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Translation for Effa Baird

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Translation for Effa Baird

THESE POEMS SUMMARIZE AND ABRIDGE THE INFORMATION that I have found regarding the life of my great-great-grandmother, Effa Baird. These poems focus on her childhood, as that is what she wrote about in her journals and autobiography. It also seems to have been the most joyous time of her life—one full of youthful abandon and treasured memories in the plains of southern Utah.

Chapter One:

Effa was born in Kanab, Utah on December 20, 1887. She grew up on a ranch with her mother, Margaret Elizabeth Allen, her sisters Matilda, Nellie, and Lois, and her brothers Brigham “Brig,” Louis “Lew,” Samuel, Alma, and William.¹ She knew little of her father, a well-renowned herder, Brigham Young Baird, due to his unexpected death by pneumonia when Effa was two years old. In the wake of this tragic loss, her mother took up sewing and weaving to support the family and sought to rear her children in a home rich in love, laughter, and the Spirit. The Baird home was always bustling with friends and family and was known throughout town as the place to be, especially for young people. Weekly Family Home Evenings were held there, as well many game nights and plays, with folks young and old gathering together to sing, dance, and even recite poetry.²

I. Where the Light Comes In

There is always light within these walls,
No matter the time of day.
The sun may set, and the moon grow dim,
Yet a brightness will always remain.

1. Information taken from Effa’s autobiography on FamilySearch.org

2. Ibid.

I see it when Lew plays the banjo,
and in Alma and Brig's violin,³
I see it in Ma's secret smile
That she wears when the neighbors join in.
I see how it shines through the darkness
As Nellie and I start to sing,
And the way that it bends
And the hearts that it mends
As we giggle through poor poetry.
For who could resist a good Highland Fling
Or a reading of Sir Walter Scott?⁴
I can't say I know, for I always have loved
Finding light in the darkest of spots.

Chapter Two:

Effa attended grade school in a six-room schoolhouse in Kanab, Utah.⁵ She loved learning and always looked forward to going to school each year. In fact, one year, Effa was late to school on her very first day, something she later described in her autobiography as “a disgrace I shall remember to my dying day.”⁶ Effa was a diligent student and an avid writer, and when she was in seventh grade, her class was given a creative writing assignment. Her submission was eventually selected to be read as part of an essay contest, a turn of events that Effa found both pleasantly surprising and alarming, as she was not one for public speaking. Luckily, she found someone to help her out, and her essay was a hit.⁷

3. In her autobiography, Effa lists the instruments that each of her siblings played, as well as her participation in choir with her sister Nellie.

4. Effa specifically mentions in her autobiography that they had an elderly Scottish lady as a neighbor, and that she would often perform traditional dances such as the Highland Fling in their home and tell them stories of Scotland and its history. She also had a fondness for Sir Walter Scott's writings.

5. Information taken from one of Effa's handwritten journal entries entitled “My School Life” that was uploaded to FamilySearch.org

6. A quote from Effa's autobiography on FamilySearch.org

7. Information taken from one of Effa's handwritten journal entries entitled “My School Life” that was uploaded to FamilySearch.org

II. Second Place

I try to be earnest in all that I do,
Be it schoolwork, or service, or love.
Yet sometimes I find that my sensible mind
Is not always aligned with my tongue.
When my teacher announced our assignment
To write an essay of fiction or truth,
I was eager to break out my pen and begin
But would soon find my zeal quite reduced.
For I love to write, yet am loath to speak
At town hall up in front of so many,
Which, I am told, is now my future role
As there will soon be a contest of essays.
It was too close a call, Teacher told us last week,
So instead the whole town will decide;⁸
Thus, it's truly a pickle
And I'd give Alma a nickel
If he'd step in and spare me my pride.⁹

Chapter Three:

Effa's sister Lois was six years older than her. However, despite the difference in age, Effa was closer to Lois than most of her other siblings, save, perhaps, her elder brother Alma. This was likely due, at least in part, to the fact that Effa served as a parental figure to the majority of her other siblings throughout her life. Lois was one of the only family members that gave Effa the freedom to act her age and didn't rely on her so heavily. In her autobiography, Effa lovingly recalls the years they spent together as children—years full of stories, the occasional math tutoring session, and a good amount of mischief. Lois was fond of lending a hand or a sewing needle in times of need, having taught Effa “more about math than any of [her] teachers,” and patched many a worn sock. However, that compassion in no way diminished her penchant for storytelling and a good old-fashioned prank, both of which Effa became quite familiar with over the years.¹⁰

8. Information taken from one of Effa's handwritten journal entries entitled “My School Life” that was uploaded to FamilySearch.org

9. In one of Effa's handwritten journal entries that she uploaded to FamilySearch.org entitled “My School Life”, she details how Alma presented her essay at Town Hall for her.

10. Information taken from Effa's autobiography on FamilySearch.org

III. The Weaver

My sister, she drives a hard bargain
But she knows I will likely agree;
Though two bedtimes tales
Seem a prize far too small for
The day's soiled dishes in the sink
Yet when she settles down next to me
I find I can never resist
The glint in her eye and the hint of a smile
As we embark on each mythic trip.
She reads to me from books of yore
As well as newer tomes,
Yet my favorite nights are those on which
The stories are all her own.
For though one day we may grow up
And leave childhood pranks behind,
I'll always have Lois, who'll eke out a smile,
And these stories will always be mine.