

Mary Ellen came into this world on Tuesday, June 26th of 1866. It was a good day; the place was not a home -- it was a stopping point for pioneers going to "the Valley".

Mary Ellen had three older sisters. Elizabeth was six years older; Sarah four, and Emily two.

The wagon company that the William Clark family was assigned to didn't start off for another two weeks. As the company came near the Valley, two brothers of Father William met the wagons, and took the Clarks to Coalville, where the brothers lived.

After a few years, William decided to try farming on his own. He and Mary Ann, his wife, found a farm near Devil's Slide. The land was good; things grew. But grasshoppers came too often for William.

He decided to take up shoemaking. After all, he had been trained in that trade in England. He chose the small town of Almy, Wyoming. It was not far from Coalville. Clark's Shoe Shop became a fixture in the town. When Mary Ellen was five an uncle and his family came from England and joined them. When she was sixteen, her family moved back to Coalville. Her father set up shop there, and continued his well-admired work. He loved to tell stories about his being a pioneer, and he had a great way of telling stories.

Mary Ellen's mother, Mary Ann, also had talent. She knew how to put frosting on a cake as if you wrote the words on it. People came to her often for cakes. Mary Ellen had an active, pleasant childhood. There was love in the home. Mary Ellen got the loving nick-name, Nellie. During the family's time in Almy, Nellie turned eight; yet she waited to be baptized with someone else. She was nine when her uncle Sam Pike baptized her.

As she grew into her teen years, Nellie went to Ogden to go to school. She boarded with relatives. In January of 1885, there was a dance. She was asked by a fine young man, and accepted. When the night came, she was picked up by a different boy; he explained that the other had been called on a trip. He promised to treat her royally. As he did, he fell in love with her. Nellie did not object to his expressions of devotion. By the next January, they were married. Nellie hid her disappointment; the bishop performed the ceremony -- her beau, Chauncey, was not a member of the church. But he was a fine young man, and Nellie promised herself that good would come of their union.

Her husband turned out to be a gardener. He was able to provide her a fine living by growing vegetables in a way that they matured even when it was cold. He became Ogden's "Market Gardener". A little over a year after their marriage, Nellie gave birth to a fine baby boy. The couple named him Charles Roswell. Two years later, she had another boy, Edward. And so it was. By the sixth year there were three boys. They named him Chauncey. It was going on three years after Chauncey that Joe was born. Two and a half years later the coveted girl arrived; named Katie.

Nellie was happy, but very busy with five youngsters age ten and below. But one afternoon her husband, Chauncey, came home drunk. That was a surprise! Nellie cared for him. The next day he said he was sorry to have come home that way. Yet, the next week, he came home drunk again. And when Nellie chided him, he became rough with her. Of course, the next day, he was very apologetic. But the pattern continued.

The children grew. And when Nellie was forty-three, she had another baby -- a boy, of course. They named him Leslie. A year after Leslie's arrival, Nellie's dear mother died. Her father lasted another six years.

And at home, still there were the drunken-husband times. Life was barely endurable. When Leslie was ten, their eldest son -- who had decided in his teens to go to church -- was installed as the bishop of the ward. The whole family went to the meeting. An apostle talked.

Husband Chauncey realized that evening that he had messed up his life; he had done everything wrong; he was frustrated. He needed a drink. But Prohibition had just begun. You couldn't buy alcohol anymore. Chauncey's nerves got the best of him. Two days later, he secured himself in the bathroom and shot himself.

That was just about as hard on Nellie as having him drunk. But she made herself equal to the tasks that came: She became an efficient executrix of her husband's estate, which was sizable -- \$25,000. (She got herself a \$100 monthly allowance, which was sufficient.) She went to the temple for herself. (That was a big step for ladies in those days.) She got herself sealed to her deceased parents. She served in the community. She involved herself heavily in Relief Society. She taught the religion class (an important class in those days) in Sunday School.

In 1933, with Chauncey dead 13 years, and Leslie grown and married, Nellie followed him and his wife. They all lived in View, Idaho, which is just outside of Burley. Life was relaxed there; at first, she made little trips to visit grandchildren, but Leslie's children were younger, and more fun. Nellie was happy. As World War Two came, she prayed for her grandsons who were fighting in the war. Her prayers were answered. Nellie encountered aches and pains. She died in 1950, on the first of September.