

History of Mary Savage Stirling, part III  
(Wife of Adelbert William Stirling--son of William, Jr.)

I was born in St. George, Washington Co. Utah, March 4, 1905, the seventh child of ten children born to Josephine Foremaster and Nephi M. Savage. To my parents a new little spirit was always welcomed for the joy of sweet innocence and the privilege of providing a home to one of God's choice spirits. However, my birth turned out to be a special event in the Savage family. For instead of just one baby, we turned out to be twins. Ten minutes after my arrival, I was followed by a brother.

Dr. Frank Woodbury, who was our family doctor, promptly suggested that we be named Theodore and Alice. Theodore Roosevelt was the newly elected President of the United States inaugurated the day of our birth and Alice was his sister. Possibly it was because papa was a staunch Democrat that he did not take the suggestion. We were blessed and given the names Mary Jemima Savage and Joseph Smith Savage. Jemima was the name of a favorite sister of my father. But since it was a name made famous by a certain pancake advertisement, and I was the brunt of much teasing by my friends, I dropped the name.

Mary Jemima baked a cake  
She baked it in the ashes.  
She picked out with her big toenail  
And ate it with molasses.

Papa had special terms of endearment for a number of his children. He always called Joe and I "the babies" until I was thirteen and absolutely rebelled to answering to the term. From then on he referred to me as "my little girl."

At the time of my birth, our house was a modest, one story adobe home. If it were small for a family of ten, I never knew it until I grew up for it gave me the shelter and security found in a loving family. It consisted of two fairly large rooms with a small bedroom and screened in porch on the rear. In the rear of the house was a granary and below that a cellar. Flour and grain was stored there as well as other bulky dried beans, onions and apples, etc, as well as things not in use, trunks of pictures, etc. below the granary was the cellar, partially built below the ground with screened in swinging cupboard for milk and cream.

Although I was often intrigued with the two story homes of our neighbors with their steep staircases to climb and parlors, stuffy smelling, I thought, because they were kept closed except for special occasions, our house was very dear to me. Our front room did double duty as both parlor and bedroom. There was a fireplace not often used with a mantle adorned with figurines and pictures. To the right of the fireplace was a built in bookcase with drawers and cupboards at the bottom and glassed in doors at the top. The shelves were well filled with many lovely books by such authors as Dickens, Shakespeare, Louisa M. Alcott, representative of the classics. There were Hearst's, also many books of popular authors of the day such as Gene Stratton Porter, Harold Bell Wright. The Horatio Alger books, the Elsie Dinsmore series. (Each book of the latter always had a fresh supply of tears.)

The walls of the room were papered in early years with a medallion pattern. The woodwork was an imitation stained wood done by our neighbors, David Moss and sons. The floor was carpeted with an old-fashioned rag carpeting, bright and cheerful. These carpets were often used by thrifty housewives. Old clothes and linens were carefully saved and when sufficient good material had been saved or donated

by neighbors, they were dyed a variety of colors and cut into 1 ¼ inch strips. The strips were sewed together end to end. I remember helping by winding the strips into balls. The balls were then sent to the weaver to be woven into carpeting. My sister, Clara, laid the one I remember. She covered the floor with fresh straw and then stretched and tacked the carpet over the straw at the base board. It meant much work and sore knees, but oh the satisfaction when we could tread softly or have a merry romp over the lovely new rug.

At the windows hung starched lace curtains to the floor. I was not allowed to help my sisters pull the wet curtains into shape on the line to dry. Some other furnishings in the room were an organ, a center table on which reposed velvet-covered albums, a graphophone player. We children were delighted with the record of Uncle Josh telling funny stories and corny jokes. The songs of “under the Shade of the Old Apple Tree” and “The Old \_\_\_\_ Bucket” were popular with us. About the organ Papa had a number of the girls take lessons to learn to play it but at the time Joe and I grew up, he had lost faith for training a musician in the family. When the Cottam’s came to visit, Papa delighted in having Sister Cottam play while he and they sang hymns and old-fashioned songs.

My memory fails me as to sleeping accommodations of our large family. I do remember in those early years, a walnut folding bed. I was afraid to sleep in it for fear it would fold up while I was in it. Also there was a spring bed which when folded and covered with a tapestry made a couch. Very likely the room contained a large bed done up with a starched spread and the pillows covered with high tidies. They were often used in those days.

I must mention the pictures which hung in our house and in every home of the day. Hung high on the walls were pictures of our maternal and paternal grandparents. I didn’t really like the portraits of them there. One of my grandmothers looked rather stern, and it seemed to me as a child the eyes of all of them followed me about the room. I was glad they hung high on the wall so I didn’t need to look at them. Notwithstanding my aversion to the pictures, I had a high regard to my grandparents. They were people of strong faith and integrity. Perhaps if I had really known them personally, they would have been real to me, but I never had an opportunity to gain association with them. They had passed before I was born. My mother’s picture was on the wall, too. She looked kind and tender. There was also a picture of my sister, Media, who had died when I was three years old. She was a lovely young girl dressed in a blue dress to match her blue eyes and golden hair.

The dining room and kitchen is the room I remember many delightful hours and homey scenes. The walls were papered, linoleum on the floor, the latter sometimes new and others times well worn. There was a large table and chairs, a tall dark wood cupboard. Those old cupboards in many homes then would be collector items today. In the upper part were glass doors behind which we displayed a few lovely dishes, some hand painted and others lovely shaped fruit and cake stands. Most of them were wedding presents. Later years papa bough a lovely set of dishes, linens, silver tea set, and Roger’s 1847 silver set of flatware. I have in my possession one piece of a twin set of cake stands. Father gave Joe and I each one for our wedding gifts.

In my early years the large black cook stove was moved seasonally from the dining room to the screened porch and the cook stove remains there permanently giving the dining room more space and less ash dust and soot to contend with. There was also a built in sink and work counter. This must have been built after mother’s passing. I was small then for I remember placing a toe of my shoe on a 9 or 10 inch base board and barely reaching up to turn the tap for a drink of water. Those early years we used kerosene lamps. The radius in which the light spread was limited. The main reason the dining room table was

center of education and social living in the long winter evenings. In one corner was the singer sewing machine which was a vital necessity in every home.

My sisters and my mother were fine dressmakers. Above the sewing machine hung the clock. I must not forget the clock. It had no special artistic design or tuneful chime. It stood high on its shelf sounding out the time loud and brisk. It was more than a clock to me; it was a companion by day and a comforter in the wakeful night hours. Often I wakened from a bad dream, wondering what was a dream and what was reality. It was often home alone as I was expected to be the first child home from school. When the house was too still, its lively tick-tock drove away fearful imaginary thoughts. We were on friendly terms, the clock and I, except when it was out of tune and I was tardy for school.

Our house was more than a house; it was a haven where our physical wants were supplied. It was peopled with children who had hungry appetites but never knew what real hunger meant. Sometimes our clothes lacked style and freshness after mother passed and the house was not as orderly as it might have been. I remember taking a small lard bucket to a neighbor to buy yeast or milk and the lady who took great pride in keeping her house orderly and clean made a cutting remark about my bucket not being thoroughly washed. I was not too young at the time to feel the criticism and my pride was hurt. Now if she had been Sister Black, another neighbor, she would have quietly washed the bucket and said nothing. Papa's work kept him away from home all day without his supervision. It left much to be desired in providing a well kept home and arranging for each one of the children to have special chores to do. I know I and some of the other children did not always take kindly to being disciplined and directed by the older ones. Nevertheless, there was a great deal of love and loyalty among us.

My father was born in Payson, Utah County, Utah November 9, 1864, the youngest of 13 children, nine of which grew to maturity. In his own biography, he relates his early life and that of his family. He was born at a time when his mother, Sarah Power Savage, was in poor health due to the rigors of pioneer life. There had been periods of famine when she was carrying her babies, which deprived her of proper nourishment. Before my father was born she had fallen from a wagon and the wheels had run over her body. There was a period of time the family despaired of her regaining her health, but she lived until my father was seventeen years old, very strong in the faith for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His father, Henry Savage, had been a weaver by trade in London, England. When he heard the gospel preached he knew it was true. He and his wife were baptized on 2 June 1844. He worked at his trade to provide a living for his family, and worked also diligently preaching the gospel. He presided over the White Chapel Branch of the London Conference. Ten years later in 1854, they migrated to Salt Lake City. During the Johnson Army encampment sent out by the Government, with others evacuated from Salt Lake. They moved south near Payson. After the danger subsided, my grandparents were without a team of oxen and the means to return back to Salt Lake, so they were forced to remain in Payson and to get by the best they could.

Theirs is a story of hardship and perseverance and great faith. My father, early in his youth, developed crippling arthritis which at times limited his participation in heavy work which his older brothers did – hauling freight, wood and timber from the mountains, stone from quarries, ranching, herding sheep, etc. It was natural for him to turn to books and school. Schools were not free in those days. Generally certain teachers were contracted by a district or group of citizens to teach. Tuition had to be paid with the help of older brothers paying the tuition. Papa progressed in his education. Some of the instructors were very good, and often repetition of subject matter. After his father passed away, September 15, 1888 (?), he went to live with his sister, Rachel Brown and husband on Box Creek in Grass Valley in Piute County.

There was need for a school in the scattered area. The school board offered to pay him \$60 a month and board to teach their school. The new log school house was built. He taught two terms of 10 weeks each. My father said that this experience turned out to be a determining factor in his life. The money saved and the experience gained set the course of his life. His brother Alma invested the money in cattle and later sold them for him. When his term of teaching was up he was eager to attend the BYU Academy. Bro. Karl Gottfried Maeser was in charge of the Academy. In 1888, the Church planned to establish an academy in St. George, Utah. Bro. Maeser was asked to recommend a principal. Papa was offered the position.

He arrived in St. George, 1 September 1888. He roomed with Bro John Pymm. Bro. Pymm had known the Savage family in England. He was the postmaster of St. George. It was natural for Papa to seek out old friends of the family of whom there were quite a number. Some of them were Samuel G. Black and the George Jarvis family. These people I remember.

As I have heard in our early family conversation, my mother, Josephine Foremaster, worked for the Pymm family. So my parents had every opportunity to get acquainted and fall in love. But my mother must have had some competition for Papa and enjoyed the companionship of three Josephines, Josephine Sanders, Josephine Jarvis and my mother. My parents were married 7 May 1891.

I have scant recollections of my mother as she died March 24, 1910, soon after my fifth birthday. From the stories I have heard about her, she must have been a woman of strong character. People who knew her spoke always of her fine qualities. She was an excellent cook. Many of my older cousins have told me they always like to eat my mother's cooking. She was very hospitable and her food was excellent, particularly the freshly baked bread and honey she served them between meals. She was an excellent seamstress. There were a number of articles of clothing which my mother made; we often brought out to show our friends. The pin tucks and yards of lace on blouses and skirts were perfectly stitched. There were charts that looked complicated, from which she drafted her own patterns.

Another thing that gave me an insight into my parents before my time were the letters stored away in a cupboard drawer. Some were notes written between my parents during the time Papa served a mission for the Church. They were beautifully written both as to penmanship and content. They were written in a semi-formal style people used in that day. They began..."My loving wife or my loving wife as the case may be.

It was common practice in those days for the Church to call married men on missions. In the fall of 1895, Papa received his call to go on a mission to Tennessee. My parents had two young children, Henry and Media, and were expecting a third (Clara was born Oct 27, 1895). One letter from Secretary to Pres. Wilford Woodruff asked if there was any reason Papa could not leave the following May 1896. He had some outstanding debts at the time. One was against the home. Papa had a contract to teach school that winter. He still had a small salary due him as St. George City Recorder. My parents decided by economizing that he could be ready to go and he replied back to Pres. Wilford Woodruff to that effect. By May 1896, he had paid off his indebtedness and was ready to take leave of his family. A number of parties given in his honor and he was given various small gifts of money.

The YMMIA gave him factory scrip to buy a new suit of clothes. He was to travel without purse and script, which was the custom in those days. For the next two years, it was mother's responsibility to provide for her family. She took in some sewing. In the meantime, she cared for her aged mother in her last illness, who passed away Feb. 12, 1898. Her brothers were considerate and helped by supplying flour and other items of food.

My father was a dedicated missionary. He knew the Bible having made a practice of reading the scriptures and memorizing passages from early childhood. Many of his friends in the South called him “the walking Bible.” Because of his arthritis, tracting was not easy. The humid and rainy weather aggravated the condition. Often the food was difficult for his stomach to digest. He had little choice in the food he ate. Many of the people who gave the missionaries food and shelter were very poor and they shared what they had, even though it was only corn bread and fat bacon. Other times the meals were excellent. We often fixed baked fruit rolls with a topping of thin cream. We really enjoyed the dish for dessert, one Papa had learned to like in the South. Regardless of the hardships, he trusted on the Lord, and the Lord provided him food and shelter.

The Lord even tempered the elements. On one occasion he and his companion had quite a distance to cover through a wooded area to reach their destination, it began to rain. Papa and his companion knelt in the woods and asked the Lord to hold back the rain. Then they walked on without getting wet. They had barely reached the appointed place when the rain came down in torrents and if I remember correctly, it continued for a couple of days. Later, when Papa met one of the visiting Church authorities, he was greeted by him, “So you are the young man who stayed the rain.”

Josephine was the first child born after his return. Papa named her for his loving wife, Josephine. Her coming was in a sense a special blessing to my parents, for the sacrifice they had so willingly made for she has been a very choice member in our family. I have often said because the Lord took our mother, he sent Josephine to take her place. Since we believe in the doctrine of foreordination it is my belief our sister, Josephine, was foreordained to come to our family at that time so she could be the influence in our family that she has been.

Always as I grew up, Papa’s mission was a sort of epic in our family. Our family often measured time by it. Certain children were born before his mission. Others came after. Papa was a school teacher before he went; he was a county official afterwards. (He filled the County Treasurer office 28 years after his return.) A number of faith-promoting stories were handed down to us children to which we never tired listening. His mission was an example for his posterity to emulate, and many have followed his example. As a boy, my son, Keith, used his Grandfather’s mission as a subject for a number of Sunday School talks.

Not all families were as fortunate as ours. In a Sunday School class I heard one older friend relate the trials they went through while her father was on a mission. There was some criticism in her remarks whether it was wise to send fathers on missions. Another case a friend told me that when her husband’s grandfather was on his mission, the family became so embittered they practically lost their faith. The friend remarked that had the grandmother exercised more courage and faith it would have helped her children and grandchildren. Surely my own mother must have been very choice to engender a good attitude in us all.

About my only recollection of my mother was her final illness. I remember quite vividly the day of her death and funeral. I stood in front of the house with some of my brothers and sisters, knowing that she was critically ill. When we were told that she had died, I wept uncontrollably. She died as a result of an operation. We were told female trouble. Aunt Ida Foresmaster took us children to her home. I was put to bed with wet cloths on my throbbing head. Aunt Ida and the girls made dresses for us to wear to the funeral. Mine was white. We gathered at the home before the funeral. I looked at mother in the white casket. She looked so silent and still. I knew she was gone, but it was more than I could understand. Before the casket was closed, her gold wedding band was removed from her finger. That is my only memory of her. Strange too, for the events of those few days stand out vividly like a series of pictures on

a screen. At the services, I sat so small between my Aunt Ida and cousins; all of whom were dressed in black and I felt so forlorn. There was the ride to the cemetery in Uncle Albert's white top buggy and the return trip to a lonely house. Afterwards, I remember being on the south side of the home and saw my brother Joe hammering on a wagon. I wondered how he could forget his sorrow in play.

Losing Mother was a big shock to my father. There were seven of us ranging in ages of five years, Joe and I, to Henry 18 years. In between, Albert 7, Karl, 9, Josephine not quite 11 and Clara 15. Papa tried a number of housekeepers. Our cousin Martha Bennett from Holden was one I remember, one of the neighbor boys pushed me off the fence. I went to her crying. She put her arms around me and comforted me, then gave me a cookie. My hurt feelings were soon forgotten.

Our cousin, Mary Foremaster, was another housekeeper. We thought the food she cooked was so good. Another housekeeper we had was Hannah. The older children didn't like it, so they called her Hammer. She was sloppy in her appearance and not a housekeeper. Probably the attitude of the older children had an effect on me. One noon day she asked me to fetch a pan of chips from the wood pile so she could start a fire and cook dinner. I was very stubborn and refused to obey. She took me to the woodpile and forced me to pick up the chips. Later years I heard my sister Clara say hired help didn't prove satisfactory. So she and Josephine prevailed on Papa to let them take over the housekeeping. Hannah was the last of our hired help.

Soon after mother's passing, a number of widows came calling on Papa. I think they thought he would be a good "catch" as he held a public office. I remember the women, but I don't remember the question that was attributed to me. I was supposed to have said, "Papa why do these women always come here?" my sisters quickly replied, "They want to marry Papa!" I said "Papa, you won't let them take you away from us." My innocent remark cut him to the heart.

Papa's family was very dear to him. His life of a widower was very lonesome, but he said, "To marry again might mean losing my family, and my children mean more to me than another wife." Bishop McFarland even advised Papa to adopt his family out. The Foster Family who owned a dry goods store and were prosperous for those times asked to adopt Joe but Papa kept us all. Imagine separating twins. The Fosters had only girls and desired a boy. Thanks to father's belief - that his children were his eternal treasure - kept us together.

In July 1911, a year and four months after my mother passed away, our family contracted diphtheria. Henry was away at work on a summer job, but my oldest sister, Clara and my brothers Karl, Albert, and Joe contracted it. Papa and Josephine, who was only a young girl of 12 years, took care of the sick ones. Sister Emmett a kind little neighbor woman assisted. It was summertime so I lived out of doors and slept on a bed set up north of the granary with Josephine. A new addition of two large bed rooms had been built, but the flooring hadn't been laid nor the doors hung. We who were not ill sought shelter in the unfinished rooms against the heat of the day to eat our lunch.

One night I remember being unhappily awakened by the doctor giving me a shot of antitoxin in my hip. There had been a shortage of antitoxin in town. So a horse back rider had been sent towards Cedar City to meet another rider who was bringing a supply. This was the fastest method of transportation in those days. However, my brother Albert was already in the last critical stages of the disease, patches of membrane had covered the air passages and the antitoxin came too late to save him. I did not know how critical any of my brothers and sisters were. Papa had told me to play in the back yard and stay away from the front of the house.

On this day, I saw the Moss family horses and white top buggy coming down the street. Excited at seeing our neighbors return from a vacation at Pine valley, I dashed to the front around the house to call

to them. I stopped short shocked upon seeing a white coffin in our front yard. Past experience told me another of our family had died. That evening I learned it was Albert. We mourned his loss. The following November he would have been nine years of age. He was a boy, I'm told, who showed much promise. His school teacher had given him a special promotion that spring to skip a grade.

The rest of the family recovered from the disease. The city law concerning contagious diseases required fumigation of the house and furnishings. We all took baths and put on new clothes. The door and windows were taped, the bedding was hung on lines and drawers and cupboards opened. Then formaldehyde was burned so that the fumes could permeate the house and contents. How sleepy we were waiting until midnight when the house could be opened. Finally, the house was opened – and out walked our black cat, apparently, happy to be free in the fresh air. We wondered how effective was the fumigation? A very short time later, Josephine took the disease. I was the fortunate one. All escaped the contagion.

### SCHOOLS

My earliest school recollection is somewhat humorous as I look back. It happened the spring before we were old enough to attend school. Papa was at a lost to know what to do with my brother. Our brothers and sisters were in school and Papa at the office. He obtained permission to enter us in kindergarten. Evidently, the teacher had her own ideas on the plan, for well I remember how she called Joe and I to the front and asked us to follow her. She led us up the long wide steps to the second floor to the sixth grade room. Two small chairs were placed in front of the class. Commanding us to sit down, she left the room.

The new teacher handed us a pencil and paper and bid us to write. We were very conscious of the older boys and girls staring and grinning. It was comforting to know that one of them we knew, Leon Moss a neighbor toy. That ended Papa's attempt to use the kindergarten as a nursery for the twins. The next fall we entered school. The same teacher was over the class. Her attitude towards Joe and I this time seemed no different than the other children. However, she seemed to be a very sober and troubled person often disciplining with severity any infraction of class rules. A few short weeks she left school because of a nervous breakdown. As a whole, I enjoyed school through the years. My teachers were kind to me. I remember them all, except my second grade teacher.

### HOME AND SURROUNDINGS

As young children we didn't have to go far from home for entertainment. We made or found it in our own surroundings or immediate neighborhood. As a rule most children were kept home to do their chores, then in the afternoon they were allowed to seek their friends.

Our house was placed on a large inside lot, eight lots to a block. As I compare them with the small city lots today, they seem enormous. They were spacious enough for children to grow. As a young child it was my world. In spring and summer it provided space and interest that was a constant source of discovery from early morning until night. Our lot was fenced in with high board fences which gave us privacy. Papa believed in the old adage "well minded fences make better neighbors." He kept the fences in good repair to keep the children home and the chickens and stock out of the neighbors' gardens which was additional insurance to better friendships. Often I stood by and held a flat iron or heavy hammer while Papa pounded nails to keep his fence in repair.

All the available land was utilized to keep the place productive. The houses face the streets and all the barns and corrals and outhouses were in the rear of the lot thus keeping the animal noises and smells collected to the center of the block. Lanes were fenced off along one side to give access from

street to corrals. On the opposite side of the lot irrigation ditches were built to carry the water from the street. Papa had planted clumps of Pottawattamie plum trees and the rest of the way current bushes. The plums we made into tart jelly and preserves. It makes me drool to think about it. Spread on cakes and jelly roll with whipped cream it was delicious.

The current bushes did not yield heavily. Two or three times a week I gathered the fruit into a bucket during the season. We stewed and sweetened into a sauce. Eaten warm with bread and butter they were delicious. Sometimes we made them into roly poly or baked fruit rolls. In spots where a bush had died we used the shady little spot for a play house, improvising cupboards, tables, and doll beds that is, until one day I saw a small garter snake crawling through the bushes. On the other side of the ditch bank was a row of medium sized apple trees. Two or three of them were yellow transparent and bore their fruit in June. The apples baked or stewed had no equal. We seemed to crave the tartness of fruit in the hot summertime. (Lemons were not plentiful in those days in St. George or too expensive.)

The rest of the apple trees bore no fruit but a summer or two a couple of humming birds nested in our trees and to me it proved an interesting discovery. To the northwest section near the house Papa planted a peach tree, grape vines two or three fig trees and a few rows of raspberries. The latter were not very productive in our hot climate. After the first few pickings we gleaned the stragglers for ourselves. Our house was set back from the front fence. At the side of the walk were grown jonquils, sweet William stocks, holly hocks, and bushes of old fashioned yellow roses and other varieties. On the other side of the walk was the lawn.