LOUISA PURSER HANCEY

Written by herself

I was born 17 July 1843, at Cassiston Parish, Pembrokeshire, South Wales. My father, Francis and my mother Frances Eynon Purser joined the Church in 1846. Elder David Burgoyone and Elder Danial Jones were the Elders who brought the Gospel to our home in Wales, where my parents entertained the Elders and gave them a home whenever they visited that part of Wales.

I was the 2nd child in our family of 9—4 girls and 5 boys. I was baptized by my father when 8 years of age. We thought nothing of walking from 8 to 10 miles to attend our meetings. I received many strong testimonies of the truth of the Gospel when the saints would arise and bear their faithful testimonies.

I left my home and loved ones at the age of 19 years, being the first one of my family to leave home for the Gospel’s sake to emigrate and go with the saints to Utah. We had a comfortable home on the seashore, where as a little girl, I loved to gather shells of the ocean. I sailed from London on the ship, AMAZON, on the 4 June 1862. There was a large company of saints and we were 7 weeks crossing the ocean. One night there was a terrible storm, the masts and sails were blown away, the passengers were all ordered below deck. The saints united in prayer and all felt that all would be well. I went to sleep and never heard a sound all night. The next morning all was calm and clear; they put up a new mast and we sailed on, thankful that our lives had been spared.

We arrived in New York the last of July 1862. We started from Council Bluffs 10 Aug. 1862, to cross the plains with ox teams in the Thomas Ricks Company. I walked all the way and many times was so tired, weary and footsore, I could hardly get into camp. I assisted with the work for a large family for my board and many times the provisions were very scant. At Florence, Nebraska, our wagons caught fire and all my clothing, except what I stood up in, were burned. When my shoes wore out I made some out of an old coat which seemed to be a soft resting place for prickly pears. We had to be very careful when in the vicinity of Indians as we had several narrow escapes from marauding bands. At times we were unable to make our campfires for fear of attracting them to our camp. Many a night we went to bed cold and hungry. During the day we would gather buffalo chips for our campfire at night. In some places buffalo were plentiful and in that we were able to secure meat to help out our provisions for which we were very thankful. Several times we were nearly stampeded by them. At night we would sing songs around the campfire to cheer us on our way. Two of our favorite songs were “Do They Miss Me At Home” and “The Handcart Song.” Oh, how our voices would ring out on the night air.

We arrived in Salt Lake City 4 Oct. 1862, almost 2 months from the time we started across the Plains. There were willow fences in Salt Lake City, along the main part of the City. I remained in Salt Lake for one month, then my Uncle John Blanchard, whose first wife was my mother’s sister, and who built the first hotel in Logan (The Blanchard Hotel), which stood for many years as a landmark on First West and Center Street in Logan, took me to Logan with him. There were about 15 or 20 families in Logan at this time. Among them were David Reese and wife Martha Griffin, Charles Griffin and wife, and John Blanchard and wife and some children. The meetings were held in a bowery. I was baptized by Marion Lewis and confirmed by Elder Eli Bell.
I lived a short time with the family of Brother Gates, then went to Hyde Park, and lived during the winter with the family of Brother John W. Woolf. I was married to James Hancey 9 April 1865, in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City by Pres. Joseph F. Smith.

There were but a few families in Hyde Park at this time, so it was real pioneer life. The frost and grasshoppers took our gardens and at one time the black crickets came down from the hills and ate our gardens in an hour or so, even the onions. I was here in Utah about 5 years before my father and his family started for Zion. My mother was not well when they started. She died while crossing the ocean and was buried at sea. Sister Ann Smith, wife of Bishop Thomas X. Smith of Logan, was present at the time. It was a great trial for her devoted husband and children, and indeed a great trial to me, when I arrived in Salt Lake City to meet them and learned I would never see my mother again in this life.

When my family was grown and most of them married, I again, with my 2 youngest sons, pioneered a new country in the Snake River Valley of Idaho. We settled on a ranch 15 miles below Blackfoot, Idaho. There were just a few scattered ranches there at the time. I assisted in building my first ranch house. After living in Snake River Valley for 18 years, during which time the scattered ranches and farms grew into beautiful little towns, I moved to Logan to be able to go to the Temple and spend the remainder of my days near some of my children. I am the mother of 9 children, 3 boys and 6 girls, 3 died in infancy and 6 are living at this time of June 1924.

Louisa Purser Hancey passed away at her home in Logan City 30 June 1926, at the age of 83, and is buried in Hyde Park Cemetery.

Official records indicate the following for Louisa Purser Hancey: Born at Lawrenny Ferry, Cosheston Parish, Pembrokeshire, South Wales.
Baptized 21 Sep. 1857 and was a member of the Caffern Mt. Branch of the church in South Wales. Sealed to James Hancey in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City 2 Sep. 1865, by Heber C. Kimball. This was the same day of the sealing for James Hancey and his first wife Rachel Seamons Hancey.

Fred’s family tells about his mother as follows: She was a small delicate woman, who loved luxury and never had it. He remembers her being out in the yard in a hobble skirt, when a pig who was being chased, ran into her skirt and knocked her down. She yelled “man overboard, Freddie, man overboard.” She was raised in a Welch fishing village and this was their emergency cry for help.

Fred also tells about his mother having trouble with her feet, and needing new shoes and he said he would buy some for her. She said, “Now, Freddie, I wear a size four.” Fred bought her a size five and when he put them on her, she said, “Oh Freddie, these are the most comfortable four’s I’ve ever had on my feet.

The older two children of Moses remember their grandmother and describe her as follows: Grandmother was an elderly lady of small stature. She was cheerful and fun-loving and would sing and jib even in those later years when we knew her. We remember her as being quite blind with cataracts. Also, that she would come to our place to go fishing with Dad on the Bear River.

A granddaughter Leah, gives the following information on her grandmother Louisa:
Louisa returned to Logan establishing a small home on North Main Street. Here she could sitit
Ed and Lettie her children, as well as the Purser family members living there. The memory of her slim erect figure, even into latter years, her fishing in near-by streams, her vigorous walk, together with her independent spirit, are legacies for the family of this remarkable woman.

Typed into computer by Kathleen Jardine Woolf 19 Oct. 2002 Idaho Falls, Idaho
Information taken from book JAMES HANCEY AND HIS FAMILY Pub. 1988