

Emma Walker Grover

written by Julie Cannon Markham 2008
revised in 2011 after receiving a history written by
Luetta Nell Jackson Schade

The spring of 1856 found twenty-two year old Emma Walker and her twenty-five-year-old sister Elizabeth on the deck of the ship *Enoch Train*, sailing for Boston from Liverpool. They were traveling with five hundred other LDS converts under the leadership of thirty-seven-year-old President Edmund Ellsworth, a son-in-law to Brigham Young who was returning from his mission in England. Many other returning missionaries were also on this voyage, the passengers referring to them as “ministering angels.” Emma and Elizabeth were traveling alone.

They left behind a home of great wealth. Their father, Henry Walker, owned a salt mine in Bristol which brought him great prosperity. He had provided a lovely home for his wife, five sons and his two youngest children, Elizabeth and Emma. (An infant daughter had died many years earlier.) His wife Elizabeth had joined the LDS Church, but Henry did not want his family to emigrate. However, their son John had already emigrated to Philadelphia. Against their father’s wishes, Emma and Elizabeth traveled almost two hundred miles north to Liverpool where they embarked on the *Enoch Train*.

Among the other passengers was an unrelated sixteen-year-old girl also named Elizabeth Walker. This Elizabeth, whose life would soon be forever intertwined with Emma’s, was traveling with her mother, the widow Elizabeth Coleman Walker, who had recently married the widower William Birch. Brother Birch’s son James was traveling with his wife and three little children.

Upon arriving in Boston on May 1st, the passengers were taken to the train station in large, two-story omnibuses pulled by horses. They traveled by rail and then by steamer to New York City in two days. The church agents who managed the emigrants proceeded to put all the travelers in boxcars with their luggage. They were then “forwarded” on to Iowa City, a trip taking ten days.

The trip west would be President Ellsworth’s third journey across the plains. A convert from New York, he had settled in Nauvoo, where he married Elizabeth Young. His first trip to Utah was in 1847 with the vanguard company traveling with Brigham Young. Also in that company were Thomas Grover and Stephen Markham. Edmund was asked to stay at the Platte River with Thomas Grover to ferry succeeding travelers across. Wagon trains to Oregon paid in goods, which were greatly needed by the Saints. A few years after settling in the Utah Territory, Edmund took a second wife. In 1854 he left both families in Salt Lake City and crossed the plains, this time heading east, where he sailed to England. While serving his mission, he dreamed about being asked to lead a handcart company across the plains. When a letter with this request from Brigham Young arrived a few weeks later, he felt this was an inspired petition, and he accepted. President Young believed handcarts could be pushed across the plains by healthy immigrants faster than wagons could be pulled by slow-moving oxen. The passengers from both the *Samuel Curling* and *Enoch Train* met in Iowa City and began the process of obtaining and drying the wood for the handcarts according to Brigham Young’s designs. In their haste, not all of the handcarts were built to the specifications, and repairs made along the way were a constant headache. In a few cases, wood from a lost handcart was used for fuel, a pleasant relief from

burning buffalo chips.

Early snows fell on the weary travelers as they reached the Rocky Mountains. At this point, James Birch died after a short illness. His widow Mary Ann continued on, giving birth to a healthy baby boy before Christmas. William Birch suffered terribly from frostbite. He died after reaching the Salt Lake Valley.

In October of 1856, and likely through the intervention of Edmund Ellsworth, Emma married forty-nine year old Thomas Grover in the Endowment House, just a few months after arriving from England. Thomas took her into his Farmington home with two other wives. At that time he was the father of twenty-four children. Thomas Grover had been a faithful member of the Church, being taught the gospel in New York by Joseph Smith and Sidney Ridgon and serving on the high council in Nauvoo. His first wife died in Nauvoo, and before moving west with the Saints, he had married the widow Caroline Nickerson and sisters Hannah and Loduska Tupper. (The marriage to Caroline did not last long.) Three months after Emma's marriage, and probably with her gentle persuasion, Thomas married seventeen-year-old Elizabeth Walker, Emma's fellow traveler.

During this period, Emma and Elizabeth's parents joined the LDS Church and emigrated to the United States. They were reunited with their son John in Philadelphia. One night, Henry went for a walk carrying \$500. He was robbed and murdered. His wife, broken with grief, died three months later.

Emma's older sister Elizabeth married an LDS immigrant. The marriage ended quickly. She gave birth to a little girl at the end of 1857. A few years later she married Isaac Green. He adopted her daughter and they had a large family, settling in Wellsville, just fifteen miles from Farmington where Emma and Elizabeth Grover lived. The widow Elizabeth Coleman Birch married a widower who died, and then another immigrant. She settled in Logan. These were all new settlements; these women continued to be pioneers.

Emma and Thomas Grover had nine children, six of whom lived to adulthood. Elizabeth and Thomas Grover also had nine children during this same time period, five of whom lived to adulthood. In addition to these eighteen children, Loduska and Hannah still had children at home. By 1871, Hannah had divorced Thomas and married into another polygamous family. A lovely photo exists of Loduska, Emma and Elizabeth together.



Back, l-r: Emma Walker Grover, Elizabeth Walker Grover; front: Loduska Tupper and one of her grandchildren.

Thomas Grover died in 1886. Emma remained in Farmington for about twenty-five years, near many of her family members. In particular, her sons watched over her. Her sister Elizabeth Green died in 1908. After that Emma moved to Garland, Utah, to live near her youngest son Albert. Elizabeth Grover had moved to Garland much earlier, at the insistence of her son Walter. Elizabeth Grover died in 1918 while visiting her daughter in Idaho. Emma died in 1920 during a visit to her daughter in St. Anthony, Idaho, living with her granddaughter Mary Jane Flint until shortly before her death.

Sources:

LDS Church records in New Family Search, which show that Henry Walker was baptized in 1857.

Mormon Immigration Index

LDS Temple Records

In 2011 I learned that Tamera Bacon Johnson, a member of my current ward, is a descendant of Emma Walker Grover. She provided a short biography of Emma Walker written by her grandmother, Luetta Nell Jackson Schade.