

Peninna Smith

1 February 1794 - 8 September 1869



We are fortunate if we can only get a glimpse into the life of someone who lived so many years ago. Even with what little we know of them, we can come to understand in a small way what they went through. It is even more difficult to know how they felt about the things in their everyday lives. It isn't too hard read between the lines to know what was most important to them. It becomes obvious and goes without saying that their families were of vital importance to them. It is also clear that the gospel was of the utmost importance to them. Even though we do not have an account of their testimonies, the facts speak for them selves. Why else would they have uprooted their homes and families and move only to do it again for the gospel's sake.

Peninna Smith was the daughter of John and Margaret Brown Smith and was born on February 1, 1794 in Wayne County, North Carolina. There were six children in the Smith family. Three girls and three boys. Peninna was the fourth child, the other children were Nancy (2 Jul 1789), Jesse (5 Jun 1791), Stephen (11 May 1793), and Fereba (about 1795). When Peninna was four years old, her mother died in childbirth. After the death of her mother, Peninna made her home with an Aunt. When the aunt died, Peninna came to live with James Frost and his wife, Isabelle, who were probably old friends of her parents.

It was under these circumstances that Peninna and McCaslin Frost became acquainted. When Peninna and McCaslin were married on November 28, 1809 in Johnson County, North Carolina, she was expecting their first child. It is a fact that around the turn of the eighteenth century, one third of brides in the United States were already pregnant when they married. At the time of their marriage, McCaslin was 23 and

Peninna was about 15. it is also a fact that girls married much younger in those days.

McCaslin Frost was the son of James and Isabelle Van Dyke Frost. He was born December 10, 1785 in Rockingham, Richmond County, North Carolina.

Peninna and McCaslin first made their home in neighboring Wake County, North Carolina where their first child, Samuel Buchanan, was born on January 2, 1810. He was followed by his sister, Nancy Illewood on August 12, 1812.

Around 1815, Peninna and McCaslin moved to Knox County, Tennessee, near Knoxville, the main city in the eastern part of the state. This is a mountainous region, and had been settled only a short time when they were married. They lived on a river or possibly a creek. At the foot of the hill below their house was a wonderful cold spring. They built a room over this spring and used it not only for drinking water and culinary purposes but also for the refrigeration of their dairy products. Their crocks of milk, butter, and cheese were kept in excellent condition. They were a musical family and sang many old folk songs, some of which are known to have been old English folk songs.

The rest of their eight children were born in Knox County The other children were: Isabelle VanDyke (14 Feb 1816), Fereba Smith (17 Sep 1818), James William (30 Aug 1820), Martha McKinney (7 Oct 1825), Mary Ann (27 Oct 1827), and Margaret Elzira (28 Apr 1830).

When Samuel was a young man, he went north one winter and secured work in Hancock County, Illinois. He liked the country and the opportunity it afforded and decided to remain there. In 1834 he married Rebecca Foreman in Hancock County and began raising a family of his own.

Two of Peninna's and McCaslin's children died before reaching adulthood. Mary Ann had died on August 24, 1829 when she was two years old. James William died in October 1834, when he was a lad of fourteen.

Isabelle was married in about 1835 to Wiley Jones, also a native of Tennessee. Nancy married Archibald Kerr of Knoxville in May 1833. Fereba married William Harrison

Barger, a native of Indiana, in Fairfield, Iowa in about 1837. After his death by drowning on July 23, 1858, Fereba married Revrand John E. Beatty at Sidney, Iowa in February 1862.

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While living in Illinois, Samuel became acquainted with the Latter-day Saints and was converted to Mormonism. He was very enthusiastic over his new religion and early in the spring of 1841 he returned to his old home in Tennessee for a visit and to explain the principles of the gospel to his family. Not only was the Frost family converted to his new belief but also a number of their neighbors as well. A hole had to be cut in two feet of ice to baptize Peninna and McCaslin and part of the rest of the family. Margaret was too young; Fereba was married and away; and Isabelle never did join the church because of her husband's objections.

After becoming interested in Mormonism, Peninna and McCaslin were eager to join the people of their faith. They left their home in Knox County and began their journey to Illinois. They went first to Memphis, Tennessee where McCaslin worked for a short time before beginning their voyage up the Mississippi River to Iowa where they stopped off for a while to see their daughter Fereba. Then on to Illinois where they resided for the next few years. They rented a place five miles from Carthage, Hancock County, and lived there for a few years.

Peninna and their daughter, Martha were members of the Relief Society when it was first organized in 1842.

At the time of the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph and Hyrum Smith, the Patriarch, on June 27, 1844 the Frost family was living about five miles from Carthage jail, and when the word reached the people of the ruthless murder of their beloved Prophet and his brother, they could hardly believe it and sent messengers to investigate.

The Frosts could see from the doorway of their home, the smoke from other Mormon villages which were being burned by mobs.

Both McCaslin and Peninna were endowed and sealed in the Nauvoo Temple on January 5, 1846 before leaving the city. Martha's husband and all three of their children died in Nauvoo. She married George Washington Langley on January 20, 1846 in the Nauvoo Temple.

When the persecution became too intense, McCaslin and Penina moved to Iowa, where prejudice against the Latter-day Saints was not so intense, and where they could enjoy comparative peace and freedom from persecutions.

In the Fall of 1846, McCaslin and Penina went to Nishnabotna, Iowa about sixty miles further down the river from Council Bluffs, where Samuel B. bought a place and they all lived there for a time. While living in Iowa, Penina's youngest child Margaret Elzira married Harvey McGallard Rawlins, a native of Illinois on December 3, 1846 in Nishnabotna, Iowa.

The Frost family slowly made their way west to Utah. The first to make the trek were their daughters Margaret and Martha, who both crossed the plains with their families in 1848 with the Heber C. Kimball Company.

Peninna and McCaslin remained in Iowa until 1856 when they set out for Utah along with their daughter Nancy and her family in the Philemon C. Merrill Company on June 5, 1856. At the time McCaslin was 69 and Peninna was 62. Two hundred individuals and fifty wagons were in the company when it began its journey from the outfitting post at Florence, Nebraska. They arrived in Square in Salt Lake City on the 15th of August.

Upon arriving in the Valley, Peninna and McCaslin were reunited with Martha and Margaret. Martha's second husband had died and in 1851 she married John McCormick Wiser. Peninna and McCaslin spent the closing years of their lives living with their children. At first they lived in the homes of their daughters in the Salt Lake Valley for a few years. When Samuel came to the Utah Territory in 1861, they went to

Spring City to live with him and second new wife, Ester Davis, for a while. His first wife had died in 1858 while they lived in Iowa.

Of Peninia's six children who grew to adulthood, five of them came west and made their homes sometime during the westward migration. Four had joined the L.D.S. Church and came to Utah. Later during the 1860's Isabelle came to Idaho and settled for a short time in Lost River but later moved to California and settled there. Fereba and her family remained in Iowa and later moved to Nebraska.

After a few years in Spring City, Peninna and McCaslin went to live with Margaret in Richmond, Utah in Cache Valley. Peninna was very sick for some time. She died on September 8th, 1869 at the age of seventy five in Richmond, Cache County, Utah. McCaslin died on May 12, 1874 at Lewiston, Cache County, Utah at the age of 88. Peninna and McCaslin Frost are buried in Richmond, Utah.

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The main source of this story is an uncredited life story of McCaslin Frost

Information about marriage in the early 1800 is from "Everyday Life in the 1800s" by Marc McCutcheon, Chapter 10 Courtship and Marriage, page 205: