

GENEVA COOLEY¹



Geneva was born 8 October 1883, the ninth child and seventh daughter of Osborn Benjamin and Frances Isabell Rodebach Cooley. She was born in Joseph (Joe Town), Sevier County, Utah. It was a large family and her sister, Emily, was already married when Geneva was born. Times were hard but there was love and harmony in the home. Osborn's mother lived nearby and the children loved their grandmother dearly.

In 1889, Geneva's father took a second wife. The family suffered a great deal of persecution because polygamy was unpopular at the time. Persecution

¹ Written and compiled by Bobbie Foster Railsback with the help of her mother, Helen Young Nielsen (Geneva's daughter).

continued after her father returned from his mission for the LDS Church in 1891, so he sold the farm in Joseph and joined many LDS people who were going into exile in Old Mexico. It was in the fall of 1892, that Osborn Benjamin Cooley, his two wives and their families left Joseph.

The families arrived in Mesa, Maricopa, Arizona about thirty days later. It was here that Geneva was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 18 July 1893 by Alexander Hunsaker in the Alma Ward. She was confirmed by her father.

The families were living in tents. The tent was pitched in a grove of mesquites with a ditch running by. There were lots of Gila Monsters, lizards, Horney toads and centipedes. The centipedes would climb up the sides of the tent and the children would cut them in two with scissors and delighted in seeing the two ends run in opposite directions.

In the spring of 1894, Frances and her family went to Demming, New Mexico to meet Osborn who had already taken his other wife and family into Old Mexico. The family of Osborn and Frances arrived in Mexico in April and first camped on the river bank below Colonia Juarez. The family then moved on up to Colonia Pacheco in the mountains arriving 7 April 1894. Geneva turned eleven in October of this year.

Geneva loved to dance when she was young. She was popular and had a pleasant personality which carried throughout her life. She had long dark hair when she was young, was very attractive and had lots of boyfriends. Boyfriends would bring horses for dates and they would ride to other settlements to dances. Geneva's brother, Freeman, remembers one boyfriend in particular who had a beautiful horse and when he came to call, he would let Freeman ride the horse. Geneva made all her own clothes, helped with household chores and the garden. Her mother taught all her daughters to sew, cook, crochet and do all the other duties associated with maintaining a pioneer home.

Several of Geneva's granddaughters have shared how they enjoyed hearing her tell stories of her courting days and over the years coaxed her to tell the stories again and again.

It was about 1899 when Geneva was sixteen, that she was doing housework and taking care of children for Bishop George Hardy and his family. The baby had whooping cough and died and it was a sorrowful time for Geneva as well as the family.

Geneva married Newel Knight Young 19 Nov 1900 in Colonia Juarez, Mexico. They were married by A. F. McDonald. Geneva was 17 and Newel was 23. They had met when both were members of the same ward. Newel was married and had one child at the time. Newel was a very well-read person, a good talker and cheerful. He taught grade school in Pacheco. He was of medium build and had brown curly hair. After Geneva and Newel were married, they lived in a framed lumber building. The home was shared by Tina and her child. Each had a kitchen and a bedroom of their own.

Geneva and Newel had four children born in Mexico. They left Mexico in the summer of 1911, at the time of the Mexican uprising. On the way to Kirtland, New Mexico in mountainous country, their wagon was the last to cross a certain creek. A flash flood came and Geneva had to jump from the wagon wheel. Her oldest daughter, LaPrele was walking behind the wagon. She was about nine years old. When she saw the flash flood coming, she jumped back to the other side of the creek where she was marooned for about four hours alone in this Indian country, before Newel could cross back over to get her. Other teams were put on to pull the wagon through.

The family stopped over in Grayson, Utah, a tent city established in 1905 when Albert Lyman pitched the first tent. In 1907, a tent school was established. Population increased by families from Bluff and Mormon refugees from Mexico. The Postal Service changed the name of the town to Blanding in 1915. Geneva's twins, Joseph and Josephine, were born here during a pelting rain storm with rain dripping all over the place. Indians in the area heard about the two white papooses and more than once Indians showed up at the door of the tent to see the twins for themselves. When Geneva was alone in Blanding, she was often so frightened at night; she would lay awake all night and then doze a few minutes at intervals during the day. They left Blanding when the twins were about nine months old.

The family moved many times after returning to the Salt Lake Valley which was probably due to the fact they were a polygamous family. Meager finances may have been another factor.

In 1915, Geneva and her children were living in a red brick duplex in Farmington and it was here that her seventh child was born--her daughter, Helen. Cleo Clark, a family friend lived in the other side of the duplex.

Kimball was born in 1920 on Conway Court in Salt Lake City.

The family lived on a farm in Draper, Utah for about a year. It was here that several of the children had their tonsils out--the kitchen table serving as the operating table. Joseph knew he didn't want any part of this and tried running

away but was caught and had the tonsillectomy with the others. It was also in Draper, that the family had a Brindle cow, "Pet" that would follow Vern to the Barber Shop, wait for him and follow him home.

Geneva's father died in 1920. One of her favorite memories of her father was of him singing "The Yellow Rose of Texas" as they rode along in the wagon. He was always fair to both of his wives and there was love and respect among the two families.

Geneva and her family moved to Riverton in 1921. Her ninth child, Kenneth, was born here in 1923. They had 13 acres with fruit trees (apples, plums, pears, peaches and cherries), gooseberry bushes, raspberry and red current bushes also. There was a large garden area and they raised tomatoes, melons, potatoes, sugar beets, etc. and alfalfa. Vernon was 16 years old and had the full responsibility of taking care of the farm plus the care of horses, cows, pigs and chickens. Marvin and the older children helped some but Vernon had the burden of seeing it was done. Vernon took extra work some days to earn money. The first electric light the family had was in the house in Riverton.

It was about 1925, when the family moved to 1876 South West Temple. There was only a dirt road in front of the house at the time but over the years they would see many changes. Before the furnace was put in, the family took turns undressing by the pot-bellied stove. Oftentimes, bottles or bricks were heated, wrapped in towels and placed in bed to warm their feet. The children enjoyed roasting potatoes and corn in the nearby field. Hobos often came to the door for a handout because of the railroad tracks to the west of the house. Geneva believed in sharing whatever she could with them—fruit, soup, sandwiches, etc.

Geneva's daughter, Josephine recalls:

"Mother loved drama. The year I was sixteen, I got season tickets in the balcony at the old Salt Lake Theater. I would save out 25 cents for candy and have four tokens for us to ride the streetcar. How Mother enjoyed those shows--Gladys George, Ben Erway and Victor Jory were the leading players that season. One night, after the show, I lost one of the tokens and we had to walk home. What fun we had--singing all the way.

She was 'tied down' so many years, it was wonderful to have her be able to visit some of the places she did in her later years. When she visited Kim and Millie in Connecticut, she got to go to New York to see the "Sacred Grove" where Joseph Smith had the Vision, the Hill Cumorah, etc. Once while visiting Vern, they took a trip and crossed the Mississippi River and

then went to Louisiana. She made two trips to Hawaii to visit Kim and Millie. In 1940, she visited us in Long Beach for seven months and we visited so many places here in Southern California.

She was always so willing to help any of her children who needed her. I never heard Mother complain or say a bad thing about any person. If she couldn't say something good, she kept still.

What a good time Mother had when she and any of her sisters got together. I remember once when we lived on West Temple, Aunt Maria and Aunt Em came and the three of them stayed awake most of the night talking and laughing like kids."

Joseph can't ever remember hearing his mother swear and her daughter, Helen says: "Mother hardly ever got mad or complained. She had a rare quality of patience and understanding. She always worked hard and was a good housekeeper."

Geneva was a wonderful mother and her children enjoyed being able to do things for her as they got older and had jobs. Vernon and LaPrele paid for her dentures when she had to have her teeth pulled. Joseph would get occasional jobs cutting lawns, etc. and would give the money to his mother. Kimball had \$5.00 of his pay sent to his mother each month when he joined the Navy and in those days \$5.00 was a big help to the family budget.

Geneva's children don't remember that she ever held positions in church when they were young nor was she able to attend church much. It wasn't because she didn't want to; she simply didn't have a nice dress to wear to church. She had two everyday dresses — one to wear while the other was being washed. In the 20's and early 30's, she looked older than her years because of her hard life. Her clothes were plain and her hair was pulled back in a bob but her true inner beauty always showed through.

Over the years, Geneva was without her husband in her home most of the time due to being a plural wife and so she was able to travel about spending time with her children and their families. Each family member has their cherished memories of her.

I have sung the same songs to my grandchildren that she sang to me when she rocked me as a small child--"Two Little Girls in Blue", "I'm Going to Write to Daddy" and "Daddy's Gone a Hunting". She loved music and one of her favorite recordings was of Nelson Eddy and Jeannette McDonald singing "Indian Love Call". She enjoyed Lawrence Welk and Liberace and attended live performances of both.

In August 1944, Newel's first wife, Tina, died. The news was received by Geneva while visiting her son, Vernon, in Texas. It was her responsibility to come back to Utah to care for Newel. She was a loving and dutiful wife and returned to Utah to live with her husband at the duplex on 17th South in Salt Lake City, where he and Tina had been living. Geneva and Newel were together until he passed away 15 August 1956 in Los Angeles County, California.

Geneva died 3 November 1970 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Acknowledgements:

My special thanks to the following:

My Aunt Josephine, who answered my many questions and shared her memories of her Mother.

My Uncle Joe, who made a special trip to my house to share his memories of Grandmother.

My Great Uncle, Freeman Cooley, who answered questions about Geneva as a child, a young person and a newlywed.

My Great Aunt, Mary Cooley Spencer, who gave me pictures and other helps when I first became interested in genealogy over 27 years ago.

I also "borrowed" tidbits and facts about Geneva's early life from the life stories of Emily Cooley Wells, Charles Herman Cooley and Maria Cooley Hardy and I want to thank each person who helped write those.

--Bobbie Foster Railsback, July 1980.

Tribute To Our Mother Geneva Cooley Young:

Psalm 23 is the philosophy mother lived by. She was a true Latter-Day Saint Christian. She lived her religion every day of her life. She truly loved the Lord and she loved her neighbor as herself. She faithfully followed the commandment "Have fervent love for one another."

She never wanted to be a burden on anyone or to be waited on; but she was happy only when she was serving others. She reared nine children and countless grandchildren; in her crowded home and with her small means, there was always room for one more. She met every challenge that came her way and considered it a duty and a privilege to serve others. She went wherever she felt she was needed most. Her children and grandchildren loved and honored her and all vied for her visits.

One of her grandson's said of her: "I know grandmother will have to go sometime, just like everyone else, but it seems like she'll always be with us, she's like the Rock of Gibraltar!"

And so it is, our eighty-seven (87) year old darling passed quietly away at 10:22 Tuesday evening, November 3, 1970. Less than two hours earlier, while Viggo and Lydia visited her at the hospital, she declared she was "feeling just fine" was in no pain, just a little weak." She died as she lived, with never a complaint; never a reproach; never an unkind word.

The example of her life is the greatest inheritance we could receive; it lives on as a guiding light. She accepted whatever came her way; she bore all bravely; she accepted the obligation to endure to the end, indeed she considered it her privilege and duty.

She had no college degrees but to us she graduated Magna cum laude as the Worlds Best Mother! She was truly a noble woman; a beautiful lady. The strength of her life spills over and is a beacon light for us, who live on. She is truly Our Rock of Gibraltar!

-- Thoughts expressed by the family and written by Lydia Knight Young Victor, 1970.



Geneva Cooley Young



1956



20 August 1956



Geneva as a child

This history was made possible by the life long interest in Family History of Geneva's grand daughter, Bobbie.



Bobbie Foster Railsback Chaffin

Images prepared by Newel K. Young grand son Robert Newel Reynolds; originals provided by Bobbie Foster Railsback Chaffin.