



MARY ELIZA SHURTLIFF TAYLOR 1832–1914

Mary Eliza Shurtliff was born 25 December 1832 in Portage County, Ohio, to Luman Andrus Shurtliff and Eunice Baggs Gaylord. The family moved about the country a great deal because her father cleared timber land. She started school at the age of three and caught whooping cough, measles and chicken pox in succession. Her parents had little hope for her life.

After her father's conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the family moved to Kirkland, Ohio, and witnessed the dedication of the Kirkland Temple. Mary saw the rolls of papyrus from which Joseph Smith translated the records known as the Book of Abraham. Persecution forced them to move many times—to Farr West, Missouri; to Quincy, Adams County, Illinois; and then to Commerce, which was changed to the name of Nauvoo. During this time, Mary recalled fires of the mobs so thick in the woods that they reminded her of the stars in the sky. On one of their moves, her mother dressed each of her four children in two suits of clothing out of concern for the possibility of not being able to obtain more clothing.

While living in Nauvoo, her father was called on three short missions. Their home was located below the temple where they could watch its construction. Mary stood near the Prophet Joseph Smith when he told the saints that they would go to the Rocky Mountains. She experienced the gloom of news that the Prophet was killed. Upon her father's return from the meeting where the Prophet's successor was chosen, he reported that Brigham Young had the voice and appearance of Joseph. During this tumultuous era in church history, Mary's mother died in October 1845, and was buried on their own lot with baby Lucy Amerilla in her arms. At the time, her brother, Lewis, had the ague and another sister lay unconscious. Mary was twelve years old. Less than six weeks later, her father married Altamira Gaylord, her mother's sister.

Mary's father moved his family to Winter Quarters, and in April 1849, they moved to a settlement called Springville where they remained until they could gather provisions necessary for the move west.

Mary's aunt taught her many things including dressmaking, a trade she worked at almost all her life. Mary learned to card wool and knit all the stockings for the family. As she walked across the plains, she knit lace and by the time she arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, she had enough lace for several pillow cases, which she sold. Mary learned many skills from others along the way, grinding hard corn and wheat, making lye from ashes and hulled corn, weaving baskets, and making hats from palm leaves. In Iowa, she made a palm hat for a traveler who offered her five bushels of corn for it.

Mary was full of love and saw the bright side of everything. She passed through many trials but appreciated the good things and good times that came to her. She was 19 when she arrived in the Salt lake Valley in 1852. She went to the home of Pleasant Green Taylor and worked for his wife, Clara, who became seriously ill following the birth of their third son, Alfred. A strong bond of friendship and love developed between the women, and with Clara's consent, Pleasant Green Taylor took Mary for his second wife on 5 July 1853.

Due to problems with Indians that same year, Brigham Young advised settlers to build forts, and the saints in the Harrisville area including Pleasant Green Taylor and his family moved into Bingham's Fort. The men left the fort during the day to work their fields, and returned to the fort in the evenings for protection. They remained in the fort until 1856.

While still living in the fort in April 1855, Pleasant Green Taylor was called to serve in the Salmon River Indian Mission. The winter of 1855-56 was very difficult for Mary and Clara as they took care of their farm and families. Pleasant Green and other men of the mission were able to make several trips back to their homes in Utah to deliver mail and get supplies. On one of these return visits from Idaho, on 6 April 1857, Pleasant Green Taylor took a third wife, Jane Narcissus Shurtliff, a sister of Mary Eliza. Jane Narcissus went to Idaho with Pleasant Green when he returned to the Salmon River Mission. As Clara's brother, William Bailey Lake, was returning from the Salmon River Mission, he was killed by Indians. Pleasant Green married the widow of William Bailey Lake, Sara Jane Marler Lake, 20 June 1858, while the saints were camped by Utah Lake due to the approaching Johnston's Army. Brigham Young performed the marriage.

The four wives first lived in log houses in Harrisville built from trees grown in the area or hauled from the mountains. Later they had comfortable brick homes. Mary Eliza's home was in one side of the same brick house with Clara. In June of 1900, when Clara was lying on her death bed surrounded by her husband and loved ones, she turned to Mary and said, "Mary, I want to die in your arms." And she did.

The LDS Primary was organized in Mary Eliza's home in 1881. She was an ardent temple worker. She made 150 quilts, 500 handkerchiefs, and many socks and sold them to provide funds to do temple work.

She was the mother of nine children, three who died in infancy. Amanda Melvina (1854), Eunice Eliza (1856, stillborn), Lewis Warren (1857-1857), Lumen Green (1859), Joseph Albert (1861), Elcemina (1863-1864), MaryAnn (1866), Laura Aner (1871), and Lucy Ada (1873).

Mary Eliza Shurtliff Taylor died, 10 October 1914. She is buried in the Ogden City Cemetery.

SOURCE:

Find A Grave. "Mary Eliza Shurtliff Taylor." 13 Jul 2012.

Taylor Family group sheets and biographies. Condensed from a history written by Lottie Johnson Taylor. Undated.

Bingham's Fort	Taylor, Amanda Melvina
Gaylord, Altamira	Taylor, Elcemina
Gaylord, Eunice Baggs	Taylor, Eunice Eliza
Lake, Clarissa	Taylor, Joseph Albert
Lake, Sara Jane Marler	Taylor, Laura Aner
Lake, William Bailey	Taylor, Lewis Warren
Salmon River Indian Mission	Taylor, Lucy Ada
Shurtliff, Jane Narcissus	Taylor, Lumen Green
Shurtliff, Lucy Amerilla	Taylor, MaryAnn
Shurtliff, Luman Andrus	Taylor, Pleasant Green
Taylor, Alfred	