

ELIZA MARIE GEDDES

By Lois England Thomas

Eliza Marie Geddes was born in historic old Plain City, Weber, Utah, September 25, 1873. She was the second child of Emma Hope Stewart and William Geddes. Emma, the young widow of John Stewart, married William Geddes in polygamy. She was the third wife. There were eight children born to this union: Robert, Eliza, Susie, David, Hyrum, Joan and Gertrude. When Eliza was six weeks old, her father was called to fill a mission in his native Scotland and from there he was transferred to preside over the Australian Mission; therefore, the family were required to carry on much of the time without him.

Since she was the eldest girl, Eliza had to assume early responsibility in the pioneer home. One of the earliest tasks was to peel potatoes and set the table for breakfast. This was done in the evening for the family were early risers and early breakfasts were the custom. She was taught to work and to honor and respect her parents, for William Geddes was a believer of discipline and order in his home.

One of the tragic incidents she recalled was the illness and death of her youngest sister, Gertrude. When Gertrude was ten she was stricken with a disease which must have been polio, for the child was paralyzed; the doctor ordered her buried up to her armpits in mud. Eliza says she can never forget the child's screams. It has been a horror all of her life.

In 1880, when she was seven years old, the family moved to Preston by way of a covered wagon. On the way Eliza contracted a severe case of the measles. She was left with bad eyes. She remembers an incident connected with the trip, how she cried at the thought of leaving her Plain City home and friends. When the wagon was ready to leave, no Eliza was to be found. One of her friends had hidden her.

Eliza was baptized 6 August 1882. She spent a typical pioneer childhood with much struggle, responsibility and few pleasures.

In 1884 when she was eleven, the Geddes family returned to Plain city to live. Here Eliza recalls another incident. One day she was holding willows for a boy to chop. The ax must have slipped because it severed her finger on the left hand. A neighbor man passing by put the finger back in place and covered it with a wad of chewing tobacco which he took from his mouth, then he bound it up tight. The finger grew back in place.

When she was a young girl she went to Ogden to work for Judge McGinnes. It was here that she met and was courted by her future husband, William T. England. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple, 5 September 1894. Her husband was a butcher but because of his health he left Ogden for a homestead in Moreland, Idaho. The family made the move in 1894.

Billy

Eliza remained in Plain City until her first child was born, 15 July 1895. That fall she joined her husband in Moreland. The People's Canal was not complete and there was no water for the land, so they moved to Blackfoot where William worked for MacTucker's in the meat business. Later he and his brother freighted by team and wagon from Blackfoot to Salmon, Idaho.

Eliza's first home in Moreland was a small one-room log cabin with a dirt roof. Life was hard, but Eliza was used to work and she was one of those women who are master homemakers. She could have made a comfortable and attractive home under any circumstances. She could have made a palace out of this little humble hut, and she did. She was gifted with initiative and resourcefulness; she proved a pearl of great price to her husband and to the struggling little community. Lurlean, her second child was born in this humble log house in Moreland on 26 October 1897 and another daughter, Violet was born 16 February 1903. The little family was very busy.

On February 29, 1904 Eliza was set apart as treasurer of the Moreland Relief Society. She was set apart as president of the Relief Society, a position which she held for ten years and was released from it on 14 October, 1917.

In the fall of 1907, she moved into her modern brick home where her daughter, Lois was born 5 October, 1907.

It seems that the "back is made for the burden", for this women, in spite of her slight physical stature, accomplished almost unbelievable things during her life. During her years as Relief Society president, her responsibilities were tremendous; for in those days, the sisters had the responsibility of caring for the sick and laying out the dead. Night after night and day after day she was on errands of mercy. In addition to these duties she boarded school teachers and relatives passing through. She also made her home the center for many parties for young people.

On 10 November 1907 her husband was sustained as the Bishop of the Moreland Ward, a position which he held for twenty years. His position brought added duties to this busy woman and she became the ward mother as her husband became the father of the ward. During this time she had two more children, Priscilla, born 20 July 1912 and Walter, born 17 February 1917.

William was in the stock and sheep business and during the summer the cattle and sheep were run in the headwaters of the Blackfoot River, where they purchased land. This meant more pioneering for Eliza, for she often came back and forth on weekends to attend her church duties and care for her home place. Thus this good couple passed the years in toil and church service, and in the service of their fellowman. But they were happy years, for they loved each other dearly, and they each made the other feel that no sacrifice was too great. Every place they went was made better for their presence.

Eliza's industry was indicated in everything she did. Her beautiful flower garden, the berry patches, the rows and rows of canned fruit and vegetables in her well-stocked cellar, the well-kept yard, immaculate homemaking, her bounteous table from which no one was ever turned away hungry, all testified to the world that truly she was indeed a "Worthy woman whose price is far above rubies." Truly the heart of her husband trusted in her. They were a devoted couple. No one ever heard an unkind or harsh word between them.

In August 1944 William underwent an operation for hernia; Eliza was at his side day and night. After the crisis passed she left the hospital at the doctor's recommendation to get a night's rest. About four o'clock that morning a blood clot silenced the great heart of a great man. Eliza never recovered from the shock. She lives in a daze of the present and the past. She began declining rapidly in health and after sustaining a series of strokes she has finally lost control of her body and mind; yet even in her helpless condition her industrious fingers never are still. She is at present living with her daughter Lois, at Thomas. She has 31 grandchildren and 29 great grandchildren.

She died the 11 September, 1957 in Moreland and was buried in the Moreland Cemetery, 14 September, 1957.