



Harriet Amelia Folsom Young

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Died: 11 Dec 1910 - Salt Lake City, Utah

Pioneer: 3 October, 1860 arriving with the Joseph W. Young Company by ox cart

BIOGRAPHY: Harriet Amelia Folsom Young

BIRTH DATE: 23 Aug. 1838 - Buffalo, New York

DIED: 11 December, 1910 - Salt Lake City, Utah

PARENTS' FULL NAMES: William Harrison Folsom and Zerviah Eliza Clark

PIONEER: 3 October, 1860 in the Joseph W. Young Company by ox cart

FULL NAME OF SPOUSE: Brigham Young

WHEN AND WHERE MARRIED: 24 January, 1863 - Salt Lake City, Utah

HER ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Harriet Amelia Folsom inherited the beautiful and abundant light brown hair and hazel eyes of her grandmother, Hannah Skinner, the stature, poise, and good humor of her father, and the tenacity to endure from her mother. She was educated by her mother, Zerviah Eliza dark Folsom who was trained as a school teacher, who also taught Amelia how to read music and play the piano. She became an accomplished pianist. The first of seven children, this daughter experienced the role of second mother to her younger brothers and sisters. She assisted her mother in the struggle to conquer "three mischievous brothers," and you may imagine her delight with the arrival of a wee baby sister, Frances Emily. Many dainty articles were fashioned by Amelia's hands for the baby as well as for herself. Upon Arrival, Frances Emily was so tiny that the dainty clothing had to be laid aside and her bed, for some time was a shoe box!

Through the trials in Nauvoo Amelia witnessed angry mobs and difficult

times. Even at age eight she was a responsible "baby sitter" for several of the families. When mobs finally drove the remaining saints from Nauvoo leaving them without property or provision on the shores of the marshy river bottom at Montrose. Iowa, Amelia wandered about helping her family and others form an encampment. It was during this time that the Lord sent quail to sustain the people who were without clothing, bedding, and food. Coveys of quail flocked amid the people regularly during the twenty days and Amelia often told of catching the quail for her mother to cook.

In her teen years Harriet Amelia continued to blossom into a beautiful and faithful young woman. She seemed to have such natural abilities of leadership that friends came often to the family homes whether in Keokuk, Council Bluffs, or Salt Lake. Where ever they gathered she could organize and entertain.

While living in Council Bluffs another family's grand piano was offered for sale. Amelia's father, William Harrison Folsom, purchased it so that Amelia, her brother Burdette. and the rest could become more proficient This grand piano was brought with the family in one of the wagons when they finally crossed the plains in 1860.

After the Folsoms arrived in Salt Lake they were introduced to the local leaders. One evening in the early spring of 1861 Mr. Folsom. his wife Eliza, Amelia, and Hyrum were all invited to attend a performance in the Bowing Theater. Here they were entertained along with the families of Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball. Amelia became the piano teacher for some of President Young's children.

She married Brigham Young on January 24.1863 and went to reside in his home. Just seven months after her marriage, Amelia's mother Eliza, still a young woman of 44, died following the lingering effects of a difficult and unhappy confinement. The two little sisters of Amelia, Frances and Louise, were sent to live with their older sister. Hyrum, at twenty-two was soon to leave on a mission to Great Britain. Burdette and Hinman, assisted their father in his work as church architect and contractor.

Amelia was not blessed with children of her own but she was a second mother to many. Without complaint she quickly fit into her husband's large family filling the position of confidant to many in the closely knit home. She was a well liked and accomplished woman who assisted her husband in his official capacities as Prophet and Territorial Governor acting as hostess when asked. She often accompanied President Young as he traveled throughout the territory.

Living in St. George with the prophet in the Brigham Young Home, she filled their home again with music. She carefully organized the household pantry and made curtains and other furnishings for the home. During what proved to be their last visit there, the lower floors of the St. George Temple were completed and President Young spent much of his time explaining the rites and ceremonies of the temple, as this was to be the first temple in Utah to use them. Saints from all parts of the territory assembles in order to

participate. Many of the visitors enjoyed the capable direction of Amelia as they collected and recorded names in a systematic way according to the procedure at that time, with men on one list, women on another.

In Salt Lake President Young was concerned because neither the city nor the church had an official residence in which to entertain dignitaries coming into the territory. President Young decided to remedy this situation. He appointed a committee to purchase a plot of ground on which to erect a suitable building. The committee chose the lot located at the southeast corner of State Street and South Temple just across from the Lion house. At the time of the purchase, "Grandma Handle" and her family were occupying a home on the lot. Books and pamphlets invariably print a picture of the building accompanied by the erroneous caption of "Amelia's Palace." President Young paid \$80,000. for the home although he never lived there because the building was not completed during President Young's lifetime. Following his death, August 29, 1877, Mother Young (Mary Ann Angell) and Harriet Amelia Folsom Young moved into part of the unfinished rooms of what was called the Gardo House. Christine Gyllenskog accompanied them. According to her personal testimony, Amelia lived in two rooms until her home on the corner of South Temple and First West was completed in 1879. The rest of the Gardo House was taken over by the next President of the church, John Taylor.

The death of President Young brought complications and worries to the Folsom family. It is true that the President intended to make a home for his wife, Amelia, in the Gardo House when it was completed. But he had not made arrangements before his passing. Amelia received an equal share with the other wives, giving her the necessary funds for maintaining a home and supplying food and clothing.

It was her wish to remain near her father's family; consequently her father gave her the corner lot of his estate on which a home was built according to her needs and with her wishes. This home was the place of many family parties. Amelia made her way often through the lot to visit her father, suffering from arthritis, and other members of the family.

Shortly before President Young's death in 1877, he decided to erect an official residence where he could entertain distinguished visitors. Amelia planned the structure, which was quite a natural thing for her to do, for all her life she had been associated with people who specialized in this type of thing, particularly her father. The family understood that Amelia would live there and assume the responsibilities of all the social affairs. President Young died before it was finished and Amelia lived in two rooms of the unfinished house until November, 1879 when she moved into another home she had designed and had built on her father's estate. (#6 South 1st West)

Having no children of her own, she was particularly kind and thoughtful of the children of the Folsom family. Nieces and nephews and cousins remember hospitality and

fun in her beautiful, spacious home. She gave freely of her worldly possessions to those in need, yet she could set an elegant table and entertain royalty. She came by her regal ways honestly, for her proven pedigree shows much of the nobility of mother countries--governors, statesmen, magistrates, teachers and scientists, all had a hand.

Mrs. Emmeline B. Wells, a life-long associate and friend said of her: "Mrs. Young was fondly attached to her home and took great pleasure in beautifying the grounds, cultivating flowers and vines and keeping her lawn fresh and green as well as the interior of her house. She had a number of unique and valuable ornaments, collected while abroad also gifts of friends and visitors ... While not a public woman, yet she was very popular in society and much admired and sought after. The history of her family is very interesting, and her own life, from a very young girl is replete with romantic incidents; but she was reticent about herself. Perhaps one of the causes of her popularity was her queenly appearance and striking personality. She sang and played well the old time songs and was a splendid musician and a very fine partner in a ball room. She always dressed in excellent taste. She was a graceful, charming woman and possessed many of the characteristics of true womanhood."

Amelia was very fond of travel and visited almost every city and town of Utah and southern Idaho in company with President Young. She also traveled extensively in the Eastern states, California and in Great Britain, making friends wherever she went.

Amelia suffered from what is known as "creeping paralysis" for about 3 years. Being in a more or less helpless condition was a severe trial to her because she was deprived of the pleasure of entertaining friends and of the delights of out door life. She died 11 Dec. 1910, age 72 and is buried in the Brigham Young family plot in the "Salt Lake City Cemetery.

Two tributes given at her funeral by loved ones give us an insight as to her character and personality: Richard W. Young said: "President Young's health was enfeebled on account of an onerous life and he needed great care. Aunt Amelia came into the family when he was sixty years of age. She was a natural nurse and performed the duties expected of her in a most praise worthy manner. He found in her a perfect companion as she had the capacity and the mentality to grasp the trials and problems of the day. From these incidents came the report that Amelia was President Young's favorite wife. He looked with some anxiety upon her appearance. As the years grew on however the family learned to love her. She was just and fair and I can truthfully say that she had

the love of every member of the family. Amelia was truly a magnetic and queenly personality and of superior intelligence. She was capable of meeting any man or woman on earth on an equal footing. She had the advantage of excellent home training."

She was tall and queenly in appearance and of fair complexion. In the Brigham Young room of the pioneer Memorial Museum hangs a beautifully tinted likeness of her. There is also a case in which are displayed some of her personal belongings. Among these articles are five lovely shawls, collars of intricate lace and bead work, elegant fans and other accessories. Several dresses which belonged to her are on display notably a light blue taffeta trimmed with cream colored lace which was worn by her at the Inaugural Ball honoring President Ulysses S. Grant in 1869. The dress contains 16 yards of silk bought in France and 125 yards of lace. Another lovely dress is two-piece black silk brocade with pink silk lining trimmed with black beads. The silk was manufactured in Utah.

A copy of the letter Amelia wrote to her brother, Hyrum and his wife, Annie Lenzi Folsom, in January 1890, when they lost four children during the Diphtheria epidemic shows she carried a burden about not being able to have any children. There is also a family story about her romance with a young man, who was sent on a mission in order to break up the courtship, for some reason, and it was while he was gone that she married Brigham Young, who was a close friend of her father's. I can't remember who told this story, but it seems it was Grandma Folsom of Mama, and I can't say if is true or not. Uncle Dee tells of delightful times at Aunt Amelia's and she was so good to them as children, even giving him and Uncle Ralph an old surrey "that she had replaced with a new one and they painted it dark green".

(Personal note*I have always felt a close kinship with my mother's great Aunt Amelia. Perhaps because she bore no children of her own, I believe we descendant cousins of the Folsom family are responsible for her continued legacy and memory. Diane Wheeler)

The children were privileged to roam at will throughout the lovely home of their "Aunt Amelia." On the never-to-be-forgotten occasion of her father's eighty-fifth birthday Amelia assembled family members and friends to celebrate the event. After ice cream and cookies were served, the program was presented, and "noses were counted", it was learned that there were eighty-five people present. It had been Amelia's privilege to favor her father with this happy time. He passed away not many months afterward on March 20,1901.

For the remaining years of her life Harriet Amelia Folsom Young continued to serve

her family and friends always remaining a beacon to others and a "yardstick" for which they might measure their growth. Her name has been maligned and memory ridiculed in anti-Mormon literature suggesting that the Gardo House, intended for church use, was a brothel. Thus it was dubbed "the Amelia harem" or "Amelia's Palace." Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Submitted by Diane S. Wheeler, Bountiful, Utah