

Catherine Beasley Higgins Holladay

1797 – 1877

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Catherine Beasley Higgins Holladay, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, p.128

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Compiled and typed by Victoria Wilson Chambers, great great granddaughter 08/17/2006

Catherine was born November 14, 1797, in Kershaw district near Charleston, South Carolina. She was the daughter of Benjamin Higgins, born 1759, and Sarah Catherine Beasley, born 1761 of Richland County, South Carolina. She was the mother of twelve children, four sons and eight daughters.

Catherine was married previously to Benjamin Jones and had two children. She sent the children to North Carolina to be raised by their grandparents, Benjamin Higgins and Sarah Catherine Beasley; when of age, the children would inherit their estate. Catherine then married John Daniel Holladay on April 16, 1822, son of Daniel Holladay born 1752 of Craven County South Carolina and Rebecca Terry, daughter of James Terry of Anson County North Carolina. Catherine immigrated with her husband in the company of the first pioneers in 1824 to Marion County, Alabama, suffering many privations and hardships incident to new country and frontier life. Here John built a large family home; they worked very hard. As their family grew, so did their wealth and number of slaves. They grew cotton, corn, and tobacco on their large plantation.

Catherine was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, June 1844.

Their oldest son John Daniel, Jr., went to Nauvoo, Illinois in the spring of 1845 and spent the summer there helping in the stone quarry, taking out blocks to build the Nauvoo Temple. He worked some on the roof in September. When he returned home he told what had transpired between the Prophet Joseph Smith and other Church officials and State officials of Illinois, so the whole family decided to cast their lot with the new faith. They sold their plantation, freed the slaves, and in March 1846 Catherine with her husband, three sons and five daughters started west with a view of meeting with the Saints who had been expelled from Nauvoo, Illinois.

John Daniel, Jr., knew the direction the immigrants would take west, so they overhauled their wagons, checked their harnesses, sold some land and obtained cattle, horses, mules and oxen and prepared for the trip west. This family, consisting of 16, started March 1846, crossing the Mississippi River at Iron Banks. Somewhere on the borders of the Missouri River, passed through Far West, Jackson County, striking the Platte River at Grand Island. Here other families from Tennessee and Mississippi swelled the Company as they joined the wearisome trip day by day. It was hard work yoking and unyoking the sweating oxen, packing and repacking the camp utensils, fording creeks, and rivers, traveling in the dust and heat, and each day getting farther and farther away from the

habitations of civilizations. Little wonder some of the numbers complained as the long journey continued.

From the Platt River at Grand Island, they followed up-stream to Fort Laramie, Wyoming. Here because they had heard nothing from the Church, the Company decided to turn south. They met John Richaw, mountaineer, who told them none of the Saints had passed that way, so they hired him as a guide and he led them 300 miles south to Pueblo, Colorado. Here the Company built winter quarters. Many members of the Mormon Battalion who were too ill to go on to Santa Fe, New Mexico, were sent here. Catherine with the other women of the Company nursed these sick soldiers back to health and were blessed by them.

In the spring of 1847 this Company prepared to go back to Fort Laramie and as other Saints joined them, they turned and headed for Salt Lake Valley, Utah. Here their son John Daniel, Jr., went back to their old home in Marion County, Alabama to sell the remainder of their holdings and was to join them later in Salt Lake. Their youngest son, Thomas Wiley Middleton, though only 11 years old worked for a day for a farmer along the trail and obtained 40 pounds of Turkey Red wheat. This he carried 40 miles on his mule, and they kept it for seed grain. They later planted it on their home ranch, and it became the start of the hard wheat that has seeded the intermountain country.

This Company, the Mississippi Saints Wagon Train, plodded on west and July 28, 1847, 4 days after Brigham Young's first Company of 43 arrived, they also arrived in Emigration Canyon. President Young had told the Saints, "This is the place." Catherine, John, and family traveled to the south side of Big Cottonwood Canyon and settled there on a big ranch near a large spring called Spring Creek (three miles south of Big Cottonwood Canyon). They built a row of small cabins and fenced the field on which they planted their crops. It became known as Holladay's Berg and later Holladay, Utah. The next year their oldest son, John Daniel, Jr., returned from Alabama and he soon married Mahala Ann Rebecca Matthews by a campfire. Relatives from each family were present. Here their homes were built and gardens and trees planted, and the family called it home.

In 1851 another call came from the Church. President Young asked the Saints to help build a new area which had been purchased from a Mexican Land Grant holder in San Bernardino, California. Here they spent seven years with Charles C. Rich and Amasa Lyman as their leaders. Catherine again set up housekeeping.

Their youngest son Thomas Wiley Middleton was married while they lived in San Bernardino, April 1, 1856, to Ann Hotton Matthews, daughter of Joseph Matthews.

At the coming of Johnston's army in Utah, and after the Mountain Meadow Massacre, the Saints were threatened with mob violence and Brigham Young called all the Saints back to Utah. Again, Catherine was faithful in her duties and patient in her suffering. With her husband's church duties, she was often left to harvest the crops with her children.

On December 15, 1857, they took up the line of march back to Utah, stopping one year at Beaver. In the fall of the year 1858, she moved with her husband and children to Santaquin, Utah County, Utah where they owned a section of land. The land was rich and there were several springs bursting forth from it. Near them they built the new Holladay home. Just four years later, January 1, 1862, she buried her husband following his death, December 31, 1861. He was laid to rest in the field not far from the house.

At the death of her husband, she was left with two of her grandchildren, W.H. and Louisa Boyle. She kept house for them until they were married and had children of their own growing up. She gave up keeping house in 1870 and lived with her oldest son, John Daniel Holladay, Jr. When her health permitted, she visited amongst her children and grandchildren who were always glad to see her and give her a kind welcome.

She lived and died a faithful Latter-day Saint, bearing a strong testimony of the truthfulness of the work of God in the last days. She retained full use of her reason and memory to the end of her life. She filled the measure of her being on earth, as a Saint, wife, and mother and died in faith of the Gospel and with an earnest hope of a glorious resurrection.

Catherine Beasley Higgins Holladay died April 19, 1877, at Santaquin, Utah County, Utah at the age of 79. Obituary lists death date as April 20, 1877, at her son's residence (John Holladay) and cause of death: old age. They tenderly laid her to rest beside her husband. Their graves with large stone markers are still in the same place, though the house has been removed. An iron fence encloses them in the center of a very large farm in Spring Creek. None of their relatives so far have given their consent for them to be disturbed.