

Miles Park Romney Documentary Film Timeline <https://youtu.be/KM2UW-69hco>

Mission: To interpret the lives of Miles Park Romney, Hannah Hood Hill, Caroline "Carrie" Lambourne, Catharine Jane Cottam, Alice "Annie" Marie Woodbury, and Emily "Millie" Henrietta Eyring Snow through cinema, and make their stories attractive and accessible to their descendants and to the world.

Miles Park Romney, a builder by trade, was superintendent of the St. George Builders' Union, and president of both the St. George Social Hall Company and the St. George Dramatic Association. He also served as a chief of police, attorney-at-law, newspaper editor and publisher, and architect.

Few men in the Church ever reached greater heights in the dramatic field than he, and on the dance floor he was superb. The agility and grace displayed by him in cutting the different figures required in dancing in his time were almost phenomenal, particularly by one so large as he grew to be.

### **Miles Park Romney History**

MILES PARK ROMNEY, son of Miles and Elizabeth (Gaskell) Romney, was born in Nauvoo, Illinois, August 18, 1843, just a little less than a year preceding the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum Smith in Carthage Jail.

He was only three years old when the twenty thousand Saints were forced at the point of the bayonet to leave their beloved city and flee into the wilderness for safety. He was seven years old when his family, having finally accumulated enough for the trip, left Saint Louis, Missouri, to join the Saints in the Salt Lake Valley, a distance of nearly two thousand miles, which had to be covered walking beside an ox team and a wagon.

As a boy in Salt Lake City, Miles Park, barefoot, herded cows near the base of the Wasatch range of mountains in the company of such boys as Joseph F. Smith, who later became the President of the Church, and others who were to become prominent in the church. Later he was apprenticed to learn the carpenters' trade in which he became expert and which was to become his life-long vocation.

Because of the need to help in the support of the family Miles Park had little formal education. He went to school only a few terms during his entire life, and none after he was twelve years of age, and yet, through his own efforts he became a well-educated man.

In 1857 when Johnston's Army was enroute to Salt Lake City to punish the Mormons on a false charge of disloyalty to the Government of the United States, companies of Mormons were sent out by President Brigham Young to harass the United States Army and to burn their supply wagons. George Romney, Miles Park's older brother, was a captain in the Mormon forces.

Miles Park, then only fourteen years of age, had a burning desire to join the forces and followed his brother into the canyon. George was unable to convince Miles Park to go home, so he wrote a letter to President Brigham Young requesting him to keep Miles Park at home. Then he called Miles Park to be a "courier" to take this "important" message to the President. With a feeling of elation and pride, Miles Park carried the message, little realizing its contents.

An admirable quality of the pioneers of Utah was their ability to put aside the grinding cares of life and submerge their troubles in music, dancing, and dramatics. These activities influenced the later life and character of Miles Park Romney. The foundations of his success in dramatics and in the ballroom were being laid in these early days when he was in the formative period of life. Few men in the Church ever reached greater heights in the dramatic field than he, and on the dance floor he was superb. The agility and grace displayed by him in cutting the different figures required in dancing in his time were almost phenomenal, particularly by one so large as he grew to be.

When eighteen years of age, Miles Park Romney married Hannah Hood Hill, daughter of Archibald Hill and Isabella Hood, in the Endowment House on May 10, 1862. Three weeks later Miles Park Romney was called to a Mission to the British Isles.

He had barely arrived in England when he attended a Conference in London. It had been widely advertised that Miles Romney from Zion would be one of the speakers. Supposing it to be Miles Romney, father of Miles Park, who had previously filled a Mission in England, the people came out in large numbers to hear an old acquaintance speak. When the younger elder was announced, he stood, but was so overcome by the large audience, that he could not utter a word, and took his seat. The second time he arose with the same result, and it was not until he made the third attempt that words began to come haltingly from his quivering lips. The young elder had achieved a victory and he became, through his persistence and native ability, one of the best public speakers of this gospel dispensation.

Elder Romney proved to be an outstanding missionary. His gift of speech and magnetic personality drew people to him. He was so untiring in his efforts to spread the gospel that he went beyond his physical strength. Finally his body gave way to disease and he was forced to go to bed. He was informed by his doctor that one of his lungs was entirely gone and the other was in the process of disintegration and that he had but six months to live. He called upon the Lord to spare his life, and through his faith and the administration of Elders he was restored to health and remained to complete his mission.

Elder Romney sailed for home on April 29, 1865, after spending three years in the mission field. There were 636 Saints on his ship and after arriving in America he was placed in charge of a company of Scandinavian emigrants. It was a great responsibility to assist a body of foreigners, who were unable to speak the English language, over a distance of nearly three thousand miles, by the slow method of wagon travel. During the journey, as captain of the guard, he defended by gunfire the company against Sioux

raiders. Theirs was the only company in the history of the Mormon overland migration to be so attacked.

In March 1868, at the request of President Brigham Young, Elder Romney took a second wife, Caroline "Carrie" Lambourne. During this time the great Tabernacle in Salt Lake City was in the course of construction and Miles P. was employed as one of the skilled workmen.

In 1867 Miles P. with 157 other heads of families was asked by President Brigham Young to take their families to the southland to strengthen the settlements there. The Romney family made their home in Saint George. Miles P. assisted in the building of the Tabernacle and Temple in Saint George, his father being the principal architect of the Tabernacle and the general Superintendent of the construction of both buildings.

Miles P. Romney was a member of the United Order of Saint George established by the church in 1874. "One marvels in looking over the journal history of the St. George stake to note the many activities in which Miles Park Romney was engaged. There was scarcely an important project or movement of any sort, either material or spiritual, in the interests of his community, in which he was not an active participant." (Life Story of Miles Park Romney, Thomas Cottam Romney)

In 1875 he and two others contracted for the building of a bridge over the Virgen River. In 1873 he was influential in establishing the St. George Library. On November 8, 1869, he was ordained a High Priest and set apart as a member of the High Council, and the following year he served a short six-month mission to some of the outlying establishments of the St. George Stake.

In 1870 he was one of a committee of five to draft a Petition to be sent to the Senate asking them to defeat an anti-polygamy bill that had passed the House of Representatives.

In 1873 Miles P. held two church positions, that of Superintendent of the Sunday Schools of the Saint George Stake and a Stake Missionary. He also was frequently called upon to attend to miscellaneous matters such as speaking at funerals, delivering orations on holidays, and serving as a committeeman to prepare programs for special occasions.

About this time the second wife, Carrie, separated from Miles P. because of her inability to endure the hardships of life in Southern Utah and plural marriage. (Carrie later married a man out of the church by whom she had several children. She passed away while still quite a young woman, and with her death the two children to whom she gave birth before she left Miles P. – William George, age 11 at the time of his mother's death, and Martha Diana (Mattie), age 9 – were returned to him and were mothered by Hannah.

In 1873 Miles P. Romney married a third wife, Catherine Jane Cottam, the daughter of Thomas and Caroline Cottam. On October 11, 1875, Miles P. Romney was

called to a Northern States Mission, which lasted for ten months. On April 17, 1877, he was ordained a Bishop. On December 16 of the same year he was appointed again as Stake Superintendent of the Sunday Schools and also Stake Superintendent of the Y. M. M. I. A. After serving as Bishop for two years he asked to be released from that position because of the amount of work involved in holding the three positions.

In 1877 he was elected General Superintendent of the St. George Builders' Union. The St. George Dramatic Association was coached by Miles P. He was one of the "big four" chosen as favorites of those in the dramatic field in Dixie County. His sister Mary was also one of the four. He was active in the Military organization. He was active in the lumber and furniture business.

Life in St. Johns was not easy. The Mexicans and the few anti-Mormons who inhabited the town before the advent of the Mormons were very antagonistic and caused many difficulties—beatings, and land jumping among them. Brother Romney and Bishop Udall had papers served on them requiring them to stand trial at Prescott, over a land matter, but they were declared innocent and were dismissed to return home.

Miles P. was threatened with hanging because of his defending the Latter-Day Saints in a local paper, the "Orion Era," which he had purchased. The persecution of the saints became so severe that Miles P. was asked to go to Salt Lake City to plead with the President of the Church to send other families to settle in St. Johns to strengthen the brethren and sisters already there. One hundred families were called to go there.

While in St. Johns, Miles P. was the leading contractor and builder. He passed the bar examination through his own efforts, entitling him to practice law in Arizona. He and Bishop Udall had the contract for carrying the mail from St. Johns to Moenkopi and other points. He was editor and publisher of a weekly newspaper. He sent many letters and articles to be published in the Deseret News in Salt Lake City Utah. He was director of the dramatic company and first counselor to Bishop David K. Udall of the St. Johns Ward.

The family remained in Arizona only three or four years, but the years were characterized by struggle and hardship. The twenty-two members of his family lived in a lumber house and slept in tents and wagons. The first winter they had no cow, and lived on bread, beans and gravy. Brother Romney developed a felon (an acute and painful inflammation of the deeper tissues of a finger or toe, usually near the nail) on his thumb that kept him from work for three months, making it necessary for them to sell some of their horses and wagons for something to eat.

Following his recovery, he took a contract to build several houses in Nutrioso, and Hannah and three of the children accompanied him to cook for the men whom he had hired to work on the buildings. While there Hannah worked so hard that she lost a pair of twins who were born dead.

At one time when Miles P. was returning to Nutrioso after a short visit to St. Johns, some unknown man sneaked up and struck him a violent blow on the side of the head, knocking him from the wagon unconscious. Two of his children, the oldest one a ten year old girl, were with him and they went for help. It was some time before he was brought to consciousness, and he was ill for some time as a result.

The U. S. Marshals hounded the Saints constantly because of their polygamy. Three of the brethren were sent to Detroit to serve a term of three years and two others were imprisoned at Yuma. Miles P. was able to escape arrest because of the fact that his plural wives were constantly in hiding. For weeks they hid in cornfields during the day and found shelter at night in some neighbors' homes. On one occasion, in order to take two of his children to their mother in St. Johns, Miles P. lay on the floor of the wagon with a blanket drawn over him all night while the children sat on the seat by the side of the driver, in order to escape the clutches of the U. S. Marshals.

Finally Miles P. left his first wife in St. Johns with instructions to meet him in Old Mexico in some future time while he took his plural wives and their families several hundred miles through a dreary waste with the meager equipment they had. Imagine twelve people piled together into one lumber wagon with all of the bedding and provisions and other equipment required for a two or three week's journey.

After only a small part of the journey had been covered the family met a Brother Bradshaw enroute to southern Utah alone in his wagon. For a small price he agreed to take five or six of the older children to travel with him. Their make-believe Primary and Sunday School meetings with their songs, speeches, prayers, and classwork shouted to be heard above the rattle and rumble of the wagon was distracting to the driver and he would yell to the "kids" to be quiet. Miles P. did not appreciate his children being referred to as "kids" and he told Mr. Bradshaw so in no uncertain terms.

New Years Eve, 1884, found the group in the midst of deep snow trying to climb the Buckskin Mountains. It was so cold that ice formed in the beard of Brother Romney and his hands were so numb that he could not make the fire. One of the wives was able to do so by using Thomas's straw hat, as there was no dry kindling, leaving him nothing to cover his head but his father's old derby, several sizes too large and green with age and exposure to the elements.

The travelers were fondly welcomed by the grandparents, the parents of both of the wives, upon their arrival in St. George. Brother Romney had been advised to flee to Old Mexico for safety. However, it was thought best to leave Catherine and her children with her parents until such a time as the husband and father could establish his other two families in that far off land and make preparations for the coming of Catherine and family.

Miles P. and Annie and her three children left by rail, but when they reached the Gila Valley they were met by Will and Miles A. who took them by team and wagon to Mexico. Their first home consisted of four posts driven into the ground with burlap bags

sewed together to form walls on two sides and a wagon box and brush on the other sides. For shoes Miles P. had sandals strapped to his feet with strands of rawhide. When Lot Smith saw the evidences of such poverty he gave Brother Romney a pair of boots and a wagon cover.

The family arrived in the settlement December 17, 1885, and on March 13, 1886, their son Erastus was born in a dugout. Erastus was named in honor of the great Apostle and colonizer who had been so prominent in establishing settlements in southern Utah and in Arizona. When the child was only three weeks old his mother, Annie, began teaching school in an old stockade building having a dirt roof and floor and with slabs supported by rough legs for benches.

On one day while the children were in school the old building began to rock back and forth in an earthquake. The teacher quietly and calmly guided the children from the building where they remained until the series of quakes had passed and then all entered the school room and continued their studies.

This quake did have an advantage: the stream of water, the Piedras Verdes River, had been quickly running dry. Now the twisting and cracking of the earth's crust had opened up new sources of water much needed for the maturing crops. The stream was increased a hundred fold. However, damage was done also; the friction of boulders loosened by the quake caused a forest fire that did considerable damage to timber in the Sierra Madres.

January 1886. Miles P. preached the first funeral sermon in the newly formed colony. In March 1886, he was the orator for a patriotic meeting held in the schoolhouse with many prominent Mexican officials in attendance.

In 1886 Miles P. sent his sons Will and Miles A. with a team and wagon back to St. Johns to bring his wife Hannah and her children to Mexico. It was a brave woman who journeyed alone with her family from Arizona to Mexico over bad roads and through an Indian country much of the way. They were warned at Nutrioso that Geronimo, the Apache chief and his band were on the Warpath, but Hannah replied that she would put her trust in her Heavenly Father. Will obtained employment and stayed in Nutrioso.

The next night Hannah and the children were caught in a heavy snowstorm and blizzard. Quilts were wrapped around the younger children to keep them warm and Hannah and the older boys walked to keep from freezing. Apache Hill was so steep that they fastened trees to the back of the wagons to keep them from running over the horses.

At one point in the journey, they saw three dead horses lying by the roadside and learned that they and their riders had been killed a few days before by the Indians. The boys removed the shoes from the feet of the dead horses and nailed them to the hooves of their own animals, whose feet were tender from traveling without shoes. Hannah sat up the entire time holding her baby in her arms, afraid to sleep for fear the Indians would

slaughter them. It was a happy family when they were met by the husband and father and taken to the rude shelter which had been prepared for them.

In January 1887, two years after their return to St. George, word came to Catherine and her family from Miles P. that they were to go to Mexico by way of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. President Wilford Woodruff had for some time been living in the Cottam home with his plural wife to escape the U. S. Marshals. When time came for the departure of Catherine and her family he gave them a parting blessing and bestowed a kiss upon each one in turn.

Scarcely had the family arrived at their destination when Caroline and Claude, children of Catherine, were stricken with scarlet fever which resulted fatally for the boy, seven years of age. The child could likely have been saved had there been a doctor or serum available.

In 1887 part of the colonists moved to a new townsite, Colonia Juarez, where on June 5, 1887, a Bishopric was appointed, Miles P. Romney being one of the counselors. As was his usual practice Miles P. immediately founded a dramatic troupe in Juarez.

In 1890 a co-op store was founded with Miles P. Romney as president. The food in Colonia Juarez was limited and consisted principally of cornbread and beans, with a little bacon and homemade molasses occasionally. Milk and eggs were scarce.

The health of the people of the newly formed colony during the early years was greatly impaired as a result of poor water. The moss-covered water of the Piedras Verdes River was infested with Malarial-bearing mosquitoes. Thirteen of the Romney children became sick with Malaria at the same time. Because of the lack of medical aid and proper medicines the people showed more of a dependence upon a spiritual power for aid. Miles P. was often called to administer to the sick and he had the gift of healing to a marked degree.

Opportunities for education were limited in Mexico, but in 1896, a Stake Academy was built under the direct supervision of Miles P. Romney. Before then students could not go beyond the ninth grade. As the boys were needed on the farms and elsewhere to assist in the economic support of the family, three months was the average length of the school year for the vast majority of the young men, and the girls also found plenty to do about the house and on the farm. Miles P. believed in equal education for the boys and girls, so the girls were given equal opportunity. The father did not mind the children leaving home to attend church schools in Utah, but he would not permit them leaving home to attend other schools in the east, for fear they would leave the church.

Seven of his fifteen sons and one daughter filled missions. During the early years the Mormon colonies in Mexico were presided over by a President of the Mexican Mission. Miles P. was clerk of the mission. When the Stake was formed Miles P. was appointed to serve as member of the Stake Board of Education. Miles P. was given the superintendency for the building of all railroad stations along the line of a railroad that

was being built into the colonies. This would have been a good-paying job, but most of the railroad building fell through.

Miles P. was a strict disciplinarian, and his large family respected his authority. No son under 18 years of age should leave the parental home to go spend the evening without first getting permission from the father if he were home. If the father was absent the consent must be given by the mother. The hour for coming home was 10 o'clock, except in case of something special. The daughters must observe the same rules as their brothers, but so long as they were under the parental roof, irrespective of age, they must obtain consent to accompany a young man.

"There appeared to be contradictory elements in the make-up of Miles P. Romney. At times he was as stern and unbending as a giant oak, and again he was as tender as a plant. He carried himself with the dignity of a knighted prince, but he had the common touch. He was courageous in the face of danger but the sight of blood made him sicken. He could endure suffering and privation as a stoic but the plaintive cry of the innocent and needy melted him to tears.

He was liberal to a fault but could not tolerate waste. He was a patron of industry and a friend of the poor. Nothing gave him greater happiness than to send a sack of flour to the widow and to give bread to the hungry.

In his own home it was very satisfying to him to gather his families together and enjoy a quiet evening with them. He loved to seat himself at the head of an extended table with his family all around him, carve the chicken or roast beef, and then fill the plate full almost to overflowing with delicious edibles and pass to each one. Always he was the last to be served and usually the first to finish the meal.

He insisted that his sons be industrious but even in the midst of poverty, whenever possible, he gave them Saturday afternoon each week to play ball, go fishing, or engage in other forms of recreation." Punctuality was almost an obsession with him. If he was ever late to an appointment it was due to a condition over which he had no control. This was an example and lesson that his children never forgot.

Love and harmony existed among the wives of Miles P. Romney, being possible because of the perfect knowledge they had that plural marriage was ordained of God and would endure throughout eternity. And the children of the different branches of the family shared the same love and consideration as if they had all been born of the same mother. Outsiders not acquainted with the family found it difficult to determine which children belonged to which mothers.

In an effort to better provide for his family, Miles P. moved Catherine and her family to Cliff Ranch, 30 miles west of Colonia Juarez, where there was good grazing land and fertile land for crops. A dam and canal were built to bring water to the land. Later he purchased a farm of one hundred acres of fertile land one mile up the river from Casas Grandes.



In the late 90's, Miles P. sold his farm near Casa Grandes and purchased 100 acres adjacent to Colonia Juarez in the rich bottomland lying along the Casas Grandes River. A large two-story adobe house on this property became the home of Catherine and Annie and he built an adobe structure for Hannah a short distance from the other house.

A short time thereafter he married a young widow by the name of Millie Eyring Snow. She had been married in the temple to William Snow, a son of Apostle Erastus Snow. While still a young man he died, leaving his wife with two small children, Theresa and Beatrice. The widow was left some money and she used some of this toward the building of a house for herself and children on the Romney farm. Her home had a bathroom and other conveniences not to be found in the homes of the other wives.

With the removal from the farm above Casa Grandes to the one near Dublan the family could all be together to enjoy one another in a social way, and the father enjoyed calling his family together on festive occasions and taking his place at the head of the table as a great patriarch. Here at Dublan he was given a position on the Board of Education and directorship of the dramatic organization.

When he was 51 he was installed as President of the High Priests of the Stake and was ordained a Patriarch by Apostle Mathias Cowley. During this year 1902, he was in fairly good health and attending to his regular duties when without warning his heart ceased to beat and his spirit took flight from his body. Members of his family were gathered about him. It had been some time since he had shown any signs of life when George C. Naegle, a son-in-law and a visiting apostle were called in to administer to him, and to the joy of all, manifestations of life in the body began to appear.

Miles P. told of his experience as follows: He was conscious of his spirit having left his body and he found himself above the bed looking down upon the scene below. He saw his body lying still in death with several members of his family gathered about it in deep sorrow. His heart was touched and he felt he had some unfinished work he would like to do. Earnestly he desired to be permitted to return to earth life. His spirit painfully re-entered his body and it was several days before his body fully recovered from the effects of his experience.

During the last two years of Elder Romney's life he desired to visit as many of the wards of the stake as possible in his official capacity as President of the High Priests of the Stake. One day in February 1904, he climbed into his wagon accompanied by his wife, Catherine, and young son Vernon, to begin a ten-day trip to visit the Mormon colonies in the state of Sonora. The journey would require two or three days of travel to cover the distance of more than a hundred miles.

During the trip they were able to visit with several relatives. Miles P. had been dieting for some time to keep down the surplus fat, but on this trip he ate freely of the food that was placed before him, remarking, "I guess I will have to pay

for it." They returned from the trip feeling very tired. A bath and shave seemed to refresh the father and as he casually looked over his farm he commented on how beautiful it looked to him.

When night came he retired as usual with paper in hand to read the news and when as he was adjusting his glasses, a strange feeling came over him and he had a pain in the region of the heart. He suggested to his wife Hannah that the family be sent for, but before they could arrive his spirit had taken its flight. He was 61 years of age at the time of his death.

President Anthony W. Ivins was the principal speaker at his funeral. "Any man who could bring such a large family into Mexico and support them as well as Miles P. Romney had done must have remarkable ability." He further stated that father Romney had lived the principal of plural marriage as perfectly as he had known anyone to live it.

His son Gaskell tells of the following incident: "One night just before going to bed, I went out into the orchard. I heard a voice and going nearer recognized that father was praying. He was kneeling by a tree, and was pleading with the Lord to save his wheat crop from the severe drought. His pleadings were so sincere and his communion so close that it impressed me that he was actually talking with the Lord. His prayer was answered with an abundant wheat harvest while others were not so blessed." MILES PARK ROMNEY