

Albert H. Black and Eliza Jane Morrison. By Clifford James Stratton



ALBERT H. BLACK AND ELIZA JANE MORRISON

1856-1937

1853-1891

Top Row (L to R): Albert H. Black and Eliza Jane Morrison.

Group at Bottom (L to R; Top to Bottom):

Picture cherished by Albert H. Black as representative of some of his happiest years.

First Row: Florence (wife of Arthur Jerome), Arthur Jerome (son), Tommie Wooten (sister of Rosalind McGuire), Elmer Hynan (son), Sottie Rivette (housekeeper).

Second Row: Addie Evalyn (daughter), Albert H. Black, Rosalind McGuire (second wife of Albert H. Black).

Third Row: James Albert (son), Ellen Wooten (daughter of Tommie Wooten), George Alfred (son), Grace Edith (daughter).

(Children not shown -- Menerva Margaret).

It was a special day in the Oakland Temple when my sweetheart, Marsha, and I were privileged to do the work for Albert H. Black and Eliza Jane Morrison, acted as proxies while the Priesthood sealed them for eternity and sealed Eliza Jane to her parents.

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Albert was born on a farm in southern Ohio. His father's name will probably never be known. His mother's name is not yet known (1978), but he was raised by the parents of a large family of eight. At age seven, the family moved to northern Indiana where his stepfather purchased a 160 acre farm. The family cleared the fields of all the timber and attempted to farm the land. After two years, the stepfather decided to go further west to secure land that was already cleared. They sold their property and moved to western Illinois and bought 160 acres of prairie land. It was here that Albert grew to manhood. His stepfather was an invalid at this time and being unable to do heavy work, it fell upon Albert, as the oldest of the boys, to do most of the work on the farm.

At age 21 he fell in love with and married one of the cute neighbor girls who had been his childhood sweetheart, Eliza Jane Morrison. They decided to take an immigrant train and move to the far west to make their future home. They arrived in San Francisco and boarded an old sidewheel steamer for Portland, Oregon. Portland was just a small town, situated on the Willamette River.

In his life history, Albert states, "How well I remember the first mistake of my life. In looking over the city I met an old gentleman who had a cigar and confectionary stand. He said, "young man, you go up to old Washington and Morrison streets, any where in that location, and buy you a block, and go to work at whatever you can get to do and hold on to it and it will make you rich some day! He went up with me and picked out a block; the price was \$500. I had the cash in my pocket, but being from the farm, this city property did not appeal to me. Let me say here that in 20 years from that time, that same block sold for \$800,000, so you see my mistake."

They took a stagecoach which carried them 100 miles south of Portland to a very backwoods section of the country. They rented property there for awhile, and then after a very difficult year, moved to Salem. He went to work for an implement firm and for the next 13 years he traveled around the western United States selling tractors and farming equipment.

Fifteen months after their marriage, their first child was born; in 1876. Altogether they had eight children; the fifth child was named Elmer Hyman Black. His business moved him to Portland and he had to do much traveling because of the long distances between cities. The children were totally in Eliza Jane's care.

When Eliza's last daughter was one year old, she had taken the baby with her to the woodshed to get some coal or wood for the fireplace. As she did, she slipped on a piece of coal and in order to save the baby, twisted her body to fall on her back. She wrenched her spine and became bedridden. Albert said, "I was with her night and day, determined that I would bring her through. But, nine months from the day she took to her bed, she suddenly passed away with heart failure. Can you realize my loss. A loving wife and companion gone, left with six motherless children, oldest fourteen years and the youngest one year old. And, my work was such that I was a stranger to my children. After we laid our dear one away, I resolved that my children should feel that they had a home and with the help of the oldest daughter, we ran the home for six years; we made the best of it and got along nicely."

He then remarried another childhood girlfriend, who had also been previously married. He had left the farm implement company and had purchased a small general merchandise store in order to be closer to his children. His second wife had been in Nebraska teaching school. Her name was Rosalind McGuire. He became reacquainted with her through letters. After corresponding for six months, he went back east to meet her and there proposed marriage to her. Her concern was being able to be the mother of his large family. He states, "Upon returning home, I put the proposition up to the children. They had become so near and dear to me that I consulted them in all that pertains to future life. They were so nice about it and urged me to bring her into the family." Eliza's parents, Hyman and Catherine Morrison attended the wedding and were very pleased to have Rosalind raise their grandchildren. When Rosalind met the children, she said, "Children, I have come to take your mother's place in the home. I knew your mother well when we were girls together and I loved her. I know that I can love her children and I want you to love me as you would your own mother." In the four years

that she was with them, all the family loved her and indeed the children did love her as if she was their own real mother. She suddenly became ill with diabetes, and in five weeks passed away.

Albert took the loss very hard. In his life history he states, "How hard and lonely it was for me and all of us to be left alone for the second time in a few years. I had the feeling that we were at last settled for life, but we must bow again to the all-wise Providence and make the best of life." His sorrow distracted him from his business and a year later he had lost so much money that he decided to give it up. He borrowed money from a banker friend and started over again in Idaho. In a short time he had built up a rather good business.

Several of his older children became married in the next few years, and he had grown so close to his family that he again became lonesome. He married a widow, named Bessie Porter who had two children. With his new wife and with two new children, he was happily surrounded by family again. His business grew and they prospered.

After ten years he decided that he wanted to get back into farming, so he moved back to Oregon and purchased a large apple orchard. They invested all the money they had in the orchard. The codling moth destroyed his crops. By this time all of his children had married, so it was easier for him to start over again. He again became quite well to do when the depression hit and hurt him financially, but again he recovered.

In 1909 he wrote a very touching letter to his son, Elmer, in which he stated, "My Dear Son Elmer: You know I am always interested in your welfare and am always glad to hear from you. The one ambition of my life is to see all of my children out in the world, honored men and woman, and then I believe I will be rewarded."

He lived with Bessie for thirty years. He concluded his life history by stating that since he was in his eightieth year, he could not expect many more years of life, "and in the span of life that has been allotted to me, I have seen many who were near and dear to me pass on. I have often read and re-read the article by Bernard MacFadden. The title is Your Own Precious Romance. 'There are times when life is beautiful beyond all description. There is a dazzling splendor about it that is overwhelming. One becomes dumb in attempting to describe such

bewitchment. At times your very spirit appears to be soaring and then you seem to be treading on air, you are vividly, throbbingly alive. Never before have you been capable of feeling everything so keenly and intensely. You are then engulfed by exquisitely satisfying happiness. And, it is at such times that one occasionally awakens with the dreadful fear clutching at the heart; 'It cannot last' shouts the inner voice of a momentary tortured soul. Words are inadequate, meaningless. They cannot describe the height of human ecstasy as attained in your own precious romance. And, if you have tasted these exquisite joys to the full, life has been worthwhile regardless of what you may have had to endure previously or thereafter, and if this bewildering enchantment has come and gone, you at least have your memories. There are too many complications in our life today. We sometimes lose ourselves in the intricate maze of hectic experiences, but one should hold to the desire for romance. It should never completely disappear; it adds luster and interest to every day. It helps to eliminate monotony. It makes life more complete in its glorification of the home and all that it represents."

Albert was very sensitive to the love and needs of his family. They were his life. He stated in his life history that there was a picture that had been taken within and his family in their prime, when he was enjoying his greatest happiness and joy as a father and husband. In his history he seriously laments that the picture might some day be lost, because of what it represented to him in terms of love and emotional security and happiness. In remembrance of my great grandfather, Albert H. Black, I am including this picture as a part of my sacred life history. My posterity can pass it from generation to generation, and through its visualization with the reading of the life history of this great man, perhaps they might somehow be touched to appreciate the intensity of the love that Albert H. Black felt within his heart for his family; it radiated through every part of his being. All of my progeny who read this were undoubtedly influenced by his love before we came into mortality. It was this self-sacrificing love that led him to come to earth at the shame of his religiously strict family, only to rise above it all by providing the key to their eternal salvation. My mother, Patricia Frances

Black demonstrates this same selfless love for her family, living, dead and yet unborn. Her ability to love and care is enormous and knows no bounds. It is not surprising that she agreed to be that key (See main text of "The Sacred Life History of Clifford James Stratton," pp. 61-63 for details).

References:

Life History of A. H. Black by himself
Letters of Albert and Elmer Black in possession of Patricia
Frances Black Stratton
Vital and miscellaneous records in possession of C. J. Stratton