

January 1. 1932, A Sketch of the Life of Your Mother, Merlin Eastham Kearl.

I was born November 6, 1852 at the little village of Masbro, near Rotherham, six miles from Sheffield. My parents names are John Eastham and Jane Huntington Eastham. They were born in Lanckershire, England.

I was born in Yorkshire, England. My father was a Locomotive Engineer having run on one line in England for 21 years. My parents were all ready to come to Utah several years before they did come in 1865. I never knew the reason the journey was put off. We lived at Masbro till I was seven years old and then we moved to the city of Leeds in Yorkshire. While there part of the time we kept conference house where the missionaries would make their home while in that part of the mission.

I well remember President Joseph F. Smith and Ezra T. Benson and others coming to our house whenever they had time and they sure seemed to enjoy the time spent there. My father being a very temperate man when the English Government opened up a railroad in the East Indies they asked father if he would go so father told mother if she would be willing for him to go for four years when he came back he would come to Utah with her. She gave her consent. Mother was not a very strong woman but she was willing to make sacrifices for the Gospel sake so she had her two eldest girls come to Utah in 1862. Both were married shortly before they left England to young men in the church at Vickers, James Ratcliffe and Andrew V. Millward.

Father came home after staying 4 years in India. Worked a year at his old job again and then on the 29th of April 1865 we left Liverpool on an old sailing vessel, The Belle Wood, and though there were 600 Saints on the ship besides the crew, the captain said it was the best and quickest trip he had ever made across the Atlantic. The Saints had a merry time coming over, with meeting, concerts and some times a little dancing as there was a company of Saints belonging to a band so we had music. There was a sorrowful time too as one old lady and one baby dies on the ship and it was a pitiful sight to see them lowered into the sea.

Well at last we landed at Castle Gardens, New York. Staid there a day or two then traveled on to a little place called Wyoming seven miles from the city of Nebraska then a town of seven houses. We were put on shore on the bank of the river with no house to get into or no place for our goods but out doors there was a kind of a cave of a place where we all went into when it rained and I believe there were thunder storms the greatest part of the time we stayed there. We stayed there nine weeks while the brethren went to Omaha for wagons and cattle. Father paid a Brother and wifes way across the sea and a single mans way so they would drive our teams across the plains. We had two wagons, four yoke of oxen, and two cows to start with. The cows were milked in the morning and the milk put in a little keg and fastened onto the side of the wagon and the jolting of the wagon churned a little pat of butter so we had a little butter every night.

We traveled with the church freight train as there wasn't enough independents to make a train of themselves. We didn't have any bad luck after we got fairly well started on the plains but lots of mishaps at the start such as broken wagon tongues and run-a-ways owing to wild teams and poor drivers and on thinking about it now I don't know how they got along as well as they did. I am sure the Lord must have helped us out some. There was a large company of Scandinavians that year. Enough for a train of their own and it was good for them as they could understand one another better than if they had been mixed with the English speaking people. We got along fairly well. Of course there were many funny things happened.

I remember one in particular. We had to come down to the Platt river through a gulch just wide enough for the wagons to get through and then the oxen had to jump into the river and get across to the other side. One wagon upset and a lady was in the wagon as it lay on its side. The water wasn't very deep but a box of tea spilled and floated down stream. The men soon had the wagon lifted up again and we went on our way rejoicing. I don't know how many times we forded the Platt but quite a few. We didn't see an indian on the trip but when we got to Fort Laramie and were going to camp for the night we got word not to stop but keep traveling all night as the danish train had been raided by indians the night before and the wife of one of the brothers stolen and he never saw her again. The fort was up a ravine quite a distance, 3 miles, from the road the trains had to travel.

I have seen accounts of the raid but they wasn't anything like what I heard about it told by some that were there. When we were about 3 days drive from Great Salt Lake one of my Brother-in-laws, Mae James Ratcliffe met us with ox team and wagon and brought us two nice fat fresh beef. Father asked the captain if we could drive ahead of the train so as to make better time. He told us we could as there wasn't much chance of seeing or being molested by anyone. We were too close to the city when we got to where the road turned off to climb the big mountain. They had to have all the teams to get one wagon to the top and leave the other at the bottom till they could come back for it, which they did and it was 12 p.m. that night before we could go to bed that was more Nov 6th my 13th birthday and Mother made a roly polly pudding to celebrate it. The next day after dark we arrived in Salt Lake City and there was a band playing and the music sounded heavenly to me.

Mother and Father stayed in the city waiting for their freight to be unloaded they had purchased quite a lot of merchandise in the states where it could be bought cheap a result of the civil war. They kept a store after they arrived in Grantsville and had a price list come from Salt Lake every two weeks and having bought cheap could afford to sell at Salt Lake prices which they did after awhile they sold out as it was too much for Mother. As she never had been well since I can remember and we were afraid she would be sick on the ship but she was the only one among us that didn't have a sick day.

There wasn't any coal at that time so the school meetings and dances had to be kept warm with wood. There was plenty of Cedar wood handy and sometimes 30 loads would be brought in one day. The Bishop asking the men folk to haul it from the Hills. We had no light either but the Mothers made candles and they were used for whatever lights were used needed after dark, both in the homes and meetings places but we had good times anyway. In 1869 my husband, James Keart, was called by President Young to come to the Bear Lake country, to help settle it. And in July 12th 1869 I was married to him in the endowment house. In August 29th 1869 we landed in round valley and commenced to make a home there and some of the boys are living there yet. The 1st winter wasn't very bad for Brother Keart, my husband came from Grantsville and through the Hills about the middle of Jan. But we have seen some pretty hard times both as to weather and other things such as frozen smutty wheat ground in a burr mill. So anyone can see what black sticky bread we had to eat and not a great deal of that at times and no fruit in the country either. Some of the men folks at Paris had started a brass band with Bro Josiah Eardly as leader.

Apostle Charles C Rich was president of the Bear Lake Stake which included the land from Soda Springs to Eganston. I hardly think Star Valley was settled then but if it was it belonged to the Bear Lake Stake too. And a sister told me when they visited the different associations they had to have a team take bedding and vittles and camp out, a night or 2 but had good times, visiting among the people.

Either the first winter or second president Rich got the band boys to come to Meadowville, Roundvalley and Laketown to play for us and cheer us up a bit and we sure appreciated it. And once when President Budge was in office he came to Lake town in a preaching tour and brought a few good singers with him which was a treat, also. And once Viola Pratt Gillette came up to visit some of her relatives and she came and sang for us. One other piece was a hymn, a favorite of President McKinley. One she had sung for him was, "Just As I Am Without One Plea." And she sang it wonderfully well. Then we had plays and dances and social parties. If they weren't very stylish everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. I know the climate has changed a good deal for the better ever since President John Taylor came to visit us and blessed the land for our benefit. Now we raise berries, apples, pears, plums and lots of good gardens. I lived at Otter Creek 8 years, 10 miles from Laketown and 5 miles from Randolph. My nearest neighbor living a mile away and sometimes I didn't have one nearer than 3 miles away. 2 of my children died there, a girl and boy, and were brought to Laketown for burial. I don't like to think of those days much too sad. I have worked in every association where women work. My 1st work was in the primary. Sister Harriet Robinson was president, then sister Eliza Johnson 1st counsellor and I 2nd. I bought a little contact for the children and at Christmas time we had the primary children play it as it was a Christmas story. Since then every year they have something of the kind. Was chosen a teacher in the 1st religion class organized here at that time. Had to have a certificate signed by the president of the church, mine being signed by President Wilford Woodruff after that by the Stake President Bro Keetch. Was president of young Ladies for about 5 years, teacher in relief society, 2nd and 1st counsellor in relief society, teacher in Sunday school for years, for years member of the Choir, for years, and president of the primary for 1 year. I am the Mother of 10 children, 6 boys and 4 girls. Their names - names are Merlin Edith, Jeanette, John, Henry, George, Robert Willis, Elsworth, Morton, Ethel Jane, Grace and Grace. Mother had 11 children, 10 girls and one boy. Their names are 1, Emma Jane, 2 Evaline, 3 Louisa, 4 Edith, 5 Catherine Curtis, 6 Marentna Althera, 7 Merlin, 8 Leonora, 9 Jane, 10 John 11 Patsy Ellen. I have 42 grandchildren alive at this writing and 10 great-grandchildren all having been baptized into the church when old enough. 23 grandsons and 18 granddaughters. I am in my 80th year at this writing.

I remember one Christmas I made the children some Molasses candy and they took some of the neighbors children, (Bro Wards), who lived a mile away and their children gave mine each a little tin cake cutter a piece. My two girls I mean and that was all they got and were so pleased with them. So in those days a very little pleased children.

Mother.