

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ELLEN ANDERSON (HOLMES)

My father, William Anderson, and my mother, Elizabeth Gourley, were of Scottish descent and embraced the Gospel in Scotland before the death of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]. I remember very distinctly, though only a little girl, their wearing crepe on their hats for the martyred Prophet. ⁽¹⁾

I was born at Glasgow, Scotland, May 28, 1838. ⁽²⁾ On Saturday, Nov. 10, 1849 we sailed from Liverpool, England in the ship "Zetland" with a company of 250 Saints under the direction of S. H. Hawkins, and arrived in New Orleans Dec. 24, 1849. ⁽³⁾ There I received my first baptism in February of 1850. ⁽⁴⁾ We remained at New Orleans five months, ⁽⁵⁾ and while there my mother was called upon to part with her little babe in death. ⁽⁶⁾ But this was only the beginning of sorrows, for when we embarked May 2,

1850 to go up the Mississippi River for St. Louis, a salute was fired from the cannon just as my brother, William, was passing and it killed him instantly. His body was taken ashore and my mother did not see him and was denied the news of his death until some time upriver.

We lived in St. Louis three years. Then in 1853 my mother, sister Elizabeth, two brothers, Peter and Archibald and myself left for our journey across the plains in the company of Captain Clawson, my father and sister, Margaret, having gone on before us. ⁽⁷⁾ I was accorded the arduous experience of walking most of the way across the plains, wading the streams and gathering buffalo chips for fuel; seeing great herds of buffalo that looked almost like moving mountains, and on some occasions impeding our travel and stampeding our animals. My only chance for a ride now and then was to take a spell driving my brothers' outfit of two yoke of oxen, riding on the tongue of the wagon. At night my sister and I would lay under the wagon, an old carpet serving as a curtain. The howl of the wolves would verily make our hair stand on end, as we could peep out and see their glaring eyes like



balls of fire. We were assigned that place as our bedroom to afford better accommodation for a young couple, the wife soon to become a mother. When her child was born my mother took care of her.

However, we had but little difficulty in traveling, and in sickness we had only the death of one child, Catherine M., half sister of John Gibson, and two births, arriving in the Salt Lake Valley in September of 1853 before the October Conference. We found my father and sister Margaret well, she having married and she had a babe three days old when we arrived. We stopped with my sister until Father could get a place for us. ⁽⁸⁾

I found a home with Sister Lydia Knight. Joseph F. Smith was working there at the time. This was on the church farm where my father also worked. I worked there for some time, then I went to work for the family of Pres. Brigham Young at the Lion House. The impressions made on me by the system and family order will always remain with me: time for everything, and everything in its place. I remained at the Lion House several months, finally having to give up the work because of a very bad felon [infection] on my hand. I also had some experience and hardships during the cricket infestation and helped to fight them while living on barley bread, weeds and sego roots. So in demand were the sego roots that a five acre plot of ground belonging to Parley P. Pratt was dug up solidly in search of them.

March 29, 1857 I was married to Henry Holmes by Bishop Hickenlooper, and later, February 22, 1868, we were sealed in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City by Heber C. Kimball, having been previously endowed. We moved to North Ogden, Utah in 1857 after our marriage. However, after that summer I had to go back to Salt Lake City because Henry was called to go into the Echo Canyon War to stop the approach of Johnston's Army. I was forced to go with the move further south when our first child Henry was only about a month old, as my husband was still stationed in Echo Canyon with our troops. My sister-in-law and I traveled in one wagon with her fourteen year old brother as a driver, both of us with young babies. When the time came for us to return, my husband, being released from his post, met us at Spanish Fork, Utah, and we returned directly to North Ogden and made it our future home.

Henry took up the labor of school teaching and serving as counselor in the ward organization. Later he served as North Ogden Ward President from Nov. 10, 1863 to Jan. 30, 1875. On January 7, 1868 at the organization of the Relief Society of North Ogden, I was sustained as counselor to Lucinda Chipman Campbell. August 6, 1871 I was sustained as president of the Relief Society with Martha Meacham and Sarah Ann Berrett as Counselors. January 1, 1874 Brother Holmes then being on a mission to Arizona, I resigned, thinking I would go also, but as the mission was recalled, he returned. [See published letter from Henry Holmes to Pres. F. D. Richards printed in The Evening News of Salt Lake

City July 17, 1873.] *Later I was chosen as a trustee with Sisters Rash and Randall in the Relief Society, but that was soon afterwards withdrawn as all property was turned over to the Church.*



Holmes family about 1867

L – R: Ellen Anderson Holmes, infant Mary Ellen Holmes, Henry John Holmes, Henry Holmes, Heber Chase Holmes, William Robert Holmes, Elizabeth Ann Holmes

My husband was called on another mission, this time to the Southern States. However, in going to Ogden and making the necessary arrangements he came in contact with the smallpox, contracted the disease and died at our home 7 o'clock on the evening of Nov. 1, 1876. He was buried the same night under very sad conditions. Without help I was forced to assist the brethren, Joseph Godfrey and William Garrard, to handle the body and get it out of the house, but through the blessings of the Lord no other deaths occurred in the family, though the whole family, myself and 8 children went through the siege. The second night that I was in bed with the disease, my heart naturally bowed down with sorrow and apprehension wondering how we were going to be provided for and not knowing who would next be called to death, I was attracted to the sound of a heavenly choir of voices singing "Oh, My Father." It left me with a heavenly influence of which we all partook, and I was made to rejoice even in the midst of my sore afflictions.⁽⁹⁾

I was left a widow with a family of eight children,⁽¹⁰⁾ but I have lived to see my five boys and three girls all married and with families of their own. I have since

been among the sick and administered to their wants, prepared the dead for burial and waited on mothers in childbirth, and in general have done what I could for the relief of suffering. Also I have had the privilege of going to the temple and doing work for my deceased relatives.

After these many years, as I look back and think how rapidly our faith has grown, it seems but a dream. We no longer are permitted to view the long train of dust-covered wagons drawn by their slow-plodding but patient oxen, but we can't blame the poor emigrants for their diversions to the evening dance around the campfire after the bugle call for evening devotions. But, oh, I remember how our hearts swelled with joy and emotion at the first sight of the Valley and the shores of the Inland Sea.

And now as my journey on earth is nearing its close, my Testimony of the Divinity of the Latter-day work grows no less bright, but like an anchor to the soul is sure and steadfast and my heart is lifted up in praise and thanksgiving to the Giver of all Good. May the glorious work roll on, is my prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen.

* * * * *

Notes and comments added in March 1949 by Ellen and Thelma Hill, granddaughters of Ellen Anderson Holmes:

(1) This statement should be questioned as the Glasgow Branch Record, Nos. 945, 946 in the Historian Office, states that William and Elizabeth Anderson were baptized into the church in 1847.

(2) The record of birth from Barony District, Glasgow is as follows: William Anderson, dresser, Bridgetown, and Elizabeth Gourlay had a lawful daughter, their 7th child born 30 May named Helen baptized 24 June 1838.

(3) Sailing record filed in the Church Historian Office lists the family:

William, age 50	Elizabeth,	48	
James	16	Archibald	13
Ellen	11	Elizabeth	8
Peter	5	John	2

(4) Personal date of baptism (7 March 1850) was given when Ellen Anderson was endowed in the Endowment House on 4 April 1856.

(5) The New Orleans Branch record No. 1736, Church Historian Office lists:

#145	James Anderson (probably William)
#146	Elizabeth Anderson
#147	Archibald Anderson
#148	William Anderson
#149	James Anderson
#150	Ellen Anderson

(6) This child was John, born about 1847, being listed as 2 years of age on the sailing record, and the third named John in the family.

(7) Journal of Church History, 19 August 1853, p. 4, gives the St. Louis Company, Capt. Moses Clawson, 2nd Company of Ten:

Arch. Anderson, age 17
Elizabeth Anderson, age 50
Ellen Anderson, age 14
Peter Anderson, age 8
Elizabeth Anderson, age 11, 1 wagon, 4 head of oxen.

(8) Margaret Anderson married James Miller and made her permanent home in Spanish Fork, Utah.

(9) On this particular evening mentioned, Bro. Frederick Ellis, leader of the North Ogden choir, was holding practice with his members in the ward house some blocks away, and "Oh, My Father" was sung by the group. Grandmother heard their voices so distinctly that she supposed the choir was just outside, and one of the household was sent to thank them.

(10) The eight children born to Ellen Anderson and Henry Holmes were:

Henry John Holmes	born 1 Feb. 1858	md. Sarah Jane Godfrey Evans
William Robert Holmes	born 26 Dec. 1859	md. Charlottle Clifford
Elizabeth Ann Holmes	born 12 Mar. 1862	md. Milton Berrett Sr.
Heber Chase Holmes	born 17 June 1864	md. Hulda A. Vanderhoff
Mary Ellen Holmes	born 13 Dec. 1866	md. Eli Tracy
Milton Keynes Holmes	born 18 Feb. 1869	md. Martha Eliz. Dudman
Margaret Holmes	born 9 Nov. 1871	md. William James Hill, Jr.
Lamoni Holmes	born 27 Jan. 1875	md. 1. Alta may Campbell md. 2. Anna Van Boerum



Photo: about 1910

Seated, left to right: Milton Keynes Holmes, Elizabeth Ann Holmes Berrett, Helen (Ellen) Anderson Holmes, Margaret Holmes Hill, Lamoni Holmes
Standing, left to right: William Robert Holmes, Heber Chase Holmes, Henry John Holmes
Not pictured: Mary Ellen Holmes Tracy

Granddaughters, Ellen and Thelma Hill wrote:

Ellen Anderson did not remarry after the death of Henry Holmes, living alone when her children married. She enjoyed good health during her lifetime, and her industry and thoroughness was typical of many of Scottish descent. She was outspoken and obedience was a requirement in her household, even when her sons had grown to manhood.

The adobe home, now torn down, was located at what is now 478 E. 2600 North, North Ogden, Weber County, Utah. In this home the family was reared and here grandmother died. The lot contained about an acre of land with vegetables and old-fashioned English flower garden, and fruit and shade trees. After her children left to make their own livelihood or married, grandmother cared for the lot and kept it productive and free from weeds.

Being a pioneer, Ellen Anderson Holmes lived with few luxuries. She raised most of her food in her own garden and more than once when she visited in Salt Lake City with relatives or attended General Conference, the sleeves of her black silk shirtwaist had been carefully darned about the elbows or forearms. Few knew these things because she did not ask for charity from family or friend.

Grandmother died at her home in North Ogden, January 9th, 1916 and the body was interred January 16th in the North Ogden Cemetery beside that of her husband Henry Holmes. The funeral service held in the ward chapel was very large for the size of the community at that time, 530 by count, including visitors from Salt Lake City and Ogden and other Weber County towns. Seated on the stand were Thomas B. Evans, President of the Ogden Stake; Nathan Harris, James Storey and Nephi J. Brown of the Stake High Council; Patriarchs James Ward of North Ogden and Levi T. Taylor of the North Weber Stake. The floral contributions were rich and profuse and of artistic design. The services were conducted by Bishop Counselor David N. Randall. Opening prayer by Mormon N. Reynolds; music by the ward choir, solos by Miss Thorstensen, etc. Remarks were by James Ward, Levi Taylor, John W. Gibson, Frederick W. Ellis, Nathan J. Harris; benediction was by James H. Anderson, Salt Lake City.

* * * * *

OBITUARY

Funeral services for Mrs. Ellen Anderson Holmes were held at North Ogden last Sunday, Bishop Barker presiding. The ward choir sang two numbers and Miss Jennie Thorstensen, Robert Greenwell and Charles W. Ellis sang solos. The speakers were patriarch James Ward, John Gibson, Frederick Ellis, Nathan J. Harris and Patriarch Levi J. Taylor. The grave in the North Ogden cemetery was dedicated by William N. Anderson.

Mrs. Holmes was the daughter of William and Elizabeth G. Anderson. She was born in Scotland May 28, 1838. In 1848 the family left Scotland for America, staying at St. Louis, Mo., four years. In 1853 Mrs. Holmes came to Utah, locating in the Sixth Ward in Salt Lake City. In 1857 she was married to Henry Holmes. In 1859 they moved to North Ogden where her husband was presiding elder of the North Ogden branch. In 1876 her husband died leaving his wife and eight children, the youngest a babe a few months old. Mrs. Holmes was a faithful member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, active in the Relief Society and in caring for the sick. Her children are Henry Holmes of McGrath, Canada (who was visiting Utah at the time of his mother's death); William Holmes of Liberty, Weber County; Heber Holmes of Ogden; Mrs. Elizabeth Berrett, Mrs. Margaret Hill, Milton and Lamoni Holmes of North Ogden; and Mrs. Mary Ellen Tracy of Cardston, Canada. She has two brothers living, Archibald K. Anderson of Salt Lake City and Peter Anderson of Lander, Wyoming.

* * * * *

About 1950 another granddaughter, Margaret Holmes Weaver wrote: "These pages should not lie rolled, tattered and dusty on a shelf. They ought to be placed in book form, accessible to this wonderful pioneer mother's family, where they can read her testimony and thrill too, with her experiences."

* * * * *