LIFE SKETCH OF ANN ELIZA HOWLAND COOK

Ann Eliza Howland Cook was born June 18, 1823 at Stillwater, Saratoga Springs, New York to Henry and Phoebe Baker Howland. Her father was a mechanic. In 1835 he left the state of New York and immigrated to Michigan with his family of six children. A seventh child was born there. It was in Ross, Kalamazoo, Michigan that Ann Eliza met her future husband.

Ann Eliza and her sister, Ann Maria, were married the same day at a double ceremony on the first of January, 1840. Ann Eliza married Phineas Wolcott Cook and Ann Maria married Washington Heath.

Little is known of Ann Eliza's educational opportunities, but her diary, written from April 24, 1887 to April 30, 1896 when she was 73 years of age, shows that she understood sentence construction, and that she spelled correctly. Her handwriting even at the age was better than average.

In 1844 Ann Eliza was introduced to Mormon doctrine. Eliza Cook, sister of her husband, joined the Mormon Church in 1843, and she and Ann Eliza were close friends. Also, when the elders came to Richland, Michigan, Ann Eliza knew their message was true. She worked to get her husband to investigate and they were both baptized on September 8, 1845.

The details of Ann Eliza's life are known only because of events recorded by her husband in his diary, and most of these are learned only through inference. Phineas made reference to the birth of their fourth child at Winter Quarters, where they had only a tent for shelter. The child was born on October 9, 1846, and Ann Eliza was so very ill that it was feared she would die. Through administration by Elisha H. Groves and through Eliza's great faith, and that of her husband, she was spared. The baby, Eliza Hall Cook, lived only a few months because the illness had made it impossible for Ann Eliza to nurse her child.

Ann Eliza was the mother of sixteen children, five of whom died as infants or small children. During these years Phineas built several log cabins and larger homes for her and his family, but each time he was asked to move to other areas, and his obedience must have been her will as well, for he does not mention that she was reluctant to go with him when he was called.

In her diary written from 1887 to 1896, there is not one critical opinion given, and she does not criticize a relative or neighbor in one detail. Phineas writes that Ann Eliza taught them (her children) habits of industry and economy. We know from knowledge of the family at this date that she also taught them to have true faith in God.

Ann Eliza lived in harmony with Amanda Polly and Catharine, Phineas's other wives. For many years they lived in the same house. Later, when the family moved to Bear Lake, each family had its own home. Ann Eliza chose Amanda Polly for her first counselor in Relief Society. Her diary makes frequent reference to her and to the fourth wife, Johanna.

Her grandson, Alonzo L. Cook, writes that she was very deeply hurt when the U.S. Government enforced the law requiring her husband to live with only one family. He chose the youngest family whom he moved to Afton, Wyoming. However, she did not record one word of sorrow, complaint or criticism in her diary. Also, she tells of their visits to her from Wyoming, and shows in her writing that she had a high regard for Johanna.

Her diary reveals her interest in politics and world affairs. Democratic meetings held periodically in Bear Lake always were of interest to her. She notes in her diary the names of speakers and details of their interests. Whether she attended these meetings in person is not clear. She worried about strikes and labor problems, and thought in terms of effects they would have on the growth of the country. She writes on the second of September, 1895, "Great commotion before the Chinese or Japanese War is over. War is now in full blast, killing by thousands. This is a terrible, bloody war. The Chinese are cruel." She recorded in detail the events of Utah being admitted as a state and told of the celebrations throughout the area.

Ann Eliza lived with her son, Hyrum, and his family at Garden City, Utah at least the last two years of her life. While she was with them, Hyrum was called on a mission to New Zealand. She records the details of his preparation. He took a load of potatoes to Lake Town and received only 45 cents a bushel for them She laments that it took a whole load to bring $8.00. Hyrum was forced to borrow $45.00 from a neighbor, and his mother and wife agreed to pay it back at the rate of $5.00 a month. She records the progress of the reduction of this debt.

Again, she does not worry or criticize or even wonder where the money will come from to take care of them while Hyrum is gone. She thanks her Heavenly Father for his goodness to them and she writes in her diary, "We are preparing to get Hyrum ready. He had $100 to start with. They say it will take $125 to get him to New Zealand. He is packing, cannot get an overcoat which he needs so much. Also, he needs another satchel. He is improvising a box which he will use, but it is not safe."

Ann Eliza took much interest in his mission. She records the details of his trip to the coast where he embarked for New Zealand, and her record contains the details of each letter received until she was too ill to continue writing. She constantly acknowledged the blessings of the Lord to him and to his family. Her constant wish was that she had more to send him to relieve his destitute condition. She writes, "Oh, the loneliness, but he is called by the Priesthood of the Lord to go and preach glad tidings of great joy to the South Sea Islanders, and we hope he may be blessed in his work. He has a language to learn before he can make the people understand."

She had great faith in God and must have received great sustaining power from Him. In her diary she records the events of each of the conferences, the names of visiting Church authorities, the details of the subject of their messages, and her gratitude for their inspiration.

She writes, "We are preparing to keep two of the Seven Presidents of Seventies, B. H. Roberts and Golden Kimball, and two other brethren. R. H. Roberts spoke of the duties of the Seventy. Both told of the need for Elders to preach the Gospel to the world. This morning the brethren administered to a sick child of (name not clear) before breakfast. They had slept late and it made us late with the morning chores. Hyrum borrowed a carriage and took them to St. Charles." In another entry she comments, "We enjoyed the Spirit with them. When we have His Spirit we are calm. Anything boisterous, angry or contradictory is not the Spirit of Him and is not the right way."

We cannot read the 125 oversize pages of her diary without realizing the esteem in which she was held by her children and grandchildren. Each day she records a visit, a letter, or a message from some one of them. She writes about members of the family and

some friends who came to Hyrum's to pick currants, gooseberries, and service berries. These folks always stayed at Hyrum's because Ann Eliza was there.

Her generosity as well as Hyrum's and Annie's is in evidence throughout the diary, though again only by inference. It was never spoken. On the 17th of September 1895 her entry reads, "When Annie and Hyrum went to get their currants they found few left, not enough to fill the bottles, and none to dry." Yet another entry on the 24th of September tells that when Brother Dean came for berries, Hyrum told him to go ahead and take what he wanted.

Ann Eliza spent much time writing to relatives to obtain genealogical information. Her diary states in a number of places that she has another twenty-five names for her son, Alonzo Howland, who is in Logan, and later in Salt Lake working in the temple. Also, she states that she has sent her genealogical book to him to complete the work she had accumulated.

She died on the 17th of May 1896 after several months of sickness. Annie, Hyrum’s wife, wrote a postscript in her diary. It reads, "Grandma Cook suffered very much from the day she left off writing and for that reason she did not keep this records until the last. Her children were not all here, as Hyrum was in New Zealand and Phebe in Mexico. The rest of her children were here and a large number of her friends."