

Anna Sariah Eagar  
by Lurlene and Rosalia Tenney

Anna Sariah Eagar was the eldest daughter of John Eagar and Sariah Anna Johnson.

Time does not dim the memory of those she loved and served. Anna Sariah Eagar was born at the turn of the century, May 29, 1850. She liked to say she was six weeks older than the Deseret News, (Newspaper published by the L.D.S. church.) Her father, John Eagar joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in New York. He came by boat around South America with Sam Brannon to Yerba Buena, (San Francisco), landing in July of 1846. He soon traveled to Salt Lake City with Mormon Battalion men where he met and married Sariah Anna Johnson, daughter of Joel Hills Johnson. John's and Sariah's first child, Anna Sariah, was born in Mill Creek now a part of Salt Lake City.

Sariah's sister Susan writes in her diary, "We arrived in Salt Lake City on October 3, 1850. We took dinner with Uncle Benjamin and my Aunt Sarah went with us to my father's home in Big Cottonwood. I found my sister Sariah there married to John Eagar. They had a baby girl about six months old, Anna Sariah, and seemed very happy together in their one room log house.

John Eagar soon moved his wife and two children to Manti, Utah where because of his education he found many things to do. He was assessor and collector of taxes, clerk of the court, postmaster, tithing clerk, stake clerk and even lawyer. Anna Sariah told her children of seeing her father wrap bed clothes around himself to sit up in bed to give a woman a divorce. He continued to work even after he became ill. In 1864 he died leaving his wife with eight children. She had a lovely home which still stands, a farm and other property but she longed for her own family so she sold all and went to Virgin City in southern Utah where after two years she married Jacob Workman and took his four motherless children to love as her own.

Anna being the oldest of twelve was the family weaver. She carded, spun and wove nearly everything they used including carpet. Joel, her younger brother tells, "Everybody had to work as soon as he was old enough. The corn harvest was piled in one corner of the very large Loom Room and I was sent there to shell corn. Anna did her weaving in this room and was there when Ammon Tenney came to see her. He had to ride nine miles on horse back to visit her. He must come early and leave early because of hostile Indians. There were kindly greetings between us but he kept looking at me. One day he asked me very kindly to leave.

"No, I have work to do," I told him.

Then he offered me money.

"No I have work to do," I said.

"Just for a little while," he said.

"No," I said.

Then he got a little cross and told me to get out he would shell the corn. I left. I was happy to have a little time to complete a project I had started.

Anna wove and Ammon shelled corn while they made plans. Anna

took the wool as it came from the shearers. She washed it, carded it, spun and wove it, cut and sewed her own wedding dress. They were married in the endowment house in Salt Lake City on November 9, 1867. Their first home was in Toquerville, Utah. Two of Anna's ten children were born there, then they moved to Kanab, Utah so Ammon could be nearer to Jacob Hamblin who needed him as an interpreter. Ammon was gone much of the time with Jacob.

When Ammon was home he was either studying Spanish or the Book of Mormon. Anna had thought much of the commandment of plural marriage practiced by the people of the church at that time. She would discuss the subject with her husband or try to as he would only look up from his book to say "Yes," when she mentioned the commandment. Apparently he paid no attention to her interest until she brought the subject up again and again. One day he looked up at her with disgust. "Do you want to do that?" he asked.

"Yes, I do," Anna answered. "It is a commandment from the lord with a blessing promised for those who fulfill it."

"Alright," he said, "You find her. You will find someone you love and who will live with us in peace. I would rather have that than anything."

But Anna insisted that since she would be his wife he should find her. Ammon found and married Eliza King Udall, sister of David King Udall who had come to Kanab to visit her brother.

Anna and Eliza lived in the same house, taking turn about in the kitchen for eighteen years with never a quarrel. Eliza bore Ammon two daughters, Olive and Phoebe, both born in Kanab. Anna loved these two girls as her own and they tell that they preferred to stay at home with Aunt Annie and the other children rather than go with Ammon and their mother when Ammon took her to cook for him on his many business trips.

If anyone had a cough in the family Anna was after it even in the middle of the night. She would make a fire in the kitchen range to heat water. The cougher would be taken from bed, wrapped in blankets then immersed in water as hot as he could take. Anna would dip the water over his shoulders until he was really warm then dry him with alcohol. After dosing him with bitter aloes she put him in her bed to keep him warm and covered. Olive and Phoebe both say it was getting into Aunt Annie's bed that made them well.

Nathan, Levi and Abbey were born in Kanab. In 1876 Ammon was called to preside over the Indian mission in Arizona and New Mexico, also he was purchasing agent to find and buy locations for Saints. He bought St. Johns for the church. Besides being president of a mission he was presiding elder in St. Johns for one and a half years so his family had to go to the lonely settlement of St. Johns. It was lonely indeed until the President of the Church called David King Udall with one hundred families to go there to make a town. Anna was very happy, she had known the Udall family in Kanab. Ammon spent nearly all of his time on one mission or another leaving Anna and Eliza to manage the best they could.

Church, school, homes had to be built in St. Johns. Elizabeth Cox Whiting was the first school teacher in St. Johns. (Elizabeth was the grandmother of one of Anna's sons-in-law much later.)

Pioneering was in Anna's blood. She could take more hardships than anyone. She never complained. She loved her church enough to

die for it. She had her children and under normal circumstances she was happy.

Ammon moved the family to a place called Windmill Ranch. Lois Janet was born there on December 28, 1879. From there they moved to Cebolleta, (pronounced Savoyeta). (Cebolleta was near the Zuni village. W.W.S.) It was a favorite pastime of the Indians when Ammon was away to come to the house and stand like statues at the door. It made Anna very nervous to have them watching her but she couldn't let them know this. Early one morning a big buck came with two squaws. Anna gave the children their breakfast but she was too nervous to eat. After the two squaws left the men continued to stand there staring in. Anna busied herself with little nothings to keep the children at the table - one of them dropped a spoon. Anna was too nervous to pick it up so she got the child another one. She had to leave the room to get it and when she returned the spoon was gone from the floor. She didn't know what to do at first. She knew that if she let the Indian get away with swiping the spoon he would be bolder next time because he would know she was afraid of him. When she went to the stove she noticed the lengths of stove wood there. She grabbed one and raised it high, lunging in his direction, saying "Give me that spoon." He took the spoon from under his blanket, laughed a little and muttered, "Brave squaw." He left.

Cebolleta was sheep country. Most of the Anglos moved away rather than fight for their rights. Ammon stayed longer than most of them but he too gave up and moved back to St. Johns where three more children were born to Anna. Lulu Maud in October of 1882, Rosalia in October of 1884 and John Eagar in September of 1887.

Under the advice and calling of Bishop Udall Ammon offered himself as a test case to be tried for polygamy. These men thought the authorities couldn't do anything to them because it was not unconstitutional and that it would put to test the case because the polygamists would have no peace from the government until they did. There was no law against it in Arizona but the judge borrowed Utah's law. They were tried, convicted and sentenced to three and a half years of hard labor in the Detroit House of Correction and a three hundred dollar fine. Ammon and four other men served this sentence.

Rosalia was two weeks old when Ammon left for the U.S. House of Corrections. He had a miserable time there. In one of Anna's letters to him she wrote, "How I wish I could serve the sentence for you. I am sure I could stand it easier than you." She assured him that all was being done possible to get him released. His sentence was cut to less than two years for good behavior.

While Ammon was away Anna spent most of the time at Walnut Grove where the family had a farm and garden. (This place is between St. Johns and Springerville, Arizona (-usually called Richville. W.W.S.) Her letters at this time are without complaints. She writes that her brother, Arthur (Arthur was a younger brother of Ammon. W.W.S.) helped the family from time to time. The oldest son of her family was sixteen, she and the three oldest sons, Ammon Junior, Nathan and Levi ran the farm with a little help from a Mexican who lived near. They left the farm each year to put the children in school in St. Johns.

After Ammon returned home he worked hard to put the family on a decent living standard and to pay debts but turned aside from this soon to again answer a call from the church to go to Sonora, Mexico to teach the gospel to the Yaqui Indians. (Ammon was still on the run because he had two wives. He filled a mission to the Papago Indians in southwestern Arizona and northwestern Sonora. This information I got from his diary. W.W.S. He entered the mission in November of 1878 and left it in 1890.)

The government was still after the polygmists and many times Aunt Eliza had to hide when law officers came around. Ammon decided he had had enough of hiding. He traveled to Mexico to prepare for his family to move there.

This move was hard for Anna. She had to leave two little graves on the hill side, Abbey and Lulu Maud (who had died from a vicious strain of measles.W.W.S.) but in 1890 she gathered her children together and with the oldest boy as driver of the team and wagon went to Mexico. They traveled over mountains, through rivers. Heat and cold, rough roads, pioneer food caused not a murmur from these mothers. They arrived in Colonia Diaz, State of Chihuahua in good shape. From this colony Ammon took them to a sawmill where he had a job running it. The sawmill was in the mountains.

Ammon married a third time, Hettie Millicent Adams. He married with the consent of his other wives. Hettie was younger than Eliza's two daughters. She was the same age as one of Anna's.

Anna's younger children believe that she really tried to be agreeable and to help. She learned to love Anna and told her step children that the trial of her life was having to leave Anna when Ammon moved away, taking his two younger wives with him. Hettie wrote in letters that Anna was the best of women.

Anna went back to St. Johns during the winter for a few years after moving to Mexico to put the children in school. She traveled those hundreds of miles every fall and spring with the boys driving the team.

Soon they moved from the sawmill into Colonia Diaz. They lived in an abandoned shoe store on main street. Ammon bought this shoe shop which the family used as the one large room. The wagon boxes lifted from their wheels and placed around the room were used as bedrooms. Later Anna's second son built two more rooms on the house, a kitchen and a loom room.

Anna Sariah, Jr. (Minnie) married Prime T. Coleman of St. Johns. Ammon Jr. married Amanda Thayne, a sweet lovely lady. Nathan married Pearl Walters.

After Ammon moved to Dublan taking his two other wives with him Anna was left to seek a livelihood as best she could. Lurlene was born to her in May of 1891 and this gave her five children at home, Levi, Lois, Rosalia, John and Lurlene.

Levi who was seventeen years old got a job as cook for a big cattle company. His wages in U.S. money were fifty cents a day. He had to work with men of the lowest moral standards. One of the few times Anna's children saw her cry was because she had to let Levi work with these men. Later Olive, Aunt Eliza' oldest daughter who was married and living in Logan, Utah invited Levi to live with her and go to school at the B.Y. college there. He went to be with her. The Spanish American War took him to join Teddy Roosevelt's

Rough Riders but he only got as far as Florida where he caught swamp fever. (They camped in the swamps there for training.) He was released and came home on September 13, 1896.

John Eagar, the youngest son of Anna, died during the same month of 1896. Anna had to bury him with only her four youngest children to comfort her. Ammon Jr. and Nathan came soon after her return from the cemetery. Aunt Eliza came as soon as she could. She had gone to meet her two daughters, Olive and Phoebe who had come to Dublan for a visit. Aunt Eliza had expected to have John Eagar with her on the trip to get them at the border. His illness prevented this. She wept greatly at his death. John would have been nine years old.

Anna didn't even get a letter from her husband on this occasion. She was a brave, noble true Saint who got her strength from God, her children say about her.

Rasmus Larson under Anna's guidance made a loom for her so that she could earn a living. She sat at the loom so many hours day after day that her children would cry when they came home from school and found her still there. Just once when her girls were older she wove material for dresses, each a different check and color for her three daughters. She carded and spun the wool, wove the material, cut out the dresses and sewed them. They were very proud of those dresses. When people stopped them on the street to admire and feel of the material the girls would brag about how their mother spun and wove material for her own wedding dress.

Levi and Lois married, Levi to Clara Accord and Lois to Kim Lemmon. They had a double wedding. Rosalia married William Edward Payne.

In her younger days Anna was a councilor in Relief Society, later a visiting teacher. Her love for her church was outstanding. In those days tithing was paid in kind (services or goods). Anna would choose all the biggest and best part of her products until they were valued more like 50% than the 10% required for tithing. She loved Sunday School and was always hungry for knowledge.

When Lurlene was eighteen and out of school she worked to help with the family expenses. Lurlene worked in the Union Merchantile store. Anna never seemed to recover from a sick spell so she took the old loom down and said she was thankful she didn't have to weave anymore. Life seemed easier but not for long.

The Mexican Revolution was growing worse and the local Mexicans were getting bolder. They began stealing and plundering from the old residents of nearby towns and ranches. People once thought to be friends turned traitor. The towns had to be guarded. The fear all day and the sleepless nights were too much for Anna. She welcomed the news sent by the church stake president to evacuate Diaz and move into the United States.

Lurlene and Anna like all the other residents left everything behind except a change of clothing and a little food. They had to accept an awaited offer from someone to take them across the border; they would not presume to ask for help. Anna was used to having to accept help but she was old now and it was hard on her pride. She only said, "The Lord is good," when Fred Whiting offered room in his wagon for her and Lurlene.

They traveled fifty miles to the border, when they crossed the

line they rested in Hachita, New Mexico. From Hachita they went to El Paso where the United States government had set up temporary quarters for the refugees and had provided some food for them.

Fred, Lurlene and Anna went to Salt Lake City from El Paso where Fred and Lurlene were married in the temple. (The United States government provided transportation for the refugees to any place they want to go. Fred, Lurlene and Anna took the train to Utah.) Anne went from Salt Lake City to Hurricane, Utah to visit her mother whom she had not seen for thirty years, so long an interval of time that they didn't recognize each other.

Anna stayed in Hurricane for one and a half years then she came to live in St. Johns, Arizona. Here in St. Johns old friends and neighbors gave her material to build a small two room home, some of them donated the labor to build it. Fred Whiting bought the lot for her to build it on. No one was ever more grateful than Anna. She was settled once more and happy.

Later she went to Salt Lake City to see her daughter Lois. She worked in the temple while she was there. She visited her daughter, Rosalia who lived in nearby Provo.

When she was getting really old, too old to move about or do temple work she went to live with her daughter, Minnie who resided in Thatcher, Arizona. She died January 19, 1934. after eighty years of pioneering.

Anna was a true pioneer who did more, much more for her community than is required of any member. She was the only nurse, doctor or midwife in many of the towns she lived in. She brought countless children into the world. Her children continue to meet individuals who say, "I know your mother saved my life, or my child's life.

One person told Lurlene that the greatest sorrow of her life was that her little sister died. She could never understand why Aunt Annie who had made all the others well couldn't make her sister, Bee, well.

Aunt Annie was always ready to serve in the middle of the night or any hour of the day, she never turned anyone away without trying to help and she never asked for pay.

She was goodness, faith, hope, charity personified.

Her children remember her with the tenderest of feelings.

It must have been glad meeting over there when she arrived with all her cares left behind.

(I copied this biography from one written by Lurlene many years ago. Rosalia added to it and changed it some. I, too have changed it from the original version whenever I thought the sentences needed more explanation.

Winifred Whiting Smiley 1965.)