

CHARACTER SKETCH OF ELIZABETH HALL MOWER

“Our deeds travel with us from afar; And what we have been, makes us what we are.”

-----Author unknown

Elizabeth Hall Bills Mower must have been one of the choice spirits of our Heavenly Father. Her life here exemplified so much His message of love: “in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

She was born the 20th of March 1820, in Saro, Surry Co., North Carolina, surrounded by numerous kinfolk of both her parents, Rebecca East and Harrison. When she was eight years of age, her parents joined the group pushing westward, settling first in Missouri and then in Illinois. In one of these places Elizabeth heard the Gospel and became converted much to the displeasure of her parents. Probably the greatest battle of her life was fought within herself at this time with the stakes high. She was told by her parents that if she joined this religion she could no longer have a home beneath their roof. Her decision exemplified the courage she manifested throughout her life. She was baptized in 1842 and, joining the body of the church, sought the means of making a livelihood. The privilege of helping tailor some proved a blessing in helping clothe her family through the years ahead. She never learned to use a sewing machine but was an artist with the needle. Even the stitches used in mending were dainty and meticulously hidden.

The hardships she endured with the Saints in their expulsion from Nauvoo helped strengthen her for the role of plural wife, which she filled during the rest of her married life. All the tact, love, and understanding she could summon were demanded of her in this calling. She entered into the marriage covenant as plural wife to John Bills in January 1847 at Council Bluffs, Iowa.

“John was born the 19th of September, 1819 in Blairsville, Indiana Co., Pennsylvania, a son of Alison and Electa (Hall) Bills. He and his wife, Elizabeth Scott, had joined the church in 1836. He was baptized the 10th of July 1836, and his wife ahead joined a short time previous. He was a tailor by trade and kept a clothing store. When he joined the church he lost pretty much all he had in settling up and in the driving he underwent with the Saints. He was President in the 29th Quorum of Seventies and a General in the Nauvoo Legion. Being a

tailor, he made the clothes for Joseph and Hyrum and cut out and superintended the making of the uniforms for the First Company of the Nauvoo Legion. (Quote from History of John Bills by his son William Andres Bills.)

The first child born to Elizabeth Hall and John Bills was a little girl whom they named Martha, probably in memory of Elizabeth's sister Martha. This little girl was born the 18th of February in 1848 in Winter Quarters, Nebraska, shortly before they left for Utah. She was only permitted to stay with them for a little over a year. Little Martha died the 19th of March 1849. They lived in the Fort their first winter in Utah. Whether Martha died before they left the fort or after I do not know, "But it was in the spring of 1849 that John Bills moved his families out and settled on the little cottonwood, one half mile below where union ward meeting house now is in Salt Lake Co., (Quote from History of John Bills by his son William Andres Bills) Here they cleared land and planted their crops. That autumn after the crops were harvested and his families made as comfortable as possible in their humble circumstances, he started on the 9th of November on a business trip to Lore, California, to obtain supplies to again get established in his tailors trade. Before he reached the end of his journey, he became ill and grew worse until they reached Santiquin valley at the Tuckahoe Pass, where he died and was buried, the 19th of February 1850. He never saw, Thomas Wesley, his son by Elizabeth Hall who was born two weeks later, fatherless. (6th of March 1850.)

In 1849, Henry Mower Jr., son of Mary Amick and Henry Mower Sr. came to Utah with his wife, Susan Strong. He was attracted to the young widow and on the 24th of July 1851 they were married for time. (On the 26th of July 1862 he took her to the Endowment House and had the marriage sealed for eternity.) Shortly after he married Elizabeth, his first wife, Susan, died leaving two children, a boy, John Albert, and a girl, Sarah Elizabeth. Elizabeth took John Albert and Susan's parents, Jacob and Sarah Hill Strong, raised Sarah Elizabeth.

Elizabeth and Henry's first son, George Harrison Mower, was born in little cottonwood, the 25th of July 1852. Their next two children, William Ezra, (born the 10th of November 1854), and John Lisbon born the 9th of January 1859), were born at Springville where the family lived until 1862 when they moved to Fairview, Sanpete County. Besides her own little brood, she took to heart and home children from two others of her husband's wives when these children were left motherless. John Albert before mentioned, and Henry and

Charles, children of Henry by his wife, Alxice Burton came to live with her. These she loved as her own and the affection they all bore her was acute evidence of her devoted care. Her sympathetic heart could not be content while there was a child in need of love and so it was, as her own were leaving the home nest, that she took another to rear, a little girl three years old, Emma Jane Weiller (or Weiler), whom she raised to womanhood. When Emma Jane was about ten or twelve years of old, a man by the name of De Witt was left alone with three children, two girls and a boy. The boy was deformed and a very bad cripple. No one wanted him and Elizabeth told that when he brought the boy to her he, (the father), told how tempted and tried he had been. He had taken the baby to the river when it was asleep with the intention of drowning him, but as he held him over the bank of the stream the baby opened his eyes and smiled and the father turned back with the child clutched tightly in his arms. Elizabeth's heart again reached out and six month old Jimmy came to live with her.

It must have been Jimmy's complete dependence that appealed to her so. Certainly there was little else to draw one to him. A grotesque looking creature, as he propelled himself about, he resembled a frog more than a human and even had to be helped into a chair. He did learn to feed himself after a fashion and to one acquainted with his jargon, make himself understood. Tenderly she cared for him, defending him against the anger his pranks would incur in playmates, carefully mending worn knees and seat in his clothes with her beautiful stitches until her strength was gone. Jim was now about fifteen years old and too large for her to lift about. No one else was willing to assume the burden Elizabeth had carried all these years and so they were separated, Jim was taken to the County infirmary and Elizabeth to her son's home. (John Wesley Bills)

Love is a tonic both to the one giving and the one receiving. Deprived of its healing and sustaining potency either may wither and die and so it proved with these two. Neither survived long after the separation, but the legacy Elizabeth left to her many descendants is priceless, and an ideal worthy of adulation in all of our lives.

This tribute to my great-grandmother would hardly be complete without an account of one of the last acts of love she was able to accomplish. A few years before her passing, a nephew from Missouri seeking health for his daughter in the arid West advertised for news of the whereabouts of his Aunt "Betsy" Hall who had joined the Mormons. He brought the first news Elizabeth had of her parents, brothers, and sister since she left their door as an outcast.

They had all died years before, victims of consumption and she alone had been spared to live to old age. With the love and forgiveness so typical of her character she cast away all resentment and, going to the Manti Temple, performed the ordinances that would open the prison doors--if they would receive it--and thus became a savior to her fathers house.

She died at the home of her eldest son, Wesley Bill, in Milburn, Utah the 17th of March 1897, at the age of 77 years, beloved by all who knew her.

Compiled by Elmira Mower and Elzada Fietkau Evans