



THE LIFE OF JULIA ANN ROCKER-KNAPP-LAUGHLIN-COOK

It was in a little town in Lower Canada, in the spring of 1828, May 19 that a dark-haired, dark-eyed little girl was born to Francis Rocker and Mary White Rocker. She was the sixth child and only girl in the family. While still a very small child, the family moved to Cleveland, Ohio.

These were hard times for the family and Julia was trained very early in her life to do all things pertaining to the duties of homemaking. She was an accomplished seamstress and made a man's suit by hand for \$15.00.

When she was but 14 years of age, she went to work for a fine lady, whose name I cannot recall. However, this lady thought so much of Julia she felt that the best was none too good for such a worthy girl. She, therefore, used her influence in Julia's behalf. She was quite influential in the town and knew a great many people. Among them was a promising young man, by the name of Martin Knapp. He had a good position and fine prospects to go far. Mr. Knapp was fifteen years older than Julia, but at 16 Julia was very mature, lovely, refined, and very attractive. So it didn't take much managing on the part of Julia's benefactress to get him to propose to Julia. And because Julia had been made to feel that it was the only thing to do, she accepted him.

They were very happy the first year, and a little girl was born to them. They named her Lida (Louisa).

Mr. Knapp was untrue to Julia from the first, but she was unaware of it until Lida was one year old, when, through her benefactress, who had been instrumental in their marriage, Julia learned that her husband and another woman, who had a baby the same age as Lida, were planning to run away and take the children with them. Not because Mr. Knapp cared for Lida, but because the other woman would not leave her baby, he planned to take Lida to keep even. Julia's friend had overheard the plans in some way, so she took Julia and the baby and hid them for a week. After which time Mr. Knapp gave up hunting for them and left without Lida. Julia then secured a divorce for desertion.

There are two versions of how Julia joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The one from Alice Cook says she met David Saunders Laughlin shortly after her divorce from Mr. Knapp and they joined the church together, and were married. Alice goes on to say it was during this time that Julia first heard of the Mormon doctrine. She was very much interested in the word of the Gospel, and while investigating it she met a young man by the name of David Sanders Laughlin, who also was interested. They became not only interested in the Gospel, but each other, and were married and baptized. Thomas Wilson baptized Julia in March of 1851. She was the only one of her family to ever join the church.

The other account of her meeting David Laughlin and joining the church is from a history written by Myrle Roberts. Myrle has done considerable research on this record. She says:

David Laughlin joined the church at an early age in Kirtland, Ohio and afterwards moved to Far West, Missouri. It was during this time that he met and married Mary Clark, who was born in April of 1821. They moved to Nauvoo, Illinois with the saints where Mary passed away, July 14, 1845 at the age of 24 years, 2 months and 3 days, of fever. (This entry is according to Nauvoo records.) Mary is also listed as one of the pioneers who died crossing the plains.

David was with the saints when they were driven from Nauvoo by mobs. On July 16, 1846 he enlisted in the Mormon Battalion as a private in Co. D with Nelson Higgins as Captain. Illness overtook David during the long, arduous march of the

Battalion and at Santa Fe he was transferred to Captain James Brown's sick detachment that was sent to Pueblo, Colorado for the winter.

When the battalion arrived back in Salt Lake on July 29, 1847 they were met by Pres. Brigham Young and many of the saints with joyful greetings.

On August 26, 1847 David Laughlin was with the large party, many of them members of the Mormon Battalion that was headed by President Young and the apostles, which left Salt Lake to return to Winter Quarters. David left Winter Quarters as a missionary to the Ohio, and it was while he was on this mission that he met Julia Ann Rocker Knapp. She was living in Cleveland, Ohio at the time David converted Julia to the gospel, and they married, probably in late 1849 or early 1850.
—Myrle Roberts

Mr. Laughlin and Julia immediately prepared to come to Utah. Like all of the pioneers they passed through many trials and hardships before reaching Utah. Brigham Young sent Mr. Laughlin back for supplies and immigrants who were arriving to join the Saints in their land of refuge. Julia and David finally settled in Cedar Fort, Cedar Valley, Utah County, Utah.

They had five children, namely: Johnnie, who died at the age of 13, Joseph and Jacob (Twins), who lived just long enough to be named, Julia and Harriett.

They had arrived in Utah in 1852 to find their home and were separated by David's death in 1856. Just before he died, he called Julia to him and told her not to worry; Bishop Henry Freeman Cook would take care of her. Therefore, in 1857, Julia was married to Bishop Cook, as a second wife. There were 4 children born to them, namely: Henry, Frank, Milinda (called Minnie), and Ada.



At that time there were few doctors in Utah and some one had to care for the sick. As was always the case, wherever Julia happened to be, she was always called in when there was any sickness. So she went to Salt Lake City to take training under a Mrs. Connley in midwifery.

She brought over 500 babies into the world and in those days of handicap and hardships, she never lost a mother or a baby. But she never took credit to herself. She, being a very humble person, never went out on a case without first kneeling in prayer, and she said she carried a prayer always in her heart and that the Lord was with her in her efforts. She took care of the mother and baby, and in many cases did the work for ten days to three weeks, as the case needed and her fee was \$5.00.

She was also called in for all other sickness, no matter what the nature, contagious diseases and all, and never a cent was paid to her for these services. And up until two years before she died, she laid out every person who died in Cedar Fort, even her own family.

Among those whom she could never quite get over, were two boys by the name of Weeks, very dear friends of hers. These boys went up into Pole Canyon to get wood. The neighbors warned them that the Indians were in a bad mood, but they said they would not go far and the two of them would be all right. They said they would be back early and when they did not come, the men went to see what was wrong, and right at the mouth of the Canyon they came upon a tribe of Indians dancing around with the boy's scalps on poles and they had cut the boy's hearts out to eat them. They said the boys were so brave they wanted to be brave like them, so they ate their hearts.

To give the boys bodies any semblance of a descent look was mighty hard in those days, and it was months before she recovered from the horrible experience. Julia donated these services to her friends and neighbors, although many people would send her flour and meat and various other things to help her.

She was always known by everyone as “Grandma Locklin”, even after her marriage to Bishop Cook. Julia was of such a sympathetic nature that other people’s troubles, as well as her own, and she had many, worked a hardship on her. Bishop Cook died in 1881, leaving her a widow again.

One of the hardest things she had to bear was the fact that when the Civil War broke out in 1861, all five of her brothers went to fight, and during the whole four years of the war, she was never able to receive any word from her family in Cleveland, Ohio. For years, following the war, she tried in every way possible to get word of them, but was unsuccessful. She had lost complete trace of her folks. It was always supposed that her brothers were all killed in the war and that her parents had died during that time. Julia could never stand to talk of her family after that without crying, therefore the children never talked to her about it.

She was a very resourceful person. She had her own spinning wheel, and spun cloth not only for her own family, but also for the first family, of which there were ten children, and for many others. She was an accomplished dressmaker, having served most of her life for those who were well enough off to hire sewing done. It would take as long as two weeks to make one dress, as the fashions were then and work all done by hand. Later, she bought a sewing machine, the first one, and for many years, the only one in Cedar Fort. It was a Howe.

She knitted all her own family’s stockings and socks, besides making them for others. She made hats from straw and did all the other things pioneer women were forced to do through necessity.

The people of Cedar Fort loved her dearly and I have heard many, many of them say that she was one of the best women that ever lived. She was called by all “An Angle of Mercy”, as indeed she was. One of the greatest proofs of this was the fact that Bishop Cook’s first family considered her as one of their best friends. The oldest daughter Hannah, who was about the same age as Julia, said that they lost the best friend that they ever had when Julia died. The two families were always very closely associated and if any of them had sickness or trouble, they always sent for “Grandma Locklin”, as quickly as did any one else.

Julia was not well for two or three years before she died in 1891 at the age of 63, thus ending the life of a wonderful wife, mother, friend and neighbor.

Sources:

Mrs. Alice Cook of Cedar Fort, Utah County, Utah, written February 1974.

Darwin Isaac Cook, Tucson, Arizona, gave a copy to Alonzo Dean Cook on 29 November 1999.

Copied from the records of Barns and Alice Cook, Cedar Valley and Myrle Roberts, date unknown.