



ELLEN GROBERG CROWTHER

1886-1978

Ellen Groberg Crowther, born 27 October 1886, was the daughter of John Groberg and Johannah Larson. Ellen's father, John, was born in Vesterfarnbo, Sweden. In 1969, he and his parents were baptized members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Carl Oberg. They immigrated to Utah, arriving in the Salt Lake Valley 17 July 1872; shortly thereafter they settled in Ogden. John's parents continued living with him until they died in 1884 and 1887, respectively.

Ellen's mother, Johannah Larson, born 8 September 1845 in Sweden, was the only member of her family to join the LDS Church. She was baptized 26 July 1868. Johannah's family and friends pressured her to abandon her new religion, making life so unpleasant for her that eventually she left home and went to Stockholm to work in a silver plating factory. While there, a mutual friend recommended that she correspond with John Groberg. John later arranged for Johannah to immigrate to Utah, where they were married in the Salt Lake Endowment House on 22 December 1874.

When Ellen was born, the family lived in Lynn Ward, Weber County, Utah, which was just to the north of Ogden in the area of Five Points. Their home was at 200 North Washington Boulevard at the foot of the hill where a military school was then located. When Ellen was three years old, her father bought a farm in Farr West. Taking Ellen's thirteen year old brother, Enoch, with him, John went ahead to prepare their new home. A neighbor, John Lefgren, was to drive Ellen, her mother, her thirteen month-old sister, Jennie, her five year-old brother, Charlie, and her ten year-old sister, Hannah, who was gravely ill, to the farm in a buggy. When Ellen got out of the buggy, the horse kicked her in the head, knocking her unconscious. The family feared she was dead, but Ellen revived. Unfortunately, John and Johanna did lose seven of their nine children at an early age: Hannah died the next year; three daughters and a son died as infants; Enoch and Jennie died as young adults.

The Groberg's brick and frame home in Farr West had five rooms with a porch across the front. Later, a summer kitchen was added to the back and a side porch was enclosed to provide more room. On their farm, a wide variety of fruits and vegetables were raised, as well as alfalfa, grain and sugar beets. Ellen helped thin beets, milk cows, feed the livestock, and care for their large garden

Once a week, she and Jennie helped their mother with the wash. The water was pumped by hand, carried to the stove to be heated in the boiler, and then poured into a washer that was turned by a hand wheel. Several batches of wash were churned and scrubbed, rinsed and blued, and hung on the line to dry. The rinse water was then used to wash the kitchen and dining room floors. Once they were done, the girls liked to lie on the front room floor or in the barrel-stave hammock under the apple tree to read.

Ellen said that she loved to work with the horses, harnessing and unharnessing teams, and riding whenever possible. One day, however, she and Jennie were almost killed riding to town in their one horse buggy. When they came to the railroad tracks near the Harrisville Brickyard with Ellen driving, they failed to see an approaching train. Some boys across the track yelled and waved to catch their attention. Jennie looked up and saw a train bearing down on them. She cracked the whip, the horse bolted across the track and the train whipped past, missing them by inches. Ellen said she was so shaken that she didn't even try to rein in the horse for sometime.

Everyone in the family took baths in a galvanized tub. Fruits, vegetables and milk were kept cool in a cellar beneath the kitchen that was accessed by a trap door and a flight of stairs. Kerosene lamps, with glass chimneys that had to be cleaned and filled with oil each week, lighted the rooms at night. After getting their first telephone, Ellen's father always took off his hat and brushed his hair before answering it. He thought it marvelous that they could hear someone from as far away as Ogden.

When she was six years-old, Ellen started 1st grade in Farr West's one room school. The beginners sat in a lean-to in the back. In later years, she had fond memories of many close friends and of good teachers. During her eighth grade, Ellen's brother, Enoch, taught her class and served as the principal before going on a mission to Sweden. Students graduated after the eighth grade. Students who went on to Weber Academy for another two years could teach school.

Enoch and Jennie attended Weber and then taught school, but Ellen had no desire to teach. Instead, she stayed home to help her mother. She took a few art lessons from an artist in Ogden, and particularly enjoyed working with pastels, and later with oils. Ellen continued painting pictures for many of her family and friends. She sold a few, but primarily she liked giving them as gifts. In 1965, at the age of 79, she took first place at the Utah State Fair for one of her paintings. Art is a talent shared by many members of the Groberg and Crowther families.

In addition to her artwork and helping at home, Ellen learned to play the organ. She worked at a local canning factory and saved enough money to send east for an organ. She practiced every day until she became proficient, but eventually she quit practicing and lost the ability to play. She often said, "that goes to prove that if you don't keep using your talents they will be taken from you."

She and her sister, Jennie, shared many of the same friends and interests. They taught Sunday School classes, wrote poetry, were called to publish a hand written newspaper for the ward, acted in numerous ward plays and gave readings at ward parties and dances. They played on the ward basketball team, and went on sleigh, buggy, and wagon rides with friends. Until divided in 1890, Farr West and Harrisville had been one ward and they continued to hold many combined dances, picnics and activities.

When Ellen met Albert Crowther she enjoyed his company, but did not consider him a very good dancer. It did not prove too great an obstacle, for in November 1907, she and Albert were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple by Apostle John R. Winder. The day before their marriage, they had taken the train to Salt Lake City and stayed the night in a hotel in separate rooms. In the morning, "nervous and excited", they went to the temple without "a relative or a friend along

with us.” After a short honeymoon in Idaho visiting Albert’s sister, Alice, in Blackfoot and Enoch, in Idaho Falls, they settled into a converted harness shop in Harrisville near Albert’s parents. It had only a kitchen and front room.

Their stay in the house was short, however. Less than ten months later they moved to Idaho Falls to care for Enoch's two boys, LeRoy and Delbert, ages 4 and 2. His wife, Maude, had died soon after giving birth to a baby girl, also named Maude, who was cared for by Maude’s mother. While in Idaho Falls, Ellen's first child, Eva, was born on 9 February 1909. Enoch decided to take the boys to Farr West to his parent's home for a visit and to recuperate. He died of tuberculosis while at home. After the funeral in Utah, Enoch was taken back to Idaho to be buried beside his wife and the boys returned to live with Ellen and Albert in Idaho Falls.

Meanwhile, Ellen's sister, Jennie, had married Francis Lowell Woods. Six months after Enoch's death, Jennie died after the birth of a baby boy, named Groberg. Jennie was twenty years old. Albert and Ellen missed their families and decided to move back to Utah. They bought a small farm in Slaterville, where their son, Lawrence, was born on 11 December 1910. Due to complications during the delivery, Ellen was bed ridden for six weeks. Under the circumstances, it was decided that LeRoy and Delbert should live on the farm with their grandparents and Ellen's brother, Charlie and his wife, who after being married for three years, had no children. Later, Charlie and Mattie had seven children of their own.

Ellen and Albert then built a frame house in Harrisville next to Albert's father and mother, both of whom they helped care for as their health deteriorated. They had two more children; Jennie, born 4 June 1913, and Chester, born 21 March 1915. Within a few years they sold the frame house to Albert's brother, Will, who was helping Albert care for their father, and bought a brick home nearby where they lived the rest of their lives. Albert's father, David, died in 1918. Four months later, on 8 January 1919, Lawrence, who had just turned eight years old, also died following a bout of severe abdominal pains that probably resulted from a ruptured appendix.

Several years later, Ellen and Albert had three more children; Elva, 4 April 1922, Eleanor, 28 April 1924, and Kenneth, 7 November 1926. The gap between the older and the younger children was sufficient that Ellen often joked that she had raised two families.

Throughout her life, Ellen was active in many community and church callings. Beginning at age fourteen, Ellen served as a Primary teacher and an assistant Primary Secretary in the LDS Church. By eighteen, she was a counselor in the Primary. She went on to serve as Primary President, ward Relief Society President, a counselor in three Relief Society presidencies, as well as serving on a stake Relief Society Board and teaching many other religion, Primary and Relief Society classes.

While raising her children, Ellen continued to take on many commitments. She was president of the local Farm Bureau for two years, attended Girls' Camp as a youth leader, taught sewing and cooking classes in the 4-H Club, and sold war bonds during WWII. Ellen’s sister, Jennie, once wrote that Ellen was “such a homebody”. If that was so in her early life, it is not evident from her later contributions. Even so, Ellen’s family was always her first priority.

After Albert retired, he and Ellen visited many of the national parks in Utah, Idaho and California. They visited Elva and Chester and their families in California before Albert was diagnosed with stomach cancer. He died on 6 April 1960. They had seven children: three boys and four girls, and twenty-five grandchildren.

Ellen liked to write poetry. On 13 May, 1962, John Barlow read one of Ellen's poems, "Our Mothers," on his "Breakfast with Barlow" show on KSL radio. As she grew older, Ellen continued to write poems, paint, garden and crochet, and to travel with members of her family. Several times she flew to Maryland to visit Kenneth and his family. She often marveled that she had lived from the days of the horse and buggy to the days of air travel and that she had seen a man walk on the moon.

Ellen had several serious illnesses in her life. She had one minor and four major operations, but managed to overcome those problems with the help of priesthood blessings and many prayers. Otherwise, she said, she had good health, for which she was grateful. She had a strong testimony of the truthfulness of the LDS Church and the power of priesthood blessings.

She lived in her home until the last three years of her life. In her final years, she lived with her daughter Eleanor's family, who had built a house next door to her after Albert's death. Ellen died April 1978, and was buried next to Albert in the Ogden City Cemetery. She was always willing to share her many talents and was a great asset to her church and community. She was loved by family, friends and neighbors.

SOURCES:

Crowther, Ellen Groberg. *Life Sketch of Ellen Groberg Crowther*. Unpublished manuscript.

Painter, Eleanor Crowther. Family Remembrances.

Painter, LeAnn. *Ellen Groberg Crowther*. Unpublished manuscript.

Wheeler, LeAnn Painter Wheeler. Family Remembrances.

Barlow, John Barlow	Groberg, Jennie
Crowther, Albert	Groberg, Johannah Larson
Crowther, Eleanor	Groberg, John
Crowther, Elva	Groberg, LeRoy
Crowther, Eva	Groberg, Mattie
Crowther, Kenneth	Groberg, Maude
Crowther, Lawrence	Larson, Johannah
Crowther, Will (William)	Lefgren, John
Groberg, Charlie	Winder, John R.
Groberg, Delbert	Woods, Francis Lowell
Groberg, Enoch	Woods, Groberg
Groberg, Hannah	

