

## **Orilla May Brown Maxfield: A "Rock of Gibraltar"**

Orilla May Brown was born on May 6, 1896, in Provo, Utah, the oldest of nine children of William and Henrietta Clinger Brown. Her family moved to Lakeview, Utah, where she completed her education, graduating from the 8th grade. At the age of 17, she met Albert E. Maxfield. Despite Albert's father's attempts to prevent the marriage, they eloped and were married on July 23, 1914.

Orilla was a creative, artistic, and endlessly energetic woman, described by her children as the "rock of Gibraltar" in every family crisis. Life was a constant struggle, especially during and after World War I and the Great Depression. The family lived in small homes, some with only one bedroom and no indoor plumbing, but Orilla always made the most of their situation. She made all the family's soap and sewed all the clothes for her six children, even making wedding gowns for her daughters later in life. She was a marvelous cook and taught her children to cook and bake, a skill they valued for the rest of their lives.

She was also a resourceful provider. While living on a farm on Provo Bench, she ran the milk through a separator to make butter to sell and fed the skim milk to the pigs. She also canned and bottled fruits, tomatoes, pickles, and her famous chili sauce to sustain the family through the winter. Orilla was also known for her artistic talents, particularly her work with Dennison Wax, creating beautiful wax trees and other decorative items for the home.

Orilla was always ready to help her family. Her mother's relatives often lived with them, and she helped her younger siblings, Jesse and Melba, and her niece, Vanita. She was also very close with her aunt, Lillie Clinger Sumsion.

In 1938, Orilla opened a nursing home in the duplex where the family lived on Belmont Avenue, providing an essential source of income during the depression. Her children remember her as a great homemaker and a genius at making wonderful meals from the frugal groceries she had on hand. She loved to try new foods and delighted in cooking with ingredients her son-in-law, Jim Sims, brought home from the wholesale fish house where he worked.

Orilla was an active and dedicated member of her church, teaching Primary classes and sharing her homemaking and artistic talents with the Relief Society. She and Albert spent many happy years in the home they bought in 1947 on Claybourne Avenue, a new home with all the modern trimmings. This was a happy time for Orilla, who had finally achieved financial stability.

Orilla May Brown Maxfield died on February 16, 1977, leaving behind a legacy of strength, creativity, and selfless devotion to her family. Her impact on her children and grandchildren was immeasurable, and she will always be remembered as a woman who could do anything and faced life's challenges with unwavering strength.

## Orilla May Brown Maxfield's Accomplishments

- **Matriarch and Homemaker:** Successfully managed a household of six children with limited resources during a time of great economic hardship.
- **Marriage and Family:** Married Albert Elias Maxfield on July 23, 1914, and was sealed in the Salt Lake Temple on June 15, 1921.
- **Skilled Seamstress:** Made all the clothes for her children, including wedding gowns for her daughters, showcasing her artistic talent and practicality.
- **Resourceful Provider:** Utilized farming skills to make butter for sale and preserve food for the family, ensuring they had enough to eat.
- **Pioneer of Small Business:** Opened a nursing home in her own residence to generate income for her family during the depression, demonstrating her entrepreneurial spirit.
- **Community Leader:** An active and engaged member of her church, she shared her skills and talents in the Relief Society and taught a Primary class.
- **Artistic Talent:** Expressed her creativity through various mediums, including Dennison Wax, and was a gifted artist who created special holiday decorations and crafts.
- **Devoted Family Member:** Maintained strong relationships with her extended family, providing a home for her younger siblings and niece when they needed help.
- **Later Life:** Passed away on February 16, 1977.