

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LIFE OF SARAH ELIZABETH GURR
By Mary Jane Whitney Adams 1932

Sarah Elizabeth Gurr was born in Sidney, Australia in 1855, the daughter of William and Sarah Elizabeth Gurr. In 1857 she, accompanied by her parents and baby brother William left Australia for Utah. That perilous voyage was undertaken in a sailing vessel and lasted sixteen weeks during which time nothing was seen but one large flock. After reaching Utah they settled in Parowan where Sarah Elizabeth was placed in the little pioneer school. On reaching the age of fourteen, having that love of finery which is the prerogative of all feminine hearts she went to work in the Hanks cotton factory to obtain the warp for weaving woolen cloth. At odd hours she spun the woolen yarn to make a dress having to spin enough to pay the weaver for weaving the woolen cloth. The finished product was a beautiful gray lindsey dress, velvet ribbon trimmed, which was the special pride and delight of her girlish heart. At the age of fifteen she learned telegraphy and took over the office. It was while at work in the telegraph office that word came that Brigham Young was on his way from Paragonah. The young girl had barely time to close her office and don her gray lindsey dress for which she had spun the yarn and earned the warp and join the company of other young folks and go out to meet him. At sixteen she was a full fledged telegraph operator living at the house of Colonel Dame to be ever ready to take or send messages. It was during the hectic days of the Nevada gold rush and many were the historic messages that were relayed in every direction under her able fingers. At the age of seventeen the laughing blue eyed girl became the bride of New S. Whitney. Accompanied by her parents and prospective bridegroom the long journey to the Salt Lake Endowment House was undertaken, and on the 29th of July 1872 she was married by Joseph F. Smith. After returning home she again took over the responsibility of the telegraph office. But after a year of happy married life her heart was gladdened by the birth of a baby girl. Family cares soon filled her time and being essentially a homemaker she gave up her office to care for her family. She was

times acted as relief operator but never again took over the full responsibility of the office again. As her family grew she taught school of telegraphy some of her own children participating. She was secretary of the Relief Society of Parowan for eighteen years which office she filled efficiently. She was ever a faithful and loyal member of the church sending her husband on a mission when she was the mother of five small children. She died February 24, 1932 at the age of seventy seven. She was a joy and a delight to all who knew her and at her passing a whole community mourned for her for she hadn't enemy in the world.