

# Lovina Jones Brimhall

Richard W. Walker, second great grandson

Lovina Jones Brimhall would describe her earlier days saying that she was a bride, wife, and widow, and then again a bride, wife, and mother by the time she was 15 years of age. But there is much more to tell about the rich life of this Mormon pioneer. Here is the rest of the story, including her emigration from Wales to America, her 1300-mile trek across the Great Plains, her involvement in the settlement of western wilderness, and her accomplishments as the mother of a large family.

## Emigration from Wales

Lovina Jones was born in South Wales in the town of Pontypridd (also called Newbridge, formerly) in the parish of Llanwonno, county of Glamorgan. Her father was Morgan Jones, a son of David and Joan Susanna Jones. In about 1842 Morgan Jones married Joanna Morgan, and Lovina, their only child, was born March 31, 1844. The mother died giving her daughter life. Lovina was taken in and cared for by her Aunt Mary and Grandmother Jones while her father toiled in the coal mines.

Missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began preaching in southern Wales in 1840. Despite fierce opposition and persecution from the established churches, the missionaries started to gain converts in and around Pontypridd in 1846, and by 1852 the Pontypridd Branch had nearly one hundred members of the Church. Among those which accepted the Gospel and were baptized were Morgan Jones and his young daughter Lovina, after she reached the age of eight.

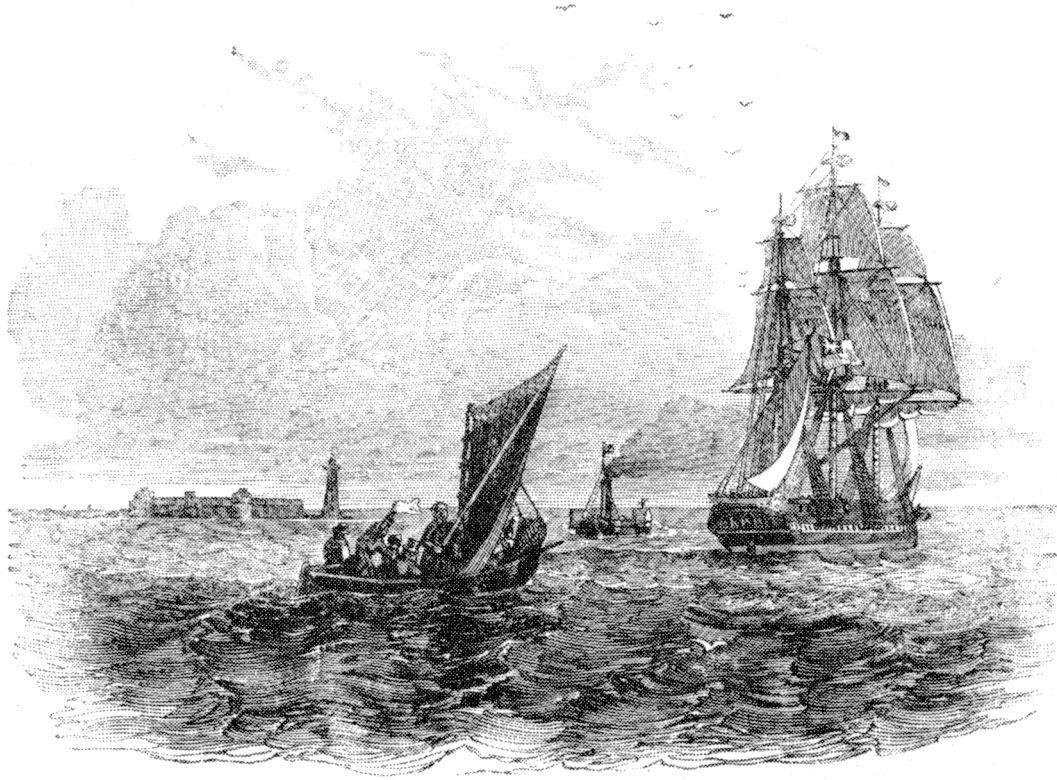
Church leaders were encouraging converts in Europe to join the main body of the Saints in Salt Lake City. At a large meeting on July 11, 1852, the president of the Church in Wales spoke “on the necessity of gathering to Zion,” and discussions of emigration continued at various district and branch meetings. The troubles in the British Isles at the time—economic depression, starvation, disease, and religious and political oppression—made the idea of emigration all the more appealing to the converts. In 1849 companies of Saints began to sail from the islands, bound for the Utah Territory.

By early 1853 a large group of Welsh and English Saints had made arrangements to sail to America on the ship *Jersey*. On February 5 they departed from Liverpool. The 314 Mormon passengers included eight-year-old Lovina Jones, her father Morgan, Grandmother Jones, an uncle, an aunt, and several cousins. All that each of the passengers was able to bring along was what could fit in a small chest.

Also among the passengers was the Parry family from England. Morgan married 19-year-old Mary Parry onboard the ship just a few days into the voyage, on February 11. Morgan and Mary Jones would eventually have nine children together—Lovina’s half brothers and sisters.

As the *Jersey* sailed away and the emigrants watched the shores of England fade into the distance, they couldn’t help but feel some sadness at the thought of leaving behind their friends and relatives, their homes, and their native land, with the likelihood that they would never return. There was also some apprehension of the long and dangerous journeys ahead and concern for their future in a new and unfamiliar place. It must have been an exciting time for eight-year-old Lovina, but a bit frightening as well. Adding to these emotions was the queasiness of seasickness. It took several days to finally get accustomed to the motion of the ship among the waves of the open ocean.

The old two-deck, three-mast sailing ship was commanded by the experienced and respected Captain John Day. As was typical, the Saints organized themselves into several districts with leaders for each, and then a presidency over all, to ensure cleanliness, order, and good behavior. These English and Welsh



Saints, though speaking different languages, cooperated fully and enthusiastically. By the end of the voyage, Captain Day was so impressed with this group of emigrants and their president, George Halliday, that he said they were welcome to travel with him on future voyages at no charge.

Families were quartered in the middle of the ship, the single men were placed at the front of the ship, and the single women were at the back. Each person was given a simple bunk a foot and a half wide. Food was provided, but it was nothing to write home about. They lived for six weeks mostly on biscuits, bacon, and rice, which was often burned in the effort to cook for so many at once.

The ship was meticulously scrubbed each day to avoid the devastating sicknesses that often appeared on such long voyages. Passengers were required to spend plenty of time on deck in the fresh air and sunshine, which was no hardship on this trip. As the ship sailed southwest from England, the cold, overcast winter weather turned warm and sunny. The people enjoyed relaxing in the sunshine and were awed by the spectacular sunrises and sunsets and the beauty of the vast ocean. The Saints met together often in prayer and church services. They worked together to prepare for the upcoming overland journey by making tents and wagon covers. Leisure time was spent reading, telling stories, and singing. School was held for the children. In general, these passengers found it to be a rather delightful voyage.

Still, there was much excitement and relief when after forty days and five thousand miles of sailing they arrived at the Mississippi River Delta. There they were met by a steamboat which towed them for four days 90 miles up the river to New Orleans, where they arrived March 22.

After a day of sight-seeing and dining in New Orleans, the Saints were taken on board the steamship *John Simonds* bound for St. Louis. Then, once they arrived in St. Louis, they were transferred to another boat which took them to Keokuk, Iowa, where they arrived April 1. On the way up the river, Lovina passed her ninth birthday.

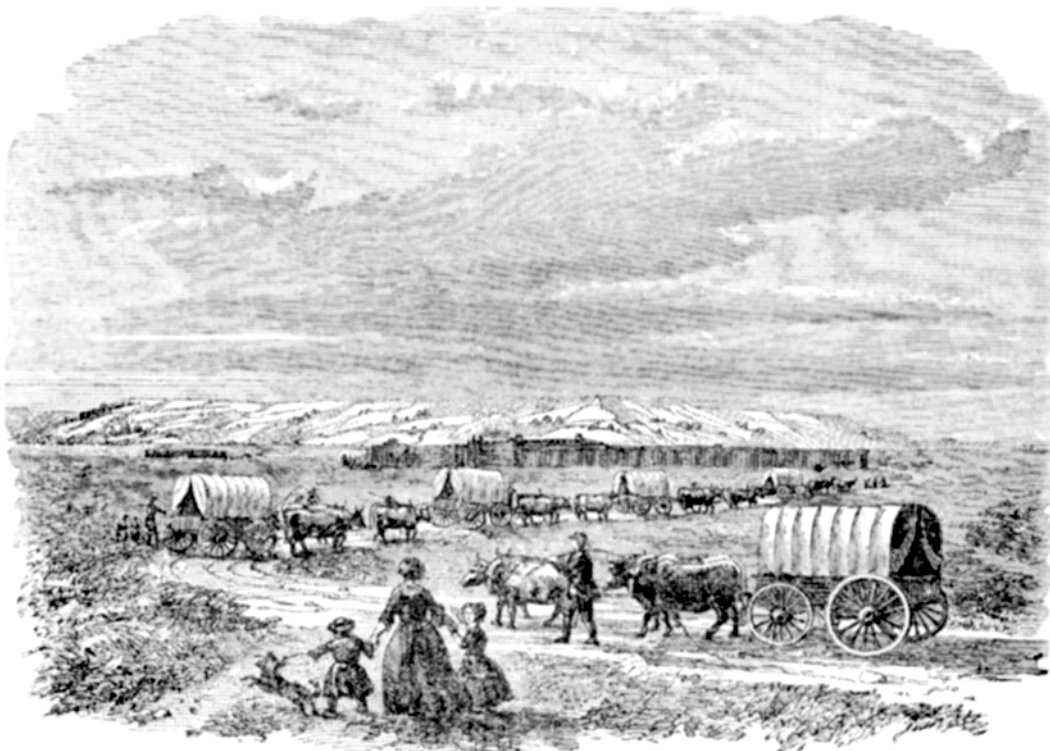
## Journey across the Great Plains

In previous years Saints traveled up the Missouri River from St. Louis to Kanesville (Council Bluffs), where they started their trek across the Plains. This year, however, it was decided best to continue up the Mississippi River to Keokuk, Iowa, and start overland from there. This way they could avoid the more dangerous Missouri River and the problems of acquiring supplies in Kanesville. But it meant an additional 330 miles, all the way across Iowa, that the emigrants had to travel by wagon, horse, and foot.

They spent over a month at the “Camp of Israel” in Keokuk, across the river from the city of Nauvoo. Much preparation was needed for the trek. Wagons were built or repaired and provisions had to be acquired. Men traveled far to find and purchase enough oxen and cattle for the trip, and even then what they could round up was barely adequate.

On May 20, 1853, an emigration company of 356 Saints from various countries was organized, with Joseph W. Young, a beloved 24-year-old nephew of Brigham Young, as captain. Lovina’s family and many other passengers from the *Jersey* were assigned to this company. After some delay the large group set out for the West. One fellow traveler, Samuel Claridge, described the scene as they began the journey: “Our first starting out was rather comical. Here were Welsh, English, Germans, and Scandinavians, and none of us had ever had experience in driving cattle, and the cattle had to learn all languages. . . . There was a great deal of awkward driving. . . . But we got started.”

Other than the occasional wind and rainstorms and having to travel over muddy trails at times, the company had little trouble moving westward across Iowa. Samuel Claridge recalled the “beautiful woodland scenery, and prairies” along the way, that the “journey through Iowa was quite pleasant.” There was very little extra room in the wagons, which were packed with supplies for ten or so persons, so most everyone, including nine-year-old girls like Lovina, had to walk most of the way, which was typically 12 to 20 miles a day. On July 2 they reached Kanesville near the Missouri River.



After ferrying the wagons across the river, they continued their journey. Now they were in Indian territory. The emigrants had heard stories about the “savage” natives of America, so they advanced with some nervousness. About halfway across what is now Nebraska, the company was met by a tribe of Pawnee Indians, all arrayed in their war attire and carrying guns, knives, axes, and bows and arrows. The leaders of the Saints called for the women and children to take shelter in the wagons. More and more of the intimidating Indians approached until there were hundreds of them. The Pawnees demanded food. So rations were collected from the wagons and handed over. Satisfied, the chief remained with the emigrants in their camp that night to ensure that they were protected from his warriors, and the next day the wagon train was allowed to resume its journey unharmed. This experience must have made an impression on young Lovina Jones, but it wouldn’t be the last of the frightening encounters she had with Indians during her life.

Continuing on, the emigrants made their way along the sandy banks of the rivers and over rocky ridges. There were few trees along the trail, so many times the travelers had to gather buffalo chips in the evening to use to cook their supper. They ate mostly bread and carefully rationed bacon. At night they slept in their tents, sometimes surrounded by the howling of wolves.

The company made good progress across the Plains until they came to the dry uplands of Wyoming. Water and feed for the oxen became scarce, and some of the animals died from the hot weather, exhaustion, and lack of nourishment. Unnecessary cargo was thrown out of the wagons to help lighten the loads for the weak livestock. Some of the men hurried ahead to Salt Lake City to bring back additional teams to assist the company on to their destination.

Finally, on October 10 the Saints struggled over the last of the Wasatch mountains and down into the Salt Lake Valley, and there was “great joy and rejoicing.” The journey had been long and hard, and there were a few who didn’t make it. But Lovina and her family all got to Salt Lake City safely, even 72-year-old Grandma Jones.

## **Marriage**

The Jones family lived in Centerville for a while and then moved to North Ogden. As the frontier of the Utah Territory was pushed northward, Morgan and his family moved along with it, being among the earliest settlers of Logan in 1861 and Malad, Idaho, in 1867.

Lovina was unhappy at home and moved out when she was only about 12. Then, just before she turned 13, she married William Bailey Lake.

Bailey Lake was a good man. The eldest son of James and Philomela Smith Lake, he was born in Ernestown, Ontario, Canada, on February 16, 1826. The Lakes were among the earliest members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and crossed the Plains in 1850. Soon after reaching the Salt Lake Valley, Bailey married 17-year-old Sarah Jane Marler; they had four children.

In 1855 Brigham Young called several faithful and dependable men, including Bailey Lake, to go north and establish an outpost and mission among the Bannock and Shoshoni Indians in north-central Idaho. The settlement became known as Fort Lemhi. The men plowed farmland and raised livestock while they taught the Indians and learned their native language. The missionaries would periodically return to Utah for supplies.

During one of his trips home, on March 20, 1857, Bailey Lake married two additional wives in Salt Lake City—Louisa Ann Garner and Lovina Jones. The practice of plural marriage was not uncommon among the faithful Latter-day Saints at the time. These marriages were administered and sealed by Brigham Young in his office. Immediately after, Bailey returned to his mission among the Indians.

Over several years, many of the native Americans accepted the Gospel and learned to farm. But then the Indians suddenly turned on the missionaries and two were killed in early 1858. President Young immediately called the settlers back to Utah. On their way south, while riding through a narrow canyon in southern Idaho, missionaries were ambushed by Indians from above, and Bailey Lake was shot and killed. This was on March 31, Lovina's birthday. Bailey Lake died a martyr for the Church while fulfilling his calling. He was buried in North Ogden.

### **The Brimhall Family**

Now a widow at 14, Lovina was invited to stay with Bailey's sister Samantha and her husband Noah Brimhall as they temporarily moved south to Provo, Utah, since there was a U. S. army advancing toward Salt Lake City to deal with they thought was a rebellion against the nation. The Brimhalls returned to Ogden when the threat had passed. On January 28, 1859, Noah married Lovina as his third wife. This was also performed by Brigham Young in the President's Office in Salt Lake City, though "for time" only. Lovina's first child, named Bailey William, was born a year later.

Noah Brimhall was a faithful Latter-day Saint. Born in upstate New York in 1826, he joined the Mormon Church after meeting missionaries in 1841. Noah reached Utah in 1850 and settled in Ogden, where he made his living farming and trading. In 1852 he married Samantha Lake, sister of William Bailey Lake, and they established a home in North Ogden, being among the first settlers there. They had 11 children over 19 years. Noah was a strong leader and an honest, forthright, and hard-working pioneer, always obedient to the will of God and assignments given him by Church authorities. Among the Church positions he held were president of the seventies quorum, high counselor, and eventually patriarch. Though Noah was 18 years older than Lovina, she couldn't have chosen a more worthy man to be her companion. And Lovina made a fine mate for Noah.

Lovina maintained strong faith in the Church and belief in the divinity of plural marriage. In her later life she said that her days living in polygamy were among her happiest. For her father, however, it was a difficult thing to accept. Morgan Jones strongly disagreed with Lovina's marriages and eventually left the Mormon community, moving to Malad, Idaho, with a few other Welsh emigrants and joining the RLDS Church in 1867. He remained there with his second family, farming and ranching on his 160-acre homestead claim, until he died in 1904.

### **The Cache Valley**

The Cache Valley of northern Utah began to receive an influx of Mormon pioneers in 1859, and in 1860 the Brimhalls moved to the new town of Hyrum. Two children were born to Lovina there—Lottie in 1862 and Sarah Amanda in 1864.

In 1864 the Brimhalls decided to leave Hyrum for greener pastures—literally! The far northwest end of the Cache Valley was as yet unsettled, and the lush grass and clear streams there seemed inviting. They made a home in what became the town of Oxford, Idaho. Noah quickly built a rough log cabin in which to spend the first cold and snowy winter.

Oxford at that time was a remote place on the edge of civilization, or maybe even a little beyond. There was much hard work and few conveniences. Lovina's daughter Lottie remembered: "[Mother] spun yarn and wove cloth to make our clothing. There were no sewing machines in Utah then, so women did their sewing by hand. All the light they had at night was a tallow candle, and they made them. Mother sat up late at night sewing, as she had no time in the day—she had as much other work to do. But with poverty and hard work they were a happy people. . . . There was a feeling of peace and contentment. They had the Gospel to comfort them."

Southeastern Idaho was the land of the Shoshoni Indians, and they were not happy about the white settlers invading their territory and threatening their livelihood. The people of Oxford built a fort to protect themselves from the angry natives. At one time they had to completely abandon the settlement, returning only after several months when they felt it was safe again. Even when their lives weren't in danger, the settlers would sometimes find their horses and cattle missing.

Six of Lovina's children were born in Oxford—Lovina Jane in 1866, Don Carlos in 1868, Cassius Morgan in 1870, Andrew Jackson in 1872 (died at age two), Medora in 1874, and Noah Walter in 1875.

## Arizona

In October 1877 the Brimhalls accepted a mission call from Brigham Young to go to Arizona and assist in starting a new colony and to work with the Indians there. The journey south took much of the winter and required traveling over rough terrain, sometimes through snow, with their wagons, horses, and cattle. Lovina was soon expecting her tenth child. Besides Noah and Lovina and their children, the group included Elizabeth Walker, her eldest son Jesse and his family, her son William and his new bride Lottie Brimhall, and Elizabeth's daughter Margaret and her husband Joseph Kay and their children. Reaching the Colorado River in January, they were surprised to find the water partly frozen by the cold weather, making the ferry unusable. But in answer to their faithful prayers, the river froze solid that night and they were able to walk their wagons and livestock across the thick ice in the morning and continue on their mission.

In February 1878 the pioneers reached the settlement of Woodruff. Lovina gave birth to her child there in March, but baby Sylvanus didn't live. From Woodruff they went on to Taylor, Arizona, where they made their home. Here Lovina gave birth to Dela May in 1879, David Loren in 1882, Orson Spencer in 1883, and Rachel Ann in 1886.

Samantha Brimhall had gone to western New Mexico instead of accompanying Noah and Lovina. Her intention was to visit her married daughter in Savoia (Ramah), and she brought her younger children with her. Unfortunately, Samantha arrived there just in time for a severe outbreak of smallpox. She contracted the disease and died before the winter was over. This left five children alone without a mother. Noah, as soon as he received the tragic news, hurried to New Mexico to retrieve his children. He brought them back with him to Arizona, and Lovina took them in and cared for them as her own. Years later the oldest of the five, Norman, commented that he "shall always be grateful to Aunt Lovina for caring for my mother's children as best she could under the circumstances of those pioneer days."

The settlers had their share of difficulties in Taylor, as Florence Brimhall Brinkerhoff, granddaughter of Lovina, explained: "There were endless hardships to be endured at this place. . . . Dams were being continually washed out by floods, and it was next to impossible to raise crops. . . . Every grain and every morsel of food meant something, and the children followed the harvesters . . . industriously gleaning both wheat and beans."

Not the least of the problems, explained Florence, were the Indians: "Apache Indians . . . were on the warpath, committing depredations on all sides. Cattle were stolen and men murdered. . . . At times [the Indians] appeared suddenly and silently, almost as if from nowhere, terrorizing the villagers. Walking brusquely into homes, they demanded food and any bright object visible."

This was not an environment very suitable to Lovina. Daughter Lottie especially remembered one particular experience with the Indians: "Mother always worried about them. One time she and I went to see some friends that lived about five miles away from the settlement. We had not been there long, a couple of hours, when a man rode up on horseback and told us the Apache Indians were on the warpath and we must get to the settlement as quickly as possible. . . . Mother and I got in our wagon. . . . She sat down in the bottom of the wagon box, nearly frightened to death. I drove home. We had new horses and a



wagon and a good team. I let them go as fast as they wanted to, and that was pretty fast. We got home all right. But the Indians killed a couple of Mormon men and drove off some cattle that belonged to the settlers. My mother was sick for a long time from the fright.”

While living in Taylor, Lovina received a blessing of comfort and promise from Patriarch Lorenzo H. Hatch: “Be comforted, therefore, for you have prevailed and shall receive for your trials and labors and sacrifices an hundred fold. . . . Thy God has witnessed your loneliness and your deep sorrow and has guided you by inspiration. . . . Heavenly blessings are in store for you. . . . You have been called to be a pioneer to this far-off land and to associate with good people and to be a comfort to your companion, who has done all that he could do for your conciliation. . . . Your name shall be propagated forever.”

## Mesa

Despite their trials, the Brimhalls remained in Taylor for about ten years. Then they set out to find a more favorable location. They went farther south and settled near the young town of Mesa. As they rolled in on their wagons, Lovina looked around and then told her husband that she would never move again.

As Noah and the boys worked to clear the land, build their adobe home, and till the earth, Lovina had her share of work to do caring for and feeding the large family, as Florence wrote: “Clothes were laundered by hand by scrubbing on a washboard and were ironed with hand irons heated on outdoor fires, and later on wood-burning stoves. . . . Lye that softened wash water and whitened clothes came from mesquite ashes poured into a water-filled barrel and allowed to settle. Soap was made from grease extracted from the fat of pigs or other animals at butchering time.

“Screen for windows and doors was still a future commodity, and flies were a terrible menace. But regardless of trials, the pioneers were grateful it was no worse and expressed gratitude soulfully night and morning in family prayer.

“Cultivating the intellect was a difficult problem in pioneer days. Schools were scarce, yet available, and although the children’s education suffered, still Lovina saw to it that they were all taught the basics at least.”

Noah and Lovina’s 15th and final child, Ruth, was born in Mesa soon after they arrived in 1887. This dear little girl tragically choked to death at the age of five.

Florence described Lovina as a “small, stocky woman, about five feet” and “having dark, wavy hair and brown eyes, and as a young woman [she] was said to have been very beautiful.” Noah and Lovina “enjoyed dancing and made an attractive couple on the ballroom floor.” Lovina, she said, was “high-spirited, but basically quite congenial, with a keen sense of humor which most of her children inherited. Although she had quite a hard life, she seemed to enjoy living and looked on the bright side of life. She liked people, and people liked her.”

Lovina passed the rest of her days in Mesa, eventually outliving her husband, who died in 1918, and six of her children. Residing with various sons and daughters during her later years, Lovina remained active in the Church and kept busy quilting and sewing her own dresses. She would attend the annual “Old Folks’ Reunion” in Mesa and would win awards for having the most children or wearing the most beautiful self-made dress. She so impressed one reporter at a gathering that an article appeared in the *Phoenix Gazette* newspaper featuring this active 88-year-old pioneer. “The elderly lady gets around briskly,” it said, “has a merry twinkle in her eyes, and a broad and genuine smile for all.”

After a long a fruitful life, Lovina Jones Brimhall passed away on November 6, 1933, at the age of 89 and was buried next to Noah in the Mesa Cemetery.

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