

Life Sketch of Elizabeth Susan Ottley Rasmussen
compiled by Sarah Darrington Wight

My grandmother, Elizabeth Susan Ottley Rasmussen, was born 30 December 1861, at Bures, Essex, England, to Edward and Harriet Mills Ottley. She was next to the youngest of seven children, namely: Edward, George, John, Annie, Elizabeth and Fredrick.



(This part was told by Frank D. to his daughter, Alice.)

While mother was still very young, she and the other children would go into the grain fields to walk around and around the grain patches carrying a can of rocks to shake and scare the birds away. The grain was planted in rows, so when she grew older, it was her job, with the other children, to hoe the weeds from the rows of grain. A Mr. Brage watched to see that they did their work. As they reached the end of the rows where he was, they would ask him, "Mr. Brage, what's the clock?" (What's the time?) He would answer, "It's nothing o'clock."

On the 12th day of June, 1876, her father put an old door across the brook that ran through the field to dam off the water, and that night she was baptized into the Mormon Church by Elder William Paxman. This was done after dark because they were afraid of the persecution.

About this time, she went to stay and work for George Whiting, a half-brother of her father's. There it was her job to clean the house. They were very strict about her work. If any dust was found, Mrs. Whiting would write "slut" in it.

Her brother, Henery, came to Utah to work in the mines at Bingham until he had money enough to send for his parents, brothers and sisters. In the year 1877, in the evening of September 14th, they went to the village, and on to London on the 15th where they stayed with

brother, Ted. From there they went to Liverpool and on to America aboard the ship, *Wisconsin*, on the 19th. They had a mild voyage with a group of 480 Saints under the charge of Hamilton G. Park. Their company landed at New York on September 30th and arrived in Salt Lake City on October 6th, 1877 by train. The family went to South Cottonwood (east Murray) to live.

Elizabeth had many suitors, including one named Letison. He was quiet; didn't take well with the girls. He later committed suicide. She liked William Crouch, an actor who came to give a play, but his father walked out from Salt Lake City to tell her parents not to let her have anything to do with him as he wasn't any good. He, too, committed suicide. In 1879, she met Hans Jorgen Rasmussen, who had been in the Salt Lake Valley for quite a number of years. On 15 July 1880, they were married in the old Endowment House in Salt Lake City. They drove there and back, a distance of ten miles, in a heavy wagon.

On 9 June 1881, a little boy was born into their home, whom they named Fredrick William.

On 26 September 1881, they took all their belongings and moved to Idaho, arriving in Elba on 27 October. Their house was one room about 12x14 feet. It had a door on the north and a window on the east. They brought the glass for the window with them from Utah. A "lean to" was built on the west side, ten foot wide with a door in the north. They stored their grain and tools there. The logs on the inside of the house were hewn flat to make a smooth wall. The roof was made of 2 to 3 diameter poles, covered with hay and then dirt to keep it from leaking. The floor joists were also made of poles, about six inches in diameter and hewn smooth on top to put the flooring on. The first winter there was no floor so they walked over and between the joists until the floor was laid in the summer. During the next few years, they built another room on the north, which was 12x16, with a door and a window in the east and a window in the north. The "lean to" on the west was used as a kitchen in the summer.

On 18 February 1884, a baby girl was born named Karen Marie. One of the worst blizzards ever known in southern Idaho was howling on the night she was born. Hans left Aunt Sofia Ottley with Elizabeth while he went to get the midwife, Mrs. Cole, down to the settlement of Elba, about three miles. The storm was so bad, they didn't get back home until the middle of the next day. Mrs. Cole related that all she could see on the way home was the heads of the horses as they floundered in the snow.

On 13 June 1886, another boy was born, dying the same day, whose name was Hans Jorgen.

The third boy born was Jens Edward on 24 July 1887. Little George Henry was born 1 April 1890 and died 4 April 1891. Their second daughter, Harriet Elizabeth, was born 8 September 1892. She died 10 Jan 1898. Their last child, a boy, was born 30 June 1894. He was named Frank D. He died 29 May 1959.

Elizabeth's husband had not been well, so in the fall after Frank's birth, he went back to South Cottonwood to get medical aid. There he passed away on 18 November 1894. He was brought back to Elba for funeral services and burial. The man who put up the money for the return of the body to Elba and the burial came and took four of Elizabeth's six milk cows as payment.

The following summer her sister, Annie Ballard, and two daughters, Zilla and Millie, came and stayed all summer.

Some years later a gentleman named Jim Cole wanted to marry her, but she decided not to marry again. Jim Cole was the son of the Mrs. Cole who helped when Marie was born.

A few years later she and her family got the smallpox. She was very ill and the doctor

was quite concerned for her, but they all pulled through.

Every few years she went to Salt Lake City to General Conference by train or with friends. While there she visited with her sister, Anne Ballard, and brother, Ted, and their families.

During these years they traveled to church by heavy wagon in the summer and by sled in the winter. During these years, she went Relief Society teaching on horse back. She and her neighbors visited a lot, going to each others homes and staying all day.

Once when they were holding stake conference in Elba, Apostle Matthew Cowley and Lew Kelch were the visitors from Salt Lake City. After the meeting, they came down and visited with her. Brother Kelch told her that he and her husband had been ward teaching companions in South Cottonwood.

Each fall the Indians would pass through on their way to the City of Rocks for pine nuts. One of these times, she met John and Mary Logan and family. They became good friends; for years the Logan family would camp along the creek in the field. They would bring mother flour and she would bake bread for them. They, in turn, would take her deer hides and make her gloves and moccasins out of the hides. Mary made her a little beaded coin purse. (Her granddaughter, Alice, has the purse to this day, 9 March 1959). After mother's death, old Mary Logan came again to see her. When told of mother's death, she sat on the door steps and cried. The Logans never came that way again.

Anytime the church had a fund raising program in the early days, they would ask mother to be cashier, since she was good at figures.

I, Sarah Wight, am going to write an addition to this history of my grandmother, Elizabeth Susan Ottley Rasmussen. I am her oldest granddaughter and the oldest child of her only daughter, Karen Marie Darrington. I was born in the little log cabin in the canyon above Elba described in the foregoing history. I dearly loved my grandmother, as did all her grandchildren who were old enough to remember her. My sister, brothers and I went to "granny's" in Elba for a vacation nearly every year. After school was out in the spring, we thinned a few acres of sugar beets on our farm in Declo; then taking the old black team of horses, Bird and Queen, we would head for Elba. It would take us all day to make the trip. We would take our lunch and have a picnic on the way. While we kids were yet young, I remember mother going with us to drive the team, with one of us kids kneeling in the bottom of the buggy hanging over the dashboard with a willow whip to keep the old mares on the move. Queen was Old Bird's colt but was the larger of the two; both were sort of lazy. As us kids grew older, we'd make the trip without mother. I can remember cousins Raeola and Clifford going with us sometimes. They had an uncle and aunt living just up the canyon from Granny. I can remember following Granny around her home, from her little pantry to the cool cellar in the back, down to the creek for water, across the little foot bridge, to the old blacksmith shop in the willows, down to the orchard in the meadow to pick gooseberries and red currants, then out to the water barrel at the end of a pipe which carried spring water down off the mountain at the back of the house for drinking purposes.

I can remember playing with my sister and brothers with the running gears of an old buggy. We'd push them up the road from the creek bridge to the gate at the top of the yard and then ride on the thing to the bottom of the hill, right over the bridge if we were lucky enough to guide it across.

I can remember my grandmother as a sweet tempered woman. I can't ever remember her

speaking cross to us or being angry. She always had petunias, fuchsias, and geraniums blooming in the kitchen windows.

She was left a widow at the age of thirty-two, with a family of four children to raise. Three of her seven children had died previously. She never, during her entire life, had much of this world's goods. Her three sons helped to keep her. Uncle Will was thirteen when his father died, so he left home to herd sheep to help keep the family. He and Uncle Frank, the youngest son, didn't marry until quite late in life so they lived at home with their mother. My mother seemed to be the pet of the family, and of course, her children were made a fuss over. As a result, we dearly loved our uncles and Granny. I can remember standing on a step in the bedroom doorway that was several inches above the level of the kitchen floor in the old log house and reciting "The Little Red Hen" and "The Gingerbread Man" by heart to the applause of Uncle Frank, Granny, and my fond parents.

Uncle Edward Rasmussen built a more modern log house (three rooms) on the place after he was married. He moved away later, so Granny moved into this house where she lived the rest of her life. She spent her entire life with no water in the house, no electricity and no automobile.

She must have been in her early fifties when she had a stroke, caused by high blood pressure, I guess. She had a second stroke later. She partially recovered from these two sick spells, doing her own work with help. It was hard for her to write; the writing on the letters we received was labored and quite small. She came to spend what proved to be her last winter with us in Declo because of her health. I think it was Christmas Day that she had her last stroke. I remember she came to the kitchen door from a walk outside, shaking so badly she was hardly able to walk. She was wearing a little grey shawl around her shoulders that we had sent for to Montgomery Wards for her Christmas present.

Mother called for Dad to catch her as she was falling. We put her to bed and called the doctor. She knew what was happening to her and begged mother not to let her go to sleep. However, she went into a coma right away from which she never revived. She lived about a week after that never regaining consciousness. Uncle Frank rode a horse down from Elba when he got the word. He was not married at that time, and I remember how we all sympathized with him, because now he was left alone. It was quite an experience for us children. It was the first death we had been close to. The president of the Relief Society, the bishop's wife, my aunt ?amie, and mother washed and laid her out for burial in our front bedroom on a board, where she laid until they took her to Elba for the funeral and burial. Dad put the top down on his car, and they put the casket across the back of the car over the back seat. That was her hearse. Uncle Will and Dad rode in the car. It was a cold stormy January day. I stayed home with my brothers and sister while Mother and Dad went. I was very nervous and scared over the whole affair. I wouldn't look at Granny in her casket. Dad was for insisting that I did, but mother objected and said I needn't if I didn't want to. I was sixteen at the time. I must have been very immature for my age.

Elizabeth was known as "Aunt Lizzie" to all her relatives and friends. She was married at the age of nineteen to a man forty years of age. She had been in this country only three years. She died 1 Jan 1923 and was buried 3 Jan 1923.