

Polly Derby Mecham

Compiled by Karen Bray Keeley

POLLY DERBY MECHAM was born in Grafton County, New Hampshire on 13 Aug 1813, the daughter of SARAH CURRIER (1788-1813) and JOHN DERBY (1789-1874). (SARAH and JOHN had only two children: ELVIRA, 1811-1886, who married L. MOSES WORTHEN MECHAM, and POLLY, 1813-1898, who married EPHRAIM MECHAM. Their husbands were brothers. ELVIRA and POLLY's mother SARAH CURRIER had died 10 Nov. 1813 when POLLY was only 3 months old, and their father JOHN DERBY remarried, to his first wife SARAH's younger sister, ANNA CURRIER. ANNA was the mother who raised her sister SARAH's two girls as well as her own children. See below for an experience of one of SARAH's granddaughters, when SARAH CURRIER DERBY appeared to her in a dream).

JOHN DERBY (Polly's father) was born at Lyme, New Hampshire on 26 May 1789. It is said that after his daughters joined the LDS Church and moved west, they wrote back to their father but he was quite opposed and angry that they had joined the Church, and refused to be reconciled.

(Quoting from POLLY DERBY):

"JOHN DERBY's father's name was NATHANIEL DERBY (1752-1812), whose sons were Jedediah, Benjamin, Nathaniel, Walter, Amassy (Amasa), John, and his daughters were Lucy and Elizabeth. Lucy and Walter were twins.

NATHANIEL's wife's maiden name was JEMIMA SKINNER (1759-1812). (She was descended from early New England families including Strong, Dixon, Pratt, Stiles, Ingersoll, Bridges, Woodward, Bascom, Frye, and Ford). One of my (POLLY's) grandmother's brothers was run down and killed by the Indians. They had three children; he was carrying one of them, and seeing that the Indians were gaining on them, he said to his wife that he would run in another direction to draw the Indians' attention to him, and for her to hide with the children. He dropped the child that he was carrying into a bush, and then ran where the Indians could see him. The plan worked; the mother and children were all saved, but he was never seen again nor was his body ever found. He laid down his life for his family.

"The SKINNERS, my grandmother DERBY's folks (JOSEPH SKINNER, 1723-1809, and RUTH STRONG, 1723-1815), lived in Lyme, New Hampshire. My grandfather CURRIER's name was SAMUEL (1746-1830). I think he was born in England (actually he was born in New Hampshire, the son of SAMUEL CURRIER, 1709-1766, and HANNAH MORRILL, 1711-1784, and the CURRIER family went back four more generations in America. They were descended from early English colonist families including Foote, Osgood, Stallion, Clere, Morrill, Wadleigh, Whittier, Marston, Clements, Eden, and Green).

His father (also named Samuel Currier) owned a vessel, he had been to the East and West Indies several times, but was finally lost. Some thought that he was taken by pirates, but we

never heard of him again. "My grandmother CURRIER (ANNA COLLINS CURRIER, 1754- ?) had consumption, and she died in or near the city of New York at a good old age. (Her parents were RICHARD COLLINS, 1713- ?, and ANNA FOWLER, 1717- ?. Her father was descended from colonists from the English families Shortridge, Eaton, Rowlandson, Dearborn, Southcott, Whitfield, Crocker, Colepepper, Servington, Manning, Pollard, Yeo, Grenville, Moore, Strowde, Giles, Atwood, Walrond, Brampton, Petley, Kirkner, Roper, Naylor, Wakehurst, Shelley, and Chaucer -- from the sister of the poet Chaucer. Also on her mother's side from Fowler, Worthen, Gould, Martin, Jones, Osgood, and Winslow families).

My grandfather SAMUEL CURRIER served in the Revolutionary War. He drew a pension in Erie County, Pennsylvania. Three of his sons, Reuben, Ezekiel, and Samuel enlisted in the War of 1812. Samuel died at Plattsburg, Uncle Ezekiel served three years as commissary, he died at Springfield, Erie County, Pennsylvania at the age of 90.

My mother, SARAH CURRIER DERBY, died while my uncle was in the war (1813). She was buried in Hanover burial grounds by the meeting house. My father's farm a few miles from Dartmouth College lay right at the foot of Moose Mountain. He sold it to the Shakers. I was only three months old when my mother died. I was in my fifth year when my father moved from New Hampshire to Pennsylvania and settled in Erie County. We lived there until I was in my fourteenth year. Both my grandfather and grandmother CURRIER lived until they were 84 years old. They were buried in Springfield Cemetery (Erie Co., Pennsylvania).

Their sons and daughters were Reuben (he served in the War of 1812); John - married Sally Silver; Samuel - died at Plattsburg serving in the War of 1812; Ezekiel - married Sally Alldrich, he served in the War of 1812; and Abner - married Margaret Davis, died in Illinois." (portions of the above quoted from POLLY DERBY MECHAM, 5 Sept. 1895 - when she was 82 years old)

After being prevented by the mob from entering Missouri, EPHRAIM and POLLY DERBY MECHAM and their 3 children went to Iowa, where EPHRAIM's brother MOSES had settled earlier. Eventually they settled near Montrose (across the river from Nauvoo), where they lived for 14 years. Six more children were born into the family while they lived in Iowa. Then, in 1853, EPHRAIM and POLLY and their 6 surviving children crossed the plains to Utah and settled in Lehi. They had 12 children altogether, but four of these had died young and then two more were born after they settled in Utah. The children were:

- 1.AMOS MECHAM (b. 1830 in Mercer, Erie Co., Penn., d. Apr. 1831);
- 2.PERMELIA MECHAM (b. 11 Sep 1832 in Mercer, Penn., md. DANIEL BIGELOW, d. 10 June 1911 in Wallsburg);
- 3.LEWIS MECHAM (b. 18 Dec. 1835 in Mercer, Penn., md. VASTIA or VASHTI EMILY JOHNSON, and later ESTHER HERBERT, d. 14 Oct 1907 in Wallsburg);
- 4.ELVIRA MECHAM (b. 1836 in Mercer, Penn. and d. Oct 1845);
- 5.EMMA MARIA MECHAM (b. 9 May 1840 in Montrose, Lee Co., Iowa, md. WILLIAM BROWN HILL, d. 6 Aug. 1923);

- 6.HYRUM MORONI MECHAM (b. 20 Aug 1842 in Montrose, Iowa, md. SARAH ANN STEVENS and later LOUISA JANE KIRBY, d. 14 Feb 1917);
7.SARAH ANN MECHAM (b. 1844 in Montrose, Iowa, and died Jan 1847);
8.EPHRAIM DON CARLOS MECHAM (b. 1846 in Montrose, Iowa, d. Oct 1846); 9.MARY HENRIETTA MECHAM (b. 10 Apr 1848 in Montrose, Iowa, md. MILES BATTY, d. 21 Dec 1899 in Wallsburg);
10.POLLY CELESTIA MECHAM (b. 2 Apr 1852 in Montrose, Iowa, md. WILLIAM HAWS, d. 21 Apr 1890);
11.JOHN ALBERT MECHAM (b. 21 June 1854 in Lehi, Utah, md. ROSELLA ANN BIGELOW, d. 14 Jan 1934 in Provo);
**12.ADELIA VILATE MECHAM (b. 26 Dec 1856 in Lehi, Utah, md. ROBERT WILSON GLENN, Jr., and died 25 Nov 1941 at the age of 84).

POLLY was a faithful wife and mother and was very spiritual by nature. For example, when her niece died in Provo, POLLY knew of her death and the circumstances surrounding it before the family received the news the next day.

The following is an incident submitted by Celestia B. Rasmussen, one of POLLY's granddaughters, to the Daughters of Utah Pioneers (OUR PIONEER HERITAGE, 979.2 H2c, vol. 2, p. 111); in the chapter entitled, "And They Were Healed":

"POLLY DERBY MECHAM, my grandmother, it is claimed was cured of an unknown malady in the following manner: She had been a practical nurse and home doctor in many families (she was the first doctor in Wallsburg, and used herbs as well as faith and prayer in caring for the sick), but neither she, nor anyone else, seemed to be able to find a cure for her sickness. She became very weak, and was unable to move any part of her body, except to wiggle one big toe. The family stood mournfully about the room and she knew they expected death to claim her at any moment.

One day a man came to her bedside and taking the wasted hand said, "Madam, you are a very sick woman, but you are not going to die. If you could see your liver it would scare you. It has ulcers on it as big as my thumb. Have watercress brought and eat as much of it as you can every day and you will get well." Watercress was brought from the spring close by and the simple directions followed. POLLY soon became well again. As a "Doctor woman" she helped 500 women through confinements and was known and loved throughout Wasatch county for her services to mankind."

(No explanation is given as to whom the "man" was, but the implication is clear that he was an angel; otherwise how could he have instantly known the cause of her illness by "seeing" the sores on her liver, and have known that she wouldn't die, and that she would be cured by simply eating watercress? Surely the Lord extended her life, and showed forth his power to heal by this simple means, to test her faith as he did to the Syrian leper, who was told if he would wash in the River Jordan seven times, he would be made whole -- 2 Kings 5.)

The spring in Wallsburg, which still has lots of watercress growing in it today, is near the old Wallsburg school and the monument which commemorates the Wallsburg fort and the founding of the settlement.

POLLY DERBY MECHAM was a faithful wife and prayerful mother, true to the end. She maintained her love for poetry mingled with a strong love of the gospel. She composed the following poem for her sixtieth wedding anniversary:

We heard the gospel in our youth
A still small voice said "It is truth."
We left our homes and friends in tears,
And now it's over fifty years.

And now, dear children, I say to you,
The path of truth and right pursue,
You have been to me a constant care,
For I have offered my daily prayer.

I want you to be plants of honor and renown,
And come up to receive your crown;
That I may present you in the courts above
To my friends who are gone, which I so dearly love.

I have tried to polish my jewels bright;
Of your virtue and honor,
I have never lost sight.
Prepare to meet me on the other shore,
Where pain and sorrow are known no more.

Where I have done wrong, pray forgive,
I do not know I have another day to live.
I have lived to see full seventy-six years;
My path has been strewn with sighs and tears.

Now I hope you will remember,
The twenty-second day of November
When you will come home to celebrate,
The sixtieth year of our wedded state;

Full sixty years have passed away,
Since our happy wedding day.
We traveled on together,
Through both fair and stormy weather,

And now we are nearly down the hill
We love and cherish each other still.
We are holding fast to the iron rod,
And love to obey the commands of God.

(Taken from the book HOW BEAUTIFUL UPON THE MOUNTAINS; a DUP publication about the history of Wasatch County. Section on the history of Wallsburg includes biographies and pictures of many of the MECHAMS).

EPHRAIM MECHAM died in Wallsburg 6 July 1891 at age 83; and POLLY DERBY MECHAM died 1 Dec. 1898 at age 85. They are both buried in the cemetery in Wallsburg, Wasatch County, Utah.

Source: <http://www.rootcellar.us/mechpoll.htm>