

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF ELIZABETH CURTIS SHORT
Compiled by her granddaughter, Mary E. Brown Hales

She was born August 8, 1807 in London, England, the daughter of William Curtis Jr., and Elizabeth Dobney Holt. She had two brothers, Joseph and Charles. Her father had been married twice before he married her mother and had two grown families all registered in the Church of England.

Her father died when she was five years of age. She was tenderly instructed by her mother in the Protestant Church of England. From her earliest youth she was religiously inclined. In later years she heard the true gospel, it had the proper ring, and she received it.

In England she lived only a short distance from the Buckingham Palace. She has told her children about the coronation of Queen Victoria of England and the grand display in London at the time. Also she told of viewing many of the Royal Parades.

She married William John Short and had five children; William Stephen, Elizabeth Dobney, Charles Samuel, Joseph and Mary Ann. Thirteen years after their marriage, her husband went to South Africa. He left on the 26th of May 1847 to join her brother, Joseph Curtis, who had gone there with an English Colony April 14, 1842. He had written them many encouraging letters about the country there. She remained with her mother in England for four years while a home was being prepared for her across the ocean.

In August 1850, with her five small children she boarded the ship Captain Guy, and sailed for South Africa and a warmer climate. After eight weeks on the water she landed in a new country and a new home at Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

They liked their new home very much, and her husband's wholesale butcher business prospered.

The Natives were very helpful to the white people. They could be hired very cheaply to do their washing and ironing. They would take the clothes down to the ocean and beat them on the rocks and then return them, washed very clean and white.

Her children grew up there to young manhood and womanhood. They were sent to good private schools. One for boys and another for the girls. The girls studied books in the mornings and some kind of sewing or handwork in the afternoons.

When the Mormon Elders came, she and her daughter Elizabeth became very interested in the new religion they brought. They entertained the Elders and would walk many miles to attend church. Finally after much faith and prayers on the part of the mother and daughter, they were converted and joined the church. Then her husband was converted after seeing one of his children healed by the administration of the Elders.

Grandfather and Grandmother Short and my mother were baptized into the true Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on November 18, 1855. Later other members of the family were baptized. Her brother Joseph Curtis and his wife Mary Ann were baptized in 1857 just two years later, but Mary Ann never had the privilege of coming to Utah.

The Spirit of Gathering to Zion had been working upon them, and the mother and daughter had wanted to come to Utah for a number of years. But, her husband had come to Africa to better his financial affairs and was not inclined to leave. She and her daughter Elizabeth, however persuaded him to let the family go to America and to Utah. He finally decided to let the eldest son William accompany the family on their journey. The father would stay and sell out his business and come the next year.

Now with children grown up she decided to cross the ocean again with them, this time to America. Preparations began. The Elders told them they would not find any fine ostrich plumes and silk dresses like they had there, in Utah. So, they thought they would take some with them. They filled their trunks with many silk dresses, patterns, feathers, and jewelry. (The greatest part of it was sold after reaching Utah since they found that they needed other things worse.) They boarded the ship Henry Ellis whose captain was Captain Philips with many Elders and other converts from Africa. (Elder Henry Dixon was with them.) They set sail for America April 1, 1863. They were on the ocean eight weeks, and landed in New York in June 1863. Then they traveled by rail road to Council Bluffs where preparations were made to cross the plains. A freight train was leaving for Utah so all the African Saints came with this company. They arrived in Salt Lake City in September 1863.

They settled in Salt Lake City, and her husband joined them the next year along with his son. They started a butcher shop. In those pioneer days they went through many hardships and trials incident to pioneer life, but they were never sorry that they came to Utah, and they found many friends among the Saints of God.

On the 30th of April 1878, her husband died and she moved to Provo to live with her daughter Elizabeth. She resided there until 1881. She went to visit her two sons and their families in Glenwood Sevier County, Utah where she stayed until her death in January 20, 1884. It was a very cold winter and with poor transportation in those days, it was her there.

Grandmother was a faithful Latter-day Saint. She was very neat in appearance. She believed in a "stitch in time saves nine". She was a great help to mother while she lived with us as there was ten young children in our family. Grandmother gave me my first lesson in sewing on a small nine patch quilt block. She also taught me how to darn stockings.

Copied June 1, 1959 by Robert L. Hales.