

Abigail “Nabby” Howe Young

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Abigail Howe was born in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, on the 3rd of May, 1766...She was but nineteen years of age when she married a Revolutionary soldier named John Young.

There were five Howe sisters, and all were said by pioneers who knew them to be pretty girls, vivacious, musical and very popular in their pioneer communities. Theodosia Kimball Young, wife of Brigham Young's oldest brother, John, and Maria Haven Burton, wife of Bishop Robert T. Burton, who lived in the same village and knew them well, bore testimony to the gentle vivacious, and attractive characters of those Howe girls. They were all singers and many social affairs were brightened by the duets and simple folk songs essayed by the Howe sisters. All were very devout and deeply concerned with Puritan religious life.

Abigail herself, though not as tall as some of her sisters, was a little above medium height. She had blue eyes, with yellowish brown hair, folded in natural waves and ringlets across her shapely brow. She was exceedingly methodical and orderly in her temperament. Neatness, as the old term was used, belonged to her as of inherited right. Not robust in her constitution, she burned up her fires of youth in impetuous toil while constantly on the move with her pioneering husband. She was the mother of eleven children. She died 11th of January, 1815.

She was brought up in Shrewsbury, which is not far from Hopkinton. Those little New England towns fairly joined each other through their outstretched farms. Sleighing parties, quilting bees, picnics and religious revivals drew the young people together from contiguous settlements. Abigail, or Nabby, as she was nicknamed, was skilled in housewifely arts, knitting, hemstitching, a little embroidering, and a great deal of spinning and weaving, baking, scrubbing and household adjustment occupying her busy hours. She had unquestionably good schooling, such as was possible for prosperous farmers in those colonial days, and she helped her children over their primary pitfalls. She was intensely humorous in her tendencies and that sense of humor formed a balance which carried her over the frequent pilgrimages of her husband to settle up new countries, leaving her with the difficult burdens of childbearing under such circumstances, child-rearing and homemaking.

The family lived sixteen years in Hopkinton, Mass. Here the most of the children were born. Moving in January, 1801, in the violently cold season of New England weather, she accompanied her husband, John Young, into the remote hills of Vermont, settling in the little village of Whitingham, Windham County, living there long enough for Brigham Young to be born, June 1st, 1801, in a log cabin at the edge of the village. Then the family removed to Sherburn, Chenango County, New York, but did not remain there very long. In 1807 they

removed to Smyrna, Chenango County, New York, where her younger son, Lorenzo was born. Moving again to Genoa County, New York, the mother died there the 11th of June, 1815. The mother's health was poor for a long time, and it was a family tradition that Fanny, the elder sister, "raised" Brigham. It is a remarkable thing that all but one of Abigail Howe's children, six daughters and five sons grew up, married and all joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with their families, all remaining faithful to the end...

Abigail Howe Young was a born reformer, so we are told. She was an invalid the last few years of her life, troubled with the frequent New England complaint of consumption, but she kept an active finger on the pulse of the neighborhood. Her sympathies were so broad, her vision was so clear, her grasp of human values so perfect that friends would come for her when their children married and take her in wagon or sleigh to spend a few days in counsel and assistance to young couples who were starting out in life. She was greatly beloved by her associates. Her children are her noblest monument.