

**LOUISA BENSON PARKINSON**  
Wife of William Chandler Parkinson

Louisa was born March 28, 1868, in Logan, Utah, the oldest of 13 children from George Taft and Louisa Ballif Benson. Her father was a son of Apostle Ezra Taft Benson, and in the late 1860's the Benson family was sent to help settle Cache Valley. In 1884 George and his wife and family moved to Whitney, Idaho, where he was engaged in farming and was a bishop for 23 years. His wife Louisa was secretary to the first Relief Society in Whitney, then R.S. President and Stake Primary President.

The younger Louisa (or Lulu, as she was called) attended public school in Logan in her early years and was 15 when her family moved to Whitney. She returned to Logan to attend B.Y. College, where she studied vocal and piano and was the school's first organist. After completing her schooling, she taught music in Whitney.

William C. Parkinson was the bishop of the Preston Ward where Lulu attended church. His first counselor was her father, George T. Benson. Often meetings were held at the Benson home. William was already married, so 18-year-old Lulu had no thought of him except as a friend and bishop. However, polygamy was a recognized principle of the LDS faith at this time, and all presiding officials were advised to obey this law. William was attracted to Lulu, and after a fairly brief courtship, they were married in the Logan Temple by Apostle Marriner W. Merrill (Temple President) on February 11, 1887.

The first few years of their marriage were very difficult because of the persecution of polygamists at that time. It was necessary for Lulu to live with her parents and visits from her husband were very hazardous. In 1889 Lulu went into hiding and lived "on the underground" as it was called, staying in the home of Apostle Marriner W. Merrill in Richmond, Utah, where her first two children were born. After the 1890 Manifesto, Lulu was able to live a more normal life. Shortly after her second child was born in December of 1891, William built her a home near her parents in Whitney, Idaho, and her next six children were born in this home.

Lulu kept very busy with her family, but also found time to sing in the choir, work in the Primary, teach in the Relief Society, and serve as ward organist. The home was two miles from the church and school, and during wintery and muddy seasons the horse and buggy trips could be very treacherous.

In 1909, William was called to preside over the Hyrum Stake, so the family moved to Logan, where she had two more children and lived quite happily with her family until the last days of her life which she spent in Salt Lake City with some of her daughters. Her ten children were Louisa, Marie, Charlotte, Clara, George, Adeline, Wilbur, Carmen, Evelyn, and Wanda. She experienced sorrow and tragedy when she lost George and Marie during the influenza epidemic in 1918 and 1919; and her devoted husband passed away nearly nine years before her death.

Lulu was an excellent housekeeper and cook, and was very kind and gentle to her children. She taught them order, cleanliness, and honesty—and to respect the Priesthood and men in authority. She had remarkable faith and a strong testimony in the principle of plural marriage, and held great love and respect for her husband and the positions he held in the Church. Her neighbors often sent for her during times of trouble or sickness, and she was always a sympathetic and understanding nurse.

Louisa Benson Parkinson passed away July 13, 1938, at the age of 69, after a serious operation. As of 1989 she has a posterity of over 250, and it can truly be said of her that she left the world better than she had found it. The last paragraph of her testimony that she left to her "loving children" will conclude this brief history:

And now I wish to add my testimony, born out of my life's experience, that I do know that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is true, that it is the power of God unto life and salvation, that plural marriage is a true principle and doctrine of God, revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith in this our day and time. That it is the royal road to eternal life with increase and exaltation. This is my faith, my confidence and abiding testimony, which I bequeath to my loving children. I soon may go to my reward, and I wish to leave you this heritage and benediction. I love you!

Louisa B. Parkinson