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Biographical Sketch

of

Catherine Cradock Armstrong

Wife of William Armstrong

by Lydia Chadwick Larson, granddaughter

Pioneer Year 1853

Sailed on the Windermere

Born 22 Nov 1819 at Oldberry, England

Married in Sponelade, West Bromswick, England

Died 19 Mar 1903

Catherine Cradock Armstrong was born November 22, 1819 at Oldberry, England. She lived there with her two sisters, Mary and Sisly. All of them were employed in the soap factory. At the soap factory she met William Armstrong, a Scotchman, whom she later married. He was at that time a chemical inspector in the soap factory where she and her sisters were spinners. He was a young widower, his first wife having died at the birth of her first child who also died.

When Catherine was very young, about seventeen years of age, she and William were married _____ in Sponelade, West Bromswick, England. Here the Latter Day Saint missionaries visited their home, and they began to investigate the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. They soon joined. It was then that their people and friends began to shun them and treat them badly. They tried very hard not to notice it and went along as quietly as they could with their little family.

Their first three children were girls: Mary, Margaret and Jane. They felt very disappointed that their union was not blessed with a son and heir, so when an old friend told William Armstrong that he never would have a son until he returned to his native land of Scotland, he was very upset. Being unhappy at the way their friends were treating them and being very superstitious about not having a son, they moved to Scotland. Here in the next five years three sons were born to them. The first one was John, who was affectionately known as Jack Armstrong of American Fork. The second son was Joseph, also of American fork. The third son was William, a sickly, delicate child.

Things were not going well with Catherine and William financially, so they returned to England with a large family of six children to find better employment, but they were not satisfied for a second time in England because of religious prosecutions, and their friends and people were even more bitter toward them.

It was very hard for Catherine to make up her mind to seek a new land, but she finally decided to come to Zion with the missionaries to worship as she had chosen. She was then about thirty-three years of age, and with six small children to bring it was

no easy task, the baby being three months old; but their faith was so great it would not be denied. In the early spring of 1853 they set sail in the old sailing vessel "The Windermere". They were nine weeks on the ocean, having a very hard, rough voyage. The ship leaked all the way, and all on board had to take turns dipping the water out to keep the ship from sinking. The older children can remember their mother gathering them around her and crying for joy when land was sighted on the shore off New Orleans. She felt her prayers had truly been answered. John and Thomas Proctor also came on the same ship, and they and their families joined Catherine in expressing their joy at reaching land.

The old ship was loaded with salt for a return trip, but it was later learned that it was lost at sea. Catherine and William felt lucky to have arrived here safely with their family.

The baby, William, was very ill during the entire voyage, so they had to stay in New Orleans for a while. Later they went to St. Louis and on to Omaha. Here they met with more prosecutions of the church. They found everyone going west as fast as they could, so they made preparations to go west with an independent wagon train. They purchased a wagon and six head of cattle, one being a milk cow. After buying these few necessities their finances were gone, so Catherine and William applied to Brigham Young for help. He, through the church, loaned them the necessary funds to come with the independent company as they had planned.

There were fifty wagons in this train, each with six head of cattle. They met with many hardships on their way to Utah. This was a completely new life for them and a new mode of travel, but they felt their faith was greater than their many trials.

This mother was the backbone of the family. She was small in stature but not lacking in fortitude and courage.

After crossing the North Platt River in Nebraska, the whole train was stampeded by a herd of wild buffalo. This poor woman and baby were tipped out of the wagon and their few possessions scattered all over. No one was seriously hurt, and for this they were

thankful. Gathering their things together they trudge on, arriving finally in Salt Lake, late in the Fall of 1853.

Doctor Richards took care of Catherine and her family until William could find some work to do. His first job was stripping the bark off trees for the tannery in Big Cottonwood Canyon. He had to leave his family with very little to get along on that first winter in order that he might work.

Catherine, alone with her small children, was soon called upon to bear still another burden. Her baby son, William, always a delicate child, died before the winter was over. The father made the coffin from lumber he had made, and Catherine dressed the baby for the burial. He was buried near Union Fort.

The father returned to Big Cottonwood Canyon, taking his family with him. Shortly after going back to work he fell and broke his hip. They had a doctor, but some way it was never properly set and left him a cripple the remainder of his life. Later, he got around fairly well with a cane. This was certainly an added burden for Catherine as later that same year she had a baby girl born, December 22, 1855. They named this child Catherine Matilda after her patient mother. This was my own maternal grandmother, later known as Catherine Chadwick of American Fork.

They lived in Big Cottonwood two years after this, where the boys did some freighting, but the family was still very poor. Then Johnston's Army came to Utah and located at Camp Floyd. William, not being able to work hard, took his boys, Jack and Joe, to haul wood and freight for the soldiers. Catherine and the three older girls did the washing and baking for the army. For the first time since they came to Utah they were able to earn a good living and begin to save money with which to pay the church their immigration fee. Finally, it was taken to Brigham Young in twenty dollar gold pieces; five hundred dollars in a salt sack.

Now they were indeed happy, because they could begin to save to buy themselves a home. They soon bought some bottom land at American Fork.

By this time the older girls had soldier sweethearts. Margret, the oldest, married John Peters, and to this union seventeen children were born. Mary, the second, married Louis Strasburg, and to this union fifteen children were born. He was a German bugler in the arm and, some say, a lasher also. Jane was married to John Williams, also a soldier, and died after giving birth to five children, leaving a baby either nine days or nine months old. This child was a girl, whom we all know as Julia Robinson of this city. Catherine took these children and helped rear them so long as she was able.

Another son was born to Catherine, in 1857, whom they named William, while they were still at Camp Floyd. Another son, James, was born in 1861.

They moved to American Fork in 1862, upon buying a large tract of land in the fourth ward. Here they lived the remainder of their lives.

They were always interested in their religion, being sincere, hard working people.

William returned at the age of eighty to Scotland to get genealogy, but Catherine remember their first voyage and never attempted a return trip. He had a good trip going over, but on the return trip he was thrown against the side of the ship and three ribs were broken. However, he still lived twelve years after returning home, or until he was ninety-five. The names he brought from Scotland were taken to the Logan Temple by Catherine, William and their daughter, Catherine Chadwick. Mrs. Chadwick, at that time, had a baby two months old, which she left with her daughter, Elizabeth, for the ten days she was gone.

The iron determination of these pioneers is very evident in this history. They were, undoubtedly, very high minded people, and while some of their odd customs and ways handed down to us seem amusing now, the respect for their real integrity and worth will always endure.

One of the trails of Catherine's life was a large cat that was a special pet of William. Whenever he sat down this cat sat on his lap, eating from his hand even at the table. Then, in the spring and

summer, he always had a few pet toads around in his garden and even in the house. He always protected them and said never to kill a toad. A dog, also, was always close to the heels of William.

Another thing that showed the sincere nature of these people is the fact that polygamy was never practiced in this home. They seemed content in the religion without that, although he was considered financially able to support another wife. He owned a large tract of land and was very comfortably fixed.

After the death of her husband, Catherine was not well enough to live alone, so she lived with her granddaughter Julia, whom she reared for about four years, being at that time near eighty years old. She also lived with her daughter, Catherine Chadwick. By this time the property was settled, and it was decided she was to live with her son, Joseph. He was to take care of her in return for her farm. A special piece of ground was given to him for taking care of her the remainder of her life.

Early one spring, five years later, this son, Joseph, was cleaning out a potato pit, and a path crossing the pit to the yard was disturbed. Catherine, not being told about it, came along the path and stumbled into the pit. No one knew how long she lay there before being found, but because of some internal injury she never spoke again. She passed away in about five days, March 9, 1903, at eighty-four years of age.

Because she could neither read nor write, much of her record will go untold, but her sturdy pioneering spirit will go on in her posterity, which already numbers hundreds.