

DUP AF Book 2 page 264

Biographical Sketch

of

Priscilla Covington Thornton

by Zella Hansen, granddaughter

Pioneer Year 1852

Sailed on the Ellen Maria

Abraham O. Smoot Company

Born 27 Jan 1839 in Bedford, Bedfordshire, England

Married Thomas Thornton, 27 Apr 1856, American Fork, Utah

Died 7 May 1916

Buried in the American Fork Cemetery

Priscilla Covington was born 27 January at Bedford, Bedfordshire, England. She was the youngest child of a family of Berrill and Elizabeth Hodges Covington.

Her father Berrill (son of Simon and Elizabeth Brown Covington) was born 6 July 1794 at Willingborough, Northamptonshire, England.

Her mother Elizabeth (daughter of Richard and Elizabeth Hill Hodges) was born 29 October 1793 in Bedford, Bedfordshire, England.

Priscilla had seven brothers and sisters: Mary Ann, Berrill, Josiah, Elizabeth, Edward, Henry, Simon, and Sarah.

They moved to or near Liverpool after joining the church, to get ready to emigrate to America. While here the father and brothers set up a shoemaking establishment, and besides their private business they made shoes for the army. They did not all join the church at one time but at intervals extending over a period of thirteen years, from the father in 1838, to one of the children in 1851.

Prissy, as her father called her, was very eager to be baptized and as soon as she was old enough, she went with some of the other saints, in the middle of the night to escape the persecutions, and in the winter time, to a pond which was frozen over with ice. After breaking the ice they were baptized and then they had to walk home in their wet clothing and stand before the fire until their clothes thawed out before they could remove them.

On Tues. 10 Feb. 1852, Priscilla and her family, excepting three brothers, sailed from Liverpool on the ship Ellen Maria, with 369 saints aboard, under the direction of Isaac C. Haight. They were two months, lacking four days, on the ocean, and arrived in New Orleans the 6th of April 1852. There a company was organized under Abraham O. Smoot, consisting of thirty-one wagons, and the journey to Utah was begun.

Many times Prissy and her father walked side by side or left the company and strolled off to the side in search of wild flowers or berries which grew along the way. They never dared go far or stay

very long, however, for fear of Indians and wild animals. Once the company was surrounded by a band of Indian warriors, but through the wisdom of Brother Smoot they were not molested. This company were bringing with them the bodies of Elders Lorenzo D. Barnes and William Burton who had died while on missions to Great Britain. Grandmother said she remembered that when she grew tired of walking she would climb into the wagon and ride on one of the caskets.

They arrived in the Salt Lake Valley 3 Sept. 1852. They were the first saints of the perpetual Emigration Fund from Europe to reach Utah. They were met by William Pitt's Band, the First Presidency and many leading citizens.

They moved to American Fork and here she met and married Thomas Ephraim Thornton (son of Oliver and Mary Griswold Thornton) who was born 2 Jan. 1835, in Pickering, Ont. Co., Canada.

One Sunday afternoon, 27th of April 1856, they went for a stroll, stopped in at Bishop Leonard Harrington's and were married. He walked on the outside of the wall which then surrounded Am. Fork and Priscilla went through the fort. They went to the home of some of Thomas's relatives where they spent the night in order to escape the custom of the time, which was to celebrate weddings by tormenting the newly married couple in crude and sometimes very cruel ways.

Priscilla and Thomas both knew the trials and hardships of pioneer life, yet they were willing to marry to make a home and raise a family to help build a new community in the new Zion. She was the mother of eleven children, and with the exception of one, they all lived to man and womanhood.

Their children were as follows: Amos, born 9 April 1856, in American Fork; Annie Priscilla, 30 Jan. 1859 and Mary Elizabeth 2 Dec. 1860, who were both born in Ogden, Weber Co., Utah. The rest were all born in American Fork: Henry, 23 Dec. 1862; Alice Melissa, 19 Nov. 1863; Thomas Ephraim, 4 April 1866; Simeon Covington, 30 Sept. 1868; Clarence Josiah, 2 March 1871; Sarah Ellen, 2 Dec. 1873; Margaret Elzator, 4 Feb. 1876; Lydia Edwina, 27 Jan. 1880.

Priscilla was a hat maker, and when grandfather was harvesting his grain he would select for her some of the best long white straws for this purpose. These she cut and soaked, then split them into 3-4-5 strands or used them whole according to the type of hat to be made. She would then braid, sew and block them, and then the hats were placed in an air tight box, in which sulfur was burned to bleach them. She made many beautiful hats both for men and women.

Grandmother was also a wonderful knitter, and with her four knitting needles she made many things such as hosiery, gloves, mittens and beautiful laces.

She came from a family who loved music and they had in their family voices suited to each of the four parts in a chorus or choir. Priscilla used to sing the alto part.

She was one of the meek of the earth and a peacemaker. She was never known to speak evil of anyone and was always a cheerful and willing helper to her husband; a thoughtful, kind and loving mother to her children. She would never show signs of discouragement, but believed that we have to have trials to make us strong and that we must sacrifice to obtain blessings.

She was never much of a public woman, and was usually at home caring for her family's needs. However, she was always willing to do anything that was asked of her. She acted as a monitor in the Primary helping to keep order among the children for a number of years. She was one of the first officers along with Sister Mary B. Adams, in the Religion Class, which was held in the East School House, when it was organized under the direction of William Webb and George Cunningham, 11 March 1891. She was a relief society teacher for many years, and she used to go about with her basket on her arm to receive anything that the people could give for the support of the poor and needy. In her day they had to walk miles instead of blocks as the sisters do today.

Priscilla, like her father, was blessed with the gift of spiritual manifestations, and has told of many little incidents and dreams. During her last illness she was being prayed for by the brethren in

the prayer circle, and just at that time, she beheld a glorious light. She said it was far brighter than the sun or any other light she had ever seen. There was just one thing that stood out against her and that was her cup of tea. She had always wanted to break herself of the habit but had never been able to do so. From that day on she refused to touch it again, and even when she became so very ill and her children begged her to talk some to make her feel better she would not drink a drop.

She lived through the trials and hardships of Pioneer life but never complained. She was always cheerful and bore all things with a smile. I never heard her or do I believe any one ever heard her speak a cross word, criticize, or speak evil of any one. She was a faithful Latter Day Saint and to know her was to love her.

She died as she had lived, a true Latter Day Saint, at her home 7 May 1916, and was buried beside her husband's parents in the American Fork Cemetery. She left a husband and a large family who mourned her loss, but rejoiced that they could have had such a devoted, loving and loyal wife and mother.

Her descendants are: 11 children, 78 Grandchildren, 164 great grandchildren, and 30 great great grandchildren, making a total of 283 in all.