

Personal History of Florence Almina Tracy Hall



Florence Almina Tracy
Wedding Photo 14 Aug 1918

I was born November 7, 1886, the tenth child of Helon Henry Tracy and Emma Maria Burdett. The family was located on the north side of 12th Street, just west of the present entrance to Utah General Depot. Grandma Bickington was the midwife of the area and assisted at my birth, as with the others in my family. My father was in the penitentiary at the time—for practicing plural marriage. He was in the company of Lorenzo Snow, Rudger Clawson and others. It has been said that the best men in the Territory of Utah were incarcerated at that time. (Read Helon Henry Tracy Diary.)

My father was a carpenter and had built a modest home for us, it being located across the street from his mother's (Nancy N. Alexander Tracy) home. My father had worked hard to make a nice home for us. One of the earliest remembrances of him involved my playing hide-and-seek with some neighbor children. I ran across the newly planted plot of grass near the house. In my haste to not get caught while playing the game, I ran on to the new grass. The moment I felt my feet sink into it, I suddenly recalled my father's warning to the children to keep off it. Being half way across, there was nothing to do but go on to the other side. I then heard my father tell the children to have me come in to talk with him, as he had seen me through the window from his bed.

I stood by the door and did not attempt to move because I knew I was guilty of disobedience; but he called to me and told me to come over to the bed and chided me. That was all I needed, as I knew I had been disobedient. I dropped to my knees and crawled back under the bed. I cried myself to sleep and then, later, I felt him kneel down by the bed. He took me by the hand, saying "Come on and have some lunch with Father which your mother has prepared for me." And he had me sit down by him and eat and was very kind in his conversation to me. Later he said to my mother, "Emma, this is one of the children you will never need to whip to gain obedience. Just a little kind guidance, and she will be all right." I recall one time after Father died; I had done something to annoy my mother. She raised her hand to slap me, but then she stopped. I felt she had recalled my father's words.

Another remembrance is how my father loved to take us little ones on his knees and sing to us. His children were precious to him and he loved them. He would sing, "Rock of Ages," "The Little Ones at Home, Oh, How I Love to See the Little Ones at Home" (from his missionary and prison days). He was kind to us. We loved to sit on his knee and feel his whiskers tickle us as he sang and talked.

Father died when I was six years old. My mother Emma and her sister, Jane (Father's other wife), were present, sitting at his bedside. I was not old enough to understand all that was going on. I could hear his heavy breathing and Mother and Aunt Jane crying.

It was not long after this that my father's other wife (Phoebe Draper) died. Then her son and my half-brother, Aaron, came in to our house. I was very much impressed with my brother, whom I had not yet seen, and I seemed to love him from the beginning. He was tall, lanky, freckle-faced, and red-headed. But I realized that he was an orphan. His father and mother had died. And I said to myself, "Well, I have one parent, but he hasn't any." My love and sympathy went out to him right there.

My first schooling was at Brooms Bench School, just east of the RR tracks. It was a one-room schoolhouse, including all grades and ages. Lindy Irwin was the teacher. Here I had my first reading and writing, spelling, and arithmetic. Although Miss Irwin was hard and stern with the older, big boys, she never failed to eulogize me nor the work that I did.

When I had completed all the instruction given in that small school, I was given a certificate for promotion to a higher school—which took me to Mound Fort (12th and Washington) about a mile from my home. Often the walks to school in winter were very cold and not being dressed warm enough, I often arrived freezing. On one occasion, I felt myself freezing from the cold. I called to my brother, Aaron (he was living with my brother Helon at this time), who was some distance ahead of me, and he came to me, rubbed my hands, and took an article of his clothing and wrapped it around my head. Then he took hold of my arm and helped me the remainder of the way to school. The teacher, Mrs. Wade, was very kind to me. We were having examinations. She soaked my hands in cold water, but they were so badly frostbitten, she had me write the answers down in pencil and held the papers until my hands were healed enough to write with pen and ink.

Occasionally, William Z. Terry, who lived in Marriott and was an instructor at Weber Stake Academy, picked me up on his horse and buggy as he went on his way in the mornings. I greatly appreciated his kindness. (Mr. Terry continued off and on over the years as an instructor until the time of his retirement in 1960 at the age of 88. He was believed to be the oldest active teacher in the nation at the time. He died in 1961.)

I continued my schooling through the 8th Grade at Mound Fort when it became necessary for me to leave. My teachers were very disappointed, as I had been such an outstanding student. They wrote my mother, asking her to do everything possible to keep me in school. It happened that my brothers had gone to Idaho, working on farms for Ben Ritchie. My brother Ad had built a nice home there and asked Mother to come. She went, and I went along with her. This was the end of my schooling, and the next few years I spent housecleaning, washing and cooking for various families in the area.

While in Iona, I began keeping company with a young man in the Iona Ward. He was a musician and directed the Ward Choir. He earned his living by playing the piano at dances. Many of the dances were held in Idaho Falls. I usually went with him, but not being acquainted, I usually sat alone at the front of the dance hall near the orchestra during the dance. It was a seven-mile ride from home where I lived in Iona to the dances in Idaho Falls. He wanted me to go into Idaho Falls with him and be married by a justice of the peace, but I refused. I was very active in the Iona Ward M.I.A. and had expected when I married to have it done in the House of the Lord and be sealed to my mate for time and eternity. He made the excuse that it would be less expensive and easier to be married right there by the bishop. I was determined to have my way and he thought to bring me to his terms. He started keeping company with another girl, thinking to make me jealous, but this made me more resolved than ever that he was not the right man for me. But thinking to remove myself from temptation, I decided to come back to Iona and, having a desire for more learning, I returned to Ogden and lived with my sister, Annie Butler. I attended the Smithsonian Business School, learning bookkeeping, typing, shorthand, etc., earning my way by doing housework in various homes.

After completing my training at the business school, I went to work as cashier and bookkeeper at Coops Market (30th Street between Grant and Lincoln) where I worked for about three years. During this time, I lived with my sister, Myra, who had married Bill Coop, a brother to Albert Coop, the owner of the store. Their home was about a block west of the store.

At about this time, my mother returned from Idaho and we rented a room above Coops store where the two of us lived together. I wasn't very happy working in the store where my brother-in-law worked, also. He was a hard man to get along with. I wanted a change, so I learned that a bookkeeper was wanted at Wilson's Brothers grocery on 28th and Wall. I took this position and moved with my mother to Uncle David's house on west 12th Street. My sister Blanch lived there with us, also.

I worked at Wilson grocery for about a year. While I was working there, a young man by the name of Howard Hall came in to do his mother's shopping, and he always hung around until I could wait on him. He was always polite and a perfect gentleman. He often walked along the railroad tracks from his home on 27th and Pacific to visit me at my home on West 12th Street.

His conversations consisted mostly of politics and socialism, while I wanted to talk about religion. He maintained that socialism would save the world, and I told him that the adherence to the doctrines of the true church of Christ was the only thing that would save the world. I usually won out in the arguments. He started attending church with me at the Ogden 2nd Ward and about four months later was baptized. His parents were very angry when they found this out. Previous to this he had had conversations with church members and had wanted to be baptized, but his parents wouldn't allow it. Howard had a wonderful bishop in George Browning who encouraged him. He paid his tithing, lived his religion, and the bishop was very happy to give him a recommend to the temple. We were married in the Salt Lake Temple, August 14, 1918.

In the past I had become discouraged with some of the young men in the Church and had decided if I had to marry one of them, I would stay single. In fact, as time went on, I had thought to receive my own endowments and move to Salt Lake where I might spend my life working in the Temple. But I found Howard, although not a member of the Church, to be a perfect gentleman. When together, we talked about religion, and I was pleased to learn that he had had conversations with members of the L.D.S. Church and was familiar with its precepts.

Shortly after our marriage, Howard went off to war, August 18, went back to live with my mother and sister in Uncle Dave's house. Howard's honorable release from Camp Lewis, Washington, January 20, 1919, we lived in a three-room home at 513 16th Street. The owner sold this house, so we moved next door to 511 16th. While living at this address, our two Tracy and Eugene were born.

At the time of my first son's birth, I was 33 years old. This was considerably older than when most people start having children, but for reasons previously mentioned, I had given up much hope of having a family at all. A neighbor, Mrs. Hart, who owned the property we rented, told me that she had never in her life seen anyone so happy over having a baby as I was. When the pain began, I was not so happy or sure of myself as I thought. Dr. Edward I. Rich attended me as he did for all five of my children.

The house was rather small for our growing family, and we wanted a home of our own so much that in 1921 we bought a lot for \$200 at 1464 Jefferson where we lived in a tent while my brother Helon was building the house for us. Our next two sons, Wendell and Donald were born here. We stayed here until September 1927, when we traded this property for a place in Marriott where we wanted our boys to have more room to grow up. Our last son, Delbert, was born at this home in Marriott.

While living on Jefferson, my mother came to live with me. She was by then crippled from rheumatism and was confined to her bed and wheelchair. She had been living with various family members when it was decided that I ought to take care of her. This was difficult for me, as I had my young children to care for and mother was so helpless, she was quite a burden to us. Howard was very cheerful about this and was glad to lift her in and out of bed and wait on her. My mother felt bad

about the situation, but resigned herself to her condition and was grateful for what was done for her. She continued in this condition until her death at our Marriott home on June 2, 1933.

While living on this small farm, Howard worked in town for Nelson-Ricks dairy, but with the coming of the depression, he lost his job and was put to work on WPA projects. As there was nothing much for us on the farm, we moved back to the city at 664 30th Street, December 17, 1933.

These depression years were very difficult times. Men were being laid off from work right and left. Our children didn't have much to eat and they were so skinny and undernourished, it was pitiful to look at them.

When we moved back to town, we became members of the Ogden 18th Ward. Our old friend and acquaintance, William Z. Terry, was bishop, and we were warmly received by him and welcomed into the Ward. I believe our living in this ward was one of the most beneficial moves we could have made for our children. L. Grant Lofgreen, a young man whom we had known in the 7th Ward, became bishop shortly after our arrival in the 18th Ward. He took a special interest in the young people. He said the older people had already shaped their lives and there wasn't much could be done with them. He had a great influence in shaping the character of our sons and the other young people in the ward during the impressionable period of their lives. We greatly appreciated what he and others of the ward did for our children and know that they are grateful to them, also.

In November 1938, we moved to a better home at 526 27th Street which we later bought. Times were improving by then. After working at a number of odd jobs over the years, Howard received steady employment by the government at the Ogden Arsenal. During those depression years, it was impossible for Howard to always be employed, so I worked whenever I could to help out and support the family. I worked in the canning factories and went into the fields, picking beans and tomatoes—taking my children with me where they picked along my side to help out. I worked about three years in the Broom Hotel, 25th and Washington (torn down in 1959 to make room for the new Commercial Security Bank), changing sheets and cleaning rooms. Mrs. Cora Brown, wife of the owner of the hotel, valued my services greatly, considering me the best help she had ever had.

One day while I was at work, my son, Eugene, came down to talk to me about what might be done to help Tracy get a suit to wear for his college graduation. Eugene didn't want Tracy to be the only one receiving his diploma and not being dressed for it. He was willing to give all the money he had to help out and wanted to know what money I could give. Mrs. Brown overheard the conversation and was so pleased at Gene for being so thoughtful and considerate of his brother, she gave \$10.00 to the purchase of the suit.

These were difficult times, but I can look back now and be thankful for being poor. Our boys got everything through their own efforts. They learned the value of work and preparation. My children remember me during those times as one who never slept, for long after hours at the hotel or my other work, I had the washing, ironing, baking of bread, and other chores to do after I got home. It was necessary for me to work long into the night. Sometimes I was found by my children awaking in the morning, asleep at the ironing board or at the kitchen table with my night's work surrounding me.

After World War II started in 1939 and with the Ogden area having so many defense plants, there was plenty of work for everybody and people came to this area from allover to obtain work. Howard had a steady job at the Ogden Arsenal, and I went to work, myself, at Hill Field. From the income of both our jobs, we were able to buy our home on 27th Street, buy a few things, and finally get ahead a little.

My four oldest boys were now in the Service. Tracy and Gene had married and were both in the Navy. Wendell and Donald had enlisted and were both' serving in the Army. Delbert was at home alone. I came home from work one day and found him crying. He was a lonely boy, not having the

companionship and the friends that my older sons had been fortunate to have. These were trying times for him.

These were trying times for all of us, with four boys in the Service and knowing that they were in danger. My prayers were answered, for they all returned home safely.

After the war was over and our sons had returned, we sold our home on 27th Street and bought a large home at 2530 Fowler, April 13, 1946. We remodeled this home into apartments, reserving three rooms on the ground floor for ourselves. We bought this home to give us income and security in our old age.

Our son, Delbert, hoped to also serve on a mission, but never received a call, the bishopric possibly thinking that two members of a family serving was enough at one time. Being restless and lonely at home with his brothers all gone, he wanted to be doing something also; so, he enlisted in the Army in 1948. While in the service, he was stationed in Virginia. While active in a branch of the Church there, he met his future wife whom he married in the Salt Lake Temple while still in the Service. His three years of enlistment were just about over when the Korean War erupted. He was held over to serve in this conflict where he engaged in some of its fiercest fighting.

My sons Wendell and Donald had, meanwhile, returned from their missions, married, and gone off to school. All five of my sons had served with distinction in the military services. All five were married in the temple. Two were fortunate to serve on missions. All have since served in bishoprics, and been active in their church responsibilities.

By 1957, the apartment house was getting to be too much of a burden to us, so we sold it and bought a home at 634 28th Street, back in the 18th Ward. We now had a smaller house and still some income coming in from the sale of the apartment house on Fowler. It was at this time that the bishopric of the 18th Ward called us to serve a short-term mission. Though we were now in our seventies, Howard and I accepted a call to the Western States Mission where we served for nine months, from December 1957 to September 1958. We labored in the town of Ouray, Colorado—also, Ridgeway and Silverton. While there, Pres. Hugh B. Brown, then an Assistant to the Twelve, visited our mission. We had some wonderful experiences on this occasion.

About a year previous to going on my mission, I had an attack of Pan-creatitis. The doctors termed my recovery remarkable and were good enough to recognize that there was perhaps another factor responsible other than their medication.

Concerning my own Church activity, I have held every office that women are allowed to hold in the various organizations. In my later years, my attention has been directed in genealogical research and temple work. We often traveled from Ogden to Salt Lake City twice a week. With inconvenience of travel, we could not go as often as we liked, so we moved for six months, living in an apartment one-half block from the temple. The result of my research and temple work has been the salvation of many hundreds of relatives who have passed on.

We count our greatest blessings to be our five sons who have all lived good, clean lives, been married in the temple, remained active in the Church, and are teaching their children to follow in their footsteps.