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A Brief Account of  
Our Marler Roots in Mississippi,  
and the Founding of a  
New Home in the  
Beehive State  
of Utah

*for grandparents*

Compiled for the Allen Marler Family Organization Reunion  
June 1963 by Mary Marler Howard

Mainly from the Following Historical Sketches:

Aunt Sarah Jane Marler Lake Taylor by Alice Taylor Shurtliff

Harriet Heath Marler by Lella Marler Hogan

George Washington Marler author unknown

Our Aunt Sarah Jane edited by Fred G. Taylor

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## OUR EARLY MARLER HERITAGE

The southwestern part of the state of Mississippi in Claiborne County is the stage setting of the first act of the drama of our Marler Family. The leading characters are Ithamer Marler and his wife, Lydia Norton. They had five sons and three daughters: William, Sarah Jane, Allen, James Norton, Abigail, Mary (Polly), Josiah and Elias.

Since records are very scarce on these early progenitors, it is difficult to write a dynamic or flowing script. With what little information we have been able to gather, we have judged the birth of Ithamer to be about 1761-1765, and his wife, Lydia, about 1775. There are indications that they may have come from North and South Carolina to Mississippi.

It is in Claiborne County, Mississippi that we really see them first. Here Ithamer had a home place in the Methodist Church neighborhood of the small town of Barland twelve or so miles southeast of Port Gibson near the eastern banks of the great Mississippi River. Ithamer was a man of considerable means for here in the Port Gibson vicinity he had a tobacco plantation with possibly some cotton, including the usual plantation equipment and retinue of slaves.

It has been said, although as of now, June 1963, we do not have the exact facts, that Ithamer fought in the Revolutionary War; and was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but did not live to come to Utah as did his son, Allen, who was the only other member of his family we know who joined the church.

Ithamer and Lydia spent the rest of their days in the Port Gibson area. It was here that they came to know the Heath family who had come from Pennsylvania to Natchez, Mississippi and then to Port Gibson. They had a large family and it was not long before romance bloomed between two of the Marler boys and two of the Heath girls. Our Allen fell in love with Harriet and married her on the 2nd of February 1832. On the 6th of November 1844 young Josiah took to wife the fair Mary Ann, but their happiness lasted only a short time because of the untimely death of Josiah. Four years later brother James Norton claimed her for his bride.

We cannot be sure of the death of Ithamer and Lydia, but we do know that their sons, Allen and James Norton were administrators to Ithamer's estate.

\* \* \*

The second act of our drama turns the spot light on Allen and Harriet Heath Marler, from whom all of gathered here today are descended.

He was born in <sup>So. CAROLINA</sup> ~~Port Gibson~~ 14 April 1809 and there married Harriet Heath on the 2nd of February 1832. Harriet was the daughter of Adolph Heath and Julia Ann Kayers. They were of Dutch descent and came from Pennsylvania. Adolph was

born 27 March 1771. He fought in the war of 1812 and died in the year 1853. His wife, Julia Ann, was born 15 October 1779 and died also in the year 1853. They died within a few days of each other in ~~Gulf Port~~, Claiborne Co., Mississippi and were buried in Port Gibson in the same grave. GRAND GULF

Allen and Harriet were well-to-do planters of Claiborne County. They possessed a good deal of landed property and colored servants to operate it. Sarah Jane, second daughter of Allen and Harriet, said the plantation joining her father's was owned by three old maids, the last of their family, and had three hundred slaves "but father", she said, "was not a heavy slave owner, he had only twenty slaves." Allen trained his children to work. In the early part of his married life, Allen was a renter and overseer on several plantations. In 1845, he bought his father's home place.

The stream of life changed for Allen by the reading of a book. His father, Ithamer, and cousins had joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and through conversation and the study of their books, "The Voice of Waring" in particular, Allen was convinced of the truth before ever seeing a Mormon Elder. Harriet had been taught the Gospel by her father Adolph Heath. In the year of 1845, they were baptized - Allen by his cousin who had the Priesthood.

The "spirit of gathering" came upon them and they were urged by the missionaries to unite with the saints in Utah. The Missionaries told Allen that they feared if he did not go that summer (1849) he would not go at all. It seems that he could not then make satisfactory disposition of his property and the start west was delayed until the early spring of 1850. Even though he waited to get the best price for his property, he had to take a considerable loss; for instance, one negro man he had bought eighteen years before for the sum of \$1000.00 was sold for \$800.00.

In March of 1850, Allen and Harriet with their eight children and Harriet's brother, Samuel, his wife and two little boys left home, loved ones, friends, and all that was dear to them, to make the long and arduous journey to Zion. They took with them a Negro mammy to act as a servant. Like many other saints, they were willing to place all their physical treasures on the altar, in order that they might partake of that greater treasure, the Gospel of life and salvation.

Allen hired a team to take them twelve miles to the Mississippi River where they took the boat at Grand Gulf and traveled up the Mississippi River to St. Louis where they changed boats for the Missouri River and so traveled until they reached St. Joseph, Missouri.

Before the boat reached St. Joseph, the dread disease of cholera had broken out among the Marler family. A child in arms was seriously ill, but the captain of the boat, fearing that his boat would be quarantined if a sick person was found aboard, insisted that they leave the boat at once. It was a dark, stormy night and they were total strangers in the city. The mother carried the child in her arms and the father, holding an umbrella above them, tenderly guarded the mother along the wet, unfamiliar streets until they could find a place of refuge for the night. When they finally reached a place where they could stay, the child was dead. It had died in the mother's arms without her realizing it. All members of the family except Sarah Jane contracted the fearful malady, as did the members of the family of Harriet's brother, Samuel.

Sarah Jane, though only fifteen years old, was obliged to act as doctor and nurse to her afflicted loved ones. And finally performed the heroic service of

mortician; for in less than a month her father and three sisters, her two little boy cousins, the only children of her uncle Samuel, and the Negro mammy all succumbed to the dread and fatal disease. It also cost her mother a premature child, a little girl, which died at birth. Making seven out of the party of fifteen to be left behind.

People of St. Joseph who knew of their plight sympathized with them, but were so fearful of catching the disease themselves they dared not come near. Sarah Jane bore that burden practically alone. It was a great test for a fifteen-year old girl and she proved the character of her mettle as she effectively met all the requirements in this tragic appointment with adversity.

During Allen's illness, he seemed to realize that he was not going to recover. So he told Harriet that if he passed on she had better return to Mississippi. "Mother, you had better use your money to go back home to your own people," he said, "instead of trying to go on to Utah. There will be too many hardships for you to undertake alone."

And now Allen was gone and the row of graves, large and small, told the tragic story of their sacrifice. The survivors were soon well and the time came when they must decide on their next move.

This heart-breaking event was a crucial test to Harriet's faith. She scarcely realized herself, what great odds were in the balance. The fate of generations yet to come, hung on the decision she would make. It was the most momentous hour of all her life. Down the flowing Mississippi to the South, lay her sunny home with warm hearted friends and tender ties. To the West stretched hundreds of miles of barren desert, with promise of hostile Indians, arduous toil, privations and discouragements. She no doubt took it to the Lord in prayer, for when her decision came it was final. There was no hesitancy, no fear, in choosing the path they would travel. She was going to Utah! They had set their faces toward the West. Come hardships, come death, it mattered not; she had started for the Rocky Mountains and the Latter-day Saints, and for her there was no turning back.

So, instead of taking passage back to Mississippi, she and her brother, Samuel, bought equipment to cross the plains. Six yoke of oxen, three wagons, six head of cows, one span of horses and supplies. After remaining in St. Joseph for about one month, they took up their sad journey for the West. It is not hard to imagine the different spirit with which they began their journey the second time. Death had taken their loved ones and they sadly missed them especially the kind and loving father. It took a great deal of courage and faith to take up the journey and go on leaving those dear ones behind.

\* \* \*

This brings us to the third and last act

Sorrowing, but firm in their faith and purpose, they left St. Joseph about the first of April 1850 and arrived in Salt Lake City 2 October 1850. There were no more fatalities in their family although the cholera raged for the first half of the journey leaving many graves along the road. In Salt Lake, they made camp on the Jordan River and met in conference with the saints on the 6th of October.

After conference, Harriet and her two daughters, Sarah Jane and Susan, and her three sons, William Norton, George Washington and Allen traveled south into Utah County with four or five other families, and located on what was then called

Battle Creek, now known as Pleasant Grove. Here they made their home being among the first settlers of that town, in fact their house was the first one to be erected there.

And now after long weeks of difficult travel and trying hardships, Harriet and her little family were at last established in their own home in Zion. And if Allen Marler, the beloved father, could look across the Great Divide surely his heart rejoiced in the courage that carried his wife and family across the plains to the Land of Promise. Yes, they had reached the Land of Promise, but the promise was yet to be fulfilled. They must first subdue the soil; and make peace with the Indians, and work and wait in loving patience and enduring stamina, until they had paid the price that Nature always exacts, before the wilderness can blossom as the rose, before the barren waste can flow with milk and honey.

With strong hands and fearless hearts they at once set about their task. The bitter cold winters with drifting snow, in contrast to the warm, flowering South was one of the trials they accepted cheerfully. The long hours of heavy toil, with never a dusky servant to lighten the burden, was another character-forming accomplishment they took with a smile. One time Sarah Jane said, "When I contrast the climate, the barrenness, and the living conditions in Utah, with those of Mississippi where the air is warm and the grass green the year around, knowing my father's disposition as I do, I recognize the hand of the Lord in his death. For I have often thought that he could not have withstood the temptation to travel on with my mother's brother to California. He went intending to return but never came back."

The little family lived in Pleasant Grove for one and a half years then they moved to North Ogden where they made their permanent home. They were a congenial family, with a keen sense of humor and a happy outlook on life. Their cheerful, neighborly manner soon won for them many warm-hearted friends. And always there was the Gospel, with its requirements and its blessings, to comfort their tired souls and hearten them for the coming day. As the seasons rolled around, the family learned to perform the necessary tasks that came to their hands from day to day, the homely tasks of providing shelter, and food, and raiment; the primitive work, that holds men and women to clean wholesome lives, that puts iron in the blood and courage in the soul.

Harriet was known as the rich widow, having been left with plenty of means. When she came West, she brought with her not only household goods, but had put a great deal of money into blooded stock, milk cows of exceptional value, and fine blooded brood mares. These animals increased in number and were sold throughout this section of the country, to the advantage of all those who owned them. However, the hard winters of 1855 and 1856 took nearly all of her stock and through other reverses the family passed through much poverty and trying times. They were a typical southern family, generous and warm-hearted and while they had means, helped many a needy family.

Harriet lived for and cared for her family to the time of her death which occurred at Harrisville, Utah 23 December 1869, being a little past fifty-six years of age.

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So we bring down the curtain on the close of our drama, and we feel to thank our Heavenly Father for the courage and faith and the great strength of character we have seen in the lives of these our early kinsmen. In our hearts is gratitude for the heritage they have endowed us. May we follow in their footsteps and give to our posterity blessings of strength like unto these noble ones.

MARLER Family

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MARLAR (See Lingwood) (See White)

Ref.: The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine April 1929 Vol. XX No. 2.  
The Ancestry of Joseph Smith the Prophet

JANE MARLAR

WILLIAM MARLAR, Gentleman, of Kelvedon, Essex, England, son of Thomas Marlar and Margaret White, made will, 1595. He married 1st, MARGARET PERYE, dau. of Thomas Perye, of Bradfield, Essex, England. He married, 2nd, Jane Saperton, of Salings, Essex, Eng.

Children of Wm. Marlar and Margaret Perye:

George, of Esterford Kelvedon, Essex, England; m. Judeth Clarke.

William, m. Ann Nevell

Ann, m. Thomas Dickinson

Jane, m. JOHN LINGWOOD

Children of Wm. Marlar and Jane Saperton:

Arthur, of Navestocks, Essex, Eng; m. Josune Howe

Alice, m. William Hudson.

THOMAS MARLAR (Gent.) of Kelvedon, Essex, England, son of William Marlar, made his will in 1540. He married MARGARET WHITE

Children:

William, of Kelvedon, Essex, England, made will in 1595. He married MARGARET PERYE.

George, died without heirs

Catherin, m. John Lovedaye

Ann, m. John Nuptiar.

Agnes, m. . . . . Hunte.

WILLIAM MARLAR (Gent.) of Kelvedon, son of John Marlar and . . . . . Pastolfe.

Children:

Thomas, of Kelvedon, Essex, England; m. MARGARET WHITE.

William. His descendants lived in Norfolk.

JOHN MARLAR (Gent.) of Kelvedon, Essex, England, son of John Marlar, made his will 1450. He married . . . . . Pastolfe, of Suffolk.

Children:

William, of Kelvedon, Essex, England.

Stephen

John, died without issue

Robert, made his will in 1500.

JOHN MARLAR, of Kelvedon, Essex, England, son of John Marlar, made his will 1419.

Children:

Thomas, of Kelvedon, Essex Co., Eng., made his will 6 April 1494; proved 11 July 1494;

m m. Elizabeth . . . . .

John, of Kelvedon, Essex, England; m. . . . . Pastolfe

John

William

John all died without issue

George

Edward

William

JOHN MARLAR, of Kelvedon, Essex, England, in 1389. He is the 13th great-grandfather of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He bore as his coat of arms: "Argent, a chevron purple, in dexter chief an escallop sable."

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