

Anna Maria Hall (1868-1951)

Original compiled & written by Maria Litchfield Watson, Cardston, Alberta
Transcribed by Faye West, Edmonton, Alberta, August 2013

T'was Christmas Eve, December 24, 1867¹; the life of one lovely Anna Maria was drawing to its close. She had lived it well and in her life heard the voice of the master, recognized it, and given all to heed his call and gather with his elect to the land of promise. She had accomplished her share of the great burden of laying the foundation of His church, and was leaving a great heritage to her posterity. Being the mother of only one living child, also named Anna Maria, her one regret at leaving at this time was that she would be deprived of looking into the face of her first grandchild. This day she had long anticipated with a longing heart, but the night drew near and she closed her eyes in a glorious rest, to open them in another sphere.

Christmas passed, the new year dawned, and the 6th day of the new year arrived, welcoming into the world another Anna Maria, the blessed grandchild to give comfort to her mother's aching heart, and to receive the great birthright blessings that were to be hers as a covenant child.

T'was the year 1868 at Manti, Utah (Sanpete Valley). Her parents were Anna Maria Singleton and Richard Hall. Their young hearts rejoiced as they beheld their first born child. How they loved her and cared for her day after day, year after year, nursing her through trials and illnesses. They were good parents and though living in humble circumstances, lasting the hardships incident to the early days of church and country growth. They were both children of those who had been gathered out from the nations of the world at the sound of the master's call to pioneer a new religion and country. Therefore, life to little Anna Maria was such as to strengthen her character and fit her for the great mission ahead of her.

BLESSING: When she was a few weeks old she was taken to the Elders of our church and received a name and a blessing given by Elder A.J. Moffat in Manti. She was given the name of Anna Maria after her mother, her grandmother, and her great-grandmother.²

BAPTISM: When she was ten years of age, she, her sister Rebecca Letitia, and her cousin Sadie were baptized in the warm spring, just south of the town of Manti, by Elder Christenson on October 3, 1878. After the baptismal services were over, the little company rode to the meeting house in the town and the three girls were confirmed members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints by Elder F.H. Folsom. Here they received the Spirit of the Holy Ghost, to be their guide and comforter through life.

SCHOOLING: In these days of pioneer life, schooling was not always available, but Anna Maria attended a primary school along with her two sisters, Letitia and Lavina. They attended for a number of

¹ Other reports say she died December 23, 1867

² Her great-grandmother was Anne Hunter, not Anna Maria

“Readers” or “Grades” for some years. The greater part of their learning was gained from the great university of life’s experience.

CHILDHOOD: Little Anna Maria’s childhood was much the same as other children of that day – very happy. Her parents were happy and close and this was a good influence on the children. Their days consisted of duties of life and hours of play and learning. The evenings were home evenings. There was the comfortable fireplace, the light of burning logs mingling with the light of tallow candles. It was a homey place, father with his hand crafts and mother with her favorite books, reading to him before the fireplace. Apples from the cellar, molasses candy, and corn popping from the skillet made these evenings of childhood never to be forgotten.

It was during these hours the wide-eyed children listened with interest to the stories of father as he crossed the plains many times freighting, carrying food to those crossing the plains to the valley. And also mother’s stories of her early days and trouble with the Indians. Pioneer days were not only days of joy, but of hard work. The young were obliged to help their parents. There was washing to do by hand and little full skirted dresses to be starched very stiff in warm then cold starch and then ironed to make little girls look prim and pretty. Home-made stockings to knit, shoes to make, quilts to make with each tiny neat block sewn by hand. Rugs to make for the floors, scrubbing to be done on the bare floor with brush and sand, and all the many tasks to be done with everyday life.

There were special times too, Christmas in the home when mother made cookies and candy and little gifts, also when little stockings were hung waiting for surprises, hardtack, popcorn, and apples and then room prepared to receive other gifts in remembrance of the Savior’s birth. New stockings were knit, new shoes made with little buttons up the front, brass or maybe a china tea set or a favorite story book or a doll. Dolls weren’t very plentiful. Next to Christmas was Easter, another looked-for holiday. This occasion called for lunches and pretty colored eggs and a rock dolly (rock in a blanket), and then they were off over the hills for a hike. There were also visits to neighbors and friends and especially visits to grandma’s house. There were trips with father which were so much fun. One day they went to Wales, 20-30 miles away and saw coal burning for the first time and saw a real train that used logs for fuel.

There were birthday parties too when all the little girl friends in their best clean starched dresses came. Father and mother’s parties were fun too. Their home was open always to anyone who wanted to come in, as father especially loved company. As they grew older, the children had their own circle of friends, known as “our bunch”, and they always enjoyed themselves. Both children and parents gathered together for New Years.

In summer, picnics at the resort, also buggy rides, singing parties and dances (at dances they always had intermission and lunches). They were also thrilled the day they went to the canyons and mountains with father. In the winter father often came home with his sleigh piled high with deer to be prepared and stored for winter meat. Other days he would start out at sunrise and the children would watch until he came home at night with a load of “pitch pine” for winter fuel. One time father met with a bad accident. He was up in Thistle Canyon when a large rock fell and pinned him down. He held it up with his hands until help came so he would not be crushed. He was hurt and ill for a year.

When Maria was 9 years old, word came to their community that the first house of the Lord in the valley was to be dedicated, the St George temple. The folks were permitted to do the work for their departed

loved ones. That same year a site was dedicated in their own home town for another temple (Manti). Everyone was present at this time at the dedicated spot and it was a thrill when President Young stepped over to father and borrowed his shovel to dig the first shovelful of dirt. This shovel was very popular from then on and everyone wanted to buy it for a keepsake, but of course father wanted to keep it. However, later it was stolen.

Those ten years erecting the temple were exciting. Father, as well as grandfather Hall, worked on it. They were stonemasons by trade, but did their share of all the labour, digging, quarrying rock, etc. The rock was secured right from the hill that was dedicated for the spot. Father worked all the time he could spare and at noon mother would pack a lunch and accompany the girls to take it to him.

These little girls had played on this very hill and now watched a beautiful white temple rise day after day and were allowed to play on the floors of the unfinished rooms. During the ten years, their home was always open and available to workers coming in from other districts. There was a group of young men from Salt Lake who often came at father's request and they would gather and have a wonderful time together. They would sit on the banks of the creek which ran through the front yard, or on the little footbridge, or in the house, singing and having a good old-fashioned evening.

When the temple was being finished, artists or finishers came and one of these was a boy Maria went with for some time, Fred Newton. They broke up shortly and she went with another of these boys, a carpenter who worked with his father at the temple. He was Ern Cox. He fell in love with Maria and she thought she shared his feelings and they became engaged to be married. These were now especially wonderful days, full of parties and carriage rides and dances and all the activities of the day. With this fun went work. These girls had to work hard and this was done without any of the modern conveniences. Board floors were scrubbed with sand to whiten the boards. Water was carried by hand and also washings and ironings done. The clothes were knit, sewn, and decorated by hand. In these days of pioneering, no machines were available to lighten their tasks.

When Maria was 15 years old, she went to work to help support herself and worked for 75¢ a week. She worked for six months and then took a holiday. She went to Salt Lake to visit a second cousin, Joseph Hall and family. That same year, the Garfield bathing resort was opened. The visit was nice and Maria returned home with a desire in her heart to return. Shortly afterwards, Aunt Susan Young (wife of President Young) came to Manti to work in the temple. She enquired around to find a girl to work for her and Maria was recommended. She was thrilled and prepared to return home with Mrs Young, but her father took ill and she had to stay at home to help. Her sister Let went instead. Mrs Joseph Hall was to have a child soon after this and Maria went to work for her. After she was well, Maria went to work for Hyrum B Clawsen and his family. One day she was walking down the street to their home when she saw a buggy with a couple in it. They stopped in front of a house and called to a lady, Mrs June Wells, and asked if she knew where they could get a hired girl. Maria stepped up and asked for the job. She was told to go to the Lion house, which she did, and was readily recognized by Aunt Susan as the girl she formerly had hired. Here she worked for seven years until she left to get married. Aunt Susan was so kind to her and when she left, Aunt Susan gave her a pair of silver lamps for her wedding gift. A few days later, Maria was grieved to hear of her death.

To go back a ways, Maria had seen, as a little girl, the first shovelful of dirt dug by President Young, had played over the Manti temple hills, and romped through the unfinished temple during the time it was

being erected, and had seen the work of her father year after year as he was helping to build the House of the Lord. She had seen the cornerstone laid, the capstone placed, the keepsakes placed in the cornerstone work, and the structure rise to completion. When the day came, May 21, 1888, Maria was 20 years old and she and her two sisters received a recommendation and an invitation to attend the dedicatory services. These personal cards of recommendation to the temple, signed by a prophet of God, Wilford Woodruff, were kept for keepsakes. She attended all services of the dedication and heard the inspiring dedicatory prayer offered by Elder Lorenzo Snow of the Council of the Twelve. She heard John Taylor talk and saw the halo surround him as he did so. She sang in the well known Manti choir at these services and was one of the privileged who were waiting for the session to begin and heard the voices of a Heavenly choir sing their glorious refrain. She heard the testimony of many of the people attending these services and the faith-promoting stories of some who had seen our early church leaders, some of whom were at these services. What a glorious privilege.

Her family's home was again open to those who came to the dedication. There was such a houseful (beds everywhere) that even the barn was turned into sleeping quarters. It meant work, for the full responsibility fell on the family. Maria's mother was so busy caring for her company that she was unable to attend to them. It was here in this temple that she was to receive her temple endowments and here be sealed to her husband and children that their life might continue through eternity in its loveliest relationship and the covenant of the Father to be carried down to her posterity.

During the seven years that she worked in Salt lake, Maria decided that Ern was not the man she wanted to marry. Ern was a temperous young man and when she handed him his ring, he threw it back at her with accompanying remarks. She later gave it to her sister Letitia who much later gave it to Maria's daughter Letitia who still has it.

Here in Salt Lake, she met and married Ed Price. Previous to her marriage she had worked for many years and bought herself a lovely wardrobe of clothes that were the envy of many. This was perhaps the last time she was to have a lot of pretty things, for from here on her life was a fiery furnace to test and try her.

On November 21, 1892, she married Ed, Eather Edwin Price, at the home of her parents in Manti. It was a comfortable home with three rooms downstairs and two rooms up. It was lovely with decorations and flowers her sister Letitia had gathered from the snow covered beds outside. Good food prepared, a beautiful wedding cake decorated, and the house full of loved ones and friends. Her wedding dress was the pride of her lovely wardrobe, from beautiful material, floor length, and the color of ashes of roses. She was a beautiful bride.

Her friends gave her a bride's shower and she received many lovely gifts to start her home with. She and Ed first lived with his mother in Salt Lake, on Vine Street. Here her friends from the city also gave her a shower. The night of the shower however was stormy and not too many guests arrived. She later wrote her mother stating "the snow was knee deep and not stretching it a bit and I received a water set from the Erickson girls. Mrs Howarth sent a cute photo, San and Clare brought a pair of vases two sizes larger than those Aunt Sarah brought. Another family sent two solid silver spoons and sugar and pitcher lined with solid gold which were very nice. Another sent a rocking chair which matched the furniture. Mrs Allen brought a nice rug. A little girl brought a decanter with glasses to match. A young man brought a carving set. Cousins didn't get out so delivered a lovely china berry bowl and celery dish on

Sunday." Maria was happy. Ed had worked in the shoe store (factory of the ZCMI) since he was a child and was still in their employment. Into a cozy home, eleven months later, a lovely baby son was welcomed and named Edwin Hall after his father and his mother's maiden name.

While living at Ed's mother's home in Salt Lake, the Salt Lake temple was completed after many years of labor and sacrifice by the people. Maria's family came from Manti and stayed with them and were privileged to attend and sing with the Manti choir at three sessions of the dedications.

Ed and Maria felt the need of larger quarters, so they moved to a place of their own on Current Street. It was here they were blessed with another son, Henry. Eighteen months later, another son, Reece, was born and brightened their home again. But their joy was short lived because little Reece took ill at seven months with spinal meningitis and passed away leaving a heartache that only time could partially heal. About this time, Ed took ill and Maria was expecting another baby. With not being well, the shock of losing her baby was more than Maria could bear. She would dream of her baby, then waken and go to nurse him and find he wasn't there. One evening she dreamed of her baby, wakened, and walked into the other room to feed him. There she saw three women sitting in the centre of her room, one woman, her grandmother, was holding her baby. Maria knew then that this had been shown to her to comfort her and she ceased to worry about her child.

Life became a little more rugged but they still had a few fishing trips into the mountains though there weren't too many pleasures in life now. Ed was becoming unable to work, necessities were becoming short, and one day, on her mother's birthday, her father came for her and took her and the children home with him to enjoy the birthday party. On finding his little grandchildren so needy, he bought Ed a new pair of shoes as he was almost barefoot, along with many other necessities.

Ed continued to become worse. She moved him and her family to Manti with her folks. Her family were in straightened circumstances, her father had been ill for a year so they too were short of luxuries but took them in and managed with kind and loving hearts. Ed was now bed-ridden. Maria's little daughter Letitia was born to them there. Maria took ill in one room and Ed in another. When she was well again she felt it was best to return to his mother's as Ed was steadily getting worse. She took Ed, her oldest son, Eddie, and the baby, Letitia, with her leaving Henry with her parents. When the baby was 5 ½ months old, Ed died of lung trouble contracted from working for twenty years in the dusty dark factory.

Alone and broken hearted after burying Ed in Salt Lake, Maria's father took them home with him. Now she faced the responsibility of raising her children alone. She had other worries. Ed had promised to take her to the temple, but time had passed and it was neglected. Finally realizing that life was slipping from him, he was sorrowful and asked Maria if she would have herself and the babies sealed to him after he was gone. On November 30, 1898, she went to the Manti temple and with her father acting as proxy for Ed, had her husband and children sealed to her for time and eternity. Now she must face the reality of her position; she must support her family. She took a job working for Harry Felt and wife running a restaurant and dance hall. Here she served ice cream, hot tamales, and hot meat pies for two years. Her parents by now had decided to move to Canada. She could not be separated from them, so she took her little family and moved with them. They arrived in Stirling, NWT (now Alberta) in November 1901 and settled in Magrath. It was difficult for a widowed mother to make a living in so new a community and the following October she went to Lethbridge to work. It was 30 miles away and they travelled by horse and wagon, so she was separated from her children much of the time. She worked at

the Arlington Hotel and later at the Galt Hospital. After a time she tired of being away from her children and so returned home. She found work closer to home at Spring Coulee on the Murphy ranch to the west of the town and later worked for the Spring Coulee depot. Soon she gave this up as not what she wanted to do and returned home to take a position as a dressmaker for Mrs Vince Helt. She soon found this did not take care of her needs, so she finally opened up an ice cream parlor which also sold hot tamales for which she was well known all her life. This she ran until Letitia was 12. In 1906, in order to better her life, she bought a homestead in Taber district. Here she met a widower, Orson Hall, who was left with seven children.

Maria had moved her family into the back two rooms of the restaurant and served meals in the large front one. She and Orson were married in her home by Bishop Levi Harker. She was wearing a light gray dress and just the family was present. She moved her belongings into his home down on the Pothole Creek and later to his land at Purple Springs. For years they lived at the farm in summer and Magrath in winter. Later they got a small home in Taber.

Sixteen months after her marriage she was blessed with her second daughter, Anna Dean. Thirteen months after that, a son, Richard Mark was born. Eleven months later, Mark was taken ill suddenly of pneumonia and died. Maria's heart was once again broken for she loved her beautiful brown-eyed baby and the longing for this child was again more than she could bear. She was again expecting another baby. The memory of his baby face was constantly before her to such an extent that Heavenly Father again gave her comfort to ease her aching heart. As she was pining one day, she saw a man holding her baby. The man was a stranger, but she was satisfied that her baby was all right. Three months later, on the first day of June, she received her third daughter, June. The loneliness was now eased in her love for this last baby.

Life in those pioneer days was difficult with years of hard work and the trials of three families. Her husband's oldest daughter, Mary, took ill and died, leaving six children motherless. Maria received credit for raising them. She had her land and his and a large herd of mild cows, she raised large gardens, always planting her potatoes by the light of the moon (an old superstition). She was able to raise her large family and fill her mission on this earth, but it entailed hard work, heart aches, and trials. She taught them the teachings and principles of the gospel and always remained true to them herself. She had the joy of seeing Eddie, her oldest son, full an honorable mission in the southern states and the worry of her second son overseas fighting for four years in the first war.

There were always worries and now one more was added. Her husband was urgent in his request that she be sealed to him instead of the young man who had failed to do his temple work in life. Maria was torn between two loyalties and not knowing the answer grieved much. Lying in her bed one night, worrying to which she owed her loyalty, suddenly before her stood the husband of her youth, Ed. He called her by name and told her not to worry as everything would be all right. Again Maria was blessed with peace of mind and comfort that all was well and ceased to worry.

Life went on for Maria. The older children married, the younger ones grown, she and her husband needed a rest from their long years of trials. They took a trip to California to visit his children there. They were having a wonderful time at Oakland when suddenly her husband took a stroke and was very ill. As soon as possible, they returned to their home in Taber. He became worse until he was practically paralyzed, unable to walk or talk or care for himself. For fifteen months he lingered and Maria faithfully

carried on the burden of caring for an ailing husband and her children. There was the full responsibility of caring for the home, the outdoor work, caring for chickens, cows, garden, etc.

In the spring of 1929 he died. At his death she found he had left a will deeding all his land to his own sons, depending on them to care for her. One of the sons, Ab, was kind and cared for her needs, but once more fate stepped in and Ab died suddenly from an accident – while siphoning gas, he got some in his lungs. He left a wife, Myrtle, and a large family (9 or 10). Maria's means of support were once again withdrawn and she struggled on through her trial, loneliness and work until her two youngest were raised. For her living she had what she could get off her own small piece of land, but as she was unable to work it, he sold it only receiving the first payment and her land was gone. (Sold land to a Mr Moore.) Then she had only her hands, garden, cows, and chickens. This didn't afford her any luxuries nor all the necessities. Her life was fraught with trials and worries. When her two youngest were grown and married and in their own homes, she left the loneliness of hers and went to live with her children, always intending to go back some day. She spent a few days with one and then the other. Then the day came when the thought of going back was dearest to her. Her daughter Dean and family, in her absence, had moved into her home and an accidental fire broke out and demolished it, burning all her belongings as well as her daughter's things and leaving her with no earthly wealth outside of her children and what she had in her suitcase. Consequently, she kept living between Raymond, Taber, Nelson, and Victoria, BC.

Maria had tasted of the bitterness of life, she also had many blessings and her testimony was strengthened.

Going back to when the first World War broke out, her son Henry and six pals joined. It was a source of constant worry. But Brother Samuel Layton in Taber gave these boys a blessing and promised them that if they lived their religion they would all come back. One boy, Leslie Biglow, was taken prisoner for several years. Whenever possible, the boys would get together and hold meetings, have sacrament, pay their tithing faithfully. Henry always sent tithing home to his mother to pay for him. They all returned. These boys were: Leslie Biglow, Eles Haynes, Hershel Van Orman, Lee McCumber, Archibald F Bennett, Lowell Duncombe, and Henry Price.

Maria worried much over temple work and genealogy but never had a chance to do much herself. Many times she was urged to do this work. Many times she saw a circle of women dressed in white, waiting (she knew for temple work). Once in a sacrament meeting, a woman in white walked up the aisle and stood in front of her. The woman said nothing but Maria knew she wanted temple work done. Many times she gave Maria of her small income and urged her to work on their genealogy that was so urgent to be done.

Other memories included the following: she had the privilege of shaking hands with every president of our church with the exception of Joseph Smith (up to the one in position before she died). She lived under the reign of four monarchs. She saw the cap stone of the Salt Lake temple laid, climbed to the top of the tall spire and dropped the coin in the ball of the foot of the angel Moroni. She made her advent into mortality very early in the church's history and saw the country and the church grow, saw eight temples erected to the Lord, saw modern inventions, knowledge, and achievements sweep the land, and many of the prophecies of old fulfilled. She saw her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren born into the world and the church and try to live up to the heritage she had passed

on to them. She also saw them going on missions to preach the gospel to the honest in heart wherever they were found. She also saw many of her children go to the temple and she must have rejoiced greatly in her heart. Maria, though tasting so often of trials and suffering, remained true and faithful. She had a pleasing disposition, seldom showed real anger or spoke of her disappointments in life. She had a lovely character, and though she did not have wealth, she gave her all for her family. She often felt sad and lonely and said that for years she had felt the presence of her mother and knew she was near. Her father passed away due to a fall from his wagon three and a half years (in June of 1905) after arriving in Canada. Her mother passed away much later on, in 1936.

At eighty years of age she was still very spry and lovely. Knitting and crocheting were her hobbies and she made many and varied articles for her children and grandchildren. She had little real sickness and was mostly always up and around. She was, at the last, at Eddie's home when she took ill of old age. After two weeks of failing, the doctor gave her twenty-four hours to live. Her children had been at her bedside for three weeks caring for her. Henry was notified and came. At 1:00 pm, March 28, 1951, she passed away. She talked much in her last hours on earth and wanted badly to go to the temple again before she died. She kept seeing her mother and others of her family. She called her babies a time or two and having lost two, was sure that they were there. Finally her time was up and she was able to join those of her loved ones who had waited for her so long.

Her casket was a beautiful deep rose lined with very pale pink shirred silk. Many lovely flowers were there. Among them was a beautiful mauve orchid which lay on her breast. Her funeral was conducted in the Taber LDS chapel and she was buried in Taber. She had planned her own service and songs. According to her wishes, Robert Litchfield sang a solo, also Hall Poulson.

She was 83 years old and left to carry on, five of her own children, 25 grandchildren, and 25 great-grandchildren who dearly love and respect her memory and hope one day to meet her again when their life's journey is through. I pray our Father may reward her according to her works and desires and recognize her as one of His most noble daughters; this is my prayer for my grandmother.