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Project Zion Podcast

Josh Mangelson 00:17

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Karin Peter 00:33

Welcome to Project Zion Podcast. This is Cuppa Joe, where we explore Restoration history, and I'm your host, Karin Peter. Today's episode is the second of three in our mini-series about the three successive wives of Joseph Smith III. Our guest, to share with us about the lives of these three women, is Wendy Eaton. Wendy works at the Joseph Smith Historic Site in Nauvoo, Illinois. Hopefully some of you have had a chance to go there pre-COVID, and will have a chance to go there post-COVID as well and meet Wendy. She is the Administrative Assistant to Historic Sites Foundation for the church and also to church history, historian, department researcher par excellence, all the things that you do besides what somebody might assume as office tasks. She also gives excellent tours. Having been on a tour with Wendy, I can recommend her highly in that. Now, she's been our guest several times, and we appreciate her insight. And she's done an episode about some of the restoration projects at the Community of Christ Historic Site, so you might want to check that one out as well. So, welcome, Wendy, again.

Wendy Eaton 01:54

Hello.

Karin Peter 01:55

It's good to have you back with us. So, we talked last time that most of our listeners are aware that Joseph Smith III, son of Joseph Smith, Jr., was the first Prophet-President of the Reorganization, the RLDS church, now Community of Christ. What people might not be as aware of is that Joseph Smith III had three wives, although not at the same time. He only had one wife at a time. He lost his first wife, he married again, and after she died, he married a third time. So, in this three-part series, we've been learning a bit about these three women, Emmeline, Bertha and Ada. So, we're going to begin this episode about Bertha, who in your notes said, "She was a green thumb and had a sense of adventure." So, I'm looking forward to her, to hearing about Bertha and her story. So, Wendy, let's begin.

Wendy Eaton 02:55

One of the absolute best things about researching Bertha is that her daughter, Audentia, wrote two wonderful articles about her mother. So, we get a woman's voice, telling the story of this important woman. These articles were for *Autumn Leaves*, which has been a wealth of information in my research. *Autumn Leaves* was a magazine, intended for what we would term young adults and youth, that was one of the many projects of Marietta Walker, who some of our listeners may have heard of, and it ran from about 1888 to 1932. And Audentia was a fairly regular contributor. So, I'm just really happy to get to share this story through Audentia's eyes about her mother. There's also some filler from Joseph III with his memoirs, of course, which is a great resource if people want to read more about his life, and a few family letters that I've been fortunate enough to have a chance to read. So, Bertha

Madison was the daughter of immigrants. Her mother, Mary, came to America from Norway with her parents and other family members in 1837. As many European immigrants, they arrived in New York and the Thomasons continued on west to Chicago, before settling in north central Illinois. I don't know quite as many details about Bertha's father but Mads Madison travels from Norway as well around the same time period. Mads and Mary meet and they are wed in October of 1840, and they settle in LaSalle County, Illinois, which is going to become pretty significant. They travel some, trying new settlements, as a lot of pioneers were doing at that time, but they continue to return to LaSalle. Their first daughter is named Anna, who is joined by Bertha, and then a brother named Martin and another brother named Osmund. I think there may have been at least one other child but I haven't found it specific, recognition for that to be completely sure there's another one. Anna, being the eldest girl, would have quite often been in the home learning those homemaking skills with her mother. Bertha was helping her father and brother, Martin, outside. And so, she picks up many farming skills; milking, taking care of cows and horses, things like that. And she learns to help in the garden as well. In 1853, the Madison family travels north, and they settle in the dense forest of southeastern Minnesota. The Madison parents, like many people did at that time, believe that there was cause to be wary of some of the local tribes of native people that were there, and the children picked up on that wariness. I'd almost call it a fear that they pick up on. Bertha shares a story with her children many years afterwards, of an event where she and her brother go out into the woods to bring the cows in for their evening milking. And as the two cross the creek, which Martin pushes Bertha into, but that's another, that's just, kind of, things siblings do. But anyway, after she gets out of the creek, and they continue on their way, they look up the hill and see one of these native tribes and they became incredibly frightened. They forget the cows and run for home.

Karin Peter 07:00

Uh oh.

Wendy Eaton 07:01

They get separated, but they do find each other again, and they're a little more careful about making their way home together. It's after nine o'clock in the evening, she remembers, and her parents and their older sister were just about out of their minds with worry about where these two kids were. But their story was supported by the fact that the cows are not with them. The Madison family quickly learns that this tribe is not a group of people to be feared, and they become incredibly friendly with this group. Their father, Mads, is regularly trading with them and all the children end up playing together quite a bit, picking up each other's language. And the Madison family, they were speaking their native Norwegian at home. I think they may have been learning some English but there was at least two or three different languages being traded between the children, but playing games and just getting to know one another. After that first winter ends, two of Bertha's great-uncles arrived to see how the farming is in Minnesota compared to Illinois. During that visit, the family decides that Bertha would benefit by returning to Illinois with her great-uncles so that she could go to school. And for a year, Bertha lives away from her family so that she can attend a school down in Illinois. Her family miss her a lot. And when they visit back in Illinois, the following winter, they decide that they miss her so much they want her to go home with them. And I'm going to quote Audentia in a few places throughout our story today, and this is one of them. Audentia writes of her mother that, "When they returned to their Minnesota ranch, they took Bertha back with them and she adapted herself with what grace she could, to the disappointment of the

lost school opportunities brought her, a sacrifice not unique to the account of short-sighted mother love.” But what this year away from home as, I think she was around 11 or 12 at this point, this year away from home instills in her a great desire for education that would stick with her through her entire life. Eventually farming doesn't work out so well in Minnesota, so the family moved back to Illinois, and it seems that they are between Illinois and Iowa for a time before they do finally just settle in LaSalle County. The settlement in LaSalle has a benefit. They call it Mission, that's the name of the group, and it's largely made up of Norwegian immigrants, so it's people that they're very comfortable being around. Through all these changes, Bertha keeps working very hard helping her brother and father with the farm work. And when she's about 16, she decides she really wants to go back to school. And so, a place is found for her to board with a family that will put her in a town so that, in exchange for doing housework for this family, she'll be able to, during the day, go to school. And Bertha is able to as gain as much education that was available to her under that time. While she's living away from home, pursuing her education, she receives a letter from her sister, informing her that their father has joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Somewhat alarmed that her father had joined with the Mormons, as Bertha thought it, she talks the matter over with her landlady. And this woman very kindly says, “No, there's some good people in that church. Don't be too hasty to jump to conclusions over this.” Bertha returns home and her father shares with her about his newfound faith and what drew him into this community. So, back in LaSalle County, in this community called Mission, a congregation is established in April 1861. It's one of the older congregations established of the Reorganized Church. And, like the community at large, it was largely made up of Norwegian immigrants, and Bertha's father is pretty active in leadership there. They're mostly meeting in homes, but by the turn of the century, a building is built and that building is still standing there, and there's a congregation that still meets there today, calling themselves Mission. This is all about 30 miles south of Plano. So, as active as Bertha's father is, the family's a little slower to jump in with him, but in May of 1865, Bertha at age 21, is baptized into this church. And like the way she devoted herself to her education and learning her farming and gardening skills, she just jumps two feet in to learning about the church, learning about scriptures and everything she could do to learn as much as she possibly can about this group. At some point in her early 20s, Bertha becomes engaged and the young man moves away and is living at some distance, and this distance caused them to decide maybe we're not ready to be engaged, so they decide to separate. This is when our story collides with Emmeline Smith. And so just a brief recap, in case people haven't listened to the Emmeline episode first, Emmeline, in October of 1865, gives birth to a son and the family, in January of 1866, moved to Plano. In March of 1866, this little boy that she had just given birth to, died and Emmeline's health begins to decline. She knows she needs help in her home with her young children and managing the household as her health is in such a precarious place. So, two young women are brought into the church, or brought into the home, Maria Cook and Bertha Madison. Maria and Bertha remain with the Smiths through those last years of Emmeline's life. And after Emmeline's funeral, when Joseph returns to Plano to try to figure out what to do with his family and his home, Bertha takes the three little girls, Emma, Carrie and Zaide, to stay with her parents, the Madisons, up north. And during this time of transition in Joseph's life, and for the girls as well, people are making all sorts of very well-meaning suggestions to him as to how to run his household. They talk about breaking up the home. You don't need to have your own place. You could board with another family, keep your girls with you. The girls can go to someone else since you're traveling so much for the church. But Joseph wants his own home and he wants his girls with him. And he consults with Bertha several times during these few months between the death of his first wife and

into the fall of 1869. Ultimately, the decision is, Joseph is going to stay in his home in Plano. The girls are going to stay with him. Bertha and Maria are going to stay in the household too. And Mark Forscutt, one of the early church leaders, was going to move into the home as well. Everyone living in the house, this worked great. This was a good solution for everyone involved within the house. Not so much for those who were not living in the...

Karin Peter 15:23

Okay, I'm just gonna stop here for a minute, because if you're listening to this, and you come out of a Mormon background, and you've read some new Mormon history, and you know the history of Joseph Smith, Jr., at this point, it starts to get a little unnerving. Actually, it got unnerving a few minutes ago, when we talked about the two young women moving in to help care for Emmeline. I can feel the blood pressure rising in some people's minds. So, you know, to be fair to the people who were not okay with this, there's some history behind why they would not be okay with this.

Wendy Eaton 15:57

Yeah, they're very much is.

Karin Peter 15:59

Right. Okay.

Wendy Eaton 16:02

Okay, so like I said, it's great for everybody living in the home, but not so much, people are a little suspicious of this whole setup, and the scandalous idea of these two unmarried women living with a newly widowed man. It's not sitting well with the community. In his memoirs, Joseph records that it gets so bad that he returns from the office, the Herald House office, to his home in the fall and finds Bertha in tears because the disparaging remarks had gotten so bad. He's determined to defend her honor and his own, and he turns to prayer to try to figure out what's going to be the best solution for everybody involved. He decides the best solution is for him to get married again, and for him, Bertha is the best woman for him to marry. He proposes to her and she agrees, and the two are married November 12, 1869. Bertha is 26 and Joseph is 37. But those who are looking for something to complain about will always find it, and now the gossipers are starting to question why he married a woman of foreign nationality. And why did he not wait the customary one year after the death of his first wife? And his response is great to one individual in particular, and he records it in his memoirs. Joseph says, "I had the extreme satisfaction of reminding him that the gossipers had not waited the conventional year before using malicious and too busy tongues upon my affairs, and that I was forced to marry in defense of both a good woman and myself. I had married my wife for myself, not for my neighbors or for the church, and that if I was satisfied, they had no reason to be otherwise.

Karin Peter 18:12

Ouch.

Wendy Eaton 18:14

He has...

Karin Peter 18:15

Take that, gossipers. Yeah.

Wendy Eaton 18:17

We think of Joseph III as this very peaceful person, but when you get him in the right place, it comes out and you better watch out.

Karin Peter 18:26

It does. That's a set down, a par excellence. Excellent. Good job, Joseph. Okay.

Wendy Eaton 18:33

So, Bertha is very capable, and she's very generous, and these people who just don't want to be happy, they're not happy for very long. They've come to realize what an incredible woman she is. When someone needs shelter, her home is open. When people are hungry, or need clothes, baskets of food and clothing would find their way to those doorsteps in need. And not only generous, but mindful. Those baskets were often delivered discreetly, so as not to bring embarrassment to the people who were in need. On Sunday, the family home was always open, and they had many guests joining the boarders and other visitors for dinner, Audentia noting that nearly every Sunday the children had to wait for second table, disparaging that the conversation was too wonderful and too long and the children were just ready to eat and, would these grownups stop talking. One dinner Audentia mentions is very, very different though and I really liked this story. It had to have been a very early memory of hers because the details are slim, but what she does remember really show a lot of creativity in her mother. So, it's cold. She, Audentia, mentions that the kitchen and dining room fires are out, and that her father Joseph is away, and it's just Bertha and the children. Audentia writes that, "Mother built up the fire in the living room since that was the warmest room in the house. She laid a cloth on the table and set bowls out, and into each bowl, she broke a few crackers, added salt and plenty of butter, and over this, she poured boiling water. This seems like a really meager, distasteful dinner, but Bertha, with the air of a great picnic, proclaims it mock oyster soup, and the children eat it with glee." And it's a memory that sticks with Audentia, through her life, this very early, simple meal that Bertha provides her children with. There are some very slim times for many of the spouses of these early church leaders, when their husbands are gone, and they're not hearing very often from them, and they don't know when they're getting back. And so, I wonder if this may have been one of those moments that resources are starting to get a little slim at home, and Bertha is doing the best she can to keep her children cared for. So, Bertha and Joseph would have nine children together.

Karin Peter 21:30

Oh my.

Wendy Eaton 21:30

Seven are born at Plano. And so, when they marry, the older Smith girls, Emma is 13, Carrie is eight and Zaide is six. I'm going to go through the whole list of all the children born at Plano here for you. Joining the family, we have first, David Carlos was born in 1870. And then the author of all these wonderful notes, Mary Audentia, who they often call Audentia, or Audi in the letters, and she comes in 1872. Then we have someone people might be familiar with, Frederick Madison, who they almost

exclusively call Freddie and so that's how I'm going to call him in this talk. He comes in 1874, followed in two years by someone else people might be familiar with, his brother, Israel Alexander. Those two would eventually follow their father in church leadership and serve the Reorganization as President for a time. And then in 1877, a son named Kenneth is born and he also dies that year. Then we have a little girl named Bertha Azuba, who they usually call Azuba. She's born in 1878, followed by another son, Hale Washington, in February of 1881. Gonna jump around a little bit in the timeline here. In the year between Freddie and Israel, so 1875, the eldest daughter, Emma, marries in January and has her first child in August. They named that baby Joseph, and in light of not getting this family tree too complicated with all the children and grandchildren coming into play, that's the only grandchild I'm going to specifically mention, but I think the first grandchild is a pretty significant one to bring up. And the other one, I want to jump around just a bit with the timeline, 1879, Joseph's mother, Emma Smith Bidamon, she passes away in Nauvoo. So, amid all of these arrivals and departures with the family, they live a fairly settled life in Plano. Pa Joseph is traveling. Mother Bertha manages the home, the children, the livestock, a garden. The whole family is really great about exchanging letters with Joseph as he's traveling, even the youngest children. Two of the letters that Audentia holds on to throughout her life are from her father from November 1876. It's two very short letters, one to her, one to Freddie. And Audentia would have been about four, Freddie would have been almost three, so they're very, very young. But in these short letters, Joseph writes how proud he is that they have written to him. And so, we don't know what those letters themselves look like, I'm guessing very large, childish handwriting that maybe just says, "Hello Papa," or something like that, but that Bertha was so, so set to have her children educated, that she starts teaching them at very early ages and it's writing letters to their father. That is one of the ways that she teaches them to read and write. So, in 1880, a big change is coming up for the Smiths as Joseph and Bertha prepare to move from Plano, Illinois to Lamoni, Iowa. The church is now being centered in Lamoni. A lot of this has to do with the railroad being established and the good farming climate that is out there. They plan their home together and in October of 1881, the home in Plano is packed up and they move west. They call this new home Liberty Hall. It's not quite finished yet, but this is the best time for them to go ahead and make the move. I don't know exactly how long the journey was, but I'm guessing it had to have been most of a day, if not just over a day. It's taken by rail and I seem to get the idea that Bertha is making this move with just her and the children, that Joseph is probably already in Lamoni. Bertha plans ahead because she's got six children, ranging from 11 years to seven months to keep track of on this train ride. And, as Audentia very clearly states, so this will be for our railroad fans, "They don't splurge on a Pullman car," which is the big fancy car in this time period in the United States. It's just basic coach that they're traveling by. Bertha develops some kind of lattice-like contrivance, when it opens up, she can lay blankets on and it provides a bed for the youngest children as they're traveling. She packs books, and toys, and art supplies, and I imagine plenty of snacks for this trip. Audentia does note that it is late in the evening when they finally arrive in Lamoni, and arrangements have been made that, until Liberty Hall is finished, they were going to live with Elijah Banta, another church leader. The next story is one of my favorites that Audentia shares, and Joseph shares this story too, in his memoirs, but I really like how Audentia shares it, so I'm going to share it the way she puts it. And so again, this is before they have permanently moved into the new home. The family is still in a bit of transition as they're making this big adjustment in their life. Audentia writes, "Late on one of these afternoons, seven clouds covering the sky and threatening a copious downpour, Mother decides she would not make the trip back to Brother Banta's home. She had some chickens to get into shelter and other things to look after in the home. She urged father and the

boys, David, Freddie and Israel, to go, but kept a couple of the little ones, Azuba and Hale, with me and her. She made beds down on the floor for our comfort through the night and we went to sleep. In the night the storm burst with great fury. Mother had put out some barrels and tubs to catch the much to be desired soft rainwater and occasionally she would venture out to change the receptacles. She finally came to me and awakened me saying, 'Audi come. I just want you to see this water.' And taking me to the side door where we could see the water pouring out of the spout, which later would supply a large cistern, we stood and watched, fascinated, the force and volume of the stream coming down. 'Why that's strong enough to turn a windmill,' I remember her remarking. The lightnings cut their way constantly through the clouds and the thunder roared and crashed about our ears. Never had I seen or heard the elements in such commotion. And shivering, I clung close to her. But all I could note of her reaction to the storm was a sort of fierce delight, an attunement which seemed to fill her with pleasure. Drenched to the skin from her frequent sallies out to the tub, she just laughed in pure joy of the experience that had been awakened in her. This elemental quality about mother, born of her love for nature and her early contacts with its primitive and varied expression, delivered her of emotion of fear at any of its many manifestations, and established instead a never wavering, never doubting assurance of its ever-divine benefice. In some measure, she left each of her children at some of that Spirit as heritage. For wind, rain, snow, hail and sun ever hold delight for them."

Karin Peter 30:24

That's a wonderful story.

Wendy Eaton 30:26

I love how Audentia writes. She is an incredibly gifted writer.

Karin Peter 30:32

You can see her mother standing at this open doorway, watching the storm and watching the water come down. Yeah.

Wendy Eaton 30:41

Yeah.

Karin Peter 30:41

Amazing.

Wendy Eaton 30:43

So, two more daughters are born at the new home of Liberty Hall. The little girl, Blossom, born and died in 1883, and then another little girl, Lucy Yeteve, born in 1884. Two other deaths take place for the Smiths and these were very difficult ones for them. In 1884, just two months before little Lucy was to be born, Azuba is injured in a school yard accident. Joseph is away at a reunion but arrives at home in time for her funeral, which is held on what would have been her sixth birthday. And Joseph, in particular, was very caught off guard by the death of this little girl. And those who have read his memoirs, have probably heard this story, because he writes quite a bit about it. Just a couple years later, in January of 1886, their oldest son David dies. He had not been a very strong child. He had suffered from heart trouble and in the end, rheumatism. He is just about 15 years old when he dies.

He's laying in bed and Bertha is attending to him when he looks at her and says, "Mama, you've been so good to me," and then he dies. Blossom, Azuba and David are all buried at Rose Hill Cemetery, which is not far from Liberty Hall there in Lamoni. We have a little more good news. Let's bring this back up. Three daughters marry at Liberty Hall; Zaide in 1883, Carrie in 1887 and Audentia marries quite young in 1891. Carrie and Audentia continue to live in Lamoni. Zaide moves east for a time. Her health is very similar to her mother Emmaline's health and she has, she gives birth late in the year and after just a few months she dies in 1891, from complications from that. During all these life transitions, much like in Plano, life carries on in Liberty Hall. Bertha's parents, Mads and Mary, move close to Lamoni, if not in, and so they are frequent visitors until her father's death in 1893. Joseph carries on with his church travels which span from Maine to California. He is out almost constantly, it seems like, based off his memoirs and the family letters. The Smiths take on boarders and overnight guests, and at times, Joseph will send a letter to Bertha saying, "I've included with this couple, that are on their way, a letter of introduction. Please let them stay with you at the house." So, he's meeting people on his travels and sending them back to Lamoni to stay with his family without Bertha having ever met them before. So, I really want to get into some of Bertha's agricultural skills because I think she really shines in this. Her pursuits with the farm really earned steady income for the family. And that's what a lot of her farming pursuits are about, bringing in income to keep the family going. So, I've mentioned the chickens with that great story of the storm. But during the Liberty Hall years, it's not just chickens to have eggs and meat for the family. She tries her hand at preparing chickens for shipping out to other locations. She even tries breeding fancy chickens. I don't get any more explanation than what makes these particular chickens fancy, but Bertha sees potential income, so she pursues it. She has cows and horses and it's great that there are several letters that when she's getting a chance to get out of home and travel for a while, and Joseph is kind of managing things back, he writes that there are a couple people interested in some of the horses that she has raised, but he tells them, "You're going to have to wait till my wife gets back. This is her business. I'm not doing it," So, he respects her skills and her understanding of how the farm is running there in Iowa. And there's a great place within Liberty Hall that continues this exploration of Bertha's experience and skill with plants. Audentia writes that, "Flowers were a veritable part of our home furnishing and the entire south end of the living room in Liberty Hall was of glass and equipped with shelves for potted plants." She remembers oleanders in this, what they call the conservatory, begonias, fuchsias, cacti of all sorts, and all sorts of herbs and geraniums, verbena, heliotropes. All, the list just seems to go on and on, of these plants that Bertha had. Audentia writes that, "The lavish tribute of her love and care seemed to make everything her mother touched flourish. Whether it was a struggling plant, or a chicken or a cow or a horse, they seem to respond to her almost like magic." There's a great story, I'm going to share a few of the little family stories that I've picked up that are just so much fun. The Smiths grew tomatoes in their outdoor garden, which proved to be tricky, which is a great fact that we found in doing some research, about a year and a half ago. We found out that Joseph Smith III was colorblind. He could not distinguish red and green. And Audentia remembers her father going out and gathering a large bucket full of tomatoes, which he triumphantly shows to Bertha. Bertha looks at them and says, "Yes, but why pick the green ones?" Apparently, Joseph laughed at himself and decided that maybe picking tomatoes was a job better for someone else who could tell the difference between red and green. In 1888, Bertha packs up her youngest daughter, she's nearly four years old, Lucy is, at this time, for a train trip to Arkansas, with the sole purpose of obtaining peaches. Now the family had established fruit trees, particularly apple trees there at Liberty Hall, but Bertha wanted peaches. She returns home and Joseph reports the incident to

Audentia who is away at college at this point, saying that Bertha really wants to start this orchard that he says he's pretty skeptical about this actually happening. And he tells his wife he'll give her \$1 a bushel for all she grew from those peach seedlings. Those peaches did so well that Audentia says that if she, her mother, had demanded payment that her father had said it would have taxed his resources because they had so many peaches that their family and extended family were able to put up for the winter months in their cellars. There's another great letter, another great farm story, from Joseph to Bertha. So, he's out traveling again, and they seem to be having a conversation through letters about decisions on large expansions to the farm. And Joseph is carrying on for a paragraph about manure, which I'm not a farm girl, I suppose manure is pretty important, but it seemed really odd to me that he just goes on and on about this. But as he's continuing on, he hits a point in his letter, "Of the pasture for pigs, I will confer with you when I come to collect kisses due me." And then he goes in to about pigs. Sandwiched in between manure and pigs is this incredibly sweet line, and I think it just shows the humor and love between these two, and it makes me think that there must have been a lot of laughter in that house. And seriously, all that manure and pig talk, I don't understand it, but I'm not a farmer. So, there's a great thing that Bertha decides that she wants for her children when they reach the age of 16, and I wonder if this might have been impacted a little bit by the loss of David before he reached that age. But Bertha decided that when the children reached that age, and that's about the time that you're graduating high school, at this time period, that they would receive a special gift. And so, Audentia is the first one to reach 16, which is just a short time after she graduates high school, and she's given a gold ring. And when her brothers, Fred and Israel, reach their 16th birthdays, each is given a watch. It's different for the youngest two though, because Bertha's vibrant life is cut short in 1896. She plans ahead though, and, which it's interesting how that she did plan ahead because her death was pretty unexpected. But for Hale, who turned 16 four months after his mother died, they found out that Bertha had already ordered a watch for him for his 16th birthday. And Audentia shares that in those last moments of life, her mother asked her that when Lucy turns 16 to give Lucy Bertha's own wedding ring. And so, that does happen. When Lucy turns 16, she's given her mother's wedding ring, and when she ends up marrying, she decides that she doesn't want any other ring. She wants her mother's wedding ring for her own wedding band. And, in 1928, when Audentia wrote these articles, Lucy is still wearing that ring. So, it just shows the foresight that Bertha must have had even though her death was so unexpected. So, her death, early in September 1896, Bertha is out in the buggy running errands. The young horses that she had been working with, they took fright and the buggy overturned. She was stunned but gets up, dusts herself off, gets back in the buggy and continues on with her errands. A few weeks later, she's out with the same team and Joseph says he tries to talk her into a different team, but she insists that it's this young team of horses. Again, they become frightened and the buggy overturns. Again, she seems fine after she cleans herself up, but at dinner, she becomes very faint, and she ends up in bed for about two weeks. After those two weeks or so pass, she gets up out of bed and she seems to be perfectly fine again. In fact, Joseph writes that he had no special anxiety about going on to his church travels that were planned for that October. He heads to a conference or reunion, only to return home on the 14th of October, finding her critically ill once more. Just a few days later, their daughter Lucy is at home tending her mother's bedside, when Joseph hears Lucy call from the bedroom that Bertha had tried to get out of bed and had fallen. Lucy and Joseph managed to get her back in the bed and she lays very quietly for a time. Before Joseph, holding her hand, she turns and looks at him, closes her eyes and dies. There's no time to call the other children home. When he married her, Joseph thought for sure she would outlive him because she was such a strong person with

such endurance. Her death was a shock to him, and he records in his memoirs, "I did not think she could die." She's buried at Rose Hill, near her children, as well as Zaide, who had been buried over there. Audentia and her family move into Liberty Hall because Hale and Lucy are still teenagers and need someone to help take care of them and manage the home. Carrie's not too far away. Emma's in, close to Independence, Missouri, so also not far. Israel and Fred had both just been enrolled at Graceland College so they are in Lamoni when this takes place. The last memory Audentia shares is a cherished one of her own transition to motherhood. As I mentioned, she's young when she marries and she has three children of her own that Bertha gets to know as grandmother. Audentia describes Bertha as, "A safe and comforting confident and her counsel wise and profitable," in helping Audentia adjust to motherhood. The day before Bertha dies, Audentia brought her family, three children, up to visit. Her youngest was four weeks old, and this was the first and only time Bertha got to meet the youngest little girl. And Audentia treasures the memory that at least a few of her children got to meet their grandmother, and at least her mother got to experience being a grandmother before her life is cut short.

Karin Peter 45:35

That is a sweet story, even at the end, that makes us sad at her death, as we had just pictured her, this fierce woman, who could apparently do all things and then dies in a tragic way. So, this, the comment, the little story between the manure and the pigs with the collecting kisses that are, "Due me," kind of, helps us see Bertha, in a way, a different way than sometimes she appears, which is like a convenient wife after the death of his beloved Emmeline, but rather someone very strong, and a wonderful partner to Joseph Smith III, that he loved.

Wendy Eaton 46:23

Yeah, he loved her very much, and she loved him.

Karin Peter 46:26

Yeah, obviously. That's marvelous. So, I want to thank you for sharing with us about her story. Before we close, do you have any, like, last comments or last anecdotes you'd like to share with us?

Wendy Eaton 46:40

Yeah, one of my favorite things in my job is the rare occasion that I have the time and the need to interact with the artifacts, the tangible pieces of our church history. That might sound a little odd since I work at Joseph Smith Historic Site, and that is consisting of houses, which are very tangible things, but I'm talking about the small day to day items. And with the Historic Sites Foundation, we have twice a year meetings, and before travel restrictions were put in place, we would travel to the historic sites, just to have a chance to experience them on a multiple day basis and let our board members get a chance to know these places a little better. So, not too long ago, we were gathered at Plano for our meetings, and the Plano Stone Church is one of my favorite old churches. We'll have to talk about that sometime. But we took a field trip, as a board, down to Mission, Illinois, to that old congregation. And the turn of the century building is still standing. They, it's from early 1900s. It's not 1861, which is when the church started there. But the congregation there prepared us a lovely Norwegian dinner. One of our board members walked in and with great glee on their face declared it snow but like Christmas to them. But they prepared this meal for us, and then we were invited into the sanctuary where the congregation members shared the story of their congregation with us, all those many years that they had been

established there in that community. And when that part of the evening finished, they invited us back to one of the classrooms, where gathered on a group of tables were old photographs and books and other, these tangible pieces of history scattered for us to look at. I, as usual, was drawn to one of the old books, and I picked it up, and it was the *1861 Congregational Record*. And I thought, well, this is a little boring, but I flipped through it anyway, thinking, ah, it'd be, kind of, nice to see what kind of things they were recording for the church official records. So, there are birth announcements, baptisms, weddings, death announcements, things like that. And then I come to the bottom of one of the pages and my hands start to shake. I'm not a person who cries easily, but I started getting tears, like, in the corner of my eyes because there, in this book, was recorded, "Bertha Madison, born July 16, 1843 in the state of Illinois, baptized by Thomas Hughes, confirmed by Thomas Hughes and Andrew Hayes on this 21st day of May 1865. So, words just about failed me, as it dawned on me the significance of this record, recording this, this life changing moment in the life of a woman who becomes so important to the Reorganization. And I got pretty antsy waiting for Lachlan Mackay to stop whatever he was doing at that point so I could get his attention without being rude, and show him what I had just found. And he was pretty excited too, when I pointed out the entry. Like I said, those tangible pieces of history are so important to me, and I love that this congregation has done such a great job preserving their story and preserving the physical pieces of their history. And I just, great shout out to the Mission Congregation for doing such an incredible job, doing that with their congregation story.

Karin Peter 50:54

Well, and to you for finding that piece that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. So,

Wendy Eaton 50:59

It was exciting.

Karin Peter 51:01

Yeah. So, I would have picked up something boring, like a congregational record as well. So, there's something drawn to those kinds of things. I want to thank you again, Wendy, knowing that you'll be with us for another episode. But I want to thank you for joining us with these wonderful stories. You just make them come alive, so we could see Bertha, see her children, see her interact with her husband, and to learn more about the women of the early Reorganization, the church leaders, the wives of the church leaders. So, important stories for us to know. So, our next episode will be Ada, Joseph Smith III's, third and final spouse, who is a [inaudible] -giver, who this part I'm looking forward to learning about, "Who navigates the Smith family with grace." So, there's a lot to unpack there next time. So, listeners, be sure to tune in for the third installment of this particular mini-series. And if you have any questions for Wendy, you can reach her at w_eaton, weaton@cofchrist.org. And this is Cuppa Joe, and part of, it's part of the Project Zion Podcast. I'm Karin Peter. Thanks so much for listening.

Josh Mangelson 52:36

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