

447 | Cuppa Joe | Emma Smith's Later Years 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 part of our series about women in Community of Christ history. This is where we tell the stories of women and how they shaped led offered ministry and had profound impact on the history of Community of Christ. Our guest to share these stories with us is Wendy Eaton. Wendy is a favorite year at Project Zion Podcast. And we're happy that she's here with us again, she works at the Joseph Smith historic site in Nauvoo, Illinois. And she's the administrative assistant to the Historic Sites foundation. Hi, Wendy.

Wendy Eaton 01:18

Hello.

Karin Peter 01:19

So this is our first episode to record in 2022. So I'm pretty excited about it. We started the women's series last year, and have lots of good feedback on the episodes about women in Community of Christ history. So today, we're going to be talking about someone a little more well known maybe than some of the people we've talked about so far. This is someone who's central to the story of Community of Christ. And that's Emma Smith. But before we start, we need to say there's a lot to talk about when we talk about Emma Smith. And so we're just gonna focus on part of her story today. And then hopefully, we'll have chances to revisit her story later on in the year 2022, as we continue to do some of these women's history episodes. So what are we looking at today about Emma Smith?

Wendy Eaton 02:19

Well, honestly, the idea of Emma is certainly an intimidating one, because her life was so eventful, and her actions so impactful to millions of people today. And so much has already been written in disgust about her, but really just the first 40 years of her life. So well, we'll cover some of that early history just to set the groundwork, but I'm not going to get into details. I wanted to focus more on for life after that. 1844. So her life after Joseph Smith Jr. died.

Karin Peter 02:57

Okay, that's a part of her life that is less talked about in Community of Christ, and I'm assuming in other Restoration traditions as well. So I'm excited about that.

Wendy Eaton 03:09

Okay, so just jumping right in, like I said, a very, very highly glossed overview of her first 40 years. Emma Hale was born July 10, 1804, in Harmony, Pennsylvania. She was the seventh child of Elizabeth and Isaac Hale. Most of her family was associated with a Methodist Episcopal Church in Harmony, but

not her father. Not until he finds young Emma in the woods praying. She's probably about seven or eight at the time. And he overhears his daughter's prayer that she's concerned about his relationship with God. And this must have touched him quite a bit because he soon joins and is a little more involved in his family's church life as Emma continues to grow.

Karin Peter 04:02

Are we saying that she guilted him into that inadvertently? (Hey, she was) Yeah.

Wendy Eaton 04:10

Emma was considered intelligent, fairly tall, very lovely. She have a love of singing which greatly influenced those around her including us today. She was quite determined and against her father's wishes, she married Joseph Smith, in 1827. A choice that causes tension in her life. Their first child arrived in 1828, but does not live through the day. Emma would have nine children born to her only four live to adulthood, one of which died as a young man. Emma welcomed at least six other children into her home three in adoption, maybe not quite a legal adoption, but she adopted them into her family. Two were welcomed in his stepchildren in the other was Charlie. We'll get to Charlie a little later. And though Joseph Smith Jr, was considered pretty headstrong Emma made her opinions known, and I think we can see her influence in the church that he starts. Emma was baptized in 1830, and is quickly given significant responsibility I've already mentioned for love of music, and that was one of the key things. A lot of those responsibilities are recorded in Doctrine and Covenants Section 24, I believe it's section 25 in the LDS version. Emma would move her family four times between 1830 and 1839, including once in the middle of winter, with four little children while Joseph's in jail in the Liberty, Missouri area. The last community that Emma and Joseph live in their lives become so confusing that it's hard to know just what's going on in Nauvoo from 1839 to 1844. It's even hard to pin just where this big problem comes into play. And of course, I'm talking about plural marriage, polygamy, celestial marriage, whatever you call it. It enters Emma's world, and it completely disrupts everything. I would guess it starts around 1841. But it's such a touchy subject that everybody has their own opinion on it, whether it started earlier, whether it started later whether it never happened. But no matter what the understanding is on plural marriage, it impacts her life. I don't want to spend too much time on it. I think there have been discussions on Project Zion Podcast on it before but I will chime in just a little bit, because I know if I don't talk about it out here.

Wendy Eaton 07:00

So the documents, if there is any documents of celestial marriage, it comes to being in July of 1843. It's not widely known during this time period. It's not published until 1852. And that is not by Community of Christ members, those who would become Community of Christ members, it's by those following Brigham Young out in Utah. Allegedly when this document was presented to Emma in 1843, she burned it. I don't know one way or the other if she did, but I think the sentiment of the story of her burning it is true. In interviews through her later years, Emma would continue to say that she was the only legal wife of Joseph Smith Jr. Which is true, none of the other wives if there were any other wives were recorded in any kind of civic register. One of her grandsons Frederick A, Smith recalled that whenever people would visit Nauvoo and start to pry into Emma's life, she typically would respond with "Thank you, those things are personal." or "That is a private affair." And so to me, that is the big takeaway out of wherever you stand on the issue of plural marriage. It impacts Emma, significantly, and

anybody who looks into her life later on. And when I tried to boil it down in my mind to what's at the heart of it, there was a covenant made between Joseph and Emma and something happened to either break or severely disrupt that covenant. And that causes a lot of trauma and distress and a lot of pain, and an awful lot of work to pull her life back together after an incident like that. And I think Emma didn't get as much opportunity to pull her life back together specifically regarding that because her attention is so focused on everything else in her life. I don't think she ever really was able to, as we would look at it today heal from that trauma that she went through. I find it really interesting. In the last few months of Emma's life, her sons, Joseph and Alexander travel to Nauvoo, and they interviewed their mother. So it's the two of them in a room with her and Louis Bidamon, her second husband, he's they're kind of giving moral support to his wife. It's published in an article one of the church's newspapers was called the Saints Advocates. And in this article, Joseph wrote, We apologize to our mother for putting the questions respecting polygamy and plural wives, as we felt we ought to do. So there are a lot of conflicts going on within the Reorganization about book Mormon, about polygamy, about the legality of church, and who's the one true church and all those crazy things that are happening at this time period. And so as the president of the church and as the patriarch/evangelists of the church, they feel like they need to do something to address these conflicts. And unfortunately, the best source for a lot of these issues, their aging mother, and so they go and interview her. So I'm very glad that in that news article that's published about six months after her death, they write an apology to her. I think that is really important for us to keep in mind today, that they clearly recognized what a difficult issue it was for their mother, and it was hard for them as well.

Wendy Eaton 10:57

So we've we've kind of done a quick catch up of those first 40, some years with a few hints at the years to come. So let's let's go back to that, right at the end of 1844. Joseph had had died in June of 1844. Emma has one more child with him. And so let's let's put it at Christmas, since we've just finished the Christmas season. Christmas 1844, Emma has four children at home, her daughter Julia, who's one of the adopted children, Joseph, Fred, Alex, and David, and she is focused on them in these initial months and years of shock that she's dealing with, with the death of her husband, because no matter the relationship that she and Joseph had at the end of their, at the end of his life, because we don't know full details, but to lose your companion in such a violent manner had to been pretty traumatic for her, and to understand the situation that she suddenly lived with for very young children. So in those those first few years, one of the initial hurdles that Emma needs to cross is securing her properties. So there are two good articles about the the property ownership and Nauvoo, which it's a it's a mess, the property ownership it's I've tried to study it off and on for four or five years, and it's very hard to pick it apart. But there are two good articles that have helped me with understanding them. One was written by Joyce Shireman who has a past director here in Nauvoo. And she wrote it for the John Whitmer Historical Association Journal. It's the 2005 issue. So most people can probably find that fairly easily. It is online, so you should be able to find it. But it's she titles in the "Mormon Prophets Illinois Legacy as Revealed in Community of Christ Historic Restoration in Nauvoo." And the article is better than that really long title.

Karin Peter 13:11

I was gonna say that's not an inspiring title.

Wendy Eaton 13:14

But the other article that was helpful to me also has a really bad long title. And just heads up to people, some people might not appreciate that I'm citing this person. But it is a very good legal understanding of what's going on. And that is the 1976 BYU Law Review, which again, can be found online Dallin Oaks, "Joseph Smith and Legal Process In The Wake of The Steamboat Nauvoo." So two long titles, the latter, The Oaks one is very tedious because he uses legalese. And there was a lot I had to have a dictionary next to me when I was first reading it because I just didn't understand some of what he was talking about. But when I boiled those two articles, especially those two titles down to my own title, "Joseph's Legal Dumpster Fire Resolved by Emma." And of course, it's not just the two of them, there are others involved, but (Oh, yes, there are) again, it was the property ownership here in Nauvoo was a mess. It's not just buildings and land, it's papers. And, you know, it's just crazy and like the Oaks article, steamboats, there were riverboats involved in these legal battles, which is kind of a fun part of it. The whole matter basically spans 1844 to 1856. And so that's, that's essentially five years of Joseph Smith, Jr. and his counselors setting up the mess of property ownership, which I'm showing my bias they're calling it a mess. There are probably people out there who understand it better than I do. But to me, it's a mess. But then Emma spends about 12 years that 1844 to 1856, working with others to resolve that mess. And she's working with legal advisors with state authorities and there are about 100 individual property owners that are also involved in this mess that are living in Nauvoo at this time. But once everything's resolved in the ownership titles are straight down as to who owns what, Emma's able to enjoy about 23 years of relative peace through her later years. Able to outright claim the properties that she wanted to have for her children. And most of those properties are what make up the Joseph Smith historic site today, which is why I personally think it should be the Emma and Joseph Smith Historic Site. But that's a whole nother matter. So, as all this is taking place, Emma's life is carrying on. It's not just the legal battle going on in this time. She has a lot of life changes happening in November 1844. Her last baby is born David. Emma works hard to maintain life in Nauvoo for her children, but in the fall of 1846. The fighting between the remaining members of the church who would follow Brigham Young and the apostles west. The last people that are still holding out here and Nauvoo. And some of the new residents are fighting and the fights get violent enough that Emma wants to leave and take her children to safety. So for about six months, she and they are living in Fulton, Illinois, which is several hours north of Nauvoo. In late December 1847, people might get a kick out of the fact that it's Joseph Smith's birthday, Emma marries Lewis Bidamon. Lewis is one of those new residents. He's not a religious man, but he's very supportive of Emma and even other church members here in the area. They are married by the local Methodist minister. And I find it wonderful, I had a chance a few years ago to visit the local Methodist church here. And the ladies several years ago, created an embroidered quilt that depicts the history of the Methodist congregation here and Nauvoo. And one of the bottom panels is an embroidered scene of Emma and Lewis's marriage. I just think that's lovely. I love it. (Oh, yeah!) I didn't get a picture of it. I have to go back up there sometime. But they marry and this union with Lewis brings in two more children. He has two daughters, Emma Zorelda and Mary Elizabeth. And if I don't have firm birthdays on either of them, so I think they were between Joseph the Third and Frederick in age. So they would have been, we would call today very young teenagers, maybe preteens right in that 11, 12, 13 age.

Wendy Eaton 18:12

And also in this time period, we start to learn a little bit more about Lewis's character. And these are taken a lot from the memoirs of his stepson, Joseph the Third, and also some of the letters that Emma has left behind. So she wrote a number of letters to her sons, in particular, and their families held on to those letters and gave them to Community of Christ, our library and archives. And so it's really fun in doing research like this for someone so pivotal, a leader for the church, to see her handwriting and to read her words as I'm doing some of this research. So we learned a lot about the character of Lewis Bidamon. He probably, you and I've talked about this before, he deserves a podcast all his out, but that there'd be a lot of snark and sarcasm involved in that one.

Karin Peter 19:09

That's okay, we may need that if COVID continues, Wendy. We might need a day of snark and sarcasm so let's put that you know, in the in the hopper for later, yeah,

Wendy Eaton 19:21

definitely. But just a few things just to give people an idea about him. He has like a great sense of humor. One of the fun stories he would tell visitors to his and Emma's home. Do you want to see my pet bat? So you know, you think little winged bat flying around the house, which we do have a lot of bats and Nauvoo and the visitors will Yeah, I'd like to see your bat. He takes them in and I believe it was sitting on one of the fireplace mantles he had a little box and he would open up this box and inside the box was a brick bat. And so this is part of the brick making process. What are the stages of brick Making him that just that that snarky kind of humor and peppered throughout his life. And that's one of my favorite stories of his humor. But he has a sense of adventure as well. And he's eager to try new things. And so he gets involved in the California gold rush. He's involved in the the railroad expansion within the state of Illinois. And one of the most fascinating from a perspective of telling the story of Nauvoo with the historic site here, he had Emma join in with the grape industry. So after the Latter Day Saints have pretty well all left, we have German and French immigrants who move into Nauvoo, the climate and the soil is great for growing grapes. And Lewis and Emma get in on this, and they end up having some of the biggest vineyards in Nauvoo. And I think that it would be so fun to have that vineyard back installed, but we don't know exactly where those vineyards were. But somewhere on the site, there were many grape vines during the the middle and late 1800s. So with these, this vineyard, part of the big industry, of course, you're selling the grapes, Mississippi River makes it easy to ship those, I think they were mostly shipping them north from here, but there's also the wine industry. And there's one of those great letters of Emma Smith that she's writing to Joseph the Third, this is December 18 67, that she writes and it talks about their recent great crop and I'd like to share that portion of the letter. So I'm a wrote to Joseph, "The summer and fall have been very dry. We have no cold weather, nor any storms of any kind until the 27th of last month. Then we had two days of biting cold. Yesterday and today happened pleasant. The grape crop was only about 1/3 of a good crop. Our South vineyard did not do so well. I think we have some of the largest clusters and largest berries on them we ever saw and we use them freely. We eat all we wanted and make pies by the section. Canned a few made up some jelly and put up another box to be opened when you come from conference. And another box put up to keep until Alex comes to visit. Also, we sold one or 200 gallons of wine and a cask of vinegar, pub Idaman would have made would not have made any wine if he could have sold the grapes as he did last year but he could only get from five to six cents a pound." So even

in the year that their crop, as Emma says is not that good. I can't imagine, I don't know enough about wine to be able to say how many grapes it takes to make one to 200 gallons of wine and a cask of vinegar. And I would assume this would be like oh a grape vinegar like red wine or white wine vinegar.

Wendy Eaton 23:07

So Emma doesn't just have grapes. Her gardens were pretty varied here and I imagine some of what I have found she was gathering from the prairies in the surrounding area but within her gardens, I've been able to find that they had quite a few fruit trees, including apple, cherry peach and possibly apricot. One of the archaeology reports says they found apricot pits and they wondered if maybe they had those trees as well in their orchard. A lot of the berries, raspberries blackberries, I think were gathered wild but I think she may have had strawberries because I know there were quite a few strawberry farmers here and Nauvoo in this time period as well. Emma grew and gathered a variety of herbs, many of which she used medicinally to care for family and friends. HER grandson, Fred A, and this is one of Alexander's son. I've mentioned him before. He recalls that Nauvoo had a doctor his name was Dr. Hamilton and Dr. Hamilton advise new parents to take their babies to Emma to be cared for because she could do more for them than he could. And he even went to her to learn all the different tricks that she had learned with herbs and natural medicines as we would look at it today. She also had a lot of the basics of family farms that you would see around here potatoes, radish, onion, turnips, all that kind of thing. And she has a lot of flowers as well. Of course lots of wildflowers in this area but roses and most well known with Emma lilacs and we suspect some of the lilacs we have on site today maybe the ones that come from Emma that she had planted here back in her later years. So not just flowers and plants and herbs and stuff. We know that Emma had cows throughout her life. So that was a way to care for her family and have some income coming in. And one of the great stories between Emma and Lewis that's been passed down through the years is about the milk in particular, the seller. So one of the sellers that they had where Emma stored her milk had some pretty rickety stairs, and she was constantly asking Lewis to fix the stairs, and he kept putting it off. And eventually, according to a source from Leah Bidamon, who I think maybe one of Charlie's children. So again, we'll come back to Charlie in a little bit. But she wrote that Emma, frustrated with Lewis threw the milk jug and all down the stairs, and then Lewis fix the stairs, so safely get up and down. So some of that humor and stubbornness that Emma would have had as well, because I imagine, I can't fathom the mess and the smell

Karin Peter 26:05

and the waste and the waste.

Wendy Eaton 26:09

Okay, so I've mentioned Charlie, let's go ahead and get into Charlie. Charlie, to me is at the core of some of the more difficult events of Emma's later years. And with her potential reputation here in town, and the reputation that is brought up on tour to this day. So one of the most frequent questions I get about Emma's later years is did it Emma's second husband cheat on her? And Wasn't there a baby born? And I have to bite my tongue? Because depending on how you look at it, and how you understand history, her first husband cheated on her too. So it's really not fair to pin all this all, Lewis? But answer is yes. Lewis did cheat on Emma. The the woman involved was named Nancy and Abercrombie. We don't know a lot about her. But what I've been able to pick up, I believe she was

married twice and had a child with each husband. And after the death, or the rupture of that second marriage, she's living here in Nauvoo training to be a seamstress, has a child out of wedlock, and then meets Lewis and has another child out of wedlock. And so they don't know who the father of that first child is. But the second one, the whole community, pretty well understands. This is Lewis's baby. She names a little boy, Charlie, and that happens 1864, about four years later, so 1868, Nancy's in a pretty dire situation. She's got four small children. She's a widow, there are rumors circulating about her, it's speculation circling about her. And she asked me to take in Charlie, and Emma does. And Charlie is part of the family home through the rest of Emma's life. He's, he's about 11 or 12, when she dies. And towards the end of her life, Emma talks to Nancy and Lewis, and asked them to get married for Charlie's sake. And so about a year after her death, Louis and Nancy do marry. And it's interesting because Joseph the Third in his memoirs, writes about this second, third, fourth, whatever number marriage it was for Louis, he and Lewis had a conversation about this Lewis had come to to ask Joseph's opinion, maybe you might even consider asked Joseph's blessing in marrying Mrs. Abercrombie. Joseph wrote that he offered no objection to taking the step for Lewis and Nancy to marry, believing it to be to a certain degree, a palliation, at least of some of his mistakes, some of which were either unknown to my mother, or else she had purposely resolved to not let create further division between them. So every evidence scenes that Emma was supportive of Lewis and Nancy marrying, and the biggest reason was Charlie, she wanted this boy who was none of his fault, how he came into this world, but she wanted him cared for and she wanted him looked after, and she even includes him with the properties of the, here at the Joseph Smith historic site, she leaves him the Riverside mansion, which we call the Nauvoo house. And so the church purchases it from him when they are in the very, very beginning stages of creating the Historic Site in the early 1900s. Here, Charlie would later remember Emma as an incredibly kind and gracious parents, he felt to be fully a member of the family. And he wrote around 1940 of Emma, "She had a queenly bearing without the arrogance of a queen. A noble woman showing a living charity for all." And I think that is a beautiful testament of an incredibly difficult situation. So let's look at Emma as a mother, a little bit as a daughter in law, but as a mother in law, and the most fun I've had as a grandmother.

Wendy Eaton 31:06

At the time of Joseph Smith Jr's death, as I've mentioned, Emma has Julia, Joseph, Frederick, Alex and David at home, and in the disturbance of the church breaking up and following different faction leaders through the 1840s and into the 1850s. She takes in a new child during this time period. So one of the early British converts was a woman named Elizabeth Kendall. And before she even left the English area, I don't know exactly what community she was living in, but she was widowed, and I think she had three or four children and her youngest Lizzy is the one at the heart of the story. So she takes her children crosses the Atlantic Ocean as a widow and settles in Nauvoo, and possibly due to her poor health, but I don't know the exact reason, she does not affiliated with any of the different factions that are developing in the church. Whether James Strang or Brigham Young Sidney, or Rigdon, any of them. She just stays a Nauvoo. We have quite a bit of record talking about how she liked to visit with Emma in the Mansion House taking baby Lizzy with her on occasion. Elizabeth dies in 1850 at Emma takes in young Lizzy, who I think would have been somewhere between eight and 10 years old at this time. This is the same time period that Emma's eldest Julia marries. And so the family is fluctuating a brand new little girl is coming in, and the oldest girl is getting ready to launch out on her life of her own, even though Julia and her husband initially live in the Mansion House and help run the hotel, but his

health caused them to need to move to Texas. And eventually his health declines enough that she's widowed by 1853. We're jumping around a lot in the timeline right here. But to go back to Lizzy after about 10 years of being raised by Emma as a daughter of the household, Lizzy and Alex, Emma's son, marry and they start a family of their own. And I think that Lizzy and Emma must have had an incredible relationship. Here's this little girl who as a very small child meets Emma and knows her as a friend of her mother's. And then she comes in, as into the home as Emma's daughter, and then becomes Emma's daughter in law. But also in very significantly, she's Emma's companion for a great many years. Lizzy and Alex live in the Mansion House, and Emma and Lewis are living in the Mansion House still at this time. And I think that Emma must have been quite a strong caretaker for Lizzy's state of wellbeing if you want to think of it that way as Alexander's taking up a leadership role within the church, and she's left home in Nauvoo with children to raise but she has her mother in law, this woman who she knows really cares about her right there to help support her.

Wendy Eaton 34:38

So we're going to run in, jump through all of Emma's children just briefly, because I've talked about some of them in past podcast. So before we get into that, though, I want to talk about two other big moments that happen in 1861. I don't have a lot of documented about Emma specifically, but anyone who has studied American history know that the spring of 1860 opening shots of the American Civil War, and though none of her sons serve in the Civil War, just reading through Joseph memoirs, you see how impacted he is by this. The decisions he's making some of the early stances that the early reorganization takes, I believe, to be influenced by this this horrific war that's going on. And though I don't have anything specifically from Emma, I did find a letter from Julia to her brother Fred, that specifically talks about the Civil War. And I think her words really reflect the feelings of a lot of people during this time period. So just out of interest, I'd like to share this little bit of what Julia wrote. She wrote "The war has passed over the state like a frightful tornado, laying waste, once smiling field, pleasant dwellings and peaceful villages." I think those words are pretty significant, because even though like I said, we don't have Emma's words, I think she must have been feeling these things as well. So like I said, she doesn't lose any children to the Civil War, but Frederick does die in this time period. It's possibly tuberculosis that he dies from. But it was a heartbreaking loss no matter exactly the illness, particularly since Frederick who was fairly newly married and a new father at this point, was abandoned by his wife. And so early in his illness before the family even knows just how sick he is his wife whose name was Anna takes their daughter who's named Alice Frederica, and they leave him. Joseph arrives in Frederick's home finding his brother sick alone and the fire out in this is winter. With great caution he moves Fredrick to their mother's home, and she cares for him through his that last illness. And he dies in April 1862. So a tough loss for Emma, she's raised these children to adulthood, but to lose this young man, I think he was about 26 At this time, and he was pretty well respected and loved in the Nauvoo community, much like his brothers were. So the other incident that's written a lot about that takes place spring of 1860 is the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints officially organizing, and since so much has been written about that I'm not going to get into great details, but Emma does travel with Joseph to the conference in Amboy, where he is set apart for that role, and she like him are accepted into the group without needing to be rebaptised, which was a pretty significant thing at that point. She reprises her role as chief hymn creator and helps with the creation of the first hymnals of the Reorganization. And as I mentioned with her relationship with Alex's wife, Lizzy, she also has a similar relationship with Joseph's wife, Emmeline, who I've talked about before in

previous podcasts, that supportive role for her daughters in law as their husbands are going off into this, this new role of church leadership.

Wendy Eaton 38:46

So Emma's daughters in law, talked about Emmeline and about Lizzy there's also Clara and later Bertha. She doesn't mean her daughter in law, Ada, who would be Joseph the third's third wife. But there's a lot going on. And there was a moment this last summer when I was working on my research about the three consecutive wives of Joseph Smith the Third that I stood in the middle of the intersection of water in Main Street, which you would never be able to do in the middle of summer here in Nauvoo, except we're close with COVID. So I was able to stand in the middle of the road in the middle of summer. And just look at the proximity of these homes. Joseph and Emmeline and their children were living in the homestead, Lizzy, Alex and their family were living in the mansion house with Emma, just for those two younger women. Lizzy and Emma like to have their mother in law so close during those difficult years of adjusting to their husbands taking on those leadership roles. I think it must have been pretty powerful and standing there in that intersection. I was I was overwhelmed by that. Understanding how significant Emma was in this role that, as far as I have seen, has not been written about, but just thinking must have been the case. So when Joseph and Emmeline move their family to Plano, Emma remains and Nauvoo. She's still in the Mansion House, Lewis is still around, even though I'm not bringing him up a whole lot. But she and Lewis are in the Mansion House with Lizzy, Alex and their children. The letters are infrequent and according to Emma, it's because her eyesight is so bad. She says her spectacles are not strong enough to write by lamplight. And until she gets new eyeglasses is then she's able to ride a little more often with her family. But we can pick up a lot from the letters that do survive and knowing what was going on with the lives of her daughter's in laws and the grandchildren that are starting to come into the family. So the first grandchild is Emma Josepha, who is Emmeline, and Joseph's oldest. And then while Lizzy and Alexander when they start their family, they named their first child for his brother Frederick. So this is where we get Fred A are Frederick Alexander Smith. And he's one of those who I was able to find some resources, which is kind of fun to have those, those insights to Emma as grandma from these various grandkids. But one of these letters that survives is one that it's about 1869, maybe 1868 That part of the date is not legible. So either six months before or six months after Emmeline's death, and it's a letter that mother or grandma Emma writes to her son Joseph the Third. And she writes that "I'm truly thankful that your Bertha is so good, but at the same time, I think you pay her well for it. I trust that Zedi (who's one of the grandchildren) will grow out of her illness in time." And so when just a recap of people haven't listened to that particular podcast, Joseph the Third's first wife, Emmeline, she's very ill, especially in her last few years. And Bertha comes into the home as a caretaker for the children for the house and just managing household affairs and such, and she stays on after Emmeline dies. And several months later, in the fall of the year, Emmeline dies in the spring and November of the year, Bertha marries Joseph the Third and that causes all sorts of fun scandal in and of itself. But Bertha is there helping take care of these three of Emma's grandchildren. So that explains a little bit about how things are being set up.

Wendy Eaton 42:57

So, Emma as grandma, I believe there are 28 grandchildren altogether. 20 that are born in her lifetime and eight afterwards. So since she's living with Lizzy and Alex, let's start with that even though he's the second oldest, third oldest. So Fred A is his and leave Lizzy's eldest and I've talked about Vida a few

times we had an episode on Vida so both of them are born in the Mansion House and know Emma from their earliest days, and with them or their younger siblings, Fina, Emma, and Dawn were also all born in the Mansion House and would have started life knowing grandma Emma. There's another little girl Eva who joins the family but she's really young while grandma Emma is still living. The last of Alex and Lizzy's children Joseph, Arthur and Coral never meet Emma, but I bet they heard great stories about her. So I briefly mentioned Frederick with his wife, Anna and their daughter, Alice Frederica. Really the only other thing I'd like to mention with that family, Alice Fredrica is found living I believe in Chicago as a young woman, and she eventually joins the Reorganization and develops a relationship with her Smith family members. And it's close enough that at the time of her death, she's living in the Independence Missouri area, and she's buried in Mound Grove cemetery, not too far from where her uncle Joseph is buried. So she reunites with the family enough that she's able to be buried very close to quite a few of the Smith family members.

Karin Peter 44:44

So this is the child that was taken when Anna the wife left her husband.

Wendy Eaton 44:50

Yes. (Okay. All right.) So that's the only child that is born from Fredrick. He dies very young. And the other son, Emma son, David, he marries Clara Hartshorn in 1870. And they also only have one child, many Community of Christ lifelog members will be quite familiar with Elbert A Smith and his many contributions to the early church. He's born in 1871 in the Mansion House. Emma and Lewis are not living in the Mansion House at this time, they've now moved into the Nauvoo House, or they call it the Riverside Mansion, which was an was last home. But this just across the street, she's very close at hand in his early years. Elbert is, doesn't have an easy life. His and it's tied very much in with his grandma Emma, Elbert's father David, it he has such a strong emotional or mental illness that he is institutionalized through most of Elbert's alive. So Elbert doesn't have a very deep connection as far as knowing his father, in a we've been together a lot kind of way. But it seems like he had a good relationship with his father as far as maybe they wrote quite a bit to one another. They shared a lot of the same talents, especially with art, music and poetry. For a time, David's wife, Clara tries to keep living in Nauvoo after David's been institutionalized. But eventually, she needs a support of her family. And so she and Elbert move and live near her family. And that's some great stories in there, but not specifically Emma, so we're not going to get into too many of them. But Elbert has a fascinating life if people are interested in reading in about that. So the remaining grandchildren are all ones that I have mentioned in previous episodes. These are those fathered by Joseph Smith the Third. And this is about 17 children. That's a lot of grandkids and sometimes I wonder if Joseph had to keep it all written down, because I certainly have to keep them all straight. But just a very brief Emeline his first wife, the children were Emma, Eva, Carrie, Zedi and Joseph. Bertha's children. David, Audi, we've talked about Audencia quite a bit. Fred Israel, who were both Presidents after their father, Kenneth, Azuba, Hale, Blossom and Lucy. And then his last wife, Aida, they have three boys, Richard, William and Reginald. and William was also a church president after his brothers were.

Wendy Eaton 47:45

There a lot of great Emma as grandmas stories and I've shared some of them that I really want to focus on the oldest granddaughter, Emma Josepha, with the a little bit of the time that we have today. And so

there are a number of letters preserved within church archives that mention little Emma Josepha or Emma J, she's usually referred to as, and then also in other family publications. They write some about her, including some of her own memories included in a book called "Reflections of Emma" by Buddy Younggreen, which is probably hard to find we have a copy in our library, but it's the only copy I've ever seen. But Emma in that book, share some great memories of her grandmother, and I think she must have inherited some of the feisty nature of her grandmother the way some of these stories go. In one such letter, it Emma was probably about nine years old at this time, and her grandma, writing to Joseph so and most father says that "the letter from little Emma is a gem and she'll preserve it for whole life." So, Emma J as a young child is writing to Grandma Emma, and I think they had a pretty good letter writing relationship, particularly after her little Emma's family moved to Plano Illinois. Emma J is 12 when her mother dies, and she seems to have a very hard time adjusting especially because she is so far away from her grandma. Emma ends up returning to Nauvoo pretty regularly to visit and at times stay for long periods of time with grandma in the Riverside mansion. And one letter written when I think she was about 14 indicates that she tried to run away from home because she wanted to be with grandma. She did not want to be with her father and her brothers and sisters. She wanted grandma. So I think indicates maybe a lot of grandkids have that same feeling With a specially loved grandmother, but Emma J certainly had that relationship with grandma Emma. And in response to that, that family account, it seems like Emma tells her son Joseph, "Just let her stay with me. It's fine. She could stay here with me." People who are familiar with images paintings of Emma Hale Smith Bidamon, so grandma Emma, probably would recognize a gold bead choker necklace that she is just about, always, if not always shown wearing and photos and portraits. A number of these beads have been lost and replaced with Amber ones. But one of the last times that Emma J visits her grandmother just before her marriage in 1875, Grandma Emma gives this necklace to Emma. And so the family, it passes down from grandma to granddaughter just before a marriage. So a pretty special gift. Again, I think they have a very special relationship. There are some little great stories between the two of them.

Wendy Eaton 51:13

So I've mentioned a little bit the sad story of David being institutionalized due to illness, he at times ended up being so violent that the family just couldn't care for him. And it seems that Emma held on to hope through her later years that David would recover. And this is a hope that David's wife Clara held as well. They dearly hoped that David would be able to come back to them his old beloved self, but he he never does. So in Emma's last few years, so for about 1877 which is When David's institutionalized on for the last two and a half years, Mo leads a life without her family close at hand except Lewis. Lewis is still here, and all the the neighborhood children who dearly love Emma, but it's Clara, as I mentioned, has taken Elbert's and they're living elsewhere. I've alluded a little bit to Joseph the Third is living in Plano, Illinois at this time. Alexander and Lizzy moved their family to near Andover, Missouri in this time period. And Julia has remarried by this time, it's not a happy marriage, and she eventually leaves her husband and returns to Nauvoo. In the last year or so of Emma's life. She and Emma lived together in the Riverside mansion. Again, with Lewis, he's still there. And they care for one another in those last few months that they have together. Both Julia caring for her aging mother and Emma caring for Julia. Julia only lives about another year after Emma dies. She dies from breast cancer and is buried in the Catholic cemetery here in Nauvoo. Julia was a practicing Catholic by this point in time and was buried with with family friends up in the Catholic cemetery. So the two of them are helping care for each other in the those last few months, or maybe up to a year. So April 20th 1879, Alexander and Joseph are

called home to see Emma, Julia and Lewis said that she was coming to the end of her life. So all four of them Alexander, Joseph, Julia and Lewis were there with Emma, when she drew her last breath on April 30 1879, and spoke her last words. Joseph wrote in his memoirs that his mother turned her face upward and said, "Yes, yes, I am coming." The news of her death spread quickly in the community and to church members across the region. And they gathered into Nauvoo. And I haven't seen a specifically specific number as to how many people were at this funeral, but I think it must have been very widely attended, due to the number of accounts of people they're visiting and being there for the service. The funerals held in Emma's parlor in the Nauvoo house, which is now if you've been in the Nauvoo house, either to stay or to visit his dining room area down on the bottom floor. And that's that service is held on May 2. And after the service, her body was carried up the little hill to the family cemetery, and she's laid to rest where she had asked to be buried so she was pretty specific with our kids where she wanted to be buried. One of the hymns sang at her funeral is "Asleep in Jesus Blesses Sleep" which if folks are interested in listening to the Toronto center plates beyond the walls choir have a recorded version so you could find it in their collection of songs. Every year, close to every year for a great many years now, Kirtland Temple has hosted a hymn festival in Kirtland Temple close to Emma's birthday. And this is one of the hymn that is always song it's biographical service around Emma's life. Talking about the hymns that she contributed to and it typically closes are one of the last songs is this asleep in Jesus, it's a it's a beautiful little hymn.

Wendy Eaton 55:56

Over the next 60 some years, those who knew Emma in her later years continued to remember her as one of the best people they had ever known. I want to share just a few of the stories that I have found. Immeal Baxter called her "one of the finest women he ever knew." Charles Reinbold said "She impressed her neighbors here and Nauvoo as being a person of superior qualities." Charlotte Stevenson, who was 16 when Emma died live next door to Emma, so she didn't live too far from where the Historic Site is maybe even on the site. And she described Emma as an "intelligent, kind, highly respected woman with an even temper and a sympathetic nature." Sophie Tanner Parsh also knew mo as a teenager when Sophie was a teenager, and said that "none could surpass Emma and fundamental goodness." Now, I'd be interested to know if any listeners would recognize any of those names. None of them are church members. They are all children who were born or grew up here in Nauvoo, and new Emma when they were small children or teenagers, that were members of the community here that just dearly loved Emma. The community of Nauvoo treasured her as one of the greatest people here. It's so easy to get a glimpse of character without even having to pull family or pull church resources. I think that tells a lot about a person that most people only know her because she's a Smith and because she's the matriarch of the church that they are a part of. But I like those little glimpses from people who knew her just as aunt Emma or grandma, just a lovely woman who they got it to grow up near and be cared for and loved by. Of course, not everybody liked Emma. But a lot of that is wrapped up in generations long sentiments against her. And a lot of those are based on choices she made in the 1840s and a rather unflattering book that was written in the late 1930s. That's a whole story in and of itself. But the legacy of Emma, I think, it just tells an incredible woman that I think we are all greatly blessed to have been impacted by even though all of us living today would not have had any personal interaction with. Just a great lady.

Karin Peter 58:53

So her, her legacy in Nauvoo, aside from the church was one of caring for the sick, caring for children, taking in orphans, taking in people just one of compassion and caring, completely aside from her life as a leader, a female leader in the church.

Wendy Eaton 59:14

And always having a full cookie jar.

Karin Peter 59:16

Oh, even better. Even better. So a lot of this pieces of this I've heard before, but it's really interesting to hear all of it kind of at once about her later years post Joseph Smith, Jr. years because you do tend to get a different kind of portrait of Emma Smith, and I think it's a fuller portrait, it has more detail. Then kind of the brief sketch that were offered as kind of Joseph's sidekick and, and spouse. So thank you for bringing all of that to us. Do you have any book recommendations other than the ones you don't want to read? What are some good good books to read about Emma Hill Smith if we'd like more information?

Wendy Eaton 1:00:05

There are definitely some to avoid. But one of the best still, even after a couple decades is Mormon Enigma, which most people would be able to find pretty easily both on Amazon and we do sell it at the Red Brick store here at Nauvoo. And we have an online bookstore, people are interested. Rom Romig who served as church Archivist for a long time and also director at Kirtland Temple and he's part of the sacred story church history team. He wrote two little books that were published by the John Whitmer Historical Association, Emma's Family and Emma's Nauvoo. And the lovely thing about those is they're collections of primary resources. So a lot of the letters that I quoted, they can easily be found in both of those books. Joseph the third's memoirs, talk some but you have to pick and choose through that. But yeah, definitely Mormon Enigma is probably still the best source on her. I would advise people as the authors do in the introduction to the later editions. Don't read the first edition because they, like many other historians had to deal with Mark Hoffman forgeries in their early research. So it's the later editions are the more fully reliable ones.

Karin Peter 1:01:30

Okay, good. Good advice for that. So Mormon Enigma, the story of Emma Hale Smith. So Wendy, I want to thank you for doing all of this research, putting this together and sharing a bit more about Emma. Smith with us. You've given us some hints on where we might go, and some additional podcast episodes, even ones that are not women centric, but I think Elbert A Smith might be an option for us to do an episode about in the future as well. But we'll revisit Emma later on in the year and check in with some different time periods of her life. So before we leave today, is there any last thought or piece of information you'd like to close with?

Wendy Eaton 1:02:21

I'd really like to close with the closing verse of a poem by David. So again, the youngest son born to Emma, and I found it published in a book called Hesperis, which was published by Elbert a Smith as a collection of both his and his father's poetry. And this particular poem, David wrote about his mother, it's called "In the Darkness and The Rain." So again, this is the last verse. So most of his poems are pretty

long. "We shall meet again to your mother in a land made right with love for the sunshine pure and golden pours from its free source above. In the pleasant land of heaven, where the Savior ever reigns, where there comes no time of partying in the darkness and the rain."

Karin Peter 1:03:17

Oh, that's lovely. Thank you. For our listeners. If you have questions for Wendy, or suggestions of women from Community of Christ history that you would like to hear about in an episode, you can reach her at weaton, W E A T O N @cofchrist.org. This is Cuppa J, part of the Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host, Karin. Peter. Thanks so much for listening.

Josh Mangelson 1:03:53

Thanks for listening to Project Zion Podcast, subscribe to our podcast on Apple podcast, Stitcher, or whatever podcast streaming service you use. And while you're there, give us a five star rating. Project Zion Podcast is sponsored by Latter-day Seeker Ministries of Community of Christ. The views and opinions expressed in this episode are of those speaking and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Latter-day Seeker Ministries, or Community of Christ. The music has been graciously provided by Dave Heinze.