

HANNAH HEFWORTH BALMFORTH

(Information compiled and written by Janet Balmforth May 1972)

Little is known about the actual fact concerning the life of Hannah Hepworth. There is much conjecture and many family traditions. Some of her descendants say that on being questioned about her life, she indicated that she didn't care to discuss it; she would rather hear about them. It is unfortunate that someone didn't gain her confidence and record what must have been an unusual story of hardship and patience.

It is known that she was born 14 March 1845 at Nethertown, Drighlington, Yorkshire, England. She was the fifth child and the first daughter of Joseph Hepworth, a coal miner, and Mary Hirst. When Hannah was two years of age, her parents joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. So Hannah lived under the influence of the Church most of her life; however, she wasn't baptised until 22 years of age, just before the birth of her third child.

Probably, because of the great expense involved in emigration, the Hepworth family came to America over a period of eight years. Hannah came at the age of 24 in 1869. Although she was single and unmarried at this time, she brought with her two small children, Amy Ann, age 5, and Emily, age 2. Another daughter, Mary Ann, died in infancy in England. In December of 1869 she had a son, Ezra, who also died in infancy. Concerning this son, one record states that he was born and died in England. Another record states that he was born a few months after Hannah's arrival in Salt Lake City. As it's known she immigrated in 1869 with two daughters, the boy must have been born in Salt Lake City.

Hannah arrived in America just a year after the transcontinental railroad was completed, and so her journey to Utah was by rail. During the long trip she became acquainted with some of her fellow passengers. When it was discovered that she was a Mormon on her way to Utah, one of the male passengers ridiculed her and her belief. As he was doing this, the train made a sudden and unexpected stop. The small heating stove in the car in which Hannah was riding overturned and hit the man who had been taunting her. When the stove was pulled off the man, it was discovered he was dead. All of Hannah's children loved to hear their mother tell this tale.

Family tradition says that Hannah's mother, Mary Hirst Hepworth, knew Charles Balmforth, a widower with one son, and introduced him to Hannah after her arrival in Utah. Concerning the marriage date of Hannah and Charles, here again the records differ. One family group says both Hannah and Charles received their endowments and were sealed on 6 February 1870. Another family group says these ordinances were performed on 6 June 1870. On the latter date, also, is recorded that Hannah's mother, Mary, was sealed to her son-in-law, Charles. Apparently she and her husband were divorced. Hannah's father remarried a few years later and settled in Oxford, Idaho where he died in 1878.

This sealing of Mary Hirst Hepworth to her son-in-law, Charles Balmforth, was not considered unusual in those days; because Mary made her home with Charles and Hannah, it was considered proper. This sealing must have been broken, as Mary was later sealed to her husband, Joseph.

Charles Balmforth welcomed Hannah's small children into his home in the east Mill Creek area of Salt Lake City. They took the Balmforth name and many years later (1968) all four of the children born to Hannah prior to her marriage to Charles were sealed to her and Charles. They had nine children of their own - Charles, Joseph Rudolph, Mary, Martha, Elizabeth, John, Samuel, Hannah, and Lorenzo.

Again, family tradition says that Charles Balmforth was a stern and unbending father. How difficult it must have been for Hannah to see her nine year old son, Joseph, banned from the home because of a disagreement with his father. It is said she secretly made the small boy a bed in a ramshackle lean-to. In the snowy weather when the boy awoke in the morning the snow had drifted through the cracks in the walls onto the small quilt his mother had provided. She provided him with food and warned him to leave the premises before his father arose. Joseph supported himself by shining shoes and on the cold winter days spent the time in local pool halls.

It is also told that she loaned another son, John, her only shoes so he could attend the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple. The shoes pinched dreadfully, but Hannah and John were happy that he could go.

In later years Hannah and Charles moved close to the business section of Salt Lake City and owned and operated a small neighborhood grocery on north and First West. Of this store Ruth Balmforth Ellis writes, "His home and the store were adjacent. I remember this store and the pickle barrel that sat in the corner. It

was because of this pickle barrel I got my hand slapped when I tried to reach for a pickle."

In her later years after Charles died, Hannah lived with various sons and daughters. She died in Salt Lake City in 1919.

The differences in the dates in this account don't matter. All the temple ordinances have been done - that is the important part. Also important is the imprint that Hannah left on her descendants. They were and are gentle, soft-spoken, considerate ladies and gentlemen in every respect. All who knew her give evidences of these qualities in her.

Josephine Hepworth Dobbs, a niece of Hannah, writes, "As a child I went to visit Aunt Hannah with my father and mother. Her son had lost his wife and Hannah was living at her son's home in Woodville, Idaho taking care of his children. I remember her as being old, heavy, and working diligently to help her son. Crowds of Aunt Hannah's children and grandchildren used to come to our home on a Sunday. They were talented and we always had a musical day."

Ruth Balmforth Ellis again writes, "My first recollection of Hannah Hepworth was when I was about 3 or 4 years old. She came with Grandpa Balmforth to see us several times when we lived in Salt Lake City and Idaho. On one visit, I remember Grandfather had the gout and his foot was bandaged as big as his head. Grandmother Hannah was very solicitous about him. After grandfather died Grandma Hannah came to live with us at Clark, Jefferson, Idaho. Our family was large and we were crowded, but we enjoyed having her live with us. She was short and plump, with a very pleasant personality. She stayed with us all one summer, and then went back to Salt Lake City. Soon after this, my uncle Joseph's wife died and grandma came back to care for his family. She was very industrious and liked things kept neat and clean and in their place. She was so English and talked with an English brogue, we often as children snickered because of the way she talked and grandpa would scold us by saying, 'Laugh, you young pups.' I realize now that grandma must have been a very patient and loving person to have raised her family in these conditions."

The descendants of Hannah Hepworth can take pride in the fact that while she left for them neither fame nor fortune, she did leave a heritage of graciousness, kindness, and steadfastness. All of her descendants have been good examples in the communities in which they have lived because of this proud heritage.

SUPPLEMENT TO THE HISTORY OF HANNAH HEPWORTH BALMFORTH
by Joseph Balmforth

(Joseph Balmforth of Shelley, Idaho is a grandson of Hannah Balmforth)

When my mother died in the fall of 1906, my grandmother Hannah Hepworth Balmforth came to live with us. She was a kind and gentle lady and had to work very hard to take care of my father and eight children.

We were poor folks and money was very scarce. On one occasion the deacons came for fast offerings and all she had was 50¢ to her name. She gave it to the boys and wondered where she would get any more. The next day some of her relatives from Star Valley called on her and brought a box of fruit her sister had sent. When she opened a bottle of jam, laying on top of the was was 50¢. Grandmother was sure the Lord had a hand in it. On another occasion she had saved enough to buy a new bucket. One day when she was out in the yard, she saw a bucket that was all mashed up. She was sure it was hers so she proceeded to tell Joseph Jr. off. He tried to explain to her that it was a different bucket, but she was so furious she wouldn't listen and went back to the house very annoyed. Soon she reappeared with her bucket in her hand. She was very repentant and humble and asked his forgiveness for accusing him so wrongfully.

It has always been a mystery to me how she managed to feed so many day after day. Sometimes there were as many as twelve seated at her dinner table. She baked her own bread and churned her own butter. I have fond memories of her wonderful meat pies and rice pudding. I'm sure there was no one else that could bake a Yorkshire pudding like she did.

She washed, ironed, baked, and cleaned for us just as if we were her own family. She was always interested in the progress of the farm work. Farming was a new experience for my father and she tried to give him all the encouragement she could. She would often come out in the yard while they were stacking hay or grain. She would bring a cool drink of water or a cookie, and they loved her for it.

Hers was a life of service--always helping someone, nursing the sick, or washing their clothes. It didn't matter what the job was she was always ready to help. I am proud to be a descendant of a fine lady born in far away England.

SUPPLEMENT TO THE HISTORY OF HANNAH HEPWORTH BALMFORTH
by Ernest Balmforth

(Ernest of Woodville, Idaho is a brother to Joseph and grandson of Hannah Balmforth.)

Grandmother was a little, chunky woman about 5 ft. 2 inches. She was grey haired and a good cook. I don't remember her ever speaking mean to us kids. She lived in our home about nine years. She'd say, "Lad, let me tell you something. No, thank you never gets you anything. If you ever get in a hurry, go slow."

When the potatoes were peeled, the peelings were saved then planted. The pieces with the eyes in were planted and the rest of the potato was used for cooking.

Once when grandmother lived at Mill Creek, she sat down at he treadle sewing machine. She happened to look down and there was a snake curled up under the treadle. They had a dirt floor at the time.

They used to be afraid of the drunks and one time when the me had left for supplies, a knock was heard. The women knew from the way he was talking that he was drunk. He kept asking for matches, and they were afraid to give them to him for fear he would burn the house down. They broke the heads off the matches and put them under the door. He took the matches and left so he must have found nothing amiss.

A saying of hers went like this: "Everybody knows how to treat the devil but them that's got him."

SUPPLEMENT TO HISTORY OF HANNAH HEPWORTH

by Ruth Balmforth Ellis

My first recollection of Hannah Hepworth was when I was about three or four years old. She came with Grandpa Balmforth to see us several times when we lived in Salt Lake City, and then when we moved to Idaho they came to see us there. It wasn't until many years later that I found out that Hannah Hepworth was my Grandfather Balmforth's second wife. On one visit I remember Grandfather had the gout and his foot was bandaged up as big as his head. Grandmother Hannah was very solicitous about him.

After grandfather died, Grandma Hannah came to live with us when we lived at Clark, Jefferson, Idaho.

It is in my memory that Grandmother slept with me. Our family was large and we were crowded, but we enjoyed having her live with us. She was short and plump with a very pleasant personality. She stayed with us all of one summer and then left and went back to Salt Lake. Soon after this, my Dad's brother Joseph's wife died and Grandma came back to care for this family for a time.

Grandma was very industrious and liked things kept neat and clean and in their places.

She was so English and talked with the English brogue. We often as children snickered because of the way she talked and Grandpa would scold us by saying, "Laugh, you young pups."

It is also in my memory about Grandma Hannah's mother Mary Hirst. After her husband died and her children were gone she came to live with Grandma and Grandpa. I remember she was bedridden for some time. Grandpa also married her as she was living in the same house and this was considered proper.

I realize now Grandma must have been a very patient and loving person to have raised her family in these conditions. Grandma Hannah had three children before she came to America. Mary Ann died soon after birth in England. Amy, Ann, and Emily came to America with her. Some two or three months after Hannah arrived in Salt Lake, Ezra was born December 31, 1869. It was after this that Hannah Hepworth married my Grandfather June 3, 1870. This was his second marriage, as his first wife, Martha Lumb, died in England. Ezra died February 13, 1870.

He had established a general store in Salt Lake City. His home and the store were adjacent to each other. I remember this store and the pickle barrel that sat in the corner. It was at this pickle barrel I got my hands slapped when I tried to reach for a pickle.

I had a great deal of respect for my grandmother, Hannah Hepworth Balmforth. It is with fond memories that I recall these few remembrances.

SUPPLEMENT TO THE HISTORY OF HANNAH HEPWORTH

(Additional information about her and her husband, Charles Balmforth)

Verna Watson Owens, a granddaughter, writes:

Grandmother was about 65 years old the last time she came to stay with us. She arrived with her very few possessions and had probably walked from where she last stayed---at either daughter Mary's or Libby's, a long, healthy walk.

Grandma came to care for Nellie and me. Nellie had scarlet fever in one room, and I had chicken-pox in another. She also helped in the feeding of Dad (Hugh Pat Watson) and Clarence (her brother) during that time.

This seemed to be the pattern of Grandmother's life after her husband, Charles Balmforth, died in 1904, going from one fo her children to another, helping where she could. One time when she stayed with us, she and my mother (Hannah) had a misunderstanding, so Grandma decided to leave. She picked up her belongings and walked to Aunt Nattie's---a walk of fourteen city blocks (more than two miles). Now, that's some hike, so she must have been strong.

One of our favorite things that she liked to cook when she was at our home was "pobbies"---bread, milk, and a little sugar, as I remember. This kind of cooking says to me that she was not a pretentious person---nothing uppity.

The way my dad would tease the dear, old soul was nothing short of dangerous. Many nights she sat at the kitchen table, usually after supper, idly making folds in the corner of the table cloth, and eventually nodding off to sleep. At this point, Dad would get a tin pie plate, work close to her, and then bang on the pie plate several times with his hand. It would scare her half out of her skin. She'd awaken abruptly and speak sharply, "I'll scald you, Pat Watson!" This would come in a dialect that left no doubt that she came from England. I'm sure she was threatening him with the very worst kind of punishment she knew. However, Dad loved her dearly and she was welcome any time she needed to be with us.

I remember the day she died. She was with Aunt Libby in an upstairs bedroom. Mother had been called during the night, and she was there when she died. I also remember seeing grandmother and Aunt Libby's after she was prepared for burial. I felt unafraid (probably because I loved her) and walked up to the coffin and brushed her forehead.

Now a little about Grandfather, Charles Balmforth.

He probably was of a "higher" class than Grandma. Maybe not the "gentleman" class, but "upper" class. I base this on a description presented to me. Grandpa would very probably walk to the Salt Lake tabernacle with Grandma on his arm. He'd be nicely dressed in his velvet vest with his gold watch and fob very much in evidence.

I also assume from what I've heard that he wasn't an especially good businessman. In addition to all his property on First West, he owned property in Mill Creek, some near the University of Utah, some on Main Street between Second and Third South, and some in El Dorado, wherever that is---somewhere west of Salt Lake City, I understand.