

**A History of  
Mary Caroline Roper Finlinson**  
1875-1963



The eldest of ten children to be born to Alvin and Martha Lydia Lyman Roper was a girl. She was born at Oak City, Millard County, Utah, 28 July 1875, at her Grandmother Lyman's home. Grandmother's house was built of adobes. This baby girl was blessed 8 August 1875, and given the name of Mary Caroline by Platte D, Lyman. She was named for her grandmothers, Mary Ann Grayson Roper and Caroline Ely Partridge Lyman. Mary never cared for such a long name and as a result gave her own children one name only.

Mary's parents had gone to St. George as soon as they were married to work on the temple. Mary's mother went back to Oak City to be with her mother for the blessed event of Mary's arrival. Her father stayed in St. George to work on the temple and worked there a year before returning to Oak City, where he built a home for his family in the south part of town on Main Street. This home consisted of a large room and lean-to and was made of adobes. Her father had a ranch on Fool Creek Flat and the family spent the summers at this ranch. If they moved before school was out in the early spring, Mary stayed with one of her grandmothers. Many times, she was very homesick.

She received all the schooling that was to be had at that time in Oak City. There were no grades but the students were in classes according to readers, the fifth reader being the highest. Mary M. Lyman was her first teacher, followed by J. A. Vance who taught for three years. Ormas Bates taught one winter and the next teacher was L. C. Neil. (L. C. Neil sometime later committed suicide in Richfield, Utah).

Mary was baptized 6 September 1883, by C. H. Jensen and confirmed 9 September 1883, by George Finlinson.

At the early age of twelve years, Mary started to make her own clothes and helped to clothe the younger members of the family. She bought the first pair of shoes that her sister, Twiss, ever had. Twiss, never having had shoes on her feet before, couldn't walk in them. The summer that Mary was twelve years of age, she was stricken with whooping cough. She was just recovering from the disease when she went to work for her Aunt Kate Walker, her father's sister. Mary didn't have much vitality and Aunt Kate was sorely tried. This was Mary's first experience working away from home. She was there six weeks and received seventy-five cents a week.

In June 1889, Mary went to Salt Lake City to work for her Aunt Annie Anderson, her mother's sister. Mary was then fourteen years of age. She rode on a wagonload of apples with Eddie and Jode Anderson. The apples were "Hard Head" variety and had been harvested the fall before. The apples were sold for one dollar per bushel. This was Mary's first trip to Salt Lake and it took four days to go. At night, beds were made in the wagons. Aunt Annie lived near Liberty Park.

Eldon was born that summer. Uncle Fred and Aunt Ann Lyman came to Salt Lake to celebrate the 4th of July. Mary went with them up Emigration Canyon to Wagoner's Brewery, a resort, to spend the day. During her stay in Salt Lake City, she became good friends with the Thomas' and visited with them in their home quite often. Just before returning to her home in Oak City, Mr. Thomas proposed to her. He wanted her to be his second wife.

In September Aunt Annie went back to Oak City and Mary went to work for her Uncle Walter Lyman's wife, Sylvia. Aunt Sylvia died from complications in childbirth while Mary was there. Grandmother Lyman and Aunt Harriet came to attend the funeral. When they returned home, Mary went with them. She had been away from home six months.

In the spring of 1891 she worked for Flora Nielson when Florence was born. That summer she stayed with her Aunt Annie most of the time. The following spring, 1892, Mary went to Salt Lake City to take a course in dressmaking from Eliza Breeze. The class lasted one month. This course proved to be very valuable to her for, among many other things, she learned to make her own patterns using tape measure, yardstick and newspapers. The styles were chosen from Sears, Roebuck and Montgomery catalogs. After this month spent in Salt Lake City, Mary went to Ogden to help her Aunt Annie again. Aunt Annie was living on the "underground" which was the reason she was moving around so much. Her mother usually went with her because Annie wouldn't go alone. Lois was born at this time. Mary was also with Lois when she died years later. Mary was the only person who was with Lois at the time of her birth and death. They all went back to Oak City in August. Mary then went to work for Martha Ann, Uncle Peter Anderson's other wife. By this time Mary's wages had been raised to two dollars a week. In November, she went home to be with her mother when her sister Frankie was born. Mary was then seventeen.

She started school one winter and had only gone a short time when Alex Melville, who was then teaching in Oak City, decided the town needed two teachers. Mary was chosen to help him. They taught in the same room in the old adobe schoolhouse. The next year she taught in a log house that was located on the Shipley lot. Rufus Day taught that year too.

In the spring of 1893 Mary went to work for Emm Nielson in Leamington. Emm's son Spencer was born at this time. As soon as Emm was able to travel, they went to Salt Lake City to attend the dedication of the temple. Mary had a card to admit her signed by President Wilford Woodruff. She remembered the people attending the dedication, waving their handkerchiefs and shouting, "Hal-le-lu-jah". In the summer of 1893 she worked for Annie (Jode) Anderson when Edna was born.

Collier Lovell was the first boy who took Mary to a dance. She was then eleven years old. That same winter she went to a dance with Jeff Finlinson. The year that she was thirteen, George Finlinson wanted to take her to a dance in Leamington. His sister Maggie, who was two years older than Mary, was going with Eddie Q. Dutson. Mary's mother didn't approve, so they didn't go. Mary went with George off and on from then on. She went with Will Lovell in between times. Rufus Day, Newel's father, came to Oak City to teach school, and Mary went with him when George was out of town. She went with Rufus to a dance in Leamington.

One nice September evening George took Mary for a stroll and proposed to her. She accepted but said she would not get married until she was twenty. She was then eighteen. Soon after this Rufus Day told her he was going on a mission and if there was nothing serious between her and George he would like her to wait for him. Mary, of course, was already engaged to George.

The winter before they were married, they went to a dance at the Smelter Boarding House in Leamington. There was a large crowd attending the dance and they had a good time. The only music attainable at the time were the fiddle and the organ. Sometimes there were harmonicas and accordions to change off the fiddler. Mary, Maggie, Joe Talbot and Jim Dutson took turns chording on the organ. The fiddler was paid two dollars and the ones chording on the organ played for free. The tickets were twenty-five cents and they had a hard time paying expenses.

Mary worked for her Aunt Nell Roper Lyman in the winter of 1894, then went to Leamington to work for Oversons. Oversons ran the boarding house when the smelter was running. In May 1895, Mary went back to Oak City to be with her mother when her brother Kirt was born. Kirt was her mother's tenth child.

Mary was married to George E. Finlinson, 9 October 1895, in the Salt Lake Temple. John R. Winder performed the ceremony. They went to Salt Lake on the train. While in Salt Lake they stayed with George's sister Libbie and husband, Walter C. Lyman. They wanted to have Mary's uncle, Francis M. Lyman, perform the ceremony but he couldn't until the tenth. They had already made arrangements to go to visit the Thompson relatives on the tenth. They were in the temple twelve hours. That evening Libbie invited the Follands, Wests, Thomas' and some of her neighbors for a party in honor of George and Mary. Someone in the group had a guitar and they were all good singers. They sang, "The Poor Married Man" along with other songs. Stories were told and some recitations were given. Libbie served ice cream and cake. The next day they went to Cottonwood as planned. Mary's Uncle Charl Roper was there and nearly teased "the life out of them". The following day they were invited to the Follands for dinner. The Follands were relatives of Aunt Rachel Rawlinson Roper. On the twelfth of October, they returned to Oak City. The town band was practicing when they arrived in town.

After their practice, they came and serenaded the newlyweds. George promised to give a wedding dance and the band members left.

Their wedding dance was not held until December 27th so that George's brother Joseph and his sister Libbie could attend. Charlie Talbot and Mary's father, Alvin Roper, played for the dance and Uncle Jodie Lyman managed it. The dance cost them four dollars and fifty cents. Mary's wedding dress was made of cream "albatross" with a brocaded silk collar and belt. The material in the dress cost sixty cents a yard and the trimming was one dollar and fifty cents per yard. It took six yards of material for the petticoat, which in 1973 is in Angie's possession. They received many especially nice wedding gifts; some of the nice dishes are still in the family.

They started housekeeping in the south room of the Finlinson home. Here they lived until after their first child, Amy, was born 6 January 1897. Mary's sister Frankie was nearly six years of age and went around saying, "I'm Aunt Frank now. Don't that sound smart?" In the meantime, George had built a three room, adobe home



*The Home where I was born. The addition on the right was built by Uncle Joe.*

on the lot just south of his parent's home. The house was ready for occupancy in the summer but Mary felt she should be close to Aunt Harriet who was sharing her baby Gene's food with Amy. They slept in the home on their wedding date anniversary, October 9, but didn't move in until the twelfth. They would have moved sooner but George was serving on the jury in Fillmore. They really appreciated having a home of their own after two years of living with someone else. Later a lean-to kitchen was added to the house. It was while this addition was being made that Angie sat down in a tub containing boiling water poured from a teakettle. After the water had been poured, Mary discovered that there was no cold water in the house and had to go to the ditch a half block away for it.

Five of their nine children were born in this home. Esdras was born 7 April 1899; Angie, 3 July 1901; Martha, 19 February 1904; Edward 13 May 1906; and Marvin, 29 August 1908. In time, this home was surrounded by beautiful flowers and trees. There was an Early Harvest apple tree at the south, Catalpa trees in front, a climbing rose by the front gate and hollyhocks in the northeast corner of the lot. At the back of the house was an underground cellar where the milk, butter, vegetables and fruit were stored.



*The new home we moved here when Marvin was a baby. mabel Roper mother angie gene love amy melon the baby. gene's sister*

As the family increased, there was need for a larger home to accommodate the growing family. A new home was built which was located nearly a block east and a half a block north of the old home. The family moved here when Marvin was a baby. It was hard to leave the old home, with its beautiful surroundings that Mary had worked so hard to obtain, but they were thrilled to have the new home. The new home had an "upstairs" that fascinated the children. The first night in the new home, Edward cried and wanted to go home.

Mary worked very hard to replace the horehound that was everywhere with lawn and flowers. Soil had to be hauled in which was

brought in a wheel barrel from the old creek bed south of the house. Of course, her older children were pressed into service in many of these projects. There were four more children born to the family after moving to the new home. Lucy was born 16 September 1910; Lenox, 17 October 1912; Melva, 11 February 1915, and a little premature boy which didn't live was born in September of 1917.

Besides taking care of the lawns, shrubs and flowers, Mary raised a big vegetable garden. One year she raised enough dry beans to fill a bushel sack after they were threshed. She bottled beans, peas, beets and corn from her garden; she also dried corn, prunes, apples and peaches. Her cellar was filled to the brim with jellies, preserves, pickles, vegetables and fruits of every kind. These number up to one thousand quarts.

Mary's cooking was a real art and done on a big scale. Besides her family of eleven, there was hired help and many times guests to feed. During the many years that her husband was Stake Superintendent of the YMMIA there were many General Board members as well as many BYU professors, which ate at her table. For many years she made sixty loaves of bread each week. After Esdras' wife Ethel died in 1940, she kept his family in bread for seven years. The pies baked numbered sixteen to twenty at a time and were of many varieties. Her husband loved pies of all kinds. Her specialties were rice and bread puddings, and "Lumpy Dick". Many times, she had to chop the wood for the cook stove if the men folks had neglected to do it.

She processed the pork that was killed each winter. The hams and bacon were cured in brine, lard rendered, sausage and head cheese were made by her. All of these things were done without benefit of modern conveniences. At one time, the men "put up ice" in the winter and used it in an ice box to keep the milk cool. Later an iceless refrigerator was improvised by tacking burlap on a wooden crate, the bottom of the burlap in pans of water. When the refrigerator was placed in the shade, the milk was nice and cool. Many times, milk was put in containers and kept in the ditch across the street. Electricity came to Oak City in the early twenties. Mary bought her first electric refrigerator in 1935. Her boys worked for Parley Roper to make a down payment. She did get running water piped into her home in 1915 and was one of the first in Oak City to have a modern bathroom. Before that time, all water used was hauled in cans in a little wagon from across the street.

It was no small matter trying to keep the family clean. The weekly wash was an all-day job. Mary did have a "hand washer"; a convenience that many women didn't have at that time. When the children were small, William Chestnut was hired to come and turn the washer. The first washer had a handle on top that was pushed from one side to the other and this turned the "dolly" inside the washer tub. The washer tub was of wood and had to be kept soaked in between washings so it wouldn't leak. The next washer had a wheel on the side with a handle. Will would quit on the dot of twelve whether the washing was finished or not. As soon as the children were old enough, they replaced Brother Chestnut. They turned each batch of clothes three hundred and fifty times. Each batch of clothes was run through the washer twice and the white clothes were boiled on the stove in a copper boiler. This boiler was oblong and covered two plates on the stove. Bluing, either ball or liquid, which ever suited the individual taste, was used in the final rinse water to keep the white clothes from turning yellow. The soap was made from scrap fat or grease and boiled with lye in a big brass kettle on an open fire outside. About 1925 gasoline motors came aluminum washers, and what a relief.

Mary gathered rags, dyed, tore and sewed them together, which were wound into balls and wove the first carpet she ever had. She wove it on Addie Van Leuvin's loom. She also made throw rugs. These carpets were placed over fresh straw for pads and stretched then tacked down. They were taken up once a year and new straw placed underneath. Straw was also used to fill mattresses for the beds. Early in 1900 she trimmed hats. Feathers were gathered from the chicken coops, cleaned, and used for hat trimmings.

When her children were growing up, Mary knit all their stockings, hoods, mittens, etc. She made coats and many articles of clothing out of the best parts of worn clothing. Her quilts were all made by her and she made wide lace for her baby clothes and pillowcases. Besides sewing for her family, she sewed for others all the time. She helped all of her sisters-in-law with their sewing, as well as Harriet (Brig) Lovell and many others. Wedding dresses were made by her for Agnes Anderson Lyman, Mary Walker Finlinson, Celia Hartley, Rachel Finlinson Nielson, Hettie Roper Johnson, Ida Roper Nielson, her daughter Angie and others.

In later years Mary made dozens of beautiful crocheted pieces that she gave away. She made "Queen Anne" table covers for Amy, Angie, Martha and finished one for Ruth Faust, whose mother died before finishing it. These were made after she was seventy-five years of age. She also made fifty temple aprons in the last ten years of her life.

During all her life Mary was active in her church duties. At the age of thirteen she was assistant secretary in the YWMIA. Later she was secretary and then a counselor to her Aunt Nell Roper Lyman in the same organization. From June 1898 to 1904 she was secretary of the Oak City Relief Society. When Edward was a baby, she helped Caddie Anderson in the Kindergarten Department in Sunday School. At the time Caddie was released, Ellen Nielson Lyman asked her to help in the same department but she felt with her small children that she couldn't. The class presented Caddie and Mary with a volume of Longfellow's poems.

It was at the time when Lucy was a baby that Maggie Jacobson (Lewis) came to the home and asked Mary to be a counselor in the YWMIA. Mary was very much surprised but accepted. By that time the older children could help out with the younger ones. Four years later Maggie went to Salt Lake to study music and Mary was asked to be president. This seemed to be a big undertaking for her. Melva was the baby and she had eight other children. Amy was then eighteen and was attending high school in Hinckley, Utah. But "where there is a will there is a way" proved to be true in her case. While she was president the girls in this organization, besides the regular activities, put on programs, skits, and sold ice cream to earn money to pay the expenses of a temple excursion each year. At one time in her early teens Amy felt that she had about all the baby sitting she could take and told her mother she thought her mother had enough at home to do without working in the mutual. Mary gave Amy to understand that "when you are asked to do anything in the church, consider it an opportunity to develop yourself and render service to your Heavenly Father." Amy realized later that this gave her mother an avenue of escape from the daily home duties. Mary was president of the Oak City YLMIA for fifteen years and did her best. She was released 25 May 1930.

After being released from the MIA, Mary served on the work committee in the Relief Society for fifteen years. She was class leader in the Adult Women's class, and was a Beehive leader.

Mary was never known to refuse to help a neighbor in sickness, sewing or whatever was asked of her. No matter how much she had to do, she would leave it and give the help needed. There were few deaths in town that she did not help with the burial clothing. After her mother died, Mary was with her sisters and others in childbirth and serious illnesses.

One interesting incident in her life was the birth of Caddie Anderson's twins, Wilbert and Elbert, on her birthday. She made each of them a dress and when they were a year old, she made short dresses for them. When the boys were old enough, they brought her birthday presents. One year they brought a bucket of apricots and another year a berry set. On her 54th birthday, Elbert brought a painting he had painted.

Mary's life is an example of faith and she tried to instill that in her family. She came through many serious sicknesses herself and many with her children. She used consecrated oil inwardly and outwardly before doctors were available. Satan tried to destroy her life, but through her faith in administration by the power of the Priesthood, her life was spared. Dr. Broadus told her in 1917 she had a tumor, also ulcers, but she never had a surgeon's knife on her body.

Ten days after Amy was born, as Mary was preparing to get out of bed for the first time, not because she felt like it but because she thought she was supposed to, she was stricken with chills. She lapsed into a semi-coma and felt like she was in a different world, yet she knew what was going on. Her Grandmother Lyman was with her and thought she was dying. A few days later Dr. Beatie of the State Board of Health came to town and was called in. He diagnosed her trouble as erysipelas in her breasts. He instructed them to use one tablespoon of carbolic acid to one quart of water and apply hot packs. She was in bed five weeks but following the doctor's orders, the erysipelas cleared up. As a result of her illness, the rest of her nine children were fed on one breast.

They had a terrible time trying to raise Amy. They knew very little about supplementary feeding. As Aunt Harriet had baby Gene, who was four months older than Amy, she acted as wet nurse and fed Amy in the daytime, and then cow's milk was warmed over a coal oil lamp at night for her. While Aunt Harriet was nursing Amy, Gene got the whooping cough and the other children had the measles, but by being very careful, Amy didn't get either disease. She did have pneumonia when she was a month old, however. Mary stayed with her Grandmother Lyman most of the summer to be near Aunt Harriet.

In 1913 Mary had rheumatic fever, which at that time was called Inflammatory Rheumatism. She was in bed six weeks at that time. Mrs. Greathouse of Leamington, a natural nurse, recommended ground rhubarb root mixed with port wine. It was used and Mary began to get better. Silva Lovell (Harris) was afflicted at the same time with the same thing and used aspirin and recovered more quickly than Mary who didn't know about



aspirin.

It was in September of 1917 that Mary nearly lost her life again by hemorrhage when her little premature baby boy was born. The summer of 1918 was a summer to be remembered for nine cases of mumps and several cases of diphtheria. A tent was set up on the front lawn and Mary moved into it with the stricken children, finally getting the dreaded disease herself. The family was quarantined for several weeks. Angie, whose husband was in the army, kept things going inside the house. The entire house was scrubbed from top to bottom and fumigated twice.

In the winter of 1947 Mary fell on the icy back step while trying to get a bucket of coal and broke her wrist. She was never really well after that. She was hospitalized in 1952 for stomach and nervous troubles, which was thought to have been brought on by her husband's failing mental health. From that time on, one of her five daughters stayed with her to help take care of their father until he passed away 8 February 1955. After the passing of her husband, Mary did considerable traveling with her children. She made a number of visits to Seattle, Washington; up into Canada; down the coast to Los Angeles, through Arizona, and back home. The day after her eightieth birthday, 29 July 1956, in company with her three eldest children, she went back to New York to attend the Hill Cumorah Pageant. They visited all points of interest both going and returning and were gone three weeks. Amy made the remark that she wished she could take as much as her mother could to which Mary replied, "You can when you are in your second childhood." She visited and did work in the Cardston, Idaho Falls, Logan, Salt Lake, Manti, St. George, Arizona and Los Angeles Temples.

The Oak City Relief Society honored Mary on her eighty-fifth birthday with a surprise program. Her daughter Lucy gave a short history of her life, and her sisters Twiss and Frankie sang her favorite songs.

Her five daughters took turns staying with her the last three years of her life. Mary made this remark to a friend who came to call on her, "I am sure glad I raised children instead of poodle dogs.

At 4:15 A.M. on July 20, 1963, Mary Caroline Roper Finlinson passed away at her home in Oak City. Two songs that she requested to be sung at her funeral were, "As Swiftly My Days Go Out On The Wing" and "Earth With Her Ten Thousand Flowers" sang to the old tune. She was buried 23 July 1963, in the Oak City Cemetery, five days before her eighty-eighth birthday.

This history was written by her daughters Amy Finlinson Faust and Angie Finlinson Lyman. Pictures added 2017.



L. to R.: Marvin, Edward, Esdras, Melva, Lucy, Martha, Angie, Amy, Mary C.



Back row: Marvin, Angie, Esdras, Amy, Edward, Martha. Front row: George E., Mary C., Melva, Lenox, Lucy.



Amy, Esdras, Angie, Martha, Edward, Marvin.



L. to R: Lenox, Mary C., Esdras, Lucy, George E., Angie, Amy, Martha, Marvin, Edward.