

Lavina Wollerton Dilworth Harper

Lavina was born 5 Nov 1818, the fifth daughter in a family of twelve daughters and one son born to Caleb and Eliza Wollerton Dilworth, of Chester County, PA. She married Charles Alfred Harper, 19 December 1839, PA. He was born 27 Jan 1817, Upper Providence Township, Montgomery County, PA to Quaker parents, Jesse and Eleanor Evans Harper. The first children of Charles and Lavina were twin daughters, born in Montgomery County, PA, 28 Jul 1841, who died same day.



About this time the young couple became converted to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, along with many others in Chester County, PA. Prior to his conversion, Charles did not like the Mormons and when his wife became one, he told her he would not walk down the street with a Mormon, so he walked down one side and she would walk down the other side. They did this for one year. One day he walked away from home and said he would be back soon. Lavina started her washing and it was not very long before she heard him coming home singing, seeming to be very happy. She looked up and saw that his clothes were wringing wet and she said to him, "So you were baptized today, I knew you would be without me asking you." He replied, "Yes, I did it today and I am the happiest man alive." After becoming a member of the Church, the Providence (Quaker) meeting recorded: "Charles Alfred Harper has left Society of Friends and joined the Mormon Society and is no longer a member amongst us."

When the Harpers arrived in Nauvoo, is not known. They were not listed in the Nauvoo census of February 1842, but their next two children were born there, John 1842 and Ellen 1846. They received their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple 31 December 1845.

The Harpers were among the thousands who established Winter Quarters on the west side of the Missouri River. Because of his trade as carriage maker and wheelwright, Charles was almost indispensable to the leaders of the Church in their preparations for the westward trek. It was doubtless because of this skill that he was included in the first pioneering migration, under Brigham Young, to the Salt Lake Valley. He left Salt Lake in Aug 1847 to return to Winter Quarters. His little daughter, Ellen, had died 27 Aug, at the age of 16 months.

Edwin B. Harper said, his grandfather, Charles Harper Sr. told him, "His grandmother was a good tailor and while he was gone, she made enough money to buy a wagon." With the arrival of spring, 1848, Charles, Lavina and their 5 year old son, Harvey John, set out to rejoin the Saints in Salt Lake Valley. Lavina was pregnant with her fifth child. She drove the heavily loaded covered wagon and a pair of oxen most of the distance across the hot dusty miles. As they neared Fort Laramie, Wyoming, it became apparent that she would never reach Utah before the baby was born. They stopped the wagon; Charles Alfred Jr. was born at 4:00 P.M., 23 July 1848.

After their arrival, they needed a home, a temporary shelter for the coming winter. They built a dugout (cave) on Spring Creek (about 47th South on the east side of the Holladay Blvd, a little Southeast of Phillips 66 Service Station) where it had washed its bed deep as it left the foothills at the foot of the mountains. The north bank was high above the stream. We do not know how long they lived there. The next known place was an adobe home built where Edgemoor Street now joins Cottonwood Lane. Charles and Lavina had the following children:

1. Susan, twin, born 28 July 1841, Montgomery County, PA
died 28 July 1841
2. Ann, twin, born 28 Jul 1841, Montgomery County, PA
died 28 July 1841
3. Harvey J. "John," born 10 November 1842, Nauvoo, IL
died 18 July 1923, married Louisa Park
4. Ellen, born 25 January 1846, Nauvoo, IL
died 27 August 1847, Winter Quarters
5. Charles Alfred Jr., born 23 July 1848, near Laramie, WY
died 9 May 1935, married Mary Boyes
6. William B., born 10 July 1851, Big Cottonwood, Holladay, UT
died 26 July 1853
7. Alfred, born 07 July 1856, Big Cottonwood, Holladay, UT
died 18 October 1856
8. Edwin, born 31 July 1858, Big Cottonwood, Holladay, UT
died 24 July 1881, lived Arizona, not married
9. Park, born 16 September 1860, Big Cottonwood, Holladay, UT
died 15 September 1936, not married
10. Chester, twin, born 15 April 1864, Big Cottonwood, Holladay
died 29 March 1940, married Amanda Ellen Herbst
11. Lavina, twin, born 15 April 1864, Big Cottonwood, Holladay UT
died 8 January 1946, married William Adelbert Walker

In 1852, Charles was called on a mission to England. Leaving Lavina with two little boys, Harvey John and Charles Alfred Jr. On 2 December 1855, Charles married his second wife, Harriet Taylor in the Endowment House, whom he had converted in England.

Only by thrift and industry were these pioneer families able to overcome the effects of cricket plagues and other hardships. They became skilled in making butter, cheese, bread, candles, soap, lye and starch; and in drying the wild fruits.

Lavina was a noble and true pioneer. She was loved by her family and all who knew her. In her old age she was given every care by a loving daughter, Lavina Walker. Lavina died 9 July 1903, at the home of her daughter in Rexburg, Idaho. A funeral was held the 13th of July in Holladay and she was buried in Holladay Memorial Park, Holladay, Utah.