To Arizona

In 1877 Brigham Young called Noah Brimhall into his office to present to him the proposition of leading a group of saints to settle in northeastern Arizona. Among the persons who were to be in this party were Elizabeth Walker, Jesse Walker, William Walker, Joseph Cardon, and Joseph Chatterly Kay. Out of the nine children born to John B. and Elizabeth Ann Walker, only four were left—Jesse; William; Margaret Ann, who married Joseph Chatterly Kay; and Selina Masanile, who married Joseph Cardon.

There must have been a considerable amount of mixed emotions that welled up in the heart of Elizabeth Ann Walker at this eventful time in her life. At the age of 63 she was again going to set out on another long journey, which would take her far from this hallowed spot where so many of those near and dear to her now lay sleeping in their graves. As she placed a parting wreath upon each mound, well did she realize that she may never pass this way again; and so it was. The grave of her husband—marked by a red sandstone with an inscription that reads, "John B. Walker died 10 March 1856"—is like a stranger in a foreign land and is seldom visited by his descendants, who are now scattered far and wide.

That fall of 1877 Noah Brimhall with his little band of followers began their journey south, and it is claimed that the Walker family supplied the majority of the horses needed for the trip. It was a gala occasion when they arrived in Bountiful, Utah, that 10th day of November 1877—for Elizabeth's youngest son, William Albert, and Noah Brimhall's oldest daughter, Lottie, were married by apostle Lorenzo Snow. Around the campfire that night they celebrated with dancing and a feast of those good old-fashioned foods of the pioneers.

They arrived at Lee's Ferry on the Colorado River in the dead of winter, only to find the ferry broken down and the river running slush ice. Their cattle were weary and hungry, and the whole party was in low spirits, only to sink still lower when Noah asked the ferry attendant if the river ever froze over and his reply was that he had been at this place several years and had never known it to freeze over. Noah bowed down his head and for several minutes said nothing. But to his mind came this assuring statement made by his beloved leader, Brigham Young, when he set him apart for this mission: "Brother Noah, if you fulfill this mission to the best of your ability, the Lord will throw up a highway before you, that you will reach your destination in safety."

With this assuring statement, Noah broke the silence by saying, "Well, maybe it has never frozen over before, but it will tonight," and strode away, giving orders to the men of the camp to cut long poles from the cottonwoods along the river, that they might serve as sled runners for the wagons. The women and children were given the task of gathering wood to keep the fires going. To quote Noah, "It is going to be terribly cold tonight." Even sand was hauled to the river's edge to sprinkle over the ice, that the animals might have sure footing.

When everything was in readiness and the party had finished their evening prayers, they retired to bed—all except Noah, who gathered a blanket, and finding a secluded spot some distance from the camp, he, like Jacob of old, poured out his soul unto the Lord. Thus the cold and dreary night slowly passed.

At the first sign of dawn, Noah aroused his newly acquired son-in-law, and together they hurried down to the river to find it actually had frozen over. William cautiously eased out onto the ice with a rope tied around his middle. It seemed solid, so he cut a hole and found the ice was six inches thick. He then walked slowly across, testing as he went. The result was that it was safe to cross.

Soon the little camp was wide awake, and all were at the river's edge with wondering awe. The sand was scattered across the ice. Then William, with his old trusted mare Fanny, took the lead and the rest of the animals followed. The wagons were unloaded, and the children were put on tables that were turned

upside-down and scooted across the ice. The wagons were secured to the pole runners and hauled across to the other side, using long ropes to pull them.

Finally, as all were safely across, and the hind wheels of the last wagon were safely on solid ground, and the teams hitched to the wagons, just as the sun peeped over the high canyon walls to the east, there was a terrific crackling sound, and the old river burst its bonds and began piling up huge piles of ice.

For the second time that morning, the little party of pioneers were stricken with awe, and as each member of the party searched his heart for the proper answer to this miracle of miracles, each came up with the same conviction: God had indeed raised up a highway, like unto Moses of old. With loud and cheerful voices, they burst into song, praising the Lord.

The sleepy ferry attendant opened his door to gaze upon what to him was impossible. For years afterwards, his favorite story to travelers passing through was how that bunch of Mormons were so lucky to appear on the scene the one and only time when the Colorado River had frozen over solid enough to cross on the ice.

This group finally arrived at Woodruff, where they spent the balance of the winter, then journeyed on to Taylor. Here they found mountains with wild game, timber not too far away, and when summer came there was an abundance of grass. In a few years they became prosperous with herds of cattle and sheep.

As for Elizabeth Ann, her interest was turned to the Primary, where she devoted the remainder of her life to teaching little children, who learned to love her dearly. After her death, these Primary children placed a headstone at her grave with the following engraving:

IN GOD WE TRUST
IN LOVING MEMORY OF
ELIZABETH ANN WALKER
b. 24 OCT 1814 d. 16 JAN 1900
Gift of Primary Assn. 1902

[Irene Black, in *Taylor's Centennial Stories*, 1978]