

HISTORY OF JOHN AND JANE HUNTINGTON EASTHAM

WRITTEN AND SUBMITTED TO THE DAUGHTERS OF THE UTAH PIONEERS

BY GRACE KEARL LAMBORN

John Eastham was born in Longridge, Lancashire, England, February 2, 1820. The eldest of eleven children he was born to Roger and Margaret Ogden Eastham.

While still in his teens John started working for the railroad company in Preston, Lancashire. Here he met and married Jane Huntington of Lancashire. She was the daughter of Robert Huntington and Jeanette Holden. Jane was born March 22, 1817.

John worked several years at Preston and was made an engineer on the railroad. It was here, Emma, the first of their eleven children, was born in 1841. Sometime during the year of 1842, John was transferred to Derby, Derbyshire, and during the years the family lived in Derby two other daughters, Evalina and Louise, were born.

From here, the family was transferred to Masbor, a small village across the river from Rotherham, Yorkshire. John worked at the Rotherham railroad center for about eighteen years and the following children were born there: Edith, Catharine, Marentha, Merlin (my mother), Leonora, John, Jane, Henry, and Betsy. Of the eleven children only six survived infancy: Emma, Catharine, Louise, Marentha, Merlin, and Leonora.

In 1860, Grandfather Eastham was offered a job by the English Government working on the recently completed railroad line in the West Indies; however, he had to sign for four years, which presented quite a problem since Grandmother's health was impaired and the responsibility of six daughters ranging in age from six to eighteen was quite an undertaking. The pay for the new job was very good and Grandfather was eager to accept, partly, I think, because he was an adventurer at heart.

He promised Grandmother that when he returned to England he would move the family to Zion and thus fulfill a long cherished desire of Grandmother's, to come to Utah. She became a convert to the Latter-day Saints Church in 1839.

So the family moved once more. This time to Leeds and John left for the Indies. Jane settled down to housekeeping for the children and associating herself with the members of the church. Probably the reason for her selection of Leeds as a place to live until John returned was because of the fact the church had a branch there.

Jane opened her house to the missionaries and among those who lived at her house was Joseph F. Smith, later to become President of the Church. He was young when he began that English mission. He lived with Grandmother almost three years, and she treated him like her own. He always, as long as he lived, called her Mother Eastham when he spoke of her.

During the time John was away, the two eldest girls were married. Emma married James

Ratcliffe and Louise, or Lucy as she was called, Andrew Millward. The young men were also members of the Mormon church and they were anxious to emigrate to Utah. So, Grandmother encouraged and helped them to make the journey, knowing it would be an added incentive for Grandfather to come to this country. However, he kept his work and when he returned to England began preparations for the emigration. On April 29, 1865, the family embarked on the sailing vessel "Belle Wood."

The trip was uneventful and much to everyone's surprise Grandmother, who had always been very frail was in unusually good health throughout the whole journey. They arrived at Castle Gardens, New York on the last day of May 1865. After a few days in New York and a few days by rail and steamer the family disembarked at a little town called Wyoming on the banks of the Missouri River. Here they camped for nine weeks waiting for a train of emigrants to leave for the West, and waiting also for the three wagons and teams of oxen Grandfather had ordered to haul the household goods and those things they had purchased in New York and Omaha, with which they intended to start a small General Merchandise Store in Grantsville, Tooele County, where Emma and Lucy, with their husbands, had settled.

The Captain of the company they were in on the trip across the plains was Miller Atwood. There were no accidents or deaths and very little illness, and the company arrived in Salt Lake City, November 7, 1865, having been a little over six months en route.

In 1866 John and Jane built a house in Grantsville which has been in constant use, and except for the addition of one room and a few repairs, it stands as it did almost 90 years ago. John also helped build the meeting house which is now in the second ward, and to which has been added a large wing.

John and Jane were good neighbors, good citizens and they taught their children to walk uprightly and hold steadfast to the faith.

Grandmother Jane died June 22, 1887 at Grantsville. Grandfather died December 18, 1893. Both are buried in Grantsville, Utah.

Transcript of a letter written by President Joseph F. Smith to John Eastham and children at the time of the death of Jane Eastham:

My dear Friends:

I see, by a brief notice in the Desert News, of last evening that our beloved and cherished mother in Israel, Jane Eastham, died on the 22nd instant.

I feel that I cannot suffer myself to be silent on receiving this sad news, although, perhaps, silence on my part would best become the sorrow I feel for the earthly loss we have all sustained by the departure of one so good, and true, and faithful, in all respects as Mother Eastham.

I cannot think of any woman, beyond the circle of my near Kindred, to whom I owe so much gratitude and affection as to Mother Eastham.

Her unwavering kindness, to me and all my fellow-travelers in a distant land, her generous hospitality to the servants of God; her motherly care and genuine solicitude and sympathy for the youthful elders, who ever found a Mother's welcome under her blessed roof; together with all her many noble virtues, as a woman and a saint, have endeared her, most affectionately and sincerely, to every one who knew her.

From the depths of my soul I can utter the words of the "News," "God bless Mother Eastham," and I bless her memory as beyond all price.

She was, and is, worthy of all confidence and affection.

She was always an ideal of perfect womanhood, in my mind--true, pure, gentle, and prudent--a faithful and consistent Saint of God.

What greater honor could anyone desire than that?

All her virtues were God-given, and, therefore, her own.

Nothing we could say would add to or diminish aught from, her sterling worth.

She was God's own daughter, and He loved her far more than we know how.

And, while we mourn her absence from us, no more to return to mortality, the great Father of us all, and myriads of kindred Saints behind the veil, are welcoming her gracious Spirit back to them.

Her toil, her sorrows, her pains and sufferings are past.

And, now, in the paradise of the good and pure, she happily awaits the resurrection of her precious body from the dust, to dwell in glory, immortality and eternal life.

While I drop with you the tear of sympathy and sorrow, I rejoice, with you, in the knowledge of the truth, and thank God that we shall meet again, if we are faithful, with our beloved ones who have gone before us to God, from whence they came.

Cheer up, my friends, we do not mourn as do those who have not this blessed hope.

I know that Mother Eastham has "fought the good fight" and "Kept the faith," and that, henceforth, there is laid up for her, a crown of everlasting life.

God bless her noble examples, to the good of her children, and children's children, to the latest generation!

Brother Eastham, you have my sympathy and my friendship.

I beseech of you to continue, forever, true and faithful to your covenants, with God and your companion.

Give my love to all the children.

Peace be unto them.

I know what it is to lose a mother, and they also have my heartfelt sympathy.

I sincerely hope it may be as well with all of us, as with our mother.

God bless and comfort you all, is the earnest prayer of your brother.

JOSEPH F. SMITH

(June 25th 1889)

Transcribed from a copy of the original epistle, this Sunday evening, February 1st, 1891, by request of Sister Merlin Eastham Kearn, daughter of Sister Jane Eastham, by Joseph Irwin.

"BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHO DIE IN THE LORD."

"O DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING?" "O GRAVE, WHERE IS THY VICTORY?"