

Dilla Ruth Lewis

Dilla Ruth Lewis was born 24 September 1860 in Perry Township, Jefferson, Pennsylvania. She was the fifth of thirteen children of John H Lewis and Isabella Dilts.¹ In 1870, the family was living in Perry, with Dilla's grandmother living next door.² In 1880, Dilla was age 19, and at school.³ She completed a high school education and left Pennsylvania in a covered wagon to become a teacher in Aspen, Colorado, during a silver mining boom.⁴

Dilla was hired to teach school in Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory, in September 1888. She was sent by the Presbytery of Utah, as were many of the teachers in Silver Reef.⁵ This was part of the "Missionary to Mormons" program.⁶ School began with 37 students and Dilla was paid \$40 per month. In January 1889, school trustees Richmond T Gillespie and James N Louder visited the school and reported they had received complaints of severity in punishment of her students. They suggested that in the future she be less severe and report to them students that persisted in disregarding the rules of decorum and government. She should suspend students she could not control.⁷

Later that month, reports came to the trustees that Dilla had completely disregarded their request and instruction. A meeting of the trustees was held and the complaints were fully considered. It was decided to visit Dilla and hear what had to say in extenuation and justification before taking any further action in the premises. Gillespie and Louder informed Dilla of the complaints against her, but instead of agreeing to change her mode of discipline, it became plain that she intended to persist in a course that would break up the school if continued.⁸

The trustees decided it would be best for all concerned to secure another teacher, and in the event of failure, to close the school until another teacher could be found. Immediate steps were taken and Miss Vie Christian of Beaver was engaged. Dilla was notified that her service as teacher would be dispensed with after the week ending February 1, 1889. The School Board Treasurer's financial report dated June 30, 1889 indicated that Dilla had been paid a total of \$88.50 for her time teaching. (It is interesting to note that the entire budget for the 1888-1889 school year was \$415.)⁹

Dilla married James Trezona, a miner, on 30 April 1889 in Silver Reef.¹⁰ They had two sons, both born in Aspen, Pitkin, Colorado. They continued living in Aspen until 1895¹¹, when it appears that Dilla and James divorced. It is not known when or where James died. On the 1900 census, Dilla was divorced, working as a nurse, and living with her two sons and her youngest sister in Aspen.¹² She also taught school in Aspen until they moved to Grove City, Mercer, Pennsylvania, in 1906.¹³ They continued living in Grove City until her sons married and moved elsewhere.¹⁴

¹ *Familysearch.org; Findagrave.com*

² United States Census, 1870.

³ United States Census, 1880.

⁴ *Findagrave.com*

⁵ Teachers of Presbyterian Schools in Utah and Idaho, by Fred Burton, 2006.

⁶ Home Mission Monthly, 1889, Vol 3, p. 10.

⁷ Silver Reef School Board Minutes.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Utah, County Marriages, 1887-1940; Utah Marriages, 1887-1935.

¹¹ United States Passport Applications, 1795-1925; *Aspen Daily Times*, 31 December 1893.

¹² United States Census, 1900.

¹³ *Findagrave.com*

¹⁴ United States Census, 1910; *Familysearch.org*

On the 1930 and 1940 censuses, Dilla was listed as widowed and unemployed but still living in Grove City.¹⁵ By 1945, she was “retired” and living in St Petersburg, Pinellas, Florida,¹⁶ but was back in Grove City for her 91st birthday in 1951. She was ill for three months¹⁷ and admitted to the hospital on Christmas Eve that year.¹⁸ She died 30 March 1952 in Grove City and was buried in the Woodland Cemetery.¹⁹



Dilla Ruth Lewis Trezona (image from *Findagrave.com*)

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¹⁵ United States Census, 1930, 1940.

¹⁶ Florida State Census, 1945.

¹⁷ *Findagrave.com*

¹⁸ *Record-Argus*, 24 December 1951, p. 1.

¹⁹ *Findagrave.com*; *pa-roots.org*