Out Of The Black Patch

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INTRODUCTION

Too often, social history reduces women's life writings to mere resources for broader analysis and interpretation. Historians and demographers may overlook the richness of the women's voices that emerge from uninhibited, reflective writing. Vernacular works by ordinary women provide grounded history that fills and colors gaps left by bean counters and theoreticians. The immediacy of unhampered words written by a woman in private often can do more for our understanding of gender roles, class distinctions, and race relations than formal, necessarily reductive interpretations. Only now are we beginning to acknowledge the imprints left by women writers such as Agnes Miner, May Cravath Wharton, Marietta Palmer Wetherill, and others whose lives remained unnoticed until perceptive editors and biographers brought them to light.¹

Writings by Mormon women in the rural South are scarce, even virtually unknown. The autobiography of Effie Marquess Carmack, a convert to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from southwestern Kentucky, contributes well to our understanding of rural white women in the post-Civil War South. It is a rare expression of a woman's vernacular, yet artful, voice and provides an unusual glimpse into the world of ordinary—though in this case Mormon—southern women, revealing the domestic life of a wife and mother as it recounts the customary and material lore of Kentucky's Black Patch and the turbulent economic changes affecting the region. Effie Carmack's preservation, and celebration, of folkways may be her most significant contribution. Her manifest devotion to them appears not only in her lively autobiographical descriptions of

traditions but also in her painting, poetry, and, especially important, her phenomenal folksong repertoire, preserved by Austin Fife and the Library of Congress.

The rural landscape of Kentucky's Pennyrile Region has changed little after a century of industry and southern turmoil. In the heart of Christian County, where this story begins, a patchwork of tobacco and sorghum farms sits in contour upon the area's gently rising hills. The ghosts of white and black tenant farmers bent over tobacco leaves for harvest, can be sensed among the furrows. Hopkinsville, the county seat and center of the dark-fired tobacco district, was where farmers brought their large hogsheads of leaf crop to market. Abandoned smoke barns remind us of an earlier age, when women and children toiled in the fields, bundling the leaves on loading sticks, after which men and boys hung the tobacco inside the barns on fire tiers to cure. Despite advances in agricultural technology, the people hold fast to deeply rooted traditions and continue many of the same domestic routines practiced by their pioneer forebears.

Today's tobacco growers of Christian County descend from an underprivileged lot, a people brought low by toil and economic hardships. A homestead for rural families in postbellum Kentucky often consisted of little more than a cabin, a few horses and chickens, a log-hewn smoke barn, and a plot of ground on which to grow tobacco and "truck." There resided individuals who lived and breathed the southern tobacco culture. They exhibited, as did others in the American South, a common dependence on frontier ideals, much like those who migrated west. As sociologist Howard W. Odum observed, the South "retains in its folk culture threads of the frontier struggle and reflects the costs that went into building a frontier society." The autobiography of Effie Marquess Carmack is a vivid portrayal of a woman's faith and perseverance through the economic hardships that gripped the dark-fired tobacco region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

2. For descriptions of the geography in the Crofton and Hopkinsville areas, see Carl Ortwin Sauer, Geography of the Pennyrroyal: A Study of the Influence of Geology and Physiography upon the Industry, Commerce and Life of the People (Frankfort: Kentucky Geological Survey, 1927), 36-45, 199, 247-48; and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Survey of Christian County, Kentucky, comp. Ronald D. Froedge, et al. (Frankfort: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Kentucky Department for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, and Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station, 1980), 1-4.


Effie Lee Marquess was born on September 26, 1885, in Crofton, Christian County, Kentucky, the sixth child of Boanerges “Bo” Robert Marquess and Susan John “John Susan” Armstrong.\(^4\) Effie’s birthplace was nestled in the Black Patch, a tobacco farming region covering western Kentucky and northwestern Tennessee. Black Patch farmers grew a regionally distinct, dark, olive-colored variety of tobacco that was cured in smoke-filled barns.\(^5\) Growing up on a dark-fired tobacco farm was not a carefree existence. According to Suzanne Marshall Hall, “Men, women, and children worked in the tobacco patch, the barnyard, the garden, the chicken pen, and the house. Play, in this culture, often imitated work, and provided valuable schooling for children.”\(^6\) Effie’s family was no exception. “Even though we were poor, as far as money was concerned, and lived in a crude log hut,” she wrote, “we were rich in a few things, such as a fervent appreciation for the beauties of nature around us. We possessed a stretch of stream that was far more entertaining, as a playground, than the most expensive of parks” (p. 58, herein). In describing the people of the region in her unpublished novel, “Tobacker,” Effie wrote that “they are different from the mountain folks. They are just common people, hardened to toil as all tobacco growers must be. A mixture of honest and dishonest, good and bad, religious and irreligious, educated and illiterate, sensible and ignorant.”\(^7\)

Effie was resolute in her effort to preserve the traditions of her western Kentucky environs. In the preface to her autobiographical work of poetry, *Backward Glances* (ca. 1945), Effie declared her intent to vernacularize the work. “I tried to keep it right down in the clods of Kentucky,” she wrote.

We were of the soil, common and unsophisticated, and I wanted this story of our lives to be kept in tune with our log cabin and true to our home life. If judged by a literary critic, I am sure it is full of errors . . . but I am also sure it will strike a responsive chord in the hearts of other commoners like myself who have experienced many of the things I have mentioned here. Many things will soon be forgotten if

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4. See pages 190–91, herein; vital dates are from copies of LDS family group sheets in Noel Carmack’s possession.


7. Effie Marquess Carmack, “‘Tobacker’: A Tale of the Night Riders of Kentucky,” 1, copy of undated and unfinished MS in the possession of John K. Carmack, Salt Lake City, Utah.
they are not put down by someone that cherishes the memory of them—things such as running down the lye in the ash hopper to make soap, pulling straw from the straw stack for the straw beds, carding and spinning, grinding sausage and storing it in corn shucks. Many customs and habits of the people of Western Kentucky are fast being forgotten as the new age pushes the old ways back.⁸

Although her formal education did not extend beyond eighth grade, Effie was in fact highly literate and impressively self-educated. She was competent not only in the mechanics of language but in illustrative description and metaphor as well. Her accounts of home life shed light on the way of life in the Black Patch. She sketches colorful vignettes that expose the southern tobacco economy and depict the individuals who lived it. In "Tobacker" she gives this bleak but vivid description of the hard times in the tobacco district:

The dawn of the twentieth century marked a time in this section of tobacco growers which resembled in a small way the age described by Charles Dickens in his "Tale of Two Cities," the age just preceding the French Revolution, when he said "it was the best of times" for a certain, satisfied class. In this case it was the tobacco buyers who had shut the ears of their conscience toward the feeble protest of helpless farmers and towards the look of hopeless, dumb despair in the faces of pitiful hard-worked women, who, with their stunted offspring at their breast, came year after year, each time expectant and hopeful, only to see again and again the product of the long year's toil taken for a pitifully meager sum. In fact often there was not even enough money left to buy shoes for their scrawny brood, and they must keep them in by the fire until some other plan could be devised.

Yes, it was the best of times for the buyers of the crops, who were quickly accumulating fortunes, but it was the worst of times for the tiller of the soil who was risking his luck on the gamble of raising tobacco, risking and losing.⁹

Effie was not alone in her allegiance to the Kentucky frontier heritage. A sampling of fine writers from the Bluegrass State includes such

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⁸ Effie Marquess Carmack, "Foreword," in Backward Glances: An Autobiography in Rhyme (n.p.: author, n.d. [ca. 1945]). The original manuscript was first written as a Mother's Day gift for her sister, Lelia, and was entitled "My Old Kentucky Home." It is typed and bound in a scrapbook cover and contains handwritten corrections and insertions (original MS in Noel Carmack's possession).

literary figures as James Lane Allen, Allen Tate, Rebecca Caudill, Jesse Stuart, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, and Harriette Simpson Arnow. All enlivened their writing by drawing upon their “Kentucky experience.”

The first poet laureate of the United States, Robert Penn Warren, was born and raised in Guthrie, Kentucky. Warren wrote vividly of the turmoil during western Kentucky’s tobacco wars in his story “Prime Leaf” (1931) and in Night Rider (1939), his first published historical novel.

While its setting is the same, Effie’s work contains none of the idealism and allegory of Warren’s Night Rider. Effie’s is a real, tangible account of rural life in a primitive region of the post–Civil War South. One can detect her clear attachment to a familiar landscape. Effie often records her life story like a folklorist recording practices or performances. At times, her narrative and dialogue approach what linguists call “literary dialect.”

Although she may not have intended an accurate reconstruction of dialect, she clearly infused her writing with regionalisms and folk motifs. And even though she came from a state where strong Unionist sentiments prevailed, Effie inherited racial expressions and attitudes that permeated Kentucky as much as they did the rest of the slaveholding South. Her anecdotal use of such terms harkens back to a time when the boundaries dividing men, women, and children by race and economic class were hardened by decades of violent hostility.

Effie’s narrative is written with remarkable clarity. Her attention to detail invokes a strong sense of presence. The sights, sounds, smells, and dialogue do more than simply provide a colorful backdrop to a common rural experience; they serve as sensory cues that draw the reader into a human drama. Her story comprises cyclical struggles, personal tragedies, and significant changes, paradoxically intertwined with persistence and hope.

Effie’s sense of community was based, in large part, upon her familial connections as well as her physical surroundings. The Marquess household fit within a larger family network of friends, neighbors, and extended relatives. Social orientation was fixed by affirming kinships with

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those individuals who were part of the local landscape.\textsuperscript{13} Consider, for example, her periodic wagon rides to Hopkinsville with her parents and siblings. The journey was marked by familiar homes and landmarks and by calling to mind the personalities associated with them. "One would think that a long jolt over rough roads in an old two horse wagon, usually in the hot summer, would leave unpleasant impressions, but not so," she wrote. "Those trips to town stand out as glorious monuments in my memory. I asked who lived in every house along the way, and our patient father usually told us" (p. 93, herein). These "topophilic sentiments," as Daniel Rolph calls them, are indicative of the southern sense of place. People are bound together by the land and community. Homes and farms are rarely discussed without tying them to an individual or a family who resided there.\textsuperscript{14}

The folklife in Effie's writings bespeaks the well-rooted traditions of western Kentucky and other regions of the American South. Descriptive memories of playtime, wooden toys, and family activities reveal that her childhood, although economically deprived, was enriched by simple, time-honored customs. And yet, while Effie's family was deeply religious, her father was not superstitious and did not believe in the preternatural. "Some of our neighbors were quite superstitious and told spooky tales about graveyards and ghosts," Effie wrote.\textsuperscript{15} But her father refused to allow his children to be exposed to such a belief system—an unusual restriction, since supernatural lore pervaded southern culture. On the other hand, her family's use of herbs and folk remedies demonstrated a pragmatic frontier heritage dependent on human skills and natural resources.

Nature is not a harsh element in Effie's story. She evokes the environment's capacity to sustain life and the curative value of its useful plants and herbs. "I am thankful," she wrote, "for all my parents told me of the use of herbs, etc., for healing: white walnut bark as a safe laxative; slippery elm bark for the stomach; blackberries and briar root for teething babies—dozens of simple remedies that are effective, yet leave no bad

\textsuperscript{13} According to Barbara Allen, ". . . the southern sense of place is constructed, maintained, and articulated in a distinctively regional conversational pattern that emphasizes placing people within a social and geographical frame. . . . In these conversations, the landscape becomes a symbolic one, with historical and social as well as physical dimensions, a complex structure of both kinship networks and land-ownership patterns." See "The Genealogical Landscape and the Southern Sense of Place," in \textit{Sense of Place: American Regional Cultures}, ed. Barbara Allen and Thomas J. Schlereth (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990), 152-53.


\textsuperscript{15} Carmack, "The Hant," in \textit{Backward Glances}, 38.
after-effects.” When recounting natural calamities, she accepts them as god sent, as manifestations of divine influence, or as part of the normal course of things. One season, a flood took “the best part” of their farm holdings: “I can’t remember now that we suffered any extra want because of the loss of crops and livestock,” she wrote. “We were used to financial calamities. Often, when they had worked all year, and made a good crop of tobacco, they got nothing for it when selling time came” (p. 55, herein). Raising tobacco to satisfy smokers she viewed as a foolhardy enterprise. “The foolish thing was to keep on raising it, when they were not getting anything for it,” she commented. “It would have been far more intelligent to have raised food for the winter months” (p. 151, herein).

Effie’s respect for nature and the physical world shaped her play and learning. Her creativity grew out of the emotions, impressions, and discoveries produced by what she called her “enchanted woodland.” Her childhood playground included a plum thicket and field of wildflowers near a lush forest of dogwoods, white oak, and hickory. The forest floor was carpeted by moss beds and sassafras. “When I was alone,” she remembered, “and no one to play with me, I would find certain places in the banks where there were great cracks where there was beautiful, moist, bluish white clay that was wonderful for modeling. Many long happy hours I have spent making horses, dogs, heads, pitchers, whole sets of dishes, and hundreds of marbles of all sizes” (pp. 39-40, herein).

The art and music of family and friends also stimulated Effie. She seldom entered the home of Marion and Ailsee Moore, her nearest neighbors, but remembered one item in it for the rest of her life: “One thing that charmed me, above all others (in that house) was a lifesized painting of a young girl, which stood on an easel in one corner of the room. It was the first hand painted portrait I had ever seen. It must have been good work, it certainly charmed me, and when I got a chance I gazed in awe and wonder to think that anyone could make a picture look as much like life as that one did” (p. 82, herein). During the coal boom, Effie’s father, Bo, a full-time tobacco farmer and occasional fiddle player, regularly joined his brother, Lycurgus or “Curg,” to entertain at dance halls and resorts in the Cumberland Gap. Sounds of her father’s violin or her mother’s singing voice often filled winter evenings, fostering an appreciation of music that continued all her life. Homemade dancing dolls, wooden toys, and pegboard games also engendered an atmosphere of learning and creative imagination, and “drawing pictures on a

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big old double slate was something that never lost its charm," she recalled (p. 42, herein).

Had she been able to complete her education and then obtain more formal art instruction, Effie might have looked forward to a distinguished, perhaps prosperous, career in art. Instead, because of her obligations at home, she only finished the eighth grade and was content to learn under the motivating influence of her father. "Sometimes father would point out pictures in the cloud formations. A long level cloud, with one upright, made a perfect ship at sea, and, if you were going to paint those thunderheads, over there, you would need to put the halo of white light on the side next to the sun, with a soft gray on the shadow side" (pp. 195-96, herein). These treasured moments with her father encouraged the inquisitive young Effie, cultivating her budding interest in art. An ability to express herself artistically would help sustain her through life.

Despite her humble circumstances, Effie never let a lack of art supplies discourage her. She sometimes resorted to clever alternatives. On one occasion she converted a roll of toilet paper into useful material: "Aunt Fannie gave me one roll, but it was never used for the purpose for which it was intended. It was used as tracing paper, to put over pretty pictures, and trace them. It was placed on the old wall plate of the attic at home with my other treasured possessions, chalk box and trinkets, and was kept for years, a roll of my favorite pictures traced carefully" (p. 46, herein). If sketch pads and standard painting surfaces were unavailable, she used whatever materials she found: cardboard, the reverse sides of wall coverings, or wrapping paper. To make brushes, she sometimes chewed the ends of matchsticks to fray them.18

During this time, young Effie's encounters with outside influences were few but significant. By all accounts, her introduction to Mormonism changed her life. By the late nineteenth century, Latter-day Saint (LDS) missionaries were a noticeable presence in southern rural communities. The affable young men traveled the backcountry, relying on the hospitality of receptive families for a home-cooked meal and a warm bed. Often, they secured a one-room schoolhouse, dance hall, or bowery in which to preach their message.

Mormon membership grew in Kentucky after the Civil War. Until that time, missionaries had sporadically entered the upper Cumberland and southern Appalachia, converting pockets of mountain families and creating small member branches in the region. From about 1832 until

18. "Mrs. Carmack Speaker at Art Club Meeting," *Atascadero News*, May 16, 1957, 2; Diane Gustafsen Gouff, "My Most Unforgettable Character" (a personal essay based on Effie's autobiography and interviews), in *Down Memory Lane* by Effie Marquess Carmack, 237.
the coming of the rebellion, the Mormon presence in the South was limited to a handful of traveling missionaries, including Samuel H. Smith, Reynolds Cahoon, Wilford Woodruff, Orson Pratt, Warren Parrish, Lorenzo Barnes, James Emmett, and Peter Dustin. As early as 1836, Kentucky was a part of the LDS Church's Tennessee Conference, which consisted of Tennessee's Benton, Henry, and Weakley Counties and Kentucky's Calloway County. In 1876, Kentucky became a part of the LDS Southern States Mission, where it remained until the fall of 1928. In the late 1890s, proselyting forces in the mission tripled from 167 at the end of 1894 to a peak of 501 in 1897. Between 1877 and 1899, some 2,087 Mormon missionaries (51 percent of all the church's missionaries in the United States and Canada) were sent to the South. This resulted in rapid increases in church membership in the South, from 1,200 in 1890 to 2,800 in 1895 and over 10,000 in 1900.19

It is little wonder that travel author Horace Kephart included Latter-day Saint proselytizing in his observations of the southern susceptibility to evangelism. He wrote that "many mountaineers are easily carried away by new doctrines extravagantly presented. Religious mania is taken for inspiration by the superstitious who are looking for 'signs and wonders.'" Kephart saw the Mormon missionaries as more threatening, as a danger to fundamental rules of connubial conduct: "At one time, Mormon prophets lured women from the backwoods of western Carolina and eastern Tennessee."20 Historian Gene Sessions has observed that the missionaries taught a system of collectivism inherently inimical to the individualistic traditions which had grown up with the slave society in the South among the religions particularly. Not only this, but the dedicated army of elders encouraged their converts to abandon their homeland to settle in the deserts of the West. . . . They often converted a single member of such basic southern community units as the family, extended family, or church, drawing its members apart.


and menacing to disrupt with philosophical and even geographic distance the basic unit of the hierarchical system of the South.  

As a result, Mormon missionaries suffered a number of attacks and lynchings. Between 1879 and 1900 some fifteen missionaries and church members were killed in acts of mob violence. A young missionary named Joseph Sanding was shot and killed in 1879 by a mob near Varnell’s Station, Georgia. In 1884, two Mormon missionaries and three local members were murdered during the “Cane Creek Massacre” in Lewis County, Tennessee. In November 1899, two Mormon elders in Butler County, Kentucky, were cruelly whipped and driven from the area; Effie saw the wounds these missionaries suffered.  

Such violence did not occur in Christian County, though, where several families embraced Mormonism with enthusiasm. When LDS missionaries entered the Hopkinsville area in 1897, the Marquess family was one of the first to accept their message. “A lot of people ’round were interested,” Effie remembered. “It looked like the whole county was a goin’ to join the Church. But finally it simmered down to four or five families.” Indeed, the Marquesses’ conversion was a culmination of many years of honoring Christianity but rejecting formal religions. Effie remembered that “although not contented with our homespun religion, we read the Bible and waited for a time when maybe the right religion would come along” (p. 163, herein).  

The message the missionaries brought was curiously different from the fiery preaching common among traveling evangelicals. After the young men obtained permission to preach in the Larkin schoolhouse, Effie’s father read their calling cards and said, “You know, this sounds different. I think we’d better go hear them.” They preached a gospel unlike anything the Marquesses had heard before. They told of a church founded by one Joseph Smith, Jr., and how he had a vision of God and


Jesus Christ, who called him to organize the church based on a restored priesthood that had been lost since the days of the New Testament. "We couldn't get enough of it. We were just thrilled with it," Effie recalled.25

In mid-March 1898, during a late winter snowfall, Effie entered the frigid waters of a nearby creek to be baptized a Mormon, only a month after her parents and older sisters, Etta and Lelia. "The Elders brought a new way of life," she wrote. "Everything we heard and read fit in perfectly with Christ's teachings."26 Young Mormon elders would always have a welcome place at Effie's hearth or table because, as she put it, they had brought the "pure joy" of their gospel message into her life.

Religious conversion, however, was not the only heartfelt change for Effie and the rest of her family. Only a year after their baptism, her mother, Susan John, died of yellow fever. One month later, Effie's sister Etta succumbed to typhoid. More changes came in quick succession when her two older brothers moved away and her father had to sell the farm. After her sister Sadie married, Effie's father took a new wife, Serena Long, a woman whom Effie unaffectionately addressed as "Miss Serena." Although Effie tells of growing to love Miss Serena through serving her, the relationship was not intimate. Increasingly, Effie turned to her sisters Lelia and Sadie as confidantes and mother figures.

In 1901, the Marquess family—now reduced to Effie and her father, stepmother, and ten-year-old brother, Autie—moved to Franklin, Arizona, where they lived for a short time on the farm of Joseph Wilkins. Their short move to Arizona was pleasant, but her father's longing for home hastened their return before Effie could fully enjoy the open skies of the Southwest. "Back in Kentucky papa was happy again; to hear the birds sing, the babble of water over rocks, the soft grass under the shade trees, and the mellow sunshine that filtered through the leaves was all he needed, but not to me—I was lonesome for the west" (p. 234, herein).

After returning to Kentucky, Bo Marquess began chewing tobacco. This continued until the addiction took hold and damaged his digestive system. He died a short time later in 1903 with his children at his bedside and a host of neighbors to bid him farewell.

That same year, Effie married Henry Edgar Carmack, the nineteen-year-old son of a neighboring farmer. Edgar, as he was commonly addressed, was a descendant of Irish emigrants who had migrated to the middle Tennessee Cumberlands from Maryland and Virginia. Although his father, Thomas Green Carmack, and stepmother, Mattie Olivia Hale,

25. Ibid.
26. Carmack, Down Memory Lane, 185.
had converted to Mormonism in 1897, he was not as concerned about religious matters. Effie noted the irony in the fact that despite her wish to marry a Latter-day Saint, "I married a fellow who was not a Mormon, and had a difficult time converting him" (p. 237, herein).

Effie wrote little about her courtship, wedding, and forty-nine-year relationship with Edgar. In marriage, her creative endeavors took lower priority to the challenges of mothering and household responsibilities. "I had care of the children and the farm and hired hands, I milked cows, tended garden etc.," she recalled.27 Still, Edgar was a capable, hard-working husband and father. "He was a kind father and loved the children, especially when they were small," Effie remembered. "He would take one on each knee and sing 'Two Little Children' and he liked to tell them about his grandmother and the songs she would sing for him and the things she cooked when he would go there" (pp. 340–41, herein). However, he was not as supportive as he might have been of the religious and artistic activities that meant so much to Effie. She recalled that despite his earnest commitment to work, his penchant for horses brought hardships. "My husband's money went for fine horses, harness[es], feed etc.," she wrote. "But I managed to keep the children clothed."28 "Not that their father was lazy, he worked hard all the time; but the money he earned never seemed to do the children or I any good, and I know it was my own fault. If I had demanded more, I'm sure I could have had more" (p. 340, herein). Effie's self-disparagement raises more questions about her relationship with Edgar than perhaps can be answered by available sources.

Never openly critical of her husband, Effie in her memoir shows restraint on the subject of Edgar's spousal qualities. She more often casts Edgar as a stoic than as a man of sensitive disposition. It appears that typical dynamics of patriarchy affected Effie's life as they did those of other women in the agricultural South. Her unmet demands for adequate food and clothing for the children, her difficulties in getting Edgar to share her religious zeal, and her deferential references to her father-in-law, as "Mr. Carmack," are all symptoms of this southern family order. It is not surprising, then, that she memorialized her own pleasant filial experience. Effie's high estimation of her widowed father and his nurturing qualities goes against the prevailing belief that all southern rural families were oppressively paternal.

Suzanne Marshall Hall observed that in the Black Patch, "as in most agricultural societies, men's power superseded women's."29 Women's

28. Ibid.
roles on a tobacco farm included caring for the children, laundering, cooking, watching over the livestock, stripping and grading the tobacco, and selling corn and eggs for extra income. "Men oversaw the tobacco patch and controlled the household economy. Women contributed to the household coffers by raising poultry and selling or trading eggs and chickens at the community general store. The remuneration for hours of work with the hens came in the form of due bills redeemable at the store. This income, although restricted, gave women the satisfaction of providing a crucial weekly sum that supplied the family with grocery staples, clothing, and even luxuries."30

Aside from housework and field labor, mothering was most often the chief responsibility of Kentucky farm women. The demands of farm labor largely dictated the number of children born to rural wives. In economically depressed areas, such as the dark tobacco district, where farm acreage was low and it was less feasible to employ hired hands, high fertility was common.31 As part of their daily routine, rural mothers, in addition to keeping their children fed and clothed, were often the principal providers of love and nurturing in the home. In Kentucky's impoverished Black Patch region, it was difficult to feel resilient bearing and


31. For example, Margaret Jarman Hagood's survey of white southern tenant farm women in a subregion of the Piedmont South and in the Deep South states of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana reveals patterns of gender and fertility. Of the 117 mothers surveyed in the Piedmont subregion, 115 married mothers had been married an average of 18.9 years and had given birth to a mean number of 6.4 children per mother. See Hagood, Mothers of the South, 108–10 and 231–34. See also Harriet A. Byrne, "Child Labor in Representative Tobacco-Growing Areas," U.S. Department of Labor Children's Bureau, publication no. 155 (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1926).
caring for a young family. But Effie was unequivocally fond of her children. She remembered that the thing for which she was most thankful was that although she struggled to provide for her children’s physical needs, she “didn’t neglect to teach them the important things they needed to know. It didn’t take money to do that, just precious time and patience” (p. 341, herein).

Unfortunately, all of Effie’s children seemed alarmingly prone to accidents and infirmities. Cecil Eugene, her first child (1904–1984), was born prematurely after an accidental fall sent Effie into early labor. Although he had a normal infancy, Cecil’s troubled birth foreshadowed the adversities of child-rearing to come. In the ensuing years, Effie bore seven more children: Violet (b. 1908), Noel Evans (1911–1980), Grace (1913–1984), Hazel Marguerite (b. 1914), Lenora Bernice (1915–1950), David Edgar (1917–1952), and Harold Grant (1919–1923). Each experienced physical challenges which varied in severity; a ninth child was stillborn. Effie saw her children through injuries, whooping cough, influenza, and near-drownings. A long-term but rewarding challenge was the extra attention her youngest daughter, Bernice, required; her intellectual development was slowed by slight mental retardation. The demands of such arduous caregiving must have been disheartening at times, but Effie persevered.

One incident involving Cecil tested both her endurance and her faith. At the age of two, Cecil had a bout with pneumonia that nearly took his life. The neighbor’s children had taken him outside to play and kept him out in a cold February rain. By late evening, he was hot with fever and short of breath. Some time later, after Effie’s considerable effort to clear his lungs and treat his temperature with medication, Cecil fell into a deep, unresponsive slumber. After twenty minutes of close observation, the doctor, unable to detect breathing or a heartbeat, pronounced Cecil dead. Effie, however, refused to allow her baby’s life to slip away. Through the night and into the morning hours, she massaged her son’s cold, lifeless body with hot water and rubbing alcohol. She “longed for someone with the authority to administer to him” in accordance with Latter-day Saint practice. Edgar was not a member of the church and could not give priesthood blessings, and at this particular time, the Mormon elders were unavailable. “Not wanting to leave a thing undone that might help,” she later wrote, “I got a small bottle of olive oil, asked the Lord to bless and

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32. Effie’s feelings of affection for her children were not unusual. However, Hagood wrote that “the [southern] mother is proud of having borne the children she has although she may not have wished for another before she became pregnant each time.” See Hagood, Mothers of the South, 125.
purify it, and to recognize a mother’s anointing and blessing on her child, and to bring him back to life.” In her prayer, she promised to raise the child to the best of her ability and dedicate her life to God. During the hours she continued to work over her son, her “whole body was a living, working prayer.” Just before dawn, a faint heartbeat could be heard, and Cecil revived and asked for something to eat. The boy regained all of his faculties, and within days, word traveled from the hills west of Crofton that the Carmack boy had risen from the dead (pp. 248–49, herein). It wasn’t long after this miraculous experience that Edgar was baptized on a “momentous day” in 1908. From then on he took churchgoing more seriously. Friends who earlier had not responded to Effie’s attempts to tell them of Mormonism also became more interested.

In 1911, Edgar and Effie moved to the farm of Francis McDonald in Holladay, Utah. While there, Edgar found employment working for Joseph Andrus putting up hay on his ranch near Park City. In Edgar’s absence, Effie picked currants with the McDonalds’ seventeen-year-old son, Howard, who later became president of Brigham Young University (1945–1949). After haying was done, Edgar began working in the canyon, assisting in the excavation of a waterline trench. At the end of September, when the work was finished, Edgar and some of the other men got wet while returning home in an open truck bed during a cold rainstorm. Within a short time, he began complaining of inflammation and pain in his foot; this was followed by a severe case of rheumatic fever. For almost six months, Edgar lay sick and unable to work. One of his few activities during rehabilitation came when, in a sacred Mormon ordinance making their marriage eternal, he was sealed to Effie in the Salt Lake Temple, along with children Cecil, Violet, and infant son Noel. When a full recovery appeared doubtful, it was recommended that Edgar move to a lower altitude, prompting the family to move back to Kentucky, where he could resume his farming in a more healthy environment.

As it turned out, the change did not prove therapeutic. The years following their return from Utah were the darkest for Effie and her family. While Edgar was suffering from rheumatic heart disease, Effie contracted an unidentified but debilitating illness that lingered several years. The symptoms were similar to those of tuberculosis—coughing blood, continuing fatigue, and fever spells, all of which Effie believed were the result of a poor diet. During her illness, Effie gave birth to three more children. Two, Grace and Hazel, were born without complications, but Bernice’s birth came with some difficulty. The three girls were born in close succession, and Effie’s sickness inhibited her ability to manage day-to-day responsibilities in the home.

Busy dealing with the demands of tobacco farming and with its fluctuating yields and returns, Edgar did not offer additional domestic support.
He entrusted his crop to an association of dark-fired tobacco planters but made little profit. By 1920, Kentucky leaf-crop prices dropped to their lowest point in ten years. At the doctor's admonition, Edgar tried to alleviate Effie's burdens by doing laundry and light housework. But even with his first effort, he found the extra chores overtaxing and hired a young woman named Lola Jones to take over. The doctor had also recommended that Effie do something enjoyable but not laborious. "Dr. Lovell," Effie remembered, "told him that he had better let me do it, as it would be far better to have a mother doing easy things I enjoyed than not to have any mother at all." Thus about 1915, while Effie had help, she took up painting again. "I had done lots of little things," she wrote. "I knew that I could paint, if only I had the time and material" (p. 267, herein). Her friend and neighbor Bernice Allington had been a helpful art tutor while they lived in Utah, and with some assistance from her longtime friend Bernice Pollard Walker, Effie received additional instruction in watercolor painting. "I was interested in painting, and enjoyed it, and was surprised that it was so easy for me, and I tackled hard subjects" (p. 268, herein). Most of these works consisted of candid watercolor sketches of her children, neighbors, aunts, and uncles; one of them was awarded a red ribbon at the 1915 Christian County Fair. With her childhood pastime regained, Effie found a sense of healing and peace of mind.

Nevertheless, ill health, Edgar's unpredictable income, and the care of eight dependent children (by this time, David and Harold had been added to the family) weighed heavily upon Effie. Her most painful challenge came so suddenly, and so tragically, it outweighed anything she had previously faced. In the spring of 1923, just two days after Easter Sunday, her two eldest sons, Cecil and Noel, were burning saw briers and grass in the fields just prior to plowing. In another part of the clearing, near an embankment, four-year-old Harry was playing stick horses in the tall sage grass with his brother David, who was celebrating his sixth birthday. Without warning, a sudden change in wind direction sent the blaze into

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the grass where the two boys were playing. Before Harry could outrun the flames, they overtook him, burning through his long underwear and thick overalls. By the time Cecil and Noel responded to David's cries for help, the fire had consumed nearly all of Harry's tender skin. For the next few hours, Effie remained near her little boy's blackened body until he took his final breath. Effie was forever changed by the experience. This time, unlike Cecil's miraculous revival, neither prayer nor cure brought Harry's precious life back.

Harry's death was the most traumatic of Effie's incessant confrontations with adversity. Although she learned to adapt to the loss, her emotional and physical well-being never fully recovered. Her intense grief triggered a number of bodily ailments, including facial eczema and a pain in her heart that she claimed plagued her continually. Reminded of the sufferings of Job, Effie tried to remain patient, consoling herself with scriptures. "Sometimes," she said, "I felt like I was getting more than my share, but I never felt rebellious nor did I blame the Lord for my affliction" (p. 293, herein).

In the midst of physical infirmities, Effie's ability to cope was made more difficult by daily reminders of Harry and unreciprocated expressions of grief between her and Edgar. Like many other bereaved parents, Effie and Edgar's inability to communicate feelings of loss impaired their ability to adjust and find comfort.

Although Effie seemed to bear no guilt or feelings of responsibility for Harry's death, losing her role as his mother seemed to haunt her in later years. Her only regret was that she did not adequately expose him to the joyful music she had experienced as a child. "Children need music and songs and laughter," she wrote. After determining that she had been remiss, she "tried to make up for lost time" with her other children. The intimate relationship between mother and child also became a recurring theme in Effie's paintings, often as the Madonna and Christ child or a Navajo mother and baby. Thoughts of children must have pressed upon

34. The foregoing narrative is drawn from Effie's own poignant account found on pages 287–88.

her mind; their names and faces appeared in her creative works and, as her writings reveal, even in her dreams.

Harry's death marked other pivotal changes in Effie's life. In February 1924, she and Edgar moved their family to Joseph City, a small Mormon settlement on the Little Colorado in northern Arizona. At first, they lived in a house tent that her brother John and son Cecil, who had both been living in the area, prepared for them before they arrived. Despite her circumstances, she wasted no time finding her place in front of easel and canvas. By mid-1927, Edgar was successfully running a dairy and delivery route between Joseph City and Winslow. Shortly thereafter, they took up permanent residence in Winslow, where Effie cultivated with even greater energy the talent that had been evident in her early works. "After we had been in Arizona a long time, I went back to Kentucky, and I was astonished to see many of the watercolors that I had done in the homes of friends and kinfolks. They were as good as the oil colors that I did later" (p. 268, herein).

Effie now taught lessons in the LDS Sunday School and Mutual Improvement Association and theology in its Relief Society, and after school and in the evenings, she gave art lessons to the children at the local elementary school. Each week she had the youngsters choose a subject, usually a simple landscape, to teach them the rudiments of linear perspective, the placement of subjects, and techniques to create the illusion of space. As an integral part of her assignments, she emphasized the importance of drawing from observation: "I had them draw from nature—a small picture of a tree and rocks, or a sunset sky, or whatever they chose to do" (p. 300, herein). As the popularity of her art lessons increased, the school teachers began to receive instruction as well. Although Effie enjoyed the association with her adult peers, the children's joy and excitement in learning seemed to gratify her most.

It can be argued that Effie's expressive works—artistic, poetic, and autobiographical—were of purgative value, that the acts of writing and painting were therapeutic. Besides being a source of personal fulfillment, her art may have been, in many respects, a cathartic response to the tragedy and hardship that had affected her life. Artistic expressions often contain covert symbols or images of extreme emotional stress that

may have occurred many years earlier.\textsuperscript{38} Hence, Harry's unexpected death could have triggered increased artistic activity as one of Effie's few consoling outlets for bereavement. Perhaps art assured her that out of ugliness she could express beauty, out of tragedy she could express hope. The events surrounding Effie's artistic reawakening were consistent with experiences of other folk artists, most typically women, who, according to a recent study, used their art "to help overcome a stressful life experience."\textsuperscript{39}

Effie's early efforts certainly fall within a long tradition of American folk painting. Folk art, often defined analogously with primitive, self-taught, or outsider art, is generally produced by individuals who are untrained and have had little or no familiarity with formal art theory. Most important, however, folk art emerges out of the cultural environment in which it is created. These self-taught artistic expressions reflect the world views of the artist and his or her culture. Folk art incorporates distinctive regional, ethnic, and cultural patterns that reveal the artist's sense of place and personal identity. Just as colloquial communication often emphasizes a distinct geographic relationship between a community and its inhabitants, folk artists create for purposes of identity and self-realization, closely tying themselves to the places or subjects represented in their art.

Effie's creative work can be divided into three thematic categories at the root of her identity—namely, kinship, place, and religion. These themes follow those of other self-taught Kentucky artists who created personal visual statements with their art. Effie's early drawings and watercolors often portrayed physical surroundings, farm life, and family and neighbors.


\textsuperscript{39} "Characteristics of Folk Art, A Study Presented at the American Psychological Association Conference" (by Jules and Florence Laffal), \textit{Folk Art Finder} 5 (September 1984): 2. 4. According to Roger Manley, "outsider artist's [sic] life stories frequently reveal traumatic events that threw them onto their own resources and triggered responses that led to art making: the loss of a job through illness, injury, or retirement; the death of a spouse or elderly parent; religious doubt; social ostracism; imprisonment. These events precipitate their transformation from 'ordinary' farmers, loggers, or textile workers into artists as well." See \textit{Signs and Wonders: Outsider Art inside North Carolina} (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1989), 9.
in informal settings. She combined these visual depictions of Kentucky folklife with written ones, illustrating childhood memories of worming the tobacco, milking cows, soapmaking, and carding and spinning. She drew several works for her book of autobiographical poetry, *Backward Glances*, to pass on images of the traditional home life of western Kentucky in the 1890s. Otherwise, as she wrote, “many things will soon be forgotten if they are not put down by someone who cherishes the memory of them.”

As Effie’s interests shifted toward subjects outside her own personal experience, her work took on themes and attributes more consistent with sophisticated studio traditions than folk genres. Her interest in New Testament subjects inspired a number of religious paintings. Her favorite religious subjects seemed to be gospel narratives, including scenes of the Nativity and depictions of Christ and the apostles at the Sea of Galilee. Besides recalling her own religious upbringing, Effie was inspired by Protestant instructional art, on which the Mormon Church relied heavily during this period.

A high point in Effie’s creative experience came during the summer of 1936, when she had the pleasure of accompanying a tour group of artists over the Mormon pioneer trail. Her daughter Hazel, who was at that time a missionary in the East Central States Mission, had read a prospectus on the tour in the *Deseret News* and, with her brother Noel’s assistance, conspired to send their mother on the trip, providing money for tuition and travel expenses. Headed by BYU art professor B. F. Larsen and his wife Geneva, the group of fifteen traveled by bus to important pioneer sites and landmarks, documenting the historic route through sketches, paintings, and photographs. The two-week art

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41. In order to control the destructive effects of tobacco worms, each worm had to be plucked from the leaf and destroyed by hand. Naturally, this was an unpleasant and tedious job for women and children who worked in the tobacco fields.


tour was an emotional peak of which Effie spoke fondly throughout her remaining years. Always grateful to Hazel and Noel for providing her the means, she later wrote, "It was one of the most wonderful experiences of my life" (p. 328, herein). During a round of successful traveling exhibitions of the group's work throughout Utah and Idaho, Effie wrote to B. F. Larsen, saying, "I experience a happy thrill when I think of a reunion of our group" and she hoped all would be present.44

Although relatively unpublicized, the reunion took place the following summer, and the group, including Effie, toured New Mexico. This trip included visits to pueblo sites on the Rio Grande, near Albuquerque and Santa Fe, where the group sketched and painted weathering Zuni and other Pueblo adobes. On the Arizona side of the border, the artists painted scenes at Navajo National Monument such as the ancient cave dwellings of Betatakin and Keet Seel.45 These two tours under Larsen's supervision were the closest Effie came to academic art instruction. Once introduced to Native American dwellings, Effie frequently returned to the subject, painting Navajo and Hopi sites in the nearby Four Corners region, such as Walpi and Wupatki. In addition to depicting Indian earthen dwellings on the Colorado Plateau, she featured in a number of paintings mission and Spanish provincial architecture seen along Sonora's west coast highway and California's Highway 101. In 1939, when American self-taught painters and regionalists were gaining national recognition, Effie entered a painting depicting an old village, Tzin Tzun Tzan, in the New York World's Fair hobby division and won second place (p. 318, herein).

Over the next two decades, Effie repeatedly returned to the Arizona landscape for inspiration. As further motivation for producing desert subjects, a circumstantial engagement to exhibit her work at the Bruchman Curio Store in Winslow provided a new venue for making her talent known. The store's owner, R. M. Bruchman, had generously provided financial support for one of Edgar's catastrophic medical expenses, and Effie intended to sell her work to repay him. Works produced during and after this period in Winslow reveal Effie's enthusiasm for such subjects as

44. Effie M. Carmack to B. F. Larsen, December 29, 1936, B. F. Larsen Papers, University Archives, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

45. "Artist Tells Rotary of New Mexico Tour," Winslow Mail, August 13, 1937, 8; Gouff, "My Most Unforgettable Character," in Down Memory Lane by Effie Marquess Carmack, 238. A painting of San Ildefonso, New Mexico, is in the possession of John K. Carmack, Salt Lake City, Utah; a painting of Betatakin is in the possession of Itha Carmack, Atascadero, California.
the towering redrock buttes of Monument Valley, the rainbow sands of the Painted Desert, and the windswept landscape of the Arizona Strip.

In about 1942, sometime after she began exhibiting work at the curio store, an unidentified man representing the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles entered the store and examined Effie’s display with considerable interest. Visiting the Carmack home next, he told Effie that the institution’s curator would like to exhibits her paintings, since their illustrations of Native American life were compatible with other artistic works and artifacts at the museum. A short time later, Effie received a letter from the museum requesting about twenty-five paintings for a scheduled exhibition. To fill the museum’s order, Effie completed more than two dozen oils depicting all facets of Navajo and Hopi culture. These paintings proved successful. During the exhibition, curator M. R. Harrington reportedly noted that Effie’s paintings were “the best coloring of Indian life he had ever had in his museum” (p. 316, herein).

In the spring of 1946, Effie and Edgar moved to Atascadero, California, so that Edgar, his health still failing, could convalesce near their children. Edgar benefitted from California’s lower altitude and fresh coastal air. Nevertheless, it pained Effie to leave her home of more than twenty years and longtime associations and friendships. She also missed the warmth and solitude of her self-made studio, a building she described as a “shanty” with a fireplace (pp. 320–21, herein).46

Yet, she was as resilient and eager to excel as ever. Two months after relocating, Effie was introduced as “a new artist in Atascadero” at the Music and Arts Fellowship, where she “delighted her audience with an exhibit of some of her historical paintings, including a pony express station and Pioneer Trail in Wyoming, old Indian ruins in Arizona, with the portrait of an old Indian in northern Arizona, and an ancient church in Old Mexico.”47 Four months later, in January 1947, Effie had her first formal exhibit at Atascadero’s Carlton Hotel. After this successful show, Effie was among fourteen local artists, including Frances Joslin and Al Johnson, who sparked the idea of an art club. The following year, on April 2, 1948, the Atascadero Art Club was organized with Johnson as president.48 Soon the organization became an important component of

46. See also Effie M. Carmack, “The Long Road from Winslow, Arizona to Atascadero” (a travel diary in rhyme, April 1946), copy of typescript in Noel Carmack’s possession.
Atascadero's community activities, sponsoring monthly workshops and art festivals on the central coast. Effie was always an active supporter of the group in the years that followed. Fellow art club members remembered her as a natural artist and musician. Charter member Marian Hart recalled that she was an "outstanding member of the Art Club. We all admired and enjoyed her many talents."49

By this time, however, Edgar's poor health required that Effie find employment. At the urging of her old friend Bernice Walker, Effie began performing in Knotts Berry Farm stage shows. Clothed in dresses from a bygone era, she played guitar and sang with other nostalgic personalities from the South. Through these performances, she not only gained a source of income but received considerable attention for the repertoire of folk songs she had learned as a child. Impressed with her collection of songs, the popular country-western entertainer Tennessee Ernie Ford, with whom Effie had occasion to perform, once reportedly asked, "Where in the world did you get them?"—even though she had learned them only a "spittin' distance" from where he had lived (p. 335, herein).50 Fortunately, through the efforts of western folklorists Austin and Alta Fife, many of these important folk songs were recorded between 1947 and 1952 for the Library of Congress.51 Recordings were made in her home and, on at least one occasion, at Occidental College in Los Angeles, where Austin Fife was professor of languages. Later, when Dr. Fife was teaching in France, he featured Effie on a Voice of America radio broadcast (p. 194, herein).

Despite the encouragement she garnered from these performances, Effie always returned to painting, writing, family, and church service as her primary sources of gratification. To her credit, she was recognized in 1945 as one of six most notable individuals in northern Arizona and featured in Who's Who in the South and Southwest for the year 1947. Selections of her poetry were included in a nationally published anthology, Poetry Broadcast (1946), as well as in other small publications and magazines.52 At one point, she completed a number of religious paintings for LDS church buildings in Globe, Phoenix, St. Johns, Holbrook, Winslow, and Taylor, Arizona. Others were completed for LDS


50. See Bill Barton, "The Latchstring is Always Out to the Fellowmen of Effie Carmack," Deseret News (Church section), January 15, 1966, 5.

51. For more information concerning these recordings, see appendix one.

churches in St. George, Utah; Overton, Nevada; and Hollyfield, North Carolina. While many of Effie’s paintings are still hanging on the walls of aging Winslow and Atascadero residents, a number of them are in the possession of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.53

Effie’s years in Atascadero marked a period in which she grew closer to Edgar and reconciled the problems they experienced many years before. Edgar’s difficulty in showing affection or providing support in the early years of their marriage weighed heavily on his conscience. Feeling regretful, he made a confession the night before he died in February 1952. According to Effie’s account, he said “‘Mom, I coulda done ‘lot better than I did.’ He said ‘I worked and made good wages but you never got much of it.’ He said ‘I spent it all on the horses an wagons an harnesses an stuff. You scratched ‘round and patched the children’s shoes and managed to scrimp and buy material to make their clothes with.’ He says ‘since I’ve been sick an had time to think of it, I was a pretty poor daddy.’” Effie “told him I thought it was kinda good for him to confess it.” But, despite his shortcomings, she concluded that “he was a good man.”54

After Edgar’s death, Effie continued her art club activities and self-motivated missionary work. Seldom did a day pass that she wasn’t painting in her studio, attending an art club workshop, or preparing work for the club’s annual art show. Never too busy for a visit from the LDS missionaries, she often hosted them to a meal or a cottage meeting in her parlor. On Sunday evenings, she entertained grandchildren and great-grandchildren with songs sung to the strum of her guitar and by popping corn in the fireplace. A special honor came in 1971 when she was one of five women nominated as California’s Mother of the Year.55

That she would have credited her parents for this high honor is apparent from her autobiographical writings. Effie was deeply grateful for her inauspicious but exemplary upbringing. Respect for parents and

53. Barre Brashear, “County Art Show Sketches,” (San Luis Obispo, Calif.) Telegram-Tribune, February 19, 1952, 1. The largest collection of Effie’s paintings is in the possession of John K. Carmack, Salt Lake City, Utah. Several paintings are among the families of Effie’s daughters: Grace Bushman, Hazel Bushman (formerly Bruchman), and Violet Mattice. Some are owned by families of her deceased sons: Cecil E. Carmack, Noel E. Carmack, and David E. Carmack. Of the many other scattered holdings, a few paintings are reportedly in the Barry Goldwater Collection.
predecessors was a major theme of her writings. Effie expressed her high regard for ancestry in the following stanzas from *Backward Glances*:

And now since I've studied the problem profoundly  
And searched out the sources from which we descend,  
I see many whys and can guess many wherefores,  
To show why our lives take some definite trend.  
Our Marquess forefathers were lovers of music,  
And lovers of beauty, religion and art.  
And though we were raised in a patch of tobacco  
These things in our beings still held a rich part.\(^{56}\)

Until age forced her to surrender her pen and brush, Effie carried on this heritage through her autobiographical writings and her art. In January 1974 she became ill, and although she was reluctant to go to the hospital, the doctor insisted that she be hospitalized so she could be treated for fluid on her lungs and other problems.\(^{57}\) After about six weeks in the hospital, Effie Carmack passed away on March 5, 1974, at the age of eighty-eight. The obituary that followed her death recognized her as one of the area's most talented artists, as both a writer and a painter.\(^{58}\)

Effie's life was shaped by a wide range of events and circumstances—idylls of childhood, religious conversion, poverty, loss of parents, illness, maternal anguish and grief, and creative solitude. Those who read her autobiography will notice a shift from the enchantment of youth to the melancholic autumn of adulthood. Pleasant memories of playtime and family are subjugated to recurring pensiveness and longing for that simple life she experienced as a child in Kentucky, revealing a strain of sadness she continually tries to rectify. In spite of this, she emerges as a survivor and, by recreating those pleasant memories for her children, finds a form of reconciliation.

Although she seemed satisfied with the autobiography, Effie expressed some trepidation that it might not be received the way she wished. Often portraying herself with reticence, Effie was slow to characterize her life as anything more than appreciable. "Not that there has been anything very extraordinary or wonderful in it, but one thing for sure, it is different from that of any other" (p. 31, herein). And yet, her life story attests to her remarkable perseverance and stamina. A body of creative works also shows her prolific efforts to better her intellectual and

\(^{56}\) Carmack, "Concerning Our Father and Mother," *Backward Glances*, lines 17-24, p. 31.  
\(^{57}\) In conversation with Karen Lynn Davidson, December 3, 1994.  
socioeconomic situation. Her work often brought unsolicited praise, for which she expressed modest gratitude. "But," she wrote, "the thing I am proudest of is my children and grandchildren. I had 8 children—five living—I have 19 grandchildren and 67 great grandchildren. All clean honorable and religious, a posterity that any mother could be proud of." 59

The importance of Effie Carmack's autobiography can be appreciated on several levels. It is one of a few which illuminate late nineteenth-century Mormon activities outside the boundaries of "Zion"—the core area of membership in Utah. More specifically, it brings to light the remarkable odyssey of a woman who was significantly changed by the influence of Mormonism on the southern frontier. Much of Effie's life was far removed from the distinctively Mormon frontier experience, but her encounters with the distresses of motherhood, emotional disruptions of successive change, and tests of personal faith were not unlike those of many of her LDS counterparts. The autobiography provides an unusual glimpse into domesticity for Mormon and non-Mormon women in the South and Southwest.

Another valuable aspect of Effie's autobiography is her record of Kentucky folkways. Her observations of rural life should be appealing to both folklorists and general readers. She describes at length the conventions of children's games, play parties or "moonlights," herbal remedies, and various crafts and practices in Black Patch tobacco culture. Effie places these traditions in the daily routines of living, providing an opportunity to view the folkways of her home region in context. Her self-described "mania" of collecting folk music as a child resulted in an impressive repertoire, for which she was recognized. The autobiography frequently mentions music and the settings in which it was performed or played. Her accounts of farm life and agrarianism in western Kentucky are particularly descriptive. Such passages will undoubtedly be of interest to social historians and students of tobacco culture. 60

Whatever its historical and cultural value, Effie's personal story remains compelling, partly because of the emotional release she gained through written and visual expression. These appealing reversions to childhood were a means of containment, a way to resolve her episodic encounters with adversity. Effie's memorialization of family folkways—

60. For another example of these kinds of observations, see Austin E. Fife, "Virginia Folkways from a Mormon Journal," Western Folklore 9 (October 1950): 348–58.
historical and customary—provided a sense of well-being difficult to attain during her years of maturity. The act of documenting happy memories of youth and adolescence provided a cathartic outlet for the pain of losing children, discord within her family, emotional stresses of motherhood, and unresolved conflicts in marriage. While not bereft of happiness, Effie seemed to be searching for peace in an adult life that contained too much tragic emotion. But the sad voice that whispers through Effie's writing may not be always apparent. By thoughtfully drawing inferences from the narrative, the reader may come to appreciate Effie Carmack, not for her public accomplishments, but for her private and somewhat ritualized acts of survival.
“Uncle Robert Marquess, son of Martha A. Pettypool, and his sisters Mayes and Emma from an old tintype.” Courtesy of Itha Carmack.