

MARY ANN FRANCOM: (Transcribed from a tape made by Howard Dean Selman Rolfson - 1982)

I would now like to tell somewhat concerning the life story of my grandmother, Mary Ann Francom.

She was born the 25th of November 1853, in Uitenhage, Cape Colony, South Africa. She was the ninth child of a family of ten children of William Francom and Amy Harding. Her parents were born and raised in England and married there. They had six children and then moved to South Africa about the year 1849. Her father was a blacksmith by trade which he carried on for some time and then he got into the mercantile business selling a variety of goods to the people of the area. It became a good operation and he became prosperous and he became so [sic] that he had a fair bit of money and also property in that particular area. They loved the country very, very much. It was beautiful and they enjoyed the warmth and all of the fruits and flowers and everything that grew in that area.

After they had arrived in South Africa, four more children were born to the couple, three boys and one girl, my grandmother, Mary Ann. She being, as I said before, the second youngest child.

There is a story told about one of her brothers while he was out camping with one of his older brothers at one time in the area there, they camped out overnight and slept out in the open in some blankets. The older brother got up and his younger brother was still in bed and finally the older brother threw the covers off the younger brother to get him awake so he would get up and there lying coiled up beside him was a huge snake, about as large around as one's wrist and about six feet long. This was a very poisonous variety and could have been the end of one or both of them, but the older brother grabbed this young Sam by the leg and quickly pulled him away from the snake and the snake uncoiled and crawled off into the forest without any difficulty to anyone. So they did have some exciting experiences while they lived in that country.

In about the year 1863 Mormon missionaries came to that part of the country and were proselytizing among the people. There were a number of people who joined the Church and my great-grandparents, the Francoms, listened and believed what they heard and they desired to join the Church and in due time they and their older children were baptized in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My grandmother, however, at this time was a very young child and so she was not baptized at that time.

Now as is usually the case in those days with the converts to the Church, they desired to gather with the rest, or main body, of the Church in Utah, and so this feeling entered the hearts of the Francom family. First of all came the oldest brother leaving for America. Then the third brother came a year later. In 1865 the father consented to allow his wife and the four younger children to come to America, and so they prepared to leave. However because of the persecution of the people of the Mormons in that particular area they did not let anyone know, except members of the Church, that they were planning on leaving by ship to come to America, so early one morning they packed their wagons and headed for the Port Elizabeth which was about twenty miles from Uitenhage to board the ship which was then in the harbour. It took them about a day's journey to get there and they stayed one night and then boarded the ship the next day together with some forty odd other members of the Church who were under the direction of a man by the name Miner G. Attwood. They sailed from Port Elizabeth in South Africa on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 1865. They sailed on the ship called the Mexicana. They arrived in New York on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1865 after an uneventful trip across the Atlantic. They soon transhipped from there to Omaha, Nebraska on the train which was at that time the end of the rail line. Here the group of saints met and prepared to form a company to go across the plains in covered wagons. My great-grandmother was well enough off that she had enough money that she could outfit herself with the proper wagons and teams and all the necessary things in order to leave on that long and arduous journey. However as they came to the Missouri River my grandmother was now of age, together with the other children, and she and her three youngest brothers were baptized in the Missouri River on the 8th of July 1865 by Miner G. Attwood.

They left Omaha, Nebraska and travelled across what is now the state of Nebraska, to Laramie, Wyoming. Here they stopped for a time. While they were there one night, and had their camp made with their wagons in a circle and their cattle and stock all taken care of and with guards set up, a band of Indians came swooping down upon them, yelling and shouting and creating a great sense of fear upon the members of this particular company and the Indians rode in among their cattle and stock and stampeded them and their stock scattered hither and yon throughout that open country around where they had camped. However no damage was done to

the members of the company, and the next morning the men had to ride out and spent several hours trying to round up their cattle and horses so that they could continue on their journey, which they did.

However, later on as they were camped a little farther west one time, the Indians attacked them again and this time it wasn't without some disastrous results. One young mother who was there had a small child was caught with a rope by an Indian and dragged off and they carried her away with them and she was never seen again. The men of the company took counsel as to what they should do about it but when they realized that they neither knew where she went, nor did they have the personnel whereby they could fight against the Indians or to recover her so they sadly had to leave for the west without this young mother. What a sad day it was for them.

As they also travelled throughout this area, they saw many herds of buffalo that was new and strange to these people from South Africa.

As they went further on West, when they came near Clearwater River, it got colder and snowed. This was the first snow my grandmother had ever seen in her life and was quite a thrilling experience for them. However they pressed on and finally they entered the Salt Lake Valley in November 1865. They stayed with friends who were there at that particular time for a day or two and then they proceeded South looking for a place where they could make their home. They went as far as Payson on one stop and stayed with friends again and went on further south through places like Lehi, and Santaquin and even on to Glenwood looking the country over. When they returned from here, they even travelled into the northern part of the state the next year. However after all this searching, my grandmother finally decided that the best place to settle was in Payson, Utah, and they did make their home there.

There is one interesting story which affected my grandmother while they were seeking this home. One day while they were in the northern part of this state, what is now Utah, they had crossed a river at noon time and had stopped to prepare dinner. While they were there, some other people crossed the river. One of them, a man, came to their camp and made acquaintance with the people. My grandmother was a young girl probably 14 or 15 years of age and this man was a married man and he even proposed to my grandmother at that particular time even though she was a young girl and she had never seen him before. Both she and her mother soon put an end to that particular nonsense.

So later on as they established their home in Payson, my grandmother, like the others, accompanied her mother to many social functions. One such occasion was a dance they were holding there. My grandmother was there with her mother and there was a man who was a married man. He came across the floor to talk to my grandmother and he proposed to her there that he was wanting to marry her. He happened to have red hair and my grandmother did not like red hair and she did not like the proposal either and so she said to him, "You redheaded old fool you, I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man on earth," and so ended that particular episode.

However some short time later my grandmother met my grandfather Charles Selman, even when she was a girl 16 ½ years of age and he proposed to her and married her in Payson, Utah on the 4th of April 1870. They set up their home in Payson and there they raised their family. They had a family of 10 children - 4 girls and 6 boys. Their children's names were Mary, Lilly Clara, Sylvia, and following the six boys' names were William, George, Emran, Delsel, Drexel and Leonidas. So they had a large family and of course all the children had to stir about and try to earn a living as best they could or help the whole family as best they could. It wasn't easy in those days and they had to work pretty hard for the little they got at that time.

My grandparents had a comfortable home for them even though it wasn't very large by modern standards, for a family as large as they had.

In 1901 my grandparents, Charles Selman and his wife Mary Ann decided to emigrate to Canada where there was greater opportunity for their sons, particularly for land and for work, and so on. So in November 1901 the Selman family came to what is now Raymond, Alberta, Canada, with one daughter, my mother Clara Dora, and their six sons ranging in age from about 21 to about 5 years of age. So they set up home in this new frontier town.

As the Church was soon established in this area, my grandmother was chosen to be one of the counselors in the first Relief Society organization that was established in this town. She gave many years of devoted service in this organization, particularly in taking care of the sick and then preparing in the house of those where there was death, and so she gave much compassionate service to the people who needed help in those early days and she served well her many years in the Relief Society presidency during those early times. Many times in her home, she entertained an apostle of the Church, John W. Taylor, and she thought he was one of the greatest men that ever lived. She was always loyal to the Church and she loved the Church and all that it meant.

In her later years as I shall tell she was unable to attend Church very regularly because of her being crippled but her heart was always there and she desired to be in Church.

As my early recollection came of my grandmother, she was crippled from my earliest time particularly from ulcerous sores on her ankles due to ruptured varicose veins, and so she had difficulty walking. Also to add to this, and it was when I was quite young - the exact year I am not sure - she also fell and injured her hip. She wouldn't allow them particularly to take her to a doctor to see what was wrong but as they were very positive in later times that she had broken her hip and so after having spent quite some time in bed with this injury she then got up on crutches and from that day until her death she walked on crutches, so she was really handicapped in all that she could do because of having to maneuver about on crutches. However that did not prevent her taking care of her household duties. She did the cleaning of her house, the cooking and so on for her husband and two of her sons who were still living with her even though she spent many hours in pain due to the problem which she had, yet she went cheerfully on her way.

I spent many happy hours with my grandmother since she lived just across the road from us, it was easy to go there and visit her and I would go in the house and if she were doing some of the cooking and preparing meals, or whatever of that nature, working with the food, it was always great fun to stand in Grandmother's pantry where she worked at her table probably making bread or rolls or pies or preparing whatever food. I talked to her as she worked at her table. So I had many good times and many hours spent with my grandmother in her house when I was a little boy.

Also we spent many hours in her home for many other reasons often just visiting and also many meals I had in her home particularly family meals when not only our family, but her other children and their families would gather on special occasions like Christmas and Thanksgiving and First of July and there have a meal at grandmother and grandfather Selman's place. It was always a very, very great occasion. They had a large yard and there were lots of places to play and many things to do around their place.

She also had an organ in her home and it was always fun to go into the living room and play on the organ although I didn't really read music or do anything like that.

So my grandmother was good to me. I can't remember my grandmother ever being angry. She was a cheerful person without necessarily resorting to much laughter or giggling or that type of thing but she was a good kind woman. She was of only medium height, somewhat buxom in nature but she had quite a pleasant looking face. She had dark hair and her hair never went gray until she was well into her eighties. As a matter of fact when she died at almost 86 years of age, there were only a few strands of gray in her hair.

She died on the 18th of September 1939 and was buried in the cemetery in Raymond. She leaves on course a large posterity and many memories she has left with those who were left behind.

Just to add one or two more things concerning my grandmother and her family - I mentioned at the beginning her mother and four younger children came to America together and their father had stayed back in South Africa to finish up his business together with one of his sons, George. However some time later they came to Utah as well but they did not stay permanently there. After some years, and I am not sure just how many, he and his son George went back to London, England and that is where he stayed. He never returned again to Utah. He had married another wife and died in London, England. So my grandmother's mother lived as more or less a widow in Utah for the latter years of her life and so this was a sad experience for her

And then one more thing I want to mention - my grandmother was about 80 years of age. I was listening to the radio at one particular time and some Organization in the United States, I can't remember the name of it, offered an offer if people would only (and I believe it was through Walter Winchell) would only let them know the names of indigent people that they would send them some flowers, and so I sent in the name of my grandmother to this group and had almost forgotten about it but quite some weeks later here the greatest and biggest bouquet of flowers you ever saw came delivered to my grandmother's house that had been sent by this Organization in the United States and she was very surprised and shocked, as was I, and it was a really quite, happy occasion. This was really an interesting moment in her life.