

Ellen Green Thomas

By Eva Mary Rowe Salway

Ellen Green Thomas was the daughter of John Thomas, son of William Thomas and Susan Sanders of Dorsetshire, England, and her mother was Susanna Legg Green of Dorsetshire, England. Ellen was born the 5 May 1857, in Jersey, Channel Island. She was the eldest daughter and second child of a family of 13 children. She lived a lot with her grandmother, Susanna Legg, she was very strict and Ellen was not allowed to sit down at any of her work, when she kicked a rug into place, her grandmother said “bend your lazy back.” One day Ellen had been playing by the sea shore, and had caught some crabs which she brought home in a paper bag. Fearing her grandmother would not let her keep them, she hid them under the bed; in the night grandmother heard scratching and creeping noises, and lighting a candle found crabs crawling all over the floor. The spittle of crabs had wet the paper bag and crabs had freed themselves.



*Charles Le Boutillier Rowe
& Ellen Green Thomas*

Once mother was tried of the old bonnet she wore to school, and she asked for a hat. Her grandmother scolder her as her bonnet was still quite good and still had wear in it. Ellen went on to school crying, a kindly neighbor asked the reason for her grief, and Ellen told her how she wanted a hat, the kind woman gave her a hat which she was very proud of that day. But when she returned home her grandmother was indignant and marched back to the neighbors with the hat, so mother continued to wear her bonnet, she had very little.

Ellen's parents and family lived in the country and raised a small market garden, her father also worked in an iron foundry. When Ellen was quite a young girl she had to get up early in the morning, go outside and scrub parsnips, carrots, etc., under the pump to be taken to the market for sale. This was very hard and cold work.

When mother was old enough she hired out to mind a baby and help in the house. One day as she pushed the baby out in it's bassinet walking along the top of a cliff, she left the bassinet to pick blackberries, not noticing she had left the baby carriage on a slope. The carriage began to roll down the slope and before Ellen could catch it, the bassinet went over the cliff. The bassinet was smashed to pieces on the rocks below, but the baby had been caught by it's clothing on some bushes jutting out from the cliff. Ellen would have tried to descend the cliff but a man who saw the accident pulled her back, and with great danger and difficulty climb down and rescued the baby. The incident remained so vivid in her memory, that all her afterlife she would sometimes dream of it.

Mother was very fond of a practical joke, which sometimes let her into trouble. One shrove Tuesday, she was frying pancakes; when she saw the gardener pass the window she impatiently said “here John” he stopped, she said “holdout your hand,” he did and she slipped

her knife under the pancake in the pan and slapped it onto his hand. “Cook you ___” said John and a few other un-writeable things. One time the coachman was showing off the new britches he was going to wear when driving the family to church, May Sunday and she got hold of the britches after and sewed hooly leaves to the lining. But the cloth was also sewed in, when the man put them on a big piece of cloth was torn in them, Ellen repaired the break as best she could.

Mother was once nursemaid in a home that had 21 children, she had 8 in the nursery. The delicate mother would look into the nursery when there was more trouble than usual in there and say “poor Ellen, I'll leave you to it” Ellen left there with a nervous breakdown.

Her great hobby was cooking, all her life she found occupations where she could cook keeping lodgers, running a restaurant, running a private hotel, although she had no need to earn money, father was doing very well.

An epidemic of smallpox swept the Island, it struck her father's family. Ellen was working out at the time and she heard of their trouble. Her employer would not let her handle a letter from home until it had been soaked in vinegar and she could hardly read it, and she was not allowed to go home which was very wise, but Ellen thought her employer very cruel. Three of her brothers and sisters died of the dread disease. Then she heard that her mother was ill and Ellen climbed through a window and walked home to care for her mother. The mother lived and Ellen did not take the disease.

Mother was walking through the town with another girl, when she first saw father, two men, sailors passed them and one threw nut shells at them, mother companion said, “That's Charles Rowe, let's talk to them.” Mother hesitated but the boys came forward, and so she met her future husband.