

Tribute to
Sarah Shannon Leavitt
by
William P. Leavitt
Georgios Stairview Room, Tinley Park, Illinois
September 16, 2003

Here was a seventy-two year old woman, a widow, who had been left a productive farm in a lush green valley near Hatley. She was surrounded by good and valiant friends. Certainly, she sat in her rocker and reflected on the day when she would be laid to rest beside her beloved sweetheart.

But, because of her testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, she left all her comforts and solace behind and became one of the Lord's nomads.

The last year of her life was spent traveling through savage weather and sleeping on the ground. Her only comfort was those family members who traveled with her. She became sick and soon died amongst a stand of trees on the prairie. Certainly she had given meaning to the phrase, "endure to the end." Her testimony stands as an indelible witness and example before every member of her posterity through the eternities.

Tribute to
Sarah Shannon Leavitt

by

Dane Leavitt

Wilton Center Cemetery, Wilton Center, Illinois
Wednesday, September 17, 2003

I think of a mother, seeking to shepherd seven children ages one to fourteen, on their 170 mile migration from New Hampshire to Hatley. The year was 1800. Sarah was one, Lydia three, Jeremiah II five, Josiah seven, John eight, Nathaniel ten, and Mariah fourteen. I think of the ease with which we today travel. Sarah and her charges had no Suburban. The plodding pace and physical burdens would have required much more patience than our pulling off the interstate for diaper changes. I envision the hardship and difficulty of that trek, and of Sarah's later hardships in travel.

After arriving in Hatley, Sarah gave birth to Rebecca in 1802, Betsy in 1804 and Hannah in 1805. She had 10 children in 19 years, during which period they changed locales, left the root of their family, and essentially entered on a physical and spiritual adventure that has affected all of our lives.

Bill [Leavitt] related last night about how the Church of Jesus Christ was introduced into our family in the mid-1830s, and how in 1837, seeking to join the main body of the Church, Sarah Shannon Leavitt, her husband Jeremiah, and much of their family, traveled to find the Church in Kirtland. It was in a place not far from here, at Twelve Mile Grove, where Sarah Shannon Leavitt died at about age 71, sometime between September of 1837 and Jeremiah II's arrival here in November of 1838. Hence we gather here today to place this monument.

The balance of my thoughts will seek to juxtapose looking back and looking forward. In our time together we have spent much time looking back. That is part of the process of the hearts of sons being turned to fathers. We look back and our hearts are filled with gratitude for the sacrifices that have enabled us to live as we live, to know as we know, to see as we see, and to feel as we feel.

I also enjoy looking forward, and pondering that which is to come. As a father, about to be blessed with our first grandchild, I ponder the joy of posterity and the interest that we naturally have in the welfare and happiness of our children. I ponder Sarah Shannon Leavitt and those that are with her – the “great majority” as they say – as they look upon us and upon our lives, and as they ponder their sacrifice in mortality, and the impact their choices made on literally thousands of lives. I ponder how theirs has been not only a physical adventure – as they left the eastern Leavitts and came west, spreading posterity, from Alberta, Canada to Pima, Arizona – but also a spiritual odyssey that shapes the lives of a vast posterity. Looking upon us, Sarah knows her mortal sacrifice and faithfulness has blessed our lives with a spiritual endowment and perspective of incalculable worth.

I am grateful, as are you, to count myself among Sarah's posterity. I look forward to the day – though I'm not eager for it to happen too soon – but I look forward to the day when we will meet. I anticipate that my father will introduce me. He knows them all. He will outline their relationships, and tie in who is whose son and who is whose daughter, and who married who when and where. I believe that time will come, when just as our hearts as sons are drawn to our fathers, and just as our father's hearts are drawn to us, we will be united in another time and in another place. The reunion will be joyous, and spirit will be wonderful. It will be a reunion to which we can look forward, just as we today look back.