

Asenath Elizabeth Browning
7 November 1835 - 3 January 1899
by Elaine Johnson

Asenath, often called Sena, was born in Adams county, Illinois. She was the sixth child of twelve and the first to be born after the family left Tennessee. Her parents were Jonathon and Elizabeth Stalcup Browning. She was too young to understand what was happening when the Mormon refugees poured into her hometown of Quincy as they fled Missouri. She remembered a time when the Prophet Joseph Smith came to her father's house when she was still small. He picked her up and said, "Whose pretty little girl is this?"



Her brothers would ride the Smith horses to and from the Brownings' blacksmith shop to be shod. Asenath was baptized in Nauvoo 1 May 1844. Sena remembered seeing Joseph and Hyrum Smith bid their families goodbye and ride away as they departed for Carthage. She went with her family to view the remains of the martyrs but was frightened when she saw Hyrum's face. Her father lifted her up and carried her through. She met many people of note in Illinois including Orson Hyde, Parley and Orson Pratt, Heber C. Kimball, and Abraham Lincoln.

When the Brownings were asked to remain in Nauvoo to aid the rest of the Saints in their departure, Sena cried. Brigham Young is said to have heard of Sena's and the other's fears and promised them none would come to any harm by remaining and none of the children would want for bread. This promise was fulfilled in many ways. They left Nauvoo with an armed, screaming mob at their heels but none were hurt. Sena's family then settled in Kanessville (Council Bluffs), Iowa, where she attended school with Isaac Carling. The Brownings and Carlings were with the second to last group to leave Council Bluffs in the Henry Miller company on 30 October 1852.

Sena and Isaac continued to be friends during this journey but were parted when the Carlings settled in Provo and the Brownings in Ogden, quite a distance by wagon. Sena worked as a dressmaker as a young woman. Some letters she exchanged with Isaac have survived:

Dear Miss A. E. Browning,

Provo, May 7, 1853

As I have not had the opportunity of seeing you or scarcely hearing from you I embrace this opportunity of writing to you a line or two though not upon the subject of future happiness at present (Notwithstanding a happy life is very desirable) but merely to let you know I haven't forgotten you as I don't wish to cast away any of my old Friends or neighbors, especially old school mates (as we once were).

. . . but they say that of the young people in Ogden are married off and their names changed so that it is difficult finding them. I started to

come over and pay you a visit and see what was going on among the inhabitants of the Northern settlements but on account of the high water I had to postpone it until another day.

Tho at first did not succeed. I must try try again. I would be pleased to have a line from you, as your mails has generally but few letters to carry it would be doing them a kindness and me also, if you write tell me some of the new names as the boys has not as yet. And among the rest tell me if your name has changed likewise. I hope you will not be displeased at me being so inquisitive. As I am only enquiring after the welfare of the (Sisters) as we know that is a natural consequence.

I must draw my scroll to a close in hope you will overlook all my nonsense and take me as I mean not as I say. As this is the first I will try and do better next time.

From your affectionate friend and well wisher.

I.V. Carling

Provo City,

June the 19th, 1853

Dear Asenath; I again take up my pen to write you a few lines. I received your letter of the sixteenth and was very happy to hear from you and when reflecting upon the past I don't wonder at your being surprised at my last letter tho I did not write anything as it were concerning a subject which has long been resting with great weight upon my mind, but as yet never have been able to do justice to so important a cause therefor I have thought much and said nothing concerning it until now and never until this moment could I think myself worthy to make you an offer of my hand and heart. If this should be agreeable to your mind I hope you will pardon me asking you the privilage to adress your beloved parents upon this subject.

if you should consent to my proposal you may rest assured that nothing shall be with held on my part which is calculated to make you happy and comfortable. I hope you will not think I mean to flatter you for this is not my intention but hope you will give this a due consideration and give me an answer as soon as possible that I may be satisfied until I can obtain means whereby I may accomplish my desire. I hope you will excuse my bad writing, I have so much business to do for the public that I can scarcely get time to write for myself at all.

Having said so much I will patiently await your answer which I hope and trust will be favorable.

With this I remain your affectionate friend and lover.

Isaac Carling

Ogden
Dear Isaac

Dec. 26, 1853

I take up my pen to write a few lines not noing whether you got my last letter or not as I did not no at that time that you was going away from Provo. Permit me to ask you whether you got it or not. I understand that you was sent on a mission to preach to the Indians. I should be pleased if you would come down this winter to see us if you write I want you write when you think you can come down if you pleas. I will add no more at present.

I am yours &c
Asenath E. Browning

Fillmore City
My Dear Asenath

Nov 3rd '54

It is with much pleasure that I can again say that I have the oppertunity of writing to you and informing of the present state of affairs here in little Fillmore. I received a letter from you the last week and was happy to learn that you was well and in good spirits. I can say for myself that I enjoy a good degree of health at present tho I have had for sometime the mountain fever which caused me for a time to be unable to be of much service in the laboring line of business. I have no news of importance to write to you at present. If I had been able to travel I should have calculated to of been on the way to Ogden by this time but circumstances would not permit me to do so, but as I am again on the track I shall endeavor to leave Fillmore for Ogden city on Monday next if nothing happens and will try to make the trip as quick as posable as it is late in the season and the weather is getting cold.

Having no more news to write I will close. I hope you will excuse my pencil and rough manner of writing as my ink is dried up and it is too late to mend it. I expect I have already written more than you can read therefore I will write no more at present as I hope to see you soon.

Yours with sincere respect
Isaac V. Carling

Isaac and Sena were married in Ogden 17 November 1854 and were Endowed and sealed together in the Endowment House 12 October 1855 at Salt Lake City. The young family lived in Ogden for a few years before moving to Fillmore. The 1856 Territorial Census lists Isaac and Asenath in both Weber and Millard counties.

After putting the children to bed Saturdays she spent the night washing and mending so they would be neat for the Sabbath. There was sometimes still mending left to be done in the morning anyway. Sena is described as "sickly" but her children relate proudly that she often fasted before fast meeting anyway. Sena and her husband were not openly affectionate with the

children. They believed too much praise led to vanity. However, the children felt loved. They were taught to be honest and do their best and let nothing compromise their principles.

My mother, Asenath Elizabeth Browning Carling, Than whom there was no purer, more devoted and faithful mother, always setting good examples to her children and all who knew or associated with her. No deception or dishonesty here, no taking advantage of anyone to get gain, I think that she came as near living the "Golden Rule" as any mortal could do, and in my life I am trying to live my life in a way that will reflect the good examples and training which they gave me while they lived.

My mother's health being poor, so that she was unable to do much beside the necessary wok of caring for her children, her health broke under the burden of caring for my father's other family of children after their mother died, there were four of them, and my mother being about to be confined at the time, and father's wife who had died left a baby boy only six weeks old weighing only three pounds. Father hired Aunt Caroline Dutson to take care of this tiny baby until mother was able to care for him. When her own baby my sister Phebe, was two months old, she took the little motherless mite of a boy, (my half-brother Jesse) to her own bosom, and cared for him as her own. The three other children of Aunt Miriams were taken by my mother as soon as their mother had died and they all fared the same as her own children, of whom there were eight. And they all remained with us until they were married. I remember one day after I was married, I went home to see the folks, and Mother and Mother and I while we were alone were talking about the family, and how she had done her part by us all, and I said to her, well Mother you always loved Aunt Miriam's children just the same as you did us, did you not? to which she replied that she always tried to treat them just the same as she did her own, but that she could not feel just the same towards them. This was a surprise to me, because I had never seen her make any difference in her treatment of us. One of Aunt Miriam's girls, Lydia May, was about nine months older than me, and we were so nearly the same size and my mother always dressed us alike, and my father called us his twins, we knew no difference in which belonged to Mother, and she had the reputation of being an exceptionally good stepmother. This shows her splendid character.

I could not refrain from writing telling you my children of these splendid characteristics of my parents, for you have not known much about them. One more thing about them, and then I think it will suffice. They were both splendid singers, tho bashful, never sang in public. Father was a violinist, and used to play for dances. Mother played the accordion.¹

¹ "Family History", by Martha Jane Carling Webb Porter, Logan, Utah, 20 Jun 1932

My mothers own family of 8 girls, and Aunt Miriams 4, 2 boys, and 2 girls, made a family of 12 children for mother to care for, 2 very young babies in the number. her oldest, a girl of 13 years, this was certainly a big undertaking, of course as time passed the older girls became more helpful, but before she had what help she needed, her strength was exhausted, and her health failed and she never regained her health, but she struggled on, did her job. And being a prayerful woman, our heavenly father helped her thru it all.²

Our parents moved to Orderville about the month of May 1875 for the purpose of living in the united order, as the people there seemed to be making a greater success of living it than attempted to live this cooperation, and they had failed, and had gone back to the old way of living. Our parents felt that to live and practice this order of living would be a better way to live, and raise their children, and so they sold the home in Fillmore and cast their lot with the Orderville people. Turned in all their property to the association, excepting the personal property, and all members of the family who were old enough to work, were soon given their work to do, and were soon absorbed in the hive of industry, where all were united in the work for all.³

When the Carlings embraced the principles of the United Order they loaded three wagons with children and belongings and moved to Orderville. There they took an active part in the community. Asenath had been ill and was unable to leave her home for Relief Society presidency meeting so Isaac gathered the other ladies, including Eliza R. Snow, and brought them to her by wagon. During the height of the Order they worked diligently toward its success. When the Order began to fail they continued to have faith in those values and did not move elsewhere as many others did.

Sena loved artistic things. She was a petite woman. Sena believed a home was not complete without children, good books, flowers and music. She was described as "high minded" and could not abide anyone swearing or using vulgar language.

As I remember, her two most outstanding characteristics were, Honesty and Truth, She hated dishonesty, and hypocrisacy more than anything else in the world.

And I think that she was as pure in morals as even the angels in heaven or as pure as it is possible for a person to be. I never knew of her telling an untruth neither by word nor deed.

² Martha Jane Carling Webb Porter, Logan, Utah, 15 Jun 1943

³ "Family History", by Martha Jane Carling Webb Porter, Logan, Utah, 20 Jun 1932

She was quiet and unassuming, kind and charitable, you know that it takes an unusually good and sensible a woman to make a good step-mother. She was one of the best.

God bless her forever.

And now, let us her posterity honor her good name, and follow in her footsteps good examples which if heeded will lead to much good, usefulness and happiness I thank my Heavenly Father for such a Mother and may we each of her descendants do as well. May our heavenly Father help us all to do all the good we can, and no harm.⁴

CARLING - On Jan. 3, 1899 at Orderville, Utah, after a sleep of 68 hours. Asenath Elizabeth, wife of Isaac V. Carling, and daughter of Jonathon and Elizabeth Browning. She was born Nov. 17, 1835 in Hancock Co., Illinois. She was the mother of twelve children and one hundred grandchildren.⁵

⁴ "Memories of My Dear Mother", by Martha Jane Carling Webb Porter

⁵ *Deseret News*, 20 January 1899, 99:2

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