



***Ebenezer Beesley*** was born in 1840 at Bicester, Oxfordshire, England, about sixty miles northwest of London. It is reported that he showed a tendency to great musical talent even at the age of two years and as a child his gift was aided by the meeting of the Wesleyan Choir in the home of his parents.

An only living child at the age of six, his parents declined an offer by some influential ladies for his training as a choir boy at St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, founded in 1348 by Edward III. This would have been a great honor; however, it turned out to be a crucial decision.

Ebenezer's family joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints a short time later and Ebenezer was baptized in 1849. The family immigrated to Utah in 1859, shortly after Ebenezer married Sarah Hancock. Leaving England in April, they crossed the Atlantic on the 'William Tapscott' ship, and then traveled by train and steamboat to the edge of the frontier. They then traveled west in the George Rowley Handcart Company. They departed from Florence, Nebraska (near Omaha) in June of 1859 with 233 others, arriving in the Salt Lake Valley in September.

Ebenezer's musical skills were a great boon to the company as he loved to sing and sang along the way when the going allowed and played the flute (or fife) and violin around the campfire at night. Although both Ebenezer and his new bride were not yet twenty, the journey was very difficult as,

with two others, they pushed and pulled the handcart with their belongings across the plains through the heat and dust of summer, sleeping on the ground in the open, with scarce food supplies.

A company sent out from Salt Lake City saved their lives at Green River, 300 miles east, where they were about to perish from starvation. Upon their arrival at Emigration Canyon, a few miles directly east of Salt Lake City, they were met by a band and thousands gathered to escort them into the city, with a brass band preceding and a martial band behind. They made their last encampment on the public square that night and then were taken into a home until they were established in a home of their own.

Ebenezer and Sarah first lived for a short time in the town of Tooele, about 35 miles southwest of Salt Lake City, where it is said that he conducted the ward (congregation) choir at Sunday services. They then settled in Salt Lake City where he again led the choir and conducted the singing for Sunday School. It is believed that he copied music for the choir by hand as was the custom for the choir leader, until the Sunday School magazine, *Juvenile Instructor*, began printing music for the choir conductors.

Ebenezer became involved in organizing and preparing music for the *Juvenile Instructor*. Assisted by notable LDS musicians George Careless, Evan Stephens and others, he directed the compilation and publication of both the *Deseret Sunday School Song Book* and *the Latter-day Saint's Psalmody*, which was the first LDS hymnal to include both the text and the music.

It is reported that Ebenezer studied violin under Professors C. J. Thomas and George Careless, and joined the Salt Lake Theater Orchestra directed by Professor Careless, assisting as a substitute director. In 1880 he succeeded his mentor, George Careless, as director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, which position he held until 1889. It is said that he initiated programs to increase the musical ability of the choir during his

time there. After his time with the Tabernacle Choir he taught music in Tooele and [Lehi](#) before returning to Salt Lake City.

Ebenezer Beesley passed away in 1906, leaving a large musical family posterity and a large collection of remarkable musical works. Eleven hymns in the current 1985 English Language LDS Hymnbook were composed by him. It is instructive to note that this man, who could have been associated with the rich and famous in the courts of England, was instead led by the hand of God through great trial and poverty to contribute greatly to the building up of a musical people in a desert land. In this work he gained abilities he would probably not otherwise have known and because of this service his name will always be remembered by the people of his faith.

Ebenezer Beesley was also the composer of the hymn tune for *Let us Oft Speak Kind Words*, which was the September 2012 Hymn of the Month. The information here is duplicated from the previous article.