

SUSANNAH THOMPSON

Susannah was born September 18, 1836 in England to Joseph Lewis Thompson and Penelope Thompson Thompson. She spent her childhood in London. Her family came to America on separate voyages and settled in Providence, Rhode Island. While there her father owned a hotel and rooming house in Providence.



Susannah was very talented and sometimes she would dance and entertain the guests. She also danced in the town opera house. One night after a performance there, Michael Joseph Clark saw her dancing and fell in love with her. He came back stage after the performance to meet her and found her father sitting by the dressing room. He sternly informed Michael if he wanted to meet his daughter he would have to do it through proper channels. It took him two weeks to arrange for it but soon they met, fell in love and were married on August 15, 1857. Six weeks after their marriage, Michael's mother died "from the effects of a chill" taken while bathing. After her death Michael's father, Patrick, came and lived with "Mike" and "Sue" since Michael's only sister and other brother had already died. Sue did all she could to keep Pat and Mike's relationship close.

Michael and Susannah settled in Providence and had two children born to them. Mary Susan was born June 12, 1858 and died when she was two years old due to pneumonia, following whooping cough. Alfred Joseph was born April 28, 1860.

Susannah was a Mormon (L.D.S. Church) and had been baptized while living in England, however Michael was Irish Catholic. Erastus Snow and Parley P. Pratt met Michael while serving as missionaries in the area. Michael was converted and joined the L.D.S. church. Patrick never did join the church.

The following spring after Michael's conversion they decided to come to Utah. Before they left, they placed the mortal remains of their baby, Mary Susan, in a joint grave with Michael's mother, Mary Ward Clark. Mike and Sue wanted always to know "the baby" and "grandma" were together. They traveled by handcart to St. Joseph, Missouri, then by steamboat to Florence, Nebraska. Patrick refused to travel with the Mormons, so they traveled the prairies with the Independent group. Sue walked most of the way, carrying their little boy and pregnant with their third child.

After they had been gone for only a month Mike and Sue were walking a distance from the wagons and talking. They were weary of the journey but Mike urge Sue on as they were

getting too far behind. "I don't care," said Sue. "Well keep up anyway," said Mike. "There may be Indians lurking near, and we don't want trouble." "I'm not afraid of Indians," she said. "Look behind you," said Mike. When Sue turned to look, she saw an Indian creeping up behind them, partly hidden. With a little scream of fright, she began to run and she ran until she caught up with her wagon.

After three months journey, they arrived in Logan, Utah. They lived there for two years in a dug out (approximately on West Center Street and 3rd West). Their lives here were similar to many of the other pioneer families. While living here, their third child was born, John Peter.

After a couple of years in Logan gold was discovered in Montana. Thinking this would improve their living conditions, they decided to move to Montana. At that time, only a wagon track marked the road and the Bear River, Snake River, as well as other streams had to be forded. It took faith to ford those rivers, as there were five in the wagon and none could swim. However,

no accident happened and after six weeks of travel, they reached the mines in Virginia City, Madison county, Montana. Patrick, although an old man, came with them to this mining town.

Mike found he did not like the life of a miner, but being very musically talented, turned to teaching music and running a theater instead. While in Montana, Alfred (now 12 years old), became proficient enough in his music to play leading coronet in the Helena band. They prospered while in this area.

While living here they had two more children. James Michael was born August 31, 1865 and Laura Penelope was born May 1, 1870.

In 1874 bad luck struck the family as a fire in the area burnt down their theater and destroyed their \$700 piano. Sue's family had been wanting them to return to Clarkston where they had settled and live near to them, so they decided at this time to return to Utah and be closer to her family.

The family brought back some of their luxury items and found them useful in trading for things they needed for their new home. Silk dresses and a parlor stove were exchanged for a cow and chickens, a pig and some farming tools. Stage scenery and some linoleum decorated their kitchen. Sue taught dancing and signing and became the stage make-up and costume mistress for the Clarkston Dramatic Association, as well as coach and assistant manager. She sang well and helped her daughter and friends in their dancing and performing.

Sue was known for being hospitable, dainty, sweet, generous, and charitable. She

was a good nurse and midwife and helped care for the dead. At the age of 63, Sue went to visit her daughter Laura after the birth of a new granddaughter, also named Laura, was born on May 28, 1899. Two weeks later she contracted tick fever and died on June 13, 1899. Her daughter was unable to attend the funeral, as it took three weeks in those days to recuperate from childbirth, so she was propped up in bed to look out the window to watch the procession go by.