

Emma Sutton Smith

*Compiled from a history of Emma written by Bertha A. Babcock
for the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers*

Emma Sutton was born in Ridware, Staffordshire, England, March 2, 1838, to Jane Sutton. She was christened in the beautiful cathedral in Lichfield, England.

Her childhood was spent in the little town of Ridware. When she was still a young girl, she went to work for an English lady and assisted her in caring for her children and doing household tasks. She was especially gifted in caring for the lady's children. They loved her and knew her better than they did their mother. She used to tell her grandchildren about the time her mistress became angry with her for some reason and sent her away. When it was time to put the children to bed, they refused to settle down. The youngest one cried for hours saying, "I want my Emma. I want my Emma," until they finally had to go and bring her back.

Emma went to work after this at an English farmhouse. Here she cooked, fed the chickens, milked cows, washed dishes and did many other household tasks, even sometimes helping to bring in the hay as it was the custom for "all hands and the cook" to help at the "haying while the sun shone." At this farm she met a young man who was one of the farm hands. He was a tall and good looking boy who looked at the serious and practical side of life, honest and fearless and very religious in nature. Emma was a pretty girl with a round rosy face and serious gray eyes. She had a spirit of independence and a certain spirited air which attracted



Emma Sutton Smith and son, Arthur (4)
Photo taken just before leaving England.

the young man whose name was James Smith. In his later years, he said he made up his mind when he first saw her that she was the "lass" for him.

When he finally won her, they were married on November 19, 1860, and lived in the small town of Oakley for several years. Here the Mormon missionaries found them and were made welcome in the little home. Both James and Emma were interested in the gospel and were converted by the teachings of the missionaries and by their own study of the gospel. They were baptized by Elder John Nicholson of Salt Lake City, September 23, 1863.

After joining the church, they made plans to go to Zion. They left England for their long journey to America April 29 or 30, 1866. Emma was now 28 yrs old with three children - Arthur,

Jane and Martha.† They sailed on the ship "John Bright" and were on the ocean for six weeks. There was a company of saints and several missionaries who were returning to Utah. They traveled in what was called "steerage" or in the lower part of the ship and very uncomfortable but less expensive. In the company there were two or three babies born on the ship and Emma took care of them. She had to beg hot water from the steward for the morning baths. Whenever she asked, she was greeted with a gruff tone and rough sailor's language.

After arriving in America, they traveled through some of the states in cattle cars. They crossed the plains in the Thomas E. Ricks Company. Starting in Wyoming, Nebraska, on July 6, 1866, in the company of 251 souls and 46 wagons, they arrived in Salt Lake August 29, 1866.†† They came with the first mule train to cross the plains. That did not mean they could ride. There were provisions to bring. James was sick all the way to Utah with Mountain Fever and had to ride part of the time but walked the greater part of the distance with the aid of two walking sticks letting the two younger girls take turns riding on his shoulders. It was a most difficult journey. Emma walked a thousand miles. Since she was healthy, she was not permitted to ride. Every morning she carried her 1 year old baby. Arthur was five and Jane three so they walked. Since they were in hostile Indian territory much of the time, the men had to guard at night. Emma often told her grandchildren how she crossed the Platte River clinging to the end-gate of the wagon dragging her feet through the cold water. When they reached Echo canyon (8 or 10 miles from Salt Lake) in Utah, Captain Ricks told Emma to get up in the wagon, "for," said he, "you have walked all the way." They were standing near a rock and he continued, "Sister, sit down on this rock while I give you a blessing. You deserve it, for you have been faithful." These were the only miles Emma rode in the wagon.

When they finally reached Salt Lake, they camped in what was known as the Tithing yard and spread quilts in an enclosure that had been used as a pigpen. They remained in Salt Lake about 2 ½ months in the company of other Saints. The people in Salt Lake were very good to them. On November 19, 1866, they moved to Kaysville and rented a farm in the west part of Kaysville from William Booth.

Here they still had many hardships. Emma's husband was still in poor health. She worked hard and had few comforts. She used to wash for people. For many hours of hard work she often received enough home-made soap to do her own washing. She did sewing and knitting



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for her own family and others. She used to gather prickly-pears, scald them, remove the thorns then feed them to the pigs. Much of this work had to be done with no shoes on her feet. Her first pair of shoes in Utah was given to her by Mrs. John R. Barnes who had bought a pair too small for her feet so she gave them to Sister Smith. She gleaned wheat from the fields and sold it for the sum of nine dollars. With this money she bought material called ticking and made what she called a straw tick. The clean new material filled with fresh straw made a very luxurious bed. It was put on the floor as they had no bedstead. She also gleaned wheat to pay for her first feather bed which was a still greater luxury and comfort.

Later the family moved to a farm on the “bench” in Clearfield and still later back to Kaysville where James built them a comfortable adobe brick house on the east side of the town. Many times Emma had a long piece of wood propped on a chair and one end in the stove. One day fire dropped from the wood onto the floor and soon the house was in flames. Selina, the youngest daughter, was 15 years old at the time (about 1889 or 1890). After that James built for



James and Emma Smith's home in Kaysville, UT
13 Crestwood Rd. formerly Cemetery St.

his family a comfortable two-story, red brick house for his industry and thrift had brought him by this time prosperity and a chance to enjoy some of the comforts of life. A large orchard of peach, pear, plum and apple trees surrounded the house. The front yard was made beautiful by many flowers and a box hedge in place of a fence.

Along the walk grew beautiful hawthorn trees and others. To the Smith grandchildren it was a really wonderful place; one of the most interesting features to them being the large hay loft above the barn where adventurous games could be played in the hay. The house still stands although remodeled and modernized.

Emma was the mother of ten children, five boys and five girls. Martha, who was the baby when they came to Zion, died of typhoid fever in her 18th year. Johnny, the youngest, died when an infant. Curly-haired David, with deep set dark blue eyes, was her special pride and joy. She often told her grandchildren how handsome and well-behaved he was as a little boy and how he could play any musical instrument he could get his hands on, even a tin whistle. His special favorite was his violin. David was the youngest living child.

Her fifth child and second son, James (Jim), was born on the frosty November morning when the rails of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad were laid through or past the town of Kaysville. When he grew up he heeded the call of the gold rush in the Klondike in the 1890's. He remained there for 16 years. This was one of Emma Smith's sorrows for he was not heard

from in all these years. She never gave up her hope that he would return. She never failed to feed the hungry tramp who came to the door. She would always ask them in to eat at the kitchen table. This was a source of annoyance to her husband who told her she should not let them in the house, but she always reminded him that Jim might be hungry somewhere for all they knew. She did not know the joy of Jim's return for he returned four years after her death.

James and Emma Smith gave free board and lodging in their home to many of the English saints who came to Kaysville until they could get places to live. One English boy, George Green, lived with them as their own son from the time he came until he was grown, and they also befriended his mother, Hannah Green, when she came later to join her son. Among those to whom they gave a home was the Bishop family who stayed with them for a year. Two of the boys stayed longer and seemed almost like members of the family. Later, Arthur Smith married Sarah Alice Bishop and Lucy Belle married Amos Bishop.

Emma Smith used to take food and other needed things to the poor and often helped care for the sick. In those days Fast Day was on the first Thursday of each month and anyone having donations of food or clothing was supposed to take them to fast meeting then they were distributed to the poor. Emma had her own way though. She used to take them to the poor herself. For this she was taken to task more than once and was told that if she did it that way she would not receive credit in heaven, but she still persisted in her own charitable way.

One of the things she liked to do was to cook a real Sunday dinner for her family. Her specialty was roast beef and Yorkshire pudding in the English way.



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She loved flowers and her front yard was full of them - honeysuckle vines, lilac and all kinds of old fashioned flowers. Often a gypsy girl who came to beg buttermilk would leave carrying a large bouquet of flowers picked for her by Sister Smith, as well as the needed buttermilk in the tin bucket.

She loved a white apron with wide home-made lace and always wore one in the afternoon and on Sunday. She always said she didn't feel dressed without her apron. One of her greatest desires was to have a black silk dress to wear to church.

James and Emma Smith did nothing unusual or extraordinary but helped in an honest and industrious way to build up the community in

which they lived and were honored and respected. They made their living by farming and sheep raising. To help out Emma used to dry fruit and sell it. James raised sorghum cane and made molasses or sorghum in an old-fashioned sorghum mill. He also owned a small flour or grist mill, the Weinel Mill purchased from John Weinel, run by water power - built over a creek about a half a mile from his home. Here he ground the grain for himself and his neighbors, with the help of his oldest son.

None of James or Emma Smith's relatives ever joined the church as far as is known, except a nephew of James, Charles Prigmore, whose parents had died, and James had him come to Utah. Emma lived to see more prosperous days, to enjoy the fruits of the gospel. On April 19, 1907, she passed away in Kaysville at the age of 69 of a cerebral hemorrhage. She was buried in the Kaysville Cemetery.

She was loved and respected by all who knew her for her kind and charitable ways, her industry and thrift, above all for her faithfulness to the gospel for which she had left her native land, her family and friends.

†The youngest child to sail was indeed Martha, although the ship list states "Matthew".

††SOURCES: Deseret News, 16 Aug. 1866, p. 289

"First Immigration Train," Deseret News [Weekly], 30 Aug. 1866, p. 309.