

HISTORY —

by Grace Kearn Lamborn



Jane — March 22, 1817

John — February 3, 1820

Long ago and far away in the village of Chaddesly, Lancashire, a daughter was born to Robert and Jeanette Holden Huntington. They named her Jane.

Also in Lancashire a son was born to Roger and Margaret Ogden Eastham. They named him John. Their children would not know each other for a number of years.

After approximately fourteen years had passed, John went to work for the railroad and Jane went to work as cook's assistant in the home of some very wealthy residents. There she learned all the rudiments of plain and fancy cooking which, combined with her natural aptitude, made her quite famous and she was much in demand to plan and supervise banquets — on special occasions and for special guests.

At first John was a sort of errand boy -- a "lackey" they were called. However, he watched and worked and listened and at twenty years of age he was a full-fledged engineer.

In the meantime, John and Jane had met, fallen in love and were married. When John was given a position with the railroad as an engineer to make a daily run from Liverpool to Longridge, the young newlyweds went to Liverpool to make their home. They lived there for several years.

Then John was transferred to Derbyshire where they were for a few more years.



I haven't the dates of their comings and goings nor of the five little girls born to them -- only the order in which they came: Edith who died and was buried in Derbyshire, Emma, Lucy, Kate, and Marentha.

It was during those years in Derbyshire that Jane heard for the first time the word "Mormon", or of a church called the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints."

One day she joined a small crowd assembled on a street corner and heard a Mormon elder speaking. She liked what he said and when she heard where he would be holding a service, she made it a point to be there. She told John about this but he was not very interested. Also his working hours probably kept him from attending any of the meetings until he could tell that Jane was very much interested. Then he investigated for himself and felt as she did -- that this Mormon religion had more to offer than most he knew about. So, while he was not yet ready to join, he made no objections to Jane's joining if she wished.

It was in 1839 that Jane was baptized into the Mormon church and from that moment she had a burning desire to gather with the Saints in Zion.

At this time, John was transferred once more -- this time to Rotherham, Yorkshire. Rotherham was a very large shipping center and John was given day work there supervising. The family was settled in a small village, Masborough, just across the River Don from Rotherham.

Four more children were born there. Two little boys who both died at birth and two girls -- Merlin, my mother, and Lenora -- which made a family of nine children. There was no Latter-Day Saint

church, but there was a little church of some sect or religion. Jane sent the children there since as she said, "Any church was better than none and they could at least learn to sing and pray."

John had now been baptized into the Mormon church, and they had hopes of going to Zion. But try as they would they seemed not to be able to save the money to make the venture.

Then one day John came home from work and told Jane that he had been asked to go to the West Indies where the English government was just finishing laying the first railroad in that part of the world. They needed experienced men and John's salary would be almost doubled and his expenses taken care of. However, he must have his wife's consent and must sign a contract to stay four years. I imagine this left them a very hard decision to make. It would mean the difference between emigrating to Zion in four years -- or probably never. They talked and prayed and decided to make the move: Jane and children to Leeds where there was an LDS church and better schools; John to the Indies with the faith that things would be for the best.

Somehow the years passed and then John was home again. I am sure they must have been very lonely at times. But Grandma's house was "home away from home" for many young missionaries; and she was the kind of person who could comfort and advise.

I wish each one of the Eastham descendants could have a copy of the letter Joseph Smith (not yet president) wrote to grandfather at the time of Jane's death.

In 1864, two of the Eastham girls, Emma and Lucy, married young men, converts, and emigrated to Utah. So, when John came home he retired from railroading, took his severance pay, and immediately the Eastham family began planning to leave for Zion.

On April 29, 1865, they sailed from England on the Belle Wood.

I am sorry I didn't ask more questions about their trip, but this I know: they were four weeks reaching Castle Gardens, New York, a port of debarkation, arriving there May 29.

It seems that the people on board were mostly families. They had a certain place on the ship allotted to each family where they slept and prepared and ate their meals.

When they arrived in the United States, the Easthams and others also, I suppose, began gathering things together to go by rail and boat to a place on the banks of the Missouri River where westward bound waited until enough had assembled to make travelling across the plains safe. The Indians would not attack long wagon trains. It was six weeks before there had been enough people to start the trek westward.

John had bought two wagons and teams and since he knew nothing whatever about horses, he found two young men who, for their food and transportation, were willing to do the driving and take care of camp chores. These were young men, not necessarily LDS, who were anxious to come West. This plan worked fine for everybody.

One wagon was fitted for the family, the other the luggage, bedding, and so on.

I can imagine what it must have been like mile after weary mile. It was July and most of them slept out in the open. When they came to a river, they would camp a few days so the women could wash and dry their clothes on the bushes. Everyone would go for a swim, if possible. Mother said there was much singing and besides -- they were on their way to Zion.

At the rivers and waterholes they had to fill barrels and canteens to last over the dry miles, and water enough for the horses.

The weeks went by. No one was ill. All seemed happy and suddenly on the evening of November 6, they were camped in Emigration Canyon by what is now known as Little Mountain. This was Merlin's thirteenth birthday, and Grandma made for her what she called a "roly-poly pudding." Mother never forgot that.

The Easthams, along with the others, were thousands of miles from the land of their birth. I expect everything seemed strange to them and doubt they slept much that night.

And so on November 7, 1865, the wagon trains came into the valley and gathered on Washington Square (where the City and County building now stands).

They were greeted by friends and relatives and people who had come to welcome those who had no friends or relatives here.

Naturally Emma and her husband, James Ratcliff, and Lucy and her husband, Andrew Milward, were there. It must have been a joyful reunion. The Easthams went right on out to Grantsville with their daughters and sons-in-law.

It was most too late in the fall to start building so they lived with the daughters and got along very well. Some of the girls slept in a wagon box. I think they enjoyed that also.

John sold the wagons and teams since he had no use for them, and then early in the spring of 1861, with the help of James and Andrew and the girls and good neighbors, the Easthams built for themselves a comfortable little home -- the first one they had ever owned. They started a little general merchandise store and kept it for a number of years and they had quite a nice business.

Grandfather John helped build the first ward meeting house still in use. Jane was president of the Relief Society for years. The younger girls grew up and married and went away. Marentha married James Stoddart and went to pioneer in Idaho where they raised their family and lived and died. Kate married Edward Milward, brother of Andrew.

Merlin married James Kearl and they went at President Young's suggestion to pioneer the south end of the Bear Lake Valley. They raised their family there -- and passed away there -- and are buried in the Laketown Cemetery.

Lenora married Hyrum Sevier and went to pioneer in Idaho. They had a large family. Many descendants survive them. I have always been glad three of the Eastham girls stayed near their parents.

John's work was so different from what he had known before and was very interesting, I am sure. He was now a tiller of the soil. There was much to be done -- a well to be dug, a garden to plant, a beech tree in the front yard and peach trees in the back. He would have received some help and much advice, I am sure.

Grantsville was just a little country village -- everyone knew everyone. They worked together, rejoiced together, and sometimes mourned together. John and Jane and the girls were taken into the fold as if they had always lived there. They worked in the Church and helped plan the future of the ward.

But the years take their toll and so after a long and useful life, on June 22, 1889, Jane Huntington Eastham passed quietly away, and left all who knew her to mourn.

Grandfather John was completely lost without her. And then one day he suddenly decided he would be more reconciled if he went back to England to live where they had lived in their youth.

His children and grandchildren did not discourage him, and so he settled his affairs, bade them all goodbye, and returned to England. They had rather expected him back sometime, but not on the first boat leaving for the United States. He was glad to be back. He said things had changed so much over there. They hadn't, really, it was John who had changed.

He couldn't live twenty-five years in the sun and clean air and starry nights and wide expanses of land without noticing the dews and damps of England; the houses built almost attached to one another, the gloomy and sunless days. He settled down and was as content as he would ever be without Jane beside him. On the 16th day of December, 1893, he passed peacefully away and was laid to rest beside his beloved wife. And with his passing the Eastham name was erased from the current ward roles.

There is no more an Eastham name. But there are hundreds of descendants from Canada to the farthest spot south, from the east to the west coast, reaching into the eighth generation, and into all walks of life.

Many of these descendants have served missions -- many are out now. Many more will be as years go by.

It is interesting to note that there are in this year of 1978, three of John's and Jane's great-great grandsons laboring in the very area of England where the Easthams lived. Gary, born in Canada and reared in Provo, Utah; Alan, born in Kentucky and reared in Illinois; David, born and reared in Cardston, Canada: these

boys are John's and Jane's great-great grandsons. And the great-grandsons of James and Merlin Eastham Kearnl. They share the Kearnl name. And when Alan and David met recently in England and compared notes, they found they had the same great-great Eastham grandparents.

Grandfather John and grandmother Jane left a fine heritage for all their descendants.

John and Jane were beloved by all who knew them. May God bless their memory.

1978

The above was written by me, Grace Kearnl Lamborn, daughter of James and Merlin Eastham Kearnl, and granddaughter of John and Jane Huntington Eastham.

Material came from records and from things mother and my Eastham aunts told us.

