

Biography of James Corlett and Catharine Clarke

On the tiny Isle of Man located in the Irish Sea, James Corlett was christened on March 22, 1808 in Jurby. He was the son of John Corlett and Mary Cleator. Catharine Clarke was born October 20, 1812 in Lezayre, and was the daughter of Peter John Clarke and Mary Crellin. James was living in Manchester, England at the time of Catharine's and his May 23, 1837 marriage in Braddan, Isle of Man. They made their home near the city of Manchester in the borough and township of Salford on Bridgewater Street. Later, they moved to Boond Street where the family could be found on the 1841 England census with James' occupation shown as joiner (journeyman; e.g., a worker who has completed his apprenticeship in a skilled trade). On other documents mentioning James' occupation, the term joiner is also used as well as that of printer or blockmaker. Family lore says he was fairly wealthy from his business as a printer.

On April 25, 1845 at age 36, James died of chronic meningitis, predeceasing by two weeks the birth of the couple's fifth child. James and Catharine were the parents of Mary Ann, Thomas, James, John, and Margaret Alice.

In 1848 Catharine was baptized into the Mormon church and began making plans to emigrate to America. There is another family tale that states she was then disowned by her parents because of her religious conversion, but that has been disproved by the fact that Catharine was generously mentioned in both her parents' wills.

With about 280 other Mormons, Catharine and her four remaining children sailed from the Port of Liverpool on January 22, 1851 on the ship *George W. Bourne*. This was a typical Maine-built vessel with two decks but no galleries. It had three masts, a square stern, and a billet head. The following two accounts are from other families on this voyage, but they give a vivid picture of the conditions:

On January 11 the ship was towed into the river to be ready for a fair wind, but because of contrary winds, they were not able to put out to sea for 12 days. In the meantime the passengers organized a branch with Elder William Gibson, a native of Scotland, as branch president, and dealt out provisions.

During the first two days at sea, the wind blew tremendously and some of the passengers were greatly frightened... Later the wind calmed and porpoises played around the ship while the passengers sat on deck enjoying the view of a smooth sea in a warm sunshine.

They passed the Bahamas on March 9th and reached the Gulf of Mexico on the 12th. On March 19, 1851, a steamer took them up the Mississippi to New Orleans. [From the Jewkes family history]

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We got into the sailing vessel "George W. Bourne," a Mormon ship, and had to wait in the Mersey River fourteen days for the wind. We left there on the 20th. We were in the Irish Channel nine days with a rough head wind. We were tossed about in a most unpleasant manner. I was seasick two days and two nights and could not eat anything. I shall never forget it. We could not sleep; we had to bolt ourselves in bed. There was an awful noise with the boxes rolling about and the chains and the sailors and the Captain. My wife was sick all the time. She could not eat and became so emaciated that in washing her hands, her wedding ring came off and was thrown into the sea. We were eight weeks going from Liverpool to New Orleans. We stayed in New Orleans two days – 6,000 miles from Liverpool. Then we got into a steamboat and went to St. Louis, 1,200 miles from New Orleans. We were on the boat seven days. This journey from Liverpool was made with a company of about two hundred Mormons, presided over by William Gibson.

When we got to St. Louis, my wife was better. I got work in a brickyard. I was very fortunate; many of the saints could not get work. Many of them were sick and in poverty, and many of them died with cholera. [From David Udall journal]

Once out to sea, the 57-day voyage was marked by very little sea sickness, and had one marriage, three births, two converts among crew members, and one death. The square-rigger landed at the Port of New Orleans on March 20 after a tow by a large steamboat up the Mississippi River. The family had brought with them about two dozen packages, several servants, a blooded mare, and a buggy with team. Catharine's occupation was "needlewoman" on the ship passenger list.

The Corletts traveled from New Orleans to St. Louis, Missouri via steamboat, still on the Mississippi River. They were then delayed there for about six months so as to get their property and affairs in shape for the final leg of their long journey. From St. Louis, they continued by steamboat along the Missouri River to Kaneshville, Iowa, traveling 620 miles. On July 7, they left Kaneshville as part of the John Brown Company made up of 50 covered wagons. Herding their cattle and with Catharine riding her mare, the family traveled with four wagons for all their possessions and servants. During a thunderstorm one night, the poor horse was killed by lightning, necessitating Catharine to finish the arduous trip either sitting in the wagon or walking on foot.

The wagon train finally arrived at the Great Salt Lake on September 28, 1851, having traveled 1,047 miles overland. A family friend from England, Joseph Chatterley, met the Corletts at that point. His son John took charge of the

livestock in Parowan where they temporarily settled. In that same year, on November 11, the Corlett family left Parowan with a company of other pioneers to help settle the "Old Cedar Fort" (now Cedar City). Several months later, Joseph, his wife, and Catharine took the long wagon ride back to Salt Lake City where Catharine became Joseph's number two wife on February 21, 1852, in the practice of polygamy. The ceremony was performed by Brigham Young at the Endowment House. A year and a half later, Joseph was accidentally shot in the arm when crossing the Big Creek. He developed blood poisoning and died on September 3, 1853. On September 10, Josephine Catherine Chatterley was born – history repeating itself with an infant of Catharine's born without a father.

There is another family myth that the once-wealthy Catharine gave away all her riches to the less fortunate church members as she embraced her new religion and made a new life in Utah. However, this may all be a bunch of religious hyperbole, along the same lines as the disinherited-daughter story. According to early surveys of Cedar City, Catharine bought three plots of farmland on February 20, 1855, costing her a total of \$190. On March 21, 1855 she bought a city lot for \$25, and on May 19, 1855 she received from her late second husband's estate a garden plot.

On November 19, 1856 Catharine Clarke Corlett Chatterley died at age 44 and was buried at the Cedar City Cemetery. Little Josephine was then raised by her half-sister Mary Ann Corlett Stewart. Eventually, Jo grew up to be a much-beloved nurse in the San Juan County frontier.

Kathie Marynik



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