

Martha Lydia Lyman Roper

1853-1922



Martha Lydia Lyman was the oldest daughter of Amasa Mason Lyman and Caroline Ely Partridge. Caroline had been married 8 years and she was worried for fear she would never have any children. She was the first plural wife of Amasa and her sisters Eliza and Lydia became his wives along with five others. She helped care for his other children and naturally yearned for some of her own.

In 1851, Amasa was called along with Charles C. Rich, David Seeley, Jefferson Hunt, and Andrew Lyttle to settle San Bernardino, California. Caroline was living in Salt Lake City and she made the journey along with others of the family. There were two companies, one led by Amasa and one by Charles C. Rich. They had 588 oxen, 336 cows, 21 head of young stock, 107 horses, and 52 mules. The journey lacked little of being as much as it took the Winter Quarters Companies to cover the distance between the Missouri River

and the Salt Lake Valley. As recorded in Amasa Mason Lyman book, they had extreme hardships with hostile Indians, lost cattle and they found it necessary to divide into companies of 10 wagons. The desert springs had great demands, some were salty, others bitter and one 50-mile stretch had no water at all. On some steep hills it took 20 teams to pull one wagon. Parley P. Pratt, who was accompanying them to fulfill a mission in California, wrote that a whole section of the long procession, teams, men and all, sank down in their tracks. "It certainly was the hardest time I ever saw."

In spite of all these hardships, Caroline was rewarded with joy in San Bernardino, when she knew she was going to have a child. Her first child was born in a home in the 14th ward in Salt Lake City, April 1, 1853. She was named Martha Lydia, after Amasa's mother, Martha Mason, and Caroline's sister, Lydia.

In 1860 she moved with her family to Farmington, Utah. One instance, she told later to her children, was that the wind was so strong it blew a window out so they put the feather bed in it to keep out the weather.

On October 8, 1862, President Brigham Young called Amasa to settle the town of Fillmore, Utah. In April 1863, the family began the journey, making a home in Fillmore where Amasa hoped to get all of family of 8 wives settled after having spent two years on a mission in England and presiding over the European Mission with Charles C. Rich. It was this mission he delivered a sermon on May 16, 1862 in Scotland which he denied the atonement of the Savior. (Millennial Star, No. 14, Vol. 24, Church Historians office.) He was brought before the First Presidency and he acknowledged his error and signed a document dated 23 January 1867, which he asked forgiveness of the Saints. Soon after he talked on the same strain. On October 8, 1867, he was deprived of his apostleship. Joseph F. Smith taking his place.

While living in Fillmore, Martha and her half-brother, Theodore took it upon themselves to help rid the home of stink-bugs. They were so numerous they made bags of denim and would fill them with the bugs and burn them.

They played a game called "Philippine nuts." Martha had been courting Orange Warner for five years and while playing this game in eating the nuts and finding two nuts in one shell, they ate them over their shoulder. She broke off with dating Orange Warner who wanted to marry her and went out with Bill Ray whom she met playing this game. But her mother disapproved of her going out with him.

Martha made a visit to Oak City, staying with her half-brother Platte D. Lyman. (He lived where Reed and Zella Lovell's home is now.) She saw a young man walk down the sidewalk and remarked what a big nose he had. She wasn't too impressed by him. But this man was Alvin Roper who later became her husband.

Martha's schooling commenced in Salt Lake City and she graduated at 13 years old from school in Fillmore. When she was 16 years old she had an attack of Epilepsy, but she didn't have any more until after she was married.

The three Partridge sisters left Amasa Mason Lyman when he was excommunicated from the church. They moved on 7 May 1872 to Oak City where their sons had property interests, bringing their mother to live with them. Martha tells of a lesson in discipline she received from her mother. She, with 9 or 10 other children, took dried Potawatamees from an aunt and her mother made her go back and ask forgiveness.

After a courtship with Alvin Roper they left in a covered wagon with his brother, Harry, and wife Cornelia for Salt Lake City. They were married in the old Endowment House by Wilford Woodruff. Soon after their return Alvin was called to St. George to work on the temple, along with Soren Christensen and wife Caroline Nielson Christensen (later Rawlinson). Martha became pregnant and very sick. She remembers that the only thing that seemed to help her nausea was some sour pickles a neighbor had in a barrel in the back of her house, she was welcomed to use. The first child was born 28 July 1875 at her mother's home. The baby girl was named Mary Caroline after both her grandmothers. After two years working on the temple, Alvin came back and he and Martha continued to live at her mother's while a home was being built of adobe for them where later his brother Charl Roper lived and where Austin Lovell lives now (1959).

This was their winter home and summers were spent on the flat. Alvin freighted to Pioche with his brother-in-law Simeon Walker for a time and the family was left alone much of the time. One night the family was sitting in front of the fireplace to keep warm and Martha had another Epileptic spell and she fell on the rock hearth, her hair almost touching the hot coals. Mary, who was 9 years old and her sister, 7 years old, managed to rescue her from the heat. Martha continued to have these spells so her mother took her baby, Caddie, to raise which continued until she was married at 17 and a half years old.

They endured many hardships and had scanty food. Out at the flat they lived in a one room log house with a dirt roof and floor. When it rained, mud would come through. The south wind blew always it seemed. They built a lean-to on the west with a big fireplace to keep warm in the fall and early spring. They had to haul water to use from the canyon in 20 gallon barrels, which was an all day job. Naturally they used it sparingly and the wash water was used on the trees and shrubs. Their main diet was bread, potatoes, water gravy and molasses, and milk only in the summers when there was food for the cows. One winter the family lived with Grandma Lyman when Effie was real sick and Alvin was away. It was called the "hard winter" as the snow was so deep there was no feed for the animals. They had about 20 chickens they could raise food for them.

Hettie, Ida, Lem and Bert were born at Charles' place, Twiss at Grandma Lyman's. Alvin traded part of his flat for Charles' Leamington property and moved to Leamington in October 1899. Twiss was two weeks old at that time. Frankie and Kirt were born there.

Martha's church activities included the following.

First secretary in first organization of Relief Society, May 1874.

Councilor to Rebecca Jacobson in the Primary.

Taught the first Religion Class in Relief Society and taught that part of Noah's posterity were the Chinese and Japanese people.

Councilor to Mary M. Lyman in the Mutual.

President of Leamington Relief Society. (First counselor was Mary Textorius Nielson.)

Officer in Religion Class.

Martha learned how to make old soft soap often in Brigham Young's home. She could knit and made over many clothes for her children, which was sent her by her more well-to-do relatives in Salt Lake City. She made quilts and carded all the wool for the batts. She made rugs in many designs and patterns, spun yarn on her spinning wheel and wove carpets on her loom. She made crochet lace and embroidery work and hardanger. Her oldest granddaughter, Amy Finlinson, has the last piece of embroidery and lace work she did as she gave it to her as a wedding present.

Her cooking was an art. She used to say, "The best cooks are those who can make a meal out of nothing as everyone can cook if they have everything to cook with."

Her baking powder biscuits were delicious, the baking powder she made by combining cream of tartar and corn starch. Charlie Indian came to her to make him some baking powder. For soda she used white alkali gathered from Deseret to make Salaradus Biscuits, which were also delicious.

For a while she freighted goods from Leamington to Oak City for her brother Fred Lyman's store. She drove horses with either buggy or wagon.

Martha was a natural nurse. She was always going among the sick. She helped bring all her grandchildren up until her health failed. She helped Mary Ann Partridge for many years nurse her husband, Jonathan, who suffered with cancer. She nursed her sister-in-law Ann Lyman after her husband, Fred, passed away, and took her to Fillmore for relief.

She was always in smallpox cases and children's diseases. She nursed Pheona Oakerman in Leamington through typhoid fever, which was a severe case. Pheona craved oranges but she was unable to get them for her. She doctored her patients with lobelia, laudanum, Epsom salts, canker medicine and made her liniment.

Martha Lydia Lyman was a woman of great faith and she witnessed many healings through the Priesthood and spiritual faith. She was an ardent reader of the scriptures to her husband and nine children. She made every effort to instill her strong testimony of the gospel in her children and encouraged them in every way to be active in the church. She has related many faith promoting instances to her posterity. Perhaps the most satisfying one to her was when her father, Amasa Mason Lyman, came to her in a dream wherein he was calling for help. She heard and saw him and had the impulse to embrace him but he warned her there was a great, yawning chasm between them, which made it impossible.

He requested her to appeal to his son, Marion (Francis Marion who was an apostle), to have him reinstated in the church. When Marion came down on a church duty she related the instance and told him how distressed her father was and she was so impressed that she thought it was a real message.

When her mother passed away 5 May 1908 in Oak City, Marion requested Martha to relate this dream again to President Joseph F. Smith who was in attendance at the funeral. This was done at Harriet Lovell's home after the funeral. President Smith was greatly impressed and said, "Well Marion, it looks like your father has suffered long enough. We will see what can be done for him."

On January 12, 1909, in the Salt Lake Temple, this record was recorded.

Francis Marion Lyman...Proxy for baptism of Amasa Mason Lyman...dead...

Relationship to dead...son.

Baptizer...John Henry Smith

Confirmer...President Joseph F. Smith

Witnesses...John R. Winder and Anthony H. Lund

Former blessings reconfirmed, President Joseph F. Smith, Mouth,
assisted by John R. Windam and Anthony H. Lund.

(Salt Lake Temple Baptism for the dead microfilm, Utah Genealogy Society)

In an interview Asael and George E. Lyman had in 1953 with President Joseph Fielding Smith, he said he was of the opinion that during the latter years of Amasa M. Lyman's church service he had suffered a mental breakdown to a degree that it had caused him to veer from the course he had for so long, doggedly and unwaveringly followed and that his will (President of the church) was that Amasa M. Lyman's blessing should be restored. Asael (Asael and George are great-grandsons of Martha) asked, "Brother Smith, did that restoration include all his wives that grandfather had sealed to him?" and he answered, "That included everything he ever had."

Martha lived to see all her children endowed in the temple and shortly after her youngest son, Kirt, was sealed to his wife, she became ill with heart trouble and died on April 29, 1922, at her home in Oak City, Utah, at the age of 69 years.

(Her move to Oak City and Bluff details are in the Alvin Roper history.)

Amy Finlinson Faust, Granddaughter.



Alvin and Martha Roper family



Front: Mary C., Hettie, Caddie. Back: Twiss, Ida, Frankie.