

## ORSON PRATT & SARAH MARINDA BATES



Orson Pratt Jr., Sarah Marinda Bates Pratt, Marinthia Altheria Pratt, Laron Pratt,  
Orson Pratt, Celestia Louisa Pratt. Watercolor painted in England circa 1850. B&W reprint from DUP.

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Orson and Sarah were married on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1836 in Henderson, New York. They had 12 children, but only six lived to maturity. In 1851 Orson and Sarah crossed the vast American Plains from the Midwest to Utah after being driven out of Illinois because of their religious conviction. Here is a brief history about each of their children:

1. Orson Pratt, Jr. was Orson and Sarah's first child. He was born July 11, 1837 in Kirtland, Ohio. He was 14 years old when he crossed the Plains with his family and was able to help along the trail heading west. He died in 1903 at the age of 66.
2. Lydia Pratt was born in December 1838 but lived only 9 months and was buried in Montrose, Iowa.
3. Celestia Larissa Pratt was born in May 1842 in Nauvoo. She was 9 years old when the family came across the Plains. She later married, had 7 children and lived to be 63 years old.
4. Sarah Marinda Pratt, named after her mother, was also born in Nauvoo in October 1844. Like her sister, Lydia, she also lived only 9 months, dying in July 1845. Like many others in the early days of Nauvoo, she died of the dreaded mosquito-born disease malaria. Orson was away on a mission for the Church in New York and was not there to mourn with or comfort Sarah in her time of grief.
5. Vanson Pratt, was the 3<sup>rd</sup> child born in Nauvoo. He was born in January 1846, just one month before the saints were driven out of their comfortable homes by mobs into the freezing wilderness. Vanson died on July 22, 1847, at the age of 18 months in Winter Quarters, Nebraska. This was the day after his father entered the Salt Lake Valley with Erastus Snow. Orson and Erastus were an advance party of scouts for Brigham Young and the first company of Saints on their way to the Salt Lake Valley. Because he was 1,000 miles away at the time, Orson would not learn of his son's death until two months later.
6. Laron Pratt was born July 10, 1847, less than 2 weeks before his older brother Vanson would die. Mother Sarah had both a birth and a death of a child to deal with while living in make-shift quarters on the Plains, away from her comfortable home in Nauvoo, and without a husband present to help and comfort her. The family did not cross the Plains

- to Utah until Laron was 4 years old. He lived 61 years, was married and has posterity living today.
7. Marlon Pratt was born in October 1848 in Liverpool, England. Orson had been called on a mission to England for the Church. He took Sarah and their three living children with him. Marlon lived less than a year and died in September 1849. It would have been very heartbreaking to bury a child in England, knowing that you would soon leave to return home to the U.S., never to be able to visit his grave again.
  8. Marintha Althera Pratt was born 4 days before Christmas in 1849, their second child born in Liverpool. Sarah now had given birth to eight children. Marintha was the 5<sup>th</sup> of those eight who would not live to see their 2nd birthday. The family was returning to America from England. They had arrived in Boston March 23, 1851 on board the ship Niagara. They then took a ship to New Orleans. It was on this ship that Marintha died. Sarah's journal entry recording her baby's death is as follows: "Marintha Althera Pratt, my daughter, died March 24, 1851, at sea, a few miles northeast of the island of St. Domingo. She was brought on shore and buried in the Kansas (City?) burying ground, Jackson County, Missouri." Typically, those who died at sea were sewn into a canvas and a weight, like a canon ball, was attached to the body to sink them to the depths of the sea. Sarah was apparently not willing to let her beloved baby Marintha be buried in that manner. Not burying the body in the sea was a fairly unusual occurrence. A ship's captain generally insisted on bodies of the dead be buried at sea. Perhaps Sarah concealed the death. Regardless, the little girl's body was kept on the ship for many days until it could have a proper burial in Missouri. The family then followed the Missouri River to Council Bluffs. They arrived in Council Bluffs on May 19, 1850, nearly 2 months after Marintha died.
  9. Harmel Pratt was born on Mormon Pioneer Trail on August 21, 1851, north of the Platt River and east of Fort Laramie, Wyoming. The conditions of giving birth on the Trail must have been horrible. Sarah would have delivered in a wagon bed in unsanitary conditions and without a doctor. She also would have had to keep moving with the wagon train and would not have been able to rest or recover properly from the delivery. She had three other children to care for, food was scarce and there was little vegetation for their animals to graze on. It certainly would have been a trying time for Sarah and the family. Harmel lived to adulthood and died in 1907 at the age of 56. Harmel's only child, a daughter, lived to be 85 years old, but never married or had children.
  10. Arthur Pratt was the first one to be born in Salt Lake City.... finally. He was born in March 1853. Arthur was 66 years old when he died in 1919. Arthur has posterity living today.
  11. Herma Ethna Pratt was born May 16, 1856 in Salt Lake City. She married William Forsythe Belding on Feb 18, 1874. She gave birth to a stillborn daughter named Josephine in March 1875. Her second child was William Jr., born in March 1876. Her third child, Arthur, was born on Dec 4, 1877. Herma died shortly thereafter on December 26, 1878 at the age of 21. Arthur died soon after on June 18, 1878. After Herma died, her husband, William, went to work in the mines in Nevada. Her only living child, William Forsythe Belding, Jr., known as "Willie", went to the Bay area of California to be raised by his father's parents. Herma has posterity living in California today.

12. Liola Menella Pratt was the last of the twelve children. She was born October 22, 1858, and like 5 of her brothers and sisters, she passed away before she reached her second birthday. She died September 21, 1860.

What a heartbroken couple Orson and Sarah must have been. They experienced untold physical hardships and challenges to their faith. They were driven from place to place because of their religion. Orson was sent on missions with no worldly means to accomplish the task. They had twelve children born in 21 years and endured the death of six small children and the death of a 21-year-old daughter. Sarah's 12 children were born in 7 different locations on two continents. Each of the six infant deaths occurred in a different place. They spent one hundred days on the trail to Utah and experienced the hardships associated with taming the frontier. They fought snakes, scorpions, crickets and grasshoppers. They suffered from lack of food, water, housing and the basic necessities of life.

However, though Orson lived a life plagued by poverty, he remained devoted to preaching the gospel and building the kingdom. In the years after the family arrived in Utah, he accomplished many things. He taught in the University of Deseret (now the University of Utah) from its founding in 1852, as a professor of astronomy. He also published *The Seer*, a periodical devoted to the doctrines of the Church, served several missions to England, helped survey the northern boundary line of Utah, served a mission to the East, moved part of his family to St. George for two years, went on another mission to England, and finally returned to Salt Lake in 1867.<sup>1</sup> He was sustained in 1874 as Church Historian and his collected pamphlets, *The Orson Pratt Works*, were published in 1851, and his *Key to the Universe* was published in 1878.

Diabetes plagued Orson's last years, but he continued to serve as Speaker of the House for the Utah Legislature and helped organize the first Pratt Family Organization's reunion on 21 July 1881. He died on 3 October 1881. On his deathbed he asked Joseph F. Smith to place these words on his tombstone: "My body sleeps but a moment; but my testimony lives and shall endure forever."<sup>2</sup>

Orson and Sarah Pratt have now passed on, but they leave a legacy that is worth remembering and honoring.

Births and deaths of Orson and Sarah's children:

Births: (18\_\_)

Feb. '37	Dec '38	May'42	Oct'44	Jan'46	July'47	Oct'48	Dec'49	Aug'51	Mar'53	May'56	Oct'58
Orson, Jr	Lydia	Celestia	Sarah	Vanson	Laron	Marlon	Marintha	Harmel	Arthur	Herma	Liola
Deaths:	Aug '39		July '45	July '47		Sept '49	Mar '51				Oct'60
(18__)	Lydia		Sarah	Vanson		Marlon	Marintha				Liola

<sup>1</sup> R. Steven Pratt, Ensign Magazine, October 1979, *The Five Sons of Jared and Charity Pratt*

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

