

Cuppa Joe | Christmas in Church History

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SPEAKERS

Blake Smith, Barbara Walden, Peter Smith, Wendy Eaton, Levi Triplett, Hunter Bouveret, Lach Mackay, Steve Smith, Seth Bryant

Blake Smith 00:27

Hello and welcome to Cuppa Joe, a Project Zion Podcast series where we explore the people, places, and events of restoration history. I'm Blake Smith, and I'm very excited to share this episode with you today. On December 7, the Historic Sites Foundation offered a special program called "Christmas in Community of Christ History." The event was co-hosted by Executive Director, Barb Walden, and member of the Historic Sites Foundation Board of Directors, Peter Smith. Barb and Peter were joined by storytellers at each of the historic sites. We hope you'll enjoy the step back into Christmas history restoration style.

01:40

Music intro.

Barbara Walden 03:21

Well hello church history friends. My name is Barb Walden and I am especially excited tonight to welcome you to the "Christmas in Church History" program. This is a first for us at the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, and I'm thrilled that you are joining us tonight. It will be an evening of tales as we hear from six storytellers who will reach back into church history and share a Christmas or holiday story with us. Now joining me today are a few familiar faces. My co-host Peter Smith, who serves as an active board member for the Community of Christ to start sites foundation and co-director of our annual Historic Sites Bus Tour. In addition to Peter Lexie Fraser is joining us tonight. Lexie's a former student in the Alma Blair Internship Program and we couldn't have these online programs without her. So as you can see, she is ready for Christmas as well with her Christmas tree on hand. So welcome, Lexie. And Peter, I love your Christmas tree, too. Now there's just a few announcements I want to share before we dive into those Christmas tales. And the first thing, tonight's also the first night for our \$25k in 25 days challenge. So this is our final stretch in the fall campaign. Your gifts to the \$25k Challenge help continue programs like "Christmas in Church History." It helps continue the virtual tours of the historic sites, our ongoing spring and fall lecture series, and so much more. The most important use of your funds is preserving and maintaining the Community of Christ historic sites, some of which you will see this evening. So once again, our generous board is offering a matching gift to the first \$6000 given to the \$25k campaign. So if you're interested in doubling your donation tonight, and supporting the ongoing preservation efforts at these significant places of church heritage, please do so.

And finally, the new year includes a new tour with the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, a church history tour to beautiful Italy. Peter and I will be heading that way along with our friend Michael Wright, who will share the stories, sights and sounds of Italy on a 10-day tour. We'll visit Rome, Assisi, Florence Pisa, Waldensian Valley and more. The dates for this history tour are October 4 through the 14th of 2024. We're finalizing the itinerary and pricing details but we can't help but share our plans for the new year. It's the holiday season and we just have to share this exciting tour for 2024. This is the history tour you don't want to miss. So, more information is headed your way soon. And if you would like to be among the first to receive the 2020 for Italy tour details, drop your name in the chat with the words Italy tour, and we'll be sure to reach out to you when tour registration opens. So, a lot of exciting things are going to be happening in the new year. The Italy tour is just one of those. And speaking of exciting things. Tonight's "Christmas in Church History" program would not be possible without our gifted storytellers. And a number of people who have helped us collect these wonderful stories. We have a lot of people to think especially a Lachlan Mackay, Seth Bryant, Wendy Eaton, Blake Smith, Sally Roth, Tom Weber, Steve Smith, Gary Reese, Hunter Bouveret, Levi Triplett and Mike Hoffman. Some of those names you'll hear from tonight as they share their stories. So we're going to begin our evening tales with Peter.

Peter Smith 07:17

Thanks Barb. I am glad you mentioned Wendy Eaton earlier as she has been sharing a number of great Christmas poems that date back to the 19th and the early 20th century. And I have thoroughly enjoyed reading them and decided to share a few with you tonight. And I'd like to open us with a poem now and then close our evening with another one. And so we begin with a poem by Mary E. Gillen from the Saints Herald, and this is from December 30, 1931. And it's called "Candle of Hope." When I have lighted my candle of hope, and set it in my window to gleam, as Bethlehem star, once shown out afar, to gladden the world with its beam. I have kindled my fire of love and watch for the glow of its spark. When love 'round the world, like a banner is curled, it will banish our whoa and the dark. I have planted the seed of faith in the shine of tomorrow sun, not always the rain, the sorrow nor pain, for sometimes the victory is won. Oh, let not my candle of hope burn low nor the fire of my love grow down. Let my faith sustain and my hope remain in Bethlehem star and in Him.

Barbara Walden 08:47

Thank you, Peter. That was a perfect way to begin our evening Christmas tales. What a great poem. So throughout Community of Christ history, we find a number of Christmas stories. Marianne Stearns was a four-year-old child in Kirtland when she first learned about Santa Claus while traveling with her parents Parley P. and Marianne Pratt in 1837. A few years earlier, the Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette, a newspaper from one of Kirtland's neighboring towns, published an editorial defending Christmas celebrations. And the author writes "on Christmas Eve, the stockings have all been hung up, including (...) little one who can just waddle, and then filled by St. Nicholas and the hearts of the children made glad and prepared to spend a Merry Christmas. To this custom, some have objected, but in our minds it is associated with the delights of childhood. Well, today in Kirtland, Christmas at the Kirtland Temple is a very special time each year. The annual Christmas Eve service takes place on December 24 at 7pm. It's an evening of Carols and Scriptures, it's held in the lower court and it's a tradition that has gone on for generations. It's really a warm, special tradition. So it's a special evening is all I can say and all are welcome together in the lower court this December 24, for that Christmas

Eve service. Our first story tonight is about Kirtland and who better to share than Seth Bryant, a familiar face and often co-hosts with us at the Historic Sites Foundation. Welcome, Seth.

Seth Bryant 10:31

Greetings from Kirtland, Ohio. I'm Seth Bryant. I'm filming from my den. I had hoped to be filming from this location (Kirtland Temple), but the traffic was just too loud. So this is a shot taken this afternoon from the Kirtland North cemetery. That is Joseph and Emma Smith's newly restored home, Joe Smith's store on the other side of the street. And then if you rotate 180 degrees, you can see the Temple and then across the street from that is Kirtland Community of Christ. Like I said the noise was just too loud from the traffic. And ironically, I found a story where Joseph Smith had trouble with traffic as well on a December day in Kirtland in 1835. So from his journal, "a fine morning, I made preparation to ride to Painesville with my wife and children family, also my scribe, we had our sleigh and horses prepared and set out. When we arrived, we were passing through Mentor Street, we overtook a team with two men on the slate. I politely asked them to let me pass, they granted my request. And as we passed them, they balled out. Do you get any revelation rate lately, with an addition of Black Guard that I did not understand? This is a fair sample of character of Mentor Street inhabitants. What's funny is in the snow, I've had one or two run-ins with the inhabitants of Manor Street or Mentor Avenue today." Black Guard, I didn't know what that was. I looked it up. Are there two of me? All right, whatever. I'm gonna let it let it slide. Here's your definition of Black Guard. Moving on. What's interesting about this story of Joseph and his family out in the sleigh, if you read through that 1835 journal, you'll find several December entries that talk about him going out for a sleigh ride, either for fun or to go and visit friends and saints throughout the area. And then there's this really nice entry on 25 December it says, "at home all this day, and enjoyed myself with my family up in Christmas Day. The only time I have had this privilege so satisfactorily, for for a long time." You'll note if they wanted to go for a sleigh ride, right? They've got this really nice hill here, right outside. One of my favorite contemporary Christmas stories here in Kirtland actually takes place on this hill. So about a year after we arrived here, there was a massive snowstorm. More than 30 inches of snow fell in a very short period of time. And the same night as that snow storm, the Kirtland Kiwanis was holding their annual Christmas dinner for seniors in the area, which was hosted at the Kirtland congregation, just across the street from the Temple. So as cars are trying to make their way to Community of Christ, of course, because the roads are icy and all the snow, they're sliding all over the place. And the police wisely decided to redirect traffic to send everyone down the hill instead to the LDS Historic Kirtland and the missionaries. They're surprised but very happy to receive these folks who had been stranded in their cars, some of them for quite a while as they were sorting out the accidents and all the issues with the roads. And so they go inside to Historic Kirtland. And of course, they're cold. What's the first thing they want? They want a nice, warm cup of coffee, and the Mormons were befuddled. Especially as the local Kirtland residents keep insisting, "No, I don't know your congregation up the hill. They give us coffee all the time. Go ahead. We just want a cup of coffee." Well, that's one of my favorite contemporary Christmas stories from Kirtland. I wish you all well, and Merry Christmas.

Barbara Walden 14:52

Well, thank you, Seth. We will now turn our attention west to Nauvoo, where we find two of my favorite storytellers and I think they're probably your favorite storytellers as well. Lachlan Mackay and Wendy Eaton. Let's begin with Lachlan will tell us a little bit about Christmas in 1840s Nauvoo.

Lach Mackay 15:15

From the Nauvoo neighbor on December 13, 1843. At the request of a large number of citizens General Joseph Smith proposals having a dinner party on Christmas Day for young ladies and gentlemen, historian Glen Leonard noted that typically in the Nauvoo period, Christmas was celebrated with activities around and in the home, like dinners and dinner parties. Customs such as gift giving, decorating and Christmas trees were not prevalent. In England, Charles Dickens published his now famous A Christmas Carol in 1843, during the Nauvoo period of church history, but the festive celebrations Dickens which described so graphically in that novel, had yet to traverse the Atlantic to any great extent. Joseph noted in his journal for December 23 of '43, "at home counseling the brethren who called on me and attending to my domestic duties making preparations for Christmas dinner, the festivities started a little earlier than expected," again from Joseph's journal on the 25th, "This morning, about one o'clock, I was aroused by an English sister Latice Rushton, widow of Richard Rushton Sr, accompanied by three of her sons with their wives and her two daughters with their husbands, and several of her neighbors singing "Mortals Awake with Angels Join" (...), which caused a thrill of pleasure to run through my soul. This hymn was number 77 In Emma's 1835 hymnal and was written by Samuel Medley in 1782. It was likely sung to him Handel's Christmas. From the first verse, "mortals awake with angels join and chant the solemn lay. Joy, love and gratitude combined to hail the auspicious day." Joseph's entry continued, "All of my family and boarders arose to hear the serenade. And I felt to thank my Heavenly Father for their visit, and bless them in the name of the Lord. They also visited my brother Hyrum, who was awakened from his sleep. He arose and went out of doors to them. He shook hands with each and blessed each of them in the name of the Lord, and said that he thought at first that a cohort of angels had come to visit him. It was such heavenly music to him. At two o'clock in the afternoon, about 50 couples sat down at my table to dine. While I was eating, my scribe called requesting me to solemnize the marriage of his brother, Dr. Levi Richards, and Sarah Griffiths. But as I could not leave, I referred him to President Brigham Young, who married them. A large party supped at my house and spent the evening and music, dancings and etc, in a most cheerful and friendly manner. During the festivities, a man with hair long and falling over his shoulders, and apparently drunk, came in and acted like a Missourian" (as a native Missouri and I think maybe I shouldn't be offended). Joseph continued, "I requested the captain of the police to put them out of doors. A scuffle ensued, and I had an opportunity to look him full in the face when to my great surprise, and joy untold. I discovered it was my long tried warm but cruelly persecuted friend, Oren Porter Rockwell just arrived from nearly a years imprisonment without conviction in Missouri. It was indeed a happy Christmas." And I wish you a Merry Christmas from Nauvoo.

Barbara Walden 19:17

Well, thank you lot. Now let's head over to the homestead. This historic home is the first home where Emma and Joseph Smith lived when they moved to Nauvoo. It was also the home where Joseph Smith III and his young family lived years later. Tonight, Wendy will share a story that took place during the time Joseph Smith III and his wife, Emmaline, were living in the homestead. Welcome Wendy!

Wendy Eaton 19:45

Greetings from the Smith family homestead in Nauvoo, Illinois. The January 1898 issue of Autumn Leaves magazine included a story by President Joseph Smith III. He looked back on nearly 40 years to his second or third Christmas, spent with his wife Emma. The two were living in this home at that time. They had one child named Emma J. And if it was their third Christmas, they were a month away from welcoming their second child Evelyn. It was 1857 or at 58, so before their lives would be devoted to the church. Emmaline had little experience with preparing large extravagant meals, and the year before she had attempted a big Thanksgiving meal with disastrous results. It was such a failure that she refused to ever make another such attempt. Joseph pleaded with Emmaline to try again. When she finally agreed, it was under the condition that only her mother and sister and his mother and stepfather would be present, so to lessen her humiliation that she was sure was to come. So, Joseph bought a turkey and shut it in a spare room to fatten it up. And no, he's not clear where that spare room was, but I certainly hope he didn't mean a spare room at this home. Time came for the turkey to be butchered, plucked and cleaned for cooking. Joseph assisted Emmaline as much as he was able as she prepared the meal. Their guests arrived and Joseph wrote that both he and Emmaline were nervous, but hopeful that the meal would be edible. I'll read Joseph's words for the rest of the story. "I had sharpened my knife for toughness and attacked the unresisting turkey while the poor cook was saying with tears in her voice, 'it is ruined, I know it is, and I will never cook another long as I live.' but to the satisfaction of our guest to the surprise of my tearful anxiously waiting wife, my unrepressed exultation that tender, deliciously cooked bird was a triumph of cookery. The meal, the feast, was a grand success. And that evening when our guests had gone, and I took my wife and my arms and kissed her in congratulations. No happier wife, no more joyful husband was in the city. The recollection of that day, with all the attendant circumstances, the incipient trials of previous failure, the enjoyment of those bidden to our table, the consciousness of devoted effort, the satisfaction of having scored a wifely success, so happified my wife's beautiful face already so dear to me. The hilarity and happy thoughts with which I witnessed my wife's success and happiness at these memories. I now look back on that Christmas as the pleasantest one in my recollection.

Barbara Walden 22:59

Thank you, Wendy. Such a great story. I've got a feeling Joseph Smith III loved Christmas. Some of the greatest Christmas stories we have in church history, either come from him or he is featured prominently in this story, as shared by his children. A lot of those stories come from Liberty Hall in the Lamoni period. And so we're gonna head over to Liberty Hall and share these Christmas stories with Steve Smith, the site director at Joseph Smith III's Liberty Hall. Welcome, Steve.

Steve Smith 23:37

Welcome to Liberty Hall historic site, the home of Joseph Smith III. The reason I have these bells on is because at Christmas time, Joseph Smith III would dress up like Santa Claus. And he put these sleigh bells around his shoulders, and they would pass out apples from his orchard. Joseph and his family lived here and this was the family room or sitting room. There were about 15 members of the family, eight of his children plus Bertha's mom and dad and parts of her family lived here as well as others. And they would gather in this room in the evening. Joseph and Bertha's oldest daughter, Audentia, writes about this room. She says it was just kind of magical, especially at Christmas time. And they would gather here in front of the fireplace. And they would tell stories, and Joseph and Bertha's

youngest daughter, Lucy, says that she remembers sitting in front of this fireplace, sitting in her dad's lap, while he told Christmas stories. Though we don't know the Christmas stories he told but the story The Night Before Christmas when all through the house, that was actually written earlier in the century so it may have been the stories that you hear today, as well as some of the Christian, the Scripture Christmas stories. Audentia also says that her dad, Joseph, would often sit over in the corner. And the one she talks about on her mom Bertha had put papers down beneath the chair. The reason she had done that was because Joseph was carving hickory sticks into bows and arrows for his, for the kids for Christmas gifts. Audentia says when they went out to get wood in the fall, he would gather specific or special hickory sticks, put them away to season, then at Christmas time he would bring them out and carve them into various toys, including bows and arrows. Audentia said that at Christmas time, it was just magical in here. She says the smells since I've been there baking gingerbread, gingerbread cookies, and colognes and cinnamon. She said the evergreens with tinsel and the kids would just be everybody is waiting baited breath about what's going to be happening. She said the people would come with mysterious packages which they would put under their Christmas tree. And the people are whispering secrets back and forth. She said everybody was just so excited at Christmas time, and they would gather in this room. Then at about nine o'clock. They would read scriptures, have their family prayers, and go to bed. I want to tell you another story, we will do that in the dining room. Now we're in the dining room of Joseph Smith III's home, Liberty Hall. And this story takes place later time than when we were in the family room. This story is about Joseph and his third wife, Ada, who remarried in 1898, after Bertha was killed in a buggy accident that year. Joseph writes to a friend and says that he was really sad, because there were only four family members here. That time the rest of the kids older and moved away. And there was only four he and Bertha and two kids who were here sitting around this large table. He says they had to take out all the leaves and making the smallest possible and was just kind of lonely. I think in response to that, he and Ada made a plan to invite all of the widows and Lamoni to a Christmas dinner. And so they set up a invitation to the widows, and we have a facsimile of the one of the invitations that they sent and I just want to read it to you. This one was to Sister Anthony. "Dear Sister Anthony, brother Joseph and sister Ada R. Smith request the favor of your presence at dinner, Wednesday, December 25 1901. So this is a later Dinner. Dinner is served at one o'clock. A carriage will call for you between 11am and noon. If unable to attend, please inform at your earliest convenience. Lamoni IA December 10 1901. Joseph and Ada R Smith. The that dinner came about and it became a tradition for Joseph and Ada to have these Christmas dinners for the people in the community who didn't have others around. That first dinner though 1898 was special because Ada was nine months pregnant with their first child. They didn't know the kids kind of encouraged them not to go ahead with that because she was so pregnant and expecting, but they wanted to invite them and so they did. I'm sure she had help but they passed things through the food as they fixed it through that pass-through window that Bertha designed in the house and for this table. They had the dinner and Joseph then takes the widows home in the carriage or sleigh. I talked about he loved to play with those sleigh bells. That night though. Ada began to have birth pains. She began to have labor pains. And the next day, December 26 1898 their first child, a boy, Richard Clark Smith was born. So it was Joseph's birthday son from his third wife. Ada Clark. We've enjoyed having you here at Liberty Hall listening to some of our Christmas stories. Merry Christmas.

Barbara Walden 30:05

Thank you Steve was so nice to see Liberty Hall decorated for this Sunday's Christmas tea. That historic home is such a treasure. Lamoni is not only home to Liberty Hall it's also home to Graceland University and who better to share Christmas tales from Lamoni than two Graceland students, Hunter Bouveret, and Levi Triplett. Both Hunter and Levi serve as campus minister or campus chaplains. Hunter is our first storyteller, and she will share a great story about Graceland students stuck on campus over Christmas, while Levi, our second storyteller, will share a story about the old children's home that once stood in Lamoni. both Hunter and Levi are sharing their stories from the Newcomb Student Center on the Graceland campus.

Hunter Bouveret 30:53

This story comes from Leonard Lee, who was a lifelong Herald Publishing House employee and former Graceland student speaking about a Christmas here at Graceland University. 12 students found themselves on Christmas unable to travel home to their families. Sitting around the Patroness Hall on Christmas Eve they wondered how to spend their time. The ice was too rough for skating, the movie playing at the theater was no good, and no one wanted to study. In fact, one person had a biscuit thrown at them for even suggesting it. One thoughtful girl had suggested that they do a good deed for others and the rest readily agreed. They bundled up against the cold, packed a few ukuleles and set out into the cold and the cloud-filled skies overhead. Among many of the social justice projects of the church in the early 1980s and 1900s was the establishment of retirement communities often casually called the old saints home. And just a half hour walk from campus was the Lamoni home. A renewed breath of life entered the residence of the home when the youngsters came in. It had been a somber day filled with sad reflections of Christmas gone by and no hope to see family or friends that year. The candles on the Christmas tree were lit and one boy timidly stated, My dear friends, we were lonesome at the dormitories and we thought we just couldn't let Christmas Eve pass without going somewhere and having a little party with somebody. So we thought we would come out and sing a few songs to you and play a little music to pass the evening. We will have to give Miss Freda here the credit for the idea. If we sing any songs that you know, join in with us and we'll all sing together. With piano ukulele and voice they all joined together in hymns and carols solos, quartets, duets. When the music began to wind down the staff surprised all with free refreshments, and they all enjoyed visiting together over the treats. When at last it was time to go the students bundled back up and ventured into the cold. They looked up into light to see the clouds had blown away. Above was the clear sparkling sky. Leonard Lee closes his story saying, Although there were no astronomers among the youngsters there was not one of them that doubted that the Star of Bethlehem shown in the blue heaven over their heads and some might have evenly laughingly declared that they had felt angels were near for the love of Jesus of Galilee was in their hearts.

Levi Triplett 33:32

Hi my name is Levi and today's Christmas tale shows how children can be incredible advocates for other children. This story comes from the February issues of Autumn Leaves in 1921. Amid the many church social justice projects in the early 1900s was a home for orphan and homeless children. The beautiful Victorian era home give the children who live there a warm and secure place to grow. illness was no stranger in the home, but most unwelcome was first diphtheria and then the smallpox epidemic that swept through in December 1920. The staff did the best they could for their 23 young charges. The home had a detached cottage that was used to quarantine the sick away from the well. As illness rages

Christmas crept closer, but the hopes of toys, games decorations and a big dinner were just not possible that year. Eight children were in the quarantine cottage at Christmas. The well children were all willing to put off the wanted festivities until they can all be together again. Still, though, the children wanted to do something. During the nightly prayer time the children memorized several Christmas hymns. On Christmas Eve, they silently walked out of the home and formed a half circle around the cottage and they began to sing. The sick children were taken by surprise and made their way to their windows to look out to find the source of the song. For a little while, they forgot their illness and isolation, captured in the joy of childish song. All too soon, the music came to an end and the carolers were ushered back into the home to warm up and go to bed. Even knowing there would be no stockings the following morning, their hearts were light at the joy they had brought. On Christmas Day, the children were well played quietly through the morning, then took up a sledding party in the afternoon, taking turns with a few sleds and scooped shovels they had. At dinner, they learned the children in the cottage were asking for an encore of carols, and they happily bundled back up for a repeat performance. As their songs ended, they cottage lights suddenly went out. When the light returned, those gathered in the yard saw a beautiful pantomimed nativity scene performed by the children inside. They had spent the day preparing with their limited supplies, a paper star over the heads, a bedsheet and rope children portraying the birth of Jesus. One of the carols the children learned was found in the youth hymnal, Zions Praises. "I've heard the sweetest story of the dearest friends to me. And his mother's name was Mary and his home in Galilee. Oh, he loved the golden sunshine and the birds and so do I. And the far off blue sky. Jesus loved Jesus loved, he loved and so do I. But the last is best. Now listen, it's as sweet as we can be. Jesus loves the little children, and he loves and blesses me. Now I fold my hands and ask him. Oh, dear savior, let me be like the little child named Jesus in his home in Galilee. Jesus loves Jesus loves He loves and blesses me."

Barbara Walden 36:48

Well, thank you, Hunter and Levi, how can you not love these Christmas stories from church history? Oh, our final story tonight comes from the Plano period. Our friend Blake Smith lives not too far from the historic Plano stone church. And he's here tonight to share our final Christmas tale. Welcome, Blake.

Blake Smith 37:08

Thanks, Barb. It's great to be with you guys. I wish I could be in Plano tonight, especially because as I tell this story, or these little reflections from Christmas in Plano, it would be good for you to, at least those of you who have not been to the Plano congregation to see just how full the church might have been on these glorious evenings. The pieces that I have to share tonight come from really two sources. One is Zions Hope, which was a newspaper that was primarily read by children, as I understand it, and had a very, very broad reading. I want to start by reading one letter that was written by a young boy named William Crick and pay attention to the incredible depth. And this is just an example of some of the writings that the children wrote in. And they come from children. I think there was the earliest one I read or the youngest one I read was about seven years old. I don't know how old William was, but he writes on January 7 of 1876. "Dear Hopes," and I assume that the Hopes are those children who are reading the letters, "we have just set out in the labors of the new year." Remember, this is a child. "But first I must tell you about our Christmas festival. Under the direction of brother F G Pitt, superintendent and brother William H. Curwan, manager of the festivities, q nice tree was prepared in the Latter Day

Saints Church, which was well laden with holiday presents. And on Christmas Eve, the Rising Star Sunday School and friends filled the house at an early hour. About two hours prior to the distribution of presents were spent in duets, quartets, short speeches, dialogues and rehearsals, interspersed with songs. Taking the affair altogether, we, young folks at least, had an enjoyable time, not soon to be forgotten. Hoping to greet you again through our little paper. I close wishing you all the late a Happy New Year. I am still yours for the right way." William Crick. There's a piece that is written also in Zions hope we believe it was written by brother Henry Stebbins, as Henry was one of the editors along the Joseph Smith of the letter he two writes about the festival in 1879. He writes this, about the Christmas tree festival and entertainment was given by the officers and members of the Ryan Using star Sunday School of Plano, Illinois on the evening before Christmas 1879. In the opinion of the writer, it was an unusually pleasant occasion. Anybody who's been to a children's Christmas program might understand those words. And one of the best he ever witnessed, he said, The best where all the actors and speakers were children. He says there be citations and dialogues were nearly all correctly, as well as pleasingly rendered, even to those parts taken by the youngest ones. He goes on to talk about the things that happen re citations and songs as was mentioned before, in the little letter by William Crick, but apparently at that festival, Zadie Smith and Audi Smith were part of that particular program. A little bit later in the 1880s, from the Herald, we get a little bit more information. And this is where as an individual who gets the honor of serving the Plano congregation as a Mission Center President and Chief Financial Officer and being with that congregation and being familiar with the size of the Plano church, JC Foss, in a letter to WW Blair, giving account of his actions during the season writes that he had been with the Plano saints on Christmas Eve, at which 423 presents were given out, including a nice organ to Maude Willette, Little Maude Willette, he says. And so we know that in those from these tales that those extravaganzas, those festivals, were celebrating the tree again, there were all kinds of things shared and songs and stories and recitations, two hours worth, before those presents were shared. I get the idea that the children of those days were not only quite intelligent and deep as they shared their writings for Zions Hope, but they were also apparently very patient. The last thing I want to share is a story from the last story I want to share is also comes from the Herald and I'm not sure who the author is it comes from the 1880s and this is what it says, "at the Christmas entertainment of the saints Rising Star Sunday School of Plano, in the meeting house their little Ora Van Gran, daughter of sister Paulina Blakely, and niece of brother W. H Dean of the Herald office, a child of six and a half years made a sensation in her rendition of the part of 'A Mother and her Sick Babies.'" The local paper, the Plano News, giving the following notice of it. Miss Ora Van Dran, a bright and beautiful child of five years of age, made a grand success and the character of 'A mother and Her Sick Babies' at the Rising Star Sunday School entertainment Christmas Eve and was appreciated by everyone present and grant she may become one of the stars in the future." The Kindall County Record has the following notice of the affair, "The Christmas Eve festivities at the stone church were unusually interesting, a large audience, a large and handsome tree and select literary and musical programs. After the tree had been picked, a handsome cabinet organ was presented to Miss George Horton. It was a gift from the members of the Sunday school and church for her services in instructing the children. And finally, I want to share a prayer. I'm not sure of the source of it is well I believe may have come from a recording of one of these festivities but it is a prayer by Joseph III and Mark Forscutt, "We wish all the Little Hopes a Merry Christmas. Whether in the chilly north or the genial south, where orange trees bloom and the grasses perennially wave and snowflakes never fall. But in the midst of your glee never forget of the dear, dear Savior who's coming into the mortal state, you may be celebrating. But remember that

present earthly pleasures are not short lived, while the pleasures of that life which you may attain unto our forevermore. Merry Christmas from Plano.

Barbara Walden 44:50

Thank you, Blake. That was beautiful. And perfect for our last story tonight. So let's close our evening of tales with another historic Home from Peter. Peter, what do you have to share with us from church history?

Peter Smith 45:04

Well, it seems appropriate that as since we started with a hymn written by Albert J Smith that we end our evening with a poem written by Albert a Smith. This poem was written in December, or it was published in December of 1927, nearly 100 years ago, and it's called "Christmas Eve." The light the glow, the pleasant heat, from blazing coals upon the grate, the patter of swift happy feet, that pause without the door and wait. Quick, pleasant greetings far and near. A merry, merry Christmas dear. The climax of each gracious plan when man is giving gifts to men, the thoughtful deed, the quick surprise, the dew of pleasure in the eyes, and over under through it all. Joy that's better more than mirth as silvery voices rise and fall, goodwill to all, and peace on earth.

Barbara Walden 46:06

Thank you, Peter. We will bring our Christmas in church history program to a close and I'm sorry to bring it to a close. These have all been wonderful stories from some great storytellers. And our thanks to all the storytellers who shared with us this evening from Kirtland, Nauvoo, Lamoni and Plano. Also a big thank you to Peter and Lexie for helping out behind the scenes. Not only tonight, but throughout the Fall Series. Thank you. Thank you. And lastly, we share our thanks to all of you, our dear friends in the audience for your continuing support for the historic sites foundation and your love for a good story. We look forward to seeing you all again in the new year where we will continue sharing and preserving church heritage. So from our home to yours, we wish you all Merry Christmas.

Blake Smith 47:03

You have been listening to Project Zion Podcast. Special thanks to BB Walden, Peter Smith and the historic sites foundation for allowing us to air this special program here at Project Zion Podcast. For more episodes on restoration history, visit project Zion podcast.org and look for the series kappa Joe will also put a direct link to the series in the show notes. Thanks for joining us, and Merry Christmas.