LYDIA EIZA BROWN EVANS
1875-1930

Lydia Eliza Brown, daughter of Homer Brown and Hannah Eliza Woolf, was born 26 Aug. 1875, in Salt Lake City, the 11th child in a family of 14 children.

Her early girlhood was spent in Bennion Ward, southwest of Murray, Utah. It seems as though there was a literary society formed in this ward (in the days before MIA had been established everywhere), as there is evidence of a very healthy activity for the young people which included writing essays and poems, giving readings, work in elocution and dramatic arts, and ballroom dancing.

Lydia married John Henry Evans, from the other side of the Jordan River, 7 Dec. 1899 at Taylorsville, Utah. Her husband was not a baptized member of the Church, therefore it was a civil marriage. He didn’t join the Church until 7 Aug 1927, and their endowments and sealing were not performed until 19 July 1938, after Lydia’s death.

Sometime in 1900, John Henry borrowed $500 from his father to buy a farm in Idaho. He bought 40 acres of partially-cleared land, 9 miles west of Blackfoot, then returned to Utah and worked at the Highland Boy Smelter for $2.50 a day. Out of this money, he supported his family and paid back the loan in 5 years.

In the spring of 1906, John Henry took his wife and 2 children, Erwin and DeVoe, and settled on the Idaho farm. All of their personal belongings were shipped by rail to Blackfoot and the family came on the passenger train. Upon arriving at their new home, John H. Found there were 120 acres adjoining the 40 acres he had purchased that could be homesteaded, which he did. There was a very crude log cabin on the place made of hewn-cottonwood logs with a dirt roof. The boys remember watching the weeds grow on the roof. This dwelling, with an addition he made of shiplap lumber, was their home for 8 years.

During this time, another son, Homer, was born to them. At that time, their place was about the last place out west of Blackfoot. An old Indian trail ran near the home which was used by the Indians to go to the Lost River and Salmon River country to hunt and fish. Many times in passing, the Indians would come to the house with the request, “Biscuit.” Lydia never seemed afraid of the Indians and always gave them some food. Whether she gave them biscuits, bread, or whatever she had on hand, they always seemed to go on their way satisfied.

Lydia had very beautiful, long, dark-brown hair, which could literally be said was a crowning glory. It was a major project to shampoo and dry her hair. While drying it, she would sit on a dining room chair with her hair touching the floor behind her. The baby, Homer, would play behind her hair, peeking through it and having great fun. She was meticulous about the care of her hair; it was always in place, never left hanging, but properly brushed and coiled in a bun on the top of her head, secured with bone hairpins about 2 ½ to 3 inches long, and adorned with beautiful ornamental combs.

She brought her gifted ability in dramatics to the community surrounding her new home. She participated in and coached many plays that were presented in the Ward. She also taught her 3 sons much about dramatic arts, public speaking, and vocal expression. She was especially adapted to comedy and humorous parts in dramatics and gave readings of all kinds.

She enjoyed cooking. Her home made ice cream was especially smooth—a smoothness none of her daughters-in-law have been able to equal. Another specialty was her light sour-cream cake with home made caramel icing on each layer. This always made a big hit with the
threshing crew. Lydia also loved to sew and embroider.

In those days, there was always a year’s supply of food kept ahead. The sacks of flour were buried in the wheat bin to protect them from mice and other pests. There was always a smoke house with hams and bacon and smoked lean beef hanging inside.

Lydia had an iceless refrigerator—a wooden frame built like a box and covered with burlap. A pan of water sat on top with wicks made of strips of burlap to syphon the water down the side of the box. The evaporation kept things quite cool. The open well was also used as a refrigerator, milk, butter and cream were let down about 20 feet into the well in a bucket that was secured with a rope to keep it near the water. This would keep these foods nice and sweet for days. Lydia also had a nice butter business. The boys would churn the cream and she would work the butter and mold it into one pound bricks, then wrap it in special butter paper with her name and address on each pound. She would then take it to the store and trade for groceries. Her butter was always in great demand and sold first because of its superior quality.

At first, Lydia used a washboard and tub to do the laundry, later a hand-powered washing machine was secured for about $15. The boys got to provide the hand power for the washing machine. There was only outdoor plumbing, and water was carried from the well to the house in buckets.

A large garden was always in evidence; there was also a large raspberry patch, gooseberry and red currant bushes, a strawberry patch and a long row of rhubarb, together with cherry, apple, prune, and plum trees. All this fruit didn’t crowd out the flowers: they were always in abundance. The vegetable garden was always fenced, as the old hens and baby chicks would run loose. One nearly-grown young rooster took a liking to her poppy leaves. Every morning, he would leave the coop and make straight for the poppy patch and load up on poppy blossoms, then stagger over to the apple orchard, lean up against a tree until his legs would no longer support him, slump down and sleep it off. Following a long siesta he would make his way back to the poppy patch and repeat the process—a real drug addict.

Lydia’s health was not the best, as she apparently had high blood pressure; the boys and her husband helped her with the chores about the house and garden. Each son learned much about housekeeping.

In 1914 they built a new frame, 4 room home, which Erwin and his wife, Gladys, still live in, having raised their 3 children to maturity there.

Lydia was active in Relief Society for many years in spite of her poor health, and was first counselor in the organization for 3 years. She also held many other offices in Relief Society.

She was especially proud of her first grandchild, a grandson and once made the statement she thought it “a misfortune when a woman couldn’t enjoy her grandchildren.” She was permitted to enjoy this one grandchild for only 7 months before passing away. Early in Sep. 1930, the family had held a family home evening & had a very enjoyable time. Erwin, Gladys & baby Bruce went to their home a short distance away and retired for the night. They hadn’t been in bed long when the younger son, Homer, came and awakened them saying, “Come quickly, Mother is sick.” She had a stroke and lingered in semi-consciousness for 10 days before passing away 18 Sep. 1930. During this time she was cared for by her daughter-in-law, Gladys, and her sister, Josephine Quist, of Arco, Id. She was 21 Sep. 1930, in Thomas-Riverside Cemetery, Bingham County, Id. She left a devoted husband, 3 sons and 1 grandson.
