

Elizabeth Birch 1830

by Taten Thorley

ELIZABETH BIRCH aka 'HEAP BRAVE SQUAW'

Elizabeth Birch was born in Wooten, Kent Co., England on April 4, 1830. She is my great great great grandmother. She was the eighth child of William Birch and Mary Ann Rodgers. Her father bought some land in Swingfield and built them a house on it. Her mother taught her to read and write. She was also good with herbs and berries and sometimes used them to heal her sick neighbors.

Elizabeth became a servant girl and went to live in the home of a rich farmer. She met John Fagg, who also worked on the farm. They fell in love and later Elizabeth had a son. Some of her descendants believe that John left farm work to work on the railroad and was killed before his baby was born. But others believe that he was not killed and that he abandoned Elizabeth. She had her baby in a poor house in Elham Parish in 1849.

Tragedy struck again when her mother died, leaving five girls at home. She felt that it was her duty to care for these sisters. When her baby John was three years old, she married again. Her second husband's name was Robert Swain and he was a policeman. Their first child, a girl, was born in October of 1852. They named her Emily. She was so tiny she could fit in a quart jar.

Later, the family moved to Dover. While living there, another little girl was born in March of 1855. They named her Martha. After about seven years of marriage, Elisabeth and Robert separated.

Later, Elizabeth moved from England to Utah. She lived in Taylorsville and became the third wife of Joseph Harker in 1872. Joseph bought a house for Elizabeth in Rush Valley. She fed and took care of Joseph's sons who worked on the sheep ranch nearby. Elizabeth spent a lot of time alone in Rush Valley. Her children were married by this time.

One day Elizabeth was working in the milk house when she looked up and saw a large Indian watching her. She stopped her work and asked what he wanted. She learned from him that he wanted bread. She shook her head and said "no bread, I have no bread." Another Indian outside on a horse said "you lie!" She caught the other Indian by the arm and pulled him off his horse. He was very surprised! She told him that no one could call her a liar and get away with it. She explained to the Indians that she was out of bread but soon some sheep herders would bring her some flour. If they returned at sunset, she could give them bread. As the Indians left, one turned and called her "Heap Brave Squaw". They were much friendlier when they returned at sundown for a hot batch of bread. From then on the Indians would shoot wild game for her.

Elizabeth passed away in Taylorsville, Utah on November 23, 1897 following an operation.

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Elizabeth (Birch) Fagg Swain Harker
Taylorsville, Utah,

