

Jane “Jean” Todd Saville



Lifespan: 88 years, 1846-1934. Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, 1/1/1846. Died in Plankinton, 6/20/1934. Buried in Plankinton Cemetery.

Locations: Edinburgh (1846), Mitchell (1887), Chicago (1888), Plankinton (1889), Eureka Twp (1890), Hopper Twp (1893), Plankinton (1901).

Spouse: 1) unknown, 2) George Saville, 1832-1924. Born in England. Married 1890 in Plankinton. George was a widower with 6 children. Civil War veteran, farmer, Aurora County homesteader (Hopper: 160 acres in section 3 and 160 acres in section 4; Palatine: 160 acres in section 34). Died 1924.

Jean Todd Profile: Jean Todd trained as a nurse and midwife in Scotland before emigrating to Dakota Territory with her eight-year-old daughter Ella, in 1887. Todd's transition from a working-class linen weaver to an educated nurse to becoming the first female student in an obstetrics program for doctors signifies a remarkable accomplishment for a woman of her era, when nursing had only recently emerged as a new profession, and very few women received formal training. With courage and confidence, she pursued a new life across the ocean at the age of forty-one. Todd showed persistence and initiative overcoming obstacles in practicing her profession as a pioneer nurse in Aurora County. In addition, she helped prepare bodies for burial as acts of charity. After marrying a widower with six children and bearing a son, she learned to make and sell butter and cheese during the economic depression of the 1890s. By serving the people of her community, both the living and the dead, she significantly impacted the health and happiness of the early residents of Aurora County, South Dakota. Even in her twilight years, Jean Todd remained industrious and productive, winning several awards for her 'fancy-work' at the South Dakota State Fair.

Roles/Talent: Wife, mother, stepmother, nurse, midwife, cheesemaker. She won awards with 'fancy-work' (crochet) at state fair, helped 'lay out the dead' before town had an undertaker.

Parents (Ethnicity): Thomas Todd and Jean Arklie, Scottish.

Children: 2 children born 1879-1891. Ella Todd (William Wilson), George Saville (Verna Plumhoff).

Sisters: Isabella Diehl, Plankinton, Elizabeth Philips, Australia.

Brothers: Frederick, Thomas

Education: Nursing School, Dundee Royal Infirmary, Dundee, Scotland 1881-84. Nurse/Midwifery diploma, Edinburgh School of Medicine, 1885 (3 months).

Work Experience: Linen Weaver, Warder of Women's Division of Fife County Prison, Nurse, Midwife, Farmwife, butter-maker for State Reform School (Plankinton)

Church, Clubs and Organizations: Plankinton Congregational Church (1906), possibly Eastern Star.

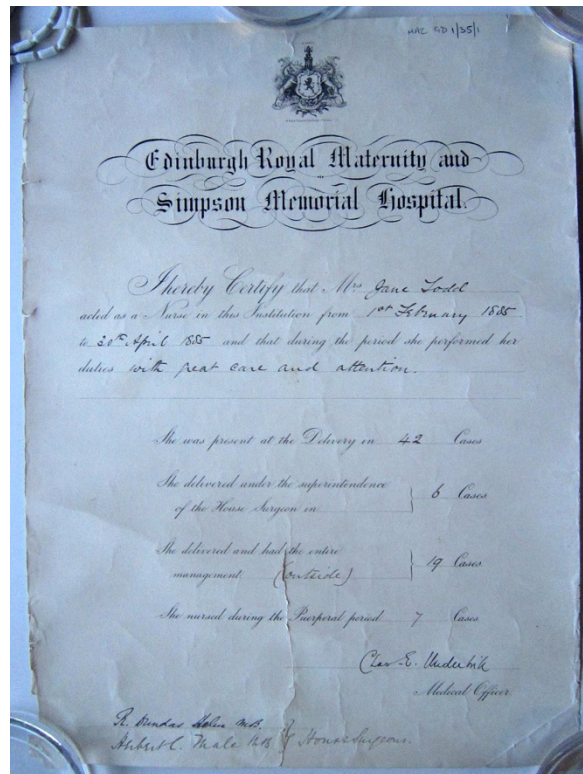
Family Connections/Occupations: Todd's daughter Ella, born in Scotland, lived most of her life in Plankinton. Her sister Isabella, widow and mother of 3, lived on their homestead in Hopper Twp (in section 26) from 1881 to 1905. In 2021, some of her husband's descendants still live in the Plankinton area and on the original homestead in Hopper Twp.

Time in Aurora County: 47 years

Physical Appearance: short stature.

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Submitter: Ruth Page Jones, rpjhistories@gmail.com



Picture 1: Jean Todd in center, courtesy of South Dakota Historical Society
Picture 2: Nursing Certificate, courtesy of Lothian Heath Services Archive, Edinburgh University Library