

Biographical Sketch Of Margaret (Maggie) McKean Ivins Bentley 1868



Margaret McKean Ivins Bentley, daughter of Israel Ivins and Julia Hill, was born on March 31, 1868 at St. George, Utah, where her parents had been called to settle by President Brigham Young. Margaret was the sixth child in a family of eight. Her father had been set apart by President Young to be the doctor of the newly established community. Israel Ivins finally built a large brick home in St. George, which was shared by his two families, and in which Margaret, or Maggie, lived during her childhood.

When Maggie had completed her schooling in St. George, she was sent to Salt Lake to the University of Deseret for one year. Here she boarded with Aunt Rachel Grant, whose son Heber had built her a nice home on Second

West and South Temple Streets. Maggie's painting attracted the attention of George Ottinger, her art teacher, who gave her much encouragement and considered her a promising student.

During the summer of 1885, after her return to St. George, Maggie took lessons in telegraphy from Joseph Charles Bentley, the young operator in St. George, and the two became good friends. That fall Maggie accepted a teaching position at Pine Valley, about 35 miles north of St. George. After school she frequently went to the telegraph office and sent messages to the operator at St. George, who would sometimes drive up and bring her home for a visit. This romance culminated in their marriage in the St. George Temple, June 30, 1886.

The newly-weds set up housekeeping in a house next door to Joseph's father, Richard Bentley, and across the street north of the block on which the Stake Tabernacle was built. A year or two after their marriage, Joseph Bentley went to Ogden to keep books for Zion's Cooperative Wagon and Machine Company. For the next two or three years Maggie and her children would spend the summers in Ogden and the winters in the milder climate of St. George.

In 1892, Joseph C. Bentley moved his wife and three children (Ellice, Rita, and Charles Joseph) to Mexico, where the Church had founded a mission a few years earlier. Settling in the picturesque little town of Colonia Juarez, Joseph Bentley purchased a quarter of a block near the center of town, on which were two small frame houses, some grapes, and a few fruit trees.

During the first winter in Mexico, baby Charlie took pneumonia and died. This was a trying experience for Maggie, as her husband was away on Church business and she had no relatives or close friends in the colonies. Within three or four years Joseph Bentley constructed a fine two-story home of red brick for his family. Here Maggie made good use of her artistic abilities, by decorating the dining room walls with beautiful mural paintings.

Maggie and children accompanied her husband to Salt Lake for October Conference in 1894 and then spent the winter in St. George with Maggie's parents. It was here that Richard Ivins Bentley was born. When her husband came back to April Conference the following spring, Maggie and children went back with him. When they returned to Colonia Juarez, they found the new brick house completed and already occupied by Aunt Gladys. Maggie and Aunt Gladys, who was her cousin, continued to share this home for several years. Each had separate apartments but shared the parlor. Ralph Edison Bentley was born in September 1897 but died with pneumonia when but a few months old.

Maggie and Aunt Gladys helped out with the family income by giving private lessons in music and art and by boarding teachers and students

of the Juarez Stake Academy. Maggie also taught in the Academy for a year or two. She played the piano, organ, guitar, mandolin, and violin, using her talent freely in the various Church organizations and composing the music for many of the Academy songs. She also studied Spanish and translated some of the Church hymns into that language. She loved art and painted hundreds of pictures and gave them away to friends and relatives. She also sold a few. For years she served as ward Primary President and Stake Primary President.

Four more sons were born to Maggie Bentley: Valentine Ivins in 1899, Israel Ivins in 1901, Leal in 1905 (he died at the age of nine months), and Anthony Ivins in 1908. After Aunt Gladys died in 1906, Maggie took Gladys' children to raise with her own.

Maggie lived through the very trying period of the Mexican Revolution, having to leave the country with her children in 1912 and again in 1914. Over the years she made several trips to Canada to visit her daughter Ellis and to California to see her daughter Rita. She spent the winter of 1924-25 in Provo, keeping house for several of the Bentley boys who were attending the Brigham Young University.

During the last few years of her life Maggie had rather poor health. She passed away at her home on January 14, 1928 and was buried in the Colonia Juarez Cemetery.