

LIFE OF MARY LEICHT OXBORROW
(Wife of Joseph Oxborrow, 2nd wife at age 17)
By Elizabeth O. McArthur

I have often promised my children I would write a sketch of the life of my mother, Mary Leicht Oxborrow, for their scrap books, and finally, with the help of my daughter, Ina Bracken, have assembled a few pages of her very interesting history.

Much of the following information was secured from Mother at the time she visited in St. George at Christmas, 1934, less than three weeks before her death. Gertrude McArthur is to be thanked for getting record on paper.

Born in West Bromage, Staffordshire, England, October 17, 1852, Mary Leicht Oxborrow was the fifth child of George and Mary Piper Leicht. Her parents were natives of Germany and move to England in 1850, just two years before Mary was born. Her father was a musician and band teacher, and while living in Germany was conductor of the Kaiser's band. Her mother was also talented in music, having a beautiful voice and was an artist on the harp.

In England the Leicht family had a musical instrument store, and their children were taught music when they were very young. Grandfather and Grandmother Leicht often appeared before the King and Queen, grandmother singing to grandfather's accompaniment on the violin.

Mother was just ten months old when her mother passed away, and her father later married a widow, Mrs. Mary Ann Hunt Miles, who had one daughter Belle Miles. This wife also seems to have been fond of music or at least cooperated in the musical training of the children.

The children of Mary Piper and George Leicht were:

George, who died in infancy.

Christian

Sophia (well known to many here as Aunt Sophia Croft)

A second George, who also died

Mary (Leicht Oxborrow) who was my mother.

Beside her daughter Belle Miles, Mary Ann Hunt Miles had three children by grandfather. These were Sarah, Amelia and Elizabeth.

In 1857, the family started for America. Mother was then five years old, and already appearing before large audiences as a child harpist. The family was apparently bringing musical instruments with them to America. But grandfather was ill when they were ready to sail, and the ship's officers would not permit him to come aboard. The family therefore returned to their home and three doctors were summoned. They found him very ill with typhoid fever, and he died within a few days. They were compelled to sell three of their pianos to pay the doctor bills.

Following their father's death, Christian and Sophia, mother's older brother and sister, left home. Two elderly maiden governesses, who lived near the family, wanted to adopt little Mary, but her stepmother wouldn't hear of it. She later brought her four children, her father and

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mother, and two sisters, one with three small children, to live in the Leicht home. With so many using the income from the music store, which was a large amount for those days, was rapidly used up, and the family was obliged to support themselves otherwise. They took in ironing, having a large mangle, and this helped to some extent.

In 1861, two LDS missionaries, Samuel Adams and John D. T. McAllister, both of St. George, Utah, brought the Gospel to the family. The Leicht children dressed up in new hats and went to Sunday School. In those days Mormons were the victims of many unkindnesses, as these children soon learned. As they went along that morning a group of Irish girls called them “Joe Smith’s kids” and pelted them with rotten eggs, ruining their new hats. But following their home instructions, they ignored the tirade, removed their hats and went on to Sunday School.

John Cornwall, who was a friend of the Leicht family, had joined the Church previously, and after spending three years in America, had returned to England to get his family. However, he found his wife had apostized and would not come with him. He had secured nine tickets for the trip, so invited Mrs. Leicht, her three children, and one step child, who became my mother, to make use of part of the tickets and come to America with him and his three sons, John, Job, and Tom. Before leaving England Mr. Cornwall had secured a divorce from his wife, and toward the end of the ocean voyage married Mary Ann Hunt Miles Leicht, mother’s stepmother.

They set sail from England May 3, 1864, for America. General McClelland was Captain of the ship. On the morning of their departure, they mangled or ironed clothes from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. before taking the train to the ship. They traveled Second Deck, bringing with them only their clothing, and leaving their home and other possessions with the Hunt family, parents and relatives of Mrs. Leicht, Mother’s stepmother. The Hunts gradually disposed of everything to live on and later came to America also.

At the time they left England, Mother was aged 11, and the voyage of five weeks and four days seemed almost endless, although she made many new friends on the voyage, and participated in the programs aboard ship. Reaching America, they were next faced with the really difficult part of their journey, the trek across the plains. Mother, with many others her age and older, walked all the way across the plains with an ox team company, of which the Thomas Judd family were members.

The Leicht—Cornwall family remained only briefly in Salt Lake City before heading for St. George, which was their final destination, making this part of the journey by ox teams.

St. George had only been settled three years when they arrived, and all meetings and public gatherings were still being held in the old willow bowery, located where the Dixie (Wadsworth formerly) Theater now stands. The Orson Pratt home near the southwest corner of that block, or for the most part in the town, most of the families still living in dugouts and willow sheds. The Leicht-Cornwall family located on the block next to the west black hill on the property now owned by Alma C. Lambert.

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Soon after arriving in St. George, Mother began to earn her own living. Girls today, age 11 or 12, have little idea of how girls that age used to work, especially when they hired out in the homes of large families, as Mother did. She worked for six months at the home of Samuel L. Adams, well known St. George Blacksmith and vocalist. Mrs. Adams was crippled with rheumatism and was a wheel chair invalid for many years before her death. Mother also worked three months at the home of Angelia McNellie who was confined with twin daughters.

Finally Mother took employment at the home of Hohn [John] Pymm, father of the present John Donald Pymm, well known as Dixie's youngest Pioneer, since he was born in a wagon box just before the caravan reached the present town of Washington. John Pymm Senior was then postmaster for St. George, a position he held for 35 years, and for which he was honored as the man with the longest term in office as postmaster, to that time, as well as for him accurately kept accounts. He also ran a small store and a boarding house in connection with the post office.

Hired girls in those days were not free to leave as soon as supper work was done, nor did they have their half day off as was later the rule. They did all sorts of housework, cleaning, bed-making, cooking, washing, ironing, dishes three times a day, helped amuse the children, if there were any, and there usually were, and in the evenings busied themselves sewing carpet rags or patching quilt blocks. For such work as this Mother received \$2.00 per week at first, and was later raised to \$2.50 which was top housework wages those days. No wonder Mrs. Pymm cried and cried when Mary Leicht left her employment to get married.

Mother was one of the younger singers who used to assemble at the George Jarvis home summer evenings for an hour or two of singing. One of the Jarvis boys, Brigham, occasionally accompanied her home after the singing, and became one of her first beaux. Another young man who became very much in love with her was George Chaffin. Each of the young men found her a jolly partner and an excellent dancer. George Chaffin was one of the mail drivers at that time and he lived at the Pymm home. One night he had a date with Mother and hired Gus Hardy's buggy to take her to the dance at Santa Clara. During the early evening he got some wine and when he came for Mother he was plain drunk, and she refused to accompany him to the dance. Postmaster Pymm glorified in the spunk she displayed, and sent George Chaffin to his room.

Soon after the family came to St. George, Mother met Joseph Oxborrow, who with William Carter, Isaac Hunt and George Fawcett, plowed the first furrows in St. George, when the city streets were being laid off. Joseph Oxborrow was already married and mother was well acquainted with his wife Jenette.

Apostle Erastus Snow, who was leader of the Dixie Cotton Mission, was well acquainted with all of the young people of St. George, and often talked with them and counseled and advised them. On one occasion he suggested to Mother that she accept the principle of plural marriage and accept the offer of Joseph Oxborrow to make her his second wife. She agreed, and in the spring of 1870, before she had turned 17, she and Joseph Oxborrow accompanied by Henry Riding and Elizabeth Bleak, who was to become his wife, made the three weeks trip by

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team to Salt Lake City where both couples were married in the Salt Lake Endowment House June 21, 1870, with Apostle George A. Smith, for whom the city of St. George was named, officiating. Mary was not quite seventeen, and Joseph Oxborrow was then aged fifty-two. This was a very serious undertaking for such a young girl, but like many young women of that day, Mother accepted with great faith, this unusual principle, and conformed her life to keep the vows she made, in spite of the great disparity in their years, and the natural problems that arose under the order of plural marriage.

For some time after their marriage, Mother lived in the home with father's first wife, Jenette, but soon after the birth of her first child, Joseph, born August 7, 1871, father rented the Kleinman home, now the Charles Laub home, and moved there. Job Cornwall was very fond of her always and tried to persuade her to take her small son and go with him to California, but she was sincere in her belief in the principle of plural marriage, and in the Gospel generally, and would not consider Job's offer of marriage. He was the son of her stepmother's husband, and she [she] did not care for him. Aunt Jenette, as she called father's first wife, was very fond of Mother, and was kind to her.

The family moved to Beaver in 1872, Mother and Auntie Jenette to cook for the hands of Copeland's Mill up Beaver canyon. Auntie and mother were kept busy with the cooking and father helped with logging when he was not helping with the cooking. He was also a good cook. I was born at Beaver, October 28, 1873. Shortly after that President Brigham Young called father to St. George to run the church bakery, which was then in the building now occupied by Hutching's Firestone Store.

On January 16, 1873, Mother gave birth to twin sons whom she named Ephraim and George. Ephraim was 15 minutes the older. That year the Grand Gulch mine was operating full blast and father went to the Gulch to cook for the miners. During his absence, Mother plowed the lot and planted a garden. Johnny Mouys, a nephew of Mother's stepmother, Mary Ann Hunt Leicht Cornwall, helped her with the plowing and ran the furrows for her. The vegetable garden produced good crops and Mother was able to send father three sacks each of peas, potatoes, and string beans, which helped him greatly in preparing meals at the mine.

It wasn't long until the mine closed down again and father returned to St. George with a fixed determination to set up his own bakery. Against Mother's wishes, he sold his farm and all of his sheep to build the bakery where Mathis Market now stands. The ground on which he built was mortgaged from John Pymm, and since he was unable to pay off the mortgage, Pymm took the business over to cancel the mortgage.

On November 2, 1878, my brother John was born, and when he was six months old the family moved to Middleton and spent the summer there farming. While they were at Middleton, Mother's oldest sister came from England and spent the remainder of her life in St. George. Her brother, Christian, also came to America.

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In the fall of 1879, the family moved back to St. George and lived in the adobe house which then belonged to Manomas Andrus, second wife of James Andrus. This was where the Clyde Graff home now stands. Aunt Sophia lived with them for a time, later marrying William Croft and moving to the lot now owned by Mrs. Mattie Foster Empey. They had no children.

By this time a cook was needed at the Temple and father was given the job of caring for the Temple grounds and he and Mother, assisted by the children, cooked for the painters, plasterers and others who were doing the final finishing work on the building. I was a small child, but often carried kettles of hot gruel to the workers at nights. We lived on the Temple block for five ears and father had charge of the Temple grounds for seven years more, totaling twelve years. The salary for this work was small, so Mother took in sewing and washing, and tended children to help support the family. I was taught to work and helped all the time. We also went gleanng during the harvest season, and since we had no farm on which to grow our own crops, this grain often helped with our living.

Besides Joseph, Ephraim, George, myself (Elizabeth) and John, Mother had six other children, as follows:

Janette Templine, born Dec. 18, 1880, at St. George, Utah, died Dec. 12, 1882, of Measles and Pneumonia.

Edward, born June 1, 1883.

Mary, born September 7, 1885.

Eliza Effie, Born June 3, 1888, died Oct. 1893 at St. George of Membraneous croupe.

Seymour, born April 29, 1892, died June 24, 1892, at St. George.

LaVera, born February 9, 1894, died February 6, 1897, in Lund Nevada.

Auntie Janette, Father's first wife, was childless, and died in 1885, when Edward was a baby, and Father moved the family into Auntie's home, which is now the home of Mrs. Emma Mills, mother of Mrs. John T. Woodbury Jr. At this time Father was still employed on the Temple grounds.

In June of 1894, my oldest brother, Joseph, married Sabra Stringham, and on October 18, of the same year, I (Elizabeth) married James McArthur. Both couples of us were married in the St. George Temple.

The year of 1895 was a very sad year for Mother. On June 16, Father died. He was 77 years old and had always enjoyed good health, yielding only to age. In August of that year I had a still-born son and for several weeks was seriously ill. Then in October, my sister Eliza Effie, age 8, died of membraneous croupe. At that time my brother George and Ted were freighting between St. George and Milford, and George suffered a serious accident, being kicked in the face by one of his horses. He suffered a broken jaw, a broken arm, and lost several teeth, and mother went to Milford to stay several weeks and care for him.

Always being skillful in the sick room, Mother was employed several years by Doctor Frederick Clift in St. George. Later she was called to go to Lund, Nevada and assist with caring for the sick in that new settlement. She was set apart for this work in the St. George Temple.

It was February, 1899, when she moved to Lund, accompanied by five of her sons and two daughters. Thomas Judd and his family had been called to colonize that section, which grew rapidly. Mother was active as a counselor and teacher in the Relief Society, and with her skill and training in nursing, and mid-wifery, she was constantly in demand in all cases of sickness, since there was at that time no Doctor in Lund. She assisted in bringing 237 babies into the world, two of these being ger [her] own great-grandchildren. Other than two babies being born dead, she never lost a maternity case.

In December, 1909, she received word from her brother, Christian, who was living in Camden, New Jersey. He sent for her to come East and care for him, as he had had an accident. While he was working on the battleship, Utah, he had fallen a great distance, injuring his spine. Mother spent two years in New Jersey nursing him.

In later years Mother's grandson, Donald Ashworth, gave her a Concertina, or small accordian, which she learned to play. She enjoyed this musical instrument very much and often played selections on it for many church programs and social events in Ely, and Lund, Nevada.

Her life in Lund was full of interest and activity. She enjoyed her work and kept in excellent health, keeping her own home until her death. Her grandson, Pershing (Jack) Oxborrow lived with her the last six years of her life. In December, 1934 she came to St. George to spend Christmas with her daughter, Elizabeth and family. She was so well and happy and visited with so many of her friends while here, although many who she had known had passed away during the years. She returned to Lund, January 1, 1935. A few days later she contacted pneumonia and was taken to the home of her son, John, in Ely where she died January 10, 1935, at the age of 82.

Loving tributes were paid to her memory at the services held in Lund, Nevada by those whom she had served and with whom she had been closely associated. She was affectionately know among the young people of Lund as "Grandma", and was a welcome guest at social functions to the close of her life.

Grandma Oxborrow's Poems
(Mary Leicht Oxborrow)

Hurry Doctor Tommy
Dolly's dreadful sick
You'll be too late to help her
Unless you get here quick.
It was just this morning
That she took her bed
My dolly's never healthy
Since she broke her head.
First she bumped her nose off

That was no great harm
Then she sprained her ankle
Then she broke her arm.
Then she bled some stuffing
It almost made me cry
Then she cracked her shoulder
Then she lost her eye.
I am quite discouraged
I have often said
My dolly's never healthy
Since she broke her head.

My dolly's sick, sick, sick,
Send for the doctor quick, quick, quick
The doctor came with a rat-atat-tat
And said, "Mary, get her to bed quick, quick, quick.
Keep her very warm and very still
And when I come tomorrow
Please pay the bill."