



**CHARLES ABLE STRATTON AND EMMA MARIA ISOM**  
**1874 – 1952                      1876 – 1963**

Top Row (L to R): Charles Able Stratton and Emma Maria Isom as young adults.

Left, Middle and Bottom : Charles Able Stratton and Emma Maria Isom in advanced years.

Group picture and insets (L to R; Top to Bottom):

Children: Clifford, William Ervin, Leah, Clayton, Warren Isom,

Charles Able, Emma Maria, Charles Keith, Katherine.  
(Children not shown - Victor and Pauline)

D. Charles Able Stratton and Emma Maria Isom, parents of Clifford Stratton Sr. (See Pedigree Chart).

**CHARLES ABLE STRATTON AND EMMA MARIA ISOM**  
**1874 – 1952                      1876 – 1963**

Charles Able Stratton was born to James Albert Stratton and Emily Amanda Gardner in 1874 in Virgin, Utah. As a young man he spent many hours enjoying the companionship of his brothers and sisters. As a family, they worked hard drying fruit to sell in northern Utah, were extremely active in the Church, and enjoyed a well-balanced life.

While a young man, he had an accident that broke his left arm. It was improperly set, in his own words, "by an old horse doctor" and he was never able to raise his arm above shoulder height. This did not limit him, however, since he played at the position of catcher on several baseball teams and always played first string. In the days before mitts and gloves were used, he was able to both catch and throw the ball with his right hand. He loved all kinds of organized sports and played successfully in all of them. Unlike his father, however, he was not fond of camping out and hunting.

Charles had a very normal childhood for a youth of that period. He was up early each morning, helped with the chores, ate an early breakfast and attended school until the fourth grade. He was then tutored by Catherine Wolfe Isom for several years. His grandfather Oliver Stratton was a highly educated man. His father, James Albert Stratton, was not well educated and insisted that his children receive a strong education.

Charles decided that there was more money to be made in mining than in farming, so during his late teen years he worked two shifts at the Delimar Mills (a shift was a certain number of weeks or months). The dust in the mine was like fine glass

and it very seriously damaged his lungs to the point that he had to leave the mine or die there. He returned to Virgin to live with his parents to recover his health. He then realized that the little girl named Emma Maria Isom, whom he used to tease at school all the time, had become a beautiful young woman. He began to court her as much as his health would permit.

Emma Maria Isom was the beautiful, little, chubby daughter of William Isom and Catherine Wolfe who had joined the Church in England and like all of the other Saints in Virgin at that time, had immigrated to Utah because of religious persecution.

Her mother, Catherine Wolfe, was one of the most highly educated individuals in southern Utah. She was a private tutor of the children of a wealthy English family in Liverpool when she joined the Church and had advanced training in mathematics. Emma not only went to Virgin until she completed the fourth grade, but then she and several others including Charles Able Stratton were further educated by Emma's mother, Catherine, in the back room of the Post Office.

Emma was not only well educated, she was also raised by the refined English rules of conduct by her mother and father. She was also taught to appreciate English culture and the arts.

Although she was well educated for that period, well dressed and refined by European manner, Emma was a pioneer child. She additionally learned all of the fine arts of a woman pioneer and had many opportunities as a youth to demonstrate her pioneer skills.

It is no surprise that several young men sought the hand of Emma in marriage, yet the one who won her heart was her handsome childhood sweetheart, Charles Able Stratton. Charles was an excellent dancer and during his lifetime won several dancing awards for his abilities in waltzing. He was naturally reserved, hard working, highly respected because of the love of the community for his father and mother, and very handsome. He took Emma to Church and community dances, picnics and fairs. Soon a special love developed between them and Charles proposed marriage to Emma.

Emma's uncle was so concerned about Charles' lungs that he seriously counseled Emma not to marry him. "He'll be dead within five years. He'll leave you a widow with small children to fend for yourself in this barren Dixie country."

Emma and Charles made it a matter of serious prayer, and soon the answer came. They were married for time and all eternity in the Saint George Temple in the spring of 1899.

They took up the life style of their parents and began farming in Virgin. They were then blessed with a baby boy, whom they named Victor.

When a land boom started in Abraham, they decided to move there to obtain a large piece of land for a small price.

A few days after they moved to Abraham, two-year-old Victor found a piece of poisoned cheese that the last owners had put out to kill the mice, and he died. Charles took the loss very hard. Emma had her new, two month old baby daughter to help her ease the pain.

Charles and Emma were the first generation born and raised in the secluded arms of the Rocky Mountains. Charles' parents, both sets of grandparents and four sets of great grandparents had suffered the persecutions and driving of the Missouri mobocrats, had helped construct the Nauvoo Temple, and most had been endowed there just before their expulsion into the wilderness at the hands of ruthless men. Children were born and loved-ones buried in the wilderness, while crossing the plains and settling Virgin. One of his great grandmothers had even come so close to death by freezing in the wilderness that her toes were amputated without anesthesia. One of his great grandfathers was a sergeant in the Mormon Battalion. His father was so highly regarded by the Saints that President Brigham Young put him on the board of directors of the United Order and his mother was so highly thought of by her primary children that her eye sight had been miraculously restored as a result of their fasting and prayers. Emma's parents had likewise paid a very dear price for their testimonies. Her mother's parents had completely disowned her because she joined the Church.

But Charles and Emma only heard the stories of the persecutions and the miracles. They only knew how safe and secluded their lives had been in the tops of the mountains.

Although married in the Temple, when they left their home environment of Virgin and lost their baby to a freak accident, they became more inactive than active in the Church. Yet, they maintained high principles and standards in the home and were sure that all the children always attended their meetings.

They moved to Hinckley in 1904. In his life history, Charles relates a funny incident that happened to him. They moved into a house that was below the irrigation canal. One morning they woke up to find everything flooded outside. There was about two to three feet of water all around the house. The ditch bank had broken. There was a low area next to the back door. Charles decided that if he got a running start, he could jump over the low, deep spot and land near the wood-chopping area, which, although covered with water, was high ground, and he shouldn't get too wet. He got a running jump off the porch and jumped for the floating wood chips that he thought designated the site of the woodpile. But, the chips had floated over the potato pit, so instead of finding only one foot of water, he went in over his head. He laughed about that every time he told the story.

Twenty years after their marriage, a flu epidemic swept over the valley, killing hundreds of people. During his married lifetime, Charles had spent many days up on a clear mountain with a friend who had also worked in the Delimar Mines, trying to heal his lungs. Although that had been somewhat successful, his lungs were still in very poor condition. Emma gathered her children around her and firmly instructed them, "We must do all we can to not bring the flu home. If your father gets it, it will kill him." The entire family contracted the virus. Dad and Mom and all eight children were in bed at the same time. Because everyone in the town had it, there was no one to help, so Charles and Emma often left their sick beds to take care of their children.

A few days later, in January 1919, the three oldest children died; ages 17, 15 and 14 years (Katherine, Pauline and Charles Keith). Charles was the only one strong enough to leave his sick bed to attend the simple funeral. They propped-up Emma, Clifford and Clayton in a bed in the front room near the window and Leah, Ervin and Warren were propped-up with chairs. They watched the three white-topped carriages

with the bodies pass by on their way to the cemetery. The snow and frost was several inches deep and the wires strained with ice. It was a terribly dismal picture and an emotional crisis of no small proportion. The memory of that awful day is indelibly engraved in the minds of all of the children to this day (1978). They saw their brother and sisters being carried to the grave and wondered if anyone in their family would survive.

The remaining family members lived, but for several months afterwards, Emma often went into her departed children's rooms, would see their new Christmas clothes and would weep heavily. One day Charles arranged for the children of a poor family to walk by the house on their way to school. When Emma saw how poorly dressed they were, she asked Charles, "Where are their coats?" He responded, "That's all they have." The next day Emma cleaned out all three of the children's closets and drawers and gave the clothes to the poor family. Now with only sweet memories, acceptance had finally come to this brave and tortured mother. Life went on.

The crisis proved to be the turning point for Charles and Emma. Their activity in the Church increased and a few months later something happened at a ward dance that was to change their entire lives.

The Stake President and Patriarch, who were very well acquainted with Charles' and Emma's parents, were at the dance and began discussing the need to find a new Bishop for the Hinckley Ward. Because of their extraordinary dancing abilities and friendly personalities, Charles and Emma were very conspicuous to them. They discussed the recent events that had happened in the Stratton home. The next day in High Council meeting, several names were considered, discussed and prayed about. When the final vote was taken, all but one person felt that the Lord wanted Charles to be the next Bishop; the only dissenting person had voted for himself.

The next day, after the chores were done, Charles stopped by the pool hall to play pool with some friends. During the game a friend told him that the Stake President was looking for him. Jokingly he said, "He wants to call you to be Bishop." Sarcastically Charles replied, "When he does, I'm going to make you my counselor."

That afternoon he was leveling off the football field when the Stake President drove up and asked Charles to accompany him. They went by the house and asked Emma to also come. They went to the Stake President's home. In later years, Emma revealed that when the call to preside as Bishop and wife was issued to them, it was done by revelation, with love and with some firm commitments.

Charles and Emma were strong people. They lived what they believed and never put on a front for anyone. Before he was made Bishop, a neighbor named Pete, who claimed to be a righteous person, stole Charles' water rotation. Charles went to Pete's home and started to change the water. Pete came out and took a holier-than-thou attitude, and yet he had stolen most of Charles' water. Charles became so upset with his hypocrisy that he grabbed Pete by the shoulders and threw him into the canal. As Pete came out, his clothes had shrunk so much that he looked like a schoolboy with knee-knockers on. Charles' two children who were with him, roared with laughter at his appearance. Sufficiently humbled, Pete allowed Charles to change the water where it belonged.

It was with this same personal commitment that they accepted the call to be Bishop. To stop his smoking habit, he chewed bitter alfalfa roots to deaden his mouth and throat. The next fall, after the crops were in, he paid his tithing for the first time in 21 years. Emma's support was equally dominant. Whenever they had something planned as a family and Charles was called away, she did not make excuses but always replied, "The Lord called your father to this position," and the conversation ended.

During the depression, in order to put some cash flow into the town, Charles built a Church meetinghouse and paid the members for their labor. His leadership was responsible for saving several families from poverty.

Charles' daughter, Leah, remembers the time she was called before a Bishop's Court at which her father presided. Their new mutual teacher (the wife of Charles' First Counselor) refused to accept the girls' service hours. She had a party, a watermelon bust, and invited the Mutual Presidency and the girls' Class Presidency to her party. During the party she demeaned the girls and accused them of dishonesty. The girls decided that they didn't need to be abused, so they left in pairs and met at another place with their watermelon and had a party of their own. Because Leah was "the Bishop's daughter" she was accused of planning the whole thing. Her father found the teacher in the wrong for not accepting the service hours and found the girls wrong for sneaking away from the party instead of just leaving it when abused. Leah was proud of her father for always facing difficult situations head-on and for always being honest and firm in maintaining truth and righteousness.

Charles served as Bishop for fourteen years, and touched many lives for good. That is longer than anyone has ever presided in that ward to date (1978). The man who kidded him that day in the pool hall served as Charles' Second Counselor for the entire fourteen years.

Charles and Emma always gave all that they had to the Church: time, energy and resources. They were generous and never sought applause or approval from others. At Charles' death a Sister brought in a meal and told of the time that they moved to Hinckley, destitute and hungry. Charles had gone out and slaughtered one of his largest pigs and gave them half of it. She said it was their main sustenance for several weeks until they got back on their feet. No one but Emma knew he had done it. That is how he served--quietly, honorably and with his all.

Emma was called to be the Stake Genealogical Director and spent much time traveling to the different wards, helping them organize genealogy classes and training genealogy specialists. She also did much original research, concentrating most of her energy on Charles' Gardner and Bird lines.

Shortly after he was made Bishop, Charles and Emma received their patriarchal blessings. Charles said, about his blessing, "Patriarch Robison said that my guardian angel had protected me so that I could fulfill the mission I had come to earth to perform, which was to be Bishop. The Patriarch knew nothing of my early life and I knew he was inspired to tell me what he did."

Later in his life Charles became ill with a goiter. After the four physicians examined his x-rays, his physician told him of his goiter and "he said that I had bad lungs from working in the Delimar Mills 47 years before. He said it was a miracle that I was alive. My lungs were so full of scar tissue, he said that they were amazed that I

was able to breathe, for I did not have one whole air cell. This, and the fact that I lived through the flu, was final proof to me that what Patriarch Robison had said was true."

Charles died of old age in 1952. His dear Emma contracted cancer of the colon and after two operations the disease was arrested.

In her patriarchal blessing she had been told that in the pre-existence she covenanted with some of her forefathers that she would seek out their records and do the work for them in the Temple. "And, after this life you will have many spirits meet you and love you for what you did for them." That glorious reunion took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1963 when she departed her body for the world of the spirits of the just and faithful.

Charles' patriarchal blessing concludes, "in the eternities you shall preside over your family as a Great High Priest and none of them shall be lost to you." Emma's concludes, "the spirits sent to you are those you were congenial with and loved in the pre-existence...If you will be wise and exemplary to your children, they shall be preserved unto you as precious jewels in your eternal crown and shall be yours in the eternities to come." How glorious that inevitable day will be, when Charles and Emma are crowned with glory and life everlasting and then are able to call their children to be by their side to share in their glory. I pray that many of us, if not all, who call them "father" and "mother" through the many generations until that glorious event, may be worthy to witness that event, and with our families be partakers with them of that moment.

#### References:

1. Life History of Charles Able Stratton by himself
2. Patriarchal Blessings of Charles Able Stratton and Emma Maria Isom in possession of C. J. Stratton
3. Stories related to C. J. Stratton by Leah (daughter), Clifford (son) and Emma Maria Isom (herself)