

ELIZABETH JANE COWLEY DUTSON

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In the early 1800's on the isle of Man lived the family of Matthias Cowley and Ann Quayle. They lived on a little farm just four miles from Peel. They cultivated two well-kept farms, one of which they owned and the other they rented. It was on one of these farms in the Cowley's modest home that Elizabeth Jane was born. The Cowley's had six children born here:

Ann born September 18, 1825
John Matthias christened August 16, 1827
Elizabeth Jane born December 2, 1829ⁱ
Catherine Mary christened February 2, 1834
William Edward christened August 2, 1836
Eleanor Margaret christened August 23, 1840

The Isle of Man is a beautiful little Island in the Irish Sea, halfway between Ireland and England. It is 33 miles long and 10 miles wide. A low mountain chain runs the length of the island. Its coast in many places is rocky and picturesque. This Isle has verdant hills, wooded glens and grassy meadows and presents a lovely picture to anyone who visits there. It was in this beautiful and peaceful setting that Elizabeth Jane spent her early girlhood days. On this small Isle that is so rich in folklore and tradition, she learned of its history which had been handed down from one generation to another. She may have learned that in 930 A.D. this Isle was invaded by the Vikings. They took possession of it, settled there and established a parliamentary form of government. They passed a constitution by which they were to be governed and divided the island into eight sections for voting purposes. During the following four centuries the island changed hands several times. It has been ruled by Ireland, Wales, Norway, Scotland and England. It was sold to the British Crown in 1865, but it still has its own representative form of government, the same form established ten centuries ago. It also has its original constitution, the oldest in the world to be in operation at the present time. It has been a pattern for all modern representative governments. The Manx people have a heritage of which they can be justly proud.

Undoubtedly Elizabeth Jane as a child took part in the celebration of Tynewald Day observed each year on the 5th of July. On this day the people from all over the Isle gathered around Tynewald Hill which is a small man-made hill. The soil for it was taken from each of the seventeen parishes on the island. It is located at St. John's, three miles from Peel. The Hill is circular, being eighty feet in diameter, and rises in four terraces, each three feet high and well sodded, to a total height of twelve feet. It makes a beautiful sight when all the officers of the Isle take their places on this Hill on Tynewald Day. The laws which have been passed during the previous twelve months must be read from the Hill on this Day before they can become the law of the land. In the olden days after the official ceremonies were completed, a great fair was held. The people brought their lunches and spent the day in different forms of recreation on the beautiful meadows surrounding the Hill. Sometimes they would visit the nearby glens, roaming through the woods and stopping for lunch by the pure crystal streams.

When Elizabeth Jane Cowley was eleven years of age two Mormon elders, John Taylor (one of the twelve apostles at the time) and Elder Clark came to the Isle of Man and preached the gospel to its people. Elizabeth's uncle, John Quayle, became acquainted with the gospel and invited the elders to hold a meeting at his home. He asked the Cowleys to attend, but Elizabeth's mother declined saying she wasn't feeling well at the time. However, upon the insistence of her brother, the whole family went to the meeting. As soon as the Cowleys heard the gospel they were convinced of its truthfulness. Nearly all who attended the meeting believed the message brought by these men of God. Eight of them were baptized that night in a beautiful stream that ran behind the uncle's home. Elizabeth's mother and father were included in this group. Because of so much persecution against the Latter-day Saints in the European countries at that time nearly all baptisms had to be performed under cover of darkness. Elizabeth was baptized in November of 1840 by James Blaksley.

Most of their relatives thought they were out of their minds to have been taken in by the Mormons, but this made no difference to them. They were soon ready to sell their little farm and home and set out for a new land where they could dwell with the saints. The brother of Elizabeth's father was wild with anger when he heard what they planned to do. He said, "Dost thou know what thou art doing, selling out thy farm and stock to take thy wife and children over into an unknown land?" But his pleading was all in vain.

He persuaded Matthias to ask one hundred pounds more than he intended for his place, thinking that no one would buy it, and then he would have to remain at home. Elizabeth's father did as his brother advised, but the Lord was with them and they were paid the price asked. They now had enough to pay their passage to America.ⁱⁱ

They set sail from Liverpool April 21, 1841 on the ship "Rochester." This was the third ship to carry converts to America from the Isle of Man. Seven apostles of the Church were returning at the time and were on board with them. They were Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Orson Pratt, George A. Smith, and Willard Richards.

The ocean voyage took four weeks; and they reached New York on May 19, 1841. They went up the Hudson River by steamboat to Troy, then westward by canal boats. After a six weeks' stay in Utica they journeyed to Buffalo and from there they made their way by steamboat through Lakes Erie, Huron, and Michigan, landing at Chicago. From there they travelled overland to Peru, then down the Illinois River to Peoria and from there overland to Nauvoo, arriving in July of 1841. A month later in August of 1841 their year-old baby girl Eleanor died.

At Nauvoo they built a home and stayed there for sometime. However the unsettled conditions made it impossible to live in peace, so they procured a home in Macedonia, four miles away. At Macedonia their youngest child Ellen was born in May of 1843.

The Cowleys were later driven back to Nauvoo by the persecutors of the Mormons. They experienced their full share of the troubles that led to the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith and the trying days which ended in all the saints being driven from Nauvoo by the autumn of 1846.

Elizabeth Jane was personally acquainted with the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum. She was present at the meeting of the saints when the mantle of the Prophet fell on the apostle Brigham Young. They were all convinced that Brigham Young was the man who was to be the new leader of the Church.

After the martyrdom the lives of the saints and all they possessed were in constant danger of the angry mobs. The Cowleys slept out-of-doors with everything packed, ready for flight, for as long as four weeks at a time. At one time when the family was at breakfast a cannonball went through a gable of their house and they had to flee to the cornfields for protection.

After they were driven from Nauvoo and had crossed the river, Elizabeth's mother saw a young man resting under a bush. She observed, "That boy's sick." She fixed a warm drink and food for him, which she sent with Elizabeth as a messenger of mercy. This was her first meeting with John William Dutson.

The Cowleys moved to St. Louis, Missouri where they made their home. While in St. Louis John William Dutson became a very good friend of the Cowley family. Almost four years later, on August 10, 1850, Elizabeth Jane Cowley and John William Dutson were married by High Priest William Dunville. At the time John William was almost 22 years of age and Elizabeth was 20 years old.

Father Matthias Cowley died in St. Louis August 31, 1853.

The young Dutson couple made their home at St. Louis, and while living there four children were born to them. On June 11, 1851 a little boy was born whom they named John William. However, he died the same day and was buried at 4:30 that afternoon.

A second little boy John Henry was born to them August 1, 1852. Death struck often in those days. This little son died when just a little over two years of age on the night of October 31, 1854.

Three months later, January 28, 1855, a little daughter, whom they named Rebecca Deseret, was born to them. She was a sickly child and they feared they would lose her too; but the patriarch promised her she would live and go to Zion and would be a mother in Israel.

Another little girl, Florence Virginia, was born February 22, 1857.

John William was in very poor health in the spring of 1857. In spite of this fact they decided the time had come to cross the plains and settle in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. Consequently on June 10, 1857 the family boarded the steamer "Silver Heels" bound for Florence, Nebraska. The boat was very crowded and many became ill. This must have given the young couple great concern for their two little daughters, the youngest being but a few months old. When they arrived in Florence eight days later Elizabeth and her husband were both very ill.

It was difficult for them in their weakened condition to do all the things necessary to prepare for the trip westward. The wagons had to be put together and equipped. To add to her husband's responsibilities, he was made captain of the second ten wagons of their company. They were in St. Louis Company. They waited at Florence near the Delaware Company, since both companies planned to travel together. They left Florence July 3, 1857. It is difficult for us today to imagine the hardships they endured on this journey. Of course Elizabeth had a little toddler a little over two years old and a baby just four months old; and the wagon was so loaded there was no room to ride. She walked most of the way and carried the baby Florence Virginia in her apron. Mary Ann Boot, a girl in her early teens who was alone and traveling with them, helped little Rebecca along the ways carrying her part of the time.

As they neared the Salt Lake Valley they were met by Elizabeth's two brothers John and William Cowley who had become anxious about her welfare. So with fresh horses, wagons, and provisions they had crossed the mountains to meet them. The Dutsons were very happy to see them and appreciated the much-needed help. They arrived in the Valley September 20, 1857.

After the death of Elizabeth's father in St. Louis, her mother and family had come to Utah and had settled in Salt Lake. They were very happy to be with the Cowley family again and spent several weeks until Conference was over visiting with them, before proceeding to Fillmore for a reunion with John William's family.

During the next three months they lived with John William's mother, Ann Green Dutson Carling, while he built a humble one-room home. It was a long, hard winter that year and work was very scarce. One can imagine the anxiety of the young couple in trying to supply the family with the necessities to last until spring.

The following children were born to Elizabeth and John William while they lived in Fillmore:

William Erastus born December 4, 1858
Ann Jane Born December 7, 1860
Frank Carling Born May 19, 1863
Richard Daniel Born November 15, 1865
Mathias Caleb Born July 3, 1868
Eddy Quayle Born September 29, 1870

Elizabeth worked very hard during these years caring for her family under the trying pioneer conditions. She spun with her spinning wheel and wove cloth for her family. During one year alone prior to Richard's birth she carded and spun fifty pounds of cotton. She had learned tailoring and dressmaking in her youth which was a great help to her. When Richard was born, her husband sold a big beef steer to the store in Fillmore and received merchandise in payment. Factory (which is a type of pioneer cloth) was \$1.00 a yard. He bought some for sheets and a few yards of dark calico to make the baby some dresses. In his arms he carried home all he received in exchange for the steer.

Her daughter Florence has described the home in which they lived during these early years. She recalled that it was a large log room, almost square. A big chest, in which their clothes were packed while crossing the plains, was placed on top of a trunk. This was their table for many years. Elizabeth always kept a white cloth on it. She said that even if they had only boiled wheat and pigweed greens to eat, the food would taste much better when the table was spread with a white cloth. Elizabeth's first real table was made by Isaac Carling. It was put together with wooden pegs. Even after they could buy oilcloth, she continued to use a white cloth on her table.ⁱⁱⁱ

There was a large fireplace where all the cooking was done in an iron pot, a bake kettle, and a skillet. There were three or four home-made chairs with rawhide bottoms. The cupboard was made of boards placed on wooden pegs in the wall. The bed was also strung with rawhide. This was made by lacing rawhide through holes in the ends and sides of the bedstead to make a network. This provided a very comfortable bed. There was a trundle bed made of wood and rawhide which was pushed under the big bed during the day. The mattresses were home-made, filled with straw or corn husks. Elizabeth brought a few dishes with her, but most of their dishes came from the old Fillmore pottery which was operated by Ralph Rolley.^{iv}

Of course Elizabeth made her own soap. Oak wood was burned and the ashes were saved. The leaching bucket used for making lye was shaped like a funnel with tiny holes in the bottom. The leaching bucket was put on a frame over a tub, then straw was placed in the bucket, then charcoal. The bucket was then filled with ashes. Water was poured over the ashes and allowed to seep through into the tub. The water that seeped through was used in place of lye in making soap. The soap was made in a large brass kettle with a flat bottom which Ann Green Dutson Carling had brought with her across the plains. This kettle was placed over an outdoor fireplace, made of rock with pieces of wagon tires pounded straight and riveted in a flat frame on top of rocks. The lye water was put in the large brass kettle. When the water was boiling, the scraps of fat were dissolved and boiled down to the right consistency. It was then strained and cooled and cut into bars of soap. This soap kettle was used by many others in the community.^v

Elizabeth also made her own tallow candles. If the supply of candles was low, she would braid a rag, put one end in a cup of grease and light the other end. It was quite a while before they ever had matches. The fire was guarded carefully, and the coals were covered with ashes at night. If the coals went out when John William was at home, he would place a piece of cotton in some fine bark in the fireplace. He would then take a piece of flint and his old musket, and the spark would fly from the flint into the cotton and start the fire. When he wasn't at home, the members of the family watched their neighbors' chimneys and as soon as they saw smoke, one of the children was dispatched to the neighbors with a covered skillet to borrow a coal.^{vi}

Elizabeth's son Caleb recalls how they swept their dirt floors with a sagebrush broom. For bread baking his mother used a heavy skillet with coals on top and it would be set in the coals of the fireplace to bake it from the bottom.^{vii} They made salt-rising bread. This was done by putting a little salt (a fourth teaspoon) and light molasses in a pint of water. It was set in the sun or a warm place to rise until good and light. Water was added, then salt and flour, and all the ingredients were mixed into bread. It was then baked in a big "bake kettle". Nearly everyone had a coffee mill in which they ground parched corn to eat with milk. Sometimes they ground wheat for mush and flour. A great deal of hominy was made. They soaked dry whole corn in water in which a little lye from oak ashes was dissolved. The corn was drained then cooked in fresh water until tender. Biscuits were made by using saleratus in place of soda. Saleratus was a white mineral gathered off the ground.^{viii}

Elizabeth's daughter Ann Jane told that their cupboard was made by laying boards on wooden pegs in the wall. She also told how the clothes her mother wove for her wore indefinitely. When they became too small the mother made them into shirts for the little brothers.^{ix}

Elizabeth and her husband were always very faithful members of the Church, and wherever they lived John William was a leader in the ward and the community. When he was called to practice polygamy he and Elizabeth together chose the woman whom he should ask to be his second wife.

On September 7, 1858 he married Caroline Geneva Jenkins, who had worked for the family as a hired girl. The relationship between Elizabeth and Caroline was one of sacrifice, love, and devotion. Even though they lived in the same house for part of their married life, there was never a word of disagreement between them. It is very hard for us today to realize the great unselfishness of these pioneer women. Their children say there couldn't have been a happier, more united family than theirs.

When the trouble with the Indians came and her husband had to leave for the Black Hawk War, Elizabeth was left with six small children and just one pan of flour in the house. Brother Callister, one of the presiding authorities, came to their rescue and cared for the family until John William returned in safety sometime later.

John William was called to help settle Oak City in 1871. He moved both his families there and built them homes side by side. He owned the west half of a block in the southwest section of town. Two years later when he married his third wife, Fannie Emiline Nixon Carling, he also built her a home on the same block. Elizabeth's home was in the center on what was called the "Betsy Lot". Fannie lived on the south corner of the block and Caroline on the north corner. Fannie had been the wife of John William's half-brother, Frank Carling. When Frank died he asked John William to marry her and care for her and her children. They were married April 14, 1873.

In 1877 John William purchased a farm in Leamington. He divided his time between his farm there and the one in Oak City. Although Elizabeth spent much of the next eight years in Leamington, Caroline also spent sometime there too, and the boys in the two families traded off working the two farms.

In Leamington their home was a picket house. It was made of split cedar posts which were stood on end and then plastered on the inside. Slanted poles were used for the roof and they were covered with mud. This was done by putting a layer of willows then a layer of dirt. It was a two-room house with a lean-to-kitchen.

In 1885 John William's health began to fail, and Elizabeth moved back to Oak City. It was very hard for Elizabeth to see her husband's suffering during the next fifteen months. He died May 6, 1887.

After her husband's death she moved back to Leamington and kept house for her son Caleb until he married. In 1895 she moved back once more to Oak City to spend the remaining days of her life. She lived in a little log house just east of the home of her son Eddy.

She was affectionately known to many as Aunt Betsy. Most of her grandchildren remember going to see her and sometime spending the night with her. The children all looked forward with great expectation to their visits with Grandma Dutson, and loved to have her come and see them. Although she couldn't sing, she entertained them with games, jokes, and stories.

She has been described as short and plump and always very pleasant. She was always a busy woman and a righteous woman with a strong testimony of the gospel. She died in Oak City October 23, 1902, leaving to her numerous posterity a glorious heritage.

At the time of her death the following Resolution was sent to the family by the Oak City Relief Society:

Oak City, 1902

Resolutions of Respect to the Memory of our Beloved Sister and Friend, Elizabeth J. Dutson who departed this life October 23, 1902, age 73 years, 9 months and 21 days.

Whereas Our Heavenly Father in His infinite wisdom has removed from our midst our faithful friend and sister Elizabeth J. Dutson; and whereas in her death the Relief Society of Oak City has lost one of its faithful members and former teachers; we all

mourn her passing. She was a loving mother, a faithful friend, one who kept the celestial law and thereby gained a celestial glory. We deeply sympathize with her children in their sad bereavement and pray the comforting influence of heaven may be with them.

Resolved that a copy of these resolutions be sent to the family and that the same be written in the Record Book of the Relief Society.

Mary C . Finlinson

Mary M. Lyman Committee

ⁱ The family records show that Elizabeth Jane was born December 2, 1829. The Kirk German Parish Register shows that she was christened on this date too. Often a baby was christened on the day of birth so it is quite possible this happened here.

ⁱⁱ Ann Cowley's Family Record.

ⁱⁱⁱ Life Sketch of Florence Virginia Dutson Nielson.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Life Sketech of Mathias Caleb Dutson.

^{viii} Life Sketch of Florence Virginia Dutson Nielson.

^{ix} Life Sketch of Ann Jane Dutson Roper.