

LAURA ELLEN FARNSWORTH; THE MISSING FARNSWORTH

Philo Taylor Farnsworth was an early and prominent member of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and an early settler to southern Utah by extension. He had been with the church in the early days, having helped erect the Nauvoo Temple prior to Brigham Young's trek to Salt Lake City, Utah.

Like many others of his religion in those days, Philo took more than one wife. His second "plural wife", as they were called, was my great great grandmother, Margaret Adams. Her father was David Adams, the man for whom the town of Adamsville, Utah is named. His family had come from Scotland to the iron fields of Pennsylvania before taking on the faith that would bring them to Utah. The migration west had taken a toll on the Adams family, David had lost his wife and 2 of their children to cholera while traveling on the Missouri River en route to their new home

Both David and Philo became bishops in the communities where they resided, such was their faith in this church which had taken them to the west. Beaver County is situated in the Painted Desert, where the rocks are streaked heavily with the colors of the sunset, yet there is snow in the winter. F. D. Fitzgerald's recollections of his early years (among them "The Great Brain") are based in much this same location, and provide a fuller image of what life was like during this time.

Margaret was 17 when they wed, and spent some time living with him and his first wife, the former Margaret Yates. The time was used teaching her the tasks that would make living in the 2 room cabin Philo was building for her simpler, those of growing and preserving fruits and vegetables, raising livestock, how to make candles and soap, how to cook and sew.

Eventually, Philo built a two room cabin for Margaret, 6 miles out of Beaver's city limits, where she was to live and raise the children.

It is into this environment that Laura Ellen was born 12 Sep. 1862, the 2nd child and oldest daughter of Philo and Margaret Farnsworth. She had been preceded by 2 brothers, David Barclay and Francis Marion, but little Francis had not survived more than a month after his birth the previous year. Young David was barely into his 3rd year at the time of Laura's birth, having been born on Sep. 6, 1859. In the years to follow, Laura was followed by other children, namely: Alonzo Martindale born 5 Nov. 1864, Susan Jane born 5 Feb. 1867, and Mary Elizabeth born 3 April 1869.

Little is recorded about Philo's children's early years; one recollection states that he was a strict but compassionate father, providing his multiple families with groceries as they needed them. The groceries often consisted of sugar for their mush, bacon for breakfast, molasses to spread on freshly baked bread and freshly churned butter, as well as special treats for the younger ones. Laura is simply listed as by her middle name, Ellen, in the 1870 Utah census records and it is indicated that she had not attended school within the year. In the following year, Laura's life would change forever.

Another sister, Isabella, made her debut that year, on May 9th, Mother Margaret, weakened by the births of so many children and the frontier conditions her family had faced in the early days, fell ill and steadily worsened after the delivery. The following spring, she came down with pneumonia. Her death came on 20 June 1872, at the age of 32, and she was buried in the Beaver cemetery.

Agnes Patterson Farnsworth, Philo's 3rd wife, took in several of the children of that marriage; others were taken in by various neighbors and friends. Laura was among the children Agnes took in, and her sister Mary Elizabeth ended up with the Will Robinson family, beyond that, the dispersion is not clear as of this writing.

By 1878, when Laura was 16, she had met and married a man named Franklin Farnham. Family recollections of some state, he was a young soldier, who eloped with her and the couple promptly left the area, never to be seen again. However, the 1880 census clearly places the couple in Beaver, Utah in a household directly listed alongside Agnes Farnsworth's home in the records.

Furthermore, while a Franklin Farnham was listed as stationed at Fort Cameron Military Reservation in Beaver Co. Nearby, his statistical information differs considerably from that of the man listed as Laura's husband. The Franklin Farnham listed as married to Laura earned his living as a barber in the area, and I suspect that he was a cousin to the one at Fort Cameron, perhaps urged by this relation to come out West and seek his fortune.

This union, as yet undocumented, begins a mysterious period in Laura's life. At some time in the following decade, she left Utah-with or without Frank-never to return.

Certainly her disappearance would have devastated her family back home; in talking with Susan and Mary's descendants, it has been said they both carried questions about their oldest sister all the way to their graves. Wherever she was, she did not return to Beaver to attend her father's funeral in 1887. When she left, it's clear she left for good.

Why?

In December of that year, she gave birth to her first child, a daughter, in Washington State (per later census records). The child was Theo Roberta Adams; her father was said to be killed by Indians, but when no documentation exists of her birth or Laura's whereabouts at the time, who can tell for certain?"

Theo Roberta's existence in itself raises many questions. Who was her father, and where did Laura live in the years afterward? Did she marry Bertie's father, or did she bear her out of wedlock and christen the child with her mother's maiden name instead? Is existing family lore completely honest when it says Laura and a husband had a falling out when he brought home a second wife, and she wouldn't hear of it, so she left him?

Whatever the case, Laura resurfaced in Spokane, Wash. Early marriage records, again using the Farnsworth name, when she wed Arthur Hugh Graham in Feb. 1890. A story in the local newspaper of the day, printed later that month, records the "crushing" of Mormonism by the "Gentiles". An article such as this may have made Laura feel that there was no going home again, if she even entertained such desires. She obviously felt that there was nothing left for her in Utah by that time.

This observation is made because Laura never, in her entire adult life that we know of, mentioned her life in Utah. It was not a known fact until her father's name appeared on her death certificate, and no childhood reminiscences exist that she has told anyone. She deliberately avoided the truth for many years; her father's name was often given as Milo Farnsworth, a native of Scotland, and her English-born mother, unnamed, was recorded as dying in New Mexico. The only trace of her early upbringing would be manifested in the way her children were raised; loving, but firm.

By 1892, Laura and Arthur were living along the Idaho panhandle; their first son, Charles Hugh Graham, was born near North Pole 24 March of that year. A homestead was established in

Athol; just a few miles away, and it is there that they resided during the years the remaining children were born: Laura Gladys -1893, Frank Earl or Earl Frank-1895, Arthur Otis-1897, Florence Margaret-1902, Philo Taylor-1904, and George 1906. Frank Earl died, circumstances unknown, the year of Philo's birth.

It would appear that she did think of the family in Utah on occasion, as evidenced by the naming of 2 of her children. Frank may have been named for Frank Farnham, as well. In 1906, Theo Roberta married paper hanger Frank W. Letts, and they remained in Athol. It was his second marriage, Bertie's first. They went on to have 2 children, Mary and Ella, and may have had more than I am not aware of.

By the time of the 1910 Census, Arthur was employed as a hotel cook in Athol, and the Grahams had taken on several lumberjacks as boarders. One of these men, John Edward McIver, would (in a few years time) marry their daughter Laura. Charles moved to Spokane in 1913 to work as a teamster, and the family moved to Spokane the following year. Arthur died in 1915, aged 57, and was buried in Mt. View Cemetery at Athol.

Laura died on 11 Dec. 1917, in Clark's Fork, Idaho and was buried soon after at Mt. View. The cause of her death was "an instantaneous paralysis of the heart." She was 55 at the time of her death.

By Kerri Hanley April 1998. Further genealogical information on any of the parties named in this biography can be sent to K. Hanley McIntosh, 9900 NE 124th St. #1310, Kirkland, Wa. 98034

E mail to treearcher@usa.net

Typed into computer 11 Oct 2002 by Kathleen Jardine Woolf Idaho Falls, Id.

Life Story of Laura Ellen Farnsworth by Melba Edwards Carter Holdaway

On 8 June 1981 I, Melba Edwards Carter Holdaway, submitted a Book of Remembrance with 4 generations on my parents line, the Edwards and Gurr's to the Genealogical Society of Utah. The society put these records on microfilm and made them available to the branch libraries. The Book of Remembrance consisted of pedigree charts of 4 generations, picture pedigree charts, family group sheets of each generation and patriarchal blessings of all but 2 of my ancestors.

Just a few days before Christmas, 1992, I received a letter in the mail. This letter was from a person named Kerri, who lived in Spokane, Wash. This name was not familiar to me, and I could not think of anyone I knew that lived in Wash. As I opened the letter I received a wonderful surprise. I read and re-read the letter. The contents brought new and exciting news and even old memories to my mind.

Now, in order to continue the exciting story of my mysterious letter, I will need to go back to what was recorded in my journal 16 Sep. 1987. The events of that day were recorded as follows: Mom, Dad and I were attending the Provo Temple on our usual Wed. Afternoon session. Mom and I were in the Celestial Room waiting for Daddy to come thru the veil. We waited and waited, and finally asked a veil worker if he would check to see where Dad was. Finally Dad came over to where we were—with a really embarrassed grin on his face. He had fallen asleep and the worker had to wake him up. Then he said,

"Melba, is Mom's sister Laura Ellen's temple work done?"

I told him I thought so, but I would check on it. I then asked him why. He then shared

with Mom and me a special dream that he had just had while he was asleep.

He said that he saw Wilford and many others of our family visiting in the temple, as we often did, when a beautiful young lady came up and shook his hand. She said, "Philo, you don't know me, but I know you. I am Laura Ellen Farnsworth, your mother's sister."

Then she tried to tell him something, but he could not understand what she was saying, and then he was awakened.

Now, 114 years later, I, Melba, received a letter from a Kerri Cox from Spokane, Wash. Asking if I knew a Laura Ellen Farnsworth. Kerrie is Laura Ellen's great, great granddaughter. She had found Laura Ellen's name from the Ancestral File at the local LDS Family History Center at Spokane.

How long does it take for our deceased loved ones to find each other? We buried our father 3 years ago to the day that I received Kerri's letter. She is our connection to Laura Ellen, whom we had lost track of since she was 16, 114 years ago.

Laura Ellen has been trying since 1987 to get a message to us. We do not know what message she was trying to tell Dad at the temple, but now we know how important it is to submit our family group sheets to the ancestral file and to use our family history centers around the world

As of now, I cannot find any of Laura Ellen's family that have joined the church, but Kerri cared enough and became curious enough to search out her ancestors. I appreciate Kerri for caring and not I too, feel an urgency to get my part done. I am heading for the Family History Center tomorrow.

Laura Ellen was bitter about her childhood experiences. From the family records we find that she never revealed who her parents were, and said her father was Milo Farnsworth from Mexico. She never attended an LDS Ward, but joined the Rebecca Lodge. She tried to leave no trace of her family or where she came from. The entire family, including Dad, Mom and her brothers and sisters searched for years for a clue as to what happened to her. She not only left no clues as to what happened to her. She not only left no clues, but lied about her heritage.

Laura Ellen Farnsworth was born on Sep. 12, 1862 to Philo Taylor Farnsworth, and his 2nd wife, Margaret Adams. They were residents of Beaver at the time. Laura had 2 older brothers, David who lived to adulthood, and Francis Marion who died a month after he was born. She also had 4 younger brothers and sisters.

Laura's mother died when Laura was only 10 years old. The children were taken into different families in the area, but it remains a mystery who took in Laura Ellen, so little is known about her childhood.

Laura's adult years are equally as mysterious. She was very unhappy in her circumstances, and when she was 16 years old she ran off with a young man from the army that was stationed near Beaver, Utah. His name was Frank Farnhan.

Now we return to Kerri's information on her 2nd great grandmother, Laura Ellen.

Laura Ellen seemed to have secrets in her past according to the story that has been handed down through her children.

One of the secrets was that she gave birth to a daughter that she named Theo Roberta Adams (her mother's maiden name). A short time later a woman claiming to be the wife of Frank Farnham came to their home and ordered Laura out.

Later she met and married Arthur Hugh Graham. This marriage was recorded in a 1903 book, The History of North Idaho. The article on Arthur Graham is as follows"

“About 3 miles southwest from Athol is situated the estate of the subject of this article, and he has the generous proportions of 240 acres of good land, which he is tilling, having sufficient stock for it and good improvements. Mr. Graham is a man of energy and industry, and is one of the enterprising and substantial citizens of Kootenai Co. He was born in Crawford Co., Wisconsin 23 April 1858, son of John H. And Annie (Dibble) Graham, natives, respectively of Scotland and Ohio. The mother died in Livingston County, Michigan, and is buried in Hartland, while the father is still living in Ashland, Wisconsin, age 72. Mr. Graham has 2 sisters: Ella, widow of Willie Brand and living in 2 Harbors, Minnesota; Jennie, wife Charles Rorback, living in South Lyons, Michigan. Our subject gained his schooling in the places where the parents lived and at 14 started for himself. He worked on a farm in summer, and went to the pineries in the winters, continuing this for 6 years. In 1878 he came to Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, old Mexico and mined, and then returned to the mines of Wisconsin on Lake Superior. It was in 1888 when he came to Kootenai and worked in the tie camp for a time, and then took a homestead, where he now lives, having added more by purchase.

This experience has been a wonderful lesson and blessing to me and has shown that our ancestors are close to us, and anxious to have their work done, even though they were not interested during their lifetimes.

Typed into computer 11 Oct 2002 by Kathleen J. Woolf Idaho Falls, Idaho