

Mary Pittaway

1 May 1822 – 15 June 1901



Mortality is difficult by design. The grand plan of happiness calls for opposition in all things. Everyone experiences difficulties during their lives. The natural course of living presents its own set of challenges. Other challenges are the product of the times and places in which one lives. The circumstances we face in modern times are different than those experienced by our pioneer ancestors. But the one factor we have in common is how we confront those experiences. Do they become stepping stones or stumbling blocks.

Even though times are different, there is much we can learn from our pioneer ancestors. Take for example the life of Mary Pittaway.

Mary Pittaway was born May 1, 1822 in Droitwich, Worcestershire, England. Her parents were John Pittaway and Ann Willis, the third of twelve children. Not much of Mary's life has been preserved as a young girl. It is known that her brothers went to sea and were indifferent toward religion, and that her mother and father said the Church of England was good enough for them. Mary was nineteen when she had her first child, Letitia Pittaway, on September 22, 1841. Her father was Abraham Louis, to whom Mary was not married.

Mary spent much of their life in the village of Wychbold, the ancestral home of the Pittaways, it is probable that this is where she may have met John Godfrey. John worked on a large farm in Wychbold for about four years after their marriage and it would seem to be a reasonable conclusion that he might have been working there prior to their marriage, thus being in the vicinity of the home of his future bride and giving the couple an opportunity to meet and become acquainted. She and John were married in the Dodderhill Parish Church on September 15, 1845.

John was a farm laborer. Farm laborers had one outstanding characteristic - they were all poor. The cash wage had fallen and with wages being low, so were the costs of living.

Cottage rents were about one shilling a week and for this a tenant had a garden where he grew his own vegetables. Sometimes farmers would allow their help extra ground for growing potatoes. Most cottages kept a pig or chickens and some kept a rabbit. Skim milk was often available from the farm dairy at very slight cost, and the family food supply was further supplemented by grain gleaned at harvest time.

Mary and John had three children when they heard the gospel from the missionaries. In addition to Letitia, their first child, George was born on January 24, 1845 in Droitwich, Worcestershire and Thomas was born on November 25, 1846 in Wychbold, Worcestershire.

When they heard the gospel from the missionaries. John was the first to be baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on April 2, 1848 by Charles Knight, and confirmed by Joseph Westergard. Mary was baptized on September 3, 1848, in Dodderhill by Joseph Westwood. Their son, George, was baptized on August 18, 1850. As soon as this happened, most of his friends and neighbors turned against him. Opposition to the Mormon Church was very high at the time and John was given the choice of giving up his church, or his job.

John gave up his job, and then had to search for another one. He was unsuccessful in his first attempts because he was well known in his district, and word had been sent around that John Godfrey had joined the hated Mormons, and none of the farmers would hire him.

Since no work meant no food for his family, he went to work on the railroad and then returned to his old neighborhood and worked in the salt mines. However, his former employer requested his return to work on his large farm, and he was rehired. To help with their income, Mary made cheese for the farmers. Often she would make one hundred fifty blocks of cheese in a season. She also raised peppermint, took the leaves to the factory that gave her juice for pay. Mary used this juice to treat illnesses.

Over the next several years they had six more children: Joseph, born February 18, 1849 at Wychbold; Mary Ann on June 8, 1852; Lucy on March 10, 1853; John Ezekiel on March 10, 1854; Emma Elizabeth on April 6, 1856; and Sarah on July 22, 1859. The last five were all born in Stoke Prior, Worcestershire.

A woman wanted to buy their son Thomas, and Mary and John of course refused the

offer. They suffered greatly when the same woman kidnapped their three-year-old. He was only returned when she was threatened with the law.

Like most Mormons, after joining the church John received impressions that he and his family should leave England and join the Saints in Utah. Mary thought they could live their religion and stay in England. Some believe her reason was fear of the ocean. John was encouraged to send their oldest son, George, to America to prepare the way for the family and was promised that within a year Mary would be eager to leave her home and join her son in the valleys of the mountains. Mary said it was hard to leave their loved ones behind in England, knowing they would never see them again, but she said, "The spirit of gathering came over us, and we knew we had the truth, and that eased the sting of parting".

Charles W. Penrose, a native of London and later an apostle and counselor in the First presidency of the Mormon Church, often visited the Godfrey home and made it his headquarters whenever he was in their part of England. It was probably no accident that when George immigrated, he went on the ship Monarch of the Sea in 1861 with President Penrose in charge of the group.

It looked for a while that it would be impossible for the rest of the Godfreys to follow, but the way was provided for them through the Perpetual Emigration Fund. Mary bid farewell to her nineteen year old daughter, Letitia, who never joined the church and remained in England with her grandmother.

The rest of the family made their way to Liverpool where on May 13, 1862 Mary, John, and seven of their children ages 15, 13, 10, 9, 8, 6, and 2 went aboard the William Topscott, chartered by the Church. The Godfreys were among eight hundred and seven Mormons immigrant passengers. Some were British, but the majority of them were Danish and Swedish converts who traveled from their homeland to Liverpool. As the passengers boarded the ship, a doctor inspected them for illness.

As the adults loaded their luggage and families, some of the children quickly dispersed, exploring the ship with great excitement. The hatchways were particularly interesting places, but also dangerous. One woman slipped going down a hatchway and spilled boiling water on the face of a child. After most of the passengers were loaded on the 13th, the ship left the dock. The remaining passengers were brought by a launch on the 14th before the ship sailed

to America. As the ship got underway, hundreds of voices – men, women and children – began to sing: Come, Come Ye Saints.



The William Topscott

The ship's passengers were led by a presidency,

called by the British Mission President from returning missionaries. Elder William Gibson was called as president with John Clark and Francis M. Lyman as his counselors. The Saints accepted the appointment with a sustaining vote and uplifted hand, just as Mormons sustain Church leaders today.

After departure on the 14th, the presidency divided the passengers into nineteen Wards, each with a presiding elder. At 6 AM a bugle would sound and all members would go to the top deck, if their health allowed. At 9 AM, each ward would have a morning prayer. They had a final Ward prayer meeting for the day at 8 PM. The last prayer meeting was a time that instructions were given, including such items as cleanliness, cooking, and the sisters not associating with the sailors. After 9 PM, the women weren't allowed on the top deck. Each Sunday they would have church services. Weather permitting, the entire group would gather on the top deck.

Shipboard conditions in the 1860s were much better than earlier immigrant voyages. Among these better sailing ships was the William Tapscott, which carried more Mormons than any other sailing ship. The ship had three decks. The passengers slept on the two lower decks. The second deck was entered through a trap-door hatchway. On each side of the deck, there were numbered cabins. Each cabin contained sleeping "berths". Each cabin also had light from a large porthole covered with very thick blue glass. Two long tables ran down the middle of this deck. Benches, fastened to the floor, bordered these tables. When the sea

wasn't rough, the porthole window could be left open.

The bottom deck was entered by a trap-door hatchway on the second deck. Like the deck above, there were cabins with berths around the sides. There weren't any portholes on this deck. For light, there were lanterns. It was very dark, so dark that one could not see until their eyes got accustomed to the darkness.

There was a cooking gallery for the common use of all passengers. In the center of the cooking gallery was a very large stove, about ten feet square. Around this stove was space for passengers to stand and hold onto their pans as they cooked. The toilet closet was a large whole that went into the water with only a bar to sit on.

As the Tapscott departed Liverpool the weather was fine, the Welsh Mountains could be seen in the distance. The passengers were not accustomed to the rocking ship and consequently seasickness was very common. Some of the people came on deck, others lay in their berths afraid they would die, and others afraid they wouldn't die. While most of the adults were seasick, many children were roaming and exploring the ship.

During the voyage, there was calm weather but there were also many severe storms. About the third week out, they encountered a terrible storm. It was so bad that the people had to stay in their berths for three days, the hatchway being closed most of the time. The Captain was glad the ship was carrying Mormons on this journey because there had never been a ship lost that was carrying Mormons.

The journey took somewhat longer than expected, and for this reason water and some food was rationed in mid June. It was necessary to put all the passengers on half-rations of water and provisions except salt beef and sea-biscuit.

On June 25th, they reached their destination after six weeks and three days at sea. The steam tug Henry Binden towed the ship to Castle Garden. Castle Garden was a receiving station at the lower tip of Manhattan Island in New York City. A doctor boarded the ship and inspected the Saints for illness. After passing the medical inspection on board, they went through customs at Castle Garden.

The family made the trip from New York to St. Joseph, Missouri by train. Because of the Civil War, passenger cars were in short supply so the emigrants who came on the Topscott

boarded cattle cars that had been pressed into service as passenger cars. From St. Joseph, they traveled up the Missouri River to Florence, Nebraska by steamboat.

Florence was the staging area for wagon trains set up by the church across the Missouri River from Council Bluffs, Iowa. It had formerly been Winter Quarters. The family stayed at Florence from July 8th to August 10th when the journey across the plains was begun.

They traveled by means of ox teams that had been previously driven from Salt Lake City to Florence. There were six hundred and sixty five persons, with a hundred wagons and eight hundred oxen; this being enough oxen to allow for four oxen per wagon, plus enough additional oxen to permit changing of the teams from time to time. John and Mary's wagon had nineteen people.

After they had traveled a few days they passed a Trading Post where some soldiers were stationed. The soldiers were killing a steer and because the family had always been told that in America people did not eat the head of anything, Her son Thomas asked the soldiers if they were not going to use the head if he might have it. They said, yes, and gave him a good big piece of it for soup. Every bit that could be used was used and enjoyed very much by the company.

This company was under the leadership of Henry W. Miller, an experienced frontiersman, who had served previously as a missionary to the Indians. During the trip each night there were six men posted as guards to prevent Indians from stampeding the oxen. There were twenty-eight who died during the trip and were buried along the way.

The Godfreys arrived in the Salt Lake Valley October 10, 1862, over five months after leaving their homeland. The oldest son George, who had come one year earlier, welcomed them. George had purchased a lot and had built a one-room log cabin with furniture and had it ready for the family when they arrived. George had worked hauling gravel and rock for the Salt Lake temple and had done excavating work for the Salt Lake Theater, one of the big public works projects of the time. John and his second son, Thomas, worked that winter sawing wood to provide for the family.

In May of 1863 the family moved to "Chalk Creek," located to the east of the Weber River near Coalville, Utah. They ran a farm for Ira Hinckley. Their youngest child, Catherine

was born in Chalk Creek. Mary was forty one years old at the time. A severe frost came in late August or early September and killed their entire crop, so the family moved to Wellsville in Cache Valley, staying there only two months, then moving on to Mendon, a neighboring community. They farmed that year in Mendon, on a rented farm.

After living in a dugout for the winter, the Godfreys built a log house, fourteen feet square, with a dirt roof and floor, which they traded, along with the city lot on which it stood, for a yoke of oxen when the family decided to move to Clarkston that next spring. John Godfrey went to Clarkston in the early spring of 1865 and planted a crop of grain and a garden.



John and Mary Godfrey with their two youngest daughters, Catherine and Sarah sometime in the early 1870s.

In May 1865 John moved his family to Clarkston, where they camped in the open for a few weeks until he built a small house. Mary served as a midwife, as she had done in England. The family was poor but she often said there was such a spirit of neighborliness, and such a willingness to share, that all fared alike in the little town of Clarkston.

The year 1866 brought trouble with the Shoshone Indians. These Indians claimed all of the land west of Bear River as theirs, so they came to assert their rights. The pioneers followed counsel previously given by President Brigham Young that it was better to feed the Indians than to fight them.

But their supplies dwindled and they did not have enough food to feed themselves, even without considering the Indians. The Indians finally began to kill the settlers' cows and with this they were advised to move to Smithfield, another small settlement some twelve miles to the east.

The men spent many tedious hours traveling back and forth in their efforts to gain a harvest from the crops that they had planted the previous spring. In the fall President Brigham Young came to Logan, the county seat, and told the Clarkston settlers that they could return to their homes, provided that they would build a fort to protect themselves. With that the small band proceeded to move. Joseph Godfrey, third son of John and Mary was drowned while they were crossing Bear River on the way back. He was seventeen years old and it would seem that he had his best years ahead of him.

When the settlers moved back to Clarkston they built or arranged houses already built in such a way as to form a fort. In the fort babies were born, children went to school, animals were cared for, meals were cooked: In other words life went on just as it would have if they were not living in a fort. The settlers moved to higher ground after staying in the fort for three or four years.

John and Mary were sealed in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City on February 8, 1869.

Mary liked to raise chickens, and took pride in them and her garden. She liked fancy quilts and although she never owned a machine, she made many by hand as well as sewing for her family. When her family came for Thanksgiving they would enjoy her English suet pudding.



Mary Pittaway Godfrey and her daughter, Catherine Jardine and granddaughter, Catherine Melinda in about 1889.

In keeping with this common practice and belief of his people at the time, John Godfrey had married Olina Thalseth as a plural wife, 1875. This was a hard trial for Mary when her husband married this young Danish girl. Mary was a clean and fussy person and the girl was not. They tried to live together, but it was no use. Mary asked John to take his wife and go. John moved with Olina to Mendon in 1877.

John and Mary were divorced. After John moved to Mendon, Mary was left to make her own way. It is noteworthy that Mary's sons and son-in-laws built her a home at the time of John's second marriage, a two-room log house. She and her daughter Catherine irrigated their farm alone, and worked hard to make a living. All her other children had married and moved out. She would trade a cup of yeast for a cup of flour, and in this way they had bread. Her house was one room with the stove, a table and cupboard on one side. In the corner sat a box with a curtain around it, which Mary called her 'toilet stand'; their personal things were kept there. Across the other end of the room were two beds; the heads of each bed were against opposite walls but the ends nearly touched.

Mary loved her grandchildren and they loved her. She would invite them to come in the fall and help her gather in the squash. When the work was finished there was a treat for everyone. She always had a piece of bread and preserves for her grandchildren when they came to see her. They called her, "Granny".

Only one memory had been preserved concerning Mary as a midwife. Her son George picked her up on horseback, in the middle of the night to help his wife Elizabeth Zaugg Godfrey in delivery of Brigham Wilford Godfrey, January 25, 1897, four years before her death.

Mary loved to go to meetings. In spite of all that she went through, she never lost her testimony of the gospel. In her declining years, she suffered from dropsy. Dropsy is old term for swelling due to the accumulation of excess water, often more prominent in the lower legs and feet toward the end of the day. After more than twenty years of living alone, Mary died 15 June 1901 at the age of 79 in Clarkston.

A PATRIARCHAL BLESSING GIVEN TO MARY PITTAWAY

A Patriarchal Blessing by Charles H. Hyde, upon the head of Mary Pittaway Godfrey daughter of John Pittaway and Ann Willis. Born 1 May 1822, in England.

I place my hands upon thy head and seal on you a Patriarchal Blessing which shall be sealed in heaven for your good.

The Father has given his angels charge over thee. Thou shalt have visions and dreams to comfort you and shall see the rolling forth of this kingdom till Zion shall be redeemed in peace. The Father has preserved thy life for a great and wise purpose, that you may redeem your dead. They shall rise up in the resurrection and call you blessed. It is your privilege to live till the coming of the Son of God, sit in council with Adam and with all thy holy prophets. It is your privilege to work in the temple for the living and the dead and hear the voice of angels calling you by name, Mary, Mary. They will give you the names of your dead; for no good thing shall be held from thee.

Thou art a daughter of Ephraim, a right to the fullness of the Priesthood, with thy companion and a kingdom which shall rise up and bless you in your old age. Thy table shall be spread with all the bounties of the earth with a fullness of exaltation with eternal lives, with all thy Father's household. To God and the Saints forever and ever. Amen

The source of this story comes from histories of John and Mary written by Richard S. Godfrey and Elinor Godfrey Hyde. Information about the the voyage of the William Tapscott is from The Life Story of George Jacklin found at myancestry.org