

HISTORY #9

A Sketch of the life of
Merlin (Eastham) Kearl as related
by her in a letter written by her to
her son Chase Kearl.

(There is a lot of repetition
with previous histories but
since Merlin wrote it I have left it
just as she wrote her letter.)

I was born on November 6, 1852 in 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 Lancashire.

I was born in Lancashire. My father was a Locomotive Engineer having run on one line in England for 21 years. My parents were ready to come to Utan several years before the finally did come in 1865. I never knew the reason that the journey was delayed. We lived in Masbro until I was seven years old and then we moved to the city of Leeds in Yorkshire. While we were there part of the time we kept conference house where



Merlin when she was about 13 years old.

January 4th 1932¹
a sketch of the life of your
mother

Merlin Eastham Keal

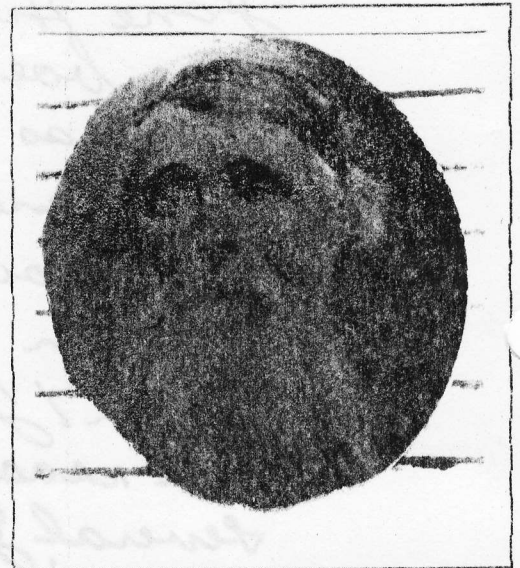
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the missionaries would make their home while in that part of the mission. I well remember President Joseph F. Smith and Ezra T. Bensen and others coming to our house whenever they had time and they surely seemed to enjoy the time spent there.

My father was a very temperate man and when the English Government planned to build a railroad in the East Indies they asked father if he would go there. Father told mother that if she would be willing for him to go for four years that when he came back he would go to Utah with her. She gave her consent. Mother was not a very strong woman but she was willing to make sacrifices for the sake of the Gospel. 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 from Vickers, James Ratcliffe and Andrew V. Millward.



My Father - John Eastham

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James Ratcliffe and Andrew McMillan

Father came home after staying 4 years in India. He worked a year at his old job and then on the 29th of April in 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 that it was the best and quickest trip that he had ever made across the Atlantic. The Saints had a merry time coming over, with meetings, concerts and some times a little dancing. A band belonged to one company of Saints so we had music.

There were sorrowful times too. One old lady and one baby died on the voyage and it was a pitiful sight to see them lowered into the ocean.

At last we landed at Castle Gardens in New York City. We staid there a day or two and then traveled on to a little place called Wyoming



My Mother - Jane (Huntington) Eastham.

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which was 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 shelter to get into and no place for our goods but the out of doors. There was 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 that we stayed there. We stayed there nine weeks while the brethren went to Omaha for wagons and cattle. Father had paid the way for a Brother and his wife to cross the ocean and for a single man so that they would drive our teams across the plains. We had two wagons, four yoke of oxen, and two cows when we started. The cows were milked in the morning and the milk put in a little keg and fastened onto the side of the wagon. The jolting of the wagon churned a little pat of butter which provided us with a little butter each night.

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We traveled with the church freight train as there weren't enough independents to make a train by themselves. We didn't have any bad luck after we got started on the plains but we had lots of mishaps at the start such as broken wagon tongues and run-aways because of the wild teams and poor drivers and when I think about it now I don't know how we got along as well as we did. I'm sure that 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 that happened.

I remember one in particular. We had to come down to the Platte River through a gulch that was just wide enough for the wagons to get through.

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Just wide enough for the wagons to get through and then the oxen had to jump into the river and swim 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 Platte 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 to keep on traveling all night as the Danish train had been raided by Indians the night before and the wife of one of the brethren was stolen and he never saw her again. The fort was up a ravine quite a distance from the road

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the wagon trains had to travel (about 3 miles).

I have seen accounts of the raid but they weren't anything like I heard it told by those that were there. When we were about 3 days drive from Great Salt Lake one of my Brother-in-Laws, James Ratcliffe, met us with ox team and wagon and brought 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 go 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 use all of the teams to get one wagon to the top and leave the other at the bottom of the mountain until they could come back for it. It was 12:00 P.M. that night before we could go to bed.

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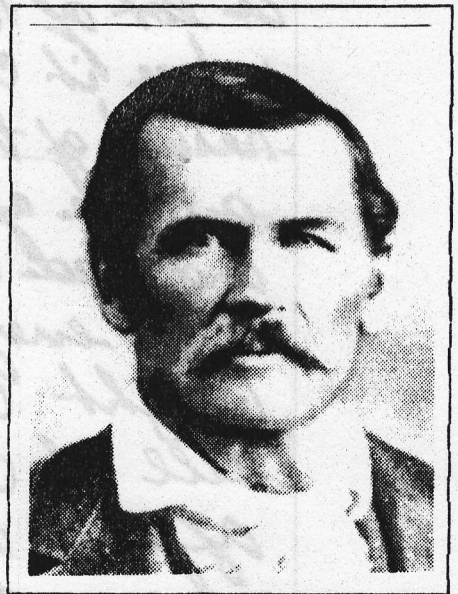
and it was November 6th, my 13th birthday. Mother made a roly polly pudding to celebrate it. The next day we arrived in Salt Lake City and there was a band playing and the music sounded heavenly to me.

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 when we left because it was cheap as a result of the civil war. Mother and Father kept a store after they arrived in Grantsville. Their price list came from Salt Lake every two weeks and having bought cheap they could afford to sell at Salt Lake prices which they did. After a while they sold out since it was too much for my Mother. She has never 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.

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There wasn't any coal in Grantsville 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 down from the hills in one day. The Bishop asked the men folk to haul it from the hills. We had no lights either but Mother made candles and they were used for whatever light was needed after dark, both in the homes and meeting places. We had good times anyway.

In 1869 my husband, James Kearl, was called by President Young to go to the Bear Lake Country and help settle it. On July 12, 1869 I was married to him in the Endowment House. On August 29, 1869 we arrived in Round Valley and commenced to make our home there. Some of my boys are living there yet. The first winter wasn't very bad. My husband came from Grantsville through the hills about the middle of January.



My Husband - James Kearl

19
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We have seen some pretty hard times, both the weather and the crops. We ate such food as frozen smutty wheat ground in a burr mill. We had black sticky bread and not a great deal of that at times and no fruit was grown in the valley. Some of the men folks at Paris had started a brass band with Bro. Josiah Eardly as the leader.

Apostle Charles C. Rich was president of the Bear Lake Stake which include the land from Soda Springs to Evanston. I hardly think that Star Valley was settled then but if it was it belong to the Bear Lake Stake too. A sister told me that when they visited the different associations they had to have a team to take bedding and food and that they camped out, a night or two but they had good times visiting among the members.



A View of the Bear Lake Valley

Grantsville and through the ¹⁰
Hills about the middle of Jan
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10. *fantastic and through the hills about the mouth of the river we have a view down the valley and the things such as paper*

Either the first or the second winter President Rich had the band come to Meadowville, Round Valley and Laketown to play for us and cheer us up a bit and we surely appreciated it. Once when President Budge was in office he came to Laketown on a preaching tour and brought a few good singers with him as a treat. Once Viola Pratt Gillette came up to visit some of her relatives and she sang for us. One of the songs she sang was a hymn, a favorite of President McKinley that she had sung for him, "Just As I Am Without One Plea". She sang it very well.

We had plays and dances and social parties. If they weren't very stylish everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. I know that the climate has changed a good deal for the better ever since President John Taylor came and visited us and blessed the land for our benefit.



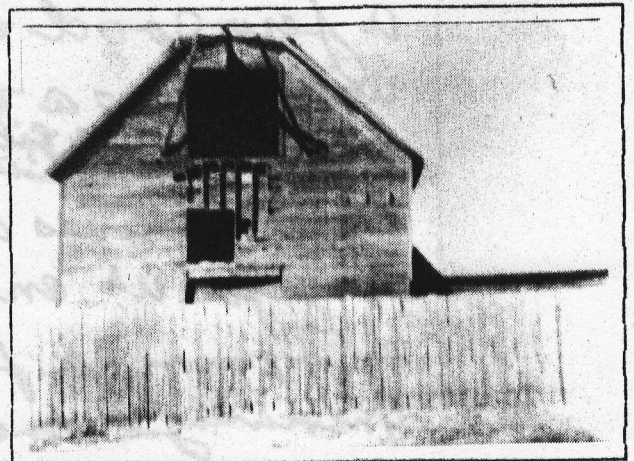
Me in my middle years.

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Now we raise berries, apples, pears, plums and have lots of good gardens.

I lived at Otter Creek for 8 years. It is 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. Two of my children died there, a girl and a boy and were brought to Laketown for burial. I don't like to think of those days. They were much too sad.

I have worked in every association where women work. My last calling was in the Primary. Sister Harriet Robinson was president, with Sister Eliza Johnson ad 1st counselor and I was second. I bought a little cantata for the children and at Christmas time we had the Primary children play it. Since then every year they have something of that kind.



The Kearl Barn where we held socials.

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Chosen a teacher in the 1st religion
Class organized here at that time

I was chosen a teacher in the 1st religion class organized here at that time. For this calling one had to have a certificate signed by the President of the church. Mine was signed by President Woodruff and after that by Stake President Keetch.



My home in Laketown.

I am the mother of 10 children, 6 boys and 4 girls. I have 42 grandchildren alive at this writing and 10 great grandchildren all having been baptized into the church when old enough.

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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 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 are
Merlin Edith Jeanette John Henry
George Robert Williss Elsworth
Morton Ethel Jane Chase and
Grace mother had 11 children
10 girls or boy, their names are
1 Emma Jane 2 Evaline 3 Louisa
4 Edith 5 Catherine Curtis 6 Marentha
Althera 7 Merlin 8 Leonora 9 Jane
10 John 11 Betsy Ellen I have 12
grandchildren alive at this writing
and 10 great grandchildren
all having been baptized into the
church when old enough

I have 23 grandsons and 18 grand daughters. I am in my 80th year at this writing.

I remember one Christmas I made the children some molasses candy and they took some to the neighbors children, the Wards, who lived a mile away and their children gave my two girls a little tin cake cutter. In those days a very little pleased children.

Mother



Me - when I was an old lady.

14²⁹
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Mother