



JOSEPHINE BINGHAM TAYLOR 1857–1920

Josephine Bingham was born to Genet Gates and Willard Bingham, 9 May 1857, in Wilson Lane, Weber, Utah. Her father owned a saw mill on Monte Cristo. In the summer, part of the family went to Monte Cristo to run the mill and the rest stayed in Wilson on the farm to raise food for winter.

Josephine became the third wife of Levi James Taylor on 30 November 1875, when she was 17 years old. One and a half years earlier, Levi had married her older sister, Flora. His first wife, Nancy Jane Gates (an aunt to Flora and Josephine), died in 1872. The Taylors accepted the principal of polygamy. However, the Edmunds Act in 1882 and the Edmunds-Tucker Act in 1887, put teeth into the anti-polygamy movement and the Taylor's and many others endured persecution for cohabitation.

Early one morning, Levi left to go to his brother's home in Plain City to get a band of horses. Josephine and her two small daughters were alone. Soon after he left, a posse of men came for him. They searched the premises thoroughly. Failing to find him, they decided to await his return. They lounged around, peering in the windows and talking in a vulgar manner. There were threats and boasts about what they would do with Levi when they found him. Josephine and the girls were worried. They knew he would return early in the afternoon, and it was impossible to get word to him. Ruby, the youngest daughter, said "Mama, let's pray to Heavenly Father. He can help us." They knelt in humble prayer. When they returned to the kitchen, they saw Levi coming. He was well known by the men who were waiting for him. When he saw the men, he drew his hat down over his forehead and drove the horses past them and down into the pastures. Their prayer was answered, he was not recognized, and he stayed away until the men left. However, Levi was separated from his families from May to October, 1877, when officials caught up with him and sent him to the penitentiary for cohabitation. While there, he took a course in double entry bookkeeping from Apostle Ruder Clawson, who was also serving time. The skills he learned helped him a great deal later in life. In the fall of 1892, Levi spent another three months in the penitentiary for cohabitation when officials determined he was still violating the law because of the birth of his daughter, Esther Mary, on Dec 25, 1891, to his wife Flora; and son a Wilford Joseph, born 9 Jan 1892, to his Josephine.

While Levi was in the penitentiary, a former prisoner came to Josephine's home late one night and knocked on the door. He told her that Levi needed some money and sent him to come for it. Josephine was very frightened, and she gave the man some money and he left. Of course, Levi had not sent him. This man had the names of some of the prisoner's wives and was out to see what he could get from them.

Levi taught school in Harrisville for ten years. Part of the time, when Ruby was in the third grade, Josephine taught with him. Josephine was a petite, dainty little woman with brown hair and eyes, just five feet tall. She was always neat and clean and had a kind, sweet disposition, and loved to care for others. She always had a pretty flower garden and especially loved snap dragons and pansies. She had her own vegetable garden and also raised peanuts and sweet peas which covered the fences.

Josephine and Flora each had their own chickens and cows to care for. Josephine's girls and Wilford milked cows and tended the chickens. Josephine made delicious soups and buttermilk biscuits and the family enjoyed her hot bread and butter, and fresh buttermilk. Everyone loved Josephine's custard pies and coconut cream cakes. She always kept her cookie jar full. The children loved to help her make honey candy by pulling it. Josephine made butter to sell and also sold eggs. Levi had a horse named "Jonnie." Their daughter, Ada, would catch the horse, hitch it up to the buggy, and help her mother deliver the butter and eggs to their customers each week. Josephine also made large cheeses. Every fall Levi killed a beef and a pig. Josephine smoked the hams and bacon.

Josephine and Levi were blessed with ten children. Five of them died. Samuel Green (1875) died in 1881 from whooping cough. Another son, Jessie Levi (1886), went with the family to a ward party where he was exposed to a child with measles. Jessie contracted the disease and died at 13 months. Lydia Almeda (1877) and Ida Josephine (1878) died as infants. Mary was born dead. Levi and Josephine also took Alfred Taylor's five week old son, Warren Wayne, to care for when the baby's mother died. He lived until he was 11 months old, and then he died. Josephine's heart ached for the babies she lost. Five children lived to maturity: Lucetta Jane (1880), Wilford Joseph (1892), Ada May (1898), Ruby Rosetta (1882), and Grace Lucinda (1893).

When the Taylor children were small, they bathed once a week in a round wash tub, which in the winter was placed by the big kitchen range. They had a well outside and had to carry all the water they used into the house. When Wilford returned from his mission, he put a sink in the kitchen and installed running water for Josephine.

Josephine's hands were never idle. Whenever she sat down she was always knitting or crocheting. During World War I, she knit 28 pairs of socks, 22 sleeveless sweaters, and four mufflers to keep the soldiers warm. She also knitted stockings for her children when they were small. She made many quilts and had a loom to weave carpets. She tore many rags into strips and made rag rugs. She also gathered corn husks for their mattresses and cushioning under the carpets.

Josephine was in attendance at the Salt Lake Temple when it was dedicated, 6 April 1893. She was supportive of her husband who held high positions in the Harrisville LDS ward, served missions, and was Stake Patriarch. She served many years in the Harrisville Ward Relief Society as president, secretary and visiting teacher. She had a gift for working with the sick and helping them heal. She was always willing to help "lay out" people who had passed away. Josephine was not very well most of her life. She was near death many times, but was healed. She suffered from diabetes and heart trouble, but never wanted anyone to

know when she was not well. She was ambitious, patient and faithful in her service to mankind. She passed away 11 July 1920, at the age of 63.

SOURCE:

Bingham, Ada. Historical material compiled by Mildred R. Hardy. Unpublished manuscript. May 1978.

Steiner, Fern. "History of Josephine Bingham Taylor." Unpublished manuscript.

Taylor Levi J. *Journals of Levi J. Taylor*. Unpublished manuscript.

Bingham, Genet Gates	Taylor, Jessie Levi
Bingham, Willard	Taylor, Levi James
Clawson, Apostle Rudger	Taylor, Lucetta Jane
Gates, Genet	Taylor, Lydia Almeda
Monte Christo	Taylor, Mary
Taylor, Ada May	Taylor, Ruby Rosetta
Taylor, Alfred	Taylor, Samuel Green
Taylor, Flora Bingham	Taylor, Warren Wayne
Taylor, Grace Lucinda	Taylor, Wilford Joseph
Taylor, Ida Josephine	