

Anna Maria Johnston Lowry 1815 – 1867

Transcribed, and footnoted, by Faye West, April 2013, from a document written by Barbara Burbank Kenny

Anna Maria Johnston was born in Dublin, Ireland on Sep 7, 1815. Her father was Alexander Johnston and her mother was Ann Hunter. Ann was born in Scotland to Abram Hunter and Janet Wallace near Greenock, Ayershire.

The family seemed to move from Scotland to England to Ireland, as Alexander was in the British military. In 1802 they were living in Hampshire, England where their first son was born. The next three children were born in Dublin, Ireland.

Anna Maria was the fourth child. She was well educated having learned several languages and played the piano. Her family ended up living near London, England. We don't know too much about her life there until she married William Williams or William Singleton. We are still researching this. On July 8, 1847 her daughter was born in Kentishtown, a suburb of London, England. She was also named Anna Maria after her mother.

When little Anna Maria, called Annie, was two years old she became very ill. At this time Anna Maria was living with her mother's family as her father Alexander had passed away sometime earlier. This family was a wealthy, haughty family. The doctor advised Anna Maria to take her little child to the seashore, away from the polluted air of London. Here the air would be fresher. Along the way she stopped at a place in the country to find a room for the night. She asked for a room at the hotel but it was filled. They directed her to go to a mission home not too far away. The lady of the house said she had no vacant rooms, as they also were filled. But her daughter seeing the sick baby asked if she could give Anna Maria her own room, saying she would use the room of her brother who was away at this time. Her mother consented and Anna Maria and her little Annie were taken thru a room where the Latter Day Saint Elders were having a meeting.

After they had closed the door to the room one of the Elders said "That child shall be healed and shall go to Utah and there become a mother in Israel." Now when the mother and baby were settled, the lady of the house asked if she might take the baby into the room of the meeting that the elders might bless her that she might be healed. Anna Maria gave her consent and the baby was taken to the Elders. They administered to her. As they finished little Annie left the arms of the lady, walked back to her Mother and asked for something to eat.

Anna Maria was overjoyed. She made further investigation into the beliefs of these men. She soon became a convert to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, knowing she had found the true church. She was converted thru the instrumentality of Orson Hyde and was baptized on Jun 11, 1849 by Thomas Marguetts, at the age of 36¹ just outside London.

Thrilled at what she had found she sent word to her family, but they did not share her joy. Upon finding that she had joined the Mormons, they were very angry and sent a brother to her to get her to come home and leave these despised people. When she refused to leave her new found friends she became

¹ On Jun 11, 1849, Anna Maria would have been 33 years old.

an out-cast from her own. They sent her her clothing, some money and a few belongings and she was alone with her baby and her new faith, never to return home or see any of them again.

On Oct 29, 1849 she left Watford and started for America to gather with the Saints. We think she sailed from Liverpool. Thus was she guided and thus she did go to fulfill the mission in her life and help build up Zion. They crossed the ocean and made their way across the wilderness enduring many hardships along the way. They crossed the plains in an independent wagon train with all their possessions packed in a wagon of one of the drivers. Later this man slipped away during the night taking all they possessed and left Anna Maria and her daughter with nothing. This was a great hardship for Anna Maria as she had lived in luxury and never done menial work. But her faith got her thru to the Salt Lake Valley.

She went to the home of her beloved missionary Orson Hyde and stopped there for a time. She brought with her a letter of recommendation and an introduction. She was living in the Salt Lake second ward and John Lowry was the Bishop at this time. John Lowry was sent by Brigham Young to the new settlement of Manti to be the Bishop of Sanpete Co. He was born in Springfield, Tennessee and had early joined the church. He married Susan Grooms and had two children. She died in 1823 and he married Mary Wilcox and had 11 more children. He crossed the plains arriving in the Valley in Sep 1847.

Anna Maria was asked to go to Manti to become the first school teacher there. She married John Lowry on Sunday, Feb 13, 1853. They were married by Isaac Morley and later sealed in the endowment house in Salt Lake City. Anna Maria and John had one child, a son who died shortly after birth and also adopted a young Indian girl as a sister to Annie. The two girls were raised together. The Indians had captured some girls from an enemy and wished to trade them for things they needed. John took both girls and gave one to Mary his first wife and the other to Anna Maria.

Anna Maria taught school with no books or papers. They obtained slate from the mountains and this was the children's notebooks. She also taught piano lessons.

The times were filled with sacrifices in the early pioneering community, with hard work and many Indian problems. There were continual fears from the Indians and their raids. The squaws and children would always be around their yards begging, and the people would give them whatever they wanted to get them to leave. One time when the Indians attacked the town of Manti, they crawled along the pole fence that surrounded the town for protection and set fire to it. Annie and Julie also crawled, but up to the hayloft and remained hidden until the trouble was over. A fort was then built and the people lived inside the fort until the Indian War was over. Many were the terrors they went thru at this time fearing for their lives. They didn't dare have lights on at night. Food was scarce and they had to eat many greens they could go out and pick in the fields.

Anna Maria worked hard helping to glean from the fields, keep up a home and teach school as well.

At an especially tense time with the Indians in 1865. The Indians had stolen cattle because they were starving. They came and met with some of the men from Manti. A young chief named Yene-Wood could not be pacified and kept talking and making demonstrations trying to persuade the other Indians against making peace. John Lowry was an interpreter and leading spokesperson on the people's side. So John, who was said to be under the influence of liquor, demanded Chief Yene-Woods to keep quiet and let others talk. Someone shouted "Look out he's getting his arrows". Whereupon Lowry stepped up,

caught hold of the Indian and pulled him off his horse, and was about to abuse him in some way when some of the bystanders interfered. An Indian mounted his horse and rode out to the Indian camp and riders were sent to the other camps. This was the beginning of the Black Hawk War.

Anna Maria's daughter Annie grew up and at nineteen married Richard Hall. Annie was expecting her first child when Anna Maria died on Dec 23, 1867 two² weeks before the baby was born. Her husband John Lowry had passed away in Jan 1867.

She is a great example to her posterity of faith and fortitude. Giving up a life of luxury for the heartaches and trials of pioneer life because she had a testimony of the true church restored in these latter days.

² Maria Hall was born on Jan 6, 1868, two weeks after Anna Maria's death