

BRAVE IDAHO PIONEER WOMAN CALLED TO WELL EARNED REST

By

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Another of Idaho's valiant pioneer characters, in the person of Mrs. Jane Elizabeth Billingsley, has ceased her earthly journey and passed to her reward. Monday, the 2nd. of November, 1900, at the home of her daughter, Mrs. B. B. Harger, in Homedale, Mrs. Billingsley calmly and peacefully went to sleep. The passing was in direct contrast to the many years of diligence, activity, and service which characterized the years of her pioneer life.

Born in Sheffield, England, May 18, 1854, she came with her parents, William and Elizabeth Synns Thorpe to the United States, at the age of seven years. They came by rail to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where they joined an overland caravan crossing the plains in a covered wagon; the children walking the greater part of the way; enduring all the hardships of pioneer days.

Mr. Thorpe had been in Utah about two years when he was accidentally killed. The mother left with 10 children endured hardships that are almost unbelievable. After two of three years, the older sons by this time being nearly grown, the family moved to Samaria, a small village near Malad, Idaho. Here Mrs. Billingsley grew to young womanhood assisting in the activities and duties in connection with a pioneer home. Mrs. Billingsley was a truly self-educated woman. At the early age of 10 years she was engaged by a neighbor lady to do some spinning and the recompense which she received was schooling or lessons during the evening hours. At that time there were no school advantages in that part of the state. From this meager beginning she made the most of every advantage and opportunity for an education. She had an especial fondness for history and for nature study. In later years she had an intense admiration for Abraham Lincoln and every article or story in which the famous emancipator figured were eagerly read. Nature's beauties, the flowers, the sun rises and sun sets and the scenery of hill and vale were constantly a delight and joy to this staunch pioneer woman.

Jane Elizabeth Thorpe and Archie Billingsley were married in Boise, October 22, 1872, in the parlors of the first Overland hotel. The Billingsley home was established near Hagerman, on the ranch later known as the O. P. Johnson ranch. Mr. Billingsley maintained a large hay ranch, which at that time was an extensive enterprise, as he sold feed to the Wells-Fargo Express Co., doing the greatest volume of business of its kind. As we remember the railroad had not yet been built west of Pocatello at this date.

It was during the time that the Billingsley's lived at Hagerman that for a period of two years Mrs. Billingsley did not see a white woman. The only assistance she had in her home and with her children was that of the friendly Indian woman. From different times over an extension of years Mrs. Billingsley made a 200 mile journey from Hagerman to Samaria to her parental home for care at the time of the birth of her children. At the time the Bannock Indians went on the war path in 1873, a friendly Indian warned the Billingsley's of the danger and Mrs. Billingsley took her two small children and rode horseback many miles to a settlement fort for protection and safety.

Mrs. Billingsley, on several occasions, had personal experience in the stage hold-ups. One time while on a stage journey robbers held up the stage and the driver was killed.

Mr. Billingsley gradually worked into the cattle business and when the Snake river country became more settled by ranchers, he went north into the Wood river country where range was open and unrestricted. Here as before, the new and raw country afforded only pioneer advantages and experiences. At this time the home was established on Wood river near what later became known as Carey. For many years the home was in a small log cabin, and when later the new home, a frame house, was built it was the first of its kind in the valley. Always interested in civic and educational advantages for their children the Billingsley home early became social centers. In order to more effectively bring this about Mr. Billingsley procured the services of a governess and one room of the home was converted into a school. Children from other families were also permitted to take advantage of this school, maintained at Mr. Billingsley's expense. About this time an organ was secured for the home; for a great many years the only organ in the valley. On picnic and community occasions it was not unusual to take the organ, in a wagon, over the hills for many miles that others might enjoy the luxury. This organ remains in possession of the family.

Mrs. Billingsley, keenly concerned with civic affairs, never missed a chance to exercise her right to vote, on local, state or national problems. Mr. Billingsley's death occurred April 6, 1916, at Colton California, where he was visiting at the home of his daughter, Mrs. W. H. Horton. Mrs. Billingsley maintained the home at Carey until failing health necessitated her giving it up. Six years ago she came to the Boise Valley where she has lived with her daughters, Mrs. Martha A. Higgs at Boise, and Mrs. B. B. Harger at Homedale.

The affliction which caused her death made her an invalid for the last few months. She knew little suffering and on Monday, November 2nd., went to sleep in peace and quiet.

Mrs. Billingsley is survived by three daughters, Mrs. W. H. Horton of Colton, California; Mrs. B. B. Harger, Homedale, and Mrs. Martha A. Higgs, Boise; three sons, Bart Billingsley, Potaluma, California, Alf Billingsley, Carey and Wallace Billingsley, Oakland, California. There are seven grandchildren and six great grandchildren. One brother Joseph Thorpe, resides at Malad, Idaho.

Funeral services were held from the McBrantley funer home in Boise Thursday afternoon. The pall bearers were: Clarence Simson, Lewis Williams, Harry D. Cosho, George Curtie, Card McCarter of Boise and Willard Robinson of Caldwell. Mrs. Paul Case of Caldwell sang three numbers, "Old Rugged Cross", Mrs. Billingsley's favorite hymn, also "Sometime We'll Understand," and "Good Night, Here; Good morning There." The bier was surrounded by many beautiful floral pieces bearing mute testimony of the high esteem and regard in which Mrs. Billingsley was held by friends over the entire southern part of the state. Interment was made in Morris Hill cemetery. Just at the sunset hour, which was so impressively expressive as a closing to so beautifully useful a life the words of the poet Tennyson were read by Rev. Mr. Shields. --

"Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me,
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea."