

Memories of Our Mother:
Clara Pearl Astle Carling
by Eva Carling Johnston

In 1901, March 12 fell on a Tuesday. That day a baby girl was born to John Francis Astle and Laurretta Hepworth Astle. She was given the name of Clara Pearl.

Pearl's father was a farmer, and her childhood was much like that of any child who grows up on a farm. There was always much work to do, and she was expected to do her share. Hard work was a way of life for her, as it had been for both of her parents. Her father, John, had had to run his father's farm alone (with the help of a sister) at age 15. His father was a polygamist and had to stay in hiding to avoid being arrested. Pearl's mother, Laurretta, had borne 13 children and had known a lot of hardship before her death at the early age of 44.

Pearl remembered being in the third or fourth grade when she had her first ride in a car. There were very few cars around, and all the children used to run for blocks to get a glimpse of one.

Pearl was very anxious to start school, so she was permitted to go at the same time her older sister, Arstanie, started. They went through most of the grades together although they were a year and a half apart in age. Their first school was a two-room building across the street from the Astle home. The school was heated by a big wood stove, and two teachers taught all the students.

The Astle family moved to the ranch each summer where they lived in a grainery and slept in tents. They slept on ranch beds with straw mattresses and no springs. They would return to Grover in the winter so the children could attend school.

The Astle's were not rich but were a "good average", as Pearl put it. "We had as much as anyone else."

When Pearl was eight or nine years old, she started milking cows. Five or six of the brothers and sisters would each milk five or six cows every night and morning. They were told they could go off to play as long as they would be home in time to milk the cows.

Arstanie and Pearl dressed alike and in some ways were treated like twins. They would make their own clothes with the help of their mother and older sister, Klea. Arstanie's dress would be blue and Pearl's would be just like it, only pink. Pearl always enjoyed sewing. She did a lot of embroidery work as a young girl and was considered the best stocking darter in Primary.

Just like all children, Pearl and her sisters wanted to go play after meals and would have to be called back in the house to do the dishes. They would come in grudgingly and one would tend the baby and the other would do the dishes. Arstanie would usually be the one to tend the baby because the babies behaved better for her, so Pearl would end up doing the dishes. Shortly before she died, she and Arstanie were talking about their childhood days and Pearl remarked,

"And I always had to do the dishes."

In Grover, the social life of the young people centered around house parties and an occasional dance. The Astle girls were allowed to attend these functions, but their parents insisted they always be home by 10:00 p.m.

Pearl attended Star Valley High School in Afton. She and Arstanie and their brothers Vernon and David rented a room in Afton because it was too far to travel back and forth from Grover. They "batched" it during the week and then their mother would drive the eight miles into town on Friday afternoons with the horse and bobsled to take them home for the weekend.

John F. Astle had always picked out the clothes for his children and told them what they could buy. As they grew older, they began to resent this practice and wanted to be able to choose their own clothes. One day while they were staying in Afton, John gave Pearl and Arstanie some money and told them they could go by themselves to buy some new shoes at a certain store in town. They were pleased at their good fortune, but their pleasure was short-lived. When they arrived at the store, their father was there waiting for them. Again he told them what shoes they could buy. Foiled again!

The Church always meant a lot to the Astle family. Both John's and Laretta's parents had been converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in England and had come to America to be with the main body of the Church.

Pearl went to church every Sunday with her family. Her father kept a nice team of horses, and they would all go in the white-topped buggy the three miles to church. Often they were the first ones to arrive.

The whole family learned what it meant to serve the Lord when their dad was called to serve two full-time missions for the Church. Laretta carried on the farm work while he was away, with the help of the older children. It required a lot of hard work and sacrifice for her to be both mother and father to ten children, but she did it willingly because she knew her husband was doing the work of the Lord. Pearl inherited from her parents this same faith and dedication to the Church.

- Mother Dies -

On Christmas Eve of 1918, when Pearl was 17 years old, her mother died of influenza. Her twenty year old brother, Vernon, had died of the same disease the day before. John F. and most of the children were sick from the flu epidemic, and it was taking its toll on many people. No funerals were held because there was so much sickness and so much snow.

Laretta was dressed in her temple clothes and placed in a lovely white casket. The children all stood at the window and watched the team and wagon take her away to her final resting place. Pearl never seemed to enjoy Christmas very much, probably because of her

memories of her mother's death.

- Move to Utah -

John F. decided he couldn't raise his children alone on the ranch, so in 1920 he moved them to Providence, Utah. He purchased a twelve and a half acre farm where they raised sugar beets, hay, strawberries, cows, chickens and later foxes.

Pearl wanted to complete her education, so every day for a year she walked to Logan to attend Brigham Young College (high school). After her graduation, she began working at the Union Knitting Mills in Logan. There she became acquainted with Laura Carling who introduced her to her brother, George. He became interested in Pearl and would ride his bicycle to Providence to see her. They would go to an occasional movie, but very often they would just sit and talk. Sometimes she would go home from work with Laura and her sister, Alice, to see George and would spend the night at the Carling home.

- Wedding Day -

On a beautiful day in September, Pearl's father drove her to meet George at the Logan Temple, and there they were married for time and eternity. The date was September 23, 1925. There was no wedding dinner or reception, but some of Pearl's friends in Providence had previously given her a wedding shower, and she had displayed her trousseau then.

The first home of the newlyweds was in the Logan 8th Ward. The home had belonged to George's family, but they had moved to be closer to town. Here George and Pearl lived from 1925 to 1930. Here their first three children, Dean, Lola, and Ivan were born.

In the spring of 1930, the Carlings moved to Providence. They purchased a house with a one acre lot for \$1,200. They had to sell all their cows but one and borrowed the rest of the money from the bank to buy the house. In 1942, they tore down the old back porch area and built on two bedrooms and a third room which later became the bathroom. This additional space was very welcome to their growing family.

It was a sad day in March of 1931 when the oldest child, Dean, was thrown from the neighbor's farm wagon. His neck was broken, and he died soon afterward. The story is told about how George's mother was in the Logan Temple at the time of the accident. She had a premonition that she should go home because something had happened to one of George's children. When she was notified of the accident, she said, "It's Dean, isn't it?"

Pearl never seemed to want to talk much about Dean, possibly because she didn't want to be reminded of her loss. We children did hear stories from our dad about what an unusually bright and energetic little four year old Dean was and how he enjoyed having him follow him around as he did his chores.

About every year and a half or two years, a new baby arrived to live with the Carling family. Because of their limited income, the parents were often concerned about how they would take care of so many children, but the Lord always provided, and it was never a real problem. As Pearl once put it, "They seem to bring their bread and butter with them."

On November 12, 1941, Linda was born, bringing the total to ten healthy children, seven boys and three girls. The children were all born at home with the doctor coming to assist.

The Carling children are as follows:

Dean Astle Carling
Lola Astle Carling
Ivan Astle Carling
Darold Astle Carling
Ray Astle Carling
Blaine Astle Carling
Lee Astle Carling
Eva Carling
Grant Astle Carling
Linda Carling

With the principles of the Gospel as a pattern for living, Pearl and George taught their nine children to be honest, dependable, hard-working people. The days began and ended with family prayer around the table. They worked hard all week, but Sunday was a day of rest, and the whole family went to church. No one ever thought of staying home because on Sunday the place to be was in church.

- As We Saw It -

Pearl's family always came first in her life and all of us children can remember how hard she worked to take care of us. Even though we weren't poor, there never seemed to be as much money as we would have liked. There was enough for necessities, but it was spent very carefully. We learned to do without frills and goodies. Because of our mother's frugal ways, she could produce a few dollars for an emergency or a special occasion. When I was chosen 8th grade Valentine Queen, I was very happy that she was able to buy me a new dress for the dance.

We were all taught to work at an early age because there was always work to be done on the farm. Every summer we raised a patch of pole beans to sell to the cannery. We picked beans all day with perhaps two or three hours off during the heat of the day; then we'd go back to the field and pick until we were finished. We all moaned and groaned about how awful it was. Every year the folks said, "If we get a good crop this year, maybe we won't have to raise any

beans next year." Apparently the crop was never good enough or it was so good they couldn't give it up, because we always had more the next year.

Our food mainly came from the garden, the cows and chickens, and we always had plenty of what we had. Nothing was wasted. We were taught to eat three good meals a day and not expect snacks between meals. It was okay to eat turnips, peas, tomatoes, etc. from the garden or to have an apple, but we all knew we were not to take cookies or other goodies without our mother's permission.

Mom made all of her own bread, even up until a week or two before she died. "Boughten" bread was a rarity at our house, reserved only for a family reunion or some other special occasion. When we were all still at home and the boys were husky teenagers with healthy appetites, she made six loaves of bread several days a week. It was a special treat when some of the bread dough appeared as hot, fat biscuits on the supper table.

We all share fond memories of the tasty vegetable soup or chili Mom usually made on Saturday, the big pancakes with homemade chokecherry syrup on Sunday morning, and the rice pudding she often made for Tuesday supper. (I remember the pudding being on Tuesday because rice pudding is very filling, and I often went to Tuesday MIA feeling very full).

Canning season was a busy time for us all as fruits and vegetables went from the garden to the bottles by the hundreds. We all had our turn helping to snip beans, shell peas, or peel peaches, pears, or apples. Even with our help, it seemed that Mom did most of the work, and she kept everything moving as she poked coal into the old black stove to keep it hot. Even on the hottest summer days with perspiration running down her face, she kept at it until the work was done. By the end of a busy canning day every available space in the kitchen was filled with full bottles set there to cool before we all helped to carry them to the basement shelves.

- Living in the Kitchen -

We could almost say we grew up in the kitchen because that's where everything happened. With its high ceiling, figured wallpaper, and its six doors leading to other parts of the house, it was the only room that was kept heated in the winter. That's where we ate, had family prayer, had Saturday night baths (with a sheet draped across the clothesline for privacy), did our homework, etc. That's where it felt so good to lean on the bar in front of the stove and warm one's backside on a cold winter night. One of my fond memories is of Monday nights in the kitchen sitting and helping darn stockings as I listened to the Lux Radio Theater or My Friend Irma on the radio.

Our mother was nearly always in the kitchen when we got home from school, and she was always busy. She was never one to sit idle. On Monday afternoons, we'd come home and find the wet clothes draped across the kitchen on a makeshift clothesline, a pile of clothes to be

folded on the table, and the windows all steamed up. On Tuesdays, we'd find Mom at the ironing board. She always did the whole batch of ironing at one time and didn't stop until it was done. She always washed on Monday and ironed on Tuesday unless something came up to change her schedule. She took pride in getting her first batch of washing outside on the line early in the morning and liked to race with her neighbor, Margaret Nielsen, to see who could get it out first. She also took pride in keeping her dish towels nice and white, and we were taught that we didn't use them on dark or greasy pans.

Another of the memories of our childhood was taking our turn to help churn the butter with the big, square glass churn. When it was done, Mom would pour off the buttermilk and make the butter into round molds with the wooden paddle.

During our years at Providence Elementary School, we all walked home for lunch, which usually was bread and milk and maybe a dish of fruit and a cookie. We used to envy the kids who had hot lunch at school, partly because of the food they got and partly because they had more time to play after lunch.

It meant a lot to us to always have our mother home when we came home from school. On a few occasions, she wasn't there; we'd become indignant and ask, "Well, where is she?" We had to be reminded that she did have the right to leave home once in a while without our permission.

Mom always wore a dress around the house topped with an apron that she used for any number of things such as gathering eggs, picking beans, wiping her hands or kids' noses, lifting hot food off the stove, etc. When she had to answer the door or leave to run an errand, off came the apron and there was the dress still clean.

- She Loved to Sew -

Sewing seemed to be the activity our mother enjoyed the most throughout her life, and she did it very well. She made all the clothes for her nine children as they were growing up. Clothes were mended, hems were let down, clothes were made over and handed down and when they became rags, they were torn up and made into rag rugs. All of us knew about hand-me-downs and clothes made over to fit a smaller child.

At one time when one of the boys was in the mission field, she sewed aprons in volume at home for an out-of-town company. She soon gave this up because it turned out to be too demanding and didn't pay enough to make it worth her time. She began doing a little sewing for people in the ward and her reputation spread until she had a pretty good business. She'd admit that she would rather sew than cook and would occasionally say to one of us girls, "I'll sew that for you if you'll fix something for super." On one such occasion, she started a dress for me in the afternoon and had it finished in time for me to wear to a school dance that evening.

All of her sewing was done on a White treadle sewing machine until the early 1960's when Blaine bought her an electric machine.

Another of Mom's talents was quilting. She made all of the quilts our family needed and in later years made some for customers. It was fun to pick out the blocks in the quilt on your bed that were made from scraps of one of "your" outfits.

A few times Mom invited some of the ladies in the ward to come to a quilting bee. It was fun to listen to the ladies laugh and talk as fast as their needles would go. Mom was often invited to other homes for quilting bees because she was known to be a good quilter.

Mom was the ward Relief Society quilting chairman for many years. About two weeks before she died, she was walking home from church when a neighbor offered her a ride. She was carrying home a quilt to bind for the Relief Society. Even though she didn't feel well, she hated to be idle. It made her feel useless when she didn't feel well enough to do anything.

- Church Service -

Our mother was always active in the Church as much as her family demands would allow. She was a visiting teacher for many years and a Primary teacher. She served as Relief Society secretary under two presidents, a calling she really enjoyed. She took great pride in keeping excellent books and having the money in balance. She also served with Dad on the genealogy committee.

The following tribute was written by one of the Relief Society sisters to honor her in one of their meetings:

My first acquaintance of my "friend" was in June of 1920 when she moved with her family to Cache Valley.

At this time she was a young woman and found work at the Union Knitting Mills at Logan. After several years there, she worked in a knitting factory that had been started in Providence.

About this time she met a young man and later was married in the Logan Temple. There were 10 children born to this couple – 7 boys and 3 girls.

Four of her boys and two girls served honorable missions for the Church. At one time, she had every step in the priesthood represented by a member of her family.

She served as a visiting teacher for many years. She also served as a Primary teacher and was secretary to the Relief Society for several years. She's also served as chairman of the quilt committee for about 6 years. She is a beautiful quilter and has made many quilts and also found time to sew for other people.

I nominate Sister Pearl Carling - originally from Star Valley - as my special friend of the month.

- Tribute from Aunt Alice -

Dad's sister, Alice Spillman, had these things to say about her sister-in-law, Pearl:

Pearl and Arstanie were their father's right hands. They worked at the Union Knitting Mills when Laura and I worked there. Laura and Pearl, Arstanie and I were best friends. They had things in charge at home after work hours, such as berry picking, egg candling, and keeping things going in general. Klea told Laura she couldn't see how her dad expected so much from those two. In Wyoming, they had the cows to milk and chores to do before and after school.

Pearl never said much about her home life, only once in a while saying she missed her mother. She loved to do handwork. Once she showed me a piece of hardanger she'd made, and her baby clothes had beautiful tatting on them.

Bless her, she and George said everybody said they shouldn't have so many children, but they were all welcome.

After Lyman and I were married, Lyman's mother gave me a bushel basket of Lyman's and his father's old suits. She said because I was so quilt-minded I could make quilts out of them. Well, we gave them to Pearl and the next time we went to see them, here came all the little boys in trousers made from those clothes. Even the suspenders were made of them. Pearl was a beautiful seamstress.

Lyman had a bacteriology class just after or just before we were married, so our first winter we sent to Sears for a pressure cooker which held three quarts. Laura had me do some beans for her as it was too cold there to grow them. They were at Mother's when she and Francis, Pearl and George ate there. I had done Mother's vegetables, and they had some of the beans. Pearl and George decided from then on the cooker was the thing to use because it saved three hours in boiling water. They did their best to provide all they could for the family.

They worked so hard to provide for their family, both spiritually and worldly comforts.

Pearl did quilting for others and sewed clothes for others, and everything was done beautifully.

Whenever she was perturbed, "Oh, my gosh!" was said so fast, then it was over as far as I could see.

I loved her as a sister. She told me once when I said I wished I could sew as nice as she did that I lacked confidence in myself, that if I had it, I could do it. Well I tried to have more faith in my ability, but she still did it more beautifully.

She was a no-complaining wife and mother.

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Once in a conversation with Aunt Alice, she said to me, "Did you know your mother was nominated for Mother of the Year?" I replied that she had never told us that. Aunt Alice's response was, "Of course she wouldn't. That would be bragging on herself. She represented Providence as Mother of the Year. She didn't win, but it was an honor to be a candidate."

- What Was She Like? -

I remember our mother as being calm and steady, seldom upset at things, just taking things in her stride. She used to enjoy a good laugh and if something struck her funny she laughed all over.

She was not one to talk about herself or her feelings. If we wanted to know something about her we'd have to ask her specifically. When someone came to visit, she'd usually let them do most of the talking.

On one occasion, Aunt Agnes and Uncle Jess Cook and others were visiting together. The chatter had been going on fast and furiously, but not being one to compete for attention, Mom mostly listened. When there was a lull in the conversation Uncle Jess said, "Hey, Pearl!", to which she replied, "What?" He said, "I just wanted to know if you could still talk."

We always knew a secret would be safe with her. She wouldn't even spread our news of an expected new baby to other family members. She maintained that we all had the right to spread our own news. Aunt Margaret once said Pearl was the most tight-lipped woman she ever knew. (We might all do well to follow her example).

- She Was Never Sick -

Our mother had enjoyed excellent health all of her life. It seemed we could count on one hand the times we had ever known her to be sick. That's one reason we were so surprised when she told us that she was going into the Logan LDS Hospital for surgery for an enlarged thyroid (goiter). We were even more shocked when they found cancer during the five hour operation. The doctors felt sure they got it all, but would keep her under close observation. This was February 12, 1968.

They brought Mom home on February 18 only to take Dad into the hospital that same evening suffering from a partial stroke. On February 22, we went to visit the folks and learned that Dad had had another stroke that left him, paralyzed on the left side. Poor Mom! To have this happen when she was still so weak from her surgery. Dad instructed the boys to "break it to her gently." He died two weeks later.

On February 29, Mom had the first of many radium treatments at the University of Utah Medical Center. Ivan took her for the first few treatments. After Dad's death on March 2, she continued the treatments five days a week, taking off one day for the funeral. Mom spent some

time with us, and I would drive her to the medical center each day. Later she stayed with Linda and David, and Linda took her for the treatments. We were glad we could spend some time with her while she was getting adjusted to widowhood. When she showed some improvement, she wanted to go back home, but it was hard for her to go knowing that Dad was no longer there.

Mom was pretty well for about four years and then the cancer returned and began to spread through her body. She tried several different drugs prescribed by the medical center doctors. Some of them made her very sick and one drug caused her to lose her hair, and she had to buy a wig. Eventually her pretty white hair grew back in and looked as good as ever. She commented at times that if it were just for herself she'd stop taking the drugs, but if they could learn something from her case that would help someone else, it would be worth what she had to endure.

Aunt Arstanie spent a lot of time with Mom during her last two years as she became weaker. It was comforting for Mom to have her there, and the family felt better knowing she was there. We'll always be grateful to her for her unselfish service. Mom insisted she would rather be at home than to be with one of us. She wanted to be independent as long as she possibly could. She was able to do this with Aunt Arstanie's help. Grant and Nola were so good to her, always calling or stopping by to check on her. She was very appreciative of their concern and also of the standing invitation to their house for Sunday dinner.

She still raised a garden and did some canning of peaches and apricots with Aunt Arstanie's help in 1973. She couldn't bear to have empty fruit bottles or to have anything go to waste, so she continued to do canning as long as she was able. She'd say, "Some of the kids can use it."

Even as she became weaker and weaker, she never did spend a lot of time in bed, but would doze on the couch. Grant insisted she have a long cord put on the phone so she could take it into the bedroom by her bed. It was a blessing to have the phone there early on the morning of June 1, 1974. She fell trying to get back into bed and broke her arm. Not wanting to disturb Grant at that early hour, she lay on the floor a long time, too weak to get herself into bed. Just before 7:00 a.m., she finally called Grant to take her to the hospital. The next day she died peacefully in her sleep. It was Sunday afternoon, June 2, 1974.

After 73 years of hard work, sacrifice, and service to her family and fellowmen, she had gone to the rest she deserved. She had endured faithfully and patiently to the end.

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Our mother was a good woman and as fine a mother as anyone ever had. Besides giving us strong, healthy bodies, she and Dad taught us how to be strong spiritually as well. She taught us by her example the importance of being honest, dependable, hardworking, obedient children.

She was always there when we needed her, and it seemed there was no problem she couldn't solve. After I left home, I could call her on the phone and she would patiently listen to my problems. She was always sympathetic and understanding, and she made you feel you could do no wrong. No one can ever take the place of your mother. She never interfered in our married lives or gave her advice unless you asked for it.

How do you adequately thank or pay tribute to your mother? I have come to the conclusion that the best and only way you can do it is to live the way she taught us, keep Heavenly Father's commandments, and to always live our lives in a way that she could always be proud of us.

Our mother's patriarchal blessing promised that she would be able to live a long life and be of much help to her children. She was much help and support to us all right to the end of her life. It seemed that she couldn't or wouldn't leave until everyone's problems were all settled. How blessed we were to have her so long.

These lines from the book of Proverbs seem to have been written about her:

vs. 27: She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

vs. 28: Her children arise up, and call her blessed: her husband also, and he praiseth her.

vs. 29: Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

vs. 30: Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a women that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.

vs. 31: Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

(Proverbs 31: 27-31)

- Words of Wisdom -

As wise sayings are handed down from one generation to another, our mother taught them to us.

She used to tell us to plan our trips to the basement. For instance, when you go down for a bottle of fruit, stop to think if you need anything else at the same time so you don't have to take two trips. She'd say, "If you use your head, you'll save your heels."

On buttoning a sweater she'd say, "If you start right and keep right, you'll end right." This, of course, was good advice on how to live our lives as well.

How blessed we were to have had Clara Pearl Astle Carling for our mother!