

Cuppa Joe | Women in the Restoration | Bertha Greer

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Bertha Greer, Utah, church, Lucy, polygamy, medicine, Lamoni, Rose Hill Cemetery

SPEAKERS

Wendy Eaton, Karin Peter

Karin Peter 00:27

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. And we tell the stories of women and how they've shaped and led and offered ministry and had profound impact in the history of Community of Christ. Our guest to share these stories with us is Wendy Eaton. Wendy is a favorite at Project Zion Podcast. And we are always happy to have her as our guest. She's also worked at multiple Restoration historic sites, and also serves as the administrative assistant to the Historic Sites Foundation. So we've been doing a lot of these histories of women of the Restoration, Wendy, and today's a little different, because we're talking about not just a woman from church history, who by the way, it was completely new to me a new name, Bertha Greer, but apparently multiple levels of her family. So we'll hear about her. So who was Bertha Greer? And what about her story was interesting enough that we should do a PZP episode on her.

Wendy Eaton 01:49

Like you said, we'll be covering a couple generations of Bertha: her mother, her aunt and a few other women as well as Bertha's father. So we actually will be getting into a man in church history this time around [Karin: what?] Well, it comes into play especially since, just as a heads up, we will be talking about polygamy in this episode.

Karin Peter 02:12

What? This is too exciting. Okay, listeners, you heard it here first. We will, we will be talking about that. And when we get there, I'll give you a link to another podcast that will help some background on that.

Wendy Eaton 02:24

Okay. I know it could be very uncomfortable for some people to hear how closely polygamy brushes against Community of Christ history, and we are gonna get right into it with this episode. So I first came across Bertha Allen Greer's name when I was doing some research on Aida Clark Smith so Joseph Smith III's third wife, not polygamy. That was the whole point of that series. That wasn't polygamy, that was individual marriages. But Joseph is traveling out in the eastern United States, and he receives word from his wife that one of his granddaughters, Viola, had died from diphtheria. Diphtheria was

ravaging Lamoni, Iowa at this time. And with this news of the death of his granddaughter was the information that Joseph's daughter Lucy, who was about 14, was critically ill with this disease. She's isolated in Liberty Hall, something many of us can relate to over the last few years, Ada and baby Richard, who's not even a year old at this point, they are in a completely separate part of the house so that they don't get sick. Getting this news Joseph is afraid. He doesn't know whether he should turn around and head back to Lamoni. He spent some time in prayer, though, and decides to just wait it out a couple of days for more news. Thankfully, in the case of his daughter Lucy, she recovers. And Joseph attributes it to the care of Dr. Bertha Greer. So I was pretty excited to hear not only this lovely story, but the fact that there is a very active female doctor in Lamoni in the 1890s. That was pretty exciting to me. Absolutely. So this entry that can be found in Joseph's memoirs, which is a collection of his memories that he dictated to his children that was published for the church in the early 1900s. This memory includes a photo of Bertha Greer and the caption, let me get this right, Bertha A. Greer was for many years a physician in Lamoni, Iowa. She was the typical old time family doctor who is at once friend, nurse and doctor. If need be, she would remain at the bedside not alone to prescribe, but night and day if possible to do so, until danger was passed. She is held in pleasant memory by a great many Saints. So I love this entry, I had to put it aside for the time being because I was focusing on Ada. But this last fall, I had the chance to go back to Lamoni from my work with the foundation, and I spent a little bit of time in Rose Hill Cemetery looking for Bertha's grave, so I could get a picture of it, because I had already started the research at this point. And it's, I love cemeteries. That's one of my favorite historic sites, if you want to think of them that way. That's where you can physically get closest to the last places of many of these individuals and she has a lovely monument. It's within easy walking distance as Rose Hill Cemetery is to Joseph Smith's home, that home that she was caring for Lucy at. So one of the first big steps that I make when going into one of these biographies is the website "Find A Grave" because, one, it's free. And, two, it gives great information just to get the basic layout of a person's life. Sometimes it can be tricky to navigate. But since I knew exactly where Bertha was buried, that took me straight to her page. And I was able to get all that basic information on her, her parents, siblings. And that's when things got weird.

Karin Peter 06:31

I don't think I've ever heard you say that in any of the podcasts.

Wendy Eaton 06:37

So to not make this too confusing. We're going to step back from Bertha to her aunt, Sarah Pidd and her story and then, that's connected to birth this mother Elizabeth and her father James. So we're just going to put all these pieces together and then we'll finish up with some more information on Bertha. So, Sarah Pidd was the second of four children and was born in 1825 in Wack load Lincolnshire in England. When she ate, her father dies, leaving her mother to have to go to work. And Sarah has to take care of her younger sisters, Elizabeth and Maryann. So imagine that an eight-year-old having to take care of a younger sister and a baby sister. And not long after the father's death in the family story is recorded that baby Maryann also dies. Eventually the mother remarries. But Sarah says that he was a terrible man and the three siblings feared him. As soon as she was able, she apprenticed herself out to learn the millinery and dressmaking trays. So, millinery is primarily women's hats at this point in England, but then again, also seamstress with dressmaking. She has a sweetheart who she hopes to marry someday. And she and her younger sister Elizabeth meet LDS missionaries. And not only are

they converted to this new religion, they're converted to the idea of these grand settlements in Utah. Sarah had saved enough money for herself and one other person to make the trip to Utah. Knowing that whoever she chooses, she's between her sister Elizabeth and her sweetheart. Whoever she chooses, the other is going to be left behind and she will probably never see again due to the lack of funds that either Sarah's sweetheart or Elizabeth had. Sarah chooses her sister. And when she says goodbye to her sweetheart, he gives her a little soldier ornament, which she treasured for the rest of her life. Sarah and Elizabeth left England in January 1853. And they probably left from Liverpool, but I haven't been able to pinpoint that. There was just one passing reference. Maybe eventually I'll figure that out. Sarah was 27. Elizabeth is 21. Sarah, like me, was incredibly seasick on the voyage, and Elizabeth was lovesick for a young man named James Allen, who was, like them, a convert. He was from Glasgow, Scotland and making the trip to Utah. James is very attentive. He's very forward with his feelings to Elizabeth. And Sarah's not comfortable with this attention. She also tells in her family stories, that he was filthy. He never changed his clothes. By the time they got to New Orleans. He just smelled awful and she convinces Elizabeth to ditch him when they get off the boat in New Orleans and lose him. Unfortunately, he finds them. He, like I said, He's completely in love with Elizabeth. But thankfully he had changed his clothes by that point. He said he saved them to put on nice clean clothes when he got to America. I guess we'll give them that. But I can't imagine making that trip about bathing or changing your clothes at all. They're separate for the overland journeys and Sarah doesn't say if she is relieved by this or not, but she does make a point of saying that they don't see him for many months. Sarah and Elizabeth arrive in Missouri from New Orleans. And they stay there for a time while waiting for a wagon train West. Sarah found work sewing, and the people she met tried to convince her to not go to Utah. She's determined to see her journey through though. And finally the company was ready to leave. And the sisters began their walk to Utah. And as the children's song goes that many of my friends have told me about the walked and walked and walked. The wagon train arrived at Old Tithing Yard in Salt Lake City in the fall of 1853. So this was roughly a five or six month journey. The travelers are nearly out of supplies, and many have died along the way. And while most of their fellow travelers had people to meet them in Salt Lake, Sarah and Elizabeth had no one in knew no one. They sat alone until dark when a man arrived, and said that his wife needed someone to help around the house. And Sarah told her sister to go with this man so that she would have a secure home and presumably safe home to be in. She doesn't say how long that she herself waited for someone to offer her a hand up. But she does say that she moved several times over the next few weeks staying with different families, sewing and helping keep house with them. She's living west of the Jordan River when she looks out the window of her current home and saw her sister in a carriage with James Allen. He had managed to find her. So I know I focus on women's stories, but I want to share some of James's story. He records a lot of his experiences on this voyage and his trip West, including a 42 verse poem about the voyage across the ocean. Much of it is about Elizabeth. He mentioned Sarah but not very nicely in this poem, and one stanza he calls her lack a day meaning regretful. But, remember I said she was seasick. And I have been seasick. I can't imagine being polite to somebody flirting with my sister, when I just want to hang over the side of the boat. I just can't. I'd be rude to him too. So, as I mentioned, James didn't travel across the plains with Sarah and Elizabeth. He took a steamboat up the Mississippi River and visited Nauvoo. He arrives here the last day of April of 1853. And he calls it the desolate city once the pride and delight of the people of God. He went to the Mansion House to meet Emma Smith Bidamon, and in his journal, he spells her new married name so incorrectly, I think he must have done it on purpose, because the rest of his writing is very easy to read. His spelling is very well. So yeah, I think he did that

on purpose. But anyway, he has a short conversation with Emma before she introduces him to her mother-in-law Lucy Mack Smith. Now Lucy is sick in bed, but she wants to meet anybody who stops in the Mansion House and wants to have a good little visit with them. So he goes in while she's propped up in bed and they have a several hours long conversation, most of it revolving around, once Lucy learns that James plans to go west to unite with the Mormons as she puts it, she's trying to convince him not to. She calls Brigham Young a usurper. She quotes the Book of Mormon to denounce polygamy. She's not able to convince him to change his mind though. He continues West and, as I said, eventually unites with Elizabeth. He proposes and now let's get back to Sarah. So James and Elizabeth are married in January 1854. So right at a year after the three had all left England, they invite Sarah to live with them. And if you'll allow me to speculate a little bit, here's Sarah who's completely up ended her life, and her sister's life for this new faith. She, she's probably relieved that James has cleaned himself up. He still loves Elizabeth. Elizabeth loves him. It seems like a good match. And they're offering her a place to stay as well. So right about a year after they've made this huge trip, both she and her sister are going to have secure homes. So she agrees, and the three move in together. A short time after living with them, James asked Sarah to be his second wife, saying that, that would mean she and Elizabeth would be together forever. And this causes anguish for both sisters, and Sarah moves out the next day. Her next home is with the Griffith family. And Sarah found herself in a repeat of that same situation. However, this time, it's both Mr. And Mrs. Griffith who asked Sarah to be the second wife. I can only imagine what's going on in Sarah's mind, but she decides she might as well go on with this because what else is she going to do? She's being offered a secure home. It's not with her sister and her husband. But at least it's something. She and Mr. Griffith marry at the end of March in 1854. This is right about six months after she had arrived in Utah. The family story says that Sarah married Mr. Griffith not because she really believed polygamy to be right, but it was all that was preached and all that was heard. Sarah said that Mr. Griffith was a good man. He treated her well. They had three children together, though only their daughter Lucy survived childhood. And he really didn't live much longer after they married. So they married in '54. He dies in 1860. And Sarah would later say to the family, that she believed God delivered her out of polygamy. That wasn't the end of it, though, because she was approached by many men to be their plural wife. She didn't want to get back into that. Like I said, she felt that God had relieved her of this, which she wasn't comfortable with, so she was going to do her best. She's a little more settled. Now she has her daughter to think about. She's gonna do her best. She returns to her seamstress skills and is able to make a living. Eventually, a man named William asked Sarah to marry him. She agrees under the condition that if he ever wants to get more wives, he would give her a home of her own and he would set her free. He agrees to that and they marry in November of 1867. They have two children. Neither live through adulthood. So the only child that Sarah has out of the five that lives to adulthood, it's her daughter, Lucy. The family story ends there, but I found a little additional information on Sarah and William. In 1870, Sarah and William joined the RLDS church and he became the pastor of the Union Utah branch. They hosted nearly all the RLDS missionaries that came through Utah, and one of their visitors was her niece, Bertha Greer. So I told you, she's gonna pop in and out of the story. Sara dies in 1910 at the age of 85, and she's buried in the Murray City cemetery out in Utah. So now let's back up to Bertha's parents. So Elizabeth and James. Much of their story, as I said is going to come from James's journal so it's very one sided. I haven't found anything from Elizabeth herself. Elizabeth has a miscarriage not long after their marriage, and that leaves her bedridden for two weeks. In the summer of 1854, James is traveling and in the summer, or May of 1855. He's returned from his travels and they're living in Sugar Creek, Utah, which

is where their daughter Bertha Anne is born. They're in Ogden the following year when their daughter Evelyn is born. And in 1858, when their daughter Cibilia is born. They're living in Springville, Utah. So you kind of get the idea, James is not a very settled person, and they're bouncing around an awful lot. I lose track for a couple years. But in 1861, the family moves back east to St. Joseph, Missouri. At some point in those last few years, James had decided to study medicine, which is why they moved so far. Of course, now that they're back in the United States, that means the Civil War is going on. And so while he's studying medicine, James enlists in the Union Army as a hospital steward, later a field surgeon. And as much as I love that I have all these wonderful journals and writings from James, I am very glad he did not keep a journal of his Civil War field surgeon times, because I didn't want to read back. I've heard enough of those stories. I don't want to spend any more time with that. By the end of the Civil War, the family settles in St. Louis, Missouri, and Elizabeth has one more child, a son named Franklin in 1866. At some point right in here, right at the birth of their son, they meet the RLDS church, and they join just a couple of years before her sister Sarah does. And I'm not even sure how much communication Elizabeth and Sarah had at this point. Maybe they were able to write back and forth during these years. In 1868, James is called to the priesthood office of Elder and they continue living in St. Louis, and then things get unclear again. Jump ahead about 10 years and 1876, James is in the middle of nowhere, Iowa. And he writes a letter to RLDS church leaders, Henry Stebbins and David Dancer, he's looking to invest in the United Order of Enoch settlement. I'm not an expert on that topic. But in a nutshell, it's an intentional community that's living communally or living together as one. And James wants to be a part of that group. Back in St. Louis, their daughter Bertha married in 1874, Cibilia in 1875, and Evelyn at 1876. So, one right after another. And, a letter to someone named Alex in the summer of 1876, after Cibilia's marriage, James reports that things are going well in St. Louis, but he's getting itchy feet again, and he wants to travel for the church as a missionary. The next letter is dated in October of 1876, and it's to his wife, Elizabeth. So now we learned that Elizabeth and the youngest son Franklin, are living in Pleasanton, Iowa, which is just about 20 minutes east of Lamoni. James opens a letter that he had borrowed money so that he could travel to the General Conference hoping to hear the news that he was being called to travel for the church. He wants to go to California. He doesn't get that assignment, and he is frustrated. And then the next letter jumps two years to October of 1878. And this time, he's writing to his daughter, Bertha. So she's married, she has had one child, but it was a miscarriage. And it leaves her unable to have any other children. He writes in the letter, some of his work with medicine, so he's still active as a doctor out there, but come to find out he's back in Ogden, Utah, by this point in time, and I can't piece together how he went from St. Louis back to Utah. I don't know if he did get that missionary assignment, not to California, but to Utah. But he finds his way back out there. And he closes this letter to his daughter. "Try and feel as kindly towards me as you can. And let us hope that all feelings will come out for the best." A month later, he writes into Bertha. James shares that he's giving medical lectures around Ogden. He's rambling a lot in this letter. He writes that he is alone, and that he has learned that his wife Elizabeth, had just gone to the presiding elder of the church in St. Louis. So the pastor in the St. Louis branch. He rambles on some more pleading with Bertha to keep her dear father in her prayers, and the mention of his mother, her mother, so Elizabeth going to the presiding elder I went and dug out some of the church records. And the closest thing that I could come to happenings in the St. Louis area right in this time, is a letter to Joseph Smith III that says the St. Louis branch has been pruned, some dead, some apostatized, some number disfellowshipped. And it's a more healthy congregation at this point. So nothing is bluntly stated. So I'm not sure what's going on here with James and Elizabeth's life together, but I think it has fallen apart. In May of 1879.

James writes another letter to Bertha. And he has rejoined the LDS church at this point. He explains all his reasons to his daughters, particularly citing to temples and that they have polygamy. So, apparently, he still very much believes in this practice. In August of 1879, James has ordained a High Priest in the LDS church. He also serves as a medical director of the Grand Army of the Republic in Utah. So he's continuing on with his medical practices. He stays in that role until 1911. He marries, but this is where I got all sorts of unclear records going on. He has a wife, and he has two daughters, one in 1882, one in 1893, which is very far apart for two more daughters to be named. And like I said, I can't figure out the name of his wife. There are two different women names, but they're all interconnected. So I just I can't puzzle that one out. It's possible he had two wives, which is part of the confusion. So I don't have as much of Elizabeth's story as I would like. She does remarry, but not until 1890. Her second husband is also a British immigrant. His family came over around 1855, but they almost immediately turned around from Utah and went back East. They settled in Kansas City, Missouri for a time but then eventually returned to Lamoni. He dies in 1917 and she in 1918. So she's buried in that Rose Hill Cemetery, not too far away from her daughter Bertha. She does have an obituary in the Saints Herald the church's magazine, and it closes. It's a fairly long obituary. It closes with. "She was a gentle woman of the old country, and always had been a faithful member of the church. Active in Sunday school work, and her greatest regret in recent years was her inability to attend church. Her life has been a very hard one, but she has been very faithful." So a sadder story with Elizabeth and lots of mysteries so that maybe one of these days I'll be able to fill in those gaps and understand a little bit better. Her children did very well though. And just very briefly, the youngest, Franklin, he marries and moves to Texas. He's a piano tuner and he does his best to stay active in the church, but there aren't any branches nearby and he writes to the Herald a few times, asking for missionaries to come out and help them spread the word and build up a branch down there in Texas. The next youngest, Cibilia, lived most of her adult life in Lamoni. She has several children, but like her Aunt Sarah, only one child lives to adulthood, and one civilians husband dies, she lives with her daughter in Nebraska, who at this point has 11 children of her own, so Cibilia gets to be surrounded by a bunch of grandchildren even though she wasn't able to have many children herself. The second daughter, Evelyn, has some great stories. After her marriage, she and her family stay in St. Louis. She gave piano lessons, taught Sunday school in the local branch, served as the branch treasurer for her congregation, which is again pretty forward for a woman at this point. And she had five children. Her eldest child was Samuel A. Burgess, who was a church historian for many, many years. And I think my favorite thing that I learned about Evelyn was about her chess skills. Her father taught her how to play when she was a child, and she often played during her lunch breaks at school. She started aside when she married and was having her children. But when her brother asked her to teach her how to play, she remembered how much she loved it and started playing in competitions in and around St. Louis. In 1907, she was named the champion in the National Women's Chess Tournament, and she held that title for many years. So I thought that that was pretty exciting.

Karin Peter 29:13

Amazing. Yeah.

Wendy Eaton 29:16

So we'll wrap things back around to Bertha and some of her adult life. Like I said, she marries her husband's name is Bill Greer, and he's also a doctor. And when they first marry, after they have their

miscarriage and are not able to have their own children, she just continues her work. She was like her and trained as a milliner, and a seamstress and she focused on that and did pretty well with that, but always kept an interest in medicine. All those letters from her father, it's talking about medicine and all these conferences he's giving so it gives me the impression that, like her sister learned chess and her other sister and brother took up piano. Bertha was very very much focused on medicine. It's not until the 1890s, though, that she decides to go ahead and pursue medical training. She goes to a homeopathic school of medicine. I don't know if that's just what was closest available what was available for a woman at that time in St. Louis, but that's a homeopathic school. She graduates in 1897 at the age of 42. And she and Bill moved to Lamoni. And they began practicing medicine in Lamoni, which is how we line right up with that story. They hadn't been living in Lamoni very long when that diphtheria crisis struck the community. She focuses, especially with the church connections there in Lamoni. Of course, that's a very active church community in the 1890s. She works a lot with the Saints Home, which is essentially a retirement community and the children's home, which is essentially an orphanage. And she really doesn't charge them much more than covers the bare minimum. She sees it as a ministry. She starts writing very actively for *Autumn Leaves*, which is the church youth magazine. She's sharing her knowledge of helpful practices. So it's no biographical information in her 20 or so articles for the *Autumn Leaves*, it's all medicine. And I'm not going to share those practices because even though I'm not skilled in medicine, I imagine they're a little outdated based off what our understanding of medicine is today. Her husband Bill died in 1822. And at that point, her sister Evelyn, who had been widowed just a few years beforehand, decided to move in with Bertha and they live together. When Evelyn died in 1836, Bertha donated their father's Civil War surgical kit to the State Historical Society of Iowa. So this is all the little threads that I was going into to get any information on the family, I wrote the Iowa Historical Society and said, Hey, I have a reference to this. Do you happen to still have this kit? And they do? Oh, fortunately, there was no information with just that who it was and who had donated it. It's in incredible shape, which tells me that maybe his Civil War journals wouldn't have been too bad to read. Maybe it wasn't used.

Karin Peter 32:28

Or he just kept everything really nice. One or the other.

Wendy Eaton 32:30

It could be that too. Maybe he was one of those who had the time to clean up his tools properly. But I think the biggest thing is when I was looking at these pictures of this kit, that it had been so well preserved. Of course, it's in Historical Society has been for 90 some years. But his daughters took care of it. So no matter what family turmoil was going on in their teenage young adult years between their parents, they must have respected their father enough to at least hold on to this piece of him. And like I said, and wanted to preserve that legacy by donating it to an institution that would hold on to it for however long they choose to hold on to that piece. So when Bertha is 75, she fell and broke her hip. She is transferred from Lamoni to the Independence Sanitarium. Unfortunately, like often happens when infection sets in and she dies in May the 1930. She's 75 years old. Her body is taken back to Lamoni, where her funeral was conducted by Apostle John Garber. She's buried in Rose Hill Cemetery, and like I said, I was able to visit her grave on my last trip to Lamoni. So, I mentioned how I often start my explorations of biographies with that website, Find A Grave. On Bertha's page, someone uploaded an obituary written by a man named Joseph Anthony. He wrote that he first met Bertha when he was a

very young child. His mother was incredibly sick, but he was hesitant to leave her until late at night, when eventually, his mother convinces him to go get a doctor. By this point, it had started storming but he goes out into the Lamoni night, which I imagine was pretty dark if it's anything like Nauvoo is at night. And he's scared as he's knocking on the door of Bertha's home, which was also her medical practice, thinking that he's going to get the worst scold in his life for waiting so late in the day. Bertha lets him in, tells him to sit down while she got her equipment together, and asked him a few questions about what's going on with his mother. When her carriage is ready, she tells him to get in and they travel to his mother's home. And Dr. Greer stays with his mother through the night until she's confident that she's going to recover. So I want to close with part of his obituary. And just as a slight word of warning, nothing scandalous or anything like polygamy we talked about, but he writes Lamonites, which he means the people who live in Lamone is not the Book of Mormon people, which might be random, rainy nights, because it's the way he spells it. It's really, really close to Lamanite. And so, he writes, I cite this personal experience only because it's so typical of the service Dr. Greer rendered to the people of Lamoni, for many years, she was a familiar figure in practically every home in Lamoni. Night or day, winter or summer, she visited home after home, lending every possible effort to alleviate pain and suffering. She ushered hundreds of little squalling Lamonites into the world, then struggled with every form of disease to keep them alive and healthy. And there are many of them living today, who would not have been here except for her excellent nursing, her efficient and untiring efforts, and the loyalty to the task which she had consecrated for life. So a powerful woman who really cared for her community coming out of quite the exciting novel of her aunt's life.

Karin Peter 32:46

Yes, when you talked about the previous generations, it almost got into like, weird Harlequin romance novel kind of there for a minute. But that's a lovely piece of the obituary that was shared to honor her life. So, as you look over her story, and maybe the greater story of the of the family, what's your like, favorite bit of the whole thing that you've that you have found?

Wendy Eaton 37:08

I think my favorite thing is with her father, and that visit to the Mansion House, partly listeners might not know, I live in Nauvoo, I have two minutes block walk from the Mansion House. So to tie his story directly into it, and him being scolded by mother Lucy not to go West. And it's fascinating that Sarah, people that she's encountering are telling her, don't go to Utah. And then James is encountering the same thing with Lucy. But they go anyway. And all of them end up back East. Well, East as in Illinois, and Missouri, not East Coast. But they just, they kept moving, and they kept going and kept trying. And I just can't fathom travel in that time period, to leave behind everything to step out and try something new. And then to get there for Sarah, especially for it to all fall apart when she gets there. I don't know, if she was aware of polygamy when she left on that voyage. I kind of suspect James might have known because he's not put off at all when Mother Lucy Smith talks to him about it. But yeah, I'm not sure if she would have actually made that full trip and left her sweetheart to make that trip and enter such a difficult life.

Karin Peter 38:44

Yes, had she known. So there are a couple of Project Zion Podcasts that kind of tie into this story today. So I know that there's an episode that Richard James did with Cuppa Joe that talked about

Wales and the big missionary push that happened there. And then part of that migration of those people to the United States as part of this big trajectory of the Restoration kind of Trail. And Andrew Bolton does has done work on this as well. And you can hear them both talk about the reality of young women who left the area and came to the US not knowing kind of what you talked about and being quite surprised when they got here. The other episode that and give you more specific information on is episode, Cuppa Joe Episode 292. And, it's from April seventh 2020. And it's titled "Nauvoo, Polygamy and the RLDS church," and it kind of talks about the situation that Wendy mentions here in the story of Bertha Greer and her and her family. About people been in the Midwest, going to Utah coming back to the Midwest perhaps had participated in polygamy in Utah and brought that back with them when they come back to the Restoration, now what do we do? And it gives a little bit of information about that that might be surprising for some of us, who grew up with a message that this just never touched the RLDS side of things. So with an open mind, you can listen to that. And that is an episode with Lach Mackay. I wanted to ask a couple more things. Wendy about this. Do you see anything out of Bertha's story, or maybe her legacy to the church that you feel like is kind of still there?

Wendy Eaton 40:42

First thing that comes to mind is she's probably, because I am encroaching on age 42 myself, but she steps out and makes a huge change at age 42. And she pursues something that's always been an interest to her. And when she receives that training, she turns around and finds a way to use it to help the church. She had no specific reason to move to Lamoni herself. Her her mother is up there. She has one sister, but she also has a sister in St. Louis. And that's where her husband's family was, they could have easily just stayed there. But she was willing to step out, make that change, and then find her skills and use it. I mean, like I said, she's writing to *Autumn Leaves*, and communication within this time period. This is before radio. Telephones not too far out. Telegraph that's around but this regular publication, and she's putting in helpful advice. Like I said, we'd have to be a little more cautious with it today, but she's teaching her medical practice to all these different subscribers of *Autumn Leaves* that might live somewhere that they don't have access to a doctor. So she's helping spread her information the best way she can. And like I said, just being willing to step out and make a change at that point in her life. Basically, at the middle of her midlife crisis, though, it doesn't seem like it was much of a crisis. Midwife dream catching?

Karin Peter 42:20

Yes, well and very timely for us to kind of mentioned that now as we're all being challenged to step out and risk something new Bertha stands as a good model of that for us. So before we close, I want to give you as always your chance to make any last comment about Bertha or her story. And the last thing you want to share.

Wendy Eaton 42:46

I think the biggest thing, there just wasn't a whole lot of biographical information on Bertha. Part of that is, she and her husband weren't able to have children. And that's probably a big part. There were no children to pass on that story. But then when you look at her Aunt Sarah, Sarah told her stories to her children and her grandchildren, her grandchildren wrote it down and gave it to church archives to

preserve. So that is how I got all this information is coming straight out of the church archives. And, you know, that is so critical that we write down these memories of our parents and our grandparents and great grandparents if you still have them around to catch their individual perspectives. I wouldn't, this would have been a very short episode if we just had to go off what I had on Bertha. But because I was able to step out and bring in her extended family, we were able to really fill out and get get a bit of a wild ride of a storm.

Karin Peter 43:52

Yeah, a very colorful story. I enjoyed hearing it. So Wendy, I want to thank you for being with us today. I've been looking forward to this particular installment. And just as I look forward to the next one that we will do in Cuppa Joe in our series of Women in Community of Christ history, but always because you bring your expertise to this and your enthusiasm and love for history shows and to our listeners. I have never seen Wendy's smile and look as joyful as when she was talking about visiting Bertha's grave so I don't know what that says but oh my goodness, you do really have a love for bringing these stories to us and we sense that when we hear them. So listeners if you have a question for Wendy or perhaps a suggestion of someone from Community of Christ history that you would like to hear about on Project Zion, you can reach her at Wenden@cofchrist.org That's w-e-a-t-o-n @ cofchrist.org. This is Cuppa Joe, part of the Project Zion Podcast. I'm Karen Peter. I'm here with Wendy Eaton. Thanks so much for listening.