Chapter 8: Catherine Richards Millard Dies



Grave marker for Catherine Richards Millard. Photo courtesy of Debora DeDen.

Late in the summer of 1872, Celia, now age ten, was at school. Her teachers at that time were two sisters, one of whom had married into a polygamous family and the other, while single, would later marry into this large family. Celia was told that her mother had become very sick, Celia not only left class that day, but she was out of school for the remainder of the summer. She sat by her mother's bed and fanned her on the hot summer days. Catherine became so weak she could not care for herself. Celia waited on her every way she could and was at her bedside, with their loving friend and neighbor Jane Hadfield, when Catherine passed away. Death came so quickly that the rest of the family could not be gathered in time. Catherine was forty-nine years old.

Ortentia Leonard had been called by the Relief society to care for the deceased. Sister Leonard was a skilled seamstress and taught sewing classes to the younger women of Farmington. She carefully and meticulously made the burial clothing for Catherine and lined the casket. This was her responsibility for several decades, but in her old age she was succeeded by one of Thomas Grover's daughters. Catherine was laid to rest in the Farmington Cemetery, leaving a grieving family.



The photograph of Catherine Richards Millard, far left, has been photocopied so many times that some of her features have been lost, such as her left ear and part of her hair. In studying this photograph, I was surprised to recognize features of my mother's face. Beth Innes Cannon, center left, was a great-granddaughter of Catherine. We inherit mitochondrial DNA solely through our mother's line, and as a result, mine came from Catherine Richards of Wales.

Fifteen year-old Alice stepped up to care for her younger siblings, and Celia added that no sister had a better brother than John, who was seventeen. She wrote that John was a very good student and, "was so kind and helpful in every way. He, I think, helped me as much as school teachers did." Mary was twelve and little Will was just seven. Celia described Will as being, "such a truthful little boy. Everyone loved him."

William Joseph later told his own children that before his mother died, she told him to be a good boy and that she would come back and see him. He said he couldn't understand why Heavenly Father would take his mother, but his father was very kind and tried to be both father and mother to him. A few weeks after his mother's death, he was asleep in his bed next to his brother John. He opened his eyes and saw his mother standing at the foot of the bed, but when he reached out to her, she vanished.

James grieved for his wife. Celia wrote that, "his own heart was sad and lonely." However, he devoted as much time as he could to his children. He read them books and told stories and tried to help his children be happy and deal with the loss of their mother. He took his children on the train to the theater houses in Salt Lake City so they could see good plays, and he made sure they participated in town and church celebrations. He also took them on excursions to Ogden and Logan.

James bought a new Howe sewing machine which was powered with a foot treadle, and Alice began sewing all the clothing for the family. While this machine was a great blessing to the family, everyone thought it was very noisy.

Shortly after Catherine's death, James received a letter from his sister Elizabeth, who had never married and who had remained in England. She offered to come to Utah to help him and his family. James suspected that she was unhappy in England and was simply looking for a better place to live. He replied to her letter by saying that if she was emigrating to Utah for the gospel's sake, he would do everything he could to help her, but if she thought she would find loaves and fishes, she had better not come, as pioneer life was difficult. Elizabeth did not reply to his letter for quite some time, and she did not ever emigrate. She died a few years later.[1]

Despite the trials in James' life, he had a firm testimony of the doctrines taught by Joseph Smith and did all he could to be a true and constant Latter-day Saint. In 1873, the patriarch John Smith, a son of Hyrum Smith, traveled to Farmington from Salt Lake City where he gave many patriarchal blessings. During that week he gave blessings to John, Alice, Mary and Celia, declaring each to be of the lineage of Ephraim. In 1874 James sought to receive his patriarchal blessing. Charles W. Hyde, an early convert who had lived in Kirtland with the Saints, was set apart as a patriarch by Brigham Young. He traveled throughout Utah giving blessings and was the patriarch who gave James his blessing, where he declared James to be of the lineage of Joseph.

James wrote often to his friends and family in England, which opened the door for him to obtain genealogy information. In early 1874 and again in 1875, James visited the Endowment House where he performed proxy baptisms for cousins who had died. He worked hard to trace his genealogy back through the generations. His friends in England, although not LDS, willingly assisted him in his research. James later performed their temple work, too.[2]

In an attempt to promote education in Farmington, Bishop Hess organized a literary club in 1874. John James, just eighteen, was called to be one of its officers. The club later became the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association. John sought out any educational opportunities throughout his life, and about this time he passed the necessary examinations in order to qualify to

teach school. He continued to be diligent in assisting his younger siblings with their educations.

In 1875 the Farmington ward organized a Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association. Celia served as the secretary. She and her siblings also sang with the ward choir where they learned the hymns, which Celia said stayed with her throughout her life. Bishop Hess also organized a Home Dramatic Club. He called ward members to participate by reading their names over the pulpit. While several were older adults in the ward, many were young men and women. The bishop encouraged them to consider the call to the drama club to be just as important as a calling to serve a mission. John and Celia were among the first fifteen people called to serve in the drama club, and all were set apart with a priesthood blessing.

At first, Celia was the youngest member of the drama club, but it was very important to her and filled a great void in her life after the death of her mother. She rehearsed with the other actors in the ward amusement hall, which the ward members had built but not entirely completed. Their first play was *The Gun Maker of Moscow*, a romantic drama in which John Millard played the lead of Ruric. The second play was *Highwayman's Holiday*, a comedy everyone enjoyed. The early audiences sat on benches made from old lumber in the incomplete building. Admission was charged, and with the resulting funds, the building was soon completed. Later, the club bought costumes and scenery with the admission fees. Then they raised money for the poor, including buying one woman a sewing machine. Celia said all the actors worked very hard for several years, with a great deal of money raised for charity. The actors were never paid, but they all felt very blessed. Celia learned from the other actors and eventually received many of the leading parts. Their brother William eventually became very active in this club, too.



Farmington Ward members built the Social Hall, also called the Ward Amusement Hall. The dramatic club performed plays and musicals to raise money to complete the building and later to help the poor.

The residents of Farmington, like the other enterprising pioneers of the early communities in Utah and Idaho, spent time together in many activities. Besides the drama club, they organized choirs and brass bands. They enjoyed parades and numerous community events. Joseph Robinson, the son of Bishop Robinson, became a beloved choir director. His nephew Loren Robinson and the beautiful Mary Millard were sweethearts and it was assumed that one day they would marry.

Changes in Church Organization Affect the Millard Family

By 1875, plans were underway for the groundbreaking of the Manti and Logan temples. In addition, President Young looked ahead to the completion of the St. George Temple. During this period of growth for the Church, he felt inspired to bring about another reformation of the saints in Utah. By this time, there were almost one hundred thousand residents in Utah.

Now in his mid-seventies, and recognizing that his health was failing, President Young desired to strengthen the Church before leaving it in the hands of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

While President Young kept abreast of what was happening in the areas of the Church, which was spreading throughout the West, he was aware that a pattern of consistency in the structure of the Church was absent. In just two examples, some of the apostles also functioned as stake presidents, and some bishops presided over more than ten communities.

After contemplating his desires and seeking revelation, President Young began a reformation by strengthening the Priesthood organization. He and the apostles planned visits to all the stakes. As they made these visits, they created twenty new stakes in Utah and Idaho and created high councils for each of them, not just for a few stakes. For the first time, young men were directed to be placed in priesthood quorums, and deacon, teacher and priest quorums were organized with teenage boys in leadership positions instead of adult men.

In many wards, all of the members were re-baptized to demonstrate their commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On several successive Sundays in July and August of 1875, Apostles John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith attended large baptismal services where many Farmington ward members were baptized at their hands. Prominent men in the ward also assisted with the baptisms and confirmations, such as Bishop Hess, Judge Thomas S. Smith, Thomas Grover, Oliver Robinson, and in one case James Millard assisted with a confirmation. John, Alice and Cecelia were re-baptized. For Mary, age fifteen, and William, age nine, this was their first baptism.[3]

President Young encouraged members to live the Word of Wisdom, and he directed Relief Society sisters to take strong actions to see that the men in their communities did not imbibe. Some ward Relief Society presidents became guardians of the only alcohol in town and were the sole persons in charge of deciding who qualified to receive this for medicinal reasons. The payment of tithes and food storage was encouraged.

During this period of reformation, in 1876 James was called to serve an Eastern States mission.[4] By this time his oldest son John was twenty-one, and with Alice nineteen, perhaps their bishop felt they could take care of Mary, sixteen, Celia, fourteen and young Will, now eleven. Other families of missionaries were in similar situations, but James felt he couldn't leave his children alone, and he turned down the mission call. Things did not go well for James after that. Two of his best cows died, and then two horses.

That winter, fourteen-year-old Cecelia became very ill with diphtheria, a contagious disease which had not only killed many in Utah, but was spreading throughout the United States. Cecelia had a high fever and her breathing was labored. While quarantines were common in Utah, with public officials keeping track of illness to keep the population healthy, they generally didn't need to be enforced against the will of the community when a disease such as diphtheria was involved. People were afraid of this disease, and often many or all of the children in a family died from it.

One Sunday, nineteen-year-old Alice stayed home from church to care for Celia. Because of a recent storm, fresh snow covered the ground. The two girls heard a knock at the door. Upon opening the door, they were greeted by an old man with a long, white beard. He was dressed in a homespun gray suit. He said to Cecelia, "My young sister, you are not going to die. I have a blessing for you." He asked for a pen, ink and paper. There was no paper in the house, but Alice

gave him a slate and pencil. Using the letters from Cecelia's name, he quickly wrote fourteen lines:

Cecelia I say be of good cheer
Ere long you'll be restored don't fear
Comfort your self God is your friend
Eternity'l heal you depend
Long you will live upon the earth
Indeed you'l be of mighty worth
Angels will guard you from all harm

Sure you'l be true you're heart is warm

Make ready Jesus you will see
In Jackson County you will bee
Look forward to a happy life
And you will be a lovely wife
Rejoice you'll have great wisdom given
Depend you'll have a place in heaven.

Before the stranger departed, he told Cecelia to guard the slate and to copy off the words as soon as possible. As he left, he closed the door to the house. When the girls opened the door to see where he had gone, there was no trace of him, not even footprints in the snow.

Cecelia and Alice were amazed. They knew all the residents in town, but they did not know this man, nor did any of their neighbors when they later made inquiries. Cecelia and her family became convinced that the stranger was one of the Three Nephites who had come to heal her of this dread disease from which she fully recovered.[5] Interestingly, no blessing was given to Alice, whose life would be very short.

The following year, in April of 1877, President Young dedicated the St. George Temple. James' twenty-year-old daughter Alice was among the first to be sealed in a polygamous marriage after the temple's dedication.[6] Her spouse was William Henderson Watson, the husband of her good friend Janet Hadfield, the daughter of their neighbors Jane and Joseph Hadfield. The couple soon returned to Farmington to live. President Young died in August.

Endnotes for Chapter 8:

1.James's daughter Mary performed Elizabeth's temple work in the Salt Lake Temple in 1905.

2.Cecelia and William both wrote of their father's dedication to temple work. I spent quite a bit of time researching all the temple work James did, not only in the Endowment House, but later in the Logan and Salt Lake Temples. He engaged his adult children in this work and all assisted in these ordinances.

3.I have spent a lot of time studying the old Farmington Ward records, since in addition to the Millard family, I have researched the Grover families. I had seen all the 1875 baptism dates with apostles present, but I am in debt to my son Thomas Stephen Markham who alerted me to documents discussing the reformation before President

Young's death which explained what was happening. An excellent source for this can be found in BYU Studies Quarterly, Volume 20, Issue 1, Article 2, (January 1980), The Priesthood Reorganization of 1877: Brigham Young's Last Achievement, by William G. Hartley. The link is here: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1986&context=byusq

4.Cecelia wrote that he was initially called but felt he couldn't leave, but finally did go in 1879. I found a record in the LDS Missionary Record Index, film #1913092, which states James Millard was called from Farmington to serve in the Eastern States on Oct. 9, 1876. The timing fits perfectly with the writings of Cecelia and William, who said that James served for one year in 1879-1880.

5.In 1963, my Grandmother Mary Elizabeth Grover Innes wrote, " Farmington was a small town then. Very few strangers. No one saw him come or go, except her sister Alice. People were afraid of diphtheria. Who would enter a home under such conditions?" Her information came from Cecelia's 1945 written description of this event, of which I have a copy, courtesy of Wayne Airmet, George F. Grover's grandson. I spoke with Norma Grover Airmet, Wayne's mother, about this event as I wrote this history. Norma, like my sisters and myself, were always told the visitor was one of the Three Nephites.

6.In looking for the record of this sealing, I was surprised to learn that sealings had begun taking place in the St. George Temple in January of 1877 even though it wasn't officially dedicated until April of that year.