

# Mary Eliza Barson

10 June 1873 – 13 November 1940



During the pioneer era of the Territory of Utah, plural marriage was a common practice among the Mormon pioneers. For those who grew up in homes where such was practiced, it was a part of everyday life. This was true for Mary Ellen Scott who was born in Salt Lake City on May 22, 1849. Her mother, Mary Pugh Scott was the second of five wives married to John Scott.

When Mary Ellen was twenty years old she married Peter Sheffield Barson who was also twenty years old on October 20, 1869 in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City. Mary Eliza Barson was born June 10, 1873 at Mill

Creek in Salt Lake County, Utah. She was the eldest daughter of Mary Ellen Scott and Peter Sheffield Barson. Eliza, or Liza as she was called, was their third child being preceded by two brothers, John Samuel (14 May 1870 – 28 July 1870) who died as an infant and Hyrum Sheffield (27 August 1871 ) who always looked after his little sister.



*Mary Ellen Scott and Peter S. Barson about the time of their marriage.*



*Aunt Eliza*

Two years after Eliza was born her father married his second wife, Eliza Ann Scott, on August 8, 1875 in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City. Eliza Ann was Mary Ellen's younger sister. It seemed natural for the two sisters to share the same husband. Some of these arrangements did not work out very well, but for Peter, Mary Ellen, and Eliza Ann it worked out very well. Peter and his wives moved to Weber County where Eliza

Ann's first child, Dennie Birdell (11 May 1876), was born.

In 1876 the Barsons moved to Clarkston where Peter built a log house. A fireplace was used for cooking and heating and candles were used to light the house. Their clothing was home made from home spun cloth.

Farming was done with hand plows and wooden harrows. Grain seed was broadcast by hand. It was harvested with a sickle and cradle. Hay was cut with a scythe and raked with a wooden rake.

The rock meetinghouse was built when Eliza was four years old at the cost of four thousand dollars. This is where she went to church and later sang in the choir.



*The house that Liza lived in growing up.*

In 1877 the Barson family moved one mile east of town where they built a nice two story frame house. Liza's half sisters, Lucy Ellen who went by Nell (20 August 1879), and Vilate Scott who went by Vie (29 January 1882), were born during this time. In some plural marriages the wives lived in separate homes with their own children. In the case of the Brasons, they all lived under the same roof.

As Liza grew up, her half brother and sisters where as much her brother and sisters as was her brother, Hyrum. Liza and her sisters learned to work at the household chores alongside her mother and Aunt Eliza Ann.

All went well for several years. Mary Ellen gave birth to Eliza's younger sister, Mattie (Martha Jane) on August 28, 1887. Eliza Ann had always been in poor health, even as a child. One Friday night she was ironing some sheets and became very ill. She passed away the following Sunday morning, on September 25, 1887 at the age of thirty six.

Then in November 1887, her father had been in Logan working in the temple all day. After leaving the temple, he was walking down the street in Logan when he was arrested for having been a polygamist. He was taken to Salt Lake City where he was put in jail. He had to sleep on a damp gravel floor. When arrested he didn't even have a chance to tell his family



*The Barson Family - 1896 Back row; Ellen, Bird, Hyrum, Liza, and Vie. Center: William, Mary Ellen and Peter S. Barson. Front: Mattie and Bessie.*

where he was being taken. He spent the next six months in prison in Salt Lake.

With the loss of her sister, Mary Ellen raised Eliza Ann's three children as if they were her own. Many people in Clarkston couldn't tell which children were which as Mary Ellen showed very little preference, if any. At this time Liza had grown into a young woman of fourteen. She was able to help her mother a great

deal with the rest of the children. Liza's youngest sister, Bessie Cloe was born on May 29, 1890.

Over the next ten years, Liza blossomed into a strikingly beautiful woman. Certainly more than one gentleman took notice of her. But it was Joe Godfrey who won her heart. On June 10, 1897 Eliza married handsome Joseph Maurice Godfrey in the Logan Temple. The following article written by her father appeared in the newspaper. (Peter was the Clarkston correspondent for the Logan Journal and went by the pen name "Sanko".)

The wedding of Miss Eliza Barson and Joseph Godfrey, both of Clarkston took place on Thursday, June 10, 1897 in the Logan temple. Miss Barson is the eldest



*Liza and her sisters; Back: Mattie and Vie, Center: Liza and Nell, Front: Bessie*



*Liza and Joe Godfrey*

daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Peter S. Barson, The Journal's newsy Sanko.

Everybody acquainted with Peter and his good wife might know that such an event in their household would be celebrated in a very large manner. Well, it was done in that very style.

The bride and groom arrived from the Logan Temple in the Barson family carriage early Thursday evening and drove at once to the Barson residence. About 8:00 p.m. the invited guests from all over the county began to arrive and unload. They were received in splendid order by two committees, one taking care of the guests, and the other taking care of the horses and carriages. Vehicles of all descriptions, from a cart to a Victorian carriage, rolled into Peter's barn yard.

While the orchestra discoursed sweet music, a magnificent supper was served to one hundred and five jolly guests. Toasts, speeches, and songs, games and music were indulged in until early morning, only to be renewed Friday evening with a grand ball, or rather a wedding dance in the ward hall. The dance was interspersed with guitar and mandolin music by Messer, Fletcher, Napper, and Crookston of Logan.

A list of guests and wedding presents would take up too much space, but the presents were various, numerous, and of a most useful character to young beginners in housekeeping; ranging all the way from a toothpick holder to a full set of furniture. The young couple will make their home on Third West.

Their home was a pretty two room red brick house with a big bay window on the north. Eliza was a good housekeeper and cook and their home was a happy one. Large trees surrounded their home, some out on the ditch. A nice lawn was on the north side of the house and flowers all over made the place attractive. Virginia creepers covered the front and side of



the house. There was a big barn and a nice granary.

Their first child, Mary Eliza, was born April 13. 1898. She was named after her mother. Mary Eliza, her grandmother, Mary Ellen Scott Barson and her great grandmother, Mary Pugh Scott.

Eliza always had a splendid garden. The feat of the year was to have the first radishes in town and new potatoes and peas for the Fourth of July. Eliza always planted pepper grass for a tasty addition to salads.

Another contest held in town among the women was to have the first line of clothes whipping in the breeze. It was whispered that some determined ladies actually wet down clean sheets and raced to the line to pin up the first Monday wash each week.

While Liza raised the children and took care of



*Four generations of Marys ~ 1899; Mary Ellen Scott, Mary Eliza Godfrey (the baby), Mary Eliza Barson (standing), and Mary Pugh.*



*The Barson women in 1907: Back row: Liza, Bessie, Mattie, and Nell. Middle row ; Ann, Grandma Barson, and Vie (The babies are not identified). Seated on the floor: Ann Godfrey, Emily Godfrey, Mary (in the center), Sylvia Barson, and LaRee Barson.*

the home, Joe and his brother, Henry, had an excavation business and worked on projects such as the water works system and the construction on the new school and church. They also hauled gravel for the road construction projects.

On April 22, 1901 Ervin Joseph was born but only lived nineteen months. Emily was born November 30. 1903. Emily was named after her father's mother. Emily Gover. On November 20, 1907 Ervil was born and four years later Alph was born on October 19, 1911. This happy family really enjoyed life.

This happy world crashed in May of



*The Joe Godfrey home about 1908; The little girl with the doll is Emily, Liza, Ervil on Joe's knee, and Mary on the horse.*

1912 when Joseph became very ill with spotted fever. He smoked quite heavy and his lungs were too weak to overcome the fever. Eliza's uncle, Dr. John Barson from Joplin, Missouri was in town visiting his brother, Peter S. Barson. He used all of his skill to try to save Joe. Eliza wore herself out caring for him, so her brothers and their wives took turns helping her. By the 24th of May his condition seemed so much better that Dr. Barson decided to climb the mountains west of town to the top of Gunsight. Effie and Hyrum Barson (Eliza's Brother) were taking care of Joe when he quietly passed away at the young age of thirty eight. Mary was fourteen at the time of his death and Alph was only eight months old. The entire family was so sad. In those days there were no mortuaries, so kind neighbors prepared the body for burial. It was considered an honor to be asked to sit up all night with the deceased person and a coal oil lamp. The newest white top buggy in town had the back seat removed for use as a hearse.

Dr. Barson and Aunt Fanny were very impressed with the beautiful way the Mormons laid their loved ones to rest in their white clothes and temple robes. They thought the funeral services were impressive and comforting.

There were many debts as Joe had built a new barn and granary. The determined young widow with plenty of backbone and grit wanted no charity. She and the children managed the best they could. Joe's brother, Henry, lived one block south and always watched over them.



*Joseph Maurice Godfrey*

Eliza's brothers did all they could to help also such as leaving a bag of flour or a load of coal. Sunday after church many of the family would stop by. In 1909 her parents had built a new house two blocks east of Eliza. Her Father walked up to check on the young family every day.



*Liza Godfrey*

Eliza attended Relief Society regularly and was a valuable Relief Society teacher for as long as she could walk. Eliza and Elizabeth Godfrey, her late husband's step mother, were visiting teaching companions. Eliza was very outspoken, she called a spade a spade and gave her opinion freely. Everyone loved and respected her. She lived her life insisting on paying her honest debts and managing her own affairs.

Liza raised their four children on her own. Mary Eliza, who was the oldest, was the first to leave home. She married Gover Buttars on November 23, 1915. She died on September 25, 1920 at the age of twenty two leaving her husband with two little boys and a newborn infant. Emily married Carl Fannesbeck on June 10, 1926. Ervil married Sarah Myler on April 3, 1928 and Alph married her sister Ruby on November 28, 1935. She was proud of her children and their families. Gover Buttars and Carl Fannesbeck were such good sons-in-law and took good care of her. Her two daughters-in-law, Sarah and Ruby, were so kind and good to her and helped her in anyway they could.

Liza's mother died on December 11, 1935 and her brother Hyrum on July 23, 1939.

Eliza died suddenly on November 13. 1940, having been a widow for twenty eight years. Three days later she was laid to rest next to her husband in the Clarkston Cemetery. The posterity of Joseph Maurice and Mary Elzia Barson Godfrey numbered fourteen grandchildren and forty eight great–grandchildren.

*The main source for this story was a life sketch of Mary Eliza Barson written by LaRee Barson McCauley.*