

## **SARAH LOVELESS**

Sarah Loveless (nee Farquhar) is considered the first female American foreign missionary, serving in India from 1806 till 1824. She was born on Long Island, New York on September 23, 1774. She studied at a school headed by Isabella Graham, a woman dedicated to educating women, helping the poor, and advancing missions. Loveless eventually became an assistant at the school; but after a serious illness she received medical counsel to move to a warmer climate in order to fully recover.

Loveless boarded the ship *Alleghany* for India with Graham's daughter and family who were on their way to the East Indies because of work in the trading industry. The ship stopped in England where members of the London Missionary Society, William C. Loveless and John Taylor, joined the voyage in order to establish a mission in the Indian city of Surat. During the voyage, William and Sarah's romance blossomed. The ship landed in Madras in June 1805, and William and Sarah married on May 9, 1806.

### **Significant Contribution to Christianity in the United States**

Although she did not set out to be a missionary, marrying William cemented her place in history as the first American woman to engage in foreign missionary work. Sarah bore four children, although three died in India. The surviving son was sent to England to avoid a similar fate.

The English government ran the East India Company, which controlled the fleets of ships and military in the region. Neither entity was favorable to mission work. In the face of opposition, missionaries had to be creative in order to gain passage on ships, as well as create opportunities to work among the people. To establish a presence in Madras, William became the Superintendent of the Military Orphan Male Asylum for six years. Madras was a major port city for missionaries traveling through the region. Sarah's hospitality became legendary as she hosted missionaries traveling to or from mission assignments in the region.

In 1810, the couple worked together to raise funds and build a missionary chapel, known as the "Loveless Chapel." William served as the pastor. In 1816, Sarah founded the Missionary Free School for Girls to provide an education to girls, despite objections from the Indian people regarding the necessity of teaching females to read.

Due to her declining health, William and Sarah retired to England in 1824, where they continued to actively minister. Sarah died on September 20, 1837.

### **References and Resources**

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