

## Florence Ellen Chaffin Gifford (1886-1975)

By: Dora G. Hill, daughter

In the year 1886 in Salt Lake City, Utah there lived a couple with the names Henry Albert Chaffin and Leatha Jane Crow. Their home had been blessed with eight children. On June 20, 1886 another baby girl was born. They decided to name her Florence Ellen.

They continued to live in Salt Lake until the following November. Then they moved to Circleville, Iron County, Utah. While living here three more children were born, making a total of twelve children.

My mother, Florence Ellen, had a happy childhood, but also a busy one. For instance, when they were small if they didn't have any other work to do their father would have them move a pile of rocks from one corner of the yard to another. He said that an idle mind is the devil's workshop. He didn't want his children to grow up to be lazy.

At the time my mother was eleven years old, she worked for a woman with a new baby. There were also two other children in the family. A woman came in and dressed the woman and baby each morning. Mother did all the rest of the work except the washing and part of the ironing. She received fifty cents per week for this labor.

The summer she was thirteen she kept house for her father while her mother and some of the children took care of a dairy.

Mother's father died when she was fifteen years old. He never laid down at all for the last nine weeks of his life, except for the last twenty-four hours. Mother took turns with Grandmother sitting up with him. During this time she experienced an earthquake that moved the house one-half inch to the north, on its foundation. She and her mother were sitting up at this time. She told me it was the most beautiful moonlight night she had ever seen. It shook the dishes from the cupboard, slopped the milk from the pans, banged the beds against the wall, and you could hear the canned goods fall from the shelves in the nearby store. It also shook the corner from a house. This house was up the canyon from Circleville. It also shook down a good many chimneys. This happened about two weeks before her father died.

The following January her mother came down with Spinal Meningitis. For the next six weeks she and her older sister took care of Grandmother. They took in washings and ironings to help with the living. One week they did ten washings and three ironings. The average for the six weeks period was six washings and three ironings per week.

For a washing for a family of from eight to ten people they received just fifty cents. They had to do these washings over the board and iron with stove irons. My mother says she would go over to my aunt's in the evenings and wash about three dozen dirty diapers (she had to get out all the stains) for ten cents.

During this time her brothers were working to pay for the funeral expenses.

When the family first came to Circleville they lived on a farm. Later they sold their farm and moved into town. The year after they moved to town there was another family moved to town. Soon after they arrived, the mother of this family died. They had a daughter about the age of Mother. Her name was Sadie Sainsberry. My mother's mother helped with these children after their mother died. My mother and Sadie became great friends. They were pals until Mother moved to Idaho in 1902.

Mother's oldest brother was married and living in Idaho at the time. He helped them move. They came about 300 miles by team and wagon -- then came the rest of the way on the train. They moved to Ammon, Idaho where they lived until November, 1903.

Mother's sister just one and one-half years older than she was working in Woodville, Idaho. One Sunday a bunch of them got together and to joking. They decided to call Mother on the telephone and introduce her to one of the gang -- George Alvin Gifford. So they did. When Mother turned from the phone she told her mother she had just met her future husband. Her mother was very provoked at her. But sure enough, they were married just nine weeks later in the L. D. S. Temple at Logan, Utah on November 5, 1903, by Apostle Merrill. Mother and father made their home in Woodville. They lived there for the next twenty-five years. They lived with Father's folks for the first three weeks while they were building them a house. Then they ran a grocery store until the following spring when Father's mother died in 1904.

On the 30th day of July, 1905 their first baby was born. Mother gave birth to thirteen children altogether. There were seven boys and six girls. All were born in Woodville, Idaho. Their names, beginning with the eldest are: Louisa Jane, Thelma, Elzada Ann (Peggy), Denzel Lamond, Elnora, Dora Alviteen (myself), Oscar Dwayne, Louis Laverle, Alma Milo, Effie, Lavern Deloy, Theda Rae, and one that didn't have a name because it was born dead.

Mother lived on a dry farm off and on for seven years to help prove up on the land. While living there her fifth child was born and it died when only one hour old. This was one of the many trials she had to bear.

Mother was a faithful church worker from the time she was married on. While living in Woodville she worked in the Relief Society, Sunday School, Mutual and Primary. She was a Trail Builder Leader for thirteen years. She was Journal Agent for eighteen years. She held many other offices in the church.

One day while living on the dry farm she got up and did her ironing in the morning, hung her clothes on the chairs to air, and went to the townsite for Relief Society Meeting. When she came back in the evening she discovered that some way the pigs had gotten into the house and rooted her clothes all over the floor until she had to wash them all over again.

When her eighth child, Lewis, was born, he only weighed four pounds and between three and four ounces. She took care of him herself. He had to be fed every hour night and day, but she pulled him through and he is now a husky man. When he was eight months old, Mother and myself had Typhoid Fever at the same time. I was about three or four years of age at that time. Mother says that I would not let anyone else touch me but her; so they would doctor her, then bring her the things, and she would doctor me.

When Mother's ninth child was a baby, Father was down for some time with Small Pox. He had them so bad that he had to be packed in pillows. He was even broke out on the bottoms of his feet and in the palms of his hands.

Her oldest child's first baby was born on August 28, 1927. It was her first grandchild (a boy). He lived one hour. She helped when it was born. After it died she helped make it's burial clothes and trim its casket and get it ready for burial, did her washing and ironing, and her thirteenth child was born on

the first day of September --just three days after the birth and death of her grandson. This child, Theda Rae, had poor health from the time of its birth. It died when sixteen months old. That spring we moved to Roberts, Idaho. We lived there two years.

Thelma had two children born eighteen months apart. They died just ten weeks apart -- Sept 1 and Nov 10, following the death of her baby. Thus she buried one child of her own and two grandchildren in less than a year. She now had no grandchildren. This happened in 1929.

In September, 1930 Mother, Father and Grandfather went to Utah for a load of fruit. When they were about twenty-five miles from home, they had a car wreck. Mother was thrown into a barrow pit of water and nearly drowned. She was rushed to the hospital. The attendants there thought she was dead. She had a large gash in her head, her right arm was broken through both bones between the elbow and wrist, and all of her right side was badly bruised. She was unconscious for six days. The doctors said it was a higher power than them that saved her life. She was so low that they didn't set her arm until the tenth day. Then it wouldn't hold so they made two openings from the elbow to the wrist and fastened the bones together with silver plates and screws. In setting her arm the doctor pulled her shoulder out of place. He thought he got it back in, but she went for nine months that she couldn't raise her arm above her head. Then she went to stay with her daughter who was looking for a new baby. She retired one night about 11:00 and at about 5:00 her daughter became ill and called her. When she began to dress she found that she could raise her arm. She feels that her shoulder was replaced by the power of the Lord during the night. Due to the plates in her arm it had running sores on it for twenty-nine months. At the end of that time the Kimball Relief society helped pay the expenses so she could go back to the hospital and have the plates removed. Her arm then healed.

In 1931 they had moved from Roberts to Kimball, Idaho. In 1937 they moved back to Kimball where they have lived since with the exception of spending the winters since about 1942 with their children in Washington.

In 1935 she took care of her bed-ridden mother who died December 2, 1935. At this time she had ten living children. There was a peculiarity in her family. She had four girls with dark hair and brown eyes and one girl with light hair and blue eyes. At this time four girls and four boys were married, and one of each sex still at home. Then on April 5, 1936 her youngest son Lavern died. This broke up the peculiarity.

The next important event was when she was cleaning house. She was standing on a chair which had a broken back. She slipped and fell, running a round on the broken back of the chair several inches into her hip. They called the doctor and he had her rushed to the hospital in an ambulance. He said the only thing that saved her life was that the stick struck the bone and glanced up the side of it instead of going straight through. This caused her to have a nervous breakdown. The hospital was very crowded and she couldn't stand the noise, so they moved her back home. Her hip healed over, and they thought she would be okay, but one day she had a very high fever. The doctor thought she must have typhoid and told Father he was afraid he could not pull her through in her present condition. A few days later the sore in her hip broke and ran about a quart of puss. When this infection was gone she soon recovered.

She has many friends as she has always been a friend in time of need.

One of the happy events she had was at the time my oldest child was born. She came to take care of me. When she arrived she found that a Relief Society sister who was with me was her childhood pal, Sadie Sainsberry, whom she had not seen since leaving Utah.

She has had other happy experiences in her life -- too numerous to mention. There have also been many other cases of illness in her family. Once, due to sickness, she never removed her clothes (only to put on clean ones) for a period of three months.

For the first fifteen years of her married life she had from one to three of her brothers-in-law with her all the time. She always had extra ones in her home until her children were married. Her home was open to friend or foe and many times they took advantage of the hospitality, but she never closed her door to anyone.

Besides her other health problems her eyes began to fail, but she continued to read the scriptures as long as she could. Poor health never seemed to stop her from doing good in the world. It was nothing to find her out in her garden as early as 4:30 or 5 am. If it was light it was time to be up and working. She was a good housekeeper and homemaker. She was a friend to the needy as well as others.

When the doctor suggested that they seek another climate for her husband's health they gave up their home in Kimball and moved to Olympia, Washington. They weren't content to "retire" so they opened a small country store in their home and ran it, selling groceries and drygoods, until their death. She continued to serve as a Relief Society Teacher. She didn't go visiting teaching on a steady basis as her health did not permit that, but she was on the active Relief Society Visiting Teacher Roll until she died.

She lost her beloved husband 16 November, 1967. After his death she made several trips to Idaho to visit with her children who were still living in the Snake River Valley.

She passed from this life on 16 December, 1975 in Olympia, Washington and was laid to rest beside her husband in the Woodville, Idaho Cemetery on the homestead where they had spent so many of their first married years.

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Kimball, Idaho Oct 8, 1946

Now Florence Gifford is our honored guest  
We are proud of her, as we were the rest.  
We appreciate her because she is willing to work,  
And when it comes to her duty she does not shirk.  
She has taught classes of girls and boys,  
This has brought her many joys.

She is an expert when it comes to selling magazines,  
She makes us all dig down in our jeans.  
She works very hard and is not content  
Until she has one hundred percent.  
She is praised very highly by the sisters of the Stake,  
And we all think that she takes the cake.

When she is finished she packs up her grips  
And she and Alvin take their annual trip.  
They motor way out to Washington  
Where the winters are not so long and cold  
And a good place to go when you are growing old.

She is very ambitious and she likes to sew,  
She always embroideries and pieces quilt blocks galore.  
She has a cute little home that is close to the track,  
When it comes to beauty it does not lack  
With shrubs, flowers and berries that stand out a-fore,  
And even a grape vine that twines around her door.

We appreciate the work you have done in the past,  
And may your joys forever last.

By: Margaret Jorgensen,  
a dear friend of Florence

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Footnote:

As I typed this it brought many memories of Grandmother. How I loved to go see her in that dear little home by the railroad tracks. Many happy hours have been spent there. Often in the summer time I would return home with a bouquet of sweet peas, my favorite flower. How I treasured them! Her flower garden was her pride and joy, and she brightened the day for many people by sharing her flowers with them. She always said, "The more you share the more you have." However, she always insisted on picking the flowers herself.

Grandmother was the Relief Society Magazine representative for many years. This poem was written to honor her in Relief Society. I believe they were honoring one sister a month.

For several years Grandpa and Grandma spent the summers in Idaho and their winters in Washington. We always looked forward to them coming back in the spring. One April Fool's day Daddy, Earl Hill, said, looking out the window, "There comes Grandpa Gifford hopping around the corner on one foot." We all rushed to the window and were so disappointed when he said, "April Fool".

This footnote was written in 1999 by: Daveen Hill Dye Kearns, Utah