

Raised from the Dead

The Ella Jensen Story

(Written by Jim Seely - 4 July 2014)

I was born in Brigham City in 1942. On my fourth birthday, our family moved to an old home at 740 South Main Street. The home was originally owned by President Lorenzo Snow, and growing up, I was told it was built by him to house some of his wives. My parents owned Seely's Motel, and the office of the Motel was built onto the front of the old home.



**Seely Motel – Where I grew up
740 South Main, Brigham City, UT
The house to the rear was originally
owned by Lorenzo Snow.**



**The original home was made of these
unique building blocks, most of which
are now covered with siding.**

Two of my best friends growing up were David and Darwin Jensen, who lived nearby. They had an aunt named Ella Jensen who in 1891, at 20 years of age, had died of scarlet fever. However, hours later she was raised from the dead by President Lorenzo Snow. This had taken place in her family home which was located not far from our motel.

After returning from the dead, Ella had total recall of the afterlife and her experiences there, which she readily related. She later married; had 8 children; and died for the second time in 1957 at age 86. Throughout her life, she would periodically gather her children and grandchildren and retell her story to them. My friends therefore heard the story from her own lips and repeated it to me. Most of what they told me is recorded in the September 1929 issue of "Improvement

Era' (Vol. XXXII No. 11). I was 15 years old when Aunt Ella died the second time, and although I never met her personally, I remember the stories well.

The story is summarized below.

In 1891, Ella Jensen died of scarlet fever at 20 years of age. Lorenzo Snow was her uncle and was at the time President of the Quorum of the Twelve. She died on a Sunday, and it happened that President Snow was speaking in the Brigham City Tabernacle at the time. Following Ella's death, her father Jacob hitched up his team and drove into town to inform Lorenzo of her death. President Snow then returned with him and when he arrived Ella had been dead for several hours. To the surprise of her parents, he asked for consecrated oil and administered to her, "Commanding that she return." But nothing happened.

President Snow then excused himself, telling his sister and brother-in-law that he had to get back to his meeting, but to just leave Ella alone and she would be alright.

About an hour later, Ella opened her eyes and said, "Where is he?"

Her mother said, "Where is who?"

"President Snow. He called me back."

After returning, she had full recall of everything that had happened to her on the other side. She described her "death" and told in detail of what she had done and the people she had met.

She said that dying was easy, but that returning was difficult and painful. For the rest of her life, she had aches and pains that she attributed to that experience.

She remembered her spirit leaving her body, and looking down at the bed where her body lay. And of her family grieving for her. She often said later in life, that we should not grieve for someone while still in the presence of their body because that was the only thing about dying that was hard for her.

While in the spirit world she met her grandfather and others that she knew. She also met relatives that had died before she was born and was able to describe them perfectly to her parents.

At one point she entered a room full of children, similar to a Primary Class. The children were being taught by her deceased Aunt, Eliza R. Snow. Ella recognized one of the children, who was a young boy named "Alphie". He had been in a Primary class that she had taught, and he was her favorite. She wondered why he was there, but when speaking of him upon her return, she was informed that he

had died shortly before she did, but they hadn't told her because in her weakened condition, they didn't want to upset her.

It was when she was in Eliza's Primary class that she heard President Snow calling her to return. She didn't want to leave, but said his voice was compelling and she finally decided that she would go back, "for a little while."



Lorenzo Snow

In 2013, I was teaching in the High Priest Quorum and the lessons for that year were on the life and teachings of Lorenzo Snow. I knew at some point I would be teaching about President Snow raising Ella Jensen from the dead and so I reviewed the story in several Lorenzo Snow biographies and also retrieved the 1929 "Improvement Era" article from my files. However, I seemed to recall that my friend David Jensen (who had given me a copy of the Improvement Era article), also had a copy of a hand written history made by Ella Jensen herself, and I wanted to get a copy of that. This was a problem however, because after graduating from Utah State University, David had moved to a small town near Buffalo, New York and I didn't know how to contact him. In fact, I had seen him only once in the last forty years, and that was at his mother's funeral, years before.

On a Saturday morning, I was lying in bed thinking about how to contact David, when it occurred to me that his brother Darwin still lived in Brigham City and I concluded that I could call my brother Kent, who also lived in Brigham City and could get Darwin's number from him. Then call Darwin and get David's number.

I got out of bed and knelt beside it for my morning prayer. In the prayer, I asked Heavenly Father to help me be able to contact David. I then got off of my knees and went into the kitchen to eat breakfast. Before I even sat down, the phone rang. When I picked it up, it was David calling me from New York. I was

dumbfounded. He said he had been thinking about me and just felt like he needed to call.

I have from time to time received answers to prayers, but this was by far the most immediate and direct.

David told me that he did not have the hand written article that I was seeking, but said such an article did exist. He had worked with a woman from Tremonton, who had a copy and she was going to make a copy for him, but never did.

David told me that he did have a copy of Lorenzo Snow's patriarchal blessing that he would send me. Lorenzo Snow was baptized in Kirtland, Ohio in 1836 and soon afterwards was given a patriarchal blessing by Joseph Smith's father, Joseph Smith Sr. Part of this blessing reads, "if expedient the dead shall rise and come forth at thy bidding." This blessing was literally fulfilled when he raised his niece Ella Jensen from the dead.

Ever since I first heard the story of Ella Jensen as a boy, I have wondered about why this happened. People die every day, but only a select few have ever been brought back. I often wondered what was it about Ella that was so special. After returning from the dead, she lived a relatively, nondescript, normal life. She did have eight children, and I sometimes thought that maybe one of them would do something remarkable. However, over the years, I am not aware of anything out of the ordinary happening to any of them. I then concluded that whatever it was that required that Ella return, might not become evident for several generations, if at all.

To this point, my thoughts had always centered on Ella, and what had happened to her following her return. However, in studying the life of Lorenzo Snow in the course of preparing my priesthood lessons, another perspective occurred to me. What of the impact it must have had on Lorenzo himself. He raised Ella from the dead in 1891 and two short years later in 1893, he was called as the first President of the Salt Lake City Temple. This calling required a great deal of spiritual preparation as did his experience in 1898, when the Savior himself appeared to Lorenzo in the temple.



Eliza R Snow

Another part of Ella's story that had always intrigued me was that she had seen Eliza R Snow teaching a Primary class. My image of Eliza R Snow has always been of her intellectual prowess, and of her abilities as a writer, poet, and leader of women. However, it occurred to me that she had never had children in this life, and that she was probably doing exactly what she wanted to do while in the next.

Recently, another thought occurred to me. Eliza was the one who brought Lorenzo into the church and they had always been very close. She had always counseled him and strengthened him in times of trouble, but she had died in 1887. It must have greatly strengthened his testimony of the gospel, as well as being a great comfort to him to learn firsthand from Ella that Eliza was still alive and well.

The impact of Ella Jensen being raised from the dead has been profound and varied. Not only to Ella and to her numerous posterity, but also to Lorenzo Snow himself in preparing him spiritually for the events and callings that he was soon to face. The story of this event has also strengthened my own testimony and the testimonies of countless others, and will continue to do so for generations to come.