Ann Elizabeth Hodgkinson Walmsley

History of Ann Elizabeth Hodgkinson
(Walmsley-Palmer-Dalton)
by Jessica Sara Morris
(3rd great-granddaughter)

Ann was the ninth child born to Francis Hodgkinson and Jane Malley on August 24, 1807 in Chipping, Lancashire, England. She was also baptized and confirmed a member of the Chipping Roman Catholic Church on her birthday.

On December 25, 1826, Ann married a young fellow by the name of Thomas Walmsley who was also from Chipping. He was a blacksmith by trade. Together the couple had six children, four of whom made it to adulthood: John-1830, Francis-1833, William-1834, Thomas-1835 (died at age 4), Nancy Marinda-1839, and Heber Chase Kimball-1841 (died at age 22). The first five of Ann and Thomas's children were all born in England while the last one was born in America after the couple came over with the Mormon missionaries.

On July 19, 1837, seven missionaries dispatched by the Prophet Joseph Smith, including Apostles Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde, landed at Princes Dock in Liverpool aboard the ship Garrick. They soon made their way to Preston, 30 miles north of Liverpool, where they arrived in the marketplace on a busy Saturday, July 22. It was the middle of a general election, called following the ascension of the young Victoria to the throne of Great Britain. As the missionaries descended from the coach, a political banner was unfurled from a window above them. “Truth Shall Prevail,” it proclaimed. The missionaries thought it a provident sign, and with a resounding “Amen” they immediately adopted it as the motto of their mission to England. Of the party, Joseph Fielding had a brother in Preston, Reverend James Fielding, who briefly allowed them to preach in his Vauxhall Chapel.

One particular home the missionaries attended was that of Thomas and Ann Walmsley. There they found Ann very sick with consumption (tuberculosis), a disease she had been dealing with for several years prior to the missionaries’ visit. She had been reduced to a mere skeleton and local physicians had given up hope for the continuation of her life for much longer. Hearing this news, Elder Kimball began to preach the gospel to the couple. He promised Ann in the name of the Lord that if she would believe, repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of her sins that she would be restored to health and strength.

After about a week of preaching to the people in Preston, the missionaries were ready to baptize nine candidates. They were performed on the morning of July 30th. The baptisms took place in the River Ribble. This was very uncommon because baptisms never took place in open-air by immersion and none were ever performed publicly. This strange affair brought between 7 and 9 thousand people to witness the ceremony.

Elder Kimball would ultimately perform the baptisms of the nine candidates, six being men of which one was Thomas and three being women. It was said
that the candidates were so eager that two men were seen racing to the river’s edge in hopes of becoming the first convert in Britain.

After a few men were baptized, Ann was carried into the water because she was too weak to move herself. Her doctor had warned her that the sudden immersion in the water would probably kill her! Yet, she said that after she came up, she immediately felt a little better and managed to walk out of the water unaided. Later, after her confirmation, she was fully healed and she was back to doing her regular chores around the house that she had not been able to do for many years. Ann had become the first female convert to the LDS Church in Europe.

A few years later, on Saturday, February 6th, 1841, a council meeting was held at Brother Richard Harrison’s, seventy-two Burlington Street, Liverpool, for the purpose of organizing a company of Saints going to New Orleans on the ship Sheffield. Captain Porter, Apostles Brigham Young, John Taylor and Willard Richards and other officers were present. Elder Hiram Clark was chosen president, and Thomas Walmsley, Miles Romney, Edward Martin, John Taylor, Francis Clark and John Riley, were appointed counselors to President Clark. Edward Martin was appointed clerk and historian of the company. President Clark and his counselors were blessed and set apart for their mission.

The Sheffield sailed from Liverpool, bound for New Orleans, with two hundred and thirty-five Saints on board, on Sunday the 7th. After a passage of fifty-one days, the company landed in New Orleans on the 30th of March; three deaths and two births having occurred on the voyage. On arriving at New Orleans, Elder Clark made a contract with a steamer to carry the company to St. Louis for two dollars and fifty cents each, including baggage. From St. Louis to Nauvoo, they secured a passage on the Goddess of Liberty for one dollar each. About thirty of the emigrants who had become disaffected through false reports, tarried at St. Louis. The bulk of the company landed in Nauvoo, April 18th, 1841, about eleven o’clock in the evening. Notwithstanding the late hour, quite a number of the brethren stood on the shore to welcome these new arrivals from the old world.

On November 16, 1842, Thomas died in Nauvoo.
Ann Elizabeth Hodgkinson Walmsley

There isn’t much information about his death. It is uncertain if it was from illness or from persecutions against the Mormons at that time.

In 1844, Ann Elizabeth married Isaac Palmer and three children were born to this union: Journal, Isaac Hodgkinson, and Rhoda. Ann gave birth to her son, Journal, just ten days out of Winter Quarters on the journey to the Salt Lake Valley. She drove an ox and two cows across the plains. They arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in 1849, being members of Allen Taylor’s company. After their daughter, Rhoda’s birth and death, Isaac Palmer left his family and went to the gold fields of California. He was caught up in the frenzy of the Gold rush, where more than thirty thousand people rushed to San Francisco and throughout California. Many men left their wives and children in order to seek gold. Some would send or go back to their families, but most were never heard of again. In the case of Isaac, Ann never heard from her husband again and was forced to move on. (Conflicting accounts vary – some say he came back for Ann and was dismissed by her. He went back east and joined the RLDS church. Still, others say he moved to Oregon and died there. Further research is needed).

Ann married a third time to John Dalton, by and in the house of Brigham Young. She was his second wife, as John decided to practice polygamy. There were no children born to this union and the marriage only lasted a couple of weeks (why?). She and her children moved to Bloomington in the Bear Lake Valley to settle and to be near her oldest son, John. Even though her home was a crude one, she was a neat, orderly, and splendid housekeeper. Towards the end of her life, Ann lost her sight, so her granddaughters would read the Bible to her. They would purposely leave out verses, but she would make them go back to read those they had skipped. She died in Wardboro, Idaho in November of 1888 at the home of her daughter, Nancy. She was buried in Bloomington, where a monument erected in 1938 reads: “Ann Elizabeth Walmsley, August 24 1807 – November 16 1888. The first female convert to the LDS Church in Europe. Baptized by Heber Chase Kimball July 30 1837. At the time she was ill and a cripple, unable to walk. She was healed by the power of the priesthood.”

A Prophecy and its Fulfillment
by Spencer Kimball
Improvement Era
October 1925

The following incident was told to me Sunday, June 14, 1925 by Isaac Hodgkinson Palmer, of Eden, Arizona.

“In the summer of 1837, when President Heber C. Kimball and his companions had opened up the missionary work in England, my mother, Sister Ann Walmsley, was one of the first to be visited by them in their tractings. For many months my mother, who has often told this story, had been confined to her bed with that dreadful disease, consumption, which has caused her much trouble for years. She was reduced to skin and bones, a mere skeleton, and had been given up to die by three different doctors. President Kimball explained the principle of the gospel to her, and bore testimony of it, after which he arose to his feet, lifted his hand to high
heaven and said to her, ‘Sister Walmsley, I promise you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, if you will repent and be baptized, you shall recover, and I do this as a servant of God - I will leave this testimony with you; converse with your husband, and I will call again.’

When he called again he asked her what she thought in regard to the testimony he bore to her, to which question she answered that she believed that he was a servant of God.

When the first baptismal service was arranged they carried my mother to the water’s edge and of the nine first baptisms in England she was the first woman convert to be baptized, President Kimball performing the ordinance. She walked home from the service and began at once to mend. When she was confirmed the disease was rebuked, she was blessed and she recovered immediately, being able within two weeks time from her baptism to do her own household work and was fully recovered.

And this recovery was permanent for she outlived her husband Thomas Walmsley, immigrated to America, and after suffering the bitter persecutions of the early days, drove across the plains with teams composed of three cows and one ox. She married my father, Isaac Palmer, and they moved to Bear Lake County, Idaho, where she lived to the age of 82 years, a faithful Latter-day Saint to the last.

Through this healing and baptism, President Kimball is responsible for bringing many hundreds into the Church; because in her one child, myself, the Church has over a hundred members, for I have eleven children, sixty-four grandchildren, and thirty-two great grandchildren.”

**************

This brief history of Ann Elizabeth Hodgkinson (Walmsley-Palmer-Dalton) was compiled by Leslie Duane Langford a 3rd Great Grandson. While serving a mission in Missouri, Elder Langford compiled numerous historical stories of these amazing Saints and placed them on a website at:

www.MissouriMormonHistory.org