

LIFE OF JOSEPHINE WHITAKER FOLSOM

Josephine Whitaker Folsom was born November 1, 1871, in Centerville, Utah. Her mother Elizabeth Mills Whitaker was among the early settlers of Utah, arriving with one of the pioneer trains of 1852. Her father Thomas William Whitaker was a contractor and builder, cabinet maker, violinist, and portrait painter. He spoke several languages among which was the language of the South Sea Islanders, where he fulfilled a mission. He was an ardent devotee of the gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. He had two wives and twenty-one children, maintaining two separate homes.

Josephine attended school at the village schoolhouse at Centerville, where all the classes were in one room and under one teacher. One of her teachers was the Hon. B. H. Roberts, Another was Prof, Mosiah Hall, now of the University of Utah. When eight, years old she won a prize for attending Sunday School every time for a year. The reward was a picture, which she keeps, in a scrapbook with other remembrances gathered through her life.

One day when Josephine was fourteen years of age, she was called with her brother John to a cafe in Salt Lake, where their father had had a fatal attack of what would now be diagnosed as appendicitis. They were the only witnesses to his death. The suffering, squalor, darkness in the back room of the cafe, left a mental picture that will remain with them always. This event was destined to change the course of their whole lives.

Josephine began earning her own living by sewing for fifty cents a day in her sister Mam's dressmaking shop. After a time she went to work for her elder sister Emily who was married and had two older children and some new-born twins. Here for two years she was brought face to face with the realities of life. At the end of this time she went to Ogden and helped in the home of Samuel Whitaker. Later she came to Salt Lake and attended the University of Utah which was situated where the West High School now stands.

Hugh B. Folsom, whom she later married, was also a student at the University at this same time. When Josephine returned home from school, a correspondence was started between them. After six years courtship, they were married. Josephine's mother gave each of her daughters a wedding dress and a wedding supper. Josephine and her sister Mama made her gown. It was of ivory satin, with leg-o-mutton sleeves, a bodice embroidered with pearls, high neck, and a long full skirt with two narrow ruffles on the bottom. She wore satin slippers with bows on the toes and low shaped heels. On the eve of her wedding day, she and Hugh set out for Salt Lake. Josephine spent the night with her friend, Addie Quigley Williams. John R. Winder married the couple June 21, 1894, in the Salt Lake Temple.

When they reached Centerville, after lunching in a cafe, preparations were well in hand. There was a long table set in the dining room. Forming the centerpiece was a wedding cake laid in tiers and decorated. Toward the end of the table were old-fashioned bouquets. There were huge platters of good things to eat: cold chicken, sandwiches, fruit and many other tempting foods. Many of the prominent villagers came to the wedding. The bridal couple received many generous gifts such as clocks, dishes, silverware and a cupboard. Many of there remembrances are still intact. One part of the evening's entertainment was a vocal duet, "The Blue Danube River" by the bridal couple.

A few days after, they filled her trousseau trunk with the household necessities of table and bed linen, towels and a rag carpet which Josephine had prepared for weaving, and her clothes. Her dresses were of such quality that they lasted her for years afterward. Hugh's folks in Salt Lake had a reception for their Salt Lake friends that evening.

Their first home was in North Salt Lake and was furnished with purchases from an auction sale. When Josephine was still a new bride of twenty-two years her neighbor asked her to come and dress her baby for burial. Though she had had no previous experience, she did not refuse. Her emotions were aroused to a point never again reached. A year later, before Ethleen was born, they moved into a yellow frame house nearby which they bought from a Mr. Neilson. About two years later they sold it and moved to Mr, Smith's house, at the turn of the mountain

on the Salt-Lake-Ogden highway, to occupy it in the owner's absence. Florence was born there. Their next move was across the river in the Jordan district, ..where Paul was born. Their life at this juncture was quiet and lonely with hardly any opportunity for social contact. Their few outings were visits to the folks in Centerville. In Josephine's spare time she took up piano lessons as a diversion.

They bought the double house at 266-268 Harvard Ave. and improved it, renting part. Hugh was asked to be on the Sunday School Stake board, and Josephine often accompanied him on his visits. Though Edna, Donald, and Juliet were born in the seven years they lived in this home, she began to assert her personality outside. She attended Sunday School taking all six children with her.

In 1907 they built the house on 9th South and Lincoln Streets and moved there In September. The following year Rhea was born. When the Emigration Ward was organized (the following year), Josephine was chosen the Young Ladies Mutual President, continuing in this office for 2 or 3 years. During this time Dorothy was born. For twelve years she and Ethel Wrathall decorated the meeting house for all the funeral services held in the ward.

Mrs. Folsom was appointed counselor to Sister Emily H. Higgs in the Liberty Stake Y.L.M.I.A. presidency continuing in this capacity for several years. Later she succeeded Mrs F. J. Pack in office. During her work in the stake, the Beehive Work was added. In August 1916 she chaperoned the young girls for three weeks at Liberty Glen. In the M.I.A. Jubilee Parade on June 10, 1925, were floats representing every stake in the church. Those from the Liberty Stake were among the best according to the Improvement Era. For this achievement she received a medal and letters of commendation from high authorities.

In 1922 she worked with the young ladies' presidents of the four city stakes and the priesthood committee as Chairman of the Mountain Home Committee, for building a Girls' Home in Brighton. This undertaking, involving \$30,000, required much good management and attention to details. She was on of the committee for one of the M.I.A. socials held at Saltair that was in the form of a dinner. Six thousand people were present, and the affair was credited a success. During her 19 years of service in the M.I.A. she never missed a weekly meeting, stake board, or committee meeting.

During the World War, from April 16, 1917, to November 1, 1918, she had charge of the third inspection of bandages in the Red Cross. She knit sweaters and stockings for the soldiers and performed a diligent work in the Liberty Loan Drive.

In the Daughters of Utah Pioneers she has been captain of the Emigration Camp for three successive terms, and worked as second Vice-President of the Salt Lake County. She was a member of the Committee to help erect the Cedar Post Memorial at the intersection of 6th East and 3rd South. She was instrumental in making the Emigration Camp History.

When they built their house at 1444 Harvard Avenue in 1927 and moved into Yale Ward, she entered another field of activity in becoming a Relief Society visiting teacher for three years.

All the time she was working in these various interests she still carried on the multiple duties required in the rearing of 8 children. All of them were married in the Temple, for she encouraged temple work, having embroidered many temple aprons for her children and friends. She now has 24 living grandchildren, having visited in Texas and California, helping to nurse

them.

Among her interests are: gardening, making quilts, remodeling clothes, making hook rugs, and art clay work. She has helped remodel eight homes and is living in Centerville. She has been a member of the Aurora Club, made up of the wives of the principals of the city schools, for twenty-odd years and has served on many committees.

A pleasing personality, charming manner, a wealth of humor, staid and gentle disposition, an inborn knack for managing well, a flair for economy, a generous spirit, a taste for bargains, a well of information on varied subjects, make her character and personality. At the present time she has a comely figure, soft fair skin, blue eyes, and brown hair turning gray, making a distinctive appearance. She carries herself with dignity and always dresses neatly and appropriately.

As the daughter of such a choice spirit, I feel honored to pay tribute to her and hope to pattern after her good example in making my life conform to her teachings.

by Rhea Folsom Smurthwaite
1936

During the first World War Josephine had charge of the Third Inspection of bandages made in the Red Cross, helped with knitting, and worked diligently on Liberty Loan drives.

In the 1444 Harvard home the family enjoyed landscaping and garden work and later at Centerville, where they lived 10 years in the remodeled Streeper home, more gardening and many choice new plants were raised. Fruit from peach and cherry orchards were marketed as a family summer project. Many friends and groups were entertained during the summers there.

In time all eight children were married (all in the Temple) and family gatherings celebrating birthdays and weddings were enjoyed, especially Xmas Eve, which became a tradition when carols were sung along with stories and programs and refreshments. Santa Claus with his bells and dances and gifts for everyone became a family legend.

In 1946 she was widowed. Three children — Juliet, Edna, and Rhea died in tragic accidents — a shock that has been hard to overcome.

In 1961 she had a 90th birthday celebration and KSL honored her with an interview. Congratulations were received from South America to Alaska, from Washington D.C. to California. She died at home in Salt Lake City on March 16, 1962.

--- Ethleen Folsom Hillam — 1961