

Jackson R Wanless & Jane Bell

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In the little town of Alston, Cumberland County, England near the Scottish border, lived the Wanless and Bell families. The family of Jackson Wanless and Mary Russell consisted of two boys and two girls: William, Jackson, Isabella and Ann. On May 31, 1826 Mary Russell died, leaving Jackson with the care of the children. He later married Ann White.

Jackson Wanless, Sr. and William Bell were both miners by trade. They were honest, hard working, home loving people and it was in this peaceful environment the children grew to maturity. When William Wanless was twenty-two he married a beautiful girl by the name of Isabella Bell. They were blessed with four lovely children, but as each little spirit came into the world, it was only privileged to stay a little while. The eldest child, a boy, lived to be six. The mother, stricken with grief at the loss of her children, passed away two years later; so William broke up his home and went back to live with his parents. By this time Jackson had married Sarah Bell, and they were blessed with two children, a boy and a girl. The boy, who was christened William after his uncle, passed away at eleven months, and a year later the mother died, leaving her husband with one little girl, Mary, age three.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was brought to Alston in the early 1850's, and Jackson Wanless Sr. and William Bell were the first to be baptized into the Church in that vicinity. Immediately the spirit of gathering took possession of them, and as money was very hard to get, each family member pledged themselves to help each other financially should they decide to emigrate to the New World. Inasmuch as William had lost his family and had no dependents, he decided to go and try his luck in America. He sailed across the ocean and finally took up his abode in Richmond, Ray County, Missouri in the year 1850. A year or two after his arrival he helped finance the passage of his brother, Jackson, and family. Jackson, by this time, had married his wife's older sister, Jane Bell, and they had been blessed with two children, Jackson and Sarah. This little family, together with Mary, who was now eight years of age, decided to migrate to America and join William.

They left Liverpool, England November 18, 1856 on the sailing vessel Columbia under the leadership of J. Williams. The weather was very bad, as winter had already commenced, and there was a great deal of sickness and several deaths during the crossing. However, they made the voyage in forty-five days, landing at Castle Garden, New York January 1, 1857. Castle Garden is now known as Battery Park. It was previously an old fort.

Mary remembered how cross the custom's officers were with them, and how they threw everything overboard, including their bedding, because there had been so much sickness on board. After a short stay in New York, they took a train to St. Louis where they were

Jackson R. Wanless--1823

met by William and a half-sister, Ellen Wanless Sharp, who had moved down from Canada to Missouri. What a time of rejoicing—so much news to hear as to the condition of father and the other members of the family.

In a few days, through the help of Robert Sharp, Ellen's husband, Jackson succeeded in obtaining a lease on some ground. He immediately started clearing it for farming. At this time the question of slavery was at its height and there was a great deal of contention and unrest among the people. Jackson had been a coal miner in England and he found it extremely difficult to adjust himself to life on the farm. The ground that he had been trying to make produce food, looked more favorable for coal to him, so he finally gave way to his impulse and started digging in the hillside. He had not dug long until he struck coal. At this time little interest was taken in his find, as wood was plentiful and much cleaner to burn; therefore, it became necessary to haul the coal to the city to sell. He hauled it in a donkey cart where it sold for from seven to ten cents a bushel. Mary helped her father by pushing the little homemade car in and out of the mine. In crawling behind the car the coal skinned her knees, and to her death her knees were black from the fine coal dust under the skin.

Shortly before the twins, Sam and Annie, were born, Jackson mounted Old Bobby, the mule, and made his usual Saturday trip to town to collect for the coal he had sold and to buy some groceries. On the way home he suffered a stroke which paralyzed his left side, and his speech. He managed to hang onto the faithful old mule, and the animal finally got him home. The family heard them come but when the usual call of "hello" was not heard, they were frightened. The unrest was as bad before the Civil war started as after, and they were afraid it was bushwhackers. Finally the donkey brayed and this gave them courage to open the door. Jackson had fallen from the donkey and was lying on the ground. They dragged him into the house. As he could not speak or move, they knew he had suffered a severe stroke. It took Jane and Mary months to nurse him back to partial health. The strain and anxiety of all this proved to be too much for his wife. She became very ill and in spite of all [p.73] the family could do for her gradually grew worse and passed away the 6th of June, 1862 and was buried in the Richmond cemetery.

Mary now had to assume the role of mother and housekeeper. What an enormous responsibility for a girl of fourteen—twins, four years of age, a little sister, six, a brother, nine and a bedridden father. However, with all this added responsibility she never lost sight of the fact that they had left their comfortable home in England to go to Zion; and up until now they had gotten only as far as Missouri. She couldn't forget how her stepmother had pleaded to go on, and even on her death bed had turned to Mary and said, "Don't give your father any peace till he goes to the Rocky Mountains." So she vowed within herself to take the children to the Rockies, even if she had to go alone. She told her father what she intended to do with such earnestness that he believed she meant it, and sold all his holdings for enough money to buy a wagon, a yoke of young steers, a yoke of cows, and a few provisions. Ellen Sharp made the children some new clothes and helped them with the arrangements. Finally, when all was in readiness, they bade goodbye to their loved ones and started the journey west. An emigrant train of non-Mormon settlers, going to Oregon to escape the ravages of war, had been made up at St. Louis, and

Jackson R. Wanless--1823

Jackson made arrangements to go with them as far as Iowa. Here he expected to join a company of Saints. Soon after they started the father suffered another partial stroke of the left side which made him entirely bedfast, and it was necessary for them to drop behind until he was able to travel. They were detained for more than a week, and by the time they were able to continue their journey, they were so far behind, they never did catch up with anyone. The three small children were placed on the backs of oxen and the nine year old boy acted as the pilot.

Day after day they trudged over the country, meeting lawless men who had deserted both armies and were foraging for themselves. They pushed on until the last settlement was left behind and nothing but a treeless and trackless wilderness lay before them. When they reached the Platte River, they should have crossed it, but instead they continued on the north side, which, unknowingly, isolated them from the white people and led them through hostile country. They saw Indians every day. Sometimes they were friendly, while at other times they were sullen. On several occasions young warriors would rush upon them, shout and wave their blankets at the cattle to stampede them, but the cattle only plodded on, and the Indians would ride away. Many times the cattle would be driven off in the night; but in the morning they were always found in a nearby wash, or behind a hill. When they made camp at night, the Indians would come from every direction, and sit around the fire or on the wagon tongue. Mary's only fear was that the wagon tongue might break under their weight; then they would surely be stalled. The hand of the Lord was manifest in their behalf throughout the whole journey, but more especially so [p.74] on several occasions. The Indians knew her father was bedfast, because they would raise the wagon cover and look in. In poor English they asked if her pappy was sick? When she nodded they would ride away, only to return later with rabbits or wild ducks for her to cook for him.

Whirlwinds were very common on the plains and one evening, when they were camped on the banks of the Platte, they encountered an extra strong one. It picked up Annie, one of the twins, and dropped her in the middle of the river. The other children screamed and Mary, who was getting supper, turned around just in time to see Annie drop. She immediately plunged in, clothes and all, and brought her out. How, she did not know, because she knew nothing about swimming and her brother was busy tending the cattle. Whenever they camped by water they let the cattle drink as often and as much as they could, because sometimes it was a long time before they reached water again. The little black heifer that helped pull the wagon each day was the one that supplied the twins with milk, and the only feed she got was what she could forage at night. After the twins were fed, the remainder was put in a jar, and at the end of the day, sometimes it was taken out in the form of butter, thus the rough roads did the churning. Along the way they gathered buffalo chips for fuel and put them in a sack which hung at the back of the wagon. If wood was plentiful at the next stop, they saved the chips for another camp-site where there was no fuel. On one occasion a herd of buffalo came directly toward them. As they neared the wagon they parted, going on either side. This made the cattle very nervous and Mary was afraid they would try to get away from the wagon, but they soon quieted down and stood still while the herd passed.

Jackson R. Wanless--1823

Days wore on, and so did weeks, with the same anxiety and routine, and finally what first appeared as clouds on the western horizon, afterwards took the form of mountains. Each night they would be a little closer, and the mountains seemed a little higher, until, by continuous plodding, they reached the foothills. The wagon by this time showed signs of wear, and the cattle were poor and tired. The going now was harder than ever, because the grade was steep and rocky. Happily, when the summit was reached and they started down the other side, they met the first white man they had seen since they left Missouri. The man was Fred Trane, from Lehi, and he was driving a freight wagon back to Omaha, Nebraska. He told them the name of the canyon they were in was Echo Canyon; also that he knew their Uncle William Wanless in Lehi. He said the quickest way to reach Lehi would be to cut across the pass to the head waters of the Provo river, then follow the river right into the valley. They did as he suggested, and while the road was very poor, they cut several days off the time of their journey. Upon reaching the valley, by still following Mr. Trane's directions, they soon came to Lehi and found their Uncle William's place. Words cannot express the [p.75] joy and gratitude at the meeting of these two families. For the first time in months they slept without fear of Indians, or their cattle being stolen in the night.

William's home was located on the corner of First South and First East. He helped to build them a little dugout on his property, and this, together with their wagon, served as living quarters for the first winter. In the spring they secured a vacant spot on the corner of Third East and Main Street, and with the help of Uncle William again, they built a larger dugout, which was to be their home. It was twelve feet square and six feet deep. They dug down three feet below the ground level, and the walls, which were made from the mud removed from the excavation, extended three feet above the ground. A pole was placed across the top of the walls in the center to hold willows, on which was placed mud. A mud fireplace was put in the west end, and in the south was a small window and a door, over which they hung blankets to keep out the cold.

The father recovered a little and was able to do a few odd jobs, but he could not speak plainly and it was hard for him to walk. He lived only a year after his arrival. He died October 31, 1864 and was buried in the present cemetery. At that time the people were buried in rows and the graves leveled, so that the Indians wouldn't molest them. As a result, no one could ever find his grave. Lawrence Hill, a cousin of the Hutchings, was sexton at the time the roads were put in the cemetery, and when they were clearing the brush away they uncovered fourteen graves. Indications were that the coffins uncovered had been made of wagon boxes and very crude lumber. These graves were in the southeast corner of the cemetery, just even with the sexton's tool house. The southern end of the cemetery did not extend to the road then as it does now, and it is thought that one of the bodies must have been that of Jackson Wanless.

The family was in very poor circumstances at this time and starvation faced them so each child went to live with a friend. Mary married William L. Hutchings; Jackson went to Cottonwood Canyon to work in the sawmill for Francis Armstrong. He married Julia Phillips. Sarah went to Cottonwood also and worked at Dr. Hullinger's home for seven years. She later met and married Millen Atwood. Ann Jane, who became Mrs. Adrian

Jackson R. Wanless--1823

Mayberry, stayed at the home of William Bell, and Samuel went to work for some people in Bear River vicinity. —Eunice Colledge Hutchings

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v.3, p.71