

Matilda Jenkensen Stolworthy

Matilda Jenkensen Stolworthy was my great-great grandmother. She and her husband, Thomas Stolworthy, joined the church in England. She always referred to herself as the ‘tithing girl’ as she was the tenth child in her family and the only one to join the church. Their families turned against them when they joined the church, so they set sail for America in 1854 and joined a group of Saints crossing the plains to Salt Lake City.

Brigham Young called them to help settle some of the outer lying communities. In England she received training as a nurse, little dreaming of the great work in store for her. She was brave and fearless in going into the homes of sickness as a nurse and a midwife, but she had absolute faith in God and felt that if she lived as near to him as she knew how, that she had the right to expect help in her hour of need. Many a prayer went up to her Heavenly Father in behalf of her patients. Pioneering life was very hard. As a result she and her husband buried four small children. Another baby girl was born named Elizabeth and at age two months the family was called to move back to Salt Lake City. Grandfather built a good substantial house where he could make life easier for his dear wife. She, being industrious turned it into a home and they were very happy.

But once again sickness came into their home and their little girl lay ill, burning with fever. No doctor to help, only a kind neighbor to watch the little spirit pass away. The mother felt that she could not give up her little girl, so falling down on her knees she poured out her heart and asked the help of her Father in Heaven. After a few moments she felt a breeze flowing through the house. She turned toward the open door and saw a stranger standing in the room. He had a long white beard and wore a suit of light clothes, such a kind, yet firm, face and the sweetest smile.

She asked him to have a chair and was very astonished to hear him say, “No, I just came in to see your sick child.” Then turning to the baby and laying his hands on her head, he murmured some words they could not understand. Turning to Grandmother he said, “Sister Stolworthy, you have had great trouble and sorrow, but you have been faithful through it all. God will bless you, and your little girl will grow to womanhood and be the mother of ten living children. You shall yet raise a family to womanhood and manhood. He then closed the door and went out.

When she turned around, the baby was sleeping. The high fever was broken and she had been healed. The two women hurried out of the room to ask the man his name and to thank him, but there was no one in sight. They followed his footsteps to the gate but there they disappeared. The two women inquired of the neighbors, but they found no one had seen him. Grandmother always felt that he was of the three Nephites left on earth. And who shall say there is no connection with God? He has fulfilled his promise literally as the baby grew to womanhood and was the mother of fourteen children, ten of whom lived.

More children came to bless Brother and Sister Stolworthy’s happy home, making ten children in all, five of who lived. Such was the life of many of our pioneer mothers.

This event, taken from family histories, was included in a Mother's Day talk given by Jensine Ahlstrom Olson on May 13, 2001 Chancellor Ward, Fredericksburg, Virginia.