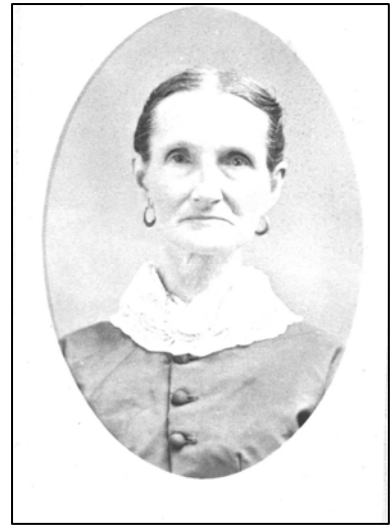


Life Sketch of Sophronia Strobridge Cook

Sophronia Strobridge was born 14 March 1813 in Solon, Courtland County, New York. She was the second child of six born to Abigail Lull and George Augustus Strobridge. She had three brothers and one younger sister. Her father was born 3 September 1785 in Clairmont, New Hampshire.



At 24 years of age Sophronia married April 9th 1837 in New York State, 26-year-old Henry Freeman Cook, son of William and Lucy Chapman Cook. Soon after her marriage she and her husband, along with her husband's parents and other families moved to Comstock, Kalamazoo, Michigan where Henry's father died in 1840. The new land, which they helped to pioneer, must have brought many hardships. The histories of Michigan say that insects were terrible and that diseases were rampant in the soil.

Four of their children were born in Comstock: John, 22 May 1838; James, 14 January 1840; Hannah, 22 January 1842; Mary Jane, 2 January 1844. They heard the gospel and accepted it there in Comstock. Sophronia was baptized in March 1843. Her husband, Henry Freeman Cook, was baptized two months later on the 15th of May 1843.

Sometime after the birth of their fourth child they left Michigan and moved to Nauvoo to be near the other Saints. At Nauvoo their fifth child, Charles, was born 21 February 1846. When they arrived the persecution of the Saints had already begun so they were not allowed to remain in Nauvoo very long. They, along with other families, went to Council Bluffs (then Kaneshville), Iowa.

They lived in Council Bluffs, or near it, for three or four years. Their home was in a heavily wooded area, the homes being a long way apart. One day, when her husband

was away helping a neighbor, one of the children became very ill. Her son, John, who was the oldest of the children, was sent through the woods several miles to get the doctor. He was on his way back home when he noticed a black panther following him. He was very frightened but took time to break a limb from a hickory tree. Then he remembered that his father had told him that if he were to ever meet a wild animal he was never to turn his back but to walk backwards and face it. He did as his father had told him and walked backwards a long way. It became dark before he arrived home but the panther did not attack him. When he told his mother about his experience, she told him she had been praying constantly for his safety. When his father came home they showed him the limb John had broken from the hickory tree. His father tried to break the limb but could not do it. They knew the Lord had protected their son and had given him the strength he needed.

The sixth and seventh children were born near Council Bluffs: William, 19 October 1847; and George, 20 March 1850. Soon after the birth of George they moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where they prepared for the trip west.

They traveled with the Warren Snow Company. (Note: The LDS Church History site for Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel does not list them in this or any other company. It appears, from what is shown on the site, that the list is incomplete.) They had one cow in their ox team one cow in their ox team that was giving milk. Every morning the milk that was left from their meals was put in a bucket and hung under the wagon. The swaying of the wagon churned the milk so that each night they had a patty of butter to use the next day. They must have experienced many great trials on their trip but they were people with a vision and accepted their trials as they came along.

They arrived in the Salt lake Valley in October 1852. They stayed at Big Cottonwood for the winter and until after the birth of their eighth child, Harriet Ann, born 20 May 1853. Sometime during that year they moved on to Cedar Valley, Utah Country, where they helped colonize the town of Cedar Fort and lived the rest of their lives. Their little Harriet Ann died the 25th of March 1854, and was one of the first to be buried in the old

Cedar Fort Cemetery. Their ninth and tenth children, twin girls Marett and Janett, were also born in Cedar Fort 17 March 1856.

Sophronia Strobridge Cook was a refined, kind, generous, courageous, and faithful woman. She had a child-like faith, which she exercised in many occasions. One story of her great faith that has come down to us is vouched for by one of her great grandsons, Henry Freeman Wilcox, who heard her tell it many times. On crossing the river in their exodus from Nauvoo there were many people, wagons, cattle and other stock which all caused a great confusion. Many of them were crossing by ferryboat, the Cooks among them. In the confusion of the day their little six-year-old son James was accidentally left on the other side of the river. It was getting late and a storm was brewing when it was discovered that James was not with the other children. The man with the ferryboat refused to make another trip because the storm was whipping up great waves. Sophronia was frantically trying to find someone with a boat that would take her back across. She knew a small boy in a strange place and in the storm wouldn't have much chance of survival. She found many men with boats but none would take her. One man with a small rowboat finally told her that he would do it but he knew his small boat would be swamped before it had gone for more than a few feet. Sophronia promised him in the name of the Lord that if he would take her he would be able to make the trip over and back safely. He was so impressed by her faith that he said he would try. Almost immediately the wind died down and the waves quieted. They were able to make the trip across the river, find the boy, and return. Upon their return the storm began again with greater intensity.

Sophronia had spunk as well faith. One day while they were living in a log cabin within the old Cedar Fort she had churned and was washing the churn when the door flew open and two drunken soldiers burst in. She ordered them out but they refused to go. She hit one with the churn dash she still had in her hand and knocked him out and then she took the other one by the nape of his neck and threw him out.

Camp Floyd was only five miles from Cedar Fort and the soldiers caused the settlers almost as much trouble as the Indians did.

One time when the Indians were particularly bad, the Cooks and seven children spent one winter in a dugout 12 feet by 14 feet dug into the bank of the Jordon River.

Sophronia was very industrious and very neat. She told her great grandson that her family raised their own hemp or flax to weave into linen. She still had pieces of clothing and some of the thread when she died. She had a place for everything in her home and everything was kept in its place. It was said of her that she could go in the dark and put her hands on anything in her house she wanted.

The thought of eating any wild meat was very repulsive to her and since wild meat was often the only kind the settlers had to eat she no doubt went without the food she needed many times. One of her grandsons at one time decided it would be great fun to fool her. He had some venison cooked up, took it to her and told her it was lamb. She ate it and enjoyed it but when he found out how much it would have upset her to know, he never dared tell her what it was.

Sophronia was generous with the things the Lord had blessed her with. No one ever went away from her home hungry.

When the Relief Society was organized in Cedar Fort she was chosen as the President with Phebe Rodeback as her second counselor. A short time later Phebe became her first counselor with Martha Wilcox as her second counselor. These three sisters served in this capacity for many years.

While Sophronia was the President of the Relief Society the sisters were asked by President Brigham Young to glean and store the wheat from the wheat fields left by the harvesters. Many people said the wheat would not keep. They said weevil would soon destroy it. She counseled the sisters that a Prophet of the Lord had told them it was the thing to do and as far as he was concerned he was going to obey. Time proved her right.

She learned to live with polygamy, too, when her husband took a second wife, Julia Ann Rucker, in 1857, which could not have been easy as Sophronia still had young children. She also served as the Bishop's wife, her husband being sustained as bishop in June 1876.

During the last years of her life she was cared for by her daughter Hannah Cook Dayton. One night her great grandson, Henry Freeman Wilcox, was privileged to observe how great her faith was. He said that it has been a testimony to him all of his life. His grandmother became very ill in the middle of the night and sent him to bring her mother, Sophronia. He was just a young boy and by the time he had lighted a lamp, aroused Sophronia and helped her get up and into her daughter's room his grandmother had lost consciousness. He helped Sophronia kneel beside the bed where she placed her hands on her daughter's head and said, "In the name of Jesus Christ, Hannah, arise." Almost at once Hannah opened her eyes and said, "Mother". Freeman said he would never forget the feeling that came over him to see his grandmother healed before his eyes.

Sophronia passed away 24 July 1909. She is buried in the Cedar Fort Cemetery beside her husband. She and her husband have a numerous posterity. They have left us a great example to follow with their faith and courage in accepting a new religion and in their pioneering of new lands.

Written by Gertrude Cook Jackson and Henry Freeman Wilcox. Date unknown.

Parenthetical items, incidental punctuation and spelling corrections, and entered into digital format by Stanley D. Hansen March 3, 2007.