

Interview with
LAURA (SNOW) WOODBURY

April 19, 1968

**VOICES OF REMEMBRANCE FOUNDATION
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

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LAURA (SNOW) WOODBURY

Laura (Snow) Woodbury was interviewed April 19, 1968 in St. George, Washington County, Utah by Fielding H. Harris, a representative of the Voices of Remembrance Foundation. She related her personal history of living in various parts of Utah.

FH: Would you [give] your full name?

LW: My full name is Laura (Snow) Woodbury.

FH: [What is] your birth date?

LW: I was born March 9, 1897 in St. George, Utah.

FH: [What was] your father's name?

LW: I was the fourth child and the first daughter of Edward Hunter and Hannah (Nelson) Snow.

FH: [Can you] recall some of the [events] pertaining to your early childhood?

LW: I remember that I had three brothers that were older than I was and perhaps I was a little bit spoiled because of that. These three brothers that were older are all deceased.

[Laura (Snow) Woodbury's brothers and sisters were: Edward Vernon Snow, Dilworth Merrill Snow, Karl Nelson Snow, Rulon Alma Snow, Olive (Snow) Reeve Farino, and Irma (Snow) Whitney. — Added by Erma (Woodbury) Stott during editing.]

[The] earliest recollection of my childhood was when I was four years old. I accompanied my mother to Brooklyn, New York where we joined my father, who was president of the Eastern States Mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I remember standing on the Brooklyn Bridge and of looking out of a large glass window at the passers by, and of seeing Santa Claus about ready to make a descent through a chimney on a roof top.

My childhood was a happy and a normal one. I was fortunate in having the loving care and protection of both a father and a mother. As children, we had the whole quarter of the block in which to roam. At the side of my home there were large almond trees, whose nuts promised a real treat to us on the long winter evenings. Eating almonds before the cheery blaze of the fireplace was much more fun than harvesting them in the fall. I remember the time I used to spend helping pick up almonds off of the ground and then husking them.

One of our chief recreational areas is now a busy highway. It was not unusual for the [children] of our day to play in the sandy and unlighted streets on a hot summer evening. Our chief games were Run Sheep Run, Steal Sticks and Come to Court. Our neighborhood pals in those days included: Abel and Nettie Riding, Burt Bentley, and Willa and Chauncey Andrews, who lived directly across from our place. [Also] there was Gwen Gardner and my cousin, Polly Kemp. Often we gathered at the small, black rock house of Sister Ridings and made molasses candy and cracked black walnuts.

I vividly remember the surroundings of my father's home, the place where I was born. There were two large lawns bordering a cement path which went up the center. There were beautiful rose bushes along each side. Bordering the lawns on the outside were china berry and almond trees. I can still smell the smell that they put out in the spring months. I remember the poplar trees that were along the sidewalk. [Because of] the height of those trees, they would light up on a summer's night when there was a bad electric storm. We would spread out on the front room floor and try to sleep and drown out our fears that way.

I remember the evenings that my grandmother, my aunt, and my little orphaned cousin would spend [time] with us, especially in the wintertime. My grandmother and my aunt raised [my cousin, Polly Kemp].

FH: The names of the people there would be interesting.

LW: This was my Grandmother Selena (Palfreyman) Nelson, Aunt Lena Nelson, and my cousin Polly Kemp. We would spend [time] around the fireplace popping corn and munching on apples. We didn't have treats then [like] they have now, but we had our type of treats.

FH: You probably had better ones then than we do.

LW: Better ones, yes, I think we did. We were born [at] the end of the pioneer times. We had to carry the coal oil lamp from room to room. We had to clean the lamps, fill them, and trim the wicks. Our home was a large two-story home. I remember the first time we had electric lights. When the lights were first put in, we turned on the lights in every room in the house. Then [we] went outside to the sidewalk to look at it. That was one of the wonders of the world!

FH: That really was too! [Would] you tell a little bit about your schooling, your early school life and how far you went in school?

LW: I was a little past seven years of age when I first attended the public schools. My parents got the idea from some traveling educator that it was as well to send a child to school at the age [of] seven as of six. That was the reason that some of

my childhood friends that I had grown up with, were a year ahead of me in school. They held me back purposely.

My first teacher was Emma (Macfarlane) Foushay. [She] taught [at] the Woodward School building. [I] graduated from Woodward School [in] 1913. At that time eight grades were held, the first through the eighth. Those eligible for graduation were required to pass certain uniform examinations made out by the state school board in Salt Lake City [Salt Lake County, Utah] for all eighth grade students.

At this stage of my education, George Brooks Jr. was my teacher. There were two teachers for the large eighth grade [class] which had to be divided. W. [William] O. Bentley was the other teacher. Most of my close friends were in Mr. Bentley's section. Since he was considered an outstanding teacher, I sometimes envied them. I knew in my heart I was the happiest where I was, for Mr. Brooks was a wonderful man. He was kind, understanding, and lovable with all. I felt that I was not under the tension [like] those [students] that were under Mr. Bentley.

We [had] the idea that one's chances for graduation were greater under Mr. Bentley. Imagine my great joy and surprise at qualifying for the valedictorian honor. I remember how worried we were over the state test. I especially worried over arithmetic, because I was and always have been very stupid at mathematics. I knew it was the high marks in the other subjects that brought my average up. I [had] the highest [scores] in the county in English and spelling.

Though I can not remember the address I gave, I remember that it started out something like this, " Friends and fellow students, when one stands at the hilltop and looks back at the path he has climbed, it will not look like a straight line, but winding and broken. So it looks to us today who have reached the top of the hill of education, as prescribed by the State Board of Education." That spring I was so worried and fearful of not graduating, that I made no plans for a graduation dress like all my friends were doing. I was fortunate enough to have a wonderful seamstress for a mother. [She] came to my rescue and made me an outstanding dress, a creation I could well be proud of.

Following my graduation in 1913, I attended Dixie Academy [in St. George, Washington County, Utah]. I graduated from that institution in 1917. I enrolled the following year as a freshman in college, but was unable to further pursue my education. My mother was failing in health. Her family of eight [or] nine to do for, plus her push and drive to maintain a spotless home made it necessary that she have some help. That help was me. At the time I felt I did the right thing. At least I honored the mother that gave me birth. Years later, knowing that father could well afford to have hired some help, I've not been so sure that I, or they, did the right thing. I can honestly say I assumed responsibility early. That is understandable since I was the first girl in the family.

In my teens I made no attempt to shirk from the many household tasks, in spite of the fact that part of my day was spent in the schoolroom. Wrapped in an old bathrobe, I have at times started the family washing at four [in the morning]. On many occasions I arose early enough to have most of the ironing done before an eight o'clock class at school. We had no such conveniences as automatic hot water or automatic washers. Friday afternoons after school, I could be located cleaning the upper floor of our home to lessen the Saturday's work the day following. These tasks did not hurt me and they surely must have given my mother a lift. I do not want to infer that, while thus engaged, my dear mother was idly sucking her thumb, for she was not. In the early part of these days, all baking, washing, sewing, etc., had to be done in the home. There were not always bakery goods and ready-made clothing to be had.

For twenty-five years my mother entertained church dignitaries four times a year at stake conference time because father was stake president for these twenty-five years. Her duties were also many. House cleaning in the spring was really a job. It meant pulling up the carpets [and putting] new straw under them. Every speck [of dirt] that could be washed was washed, transoms included. One spring, mother and I worked side by side, from dawn to dark for three weeks, before we had finished the spring-cleaning. Believe me; it was clean when we were through. I have since wondered if that is the reason I have had little pep and ambition for doing housework as I [became] older and founded my own little family.

One night I flopped into bed early — dead tired from this strenuous house cleaning. My spirits were not improved much when father got me out of bed to witness the marriage of a transient couple. I felt somewhat paid for my efforts in the fun I [received] in seeing the bridegroom refuse to kiss his bride, as he was required to do in the marriage ceremony.

Father was very appreciative of the help [that] I rendered and he would often thrust a five dollar gold piece into my hand. He bought me good things to wear. Often, when he would return from Salt Lake City, he would bring a good piece of cloth and my mother would make it up so that when I was dressed, I was well dressed, though not expensively so. I felt like a queen one day when father bought me a pair of high button shoes. I don't believe I ever had to ask my parents for money when I [became] older. They seemed to sense the sacrifice I had made, and kept me supplied with what I needed, that was within reason.

During my high school years, my acquaintances became more numerous and I made many other friends. In grade school, Vera Conger and Eva Dean Higgins were my close pals. Julia Pace became one of them a few years later about the time I graduated from public schools. Annie and Vernon Worthen, Eleanor Seegmiller, Ione Blake, David [Orin] and Mary Woodbury were some of the friends of high school days.

One lonely Sunday afternoon, Polly and I were wondering what to do with ourselves as we stood on the David H. Morris corner, now where the telephone building stands. While I was pondering, along came Vernon and Annie Worthen and David Woodbury. An invitation to go riding with them in Worthen's white-topped buggy was an answer to our needs. That was the beginning of many good times and a life-long friendship with them. Soon after that, we found that we belonged to a gang of some twenty to thirty people. A gang who could any time, in fair weather or foul, go trooping into the George [W. and Lenora (Woodbury)] Worthen home, regardless of mud on our feet, or regardless of frequency of visits. Any time we wanted to go [there] we could depend on being welcomed at Worthens. Worthens lived across the street north of the tabernacle. I shall always cherish the fun and memories of the evenings there.

I remember one not so pleasant occasion when David Woodbury and Ruth Snow thought that they would play a trick on me while I was with others at the Worthen home. They went over to the Pulsipher phone, and telephoned William Stucki [in] Santa Clara [Washington County, Utah]. Ruth tried to make it appear she was me trying to make a date with "bushel measure of hair on his head." It was a pet name adopted for Willie. David was an accomplice in the matter, which rather made me indignant. Indignant to the extent that I said to myself, "I will never, never speak to you again." What a crack to make even to myself! I've now been married to him for forty-eight years!

We really had a lot of fun. Fun [that] I wonder if the young people now-a-days ever dream about. There was the fun of D-Day, Founder's Day, Peach Day and Christmas Holidays, dances, dates and beaus. One Peach Day a group of girls escorted by David and a wagon box drawn by a team of horses went to Hurricane [Washington County, Utah] for the celebration there. That was the one and only time I went to Hurricane on Peach Day. The girls rented a room from the Stanworth family in which we could change our clothes and make our headquarters. Verda [(Bastian) Seegmiller] had a new petticoat and I had a new under waist that turned up missing right under our nose and [were] as mysteriously returned. To this day, we wonder who the guilty culprit was. Anthony Russell escorted me to the Peach Day Dance and Annie [Worthen] went with Afton Ballard. Grace Prsbrey was David's girl [for] that Peach Day.

Upon one occasion the gang planned a trip to Zion before it became a National Park. There were about nineteen [who made] the trip over a crude road leading there and up to the mountaintop. Yours truly was the only one of the gang left in St. George that summer that did not make the trip. I guess it was my fault. I suppose I took my parents a bit too seriously, for when they would say we were always planning something, I often would forego the pleasure rather than tell them of the planned events. Not so Polly. She took everything in and made a special effort to win over David, who at various intervals kept company with me.

On a particular afternoon following a nice bath and dressed in white middy suit, I went strolling over to grandma's to see if Polly had come from Zion. She had. Along with David she had just arrived, dirty, tired and out of sorts. It surely made her mad that night when she saw me at the show with David and accused me of deliberately trying to steal him. I was not afraid in the least of Polly! I cannot say quite the same of Grace Prisbrey who seemed to like the same boys that I did.

In April 1917 World War I broke out. David volunteered May 13 [1917] and it took something like that to let me know where my affections lay. While he was in the service I worked as typist at the St. George Temple. On September 24, 1920, we received our endowments and were sealed for time and eternity by David H. Cannon who was then president of the temple. As young people usually do, we started from scratch. We had no big wedding stake. David worked at various [jobs] while we lived in an old white house across the street east of the old courthouse.

We moved to Enterprise [Washington County, Utah] where he worked under Chester Kemp on the school building there. That fall he had decided to go on to school at the University [of Utah, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah]. I had been able to save a little from my \$60.00 a month [salary] so was able to help out a little. We were at that time expecting our first baby who was born March 21, 1922. We named her Virginia [Woodbury]. Virginia was born in St. George while her father was in Salt Lake [City] at school. He did not see her until she was two [or] three months old.

Virginia was a fat, chubby and lovely baby. Her one drawback was that she was unfortunate enough to be born with defective eyes. That was the one big sorrow of our lives. We had reason to be very proud of Virginia. She did not let it hinder her seriously in getting an education. She was the first granddaughter and the second grandchild of [my] father's to graduate from college. She has a good mind, good reasoning powers, is courageous and plucky. Virginia taught [at the] School for the Blind [in] Ogden [Weber County, Utah] for four years.

We [lived] in Garland and Tremonton [Box Elder County, Utah] in 1923 where David taught [at] the Bear River High School. That fall we moved back to St. George and he taught [at] Dixie College for ten years. During this time we built our home that used to be [at] 145 East 100 North. Erma and Merrill were born to us there.

Erma [Woodbury] was born April 27, 1927. She was blessed with a good physique and had beautiful eyes. She has been a very devoted daughter and has brought us much joy. She was twice valedictorian of her classes. She was always considered a good student, had high ideals and made many friends. She had

enough good looks and wits to be selected [as the] Washington County Centennial Queen of 1947.

Erma married Gerald Stott of Kanosh [Millard County, Utah] and they now have six children. At the present time, Erma is completing her college education after being married more than twenty years. When [she] graduates, [she] expects to teach next fall. Erma has continued to get honors in her schoolwork, though she still has to be a housewife and a mother of six. She qualified for the honor of being initiated into the Phi Kappa Phi [sorority]. She has also received scholarships from the University of [Arizona] in Tucson. [Her husband], Gerald Stott, is a very good man of high principles and very ambitious. He is also very spiritually ambitious and has made her a wonderful husband. We feel that she has been fortunate in having such a good companion.

Merrill [Woodbury] has been rather special with us perhaps because he was our youngest child and our only son. He was always a good youngster and was able to make many friends. He was rather modest about the honors that he received and almost made a point of concealing them from us instead of confiding them to us. His ambitions have been told in his father's [David Woodbury] history, so I won't need to go into that.

I'm sorry to say that I don't have such a good record, church wise. I have tried to be a good attendee at church. I have taught in Primary [and] Sunday school. I have not occupied many positions of distinction. I've been the social science leader in Relief Society and, along with my husband, I served as a stake missionary. I also was set apart and went on a building mission with him to England. I feel if I contributed anything, I did more there than I have before and since, in a church capacity from a public angle.

FH: Sounds to me like you don't need to make any apologies whatsoever. You have been very active. Sounds like you have done a fine job. Tell something about your parents, something that might have affected your life. How [do] you feel about them?

LW: I believe this is one of the chief reasons for submitting to this interview. I am grateful for the kind of parents that I had and the fact that I was given life itself. I feel that I surely had parents to be proud of and I almost idolized my father. He was a prominent, public man. Because he served the public so much and also the church, we really didn't get to know him as well as we should from a family angle. This is where mother had to take over. We probably would have had idolized father and, at the same time, we would be a little bit fearful of mother's wrath if we [were] out of step a little bit. I'm sure she measures up to all that a good mother should. She has taught me to accept responsibility and I knew what it meant to work. She was very understanding. She had been deprived of an education. She was by natural endowment a talented seamstress. She made

wedding dresses for people and was known for her [sewing] ability and was also a beautiful singer. I'm sorry to say I didn't inherit a bit of it! I appreciate music, love to listen to it but I can't crack a note!

My father was a bit that way. He was a real student and I [was] proud of the positions that he held. He was made chairman of the Board of Equalization of the State of Utah at the time of Governor [George H.] Dern. This [board] later developed into the State Tax Commission of which he was chairman. He had much life of his own to be proud of. He started the banking system here and the telephone company. The older residents here described him often as [the] "father of the community."

I believe some of the most rewarding years of my life and the ones that I will cherish the most, were the two years that we spent in England. For two solid years I could go to church accompanied by my husband and I had his company on Sunday. I will always remember that privilege. I'll never forget the efforts that we put in over there in the bitter cold weather. As [for] a faith-promoting incident I might say this, that in the two years that we were there, Brother Woodbury worked in the cold, and often in the rain —

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

LW: — and the mud. He only missed one-half day's work due to sickness. All the other branch members had a bad cold or were too sick to come out and work. He was blessed with good health. I definitely attribute it to the power of the Lord and His protective hand that we [returned] home safe. We had quite a few narrow escapes over there. I used to say if we get home alive we can only attribute it to the power of the Lord. He surely watched over us.

[We spent] a lot of [the] time on the road [with poor] driving conditions. One time we [were] to take [a] tour of the continent of Europe. We were tossed around almost like a feather on the North Sea, in a boat on angry waves. I had been a coward all my life. I had never dared do this or dared do that. There I was and, for some reason, I was just as calm as could be. I [will] always remember that as a special [time] in our lives.

We came home from England in the fall of 1963. Our little granddaughter [who] had been born in our absence was about nine months old. We hadn't been home very long until we decided to move down to a house that is [at] 221 West Tabernacle. This was a little place that had formerly belonged to David's mother [Mary Elizabeth (Evans) Woodbury]. Our son and his family continued to live in the home that we had been absent from those two years. Shortly after we came home, our daughter-in-law, [Jillynn (Winton) Woodbury] who was naturally rather small and delicate looking, contracted an incurable disease one — that they knew little about. She became an invalid and had this little family. Some of the

time help was procurable, but much of the time there was no one that could be had. It was rather spasmodic that she had help and that is where we tried to fill in. I tried to help the family with cooking, mending, and washing. Although I did quite a few tasks, I know it didn't nearly answer their needs. Most of this twenty-four-hour responsibility lay on our son. When we came home from our mission, we both thought here is where we are going to retire. We are going to begin to do some of the things that we wanted to do and haven't. We are going to take life easy. But this sickness developed and so it looked like we needed to be of a useful nature there.

After we had lived in that home about a year, we moved into [the] house here. It wasn't the one I thought we were going to have, but it was the one we moved into. It is the one we are living in and it has become very dear to us. It was the last home Brother Woodbury built during his career. We are very happy here but it seems strange that the last few years of our lives brought us much joy, and yet it has brought us more heartache too. We feel [that] with it all we have been greatly blessed. The Lord has never forsaken us yet. We attribute many of our blessings to Him. We are grateful to our Father in Heaven for the gift of life, for the parents we have had [and] for [our] children.

I feel for myself that I haven't been an ideal mother [and] that I have had a lot of shortcomings. If I had my life to live over, I could probably be a better one. That is impossible now, but I hope that they can carry on at least as well as we have, and I feel that they can and should do a lot better. I hope that they always remember that they had parents that stood for the right and the good things in life. Whether we always reached that point or not is another thing. They have a good heritage back of them. They had grandparents that they can be proud of. I hope their descendants can say the same thing about theirs.

I want them to always remember that we loved them from the bottom of our hearts. [Emotional] This is my testimony of the gospel [that] I say in the name of Jesus Christ Amen.

[END OF RECORDING TWO. END OF INTERVIEW.]