

LIFE OF MARY ANN WILSON

Sketch written by Alice Maude L. Matheson of her Mother's life.

Mary Ann Wilson, daughter of William and Martha Phillips Wilson was born in Carlisle, Cumberland, England, January 19, 1843. At the age of three years her mother died but she remembered her as being a lovely woman and as he looked up at her tall handsome Father wearing a band of black crepe on his hat and noticing his sad expression on his face she realized their great loss, young as she was.

She went to live with her Grandmother Wilson who took good care of her and gave her every advantage of learning and culture. She attended Kindergarten school when four years old where she learned to read as well as to sew and knit (we have a sampler she made at the time with her Mother's name and the letters and the numbers worked on it) she could read the Bible at the age of six years.

Her Father would take her for long walks in the meadows where no doubt he would go to meditate over his loss and on one occasion she slipped and fell in the mud and she never did forget how badly she felt when she saw her little white stockings and slippers ruined, but the father carried her back home where the Grandmother soon had her immaculate again.

She attended the Church of England regularly with her Grandmother who required her to listen to the preacher so attentively so that when the Grandmother was unable to go she could tell almost everything he had said. When 12 years of age she was presented with a Bible by Lord Wharton for repeating from memory the catechism and some of the prayers as well as the 1st, 15th, 25th, 37th, 101st, 113th and 145 Psalms. I have this Bible now. She received an education qualifying her to become a nurse at the age of 17. Being gifted with a beautiful voice she was chosen as soloist in the Church of England Choir in Carlisle and was loved and respected by all. On several occasions she was asked to sing for Queen Victoria, (whom she always did admire) for her many noble qualities.

One day on her way home from school she heard footsteps behind her and on quickly looking around saw a man with a pair of scissors about to cut off her long braids of auburn hair.

In 1856, when she was 22 years old some friends invited her to attend a conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints where she would hear a young missionary from America tell of the Restored Gospel, and being interested and anxious to learn something different from the regular routine of the Church of England she went but unbeknown to her Father and Grandmother. When she saw the Missionary and heard him talk she said to herself, "He is the type of a man I would like for my husband." He was tall and good looking as we would express it now, had dark hair and large brown eyes, dressed as an English Gentleman; which he was. Mary Ann became more interested as she investigated the Gospel, also in the handsome man who had appeared so suddenly into her life and he being also anxious to make new converts, they became acquainted. However at the close of the Conference referred to she expressed to him her satisfaction in what he had explained in his sermon, as

it appeared that she had been acquainted with all she had been anxious to know for some time and answered every inquiry in her mind. A deep friendship grew up between them; he however only spending a small portion of his time in Carlisle.

She was baptized at Dalston near Carlisle on the 27th of July 1856, by Elder Thomas Adams. Upon hearing of this her Father disowned her and the Minister, who had doted on her, preached her funeral sermon, saying "another sheep has been lost from the fold." Some friends, relatives of the Royal Family often invited her to accompany them to Church, would now pass her by with a look of scorn.

Upon the death of her Grandmother she lived at the L.B.S. Headquarters where her skill with the needle was made use of in making and repairing shirts for the Elders and assisting the Saints who were preparing to leave for Utah. In the meantime she and her Missionary friend Elder Henry Lunt indulging in frater friendly correspondence and although she knew he had a wife in Utah the following poem composed by her and sent to him portrays her unselfish nature which she exhibited all through her life.

The Poem:

A SIMILITUDE INSCRIBED TO MRS. HENRY LUNT

In Ephraims vale a floweret bloomed
Surprising lovely was its hue
It spread its fragrance all around
The pleasant spot on which it grew.
Yet so lovely and so sweet
So full of grace and modesty
And strove to hid its loveliness
From the rude gaze of the passersby.

But there was one of beautiful form
Of graceful mien and noble birth
Who chanced to see its tiny head
And not because of gorgeous tint
Of dazzling beauty 'twas arrayed
But for the unassuming grace
That threw a halo around its head.

But when he saw its tender stem
And thought of storms that might arise
And blight its beautiful bloom
He gently plucked the dear loved prize
And in his bosom he safely placed
This sweet and fragrant flower,
And there it bloomed secure from harm
And every blighting power.

This flower and emblem is of her
Who is the hope, the joy, the life
Of one of Israels noblest sons
His dear and fondly cherished wife.

O still may she in beauty bloom
 And dwell in peace and sweet content
 And bless with pure devoted love
 Her honored husband Henry Lunt.

(Copied from his diary kept while on his mission.)

Upon the advice of Elder Lunt she sold all her personal belongings paid her debts, and had four pounds ten shillings left which was sent to Liverpool for her emigration; she sailed from Liverpool on March 25, 1857, on board the George Washington which had 817 Saints on board, bound for Boston. Elder gave her two pounds ten shillings to pay her Railway fare through the States and put her in charge of George Swindle. He agreed to furnish her a passage over the plains. Bro. and Sister Swindle proved to be true and faithful to her and spoke in the highest terms of her as being a most amiable young woman and very industrious and agreeable company, doing all in her power to make them comfortable. (extract from Elder Lunt's Diary)

While staying at the mission headquarters the landlady put five dollars among the papers on the table which was one of Miss Wilson's duties to straighten. When she found the money she returned it to the landlady, who said it had been put there as a test of her honesty. They were on the sea six weeks. Mary Ann was so sick that she wished that the ship would sink. She traveled across the plains in Jesse B. Martin's Company. Three days after they had started on their journey a stampede occurred among the oxen, wagons were broken and many cattle lost. Two people, an old man and a child, was killed. This crippled the company, only necessities could be taken on, good sets of books, feather beds, stoves, and relics of every description were left on the plains. Every able bodied person was required to walk. Miss Wilson walked all the way except thirty miles. The Captain of the Company allowed her to ride his horse that distance.

Here shoes were gone and she arrived in Salt Lake City with moccasins on her feet which had been purchased from the Indians on the plains. Songs that were new at that time and popular were dear to her heart and she brought, Ben Bolt, "Annie Laurie", "Shells of the Ocean", with her, and which she sang many times after arriving in this country.

She arrived in Salt Lake a month before Elder Lunt and stayed with friends and busied herself sewing, and making herself useful, and soon after his arrival they were married, his first wife, Ellen, willingly giving her consent. They traveled to Cedar City by Ox team.

Henry Lunt and Ellen Whittaker were married March 25, 1852, she having come to Cedar City in 1851. Their first home was a wagon box, which contained one chair and very few dishes mostly tin. In a short time they moved into an adobe house. During a thunder storm the lightning struck the house taking the soles off Ellens shoes and cutting holes in the ribbon with which she was trimming hats. She was a Milliner by trade and during the absence of her husband, while on a mission, she supported herself by braiding and trimming hats and bonnets, using silk she had brought from England. She and Mary Ann were both members of the Choir, also of the Dramatic Society. Ellen was the first secretary of the Benevolent Society, this was before the Relief Society was organized. Her Father was a weaver and she also learned the trade, she doing the weaving and Mary Ann doing the spinning for the family.

When cotton was raised in Dixie the two young women made cotton cloth as well as woolen. Thread being scarce they made that also. When the Deseret Telegraph line was built Ellen was one of the first operators, having charge of the office which was in the Lunt home at the time it was first established in 1866 until 1903, when it was abandoned. Maude L. Matheson being the last operator of the Deseret Telegraph Company with W.B. Dougal as manager at the time.

The two wives Mary Ann and Ellen lived in harmony with each other with their husband, Ellen having no children of her own shared her love with those whom Mary Ann was blessed with and they all loved her. Mary Ann taught school for a time, walking from the old Fort to the new City, a mile. She helped her husband haul hay, reaped grain, singing as she worked.

A large house consisting of fifteen rooms with attic and cellar, three porches, built in the new City, which also served as a hotel and furnished accommodations for the President's Company in making their annual tour through the Territory. Aunt Ellen would receive the news of their coming over the Telegraph wires and great preparations would be made. Mary Ann was blessed with eight children-- Henrietta, Eva, Henry, Randle, William, Florence, Violet Alice Maude all of whom were held in their arms on President Young's knee, when he took the last named in his arms he asked how many that made and being informed that she was the eighth he said, "That is a good beginning," which since has proven to be true.

When the Relief Society was organized both Ellen and Mary Ann were chosen as officers, both in their turn serving as Stake President, the latter being chosen. Then Aunt Ellen left for Mexico to join her husband, who had taken his two wives Annie and Sarah, each having eight children, all boys, being born to Sarah after their arrival there. Annie's children were--Jane G. Lunt Jamina, Rose, Oscar, George, Thomas, Eliza, Rachel. Sarah's family were-- Egerton, Broughton, Parley, Edward, Heaton, Alma, Owen, Clarence.

Mary Ann remained in Cedar City where all her children were living and for twenty five years she was an active worker in the Relief Society in both Stake and Local capacities, and much respected and loved by all, always being prompt, and willing. Her personality commanding, yet kind and considerate, also possessing that finest of attributes, motherly affection. In her home she was queenly, gentle and beloved by her children, who were ever ready to give her every attention in her declining years. Her counsel and advice were always words of wisdom, encouraging mothers to instill into hearts of their children love for the principles of truth and virtue and obedience to parents. While she missed greatly her husband and the other two wives who were in far off lands she took comfort with her children whom were married in the St. George Temple and had large families with the exception of Violet who was a ministering Angel to all the others, she adopted a little girl who died when fifteen months old. Several years after she took two children to raise both having families and who loved her as a mother. On the 7th of April 1910 Mary Ann departed this life at the age of 76 after a short illness surrounded by all the children except Florence who had preceded her only four months, on December 14, 1909.