

# **History of Axeline Katherine Peterson Engebretsen Ellis**

**May 19, 1873 - December 5, 1957**

It was on May 19, 1873, in Salt Lake City, that Wilhemine Kroll Peterson first cuddled a new baby daughter in her arms--a daughter who was to be known as Axeline. Three older sisters and two brothers were pleased to have a baby sister. Axeline was dearly loved by the family. Both her father, Charles Christian Peterson, who died when she was just a little more than a year old, and her mother were pioneers who had walked across the plains to reach this valley in 1861. Her father's parents were also pioneers. Grandfather Peterson died just before his party entered the valley. His body was left in a shallow grave on Big Mountain--near where the Pioneer monument now stands. (The small monument on Big Mountain - not the large "This is the Place Monument.") When his folk returned later to bring his body into the valley for permanent burial, they were not able to find it. It is believed wild animals had destroyed it.

Axeline wrote this about her father: "Father worked in Joseph E. Taylor's undertaker parlor. He had just finished a casket when it cracked. Father fainted dead away. He got up to work on the casket and fell over dead with heart trouble at the age of 40. He left six small children, I was the youngest, Charley, the oldest, being 11 years old."

Axeline was a happy child. She loved to sing and had a beautiful soprano voice. When she was about four years old, she sang in a concert at the 11th ward in Salt Lake City. Sister Louise B. Felt, who later became the first general Primary President, knelt beside her as she sang "Rosy Little Fingers." The Gospel was dear to her and she took an active part in the activities of the 11th ward.

Axeline was blessed with beautiful long yellow-gold hair. As a girl her hair was yellow as corn but a case of typhoid fever resulted in her becoming completely bald. Her hair grew back but came in very dark. It wasn't long until her friends were begging her to wear her braids down over her shoulders to show off their beauty. She said her hair was long enough to sit on and that she was very proud of it. When she washed her hair, her mother would hold pieces of it while she combed out the snarls. At the age of 77, her hair was still dark and long. It was hardly gray at eighty.

Her given name was Axeline, but a boy friend of her sister's once asked her her name, and upon hearing it he said, "I'll call you Ada." The name stuck and she was known as "Ada" to all her friends. Later, people in the South Bountiful Ward called her "Aunt Ada."

Ada attended school at the home of a Mrs. Holland and studied until she had finished the third reader. She then started working to help her widowed mother. She helped care for children for several years and later worked at the Z.C.M.I. overalls factory. She made many friends there.

As a Sunday School teacher in the 11th ward, she was diligent and she also enjoyed her work in the Mutual, but her first love was singing. She sang with the 11th ward choir and enjoyed participating in operas and choral productions. She sang in the opera "Queen Esther" which was performed at Easter. She often sang alone or with her sister Thora. She sang many duets and in a quartet. Sometimes she would sing soprano and sometimes alto. Her favorite song was "Galilee."

Axeline sang with the Tabernacle Choir for 11 years. She sang when the capstone with Angel Moroni was laid on the Salt Lake Temple. The choir stood on a platform on the southeast

of the temple. She said “crowds were everywhere--up on the fence, in the trees and the yard was full.” She never forgot the words to the song they sang as President Woodruff pressed the button that lay the crowning stone.

These are the words:

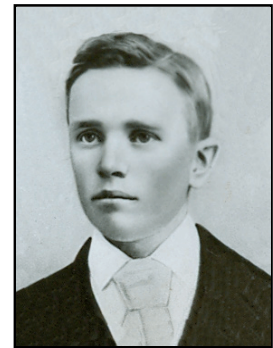
Glorious God, Eternal Father in the name of Christ we pray,  
Thou wilt bless us with thy presence while this crowning stone we lay.  
May thy peace brood o’er this Temple, may they hand protect these towers.  
May they peace brood o’er this Temple, it is thine oh Lord, not ours!  
Glory, glory, Hallelujah, heaven and earth and angels sing  
Heaven and earth and angels sing, Amen, Amen, choir Celestial,  
Join the choir, choir Celestial, Join the chorus, Amen, Amen.



Axeline also sang the first morning when the Salt Lake Temple was dedicated – April 6, 1893 with a selected choir. She sang several other times during the dedication.

Axeline met Einar Markus Engebretsen the first Christmas he came to her brothers store on 1st So. and West Temple. It was just before Christmas day when he took her home with a large box in his arms. He told her it was a present for his “Chinese girl” and wondered if she would keep it for him.

She said “yes.” When they got to the house, he opened it to show her what was in it. This is what she said about it: “It was a lovely lavender plush and satin toilet set. (Brush, comb and mirror.) It was grand! Then he told me it was for me.” “I sure got a thrill of my life when we were married.”



On March 8, 1894, Axeline and Einar were married in the Salt Lake Temple. Her brother Charlie gave them a nice reception that night. They lived in a part of her mother’s house on about 7th East and 1st South in Salt Lake City. Einar was a fine young man and they were extremely happy. She dearly loved him. Einar was a great lover of children and often stopped to gather up the neighbor children to take for a ride in his wagon. Their joy and happiness together was short lived. About a year after their marriage, times were bad. Those who had families were able to keep their work, but since they had no children, Einar lost his job. Einar had a team of horses. He was hired by some society people of Salt Lake to take their bedding and supplies to Bear Lake. Axeline recorded: “On 8 of August he went hunting chickens with a Mr. Hall, one of the men, and was accidentally shot. What a terrible time. It seemed like the bottom had fallen out of my world. While going through this terrible trouble, the Lord gave me such a lovely vision which brought much comfort to me. I was sleeping with my mother when I saw a great light in the East. Then I saw a lovely woman kneeling with her beautiful long hair. A large book was open. Then I saw Moses. He had a large scroll in his hand and he showed me the number of times the Lord had appeared to Joseph Smith. Then in the North two Heavenly figures appeared standing about 3 feet in the air. They were clothed in beautiful white robes. Their heads and hands and feet were bare and I saw the boy Joseph Smith kneeling before them and I heard a

lovely voice singing the words “Joseph, this is my beloved, hear Him. When I awoke, the tears were streaming down my face. I woke my mother and told her what I had seen.” This dream and the gospel were a great comfort to her. A wonderful blessing was also given her by Patriarch Smith of the 11th ward.

Axeline was only 22 years of age when Einar was killed. That is really young to be a widow without children. She continued to visit Einar’s parents who lived in Woods Cross. It was during these visits that she met Stephen Hales Ellis, a widower. He was a kind man who could give her financial security and children. It was on May 30, 1901 that she married Stephen Hales Ellis in the Salt Lake Temple for time only. Stephen was 54, Axeline was 28. Stephen Ellis had seven living children, three of whom were married. Two girls, Amelia and Clara were living at home and two boys, Ralph and Roy were away working. The two girls were married soon after. She moved into the Ellis home located at 653 West 1500 South in South Bountiful - later known as Woods Cross.

Aunt Mary Ellis told this cute story about Axeline, her mother-in-law. Axeline was expecting her first child. Her step daughter was out on the porch “courting.” Axeline went into labor but did not want to disturb them. Her husband Stephen was away from the home and so she just waited, hoping the young man would leave soon. She was beginning to panic a little before the young man finally left, her husband was found and the doctor called! What a polite woman! Stephen and Axeline were blessed with four sons in seven years – Owen, born December 21, 1903, George, born February 24, 1905, Reed, born January 30, 1907, and Orson born October 16, 1908. Now her days were filled with the busy life of a mother and farm wife.

Axeline’s husband was a farmer with much property. He owned a piece of property in Woodruff, Utah. Axeline took her four young boys there during parts of the summer and spent her days cooking and preparing meals for as many as 15 men who were helping with cutting the hay. She did this with only an old wood burning cook stove!

After her marriage and move to Woods Cross Axeline enjoyed singing with the ward choir again. She loved to sing to her children and even took Organ lessons after her children were born from Viola Brown. They owned a little reed organ--the kind you pump with your feet. It had knobs above the keys called stops that made up the various sounds. She took lessons so that she could accompany herself while singing. George remembered that she would put them to bed and then play and sing until they all fell asleep.

It was a custom at this time for certain women, called to this capacity by the Relief Society President, to wash and anoint expectant mothers. Sarah Howard asked Axeline to accompany her on several occasions of this nature. She was also a class leader in the Mutual, and while her own four sons were still young, she was called to be the President of the Young Lady Mutual Improvement Association. She served in that capacity for two years from Sept. 17, 1914 to October 6, 1916. Just four months later, a call came to serve as Relief Society President. Her account of this calling is as follows:

“In January of 1917 Bishop Samuel Howard came to see me. I shall never forget how I felt when he asked me to be President of the Relief Society. My health was poor and with my husband, four boys and hay-men to cook for, it seemed more than I could handle. Nevertheless, I accepted the call and I did the best I could with the help of my Heavenly Father. On Feb 4, 1917, I was put in as President with Mary Bennett as first counselor and Annie Mann Hatch as second counselor. Lillie V. Hatch was secretary and Lizzie Hatch as treasurer.”

“The weather was very cold and how we did freeze driving our horse and buggies. Sometimes I had on three pair of gloves but was still cold. There was quite a lot of wheat and a few beans in the granary. Before I was President, the granary had been moved to the northeast corner of the chapel. The wheat was sold to the government and the money turned over to the Presiding Bishopric. Interest on the wheat was received by the next President after me. The few beans we had we put in paper sacks and divided among those we knew could use them.”

“We put on shows and had dances to raise money to help pay our expenses for Relief Society. The first dance I remember was held down in the basement of the chapel. What a night and what a big snow storm! It looked as if the officers would be the only ones to come, but about 9:30--here came the crowd. We surely had a fine time. The ward had purchased the old school house (corner of 1500 South 800 West) and renovated it for a recreation hall, and the next dance I remember was held there across the street. I was sitting there deep in meditation when I heard my name and the names of Mary Bennett and Annie Hatch called. I was almost stunned when I was presented with a quilt. The blocks had been made by the dear sisters with their initials on each block. What a happy time I had puzzling out each block to see who had made it. My counselors were each presented with a nice sofa pillow. Maybe this was the way they wanted to get rid of me, but I didn't take the hint. Neither did the Bishopric as I stayed in quite a while longer.”

“My! The good times we had in the old basement amusement hall. We had big reunions and hot dinners, for we had some wonderful cooks. I can taste the hot rolls and cabbage salad yet! We had to scrub and scrub the tables down in the basement as they were so close to the coal bins. While the first tables were enjoying dinner, the rest of the crowd was up stairs having a good time.”

“We have to have some bad with the good. An epidemic of flu broke out. My first counselor was down with the flu. The second counselor had flu in her family and her oldest son died. The call for help came. Bishop Howard and I drove around to find someone to help nurse, but nearly every family had sickness or was afraid to go into the homes so we weren't very successful. Three of my boys came down with the flu and were very sick, but thanks to my Heavenly Father, their lives were spared. There were many deaths all around us, but I think the ward had only one death. I believe two people were brought here for burial as I remember going up to the cemetery to sing with the choir.”

“One evening we had a very bad night. The lightening and thunder was so bad I was happy to be home. Then a knock came at the door. There stood a good brother who had come for me. His wife was going to have a baby. How I did wish and pray that the doctor would get there first and sure enough, he did.”

“We also had a most wonderful job of washing and laying out the dead ladies. I don't know who took care of the men. One night at two o'clock Bishop Howard came for me. A dear sister had died and I went and washed and layed her out. Every good thing has an end and the undertakers took over that job.”

“I think we met as Relief Society twice a month, once a month for class work where we studied the Bible, and once for sewing. We made many quilts and sold them to the Deseret Live Stock Company for their sheep men. We also made clothes for the dead.”

“I was released May 7, 1922. I want to pay tribute to my good officers who were a big help and to Bishop Samuel Howard who did so much. The night was never too dark or too

stormy for him to go and help where help was needed.”

Axeline’s husband had a bad heart and had poor health for some time. He was confined right in bed for seven weeks before he died October 2, 1922. After his death, Adeline again resumed church activity and was class activity leader for Relief Society while Liddie Shulthies was President. She learned to know and love the Book of Mormon here.

Adeline did much Temple Work for many years and spent hours and hours gathering and collecting genealogy. Thousands of names have been done through her efforts. She went to the temple in the days when you did the complete ordinances in one day. It took a whole day to get to the temple in a buggy, do the Temple Work, baptism through the endowment and then return home again. She also paid friends and family to go to the temple to do work for names she had gathered.

Axeline bore her testimony in an interesting way. When there was a break in the testimonies, she would begin singing a song from her seat in the audience. The congregation would join in and sing the song together. Sometimes they sang more than one verse. Some of her favorites were “We Thank Thee Oh God For A Prophet” and “High On A Mountain Top.” This is what two sisters from the ward said about this practice: “You know, today I have just waited for Aunt Ada to start singing “Count Your Many Blessings” and another said, “I will never forget the first time she did that at Testimony meeting. Chills went through me from head to toe.” Blanche Ellis, a daughter-in-law said: “It affected me that way too, the first time I heard her, but that is Mother’s way of expressing her thanks in song, now that she is older, to her God for his many blessings. Song is her medium of expression and she does it with the beautiful voice God blessed her with.”

Axeline was a quiet woman who did not like to be in the spotlight. Her family wanted to have an 80th birthday celebration for her but she would not let them do it!

Axeline was proud of her family. Two of her four sons, George and Reed, filled missions for the church. She also helped two of them go to college – Orson and Owen. All four boys married in the temple and had families of their own. She had 19 grandchildren and numerous posterity.

Axeline shared her home with her son Orson and his wife June and their family of seven children. Orson had started work on a new home to the west and was including a room for her with a bathroom nearby. Orson always felt bad that she died before this home was completed. Axeline slept in the parlor on a couch that folded open into a bed. There was no heat in the parlor. The home only had coal stoves for heat and during the winter nights the home became quite cold. One night Axeline fell out of the bed onto the cold floor and could not get back into bed by herself but did not want to disturb anyone and just stayed there until morning. She developed pneumonia and died at home a few days later, December 5, 1957. Axeline was 84 years of age.