

Life history of Rachel Judd Hamblin, second wife of Jacob Hamblin
By Frank F. Judd, Ph.D.

Rachel Judd was born in a pioneer home on the frontier of Upper Canada (now known as Ontario). She spent nearly her whole life in one frontier home after another. It is no wonder that we are bereft of many of the official documents that might have been counted on to describe her life and doings. Rachel joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints as a 15-year-old teenager and never lost her faith in the gospel despite her life's hardships.

The trek west she and her family undertook from Upper Canada initially to Ohio and then on to Missouri and finally back to Illinois was fraught with hard work, frustration and perplexity. All this happened while she was yet a young unmarried woman of 22 years. When she did marry, the persecution and turmoil did not stop. She was married three times, two of which were polygamous relationships. None of these marriages were preceded by an engagement nor a lengthy courtship. One doubts at this late date if there was even an exchange of rings. Yet, she was eventually described as being “. . . of a mild, gentle disposition” and a “. . . kind, affectionate companion.”

At one point her marriage circumstances had been so stressful she was convinced that she would never have children. It wasn't until after she made the trek to the Utah Territory and was able to settle in one place for a reasonable period of time that she was able to conceive children of her own. Her life in the Utah Territory was never to be one of peace and quiet as her husband, Jacob Hamblin, was ordained to be a missionary of the LDS Church to the western Indians. He was seldom at home and when he was, he was consumed with Indian and Church responsibilities. Rachel would find herself largely responsible for the family's business endeavors and practices. She was a very capable woman, wife, mother and provider.

One could have hoped that Rachel, as she grew older, would find a measure of tranquility and rest. This was never to be so. She continually battled the demands of building a satisfactory home for her family in the southern Utah frontier. Putting up with the shenanigans of the local Indians, being ravaged by the weather and other natural forces when they destroyed what her family had built ultimately led to her frail health. Then, there was the anguish that came to her home via the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Neither she nor anyone in her family took part in the atrocities of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, but she played a pivotal role in the aftermath of that brutality.

One would be hard pressed to find a more faithful and successful woman in the western movement of the Mormon pioneers than Rachel Judd Hamblin. She faced hardship and trouble with a courage and strength that may have brought many of us to our knees. In fact, she was likely on her knees often as she sought help from her God to deliver her and her family from the troubles they faced.