England, waiting for her opportunity to emigrate, Margaretta had received eight years of hospital training. She was a trained midwife and nurse, which amply qualified her to pursue this profession in Bountiful. She showed sympathy to the patients whom she skillfully cared for. She carried a small basket on her arm as she hurried to her patients. The basket was always filled with herbs for the sick and fresh cookies for the children.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1890, Anson passed away. Margaretta’s life had been preserved and made full by this faithful man. She was honored to be his wife and proud to have him as the father of her children.

Margaretta had served in the Primary and as a Relief Society Teacher for many years. She always found some one who needed something and she would busy herself trying to help them. She was one of the many grandmothers who always had a cookie can and it was seldom found empty. Her cookies became a trademark and were called 'Grandma Cookies' by generations of recipients. Regardless of the time of day this wonderful woman received callers she assumed they were hungry and in need of a warm meal. Fixing for other gave Margaretta a good deal of pleasure.

Loved by all who knew her, she fulfilled a life of service and joy. It was easy for mother to forgive and her life was long, helpful, useful and full of faith, hope and charity. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1908 Margaretta Unwin Clark Call passed away at Bountiful, Utah and was buried there.

-- A fellow traveler in the Martin Handcart Company wrote in her history of the feelings she had about her experience. It can be assumed that Margaretta felt the same way...

*"I have a desire to leave a record of those scenes and events, thru which I have passed, that my children, down to my latest posterity may read what their ancestors were willing to suffer, and did suffer, patiently for the Gospel's sake. And I wish them to understand, too, that what I now write is the history of hundreds of others, both men, women and children, who have passed thru many like scenes for a similar cause, at the same time we did. I also desire them to know that it was in obedience to the commandments of the true and living God, and with the assurance of an eternal reward exaltation to eternal life in His kingdom – that we suffered these things. I hope, too, that it will inspire my posterity with fortitude to stand firm and faithful to the truth, and be willing to suffer, and sacrifice all things they may be required to pass thru for the Kingdom of God's sake."*

-Leaves from the Life of Elizabeth Horrocks Jackson Kingsford –  
Martin Handcart Pioneer



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*The author of this Life Sketch of Margaretta Unwin Clark Call is unknown, however the last paragraph states "easy for mother", which hints it was written by one of her children – likely Willard Call. All dates and vital information have been verified with records, documents and other information in possession of K. Oswald. Historical dates and events pertaining to the Martin Handcart Company have been confirmed with records in possession of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and other records documenting this account in history.*

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