

A life sketch of
Hannah Severn Randall

1841 – 1912

(Wife of Alfred Randall)

Hannah Severn was born on March 24, 1841, in Nottinghamshire, England. She was the daughter of Enock and Ann Severn. As a child she was brought up in a humble home that did not boast much of this world's goods or of many of the comforts of life. But it was clean and orderly and although her parents were very strict, especially the mother – love was in that home. The children were taught to be truthful, honest and industrious. Besides Hannah there were three other children, William, Sally or Sarah and Joseph.



Enock, her father, worked in the mines all day. As the boys grew up, they were put to work there too. Sally worked as a housekeeper in the homes of the so-called rich. Hannah went out to apprentice as a dressmaker. In the evening she would bring home stockings to mend and did so many toes and heels at night that she would still have money left over after giving her mother her share.

Schools were few and far between in those days and so the education the children received was of course very meager as compared to today. It was even less for the parents who had but a very few days of schooling in their lives. In fact, their knowledge of the art of writing was very limited, but what they lacked along this line they made up for in good common sense.

I can remember mother telling me of going to the country in the summer once in a while for an outing and how they loved to pick the primroses along the way. I remember too, of her telling me about the time she went to someone's house and saw quite a large picture hanging on the wall. It was old and worn, but mother adored it and bought it. It must have been quite a picture at that. It pictured a large field of green grass dotted with primroses. Standing knee

deep in the grass were two girls picking the flowers. They wore large hats, blue capes and brown dresses with black ribbons down the back for streamers as they used to call them. Mother said the picture reminded her so much of herself and Sally that she kept it for many years. It always brought sweet memories to her mind of her early childhood in England.

During those years, as time passed, grandmother and father always attended church, but never seemed quite satisfied with it. When our mother was about 17 years of age, she and a friend, Eliza Folds (Brown), chanced to hear some Mormon missionaries speaking on the street. They were very much impressed. After hearing them she did not want to go to her own church any more and asked if she might stay home on Sundays and read her Bible. She gave as a reason that there was too much confusion there. Her father agreed and said he was shocked at the disagreement among the ministers. But grandmother was emphatic about her going just the same and said she certainly could not stay at home. But somehow mother won out and did stay at home, reading her Bible faithfully and feeling quite content. That was the beginning of Mormonism for her.

She and her girl friend attended the Mormon meetings whenever they could. Some of the neighbors saw them with the hated Mormons and thought it was terrible saying, "Those Mormons will soon whisk them away and take them to Utah for their wives." Of course this made Hannah's parents very angry. Accordingly, grandmother told her to pack her clothes and go where her sister, Sally was working, although it was seven miles away. Grandmother thought at least this would get her away from her girl friend and those awful Mormons! Our mother said she walked all the way and cried at every step.

When she finally arrived at the place, her sister asked why the mother had made her come if she did not wish to. Hannah replied that she did not want to disobey, so Sally cheered her by saying, "Well, dry those tears, for the Mormons preach here too and you can go to hear them sometime." Hannah found another friend and together they went to hear those 'awful Mormons.' They believed their words and were eventually baptized. Of course she could not keep the news from her own mother. When she got to hear about it there was quite a scene. "Now I guess you will go to Utah and we shall never see you again," her mother chided.

“Yes, I am going to Utah when the right time comes,” replied Hannah, “but I will tell you about it this time so you will know.”

Our mother stayed on and helped Sally for a couple of years more. From the very first she began paying tithing out of her meager earnings. She also managed to send money to the immigration fund so that when she was ready to go to America she would have means to buy her ticket.

When the time came that she was to leave, her parents were loathe to let her go and she was called home for a family discussion. Her parents said they were willing to send her to some kind of school, but would not give a penny to help her go to Utah. Mother bravely replied, “I ask no help from anyone except my Father in Heaven, and He was already helped me. My ticket is bought and paid for and I still have some to spare. I must go to Zion! But we shall meet again.”

Of course, they were all terribly upset, but who wouldn't be under similar circumstances. A young and beautiful girl going so far away and alone! No wonder grandmother fainted. It must have taken a great deal of courage for our mother to give up all she had in life for her religion. This she did willingly for you and me, her children and grandchildren.

On April 23, 1862, she set sail for America on a small sailing vessel. The trip took seven weeks, sometimes going forward and sometimes just drifting. However, there were no accidents on the way and despite the wind and storms they managed to keep cheerful. Each night they knelt in prayer. Brother Brown, Joseph Rich and Brother Linsay were among those in charge. Others were Ruben McBride and William Staley. Among the women, besides Hannah, were Elizabeth Giles, Eliza Lester (Brown), Zella Green Smith. On June 7, at 1:30 pm, the cry of “Land” was heard. Mother wrote: “We all scrambled up on deck and a most beautiful sight met our eyes. There was the shore dotted with tall trees and little houses surrounded by grass and flowers, and the harbor along the shore was alive with many boats and stately ships. After getting our orders and being examined by the doctor, we set foot on American soil, our hearts

full of thanks to our God for a safe journey. We went immediately to Florence to meet the men from Utah who were to take us across the plains.”

Mother and Eliza Lester were told by a couple of the men that if they would wash, and mend, and cook for them they could ride free of charge. Of course they agreed to do this, but there was another reason to which they did not agree. The men, though already married, thought these young girls would make mighty fine wives and so proposed to them. The girls did not accept, as the men were older and besides they were hardly converted to plural marriage yet. Mother said they got by with the cooking although they didn't know too much about the art.

In Utah, Eliza went to work for the Randall family. One evening she chanced to bring Hannah to the house with her to help prepare the meal. That night mother said to her friend, “Who was that man that did the preaching?”

“Why,” replied Eliza, “that was Brother Randall whose house we are at.”

“My, but I do like him” mused Hannah. “I was struck with his appearance and manners.”

“Why, Hannah, he already has three wives!” said Eliza.

This did not discourage Hannah, for in time she met him and married him just the same. Brother Marley had already told her that she would not marry the young man in England, but was going to be the fourth wife of some other man. This promise was fulfilled when she met and married Alfred Randall, and I have never heard her say that she regretted it. She came to believe in the principle of plural marriage and said anyone could live it if they tried hard enough and if they wanted to get into the celestial kingdom.

She married Alfred who was 54 years old, in Salt Lake, where they lived for a couple of years and then moved to Ogden, and later to North Ogden where she made her home until she died. They were blessed with nine children, one of which died –

James Enoch

Heber John

William Henry

Annie Severn

George Edward

Esther Louisa

Hannah was a very industrious person and she and Alfred tried to teach their children to be likewise. They taught them how to work and the value of improving themselves at the same time. During Hannah's busy life of raising a large family she found time to do many outside things. She made overalls for the Z. C. M. I. in Ogden, she raised silk worms, she had a knitting machine and knit stockings for her own family, as well as for others, she raised chickens and geese, she dried large quantities of fruit with the help of the children. They earned their winter clothes in this way. She was always a faithful tithing payer and worked very hard to clear the mortgage on the farm. She made pounds and ponds of fresh cream butter, which supplied all of Alfred's families, as well as having some left to deliver each week to town customers.

Hannah was a trustee in the Relief Society ward organization and later when the Relief Society house was built, she acted as a teacher for many years. Many a time she went around in her buggy, pulled by horses, to gather needed supplies for the Relief Society. Her health was not too good, but she managed to keep active and to lend a helping hand wherever needed. She was bedfast the last six months of her life and died on May 27, 1912. She was buried in Ogden City Cemetery. She had raised a splendid, large family to whom she always gave her first attention, but she found time to help many others besides. She had many friends and was honored and loved by everyone.

She leaves a memory rich in devotion and staunch in the faith, and an everlasting love of the truth. May we, as her children and grand children cherish that memory and walk in her paths.