

Biography of Harriet Eliza Strong Speirs



Harriet Eliza Strong or as we all called her Aunt Hattie, was born October 27, 1894 in Salt Lake City, Utah. She was the seventh child of eleven born to William Hill Strong and Clara Ann Bishop. The family was living in a home built by William Hill at the rear of 827 East 4th South when Hattie was born. Some of her siblings Lewis Hyrum, Elias John, Loretta Maud and Lillie Geneva were also born in this home. About 1904 Harriet moved, with the rest of the family, to a home one door east which was located at 345 Laker Street, (rear 831 East 4th South) which had been purchased by William from his Mother. Chloe LaPriel was born in this last home.

Harriet had a wonderful childhood, much of which was spent up Emigration Canyon. Her Father William was devoted to nature and the canyon where he spent many of his childhood days. The family built a few cabins up at Kelvin Grove and

would move there at the close of their school work each summer. During this time in the canyon Hattie spent her time gathering shells on the mountain slopes, hiking with friends and relatives and gathering native black currants for her Mother who used them in cobbles. She also gathered wild choke cherries for use in jellies and fished at a water hole in what would become known as Pioneer Addition. Many families lived in Emigration Canyon and would commute back and forth to their work in the city during this period of LeGrande Young's railway. She attended church during these summers at the place known as Pioneer Addition. She is quoted as saying "those were happy, happy days for us all."

During Harriet's teenage years she developed a love for family history. Little did she know how much this was to affect her life and the lives of those around her. The blessings she earned for the living and the dead cannot be numbered. Not only did Hattie do so much for the Strong family, she also did so much for her husband's family. Much of the following information was provided by LaPriel Strong Bunker, her sister. Harriet worked in the Strong Brothers' store which was located at 813 East 4th South. Not far away was the old Speirs Grocery store. The Speirs store, owned by Adam Speirs, was cared for by two of his sons Ernest and Edgar. Neither of these boys were married and were considered confirmed bachelors. Harriet knew Ernest as all the children from the Webster School knew him, their parents were friends and he sold all the kids "penny candy".

Ernest was much older than Harriet, so when he started to give her some attention she had mixed emotions. She respected him as an older gentleman and a friend in the store and the ward, but resented his attention in any other way. LaPriel (who shared a room with Harriet) recalled that "there were times she would be very disturbed with his attention and on some occasions wept with indignation, wondering why he was so persistent. He was always a real gentleman to her and took her to the finest shows at the Old Salt Lake Theatre, the Orpheum Theatre, Saltair, Lagoon and other fine entertainments. He had some of the finest horses in the City, many of them winning prizes in Cart Races at the Utah State Fair. He loved his horses and he and Harriet

went horse-back riding on many days. She loved them also and found great interest in his hobby. As time went on she learned to have great respect for him and then gradually this so-called respect grew into a love for the man who was to be her husband. She was unaware of why he persisted in giving her his attention until after their marriage. Their courtship was very hard on Hattie for neighbors and relatives tongues were not always kind about this romance. She was an attractive beautiful young woman and he was so much older (about 30 years). One can understand to a degree why their romance was of such great interest to all that knew them, but apparently the Lord had a purpose for this marriage.

Ernest was not what you would call a religious man as far as attending Church, but a fine man in every respect. He was not too active in the Church because he had a great fear of being asked to pray or to take part in a meeting. This was a great trial to him and one that he never fully overcame. After their marriage he attended Church regularly, but sought his Bishop out to tell him of his fear. He was made a ward teacher, which he loved, and was at home doing good for others. After their marriage on the 29th of March 1916 in the Salt Lake Temple he told Harriet of his sacred experience. It seemed that his Father came to him after he had been dead for some years and told him he was to marry Harriet Strong. He knew that he had an unusual experience and that he must follow through in the direction his father had given him. They lived in the old Speirs home which had three floors including an attic. One day Ernest and Hattie decided to clean out the attic and they found an old trunk. It was full of the Speirs Family history. Ernest asked Hattie to please do his family's genealogy and in return he would do anything he could to support her in this effort. This was to be her calling in life, not only the Speirs' genealogy but also that of the Strong's. For the rest of her life Hattie spent her time in behalf of her ancestors, both living and dead. No children were born to Ernest and Hattie, but the love of her family filled that void. In March of 1916, Harriet guided her father William to found the Jacob Strong Family organization. She directed that stalwart organization for the rest of her life. Now, nearly 100 years later we are still progressing with family history using that great organization to guide the Strong family.

Ernest died September 28, 1935. Two years later on June 7, 1937 Harriet married Andrew LeRoy Bosworth. They lived in Bingham Canyon near the Kennecott mine. After they had been married two years they divorced. She continued doing her genealogical work for both the Speirs and Strong families during this time and after.

I remember being with my Great Aunt Hattie many times in my life. I have many fond memories of her and the things she did for me. While I was growing up I was the only male Strong left from the William Hill Strong line to carry on the family name. Because of that I was treated so nice by my loving Great Aunt. Every year on my birthday I would receive a beautiful card with a nice crisp one dollar bill in it. I was always so excited that she remembered my birthday. I always loved to go up to see her on the avenues and was always amazed at how much typing she would be able to do with her crippled arthritic hands. She was such a beautiful, loving, caring person. Harriet obtained many outstanding honors in her life. She was a member of the Daughters of the Mormon Battalion, Daughters of the Utah Pioneers and the Utah Republican Women's Organization. She received recognition from the Mitre Press of London, England in 1934 as one of the principal women of America for her contributions to genealogical work. She was also a member of the Genealogical Research Foundation and was one of thirteen women of Utah honored in Chicago as one of the leading Genealogical Researchers in the country. But the

greatest honor that we can give her is the undying love of her family. She is loved and honored by so many of us for her years of service and sacrifice in our behalf and in behalf of our departed ancestors. All the family history work that has been accomplished in this family so far is due to her timeless work, endless sacrifice and great talents. Hattie Strong Speirs, we love and honor you and your efforts now and for all the eternities.

Written by Lewis W. Strong, May 26, 2011.
Great Nephew of Harriet Strong Speirs