

Biography of Eliza Ann Hardy Wadsworth

Source: Wadsworth, Martha Ann Hardy.

Abiah Wadsworth: His Wives and Family, 1810-1979. 1979. 32-36.

Eliza Hardy was born on April 18, 1806 in Lincolnville, Maine. She was the daughter of Joseph and Elizabeth (Betsy) Thorndyke Hardy, who were both of Siersmont, Maine. In 1831, Eliza Hardy married Abiah Wadsworth, son of Sedate and Susan Hassen Wadsworth, who was born in Lincolnville, Maine, May 25th, 1810. Abiah's parents were also natives of Maine, and his father was a noted shipbuilder and carpenter.

After Eliza Hardy and Abiah Wadsworth were married, they lived in Lincolnville, and Siersmont, Maine. Eliza's parents had loved to live on this coast. Her father, Joseph, worked as a Captain on a large freighting vessel and had learned to love the Great Waters. His family learned to love the music of the ocean waters dashing on the rock-bound coast. Eliza loved this life, and has told that she often sat near the water, and the rocks and listened to the stories that the waters whispered to her. Eliza's mother had told her children that the steady dashing waves against the rocks was as peaceful music, but if they heard the ocean roar beneath, even though it did not look so rough, that the water warned seamen of death and destruction. At those times, the mother worried that it might take the life of her husband, or some brave captain, or more abroad. Eliza's life was happy by the ocean, and her husband Abiah, who likewise had lived in those parts and had seen the new ships finished and set out on their first voyage, had heard many interesting stories from the sailors. They were a happy couple on the coast of Maine and soon had a little family of their own.

In the fall of 1839 there was quite a commotion in the town of Lincolnville. An Elder of the new Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came to preach to the people, and bring them into the new and true church. Eliza and Abiah and many others were converted and baptized into the Church. In the year 1840, they joined a company leaving for Illinois. Eliza's father Joseph and mother Betsy Thorndyke Hardy, and three of her brothers joined the company, but Abiah's parents did not go. It was very hard for them to leave their homes they loved so dearly, and especially Abiah, who had to bid farewell to his loved ones and many of his friends. Nevertheless, they were eager to join the Saints, and believed with all their hearts the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and were more than anxious to meet him in Nauvoo.

Eliza and Abiah had four children at the time and they, with Eliza's parents and brothers, prepared for the long trip to Nauvoo. The saints sacrificed all they owned except just enough to take them along their journey. Eliza's mother was not strong and became very ill as they went over the rough untraveled trail and it became necessary for Eliza's parents to stay with a family of saints along the way who made them welcome until Betsy was able to travel. The others went on, but Mother Betsy had told them if her Father in Heaven would only permit her to make the journey so that she might see and meet the Prophet Joseph, she would be willing to die.

Abiah, Eliza and family reached Nauvoo in April of 1840, and soon became acquainted with the Prophet Joseph, and until the time of his death, they were very true and close friends. As there were only a few years difference in the ages of Abiah and the Prophet Joseph, they often were interested in athletic games together. Abiah and Eliza often told their children what a fine specimen of manhood the Prophet was - so fair, so true, and honest, that everyone loved him.

The older brother of Eliza had gone back to get the mother Betsy and her husband, Joseph, and arrived safely in Nauvoo, where Betsy and Joseph met the Prophet of God and learned to love him as all other Saints had done. Mother Betsy and father Joseph had received their wish. They had joined the main body of saints and had heard the voice of their Prophet, and they had believed and were thus made very happy. Betsy died in 1841 and Joseph in 1842, both in Nauvoo.

Eliza and Abiah with their family and her brothers and their families were as a little group adrift, clinging together now as her dear parents were gone, and the prophet had been martyred. Everything seemed changed but it seemed the Saints grew more determined as they tried to choose another leader to take the place of the Prophet. Abiah was at the meeting and heard Brigham Young speak in Joseph Smith's voice, and told the story of how this inspirational experience convinced the Saints. They saw another great leader before them.

The people were having to keep out of the way of the mobs who were determined to do away with all of the Saints, and they had to flee for their lives. They would have to cross the great Mississippi and that meant they must be ferried across the river in all of the hours of the night and day.

The weather was bitter cold and men had to stay right on the ferry job. There was sickness and trouble. Eliza's brother, Zachariah Hardy, who had had experience on the large freighting vessels with his father in Maine, was put in charge of the ferry boat. He was not relieved of his trying position, there being so much sickness, so he had to stay long hours until he became exhausted and chilled with the extreme cold. He was taken to camp but died soon after of pneumonia. He died February 12, 1846. Grief stricken, the little group with other saints moved to a little town called Montrose.

Soon after the little group again moved to a small town about 50 miles away called Salem. The family now consisted of five children as Eliza had given birth to a child while in Nauvoo. (It appears this child was Charlotte born in 1845 and died at one year of age.) They lived there in peace and safety for one year and then in 1847 moved to Council Bluffs, about 300 miles west. Here her son Abiah, Jr. and daughter Lucinda Marthina were born. From here they left for Salt Lake City, arriving September 17, 1851, with every member of the company in high spirits. They were immediately sent to East Weber to settle. (For more details on this time of their lives, see Abiah's history.)

Abiah had been in the tannery business while at Morgan making harnesses, saddles and that sort of thing, and for his work and kindness to the Indians, they had given him several buffalo hides, which Eliza had carefully lined and kept for extra covers on beds in cold weather. She had also arranged some of them for rugs. She was proud of having more of these hides than any around her, and she was proud of her work, keeping them especially clean and attractive.

Abiah, having two families to support, bought land and moved to Hooper, Utah, west of Ogden and near the Great Salt Lake. He moved the families in 1869 or 70. Abiah had a home across from the Naisbitt home or where the Naisbitt home is at this time; his workshop was a few steps east of his home. A short distance west of his house was a daughter, Cindy; a bit farther west on the same side of the street was another daughter, Nancy; in the west corner of the block on the south was the home of his second wife, Augusta; half way on the west side of the same block was the home of their son, Abiah Jr.; on the north east corner of the same large block was another daughter, Ann who was married to Eli Spaulding. Just half way on the block going south, across the road, was the

home of their son Joseph, and his two wives and families. The children were all within one half mile of their home.

Eliza was happy to have her children near her. She had always been an ambitious worker for her family. It seemed in whatever work she was to do, she always tried to get through before her neighbors. Her hands were eager to work just a little faster to pick the most berries, to work harder and get the most butter. She put it in ferkins which were containers made of wood like a bucket but were made of a certain kind of wood which did not contain pitch. These were made by her husband and would hold several pounds of butter in store. She would be prepared for winter it seemed before any of her friends and neighbors. This was her ambition to always win. She could knit real fast, to supply menfolks with winter socks.

Eliza and Abiah were getting older and Eliza had been troubled with cataracts on her eyes which grew worse and she finally lost the sight in both eyes. This was a tragedy for one who was so ambitious. For those hands that loved to work fast and always win, it seemed she could hardly bear such a thing to come into her life. Her family was also grief stricken. Father Abiah was unable to take care of her or even to take care of himself, so the little home was broken up. Mother Eliza went to live with her daughter, Arline, who lived next to her on the east side. Arline and her husband were very kind to her but life was so different for her.

Eliza loved her husband dearly but her life must be changed. Abiah was taken care of by Augusta, his second wife, who was some years younger. Eliza was weary and blue, but her many friends came to her often. Her own children were extremely good to her, and she began to study the voices of those who called, and she would call them to her side, and she would feel their shoulders or their hair and in her way she could guess each one. Children came with sweet cheering words to her, and often brought dainties their mothers had arranged. Tears of gratefulness ran down her face as she studied what had been given her. When it was sewing or knitting, her keen fingers could feel every stitch and she appreciated the work that had gone into it. She could not help but cry as she thought of her many friends and her dear children.

Abiah and his second wife and their family moved to Taylor, Idaho, soon after Eliza became blind. He could work around a bit for several years but died April 18, 1899.

Eliza later stayed with her daughter, Ann, and her husband, Eli Spaulding. Here she was also treated wonderful and none could have been more thoughtful or kind than Eli Spaulding. When he came in from work, he would hurry to mother.

Eliza also lived with her daughter, Nancy Higley, who was also thoughtful and kind and did everything possible to make life pleasant and happy for her mother.

After having been blind fourteen years, Eliza died in Hooper, Utah, January 24, 1897, at the age of 91. She is buried in the Hooper cemetery.

Compiled by Martha Ann Hardy Wadsworth