

# Catherine John

1778 – 27 July 1841



A person's life is part of a larger tapestry interwoven with relationships and experiences. The events that transpire in a family, a community, and even a nation can have a profound impact in a person's life. These events can easily span generations and be an integral part of the family history binding the weave of the tapestry into a lasting legacy that reaches well beyond the generations that experienced them. The family of Thomas and Catherine McBride were a very close family and they, their children, and grandchildren endured together the hardships of the times in which they lived.

Catherine John was born in Frederick, Frederick County, Maryland in 1778. She was the daughter of Thomas John and Ruth Evans who were of Welch descent.

At the age of about nineteen, she married Thomas McBride on September 28, 1797 in Martinsburg, Berkley County, Virginia (now in West Virginia). Thomas White McBride was born May 12, 1776 in Loudon County, Virginia. He was the son of James McBride and Mary White who were of Scottish descent. At the time of their marriage he was about twenty one years of age.

Thomas and Catherine made their home in Martinsburg where seven children were born to them; Rebecca (27 Mar 1799), Ruth (7 Sep 1800), Amos Evans (20 Mar 1802), Mary (18 Oct 1803), Hannah (1806), Elizabeth (7 Jan 1808), and Susan (1810) who died as an infant.

Thomas and Catherine left Virginia in the spring of 1810 and moved to New Lancaster, Fairfield County, Ohio, a journey of about three hundred miles. They took all of their children except for Ruth, who was left with Catherine's parents where she remained until 1813 when Thomas returned to Virginia to get Ruth and bring her home.

In New Lancaster seven more children were born; Thomas John (about 1812), Sarah

(about 1814), Isabelle (28 Mar 1816), an unnamed daughter (about 1817) who died at birth, James John (9 May 1818), and another unnamed daughter (about 1819) who died at birth. Rebecca and Mary were both married in Fairfield County, Ohio. Rebecca married William Green in about 1817. Mary married Cornelius Biddlecome on November 16, 1820.

In March 1820 Thomas and Catherine moved from Fairfield County, to Wayne County, Ohio a distance of about one hundred and ten miles. There he leased a section of land which was situated on one of the tributaries of the Mohegan River, called the Red Haw. They were obligated to clear not less than twenty acres of heavy timbered land and build a log house and a double log barn.

Their circumstances were very poor. Everyone was put to chopping and grubbing to clear the land. The youngest children were put to gathering brush — whether girls or boys, it mattered not, the clearing must be done. The first year about five acres were cleared, and put in corn. Heavy frosts destroyed the crop, so that year there was no income. In three years, however, eighty acres had been cleared and gradually began to produce an income.

Catherine (10 Jun 1821), and Dorcas (15 Aug 1822) were born in Wayne County. Ruth married Perry Durfee on August 19, 1824. Amos married Keziah McBride (no relation) in about 1828, Elizabeth married James McMillen in 1829, and Isabelle married Enoch Rhodes in about 1832. He died shortly after their marriage. Sarah died in about 1828 at the age of fourteen or fifteen.

While living on the Red Haw, the Everlasting Gospel, as revealed to man in the last days, preached by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day-Saints was proclaimed to the McBride Family by Elders Thomas Tripp and Harvey Green. Thomas, who previously had not felt to join any Christian denomination now opened his house, and welcomed the elders to his home. The first sermon preached on the Red Haw, by the elders of this church, was preached in his home in April 1831, by Elders Tripp and Green. Soon after that, Thomas, Catherine, and Isabelle were baptized and confirmed members of the church, by the same elders.

Thomas sold his lease; and in August 1833, accompanied by their son Amos and

his family, and James McMillen and family, started for Jackson County Missouri to join with the church there. The season being well advanced, they was not able to go any further than to Richland County, Ohio. While there Isabelle married James Dayley on March 18, 1834 and Thomas married Hannah Soule on April 20, 1834. Thomas and his family stayed in Richland County until the spring of 1834. Once more they set out for Jackson County, Missouri accompanied by Amos McBride and family, James McMillen and family, Isabelle and James Dayley, and Thomas and Hannah. They traveled for about two months with teams and wagons and arrived in Pike County, Missouri, in the latter part of June. The Church was very much scattered and unsettled, so they remained in Pike County for about a year.

In the spring of 1836 the family moved to Ray County, Missouri, and there joined with a branch of the church. They stopped there about three months, during which time they suffered with ague, a fever that is marked by chills, fever, and sweating recurring at regular intervals. The howling of the mob could be heard on every side, and it was decided to move to Caldwell County, Missouri.

In September, Thomas and Catherine and the children yet remaining at home, accompanied by James and Isabelle Dayley, moved to Caldwell County and settled about three fourths of a mile from Haun's Mill on Shoal Creek. There Thomas rented eighty acres of land from the government and began to make a home. A branch of the church was organized at Haun's Mill piresided over by David Evens.

This small settlement twelve miles east of Far West was founded by Jacob Haun in 1835, hoping to avoid the persecutions the Saints were experiencing elsewhere in Missouri. Haun's Mill consisted of a mill, a blacksmith shop, a few houses and a population of about twenty to thirty families at the mill and another one hundred families in the surrounding area.

Though many of the followers of Prophet Joseph Smith had been beaten, tarred and feathered, driven from their homes, and their property confiscated for the use of the mobocrats, their persecutions were not yet to cease. Threats were made against the Mormons, the right of citizenship was denied to them. The Prophet Joseph Smith advised

the Saints in outlying areas to move to Far West or Adam-ondi-Ahman . Unwilling to abandon his property, Jacob Huan disregarded the Prophet's counsel. Rather than inform the community of the Prophet's directive, he instructed the small community to remain. The Saints at Haun's Mill who fully realized the dangerous situation which they faced, decided to adopt measures to defend themselves against the raids of the mob. It was decided that a guard should be placed at the mill.

One beautiful afternoon, on the 30 October 1838 an angry mob of 250 armed men approached the settlement of Haun's Mill and began firing at all who were there. Not more than six minutes had passed from the firing of the first shot until the massacre was over. Catherine's husband was shot with his own gun and his body was badly mutilated. Her son, James, her son-in-law James McBride, and three other men escaped by running from the mill across the mill dam into a field while being shot at.

The sun slowly sank beneath the western horizon and darkness spread a broad mantle over the universe. With a single exception, the dead were left lying where they fell, in fact there were none left that were able to take care of them. Whether dead or alive, all were alike – all was uncertainly – all was pain and sorrow. In vain did this affectionate wife with an aching heart and streaming eyes watch through the long, long night for the return of her husband.

At dawn on the 31<sup>st</sup> the extent of the massacre was not known. Catherine's son, Amos having been detailed on the previous day to get wood for the families, was on his way to the mill when he was told there had been serious trouble there. He went on and passing the mill a short distance, came to the Haun's house. The first object that met his eyes in human form was the mangled body of his father, lying in the dooryard.

A few yards south of the blacksmith shop, was an unfinished well, about eight or twelve feet deep with no water in it. This made a sepulcher for the dead. The seventeen murdered persons, including Thomas, were carried on a board, one at a time, and dropped into the well by Amos McBride, James Dayley, and Jacob Myres: the only three able bodied men that were present. The mass grave was covered with dirt and James Dayley dedicated the well as a grave.

On February 24, 1839, the family gave up their homes at Haun's Mill and started for Nauvoo, Illinois. The company consisted of Catherine John McBride, along with her sons Amos and James McBride, her daughter Isabelle and her family, and another young man, Harrison Severe. In all their party numbered about thirteen persons. They set out with a team of horses pulling a wagon and a yoke of oxen pulling a two-wheeled cart. The first day, they traveled about nine miles and camped that night in a house that had been vacated by one of the brethren. It was extremely cold.

After a tedious journey and a great deal of exposure, the company arrived in Adams County, Illinois. Around the last of April in 1840 they arrived in Nauvoo, Illinois. While living in Nauvoo, Catherine was taken with Kings Evil (lymphadenitis of the cervical lymph nodes associated with tuberculosis), from which she died on July 27, 1841 at the age of sixty three. She is buried in the Nauvoo Cemetery.

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*The main source of this story is an autobiography of James McBride.*