

MARIA ELEANOR COWLEY ALLEN TELLS HER OWN STORY

A sketch of the life of Maria Eleanor Cowley Allen, daughter of Charles Cowley and Ann Killip Cowley.

My parents were born in the valley of Peel, Isle of man, England. They were converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by the teachings of John Taylor. They left their native land in January 1843, and arrived in Nauvoo sometime in March. Here they met the Prophet and Patriarch. They made their home in the town of Macadonia, about ten miles from Nauvoo. They had just settled down when a terrible gloom seemed to be cast down. I remember my father speaking of it many times and how he walked the ten miles to Nauvoo and found to his great sorrow the cause of the terrible gloom. The Prophet and his beloved brother Hyrum had been martyred, and their dear friend John Taylor sorely wounded. The servant of the Lord who a few years before had brought the glad tidings of great joy of the restored gospel to them, was dead. So much has been written of these gloomy days that I will not dwell on it. Suffice it to say that it was indeed a sad time for the saints. After these terrible happenings the saints there not permitted to remain in their homes and enjoy the fruits of their labors. My father and family remained in Macadonia one year after the majority of the saints were driven out. He raised a crop that year, but under very difficult conditions. He had to sleep in his corn field with his gun on his arm to protect his farm crop and family. That fall they were forced by the mob to leave the country. After disposing of what property they could, they moved to Council Bluffs, where we remained about five years. Our family consisted at that time of four children, Charles, William, John, and Annie and James. After making conditions as comfortable as possible for the winter, with the other saints that had stopped there, the people prepared to live their religion and enjoy themselves as best they could. In the spring they planted crops and were doing all in their power to make preparations to join the saints in Utah.

While at Council Bluffs, on the 24th of October, 1847, I was born and christened Maria Eleanor Cowley. In two years after a little one came to our home, a boy called Joseph, in honor of the Prophet. In the spring of 1850 we started on the long journey to Utah. We had two wagons drawn by oxen and cows, also a small bunch of sheep. Most of them died or were killed before we reached Utah. Imagine, if you can, the long line of wagons drawn by ox teams, loaded with all they could get along, with the men and women walking, pushing handcarts on which were bedding and their little ones who were too small to walk by their sides. Among that long line of Pioneers were my beloved parents with eight children of different sizes, I, being but two years old, was placed often in the handcart end often carried by my mother. When she could she placed her small baby in the cart. Bill Howly, an old friend from our native land, traveled with us and did much to help carry my brother and myself. My devoted mother had one of her babies in her arms most of the way across the plains. The journey lasted nearly six months. When we arrived in Salt Lake City we were met and welcomed by some of my parents' dear friends and neighbors from the Isle of Man. Some of these faithful life long friends were Watersons, Tarbets, Quayles, Cannons and others. We lived that winter in the home of the Tarbets. Our long journey had ended way out wheat where the saints had been led by their leader and prophet, Brigham Young, and we rejoiced to feel that we could worship our God according to the teachings of our martyred prophet. In the spring my father and brothers built a two room adobe house near Tarbets in the Seventh Ward.

As spring approached plans were made with great hope and anticipation of bounteous seed time and harvest, which was very much needed to replenish our supplies of food that were getting very low. So the precious seed was planted and soon they were rewarded for their toil to see green fields of different crops, which promised to yield abundantly. But alas, our hopes were shattered when crickets in great clouds came from the hills and settled on the tender crops. It surely looked like famine and starvation for the faithful pioneers who had made so many sacrifices that they might worship God as they desired and find a haven of rest away from their tormentors. And now in this new army that had come to destroy their crops, things looked very dark, but they did not forget the Lord who had brought them safely through the wilderness and with all faith and unity they called upon him for assistance. They also fought with every effort they knew to destroy the pests. When it looked like all would be lost great flocks of seagulls came from the lake and devoured the grasshoppers so rapidly that some of the precious crops were saved.

The next year was indeed a year of scarcity and many did not have the necessary food. Many were without bread in their homes weeks, but all were willing to share with others so none were entirely without enough to subsist on until the next crop came on. My Mother had been promised by the Patriarch that she should never want for bread. I have heard her say there was always some flour in our house and she never refused to give a piece of bread, or divide the flour with those who were not so fortunate. Many times we had but one biscuit each at a meal, and they were often divided with other children. My Mother said she never turned a hungry person from her door without food of some kind. We did not fare so bad as many. My Father had learned the shoemaker trade in his native land. This came in very good as he was always able to chance his work for necessities for his family. We were among the ones that were considered well to do in those trying times. My father always had some sheep and raised flax and understood weaving. My Mother carded and spun the yarn, and they would weave it into cloth for our clothing. My Father was also a good knitter and used to knit stockings for his large family during his spare time. I learned to spin at an early age, often spoiling some of the precious wool, but was able to help a great deal after I had learned the art.

When I was but eight years old a great sorrow came to our home. My beloved Mother passed away, leaving eleven children. Her babe was but a few days old at the time of her death and soon followed her. She had fought the good fight, had passed through many hardships and sacrifices for her family and her religion, which was always dear to her and to which she remained true to the end of her days. My Father and brothers were beginning to prosper, with the other saints, when word was received that the Johnson Army was coming to destroy this people. All are familiar with this part of the history of Utah. We moved south with others of the saints until a settlement was agreed upon when we returned to our home. In 1860 a company was organized to go and settle Cache Valley. My Father's family, with many of their dear friends, pioneered the way to Logan where they built their homes and took up land and begun farming on a large scale. Our home was built in Logan Third Ward. My only sister was married to William Partington, when I was but a child, leaving me the only girl with six brothers. They were all very fond of me and I was made much of until my Father took another wife. I felt many times if my own mother was there things would have been much more pleasant. But I was blessed with a happy disposition and had many friends among the young and old and always took an active part in social affairs. My first important appearance in public was in a 24th of July parade when I was

chosen as one of the 24 young ladies to march. My friend, Sister Waterson, loaned me her daughter's white dress in which she had taken the same part in Salt Lake City some years before, so my first appearance in public was in a borrowed dress, but my heart was happy.

One of the well remembered dances was because of its comedy, for which I was often teased by my brothers and friends. My boy friend invited me to accompany him to this party, some time before the event. But alas, the day of the party a downpour of rain lasting all day made the mud so deep it was almost impossible to get through. But Ben Pearson, my boy friend, was not to be out done by mud, and at the time appointed was at the gate with a nice team of young oxen and a large government wagon that had a box about five feet high. After I was seated on a chair inside the wagon I could not see over the top. Ben asked to be pardoned for not riding with me as it was necessary for him to hold on to a rope to keep the oxen from running away as they were not broken in very well. So we had a happy ride to the party. Ben assisted me to the door and then had to clean the mud from his clothes and attend the oxen before he could come in. We were very grateful to find the mud was frozen enough when the party was over so we could walk home. Our youthful days were spent in socials and parties of different kinds, such as candy pulls, barn dances, quilting parties, home theatricals, choir practices and mutuals. I always took an active part and was one of the merriest among the crowd. Among my boy friends was a young man by the name of Alexander Allen. Our friendship soon developed into something nearer and dearer and on the 5th of April, 1869, we were married in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City, making the journey from Logan to Salt Lake City with an ox team, the only way of travel in those days.

We lived in Logan until 1876, mingling with my relatives and friends, passing through sorrow and happiness. We dearly loved each other and to make our happiness more complete we were blessed with five beautiful children, four girls and one boy. My husband's folks were very kind and his mother did all she could to take the place of my own dear mother of whose comforting companionship I was deprived of when but eight years old.

During the seven years spoken of my only sister, Ann Partington, was taken by death from her large family of little ones and on whom I had gone for comfort in times of trials. This was a very hard experience to pass through. In three short years after her death my father was also called to depart from this earth and its sorrows and joys, having reared a large family of sons and daughters, embracing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in his beloved native land and leaving many things that were dear to him to come with his family to Zion to be with the saints, where he felt he could live the gospel in its fullness, and to which he proved true to the end of his days. In 1876 a call came to my husband from the head of the Church to move to Weston, Idaho to be bishop of that Ward. At that time the people were in a scattered condition and had some Indian trouble. It was not a place that we desired to move to, away from our comfortable home and relatives and friends, for by this time Logan was a beautiful city with trees and flowers, fruits, and literally flowing with milk and honey. It was a great sacrifice for us to leave all and go again as pioneers into a small country town where conditions were anything but pleasant. But we felt it was our duty and were willing to say, "I'll go where you want me to go dear Lord, I'll do what you want me to do."

The condition of my health at that time was very poor. My babe was but a few weeks old and it seemed Satan was trying to discourage us and bring every obstacle in our way to stop us.

But in May I was put in a covered wagon in a bed where I thought I would be able to make the journey. We traveled a few miles when my strength gave away and we had to stop at Benson Ward that night. We continued our journey the next morning, crossing Bear River on a ferry boat. The animals had to swim the river. By the time this was all complete I was again exhausted. We traveled a short way when they had to leave me about twelve miles from our destination. During the night I was so sick I feared I would never reach my home, but we exercised our faith and in humble prayer begged the Lord to spare my life. That night in a dream or vision I saw some people in prayer and council and I was promised that my life should be spared and that I would have the privilege of helping my husband to fulfill the mission we had accepted. This promise was fulfilled, as my life's work will testify. It was some time before I regained my health sufficient to take up the responsibility of my home and children, and then I began to feel the added responsibility of a Bishop's wife. Only those who have filled that position realize all that is expected of them. I was called upon to visit the sick and dying, to listen to the sad life story of widows and orphans, to cheer the lonely and comfort those in distress. In addition to my numberless duties I was chosen to be the first president of the M. I. A., which position I held for twenty five years. Many were the changes during that time. Girls in the early teens grew to young womanhood, became sweethearts, wives and mothers. I enjoyed my labors in this association very much. I had as counselors during those years Hanna Michelson, Mary Jesperson, Elizabeth Cassman, Mary Maughan and Marth Olson. In connection with my numerous duties, our home was the stopping place for all travelers. There were no hotels or boarding houses in those days, so it was to the bishop's house all were directed to come. The church was organizing new wards and branches, helping to lay out plots and were sending many missionaries to encourage the people, so we entertained in our home the members of the twelve apostles, presiding bishops, high councils, missionaries, freighters, cowboys, and any that happened to be traveling through. As time went on more settlers came until the large district my husband presided over was divided into more wards.

My husband was ordained by some of the presiding brethren to take another wife, which in the course of time he did. I accompanied them to Salt Lake City and witnessed the ceremony. We lived together as sisters until her first babe was born, when she moved to a home of her own. My family, the older ones, were now able to do much to assist in many ways, making my household work lighter. But another trouble came to the saints in the crusade against polygamy. My husband was compelled to go in hiding and was called on a mission to the Southern States, leaving May 4, 1884. On account of ill health he was released and returned home in about one year's time. My husband had learned the trade of sawyer and on his return from his mission went up the beautiful Logan Canyon to take charge of a lumber and shingle mill. I and my family accompanied him to help all we could. We spent many happy days among the mountains and learned to appreciate the beauties of nature in flowers, rocks and trees and beautiful mountain streams filled with speckled mountain trout. We also had the privilege on many occasions of rearing wild animals in their mountain retreat.

From there we went to Wyoming where the mills were increased in size and we employed a number of people. We all enjoyed the life there as we had many social events, dancing on the lumber pile and playing games around the big fire made by the sawdust and rough lumber. We spent our time in this way and I and my family being on the farm part of the time. Then the manifesto was given, when my husband was permitted to remain home in peace

on our farm. We went to Logan where we worked in the temple for seven months in the year 1902. My husband developed diabetes; his health failed him so he was not able to take care of the farm and in 1906 we sold our farm and moved back to Logan to carry on our temple work and spend our last days in our home town among our dear friends and relatives that there left. My family all grew to manhood and womanhood. We felt we had been greatly blessed as we had not lost one child and had the pleasure of seeing them all married in the temple.

My husband continued to fail in health and on the 31st of July 1916 passed away. I gave up housekeeping and went to live with my children. My health began to fail and nothing seemed just right after my companion was gone.

On the 5th of April 1924 she left this earth, with all its cares and sorrows and happiness mixed in, and went to join her companion, where all is joy and gladness. She joined him on their wedding anniversary. She lived a life of usefulness and was a noble example to her children and grandchildren, who love and revere her memory. She fought the good fight, passed through many trials and sacrifices for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to which she had lived and labored faithfully all her days. And we know she received the glad word "well and faithfully done, enter into my joy and sit down on my throne."

Copied from a book of Mrs. Maria Poulson.

Sent in by a granddaughter, Thela B. Sorensen, Centerfield, Utah.