



## Mary Fielding Smith (1801-1852)

In 1836 Mary Fielding and her sister Mercy and brother Joseph were English emigrants, members of John Taylor's Methodist congregation in Toronto, Canada. With John Taylor they accepted the restored gospel taught them by Mormon apostle-missionary Parley P. Pratt and were baptized in May 1836. In the spring of 1837 all three Fieldings moved to Kirtland. By mid-June, however, Mary was left in Kirtland without family: Joseph Fielding had been called to serve as a missionary in England, and Mercy had married Robert B. Thompson and accompanied him on his mission to Churchville, Canada.

Mary's English education provided her with the necessary background to teach school, and when school closed she boarded with a family, caring for and tutoring several children. Through letters Mary maintained a close connection with her sister Mercy in Canada, reporting regularly on her personal living situation and feelings as well as on Church happenings. The following excerpts are taken from three of Mary's letters, which span the months between July and October 1837. In December of that year Mary married recently widowed Hyrum Smith and assumed care of his five small children. She lived with Hyrum in Far West and Nauvoo, and after his death journeyed to the Salt Lake Valley.

Original holographs of these and other letters written by Mary are located in the Historical Department of the Church. Ronald K. Esplin is preparing the complete correspondence for publication. Selections from three letters are included here. The first rather lengthy excerpt includes almost all of a letter from Mary to Mercy dated July 8, 1837. The last two pages of the holograph have not been included here because large torn sections on those pages make difficult an accurate rendering of Mary's prose.

The second letter was rather extensively edited by Susa Young Gates and published in the *Relief Society Magazine*, volume 2 (March 1916). Here the original holograph has been followed.



A nineteenth century portrait of Mary Fielding Smith. Artist unknown.  
(LDS Church Archives.)

The final excerpt is taken from a letter of October 7, 1837, addressed to Mercy and her husband, Robert B. Thompson. Much of the letter focuses on family matters and friends. This excerpt reveals

something of Mary's feelings toward the presidency of the Church. In publishing parts of three letters here, the editors have preserved the original spelling and added punctuation and bracked material for clarification.

Kirtland July 8 [18]37

My dear Sister

As I have met with paper I feel inclined to commence the proposed correspondence, as I hope you also do. I shall begin from the time my last letter was written. You would hear what a glorious meeting we had on the Thursday before Bro. Brunell left so I need give you no account of that.

On the Sunday following we had a quiet comfortable waiting upon God in his House. President [Sidney] Rigdon delivered a very striking discourse from Daniel Chap[ter] 2nd Vrs 44. It would be useless for me to attempt giving you an idea of the manner in which he handled the subject. You must read the text and remember that he is a Masterpiece and then you may perhaps form some idea. He told us with great warmth indeed, that the Kingdom which was set up should never be destroyed, nor be left to other People. No, said he, nor yet change Governours. I really thought from what he said that all opposers from that time rest satisfied that their exertions would be fruitless, but I do not expect in the least that Satan will give up the contest. No hed [he'd] work in the Children of this World, and also in the Hearts of the Children of the Kingdom w[h]ere ever he can find access to them, untill he is bound. O may the Lord preserve us from his subtle power and keep us to that day.

It was truley gratifying to see the venerabl[e] Patriarch [Joseph Smith, Sr.] with his two aged Brothers in the upper stand and in the next, four of his Sons with president Rigdon in their midst, all I believe faithful servants of the living God.<sup>5</sup> Joseph & Hiram I know best and love much. While I lookd at them all my heart was drawn out in earnest prayer to our heavenly

Father in their behalf and also for the Prophetice their aged Mother [Lucy Mack Smith] whose eyes are frequently baithed in tears when she looks at, or speaks of them.

Our thursday meeting was again better than any former one. The hearts of the people were melted and the Spirit & power of God rested down upon us in a remarkable manner. Many spake in tongues & others prophesied & interpreted. It has been said by many who have lived in Kirtland a great while that such a time of love & refreshing has never been known. Some of the Sisters while engaged in conversing in tounes their countenences beaming with joy, clasped each others hands & kissd in the most affectinate manner. They were describing in this way the love and felicitys of the Celestial World. Altho the House of the Lord was more than half filld during this time their were few dry faces. The Bretheren as well as the Sisters were all melted down and we wept and praised God together.

Some of the prophecies delivered in touns and interpretd were so great that I cannot begin to describe them but I do assure you Brother Hyrum Smiths prediction that from that hour the Lord would begin to bless his people has been verily fulfild, I believe as do many others that Angles were present with us. A brite light shone across the House and rested upon some of the congregation. What I felt that day seemd to out way [weigh] all the afliction and destress of mind I have sufferd since I came here. We have a promise of a still better meeting next Thursday if we humble ourselves as in the dust before the Lord. This will be our fast day. May the promise be verifyd indeed.

On Saturday July 8 We all received Letters from our Brethren [missionaries] in New York giving an account of their journey thither and their preparations for setting sail which did not take place til the 30 of June.<sup>6</sup> You will see that from various causes they were delayd 10 days in New York. They were all well and in good spirits tho much disapointed at not receiving the expected money, but they contrived to exchange some

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Kirtland paper [bank notes] or to get provisions for it, so as to enable them to pay their expences amongst them. The fare was 20 dollars each in one of the largest Vessels that has ever saild 9 hundred tons burden. Joseph says I must send the money when the next Elders go which will probably be in the fall. But all uncertain they expect to land at Liverpool so that poor Brother James [Fielding] will soon have to recieve or reject them. Our prayer to God must be unceasing that he may become as a little Child that he may enter in to the Kingdom.<sup>7</sup> Sisters [Vilate] Kimball & [Marinda] Hyde are beginning to wright to their Husbands at Preston [England]. They continue to be in good spirits.

While the Brethren were in new York they endeavoured to do all the good they could by conversing with the people and destributing the prophetic warning to all the Priests they could find. About 105 they were put into the Post Office.

Elders [Thomas B.] Marsh & [David W.] Patten have arrived from missouri. They met Elder [Parley P.?] Pratt 300 miles on his way thither and brought him back with them. Elder Marsh is a most excelent Man. He seems to be a Man of great faith. He says he believes the difficultys between the Presidency & the twelve will very shortly be settled.<sup>8</sup> And then we can expect better days than ever. *[The remainder of the letter is badly torn, and only parts of the sentences remain.]*

[ca. September 1, 1837]

My dear Sister

I have this day received a very short note from you and am glad to learn by Brother [Almon W.] Babbit that you are well and comfortably situated. He tells me he is expecting soon to return to Canada so that it is unnecessary for me to say much as he can inform you of the state of things here verbaly better than I can by writing. But still I can hardly refrain from sending a few lines.

I am now in a school which I took for one month. The time expires tomorrow when I expect again to be at liberty or without employment, but I feel my mind pretty much at rest on that subject. I have called upon the Lord for direction and trust He will open my way. I hope you will not fail to remember me at the throne of grace. I have no doubt but you have many trials but I am inclined to think you have not quite so much to endure as I have. Be this as it may, the Lord knows what our situations [situations] are and he will support us and give us grace and strength for the day if we continue to put our trust in him and devote ourselves unreservedly to his service.

I do thank my heavenly Father for the comfort and peace of mind I now enjoy in the midst of all the confusion and perplexity, and raging of the devil against the work of God in this place. For altho here is a great number of faithful precious souls, yea the Salt of the Earth is here, yet it may be truly called a place where Satan has his seat. He is frequently stirring [stirring] up some of the People to strife & contention and dissatisfaction with things they do not understand. I often have of late been led to look back on the circumstances of Korah and his company when they rose up against Moses and Aaron. If you turn to and read 16th Chap[ter] of Numbers you will there find the feelings and conduct of many of the People and even the Elders of Israel in these days exactly described. Whether the Lord will come out in a similar way or not I cannot tell. I sometimes think it may be so, but I pray God to have mercy upon us all and preserve us from the power of the great enemy who knows he has but a short time to work in.

We have had a terrible stir with W[arren] Parish the particulars of which I cannot here give you at length. We are not yet able to tell where it will end.<sup>9</sup> I have been made to tremble and quake before the Lord and to call upon him with all my heart almost day and night as many others have done of late. I believe the voice of prayer has sounded in the House of the

Lord some days from morning till night and it has been by these means that we have hitherto prevaild and it is by this means only that I for one expect to prevaile. I feel more & more convinced that it is through suffering that we are to be made perfect and I have already found it [to] have the effect of driveing me nearer to the Lord and so has become a great blessing to me. I have sometimes of late been so filled with the love of God and felt such a sense of his favour as has made me rejoice abundantly indeed, my Heavenly Father has been very gracious unto me both temperally and spiritualy.

Since I commenced this Letter a kind Sister has proposed my going to stay for a while with her to take charge of 2 or 3 children who have been in my School. They propose giving something besides my board & I think this will suit me better than a publick School if it is but little. I expect to go there in a day or too and hope to be quite comfortable as I know the family to be on the Lords side. The Mother is a Cousin of Brother Josephs and took care of him when a child. Their name is Dort.<sup>10</sup>

I felt much pleased to see Sisters Walton and Snider who arrived here on Saturday about noon.<sup>11</sup> having left Brother Joseph, Eliza, and Mary about 20 miles from Fareport for the purpose of visiting the Mother. They were to come home in Dr. Hays's stage carriage and expected to arrive about 10 O'clock at night but to their great disappointment they were prevented in a most greavous manner. They had got within 4 miles of home after a very fatueging [fatiguing] journey, much pleased with their visit to Canada & greatly antissipateing the pleasure of seeing their homes and familys, when they were surrounded with a Mob and taken back to Painsvill[e] and secured as was supposed in a Tavern where they intended to hold a mock trial. But to the disappointment of the wretches the Housekeeper was a Member of the Church who assisted our beloved Brethren in making their escape, but as Br J[oseph] S[mith] says not by a Basket let down through a Window, but by the Kitchin Door.<sup>12</sup>

No doubt the hand of the Lord was in it or it could not have been effected. The day had been extremely whet and the night was unusually dark and you may try if you can [to] conceive what their situation was. They hardly knew which way to stere [steer], as it had by that time got to be about 10 O clock. The first step they took was to find the Woods as quick as possible where they thought they should be safe. But in order [to reach] thereto they had to lay down in a swamp or by an old log just w[h]ere they happened to be so determinately were they pursued by their mad enemys in every direction. Sometimes so closely that Br J was obliged to entreat Bro Rigdon, after his exertion in running, while lying by a log to breath more softly if he meant to escape.

When they would run or walk they took each other by the hand and covenanted to live and die together. Owing to the darkness of the night their persuers had to carry lighted torches which was one means of the escape of our beloved suffers as they could see them in every direction while they were clim[b]ing over fences or travling through brush or corn fields untill about 12 O clock. When after traveling as they suppose in this manner 5 or 6 miles they found the road which led homeward and saw no more of their persuers. After traveling on foot along muddy sliperry roads till near 3 in the morning they arrived safe at home almost f[a]inting with fatuage [fatigue].

He Bro J told us that he decread in his heart when first taken that he would see home before Sun rise and thank God so it was. And notwithstanding all he had to endure he appeared in the House of the Lord throughout the Sabath in excelent spirits and spoak in a very powerful manner and blessed the Congregation in the name of the Lord and I do assure you the Saints felt the blessing and left the House rejoyceing abundently returning their blessing upon him. Brother Rigdon through his great weariness and a small hurt received from a fall did not attend the House but is now well. I suppose all these things will only add another gem to their Crown.



I did not think of takeing up so much room in relating these circumstances but I have been as brief as possible. I must now give you an account of [a very] affecting event which took place in Kirtland Sunday before last. You will of course remember a Mr. [Wycom?] Clarke, a Miller who has been a great opposer of our Church. As he and his Wife with some of their Children and other Friends were returning from the Prespeteran [Presbyterian] Meeting House in a very nice carriage, about one minuit after they passed the House of the Lord their Horses took fright and started off the side of the hill, overthrew the Carrage and hurt Mr C and one child considerably but Mrs. C so seriously as to prove fatal. She was burryd [buried] on the Wednesday following. She has left 6 weeping Children and a mourning Husband indeed. On the day preceeding the accedent she was heard to speak very unfavourabley of our Church but is now gone to prove whether it is the Church of Christ or not. I greatly desire that the visitation may be sanctified to the Family.

I believe it is not quite a year since Bro J S told Mr. C that the curse of God would be upon him for his conduct towards him and the Church. You may remember that our People wished to purchase his place, but he would not sell it on any reasonable terms and therefore kept it, and has been a trouble in the place but has prospered in buisness so much as to say he never prospered better and told a person some time ago that he was ready for another of Joseph Smiths Curses. I feel inclind to think he will never be heard to utter such words again. May the Lord forgive and save him and all others who raise their hand against the Lords anointed for I see more clearly than ever that this is no trifling sin in the sight of God. No it is as great as ever it was in any age of the world. I sincerely wish that all the members of the Church had a proper sense of their duty and privilege in this respect.

I expect to hear from you soon and also from England. I hope I shall not be disappo[int]ed. Tell [me] if you and Brother Thom[p]son have any idea of coming to Kirtland this fall, (if

the Field of labour remains open there), and unless a change should take place in the state of affairs here for the better I should not advise it however much I might [like] to see you. Here are course [corps] of Men out of employ even in the summer and how it will be in the winter I cannot tell but I fear for Kirtland. O, that we as a people may be faithful this is our only hope and all we have to depend on. Give my kind love to Brother Thompson and all other Friends particularly Brother & Sis[ter] Law. I thank them for their kindness to you. I thank Brother Thompson for his last kind letter and should be pleased with [a]nother. I remain your very affectinate Sister

M. F.

*[on margins]*

Dadeus Sekins has marr[i]ed a widdower [with] 5 children  
Sister Kimble desires her love to you Both

[October 7, 1837]

My dear Sister & Brother

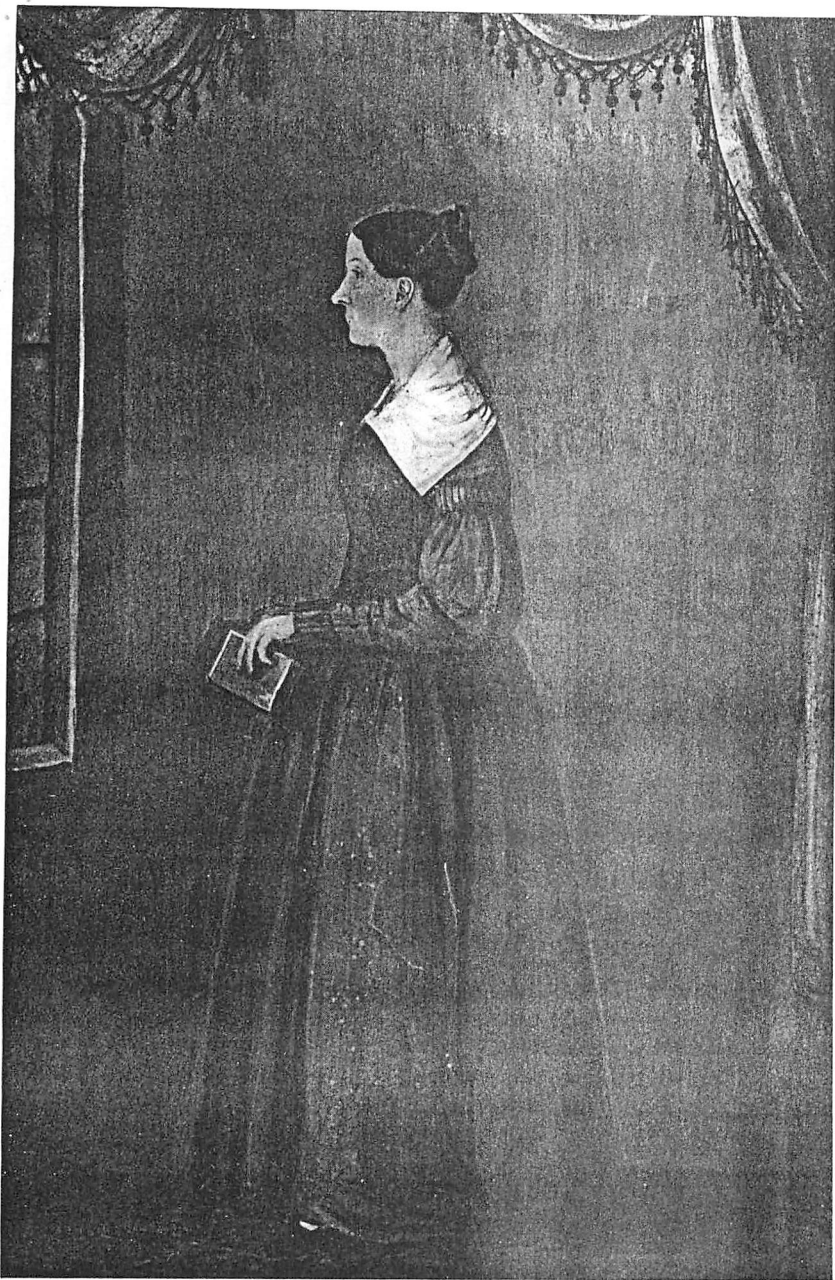
... Brother Joseph [Smith] came to see us a few days since for the last time previous to his going on a journey to Messouri. I believe I felt as much at parting with him as an own Bro. He, Brother Rigdon, Bro. Hyrum S[mith], W[illiam] S[mith] & others are all gone on a very important business and are not expected back for some months. May the Lord have mercy upon us and guide us in their absence and preserve us here from the power of the devel & them also while absent. Indeed we all need to pray much. For as the great Wheels or Stone rolls forward as it is now doing with great success the grand adversary who knows he has but a very short time, will most assuredly rage with all his might.

Some important things were shown to Bro. Joseph in vision previous to his going off relitive to the enlargement of our Borders which has indeed become indesably [indispensably?] necessary for the Inhabitants of Zion both here and in the West are crying the Citys are too strait for us give place that

we may dwell. The people are crouding in from all parts and as President Rigdon said in his last discourse *here*, they will gather and Earth and hell combined cannot hinder them for *gather they will*. Hence the necessity of planting new stakes which they received a command to do before they left and it is expected that after they have set in order the Church in the West they will fix upon 11 new Stakes before they return but this is not spoaken of in publick for reasons you will be aware of. If this were generally known it would probably make their way much more difficult.

We had a very affecting time the last Sabbath. Our dear Brethren were present and took their leave of the Church. I suppose we had not much less than 1500 persons on the Congregation. Brother Rigdon receive[d] directions from the Lord in the morning as [to] the discourse he should deliver that day before he left us and truely it was marvelous, it was gareat it was glorious far beyond my power to discribe. The tears flowd plentifully from Bro. Josph Eyes during the service. When he looked over congregation and considered what had been done and then what was still to be done he seemed to be filled with feelings indiscribable. I am truely sorry that I am so unable to give you an idea of what passt. O what feelings ran through my soul while he was pouring his blessings upon all the sincere and faithful Saints. How I longed to have a share in them all. Brother R[igdon]'s address was upon the enlargement and future glory and purity of Zion when she arises and puts on her beautiful garments which must be before long.

As it is quite useless for me [to] aim an entering into any particular subject, I must just tell you how he concluded his discourse. After showing us what we have to do & what our privileges are and what our future blessedness would [be] he spoak out with a loud voice from the fulness of his heart, And let all the people say Amen & Amen. When it seem[ed] as tho all the congregation in one simultainous voice responded with a loud Amen it was the opinion of most that they had never heard the like before. . . .



*Sutcliffe Maudsley's portrait of Mary Fielding Smith, painted sometime between 1842 and 1844. Around this same time, Maudsley painted similar portraits (same size and pose) of Hyrum, Joseph, and Emma Smith.*

care of the teams and wagons until the ferry boat could cross. She remembered that the old man "stood with tears in his eyes watching us, not knowing whether we could reach shore or not."<sup>5</sup>

*emma* Emma Smith made her departure from Far West, Missouri, with a group of Saints on 7 February 1839. Her husband still languished in a "lonesome prison" in Liberty, Missouri. She wrote to him shortly thereafter:

No one but God, knows the reflections of my mind and the feelings of my heart when I left our house and home, and almost all of everything that we possessed excepting our little children, and took my journey out of the State of Missouri, leaving you shut up in that lonesome prison. But the reflection is more than human nature ought to bear, and if God does not record our sufferings and avenge our wrongs on them that are guilty, I shall be sadly mistaken.<sup>6</sup>

Emma finally arrived at the western shore of the frozen Mississippi River. Somewhat fearful of the thin ice, she separated her two horses and walked apart with two-and-one-half-year-old Frederick and eight-month-old Alexander in her arms. Julia held securely to her skirt on one side and positioned young Joseph on the other side to begin the walk across the river.

Emma also carried Joseph's manuscripts of his Bible translation in heavy bags, along with her husband's other personal papers fastened securely to her waist. She then walked across the frozen river to safety in Illinois.

Mary Fielding Smith, whose husband, Hyrum, was also shut up in Liberty Jail, told her experiences during the difficult exodus in a letter to family in June 1839. She recounts the tale of her tribulations:

*Mary* My husband was taken from me by an armed force, at a time when I needed, in a particular manner, the kind [of] care and attention of such a friend, instead of which, the care of a large family was suddenly and unexpectedly left upon myself, and in a few days after, my dear little Joseph F. was added to the number. Shortly after his birth I took a severe cold, which brought on chills and fever; this, together with the anxiety of mind I had to endure, threatened to bring me to the gates of death. I was at least four months entirely unable to take any care either of myself

or child; but the Lord was merciful in so ordering things that my dear sister could be with me. Her child was five months old when mine was born; so she had strength given her to nurse them both.

*Mary* Mary recalled the persecution the Saints encountered following the fall of Far West and their subsequent expulsion: "This happened during my sickness, and I had to be removed more than two hundred miles, chiefly on my bed." The journey was hard on the family. "I suffered much on my journey; but in three or four weeks after we arrived in Illinois, I began to amend, and my health is now as good as ever."<sup>7</sup>

Martha Pane Jones Thomas arrived in Missouri from her home in Kentucky in 1837. She and her family departed the former Mormon capital in Missouri on Valentine's Day, 1839. Martha was eight months pregnant when she began the journey.

We started across the prairie to Tenny's Grove, about twenty miles [from Far West]. The snow was about six inches deep. The children all barefoot, except the oldest boy. To hear them crying at night with their feet cracked and bleeding was a grievous sight for a mother to bear. I would often grease them and put on clean stockings, instead of making them wash them when going to bed.

Hundreds of Saints were on the road heading east at the time. Their escape to Illinois was sometimes accomplished as fast as eight days, and other times it took as long as three weeks. The usual trip took between ten and eleven days. Some of the last Saints out of Far West found camp poles and wood for fires all along the way, provided by the Church's Committee for Removal. One man returning from Illinois to Far West reported over two hundred wagons between the Mississippi River and Far West, all heading for safety in Illinois. For those without sufficient provisions, the way stations provided welcome relief.

Martha Thomas's family "found stations all along the road with provisions." They were "much surprised as this was the first station we ever saw. We acknowledged the hand of God. Drew provisions and went onto the next, until we reached [the Mississippi River]. We could not cross for the ice. Several hundred families were camped on the river bank."

While camped at the river, word came that the militia intended to shoot all the Mormons still remaining in Far West on a certain