MARY ELIZABETH HUGHES

Mary Elizabeth Hughes was born December 14, 1864, in Llandudno, Carnarvonshire, North Wales, to Elizabeth Evans and Peter Hughes.

Her mother and father were married by Reverend Evans of the Church of England. Three daughters were born to them, Mary Elizabeth, Martha Maria and Annie Lloyd.

In 1860 the family migrated to America and lived in New York City for two years. The mother longed to come to Zion, and she prayed earnestly for this, and for the health of her husband who was very ill. She had to earn the living by making neckties, nursing and washing clothes. Apostle Erastus Snow came to their home one day and told them that the Lord had sent him to find them and send them to Zion.

The journey across the plains took about three months and was very difficult for the sick husband. The wife had to walk most of the way, as the husband had to ride, and the little girls could not walk very far.

While still two weeks' journey distant from the Valley, at Big Sandy, her youngest child Annie died and was buried on the plains in an unmarked grave. The journey was too much for the ill husband, and three days after reaching Salt Lake City, the husband passed away.

Later, the mother Elizabeth Evans Hughes married James Patton Paul, and to them were born five children, Joshua Hughes, Joseph Evans, Lotta Robina, Barbara and Maude.

James Patton Paul was very good to the two children by the former marriage, and his affection was deep and genuine. Martha (Mother Neasley’s sister) wanted to go to Ann Arbor to study medicine and he made every effort to assist her, although it was very unusual for a girl to want to become an M.D., but through hard work and sacrifice this was accomplished and she was a practicing physician in Salt Lake City for many years. She later was Utah’s first woman senator, the first woman to hold that position in United States. In the column by Dan Valentine, in the Salt Lake Tribune in later years appeared this statement: “Utah also had an important political first - The first woman State Senator in the entire United States was Martha Hughes Cannon.”

For years we tried to get a sketch of the life of Mother Neasley, but the family never did find time, promising always that it would be done. Her son James Patton, and daughter-in-law, Stella Cox Neasley will do their best to record some of their recollections and some of the stories related by her during her life.

Her beautiful hair touched her knees. She was very aristocratic and reserved. She was a devoted mother, but she had a rather sad life.

She married James Farley Neasley and to them were born seven children: Farley, Hughes, Louis Paul, Mary Lourette, Martha Maud, Lottie Ardelle, James Patton, and Barbara Elizabeth. Louis and Lourette died within twelve hours of each other of scarlet fever. Barbara, at the age of twelve, contracted pneumonia and passed away the night of the first day she became ill. Hughes was born in Salt Lake City, all the other children were born in Wasatch and Summit Counties where the father operated a saw mill on the Provo River.

The country surrounding their home was sparsely settled, and the Indians would come begging. Mother Neasley was very frightened, and she would take her children and go to some caves on the hill and hide until they left.

She was President of the Relief Society and also served as President of the Primary in Francis Ward for years. She also sang in the quartet. She was active in Church all her life.

We remember one interesting incident in her life. A man who had been in a fight was brought to her home very weak from loss of blood, and Mother Neasley sewed the wound up with white thread which saved his life.

She was quite famous for delicious butter she churned - people would come from miles around to buy it.

Aunt Maude Paul told me that she always had a beautiful garden. The brightest spot in the Valley or on the Mountain side would always be the Neasley home. I'm sure her two sons inherited her "green thumb" as the gardens they always had when they got their own homes were sights to behold.

Mother Neasley was so cute, she sometimes would do some little thing wrong (she thought) she would never tell her family, but she would come home and tell me. One day she came home, her face was still red, said she went into a drug store with a prescription in her hand to be filled, the druggist saw her and started toward her to get the prescription, and she took his hand and shook it. She was so embarrassed, we laughed all afternoon.

I'm told Mother Neasley had good health until the last few years of her life. I watched both she and Dad Neasley through their last illness. She was anxious for her children to have a good education, and even though the family had to make sacrifices, they all received a good education.