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Title: **History—Mary Elizabeth Clark**

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Person: **Mary Elizabeth Clark**

Date:

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Ezra T. and Mary Stevenson Clark welcomed their third child, and only daughter, Mary Elizabeth, on November 25, 1849. She was born in East Canyon (present-day Bountiful), Utah, where just a few months earlier, her future husband, Joseph Elijah Robinson, was born to Joseph Lee and Maria Wood Robinson.

Both families moved north to Farmington (called North Cottonwood at the time), where Mary and Joseph grew up. Their fathers were prominent members of both the community and the LDS church.

Curly haired and slender, Mary was gifted with dramatic ability, and Joseph was musically inclined—they participated in plays together and attended dances. It seemed to all who knew them that the two were destined to marry.

About this time, a man named Arthur Stayner, a highly educated and polished convert from England, came to Farmington to teach school, and flattered by his attention to her, but “hypnotized” as she later described it, Mary agreed to become one of his plural wives. They were married on February 22, 1869, but the union lasted less than four months—Mary later told a daughter that she never lived with her first husband. She was granted a divorce on June 12, 1869.

A few months later, on September 6, 1869, Mary

and Joseph Robinson were married. They had four children together: Joseph Elijah Jr., Ezra Clark, Albert Carlos, and Mary Elizabeth (May). A few days before their third child was born, Joseph took a second wife, Dorothy Henderson Watson. Things seemed to be going well until a tragic event occurred on July 10, 1874.

Joseph, Mary, and Dorothy had set out by carriage for Salt Lake City to have their picture taken. They stopped at the edge of town to water the horses, but one of the horses became frightened and lurched forward unexpectedly. Joseph was trampled by both horses and run over by the front wheels of the buggy. For weeks, he hovered between life and death. Miraculously he survived, but was crippled for life.

Heavy burdens were placed on Mary during Joseph’s long recovery. The exact circumstances and reasons for what took place are unknown, but shortly before the birth of Joseph and Mary’s fourth child, and only daughter, Mary took her children and moved back into her father’s home, fully intending to return. However, misunderstandings lead to a permanent separation, and Mary and Joseph divorced.

Although Mary’s children were never again welcomed in their father’s home, Mary never spoke a word of censure about Joseph, and their children, likewise, were loyal to both parents. Once, when someone commented that Joseph must have been a harsh and unforgiving man, his daughter, May, protested, “No, you must not say that. He was a terribly sick man for many years and a victim of circumstances beyond his control. He was kind, good,

and noble, as was my mother. It is not right to blame either of them. They have both suffered enough."

Mary's father and brothers filled in as father-figures for her children, and for a time, she took her children to Georgetown, Idaho, to keep house for her brother, Wilford, before he married. The family, however, missed Farmington, and they were all happy when they returned.

Still young and attractive, but with no further desire for marital life, Mary enrolled in nursing classes taught by Dr. Ellis Shipp in Salt Lake City, graduating with her cousin, Pliny Phelps Lyman. Hundreds of babies were brought into the world with the help of "Auntie," as Mary came to be called. She only lost one patient, but it was very difficult for her; it was her uncle Amasa Clark's wife, Alice, who died of phlebitis.

Her services when delivering a baby consisted of much more than being there for the birth. She visited at least twice a day for the first two weeks to bathe mother and child and check on their well-being, and in some cases, lived in the home to do the cooking and housework. For all of this, Mary received five dollars (if the family could afford to pay at all).

At home, Mary taught her children to pray—they gathered in a private room and took turns offering family prayer. They were taught to pay their tithing, to fast, and were strongly impressed with the truth of the gospel. She attended church regularly and worked in the Primary and Relief Society.

Although she stressed a healthy lifestyle and became known for her delicious whole-wheat bread, Mary developed cancer and slipped from this life on January 25, 1904, at the age of fifty-four, just a few weeks after delivering her last baby, her grandson, Carlos Stoffel Robinson.