

His songs lifted spirits of the weary pioneers

DIARY of Charles Lowell Walker . . .

St. George and the Drag On³

Oh what a desert place was this
When first the Mormons found it.
They said no white man here could live
And Indians prow'd around it.
'Twas said the land it was no good,
And the water was no gudder,
And the bare Idea of living here
Was enough to make one shudder.

Chorus: Muskeet, soap root,
Prickly pears, and briars.
St. George ere long will be a place
That every one admires.

Now green Lucern in verdant spots,
Bedecks our thriving City.
Whilst vines and fruit trees grace our lots
And flowerets sweet and pretty,
Where once the grass in single blades
Grew a mile apart in distance.
And it kept the cricket on the go
To pick up their subsistence.

Chorus

The Sun it is so scorching hot
It makes the water siz, sir.
And the reason why it is so hot,
'Tis just because it is, sir.
The wind like fury here does blow
That when we plant or sow, sir,
We place one foot upon the seed
And hold it till it grows, sir.

Chorus

CHARLES LOWELL WALKER was the "Poet Laureate" of the Cotton Mission in Utah's Dixie. He wrote many poems commemorating the major events in the early history of St. George. He wrote the text for "Dearest Children, God Is Near You," in the current LDS hymnal.

He was born in Leek, Staffordshire, England, on November 17, 1832. After converting to Mormonism, Charles came to St. Louis in 1849 and to Salt Lake City in 1855. He married Abigail Middlemass and later Sarah Smith. His sister Ann Agatha became a plural wife of Parley P. Pratt. In 1862, at the October conference, Charles and Abigail with about 200 other missionaries were called to go to the "cotton country" mission in Southern Utah. He worked as a stonecutter on the St. George Temple.

"His journal reveals the stirring events of the late 1850s and early 1860s. It pictures the hard times of 1855 and 1856 and the exciting days of the Utah War, the move, . . . the conflict between the U.S. soldiers and the Mormon citizens, the clashes with federal judges some governors, the U.S. Marshals. . . . He is the faithful, if partisan, reporter of the gospel sermons of the General Authorities."¹

"He spent his time ministering to the poor, the sick, and the lonely. He delighted everyone with his ability as actor, musician, and poet."² ▣



1 A. Karl Larson and Katherine Miles Larson, *Diary of Charles Walker* (Logan: Utah State University Press), vii.

2 Larson and Larson, xviii.

3 Walker, "Poems," 40, in Larson and Larson, 369-70.