

BIOGRAPHY OF  
THIRZA STILES CAHOON

Thirza Stiles, first wife of Reynolds Cahoon, was the daughter of Daniel Olds Stiles and Abigail Farrington. According to the church records, Thirza was born 18 October 1789 at Sanesborough, Connecticut. (At the present time, there is no such city.)

It appears that the Stiles family resided in various places: Brandon, Rutland, Vermont; Herkimer, New York, and in cities of Connecticut. The Cahoon Family Records state that Thirza was born in Lansingburg or Rensselaer, New York.

She had two brothers, Farrington and John, and one sister Abigail. Her mother died in September of 1793, leaving four small children, the eldest being six years old and the youngest, an infant of one month. Her father married a second wife, Sarah Buckland, and to them were born seven children.

Thirza married Reynolds Cahoon 11 December 1810, in Newport, New York. The Honorable John Stiles performed the marriage ceremony. They moved to Harpersfield, Ashtubula County, Ohio then a new county, and began farming in the year 1811. They lived here for about twelve years and it was here that their first five children were born:

William Farrington	7 November	1813
Lerona Eliza	25 October	1817
Pulaski Stephen	18 September	1820
Daniel Stiles	7 April	1822
Andrew	4 August	1824

In 1825, the family moved about thirty miles farther west, near the town of Kirtland. where Reynolds went into the business of tanning leather and making shoes. In this business, he was quite prosperous and accumulated considerable amounts of property. It was here they were visited by Parley P. Pratt, a missionary from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Along with her husband, Thirza was baptized into the Church in the winter of 1830. From that time on, she was with the Church and shared all the hardships and persecutions of the Saints. She had lived in the more highly developed communities of the eastern United States. She came from a comfortable home and had she chosen to remain there, could have spent all her days on earth without want or privation.

In Kirtland two more children were born to Thirza and Reynolds.

Julia Amina	24 September	1830
Mahonri Moriancumer	26 July	1834

How this last son of Thirza's received his name is a story in itself. Reynolds had invited the Prophet Joseph Smith in to

bless and name the baby. Joseph did so and gave the boy the name of Mahonri Moriancumer. When he had finished the blessing he layed the child on the bed and turned to the parents and said, "The name I have given your son is the name of the brother of Jared; the Lord has just shown (or revealed) it to me." This was the first time the name of the Brother Of Jared was known in the Church in this dispensation. All things must have been in order in this humble home for the Lord to have chosen it for the unfolding of one of these hidden truths.

In this family and home another event of much importance occurred. It was "The First Public Marriage in the Mormon Church", the wedding of William Farrington Cahoon to Nancy Miranda Gibbs, and Lerona Eliza Cahoon to Harvey Stanley 17 January 1836. Thirza had been promised in her patriarchal blessing, "thou shalt partake of all the blessings sealed upon the head of thy companion, for in common with him thou shalt enjoy all the blessings that Heaven and Earth can afford; thou shalt have power to heal thy children and preserve them from the destroyer to be a comfort to thee...and also to do any miracle that wisdom will dictate for the health and happiness of thy family. Thy heart shall be made to rejoice and thou shalt have riches in abundance; thou shalt be able to set a table to feed a thousand with as much ease as thou canst now feed ten..." Surely this promise was put to the test at the marriage of her eldest son and daughter. Thirza prepared the wedding feast and there were about three thousand in attendance.

With the dedication of the Kirtland Temple 27 March 1836, the hostile opposition to which the church had been subjected since its organization seemed to increase. The persecution soon became so violent that Reynolds, Thirza and their family left their property and all they possessed in the hands of enemies and strangers, never receiving a cent for anything they owned. They arrived in Far West, Missouri 7 June 1838.

Following Governor Boggs' "Order of Extermination", the family was again uprooted and forced to flee their home. They migrated, with the torrential stream of wagons, carts, livestock and people that moved out of the Mormon settlements in western Missouri, to Hancock County, Illinois. They lived in Iowa just across the Mississippi River where Reynolds had been called as counselor over the Branch in Iowa. In October of 1840, the family moved across the river to Nauvoo when Reynolds was called to assist in the building of the temple there.

Thirza's only living daughter, Eliza, died at the age of twenty three years, 18 June 1840. She had baby girl, Thirza Lerona just seven months old and Thirza took her infant granddaughter into her home to nurture and care for. Thirza Lerona traveled to Utah with her grandparents and lived with them until her marriage at age seventeen.

Thirza was a charter member of the Relief Society in Nauvoo. It

was first organized by Joseph Smith 17 March 1842. The objective of the Relief Society was to relieve the poor, teach the gospel, and save souls. The sisters shared with those more needy, sustained and encouraged their husbands, cared for the sick, comforted the dying, and laid away the dead.

Twenty six women formed this first membership. They deprived themselves of many necessities in order to feed the workmen on the temple. For instance, they would churn butter for the workers, reserving none for their own tables.

24 January 1845, Reynolds and Thirza went to seek a Patriarchal Blessing from the Patriarch of the Church (probably William Smith, brother of Joseph, who was Church Patriarch at this time.)

The Nauvoo Temple was completed and on December 10th and 11th 1845, Thirza and Reynolds received their endowments. In this same temple they were sealed in Celestial Marriage at 7:10 p.m. 16 January 1846.

The mob violence and the persecutions of the Saints became intolerable. The family fled Nauvoo 9 March 1846, and suffering innumerable miseries with exposure to cold and hunger, they crossed Iowa, arriving in Garden Grove 8 May 1846. They must have spent a little time here as their son Andrew carried the mail between Garden Grove and Nauvoo. In July of 1846 they crossed the Missouri River and arrived at Winter Quarters, Nebraska. It was here in Winter Quarters that Thirza's son Andrew received his call to serve a mission in Europe. How hard it must have been, with the desperate condition of the Saints, for Thirza to send her son away to a foreign country.

The Cahoon Company did not leave Winter Quarters with the first body of the Saints, but remained behind for over a year. Andrew completed his mission and arrived back at Winter Quarters with a large body of converts from Scotland, among them his wife and her family, just in time to travel to the Salt Lake Valley with his parents. They traveled across the plains during the summer of 1848 and arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in the evening of 23 September 1848.

Thirza supported her husband in his many callings and activities in the Church. She shared him with his polygamous wives and remained true and faithful to the end. She outlived Reynolds and died at the home of her son Andrew in South Cottonwood 20 November 1866.