

BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN AND LOUISA PARK

By **Mary Ann Park Brockbank**

Daughter



Mary Ann at age 94

In responding to the request for me to give you a short sketch of this branch of the Park family from the time of their arrival into the Valley of Salt Lake, embracing as it does, over half a century, I find it somewhat difficult, as I must seek my information almost entirely from the fields of memory.

I was a little over four years of age when our family arrived in Salt Lake Valley, in September, 1847, the first year of the colonizing of Utah. We came in President John Taylor's Company. My father's family consisted of our father, John Park and his wife, our mother Louisa Smith Park, and four girls, Jane, Marion, Mary, and Louisa. Soon after our arrival, Father built a log cabin in the old Fort Square, now known as Pioneer Square, Salt Lake City. Prior to this we lived in two wagons we had crossed the plains in, and in stormy weather we had a very uncomfortable time for a family of small children. The houses were built of logs chiefly, and so we arranged that they all faced the center of the square.

Sister Sophia Taylor, wife of President Taylor, taught school in the old fort, where Jane the eldest child attended. Our oxen and cows that we brought across the plains were compelled to subsist on what they could find on the domain of the dry sterile soil. We had little to subsist upon ourselves, being but poorly provisioned for the long dreary time that elapsed before we could get supplies, and that was after we raised them from the dry

sterile soil. Many of the people lived upon very short rations, and in very many instances had to make use of thistle roots, segoes, and other things to help out the living and a rather poor one at that. And to make matters worse, the Indians, who were quite numerous, became troublesome and annoying, and did not scruple to drive the ravages of the crickets upon the meager crops of the settlers. The outlook for the permanent settlement of the valley in 1848, to all appearances, was no probability of any crop being raised on account of the immense swarms of large black crickets that would eat everything that the settlers had planted. All the efforts of the people to save their crops were unavailing; nothing but the hand of Providence could prevent the colony from being entirely annihilated. The story has often been told how the gulls came and ate up the crickets and thus permitted the colony to survive.

After living in the old fort at Salt Lake City for two years, (winters), my father was called in connection with others to settle the Provo River, and though some of our oxen had been driven off by the Indians in the Salt Lake Valley, my Father succeeded in getting his family moved to this place. Here again he built a log cabin in the fort, that was then erected to protect the people from being wiped out by the Indians. These were trying times, as it became necessary for the men to do service in fighting Indians and in standing guard to protect the women and children, and their cattle that they had brought with them, in addition to having to build houses for the shelter of their families, and in subduing the soil and bringing the water out upon it. The number of available men was quite small. After the erection of the old Fort, for some cause it was decided to move the location of the settlement onto higher ground, and another fort was built on the North side of the present city, known as the old Adobe Yards.

The twin boys, William and John, were born in the old first Fort Provo, and here is where sister Jane and myself commenced family cares. Jane had the care of William and I to care for John. Jane being the eldest of the family had the labors of the house to attend to, and I being the next eldest, had to help my father with the work outside, often doing the work of a boy, such as yoking the cattle and driving them on a wagon, loading hay and grain, and taking care of the crops, with scarcely any tools to work with, often loading hay without any pitch-fork; and the chances for getting the use of your neighbors to use were very slim.

After remaining in the last fort for less than two years, my Father again moved his family to what is known as the Dry Creek, where he owned his farming land, and here is where Joseph and Martha, another pair of twins were born, and as the children came along, the labors of the elder children did not diminish; and it seemed to be a continuous struggle to meet the requirements of our daily life. Father and mother had very few idle moments, the Indians being a continuous torment, and for years kept making attacks on

the settlers; and the men were being continually called to go in pursuit of them. So that our lives were constantly in jeopardy. We did not know at what time we would be attacked by them; often times our men would go out for days, and sometimes they would return, with a few scalps of the natives.

My earliest recollection of attending school was one that was kept in the old fort and taught by the late George W. Bean. But our chances for an education in those days were very poor indeed. It seemed as though it took all the energies of the people to meet the necessities of life, and we had to be satisfied with what we could get and be thankful it was no worse. After remaining on the farm for two or three years, Father again moved the family to a lot two blocks west of the present homestead, where he would be nearer the neighbors at about 5th West and 6th South. And here is where David, Albert and Margaret were born. During our residence here we had another severe experience, not with crickets, but with grasshoppers. They became so thick that they obscured the sun. They ate anything of an eatable nature. The green fields of grain were cleared off just as though a fire had swept the surface of the earth. The ground, fences, and houses were covered with them, so that, what seemed to be the greatest necessity of the people, their subsistence was immediately cut off, and a very little surplus of food in the valley for that year, 1855. Of course, many people suffered for want of sufficient food, and with all the efforts of the people to save their crops, it seemed as though starvation was inevitable. Every hope was blighted, but in the last moment, when nearly all the grain was devoured the sea gulls came again to the rescue and they ate up the insects in such numbers that there was a small amount of grain and potatoes raised through replanting. The following year was another gloomy one, but insects did not make everything so bare, and there was sufficient grain raised to tide the people over for another year.

During these times of scarcity, provisions could not be bought for money, there was no stores to go to and the people were compelled to subsist on what they had, or could get, consequently, many people suffered. The following year, 1857, was a prosperous one for crops generally, and the people were filled with gratitude for their deliverance from the pestilence. But one source of trouble had scarcely passed away before another commenced. During the summer of 1857, word came that the Government had issued orders for troops to be sent to Utah to exterminate the Mormon people, and every man in the territory able to do military duty was enrolled for the protection of the homes of the people. The troops came to Utah the following year, being unavoidably detained en route, during a long severe winter, and during which time, all their supplies were used up, and the object of their coming to Utah was defeated though they remained in Utah for four years and were a great help in supplying the needs of the people during that time, as the expedition cost the Government millions of money, and they brought into the country property that was greatly needed, thus proving to be a great blessing to the people and

community.

About the year 1863, my Father again moved to the present homestead on Main Street, and here in 1869 Father died in the 76th year of his age, having worn himself out with toil and hardship. He died honored and respected by all who knew him. From this on, until the year 1880, nothing especially worthy of note happened. Some of the boys and girls married off and commenced raising families. Mother lived on the old homestead doing all she was able to do, and living the life of a devoted and sincere Latter-day-Saint.

Early in July 1880, our brother, Albert, was accidentally shot while practicing for a sham battle for the Fourth of July celebration. He lived but a short time after the accident, and was buried greatly respected. This was a sad affair as he was a promising young man and the hope of a mother's declining years. Mother died in October, 1891, having filled up a life of devotion to the principles of the Gospel and an example of that faith that will live forever. May we who remain as the fruits of our worthy parentage, be able to make as good a record, and that none of their offspring will ever be repellant to the principles that they sought to maintain, and for which they suffered so much, is the prayer and earnest desire of yours.

Very truly,

Mary Ann Park Brockbank

(NOTE: Mary A. Brockbank is John and Louisa's second child)

Source: Park Family files, family history library of Robert N. Reynolds. Image added January 14, 2012.