

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF MARIAMNE FORSYTH SEEGMILLER
as told by Anna Eve Seegmiller Starr, Daughter,
and written by Grace Starr Hawkes

My Mother, Mariamne Forsyth Seegmiller, was a Scotch Lassie. Being born in America couldn't alter that fact--for her parents were both born in Scotland and came to America later.

Her father, Thomas Forsyth, was born September 20, 1813, in the town and Parish of Kelso, Roxburyshire, Scotland. Because of the illness of his mother, the doctors advised a change of climate. His father, mother, and seven children came to America in the Spring of 1820. Soon after landing at Montreal, Canada, his mother died, then followed the death of his brother due to exposure. While clearing land to put in crops, his father was killed by a falling tree in 1821 or 1822, leaving six orphan children.

A few years after his father's death, his brother Robert and sister Christina, the two oldest of the children, married, each taking two of the remaining children with them to care for. It fell to his lot to go with his brother Robert, who lived in Montreal after his marriage.

Thomas moved around, engaged in lumbering, for a number of years, then in 1838, he went to Quebec and from there to Sprel, a Port on the St. Lawrence River, to visit his two younger sisters who were then married.

In the Spring of 1839, he married Isabella Donald, daughter of George and Janet Taylor Donald, who was born in Glasgow, Scotland, May 17, 1819. The union took place in Lanard, Canada, in April. The same spring, in company with his wife's family, he moved to the District of Kend, Canada West, where he operated a saw-mill. Later, he moved to Kalamazoo County, Michigan, locating at Galesburg. While there, for the first time, he met some Mormon Elders, attended their meetings and was convinced of the truth of their teachings. He was baptized August 4, 1844, by an Elder M. E. Webb.

The following children were born to them before they came to Utah:

Thomas Robert, September 10, 1840 at Pt. Huron, Michigan.

Jannette, March 29, 1842 at Plyonton, Kent County, Canada, West.

George James, May 23, 1844 at Huron County, Michigan.

Isabella Jenne, March 2, 1846 at Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois.

Mariamne, April 6, 1848 at Pottawattamie, Owa. (Our Mother).

Neal Donald, August 4, 1849 at Pottawattamie, Iowa.

Saville Delina, September 25, 1851. (Place not stated).

In 1852, Thomas Forsyth, his wife Isabella, and seven children arrived in Salt Lake City from Nauvoo, having crossed the Plains with Brigham Young Express (The Brigham). In November, soon after reaching Salt Lake, their infant daughter Saville Delina, died, and Isabella, the wife and mother, followed in death on December 23, 1852. Her death was caused by the hardships endured on the trip. This left Thomas with six small children under twelve years of age. Her passing must have affected Thomas deeply, for he always said that she was a wonderful woman.

Mariamne was only four years old when her mother died, so she remembered very little of her. However, the recollection of the quiet afternoon lunches her parents used to enjoy together, was dear to her heart,- a custom which she later carried out in her own home.

In August of 1853, Thomas married Mary Browett Holmes, a young widow of English origin, who had buried her husband shortly after reaching America. The family lived in Salt Lake City eight years after his second marriage. During this period four children were born to them as follows:

George Joseph, March 17, 1855.

Mary B. March 28, 1857. (Who later became Mary Jarvis).

Christina, December 9, 1858 (Known to us as Aunt Tina Macfarlane.)

William H., November 8, 1860.

In 1861, because of his knowledge of the lumber industry, Thomas, (we will call him Grandfather now), was called to the Dixie Mission to make lumber, shingles, and lath for the settlers.

Taking the two oldest girls, Jennette and Isabella (or Nettie and Bell, as they were called), he went to Pine Valley with the intention of starting a saw-mill.

In 1862, the family moved from Salt Lake City. Land was secured and cleared at Bellevue. The family passed the winter there in a tent. Aunt Tina had the small-pox. Her hospital room was the wagon box. The next summer, from the lumber made at the mill he located on Ash Creek on the south side of Pine Valley Mountain. It is known as Forsyth Mountain. This was in 1863.

He built a home for his family in Santa Clara. Their neighbors living along the street were named: Brown Crow, Leigh, Hatch, Knight, Day. A special festivity of the children was to go across the street to Crow's yard to make Spearmint Tea, and eat bread and molasses.

Mary Browett Forsyth, whom I will refer to as "Grandma", for that is what we call her, was extremely ambitious and insisted upon uncomplaining industry from her own children as well as from those to whom she was "foster mother". Soon after the family was established in Santa Clara, she took the three older girls--Belle, Nettie, and Mother (Mariamne) to Salt Lake City, where they learned the glove making and tailoring trade. She built a little home there and returned year after year. They also made soap for sale. Grandma had a leaching machine to make lye from ashes. Fat was secured from the Tithing Office and soap was made for half. Thousands of pounds were made and sold, the money going to equip the saw-mill with the necessary machinery.

In the meantime a one room log cabin was built at the mill and in the summer of 1865, Grandma and the family went to live in the Canyon. The roof of the cabin was made of willows covered with dirt, and was inhabited by snakes, scorpions, centipedes, etc. One evening mother started to walk across the floor when something bit her foot. The pain was most intense--getting more excruciating by the minute. Her foot got black and the discoloration spread quickly and kept spreading. Grandma decided something had to be done and done quickly. She had several chickens brought to the door, killed one at a time, split it open and placed it immediately over the bite. The warm chicken drew the poison out and mother's foot soon got alright again.

In October of '65, Agnes was born at the mill. An old squaw brought Grandma some dried Prickly-pears, instructing her to make a tea from them and to drink it "to make papoose come easy." Whether it was the tea or the Grace of God, We'll never know, for the baby came into the world with less suffering than usually attends a birth--despite the fact that the snow was too deep to get off the mountain, and the only help she had a woman who came and stayed for about a month. Aunt Tina can remember one time when there was nothing to eat on the mountain but corn and potatoes.

In 1865, Grandpa moved his family from Santa Clara to Toquerville, where he made home until death called him at the age of eighty-six.

During the time the family were at the mill, the Indians became hostile, so Aunt Mary, Aunt Tina, Joe and Will were sent to live at Toquerville with Mother to take care of them. (Mother was then sixteen years of age.)

In all probability she was charming, for the mail carrier looked with favor upon her, and from all we can find out, he must have been her first beau.

The next spring, while Mother was still taking care of the children, Brother Dodge (Sam Dodge's father) came over to their house and told them that he had a tree with apricots on it, and he would like them to go over and see them, but they mustn't touch them. They went over and oh, how lovely they looked, but they didn't know what they tasted like. Mother then asked him what she could do so as to get enough for the children to have a taste of them. He told her that she could spin a pound of wool and he would give her a dozen apricots, which she did. Aunt Tina, who told this story, says that she has had many apricots since then, but none of them have tasted as good and delicious as those first ones they ever tasted.

On the mountain, Grandma and Grandpa used to gather Choke Cherries, Elder Berries and Service Berries and dry them and prepare them for winter. Also some small tomatoes which they would scald and then dry them to be used for winter. Fruits were very scarce, and they had to make the most use of everything that could possibly be used for foods.

Mother's formal education was very limited. A few weeks here and there, but no record of where, when, or how much, has ever been found. However she wrote a good hand and was an interesting reader. Her skill in the kitchen and with the needle was well developed by the time she was in her early teens.

While the family was still more or less head-quartering between Toquerville and the Mountain, Belle was married to John Barnard in Toquerville. The high-light of the occasion seems to be the dried peach pie Grandma made from peaches purchased from Bishop Thomas Willis at Fifty Cents per pound. It was, no doubt, a pleasant relief from "Rheubarb" pies made from "sour dock".

After Nettie and Belle were married they lived in Salt Lake City. They were good friends of a newly arrived Canadian by the names of Charles Seegmiller, who with his Mother, Anna Eve, his sister Amelia, and his brother William, had a farm on the Jordan River. The more the girls saw of this fine young man, the deeper grew their desire to have Minnie (as Mother was called) come up from Dixie to meet him. They told Minnie all about Charley and Charley all about Minnie--so when they actually met at Belle's house, they became good friends, sweethearts, man and wife--in a short and beautiful courtship--for they felt for each other a binding and unselfish love which grew sweeter and more enduring with each year of its maturity.

They were united in the Old Endowment House on February 1, 1868. Grandma Seegmiller made her home with Father and Mother (Charley and Minnie), and could really call it "home" for the three of them got along well together.

In 1867, William and Adam were called to the Muddy Mission and in 1868, Dan and Charley were called to the Dixie Mission. They had worked hard on their Jordan property, but felt it their duty to go where they were called.

Father says that his brother Will knew President Young very well, so made a call on him with the intention of selling him the Seegmiller farm. The Jordan district was supposed to be a poor country for grain. President Young answered Uncle Will by saying, "Why, Brother William, I'd have to get a fife and drum to call the grain together out there." One of President Young's brothers was present and assured the President that the Seegmiller Boys had a fine crop. Still there was no sale, the upshot of the thing was that Father realized nothing for his property or labors.

Uncle Dan and Father traveled south together. They had an order on the Cedar City Tithing Office for flour. When they arrived in Cedar City late in the Fall of 1868, the streams were frozen and the mill couldn't run, so they had to take wheat instead of flour. There were no sacks available, which meant that the wheat had to be hauled loose in the wagon bed. All the provisions of both families were piled in one wagon and the other loaded with wheat.

They went to Toquerville where Grandma and Grandpa Forsyth were living. Their son Benjamin was born on November 18, 1868 at Toquerville. Their daughter, Eleanora, was born on October 4, 1863, but she died in infancy. She was born at Salt Lake City. (Benjamin and Eleanora were children of Grandpa and Grandma Forsyth).

The rest of the journey was a welcome one for Mother, as she was expecting her first child or baby, in the early spring. Father and Uncle Dan took the grain up to Virgin to the grist mill. There was nothing in that settlement to feed the horses except a few frozen corn stalks.

Father was to help Dan establish a tannery at Leeds. Grandfather Seegmiller, previous to his death, had a flourishing tannery and leather business in Stratford, Ontario, Canada. Dan and Adam had learned the trade under their father's direction. Considerable work was done in clearing boulders and brush at Leeds. When Apostle Snow decided the wise thing to do would be to establish the Tannery in St. George, he re-called Adam who understood the curing of leather, from the Muddy Mission, to work with Dan in St. George and to send Father to the Muddy Mission in Adam's place.

Once more Father and Mother packed up and moved to a new land to begin again. They worked hard in helping to make the settlement of St. Joseph. On the first day of May, 1869, Chas. Wm. Jr. was born. About this time Mother completed the tailoring of two suits. About this time, Uncle Will's pants were worn out. There were no stores to go to and get a pair of levis or bib-overalls, neither could cloth be purchased.

Before Mother left Salt Lake City, a lot of sheep froze to death near their farm,

so she pulled the wool off of them, carded and spun it and wove it into two pieces of cloth, dyeing one piece one color and the other piece another color. Then she made Father and Uncle Will a nice suit of clothes each. There was a piece left from each suit which she brought with them. This cloth was truly a blessing for she made Uncle Will a pair of pants. They answered the purpose, even though one part was one color and the other another color, and they were good old home-spun. The temperature in St. Joseph was enough to ignite a match, but the extreme heat was very hard on Father.

Hela, their second son, arrived January 7, 1871. Overshadowing the joy this young couple felt over the birth of their second son, was the tragedy of having to leave the land and home once more, the reason for which will follow.

In 1866, an Act of Congress gave a portion of western Utah and Northern Arizona to Nevada. This made the people in the Muddy Mission subject to the laws of Nevada. They were not informed of this change in geography until about 1870, when Nevada demanded back taxes from the people in that section. Considering the fact that no one had any money in St. Joseph except father and mother who had boarded the mail-carrier or driver on his irregular trips, the saints were unable to meet this new requirement. Acting on the advice of President Young, six hundred saints turned their backs on their fields and homes to find other homes for themselves elsewhere.

Hela was but two months old when father and mother left St. Joseph. Mother walked up the sandy hills, carrying the baby and helping Charl, who wasn't quite two years old. Charl had canker terribly bad and so did his little dog. Mother has told us how when they stopped to rest, she had to doctor two mouths, Charl's and the dog's.

Father and Mother stayed in St. George after leaving the Muddy, while most of the saints went on to Odenville and elsewhere.

Edwin Dee was born October 4, 1872 in St. George. He was so frail and delicate that often they have taken him to the window to see if he was still alive.

In 1873, they left St. George and moved to Sevier County. Father says he worked at the tannery in Glenwood and helped make canals there. Then he joined the United Order at Prattville. Mother's sister Belle, lived in Salina and Father's sister Lucy, who had married Andrew Heppler in Canada, before coming to Utah, lived in Glenwood. Later, she and her husband and family joined the Order. Father was head of the teamsters at Prattville. They had a nice two room log house with a large east door-yard, which was remembered because she kept it so clean.

One Christmas that Dee remembers at Prattville, was a little bit extra. This year Uncle Andrew Heppler, Father and Mother, made wooden horses on a platform with wooden wheels and a strap to pull them by. They had real horse-hair tails and manes. Christmas morning, when the boys got up the horses were under the table hidden from view by the table cloth or cover which came down to the floor. Only a bit of the strap was in sight. The boys were told to pull the strap and then out rolled the horses. Mother had made them all a little tailored suit and set the table with plates and cookies and other Christmas treats. Mother's ingenious ability with her needle made us the lucky children of the neighborhood every Christmas.

Frank was born on September 28, 1874. Later they had another baby which died shortly after it was born.

Two things were well remembered by the family,--one of them was that Father was a great hunter and the other one was that Mother was a tidy housekeeper. The older boys remember this incident which shows how Father and Mother respected each other's feelings. One cold day after a duck hunt, Sport, the bird dog whom the whole family loved, came to the house with icicles hanging all over him. Father loved the dog so much that he would have given him his bed, but he left it up to Mother to invite the wet animal into the clean house. Dee says that he will always carry the memory of Mother spreading a rug in front of the stove, inviting Sport in to get warm and then wiping the water from the floor as fast as the icicles melted.

Julia Isabella, the first daughter, arrived March 12, 1877 at Prattville, Utah. When she was six weeks old, once more came the need for them to leave their established home and their many friends, for Mother's home was the gathering place of the women of Prattville. Father felt it his duty to leave the Order and return to St. George to take care of his aging Mother. Apostle Snow took Mother, Father and the children in his white-top buggy over to Salina to tell Aunt Belle "good-bye".