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## SARAH INDIAETTA YOUNG VANCE

*Author Unknown/Autobiography*

**MAIDEN NAME:** Sarah Indiaetta Young

**BIRTH:** November 24, 1861; Chatham Hill, Smyth Co., Virginia

**PARENTS:** Absalom McDonald Young and Matilda Shepherd<sup>1</sup>

**MARRIAGE:** John Thomas Vance; November 21, 1877

**CHILDREN:** John Milton (1879), twins Franklin Troy and James Monte (1885), George Albert (1887), William Leslie (1888), Gilbert (1889), Leonard Absalom (1892), twins Estella and Orella (1895), Irma Indiaetta (1897), Alta Mabel (1900), Stanley Wiler (1904)

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1. Matilda Shepherd Young died June 1892 in Mesa. A granddaughter, possibly the daughter of Evalina Young Coryell, said, "We don't have the exact date she [Matilda] migrated to Arizona, but she didn't come when her daughter Sara Indiaetta Vance did. She came to live at our house. . . . We children had a little wagon and grandmother, being a very small woman, would put that bandana on her head and sit in the little wagon and we children would haul her up to the Vance home to spend the rest of the day. Many were the times we did this." Information from Jeanette Done; copy in possession of Ellis.

**DEATH:** November 18, 1940; Mesa, Maricopa Co., Arizona

**BURIAL:** Mesa, Maricopa Co., Arizona

Sarah Indiaetta Young was born November 24, 1861, in Smyth County, Virginia. She was the youngest of sixteen children born to Absalom McDonald Young and Matilda Shepherd Young. Her father and her uncle and one brother were all doctors. Sarah showed a tendency toward nursing in her childhood days. Her parents owned a large plantation of 1600 acres, on which grew every kind of tree, it seemed. There were many varieties of nut trees besides sugar maples from which maple syrup was made.

She recalled many pleasant experiences on the plantation as a child, when she used to play in a large cave or in her tree houses. Sometimes she rode the horses and enjoyed happy times. She remembered that everyone gathered herbs and made their own medicine in those days. They raised corn from their own seed corn, which they hung up and dried from one harvest to the other. Sarah had vivid memories of her home, the large clock on the mantel, the four-poster beds with their woven rope springs and the large kitchen where her mother cooked the meals over an open fire. Since her father was a doctor, there was a drug room in her home where he kept all his medicines.

Sarah could remember the Civil War vividly. Sometimes the soldiers would come and want horses and cattle, but her father would not give them to the soldiers. She could hear the guns firing in the distance.



*John and Sarah Vance and family; back row: Monte, Bert, George, Leonard, John, Leslie, Frank; middle row: Ella, Stanley, Sarah, John, Estella; front row: Alta, Irma. Photo courtesy of Vance Family Collection, Catherine Vance Dodds.*

Her mother made all the clothing for the family except tailored suits worn by her father.

When Sarah was four years old, her parents were converted to the Mormon faith.<sup>2</sup> Shortly after this, her father contracted pneumonia and died, but before his death he had her mother promise to take the children and go to Utah because the Mormons were being

persecuted for their religion in all parts of the country except Utah.<sup>3</sup>

Her mother sold all their possessions to raise money for the journey. They could not sell to anyone as people would not buy because the family was Mormon. Out of the large 1600 acre plantation, all they received was about five or six hundred dollars.

They went by train to Utah. It was a long journey, and they arrived there in the height of a cricket invasion. There were millions of crickets, and everything was black with them. Some of the Saints got right back on the train and returned to their homes in the East. Sarah's two older brothers had come on before and had rented a house for them and got work in Payson.<sup>4</sup>

2. The family was contacted by Mormon missionaries much earlier than 1865—at least by 1852, when they named a son Alma Nephi Young. A letter from Absalom M. Young to Erastus Snow dated September 4, 1855, reports missionary work in Virginia and North Carolina and was published in the *St. Louis Luminary* on September 29, 1855. Sarah stated that she “was named Sarah Endiaetta Young after a cute little Mormon girl whom my father had met in another settlement.” Sarah Y. Vance Autobiography, MS 3644, CHL.

3. Absalom McDonald Young died February 16, 1869, at Chatham Hill, Smyth, Virginia and is buried in the Young Cemetery.

4. In 1870, Matilda was living with her children Parley, Alma,

Later the families moved to Fairview, Sanpete County, where Sarah was raised and lived till she was married.

Sarah had the mountain spotted fever when she was about eight years old and was seriously ill but recovered from it after a time.

People were still in danger from the Indians and had to guard their cattle and horses from Indian raids. Also when the men went to get wood, others with guns had to stand guard to protect them from the savages.

When Sarah was fourteen, she began working out for other people, helping with housework and new babies. She began having beaux about this time too. She had many beaux. The popular way to ride horseback was for both to ride on one horse, one behind the other. One Sunday as she was going to Sunday School with a group of girls, John Vance, who was a stranger in town, saw her and inquired about her. She and John had known each other in Fairview in school, but he had forgotten her. He went to the same place that she did that afternoon and was introduced. She liked John so well that she broke her other dates to go with him, but he lived over a hundred miles away, so they had to do their love making by mail. It took four days for John to make a trip to see her, so they made up their minds to get married.

John's family had been living in Utah for some time at various places, including Fairview, St. George, and Alpine. John Thomas Vance was born at Alpine on April 29, 1858.

On November 21, 1877, Sarah and John Thomas Vance were married in the St. George Temple. Sarah was sixteen years old on the 24th day of the same month. They lived in St. George with John's family for a while after their marriage. Sarah took typhoid fever and very nearly died. Of this illness she tells:

One day while I was in bed burning up with fever, I had a vision. I could see beautiful snow-covered mountains and other scenes of unimagined beauty. Suddenly, I saw some one standing at the foot of my bed. This person said, "Come, I want

to show you something." I followed him and we went together into a big, spacious valley, or so it seemed to me. It was like a huge amphitheater with thousands of people sitting all around. On a platform my father was speaking to them. I do not remember what he said; I only know that he was preaching the gospel. I was shown the family that I was to have. There were seven boys in a row. Behind them were other children whom I could not see distinctly enough so that I could know who they were. I only knew that they were the family which I was to have. The vision vanished and I was back in my own room again.

After she recovered from the typhoid, she was so homesick for her mother that they went to Fairview to visit. After all, Sarah was only a sixteen-year-old child. They lived at Fairview until the birth of their first child. When he was a year old, they decided to go to Arizona to live. Several families went together. They left St. George, Utah, in November 1879 in a covered wagon with just their clothes and necessities.

The trip was quite a long one, and they ran out of some articles, but they did very well. It took them about four months to make the journey from St. George to Hayden's Ferry.<sup>5</sup> John worked for Mr. Hayden doing hauling of supplies to get some money for them to buy provisions and continue their journey to Mesa, their original destination.

They took up land about three miles from Mesa and found that before they could farm it they had to buy water shares. They worked on the canals to pay for their water shares and did freighting to the various towns. Sarah had several Indian scares while living there. She tried to be friends with the Indians, so her friendliness was remembered by them and probably saved her life.

At this time Mesa had only a few adobe houses, but it was laid out with wide streets. Phoenix, too, was like most frontier towns, no paved streets and no sidewalks.

The storms were terrible. One day, big black clouds came up, and the rain fell in torrents. Sarah and

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William, Cloyd, and Sarah in Payson, Utah Co., Utah. Her oldest son, John, was living with his wife and four children in Fairview, Sanpete Co., Utah; from the birthplaces of his children, he apparently came to Utah sometime between 1866 and 1868. Neither family is found in the MPOT database; Matilda and the younger children are not listed because they came all the way on the train, but John and Nancy could be listed and are not. Apparently two of Matilda's older children (a son and a daughter) did not come to Utah.

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5. Although not apparent from this account, this trip was through western Arizona, not Lee's Ferry. Sarah wrote, "It was on New Year's Day that we stopped at an Arizona mining camp named Hackberry and gave our horses a much-needed rest." Hackberry was only used as a stopping place when the route from St. George south to the lower Colorado River ferries and then to Mesa was used. Sarah Y. Vance Autobiography, MS 3644, CHL, 11.

her sister-in-law started to run to town. In a little while the water was to their knees. A neighbor took them in and kept them till they could get back home. John had come home from the canal where he had been working and found the home in ruins. He thought Sarah and the baby were buried in the ruins, but after digging almost all night he knew they must be safe.

When they had earned enough, they started to build a new home and moved into it before it was finished. Sarah told of seeing a six-foot rattlesnake crawl in one door and out another as she sat holding her baby in one side of the room. Snakes, scorpions, and centipedes were common, and they paid little attention to them.

Sarah and John were busy on their ranch, trying to reclaim it from the desert. Not only did they have to fight the arid land, but windstorms and rains were so bad. The heavy rains washed out the dams, and then the crops would fail for lack of water. The high winds would blow the roofs off the houses, endangering the lives of people as well as ruining the houses and furniture.

Sarah's health had begun to fail while they were still in Utah. She went to a doctor and was told that she had tuberculosis, cancer, and a kidney disease. The [stake?] president of the Church in Mesa told John that she might be benefitted at the hospital in San Francisco. Sarah underwent two operations and was in the hospital three months [about 1883 or 1884]. John had to sell a horse to supply funds for the trip, and at the end of this time John went home to Mesa and Sarah went to Utah for three months to recuperate at her mother's home.

She returned to Mesa on the train from Utah, and in about a year, twin boys were born to her [September 12, 1885]. They won many honors, being the first twins born in the Salt River Valley. They also won first prize of five dollars each at the fair in Phoenix for being first set of twins and fine babies besides. During these years, John and Sarah both taught Sunday School and worked with the young people. John was made superintendent of the Fourth Ward Sunday School and served many years.

Sarah had cows to milk and made much butter and cheese, which John sold for her in the towns of Globe, Miami, and the Silver King Mining Camp. Once, while trying to milk a new cow, Sarah was tossed by the cow and injured pretty badly. Shortly after that incident, another baby was born to her.

About this time, they grew tired of their hard life in Arizona and decided to go to Colorado.<sup>6</sup> Their farm in Arizona was very good, and John was considered to be an excellent farmer. But they were discouraged, so they sold their cows, chickens, and ducks, and took horses and wagons and began their trek to Colorado, traveling through Prescott and Flagstaff. They had many narrow escapes over the rough roads of this journey. They crossed through the Navajo Reservation and into New Mexico and had many exciting times. When they reached Colorado they could not find a suitable place for a home.<sup>7</sup> They tired of the cold country and decided to go back to Arizona.

As they returned through Utah, they stopped at Price, where they left their older boys, and John and Sarah went to Salt Lake for quarterly conference, and she took a nursing course. She wrote, "While we were here I decided to stay and fulfill that dearest of my childhood ambitions when I desired above all else to be a doctor like my father when I grew up. I enrolled in a class for the study of obstetrics under Dr. Ellis R. Shipp."<sup>8</sup> John returned to their home in Arizona. When she finished her course, Sarah also returned home and put her nursing ability to work. She delivered approximately 1500 babies without the loss of a mother or a baby. In all her cases, there were only about six times when she found it necessary to call in a physician. Once, a state nurse called on Sarah to ask her about her success in her work. Sarah told her that she had been set apart by Apostle Abraham H. Cannon, and he had promised her that she would be prompted.<sup>9</sup> She

6. They had lived in Arizona about fourteen years.

7. They lived for a summer at Sanford, Conejos County, Colorado. Then they traveled through Green River to Vernal, Utah, where they spent the winter.

8. Sarah Y. Vance Autobiography, MS 3644, CHL, 27. Ellis Reynolds (1847-1939) married Milford B. Shipp in 1866 and then left her children in Utah to attend the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1875. She graduated in 1878 and began a fifty-year career serving the women of Utah. In the fall of 1879, she began the School of Obstetrics and Nursing, in connection with the Deseret Hospital, that Sarah Vance attended. Dr. Shipp delivered more than 5,000 babies and trained 500 women as licensed midwives while bearing ten children. Gail Farr Casterline, "Dr. Ellis Reynolds Shipp: Pioneer Utah Physician," in Burgess-Olsen, *Sister Saints*, 363-81; "Ellis Reynolds Shipp: Beehive House Schoolgirl Who Became a Pioneer Doctor," in Arrington and Madsen, *Sunbonnet Sisters*, 126-33, 155; "Dr. Ellis R. Shipp," in Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4:196.

9. Abraham H. Cannon (1859-96) was ordained an Apostle in 1889 by Joseph F. Smith at age thirty. Cannon died just seven years later. Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4:1633;



said that she owed her success to the Heavenly Father, that when she came to a difficult problem, something seemed always to inspire her, and she would know what was the right thing to do.

About this time the family grew tired of the hard ranch life and moved into town. There were no places of amusement in Mesa, and the young folks would go on the excursions to Phoenix. John thought it would be better if there were a place in Mesa for recreational purposes. The Vance Auditorium was built, later known as the Mezona, in which dances, theatricals, picture shows, wedding receptions, and conferences of the Maricopa Stake were held.<sup>10</sup> The twin boys decided to go into the baking business, and they established the first bakery in Mesa. John built their first oven for them of brick. Later they bought another store and bakery. Then Frank went to Phoenix and opened a branch there while Monte took care of the Mesa shop.<sup>11</sup> Besides the twin sons, they also had twin daughters. The first death in the family was Orella, one of the twins; she was injured in an automobile accident on Christmas Eve and died two days later.<sup>12</sup> The terrible shock of her death brought a complete nervous collapse to Sarah from which it took a long time for her to recover. Quote from Sarah:

On April 25, 1928 tragedy again visited me with the sudden death of my companion of all these happy and work-filled years. John died very unexpectedly of a heart attack during a trivial illness of only a few days. Our married life had been a full and happy one. Our ambition had led us through many days of toil and hardship and privation. We had worked together with accord the common purpose of providing for our children and giving them the proper sort of training for good citizenship. The struggle had been hard,

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“Abraham Hoagland Cannon,” in Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:167–68.

10. The Vance Auditorium opened on February 14, 1908. This building was used for roller skating, concerts, motion pictures, and prominent speakers; its regularly scheduled Friday-night dances were legendary. In 1919, the LDS Church purchased the building and began using it for stake offices, a Bishop's storehouse, and a place of worship. By the 1950s, the Mezona sometimes provided housing for Mexican Saints who came to attend the temple; a curtain separated the men's and women's sleeping areas. Turner and Ellis, *Latter-day Saints in Mesa*, 94, 118.
11. For additional information and photos of the bakery, see *ibid.*, 28.
12. Orella Vance Cluff died December 25, 1923; she left one child, two years old.

but we were content. Our joys, our sorrows, and our lives had been together and I sorely missed this companion who had walked so sturdily by my side.

We had raised a nice family of twelve children: John Milton, born November 7, 1879; Franklin Troy and James Monte, born September 12, 1885; George Albert, born May 21, 1887; William Leslie, born August 21, 1888; Gilbert born October 30, 1889; Leonard Absalom, born April 12, 1892; Estella and Orella, born June 7, 1895; Irma Indiaetta, born November 22, 1897; Alta Mabel, born April 11, 1900; and Stanley Wiler, born August 4, 1904.<sup>13</sup>

Sarah had to return to the hospital and have an operation for a tumor.

In 1930 another great shock came to her when Frank was called away by a heart attack. She spent several pleasant summers with her children in California. In 1938 she was again shocked by the death of her son Monte, who was stricken with a heart attack.

During all these years, Sarah was busy with her profession and work for the Church. She sang in the Mesa Stake Choir and was president and then Stake Board Member of the Relief Society. During her presidency of the First Ward Relief Society, the first ward chapel in Mesa was built. When it became too small to accommodate the people, she was asked about the designing on the second one. She suggested that it be built as nearly like the first as possible, so the twin chapels of Mesa were built.

Many times in her later life, women would come up and praise her for helping them and would be so thankful that she had helped them when their children were born. Failing health made her give up her positions and her nursing. She enjoyed her children and old friends. The last days of her life, she and her grandson made a trip up the west coast into Canada. There she visited some of her Vance relatives. She enjoyed the trip very much. Her grandson Edward would stop the car at places of interest and let his grandmother see them.

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13. There are different reports of the number of children, including from Sarah herself. In 1900, she reported fourteen children with eleven still living, and in 1910, she only listed twelve children with twelve living. Either the 1900 census is in error, or she possibly had two miscarriages. 1900 census, John Vance, Township 1, District 32, Maricopa Co., Arizona; 1910 census, Sarah Vance, Mesa, Maricopa Co., Arizona.

Soon after the trip, she became ill at her home, and after about three weeks she passed away November 19, 1940, at the age of seventy-nine years.

## ELLIS AND BOONE:

About 1938, Sarah Vance wrote thirty-eight typewritten pages about her life, giving many more details of her childhood. Here is her description of taking the nursing course in Salt Lake City about 1894:

In Salt Lake City I rented a room across the hall from the doctor under whom I studied. You can just imagine what a time I had with those three lively little country boys in the city. I would lock them into the room while I attended my classes. No sooner was I gone than out through the window would go Leslie and Bert leaving the baby alone. Leslie wanted to sell papers but I would not allow him for I thought him much too small. I did not want him running around on the street. . . . [However, he did eventually sell papers and the boys had many escapades in the city.]

At the end of six months our course was finished and the time came for the six or seven women who were members of the class to receive their diplomas. We had graduating exercises and received the blessing for our work from Abraham H. Cannon, one of the twelve Apostles of the Mormon Church at Salt Lake City.

When he came to me he said that I would always have a Guardian Angel to watch over me and guide me in my work so that I would always do only what was right and what was best for the welfare of my patients. Dr. [Ellis R.] Shipp told me afterwards that never before had she heard so gracious a blessing pronounced over one of her students.

Many years later Dr. Shipp came to Arizona and organized a class here.<sup>14</sup>

Ralph Richards in his medical history of Utah wrote that Dr. Ellis Shipp's "great contribution to the welfare of the women of Utah and the Intermountain West was made by conducting systematic, thorough, and



*This photograph is a nursing/midwife graduation picture that Sarah Vance saved. With the palms on the left, it may be the class Dr. Shipp taught in the Salt River Valley. Photo courtesy of Vance Family Collection, Catherine Vance Dodds.*

complete instruction classes in nursing and obstetrics. She was kind, considerate, and patient with her pupils, but she never gave a certificate of graduation to any student who did not have the mental and personal qualifications necessary to make a good practical nurse and midwife."<sup>15</sup> Sarah Vance brought her nursing skills to the Salt River Valley and to the women she served. But she also used these same skills when her children had various accidents, including one near drowning. She said, "When I think of all the accidents that befell my active little children I thank God that I raised them all."<sup>16</sup>

14. Sarah Y. Vance Autobiography, MS 3644, CHL, 28–29. Dr. Ellis Shipp taught an eight-week class of thirty-six women in the spring of 1900 in the Gila Valley. Taylor, *25th Stake of Zion*, 34.

15. Richards, *Of Medicines, Hospitals, and Doctors*, 232–34, quote 234.

16. MS 3644, CHL, 30. Another autobiographical sketch is "The Story of My Life," MN MR 929.2 V277N 2002, Mesa Room, Mesa Public Library.