

Huldah Mariah Holden Heath

Based on a story in the book, James Harvey Heath, His Ancestors and Descendants, by Viettia Newcomb and edited by Kenneth Glyn Hales.

Hulda Mariah Holden was born September 29, 1824 in Wayne County, Tennessee, the daughter of Joshua and Mary Talley Holden. She was the fourth of fifteen children – but not all of these children lived to maturity. When she was fifteen years old her parents converted to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. When she was seventeen she was baptized on November 29, 1841 and confirmed a member of the church. In 1842 her parents moved to Nauvoo, Illinois to join the body of the church. Her name is also found spelled as Huldah Mariah or Huldah Maria Holden.

She married James Harvey Heath on September 5, 1845, at Nauvoo, Illinois. Known as Harvey Heath, he had lost his first wife, Teressa Jane Rigdale on August 20, 1843 at Nauvoo in a plague. During that same year four of his five children also died leaving him with a young five year old son, George Fluker Heath. His story is in my first book *Windows*.

Hulda and Harvey Heath had ten children – three were born in Iowa: Jacob, William Riley and Martha Elizabeth; and seven after arriving in Utah: Teressa Jane (probably named after Harvey's first wife and my great-grandmother), Mary Louisa,

James Harvey, Mariah Lucinda, Dorothy, Harriet and Huldah Semantha.

While Hulda did not bear children during the westward journey, she still endured the physical and emotional discomforts common to the Pioneers. The Heath family consisted of James Harvey and Hulda Mariah and children George Fluker, Jacob, William Riley and Martha Elizabeth during their Pioneer trek to the land they called Deseret (a symbol of the industry of the honeybee).

This chapter highlights the difficulties of the daily lives of the women who helped to pioneer the harsh land on their trek westward and as they helped settle new areas. The story provides a woman's perspective and should be considered a tribute to Hulda and her contemporaries.

Life was very difficult for the Pioneers, and those little meals happily and easily cooked over the campfire added to the weary miles walked that day. But the women felt the promise of a new beginning was worth the effort, however hard.

There were some who had children along the way. For those women whose time had come, the pain of childbirth must have been magnified in such a manner as cannot be imagined. Labor pains did not halt the trek, and even if a wagon was available, the ride gave small relief. The jarring and bouncing, with wheels hitting rocks and ruts, dropping into holes, and pitching to the right and left, could only add to their discomfort.

On the plains, where trees were few and far between, it was the daily chore of the women and children, as they walked, to locate and pick up

dried dung dropped by buffalo. The grass residue which had passed through the stomach, when dried, made burnable fuel for the campfire. When not dry enough, it did not burn properly, and produced a pungent odor. They were taught to kick and test the chips found and reject those not fit for the fire.

Water was hauled, for every day use, and it was not always possible to find a stream to camp alongside. When fresh water did become available, it was common practice to remain there for a day so the women could catch up on the laundry. Hand washing was not reserved to fine fabrics. All laundry was done by hand, and those fortunate enough to have a washtub must have been the envy of those who had only the creek pools as their tubs. While not walking, the day would be filled with the work of washing the family's clothing.

Scrubbing, pounding, rubbing, wringing, of heavy shirts and dungarees, rinsing again and again to remove the homemade lye soap, finding places to spread the clothing to dry, and knowing that the skin of their hands would probably chap and dry, break, and bleed was endured. Washing the families clothing by hand cannot be imagined, unless one has actually done it.

Later, in their new homes, all laundry was washed by hand, and ironed with old "sad-irons" heated on the wood stove. Canning was done outside, in summer, over another wood stove. Running water for washing jars, a flame that comes on when a simple handle is turned, an air conditioner to cool the house down – these were

luxuries our great-grandmothers could not have imagined.

The story of the difficulties of the times, the strength, endurance and faith of Hulda Mariah Holden Heath, is descriptive of the Pioneer spirit of the women in those early days. This story is included so that descendants can better understand the trials those earlier generations suffered and survived.

Upon reaching Deseret and making a home at Weber, the dream of a permanent place to live was short-lived. Those having a knowledge of cotton were called to settle in the southern area known as Dixie. This meant that they had to sell their home, pack their meager belongings in a wagon, and travel the 300 or so miles to where they would have to find a new place to live. Again it was camping and the work of moving in a wagon along the way.

From what seemed to be an almost impossible task of making ends meet in Dixie, they were soon on the move again to the high mountain valley of Bicknell. This move tested their survival skills.

The requirement to continually move is a testament to their faith in the gospel of their chosen religion – The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

James Harvey Heath and his wife Hulda Mariah Holden spent the remainder of their lives in Bicknell and are buried in the old cemetery there.