

## **AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MABEL LOUISE ROBINSON BARRUS**

Born to Heber John Robinson and Jane Louise Millward Robinson of Grantsville, Utah were two children, a girl, Mabel Louise, born 3 MAY 1885 and a boy, Heber Clarence, born 2 JUN 1888.

We lived a very happy childhood. My father owned and operated one of the first steam saw mills located in the mountains west of Grantsville. We children spent much of our lives gathering flowers, shells, choke cherries, and sarvis berries from the mountainside. We had a swing over the sawdust. We could swing, then jump and play. We could watch the hired men bring in the big logs with the oxen. They would call Gee and Haw, depending upon which way they wanted the oxen to go. We could also hear the logs falling and crashing to the ground at quite a distance.

Each Saturday at twelve noon everything stopped at the mill and we would take a load of lumber home. Father drove the big black horses, Harrison and Cleveland, and mother would hold on to the brake made of a green pole and some rope. There were no roads, just a trail, the trees having been cut out of our way. The canyon was very steep and dangerous, so brother and I walked until we came to the main roads. When we got home we would clean the house, bathe, clean our shoes, often using the soot from the stove lid, which wasn't so bad.

My father was very orderly so everything was in perfect order for the Sabbath. Sunday we would go to Sunday School, and to meeting at two in the afternoon, then go home, get ready and drive to the sawmill a distance of twelve to fourteen miles. This way of life continued during the summer months until father went on his mission.

My brother and I often went to the dances with father and mother. Father played a cornet in the orchestra and mother sat on the side lines. It was not long until some of the older boys would ask me to dance and I was considered a good dancer in those days, so I started dancing very young.

I remember being asked by my Sunday School teacher to lead the class in singing when I was about eleven or twelve. I took several parts on the stage when I was very young. I was asked twice to go into Plural Marriage.

My father played the cornet very well. He played in an orchestra that introduced the Two Step, Chicago Glide, Waltz, Quadrille and others. Some of the highlights of my childhood were the orchestra practices held at our house each week, and when there was a celebration of any kind it was always started out by the brass band serenading the town at day break. Father belonged to the band. Mother was a very good cook, and also very generous, so she would prepare a breakfast for the band.

About the age of twelve we made a trip to Salt Lake City to the Golden Jubilee. Father had a new green wagon with red wheels and he hitched Harrison and Cleveland, our two beautiful horses, to it. While we were in Salt Lake City father and mother went out at night and brother and I lay in the wagon on hay to sleep and we could see the wonderful fireworks.

My grandfather Millward made brick and adobe. Always walking, he would travel about four miles to "Down on the bottoms" as they were called, where the water and alkali soil were just right. He made his forms from lumber. I can see him now, he would roll his old trousers to his knees, remove his shoes and socks and go to work. When the mud was just right, he would pour it into the molds, then each few days he would turn them over until they were dry and ready for building. Most of the first houses in Grantsville were built of these brick and adobe and these houses are still in good condition. It was the children's duty or privilege to take the lunch to the workers and I remember some of the time I was taking only bread and milk in a five pound lard bucket.

When I was about nine to twelve years old there were two great fears in my life; one was the Indians who lived on a reservation not far from Grantsville. I would hide for hours, it seemed to me, until I got the courage to come out. Even then there would be five or six Indians looking in the windows or the door when I opened it. They lived to frighten women and children. Another fear was old Hanner a half-crazed woman who liked to hide in ditches, and behind sage brush, and then jump out at you and chase you almost to the door. After I was married and was in Salt Lake with four little children she recognized me and said, "You son of a b----." She hated my great grandfather Eastham, who brought her from England, raised her, and tried to make a lady of her but failed. Today they would put her in an asylum.

My first meeting with Aldo was when my Aunt Alice Millward who had married Aldo's brother, gave a Thanksgiving dinner for the two families. Aldo was there fresh from college and he looked good to me but he went back to college in Salt Lake and I didn't see him again until the next June, when he borrowed his folks buggy and an old mare named Blackie and we took our first ride.

When father accepted the call to go on a mission. He sold his mill, oxen, wagon, horses, etc. and after paying all his debts there was not too much left, but the remainder was used to buy clothes, etc. and help him on his way.

Mother had a millinery store in the day, at night we would sell ice cream, eggs, milk, and whatever was needed. The trip from home and back gathering these things was about three miles. Mother would find time during the day to bake cake, make the ice cream, and have everything in order for evening. In this way we kept father in New York for one year. She had gall bladder trouble. The last year of father's mission was spent in West Virginia.

A few months before he was to be released he wrote to mother, saying he had a dream and he knew he would be called on another mission, a foreign mission. He was not sure if he would be able to come home before he would be called or not. Mother told him in her letter that her health was failing and he better make arrangements for his support before he left. Father's dream worried him so much that he spoke to the Mission President about it and he told him of our condition at home.

Shortly after father came home, mother was operated on for gall stones, which was a very serious operation in those days. She laid in the St, Marks Hospital in Salt Lake for twelve weeks and was not well for a year after the operation.

Father knew he had contracted tuberculosis in the south and hadn't long to live. He died 17 MAR 1901. We always believed, and so did the Mission President that he had talked to about it, that this was the mission he had dreamed about.

My heart was almost broken. I idolized my father. Never a cross word was spoken, but when he spoke you knew he meant what he said. Just before he died he bought me a six octave organ and told me to learn to play.

I didn't get as much schooling as I would have liked, financial circumstances prevented it, and I was married very young. I finished grade school and in those days you went from the grades to college. There were no High Schools. After I was married, I tried to make up for the lack of education I had received by reading good books, studying and trying to keep up with the times.

I married Aldo Benoni Barrus 8 JAN 1902 in the Salt Lake Temple. Eleven boys and two girls were born to us.

When Calvin was six months old, we started for Star Valley, Wyoming. We had an old wagon and harness made out of old pieced harness and wagon gathered up from Grandpa Barrus and the other neighbors. The wagon box was made of old lumber nailed together. We had two small horses. We loaded all our worldly possessions into this small wagon box and trailed our buggy behind the wagon and our pioneering of an almost unknown valley commenced.

We traveled, for twelve days. I would walk part of the time and carry Calvin. The canyon roads were terrible and the hitch on the buggy was not right, so when we would go down hill the buggy would run into the wheel of the wagon.

What a cold, lonely place was Star Valley, an altitude of nearly 7000 feet and fifty miles to the nearest railroad. I was seventeen years old then. I had left everybody and everything that I loved. Albert met us at Montpelier, our wagon had fallen apart.

Aldo bought some land and took up a dry farm of 160 acres. The first winter, three families went into the canyon and cut logs. We all lived in one log room. Snow was from 3 to 7 feet deep and temperatures as low as 35 to 40 degrees below zero. The men would come in at night with their clothes frozen to their bodies. After enduring these hardships, the men couldn't sell the logs. There was absolutely no money in the valley at that time, just sort of an exchange system.

When Alton was born the doctor had no equipment of any kind. He used my scissors and a piece of string for the baby. We didn't have any help. I had a nervous breakdown and was not well for a year.

Aldo and his brothers decided to go into the horse business. As they were not experienced, their losses were heavy. It took all they got off the farm to pay for the stallion that died.

When Calvin was six years old, he would harrow all day behind the plow. Dad fixed a seat on the harrow and tied Calvin on the seat.

When Lamar was a baby of two months I drove the wagon all day and loaded the grain. It was a late cold spring. I took a heavy quilt, put it over the spring seat making sort of a tent, and protection from the cold wind for Calvin and Alton. I held Lamar in my arms. Dad sat in the back of the wagon and broadcast the grain or threw it out with his hands. This was very slow planting. I also helped with the farming of the dry farm we were taking up. I helped everyday I could until my health broke.

In a deep canyon we had a one room cabin with a dirt roof. When it would rain the muddy water would come down in streams. It was during one of these storms that I gave birth to a seven months baby. Dad put a heavy quilt over the bedding and when it wouldn't hold any more dirty rain water he would take hold of one side of the quilt and let the water run off onto the floor.

We had two small rooms we lived in, down in the valley during the winter months. The bread and meat would freeze so hard during the night we would have to cut it in pieces with the ax and put it in the oven to thaw out. We burned wood and it was impossible to keep a fire all night. The quilts would be covered with frost each morning, no need for a deep freeze.

We never went hungry. We kept a cow and some chickens. Dad would go hunting and bring home an elk so we had meat during the winter. We would take our wheat to an old flour mill and have it ground. The bread was dark and we had lumpy dick a lot of the time.

Schooling was a problem. We sent the children to school on a horse when it wasn't too cold, a distance of about two miles. The children grew and were happy.

We worked in the church all this time and we had a fine dramatic company. Dad was the manager. In the winter we put on several good plays: "Silver King", "Yon Yonson", "Brother Against Brother", etc. We would take three or four children in our covered sleigh. Sometimes we had an old heater in it. We would gather up the cast going from house to house, then to the old church and recreation hall, and start a fire in the old heater. Sometimes we would take chopped wood with us in the sleigh. The men would make the fire while the women made beds for the children. Then we would get started to rehearse.

The Fairview Ward was badly in debt. The dramatic company paid all the debts. We would learn a play, then take it to some of the wards in the upper and lower valley. At times it would be 40 below zero. The snow was so deep that if someone got off the road men would have to shovel them out. The horses were white with frost.

Word from the outside world would have to come from Montpelier, Idaho which was 50 miles away. In the winter it would take a week or longer to make the journey because of the snow drifts and having to use snow shoes.

While in Star Valley, Dad was on of the Seven Presidents of Seventy and Councilor in the Sunday School. I was the organist on the Mutual for eleven years.

In star valley when our babies were born we had no help except for out neighbors. We never saw a doctor until the day of delivery. I have sat up with the sick and dying and helped dress people for burial. I have helped with many babies too.

We built a nice home and lived it one year. In the summer we carried water from a canal. In winter we melted snow to do a washing. We drank and cooked with melted snow.

Two outstanding experiences in my life were: when I had five little children and we were living on the dry farm, the doctor told my husband my heart was so bad that he should take me to lower California. I had been bedfast for a year. If I stood the trip and the change of climate wasn't too great I may live a few months or even a year. We sold some pigs we had and left five little children to shift for themselves as best they could, hoping the neighbors would be kind to them. Before leaving, Albert Barrus administered to me and told me my life would be spared. We went to the Salt Lake Temple and they gave me a blessing telling me my life would be spared. We went to Grantsville to see Brother and Sister Barrus and Grandpa gave me a wonderful blessing -- saying the Lord has heard and answered your prayers, that my life would be spared to raise my children. Three men miles apart had spoken almost the same words. I knew that I would be better so we went back to Star Valley and I was much better although the doctor advised us to move to a lower climate.

After coming to Sugar City I was very poorly, I thought I was with child, but things were unnatural. I grew to an enormous size and weight. I went to several doctors. Finally all the doctors I had been to decided on one thing, to open and find out.

The Sugar City Seventies were making their annual trip to the Logan Temple, so I went, against the doctors advice. I asked for a blessing in the temple and Brother Carlyle gave me one. During the day he came to me a second and third time, and told me to be of good cheer that all would be well with me and that I didn't have a floating tumor. From that time I started losing weight and size and in the course of six months I was normal.

I was set apart as a Relief Society Teacher and Literary Leader in 1922. I held these positions for 20 years, serving under Janet Orme and later Stella Holman who were the presidents during that period of time.

In 1923 I became a member of the relief Society Chorus and sang with them for many years. In 1926 I was asked to join the Ward and Stake Choirs and was a member until 1951 when I felt younger voices were needed. I had the privilege of singing with the Stake Choir, under the direction of John Anderson, in the Salt Lake Tabernacle. In 1940-41 I was Social Science Leader

and Chorister of the Relief Society in the Ward. Then I was chosen as second councilor to Lavina Wilding in the YWMIA. I held this position until the wards went back together again. In 1943 I was chosen as a member of the Stake Relief Society Chorus. Then I was chosen Ward Relief Society Chorister and held that position until 1950 when the Relief Society was reorganized.

I have never missed one day of leadership until the year of 1949 when a terrible blizzard blocked the roads.

On 21 FEB 1949 we were set apart as temple workers in the Idaho Falls Temple and did fifty names each during the year following our call.

I was chosen a member of the first Music Club in the Upper Snake River Valley. I have always attended funerals, leaving my work to do so. I have only missed a few and that has been because of poor health.