

Chapter Twenty-Seven

“A COMFORT UNTO MY SERVANT, JOSEPH”



EMMA HALE SMITH (1804–1879)

Mark L. Staker

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born on July 10, 1804, in Willingborough, Pennsylvania, the seventh of the nine children of Isaac and Elizabeth Lewis Hale, Emma Hale spent her first years in a weathered log home on a marshy, rock-strewn, ninety-acre farm in the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains. When their part of the township was renamed Harmony in 1809, Emma's family was already one of the wealthiest in the Susquehanna Valley.¹ Her father made a comfortable living shipping meat and other merchandise downriver to Philadelphia and Baltimore.²

While Emma was still young, her family built a fashionable

1. Amasa Franklin Chaffee, *History of the Wyoming Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1904), 721; cf. Susquehanna County Assessor, Tax Assessment Records, 1813–1865, Susquehanna County Courthouse, Montrose, Pennsylvania.

2. George Peck, *The Life and Times of Rev. George Peck* (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1874), 67; Isaac Hale Testimony, “Commonwealth vs. Jason Treadwell,

frame home described as a “mansion” where the Hales lived “in fine circumstances.”³ The affluent girls in their narrow valley attended the Female Seminary in Great Bend Township, roughly two miles west of Emma’s home, where she probably also studied for a short period and developed beautiful penmanship.⁴

Emma grew to be a tall, beautiful woman, standing about five feet nine, with dark hair, dark eyes, and an olive complexion. She had a quick mind reflecting “uncommon ability of talent and judgment,” with piety and a well-developed sense of morality and virtue.⁵ She was among the first individuals required to sacrifice for her support of Joseph Smith. Emma left behind her family, friends, possessions, and everything but the clothes she was wearing when she eloped on January 18, 1827, with the young day-laborer who had little formal education. The newlyweds spent part of the year with Joseph’s parents in New York before returning to the Susquehanna Valley to work on the translation of the Book of Mormon. There Emma endured insults and ridicule from her family. Yet she often led other believing women in prayer, work efforts, and service.⁶ The Lord addressed her directly in revelation, instructing, “Thy calling shall be for a comfort unto my servant, Joseph.”⁷

Murder, Filed Augt 30, 1824, Trial Testimony [of scribe A],” Collection of Governor John Andrew Shuzze, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

3. Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed., *Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s Family Memoir* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 2001), 430.

4. See Lydia C Dimock [Seals], *Diary*, June 1832–November 1833, Holograph, Susquehanna County Historical Association, Montrose, Pennsylvania. Take particular note of her extensive entry on September 2, 1832.

5. Oliver Cowdery, “Letter VIII,” *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 2 (October 1835): 200.

6. “Some of the Remarks of John S. Reed, Esq., as Delivered before the State Convention,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (June 1, 1844): 549; Anderson, *Lucy’s Book*, 502–3; Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Harems Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1983), 150.

7. Doctrine and Covenants 25:5.

Emma lived with Joseph near her parents’ home for almost three years while her husband laid a foundation for the Church. Then she left her “native country” in September 1830, never to see her parents again. Her first three children died shortly after birth.⁸ An adopted infant son, Joseph Murdock, died five days after a mob attack in Hiram, Ohio. Her fourteen-month-old son Don Carlos died in 1841 in Nauvoo of malaria, and a newborn son died less than a year later.⁹ Emma raised to maturity her adopted daughter, Julia Murdock, and four sons: Joseph III, Frederick Granger, Alexander, and David Hyrum Smith. Disagreements with her husband over the doctrine of plural marriage continued with other Church leaders after his martyrdom, and Emma stayed behind in Nauvoo when the Saints went west. After an extended illness, she died April 30, 1879, at age seventy-four.¹⁰

LIFE EXPERIENCES

Developing Faith

Emma’s deep sense of religious conviction and devotion to God from childhood frequently influenced others for good, even her parents. Initially, her family was not particularly religious. After Emma’s father, Isaac Hale, arrived in the Susquehanna Valley with

8. Near the end of her life, Emma noted in an interview that her first three children “did not live to be named and are not recorded.” Joseph Smith III, “Notes of Interview with Emma Smith Bidamon, February 1879,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1996), 1:541. In the published version of this interview, Joseph Smith III asked, “Who were the twins that died?” to which Emma answered, “They were not named.” Joseph Smith [III], “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” *Saints’ Herald* 26 (October 1, 1879): 289.

9. Almira Mack Covey to Harriet Mack Whittemore, February 24, 1842, Whittemore Family Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Jacob Scott to Mary Scott Warnock, March 24, 1842, Community of Christ Library and Archives, Independence, Missouri, hereafter cited as Community of Christ Library and Archives.

10. Mark H. Forscutt, “Commemorative Discourse on the Death of Mrs. Emma Bidamon,” *Saints’ Herald* 26 (July 15, 1879): 209.

his friend Major Daniel Buck, Isaac briefly associated with the local Congregationalist church where Daniel was pastor. Isaac and Elizabeth Lewis Hale had the Reverend Buck baptize some of their children, including Emma.¹¹ Due to doctrinal conflict, many members of the congregation separated and became “deists” who believed in God but generally did not believe in prophecy, miracles, or a divine role in the production of scripture. They gathered on Sundays for meetings in the local schoolhouse and read from Thomas Paine’s *Age of Reason* instead of the Bible.¹² Emma’s father was a deist.¹³

Emma’s mother remained unaffiliated as a young woman when her family joined the Methodists.¹⁴ In 1805, however, Methodist

11. Register of Baptisms, First Presbyterian Church Records, Hallstead, Pennsylvania, p. 138, Susquehanna County Historical Society. During the early nineteenth century, many small Congregationalist communities blended with Presbyterian congregations, including the one with which the Hale family were associated. Congregationalist records in the Harmony, Pennsylvania, area were copied into the Hallstead First Presbyterian Church books sometime around the Civil War. See also *The Journals of Seth Williston, 1796–1800*, ed. Lawrence Bothwell (Binghamton, NY: The Broome County Historical Society, 1992), 108–9.

12. J. B. Wilkinson, *The Annals of Binghamton, and of the County Connected with It, from the Earliest Settlement* (Binghamton, NY: Cooke and Davis, Printers, 1840), 106.

13. Isaac Hale may have had some temporary associations with the Quakers who held the first religious services in the valley and gave Harmony its name, but the evidence for this is sparse and only circumstantial. In 1824 when “old Mr. Hale,” at sixty-one years of age, was asked to swear an oath during a trial, he refused to swear but “affirmed” he would tell the truth—a common Quaker practice. “Commonwealth vs. Jason Treadwell, Murder, Filed Augt 30, 1824, Witness Suppl[emen]t as,” Collection of Governor John Andrew Shurtz, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg. For the Quaker origins of Harmony Township, see Emily C. Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, from a Period Preceding Its Settlement to Recent Times* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfinger, 1873), 92.

14. David Hale believed his mother was converted to Methodism in Pennsylvania. Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County*, 103. Neighbors of the Lewis family in Vermont indicated that some of the family did not join Methodism in

circuit riders Frederic Stier and Timothy Lee brought their faith to the Susquehanna Valley.¹⁵ Emma’s uncle Nathaniel Lewis, probably her mother, Elizabeth, and possibly other family members had joined the Methodists by that year.¹⁶ Emma’s father held back.¹⁷

On Emma Hale’s third birthday, July 10, 1807, her family was involved in the second day of a Methodist revival when Bishop Francis Asbury spent that night at the large tavern a half mile west of the Hale home. The following day was Sunday. One thousand people, more than lived in the valley, gathered to hear Bishop Asbury’s sermon. Asbury ordained Nathaniel Lewis a deacon in the Methodist church to serve as a local preacher but did not think Methodism would do well in the valley because the settlers were “wild, ignorant, and wicked.”¹⁸

Vermont. Abby Maria Hemenway, *The History of Rutland County, Vermont: Civil, Ecclesiastical, Biographical, and Military* (White River Junction, VT: White River Paper Co., 1882), 1194; Paul Hilland, *History of Wells, Vermont for the First Century after its Settlement: with Biographical Sketches by Robert Parks, Esq.* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle & Co., 1869), 33.

15. Chaffee, *History of the Wyoming Conference*, 36.

16. George Peck, *Early Methodism within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference from 1788 to 1828* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1860), 454–55; Hiel Lewis, “That Mormon History. Reply to Elder Cadwell,” *Ambony Journal* 24 (August 6, 1879): 1; Rhamanthus M. Stocker, *Centennial History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: R. T. Peck & Co., 1887), 543.

17. In later years only Isaac’s wife, Elizabeth Hale, was acknowledged as a longtime member of the Methodists, suggesting Isaac Hale associated with them some time after his wife did. Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County*, 103. As late as July 20, 1816, when George Peck rode the circuit that included the Hale family, he stayed with Isaac’s oldest son, Jesse Hale, who lived near Isaac’s home but had a smaller residence and fewer resources. Peck, *Life and Times*, 67.

18. Francis Asbury journal, July 11, 1807, in Peck, *Early Methodism*, 154. Amasa Chaffee also described Nathaniel Lewis as “a local deacon.” Chaffee, *History of the Wyoming Conference*, 48. But later in his narrative (p. 720), he noted Lewis was “an elder, ordained by Bishop Asbury.” Chaffee’s reference to both offices supports later reminiscences by Emma’s family that frequently refer to him as “Elder Lewis.” Nathaniel Lewis was originally ordained a deacon but was later ordained as a Methodist elder.

Momentum shifted, however, as many were drawn to this relatively new movement. "Everybody espoused Methodism,—men, women and children," one friend of the Hale family wrote. "They frequently walked from five to six miles to be present at prayer-meetings."¹⁹

Emma was among the children converted and helped bring others to her faith. She became "a member of a class in the M. E. [Methodist Episcopal] Church when only seven years old. A missionary spirit was hers from her birth."²⁰ These classes afforded her the opportunity to learn the scriptures and receive gospel instruction in addition to her uncle's Sunday sermons and the regular weekday preaching of the circuit riders who came through the valley.

The following year, 1812, Elisha Bibbins came through Harmony as a Methodist circuit rider, and he encouraged young people to go into the woods and pray for their own spiritual experiences. His encouragement was so successful that a local hunter searching for game in the woods "came upon praying people everywhere."²¹ One day while Emma's father was in the woods hunting, he found her praying for him:

Mr. Hale always claimed that he was converted from

19. John B. Buck, 1869, in Stocker, *Centennial History*, 543.

20. Forscutt, "Commemorative Discourse," 209. Forscutt records his conversations with Emma in several journal entries. For example, on December 4, 1867, he writes, "Had a very interesting conversation with Sis. Emma, who was more than ordinarily communicative," and on August 1, 1875, "Visited Mrs. Bidamon, relict of Joseph Smith the Martyr. I learned from her many facts relative to her husband, Joseph." On February 7, 1876, he wrote in his journal about going with a friend "over to Nauvoo. Had a pleasant visit with Alex. and family his mother, wife of the martyr'd prophet, on the circumstances attending the death of her husband." See also journal entries for June 10-15, 1879. Shortly after Emma's death, Forscutt spent five days writing up his history of Emma while living with her son Joseph III. Mark Hill Forscutt journal, Mark Hill Forscutt Collection, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, hereafter cited as Church History Library.

21. Blackman, *History of Wasatchanna County*, 138.

deism to faith in Christ as the Savior, by a secret prayer of Emma's, when she was but seven or eight years old, which he accidentally overheard when just entering into the woods to hunt. In the course of her prayer she besought the Lord in behalf of her father, and the force and efficacy of that prayer entered into his heart with such power as to lead him to faith in Christ the Lord.²²

Emma's prayer

While Emma prayed aloud in the woods, as the preachers encouraged, she influenced her father for good when he "listened to the wailings of her young heart in his behalf."²³

Courtship and Marriage

Emma was twenty-one years old when she first met nineteen-year-old Joseph at the end of October 1825. Joseph had virtually no education, no money, and few apparent prospects. He came from a poor family living in a village more than 140 miles north of Emma's home. Emma's brother-in-law described Joseph when he first met the family as "a green, awkward, and ignorant boy."²⁴ Joseph, with his lack of education and resources, contrasted sharply with Emma. She was "a school teacher, a fine girl, of good repute and respectable."²⁵

22. William W. Blair to Editors, May 22, 1879, *Saints' Herald* 26 (June 15, 1879): 191. Blair reported the memories of Michael Morse, who gave his father-in-law, Isaac Hale, as his source. Later, Emma's cousin Hiel Lewis challenged this claim because he recalled hearing Alva Hale say his father, Isaac, was converted by Methodist minister Timothy Lee before Emma was born. Lewis, "That Mormon History," 1. Although Frederic Stier and Timothy Lee were placed on the Tioga Circuit the year after Emma's birth (Chaffee, *History of the Wyoming Conference*, 36), Lewis's account precludes a gradual conversion that included periods of backsliding.

23. Forscutt, "Commemorative Discourse," 209.

24. William W. Blair, *Journal*, May 8, 1879, pp. 52-56, *Community of Christ Library and Archives*, Independence, Missouri.

25. Emily M. Austin, *Mormonism; or, Life among the Mormons* (Wisconsin: M. J. Cantwell Book and Job Printer, 1882), 33.

In addition to her education, Emma acquired several cows and other items on her own, perhaps by teaching school.²⁶

Although the poverty of her suitor's family had limited his educational opportunities and his financial resources, Emma saw something more in him. As Joseph Smith stayed in a neighboring county while courting Emma, a neighbor noticed of him that "his character was irreproachable; that he was well known for truth and uprightness; that he moved in the first circles of community, and he was often spoken of as a young man of intelligence, and good morals, and possessing a mind susceptible of the highest intellectual attainments."²⁷

Joseph Smith informed his parents that he was smitten with Emma practically from the moment he met her.²⁸ During the next two years as Joseph courted Emma, he attended more than one school in the area where he applied his native intelligence toward improving his education.²⁹ Despite the heavy investment of time in school, Joseph also worked hard for his employers. Joseph Smith's work companion, Joseph Knight Jr., later recalled, "My Father said Joseph was the best hand he ever hired."³⁰

As Joseph continued to improve his education and financial prospects while courting Emma, her family remained unresponsive.

26. Isaac Hale, "Affidavit, March 20, 1834," in Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 263; Susquehanna County Assessor, Tax Assessment Records, 1827-29.

27. "Some of the Remarks of John S. Reed," 549.

28. Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 362-63.

29. Josiah Stowell Jr. to John Fullmer, February 17, 1843, Holograph, Church History Library; Hamilton Childs, *Gazetter and Business Directory of Chenango County, N.Y., for 1869-1870* (Syracuse, NY: Journal Office, 1869), 82; H. P. Smith, *History of Broome County* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Company, 1885), 332; S. J. Clarke, "Willbur F. Stowell," in *The Biographical Record of Henry County, Illinois* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing, 1901), 713-16.

30. Joseph Knight Jr., Statement, August 11, 1862, Joseph Knight Jr. Papers, Church History Library.

"My folks were bitterly opposed to him," Emma recalled.³¹ Emma's brothers and sisters all married companions living near their family and continued close relationships by initially settling within sight of their parents' home. As his first reason for refusing to consent to her marriage, Emma's father listed his concern that Joseph was a "stranger." He also disapproved of Joseph's profession, which he left unstated but may have meant Joseph's involvement in the search for a silver mine near his home, even though Isaac was originally a part of the same project.³² His disapproval may also have come from Joseph Smith's full-time involvement in religious pursuits. Joseph recalled: "Owing to my continuing to assert that I had seen a vision, persecution still followed me, and my wife's father's family were very much opposed to our being married. I was, therefore, under the necessity of taking her elsewhere."³³

Emma said Joseph "importuned" her, implying he pressed her with repeated requests. Finally, "aided by Mr. Stowell, who urged me to marry him, and preferring to marry him to any other man I knew, I consented."³⁴ It was not a light decision. Her contemporaries in the county wrote in their journals about hopes for wedding cakes with sugar plums and frosting, well-crafted wedding dresses, bridesmaids, and festive celebrations.³⁵ Emma gave up any similar expectations when she eloped with Joseph. Even more difficult was having to leave her family, home, friends, and community to become his wife. She was among the first to make a personal sacrifice to support Joseph when she married him on January 18, 1827, and went with him to live with his parents. She soon returned at her parents' invitation to retrieve her possessions, and in December

31. Smith [III], "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," 289.

32. *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2002), 238; Joseph Smith—History 1:58, Pearl of Great Price.

33. Joseph Smith—History 1:58.

34. Smith [III], "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," 289.

35. Dimock, Diary, May 13, 1832; June 3, 1832; July 12, 1832.

JA 18, 1827 → Dec 1827

1827 Joseph and Emma went back to the Susquehanna Valley to live next to Emma's parents.³⁶ *12/27 - Harmony*

Emma's consistent faith in her husband, as well as her strength of will and dedication in the face of adversity, characterized her role of helpmeet as her husband organized the Church of Jesus Christ. When Oliver Cowdery baptized her and several others on June 28, 1830, an unruly crowd offered insults and ridicule at the water's edge. Then, before Emma or the other newly baptized members could be confirmed, Joseph was arrested for disorderly conduct and taken from Colesville to South Bainbridge, New York, about thirty miles north of their Harmony, Pennsylvania, home for trial. Although she could not directly intervene, Emma gathered a number of the sisters of the Church "for the purpose of praying for the deliverance of the prophet of the Lord."³⁷ Joseph was acquitted, but Emma experienced intense anxiety for his safety during the trial.³⁸ She would use the word "anxiety" several times over the years to describe her feelings when Joseph encountered opposition and difficult circumstances.

Emma is the only woman to have received a canonized revelation directed specifically to her. She was told in revelation, "The office of thy calling shall be for a comfort unto my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., thy husband, in his afflictions, with consoling words, in the spirit of meekness."³⁹ In addition to providing comfort, "the office of [Emma's] calling" included serving as Joseph's scribe "while there is no one to be a scribe for him."⁴⁰ This is a role Emma had

36. Joseph Smith—History 1:62.

37. "Some of the Remarks of John S. Reed," 551-52.

38. Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-51), 1:96.

39. Doctrine and Covenants 25:5.

40. Doctrine and Covenants 25:6.

already helped fulfill to an extent as she assisted her husband with the translation of the Book of Mormon.

Emma Assists in Bringing Forth and Preserving Scripture

9/27 - NY

After Emma's marriage to Joseph, the couple lived for a brief period with Joseph's parents in Manchester, New York. As night fell on September 21, 1827, Emma put on her bonnet and riding dress and slipped out with Joseph in a borrowed wagon as they rode after midnight to the Hill Cumorah, a long, narrow drumlin a little over three miles away.⁴¹ "Taking his wife," recalled Martin Harris, Joseph "went to the place where the plates were concealed, and while he was obtaining them, she knelt down and prayed."⁴² Not having a box to put the plates in, Joseph found a hollow tree and hid them while Emma waited. The couple returned home in the borrowed wagon with the breastplate and interpreters covered in a silk handkerchief.

Emma played a significant role as a witness to Joseph's mission when neighbors visited them to investigate the stories they heard about the ancient record. Martin Harris arrived one day when Joseph was not home. "I was glad he was absent," Harris recalled, "for that gave me an opportunity of talking with his wife and the family about the plates."⁴³ Emma's testimony proved convincing. She not only testified to the reality of the record in Joseph's possession but she also took a measure of responsibility for the safety of that record. One day Joseph was in the neighboring town of Macedon working when his family learned of threats to the safety of the golden plates. Emma rode to inform Joseph so the plates could be protected.⁴⁴

Partly to help protect the golden plates, Joseph and Emma

41. Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 376.

42. Joel Tiffany, ed., "Mormonism," in *Tiffany's Monthly Devoted to the Investigation of the Science of Mind* 5 (May 1859): 164.

43. Tiffany, "Mormonism," 169.

44. Willard Chase, "Affidavit," in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 246.

moved to Harmony, where they arrived in early December 1827. Here they again worked hard to support themselves. With a partial barrel of beans to live on, the newlyweds apparently lived in the log work kitchen attached to the Hale frame home for a brief period as Joseph earned a little money covering mittens with leather for Emma's brother David Hale and later digging wells for their neighbors.⁴⁵ The couple had little room to work. Emma recalled the golden plates "lay under our bed for a few months but I never felt the liberty to look at them."⁴⁶ Joseph took the plates out to copy the characters and look at the record. Emma worked in the kitchen while the plates lay on a small table covered with one of Emma's small linen tablecloths, "and she would lift and move them when she swept and dusted the room and furniture."⁴⁷

She "felt of the plates, as they thus lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic sound when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book."⁴⁸ Emma was asked not to look inside of the cloth, and she never did. Her father was not as cooperative. Referring to the plates, he informed Joseph that "if there was anything in my house of that description, which I could not be allowed to see, he must take it away; if he did not, I was determined to see it. After that, the Plates were said to be hid in the woods."⁴⁹ Joseph and Emma then purchased

45. Joseph Smith Jr., January 1 and 22, 1828, David Hale Daybook, pp. 18–19, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, hereafter cited as BYU Special Collections.

46. Nels Madson, "Visit to Mrs. Emma Smith Bidemon [1877]," *Historian's Office Journal*, November 27, 1931, Church History Library.

47. Joseph Smith III to Mrs. E. Horton, March 7, 1900, Community of Christ Library and Archives.

48. Smith [III], "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," 290.

49. Hale, "Affidavit," 264.

a modest frame home from Emma's brother Jesse across the road where they could continue their efforts on their own terms.⁵⁰

As Joseph and Emma began to work on the translation of the ancient record, Joseph dictated the words as "his wife and his wives Brother [Reuben] would sometimes write a little for him through the winter."⁵¹ By February 1828 some of the characters and their translation were ready for Martin Harris, who took them to show to prominent scholars. He returned about April 12, 1828, to assist in the translation effort.⁵² Emma not only served as scribe but, drawing on her own broader education, served as her husband's tutor during the early stages of translation. Joseph, who "could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon," nevertheless continued to translate through the gift and power of God as Emma wrote-hour after hour, which she perceived as "a marvel and a wonder."⁵³ Emma later recalled of the experience:

When my husband was translating the Book of Mormon, I wrote a part of it, as he dictated each sentence,

50. Isaac Hale to Joseph Smith, April 6, 1829, Susquehanna County Deed Book, 8:59; Harmony Township, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania Tax Records, 1815–1832, Susquehanna County Courthouse, Montrose, Pennsylvania; Hargen Archeological Associates, "Archeological Field Investigations and Addenda 1 and 2, Joseph Smith, Jr. House Site, Town of Oakland (Formerly Harmony), Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania," May 2005, in Historic Sites Files, Church History Library.

51. Joseph Knight Sr., "Manuscript of the History of Joseph Smith," ca. 1835–1847, p. 3, Church History Library. Emma's advancing pregnancy and household duties may have been reasons her seventeen-year-old brother Reuben helped as a scribe. Reuben "wrote for Smith when he first began to translate, before Harris came to Harmony." "Prophet Smith's Family Relations," *Salt Lake Daily Tribune*, October 17, 1879.

52. Andrew Jensen, ed., "The Three Witnesses," *Historical Record* 6 (May 1887): 212.

53. Smith [III], "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," 290.

word for word, and when he came to proper names he could not pronounce, or long words, he spelled them out, and while I was writing them, if I made any mistake in spelling, he would stop me and correct my spelling, although it was impossible for him to see how I was writing them down at the time. Even the word *Sarah* he could not pronounce at first, but had to spell it, and I would pronounce it for him.

... One time while he was translating he stopped suddenly, pale as a sheet, and said, "Emma, did Jerusalem have walls around it?" ... He had such a limited knowledge of history at that time that he did not even know that Jerusalem was surrounded by walls.⁵⁴

David Whitmer acknowledged Emma's important role as Joseph's tutor during the early stages of translation when he later related her story as he had heard it. "So illiterate was Joseph at the time, said Mr. Whitmer, that he didn't even know that Jerusalem was a walled city and he was utterly unable to pronounce many of the names . . . and therefore spelled [pronounced] them out in syllables and the more erudite scribe put them together."⁵⁵

As Emma assisted in her scribal duties, she was expecting a child and may have felt the quickening movements of life as early as mid-January 1828 while also carrying out normal household duties such as cooking, cleaning, and maintaining the fire. She still found time to write for Joseph, however, noting that after returning from meals or other interruptions, her husband would begin at once where he

54. Edmund C. Briggs, "A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856," *Journal of History* 9 (October 1916): 454. Although the name Sarah appears in 2 Nephi 8:2, the name Sarah appears in numerous places in the first chapters of the Book of Mormon. Because Emma worked with the manuscript that is now lost, it is not clear whether Briggs misspelled the name Sarah or Emma had reference to another individual in the text.

55. "The Golden Tables," *Chicago Times*, August 7, 1875.

had left off "without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him. This was a usual thing for him to do."⁵⁶

Emma entered the last months of her pregnancy as Martin Harris arrived to assist Joseph as scribe. April through June was the busiest time of year for farmers in the Susquehanna Valley because the winter typically depleted most resources and spring came to the valley in mid to late April, accompanied by clearing, plowing, and planting of crops. Joseph would have had more than his normal tasks to take care of in addition to working on the translation. Nevertheless, Joseph and those who assisted him produced more than 116 pages of manuscript material by June 14.

As Emma prepared for the birth of her child, Martin Harris planned to return home the next day to see to business. He took 116 pages of the manuscript with him to show close family members. Emma delivered a son on June 15 "shortly after Mr. Harris left."⁵⁷ The child was stillborn, a term medical professionals of the day often used for infants who "do not cry for some little time after birth" and soon die.⁵⁸ The baby "died the same hour" he was born.⁵⁹

Emma herself was also gravely ill. For two weeks she lay near

56. Smith [III], "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," 290. In another interview, Emma said, "When he stopped for any purpose at any time he would, when he commenced again, begin where he left off without any hesitation." Briggs, "Visit to Nauvoo in 1856," 454.

57. Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 412.

58. *St. Louis Medical and Surgical Journal* 12 (March 1854), quoted in Paul Bernan, "The Practice of Obstetrics in Rural America, 1800–1860," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 50 (April 1995): 185. Lucy Mack Smith's account of her daughter-in-law's delivery reads, "Joseph's wife became the mother of a son, which, however, remained with her but a short time before it was snatched from her arms by the hand of death." Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 412.

59. "Genealogy of President Joseph Smith," *History*, 1834–1836, A-1, p. 9, reproduced in *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1989–92), 1:16. Emma's mother-in-law, Lucy Mack Smith, recalled of his death: He "was very soon snatched from her arms and borne aloft to the world of spirits." Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 412.

death while Joseph tenderly cared for her through sleepless nights and rough days. Emma's sister Tryal Morse was also expecting a child and delivered her baby eleven days later on June 26 in the middle of an epidemic that raged in their neighborhood for six months.⁶⁰

While Emma grieved in bed near death, she and Joseph could hear the stagecoach rattle past their front door twice a week going back and forth between the county seat at Montrose and turning north to Canandaigua, New York. Yet they did not receive the expected letter from Martin Harris and grew uneasy about the silence. Once Emma's sister delivered a healthy baby, their mother, Elizabeth Hale, could turn her attention back to the daughter who had lost a child and was struggling to recover. Emma, sensing her mother's availability, asked Joseph to get her so he could follow up on the loaned manuscript. "I feel so uneasy," Emma said, "that I cannot rest and shall not be at ease until I know something about what Mr Harris is doing with it." She told Joseph, "Go and enquire into the reason of his not writing or sending any word back to you since he left us."⁶¹

Emma's concern about Martin's taking the manuscript proved

60. Cyrus Lorenzo Morse, "Morse Family Genealogy," accessed March 14, 2011, www.geni.com/people/Cyrus-Morse/600000001959197750; Cyrus L. Morse, Civil War Pension Applications, Private, Company F, 144th Regiment Illinois Infantry, December 16, 1892; Margaret Lane Morse Bunn, "Cyrus Lorenzo Morse," in *The Heritage of Bibb County, Alabama*, ed. Bibb County Heritage Book Committee (Clanton, AL: Heritage Publishing Consultants, 1998), 206. While the Hales and their neighbors usually averaged less than one burial per year in their local cemetery, in 1828 they buried seven people within a few months, including the two-year-old daughter of Emma's brother Jesse and his wife, Mary McKune Hale. Emma's sister Tryal named her child Cyrus Lorenzo Morse after her brother-in-law, Lorenzo Dow Morse, who died that same day and was buried in the cemetery next to Emma's house. Their neighbor Mary Treadwell also delivered a son in June that died a few weeks later. For a list of all the deaths that occurred near Joseph and Emma Smith's home that year, see Leticia Elliot, *Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania Cemetery Records* (Salt Lake City, UT: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1942), 3, 5, 8, 13, 20; J. Howard Morse and Emily W. Leavitt, *Morse Genealogy*, vol. 2 (New York: The Morse Society, 1905), 178.

61. Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 412-13.

well founded. Nearly three weeks after he left, Martin still had not returned or sent word. When Joseph went to his parents' home and learned Martin Harris had lost the manuscript, he was concerned the news would be too great for Emma to bear. "Then must I . . . return to my wife with such a tale as this?" Joseph asked. "I dare not do it, lest I should kill her at once."⁶² Nevertheless, Joseph left immediately for Harmony to attend to his wife, who had sacrificed so much for the manuscript.

Emma sustained Joseph when the heavenly messenger required that he return the record and stop translating for a season. She and Joseph had given a great deal to the translation effort, being "reduced in property" as a result.⁶³ It was probably the next spring when Joseph learned through revelation that he should "not run faster than you have strength and means provided to translate."⁶⁴ The historical record does not show that Emma assisted any more with the translation after Joseph received this revelation.

Family Relationships

In September 1830 Emma left her little valley for the last time, never to see her parents or many other relatives again. She continued to face obstacles throughout her life and often tried to comfort Joseph through letters as persecution and the challenges of leading the Church kept him from her and their family. When the Kirtland Safety Society began to collapse in Ohio and Joseph was away trying to get the economic resources needed to support it, Emma wrote, assuring her husband: "I still believe that if we humble ourselves, and are as faithful as we can be, we shall be delivered from every snare that may be laid for our feet, and our lives and property will

62. Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 419.

63. Jesse, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:110.

64. Doctrine and Covenants 10:4.

be saved and we redeemed from all unreasonable encumbrances."⁶⁵ In the wake of the financial collapse and threats against Joseph's life, Emma fled with him to Far West, Missouri, where she again helped to nurture their children and maintain a household. When her husband was arrested and thrown into a Missouri jail, leaving her alone to fend for her children, Emma sent a tender letter to him on March 7, 1839, penned in a fine, carefully crafted hand and again offered encouragement in the face of opposition:

I shall not attempt to write my feelings al together, for the situation in which you are, the walls, bars, and bolts, rolling rivers, running streams, rising hills, sinking vallies and spreading prairies that separate us, and the cruel injustice that first cast you into prison and still holds you there, with many other considerations, places my feelings far beyond description. Was it not for conscious innocence, and the direct interposition of divine mercy, I am very sure I never should have been able to have endured the scenes of suffering that I have passed through, since what is called the militia, came into Far West. . . . but I still live and am yet willing to suffer more if it is the will of kind Heaven, that I should for your sake. . . . No one but God, knows the reflections of my mind and the feelings of my heart when I left our house and home, and almost all of everything that we possessed excepting our little children, and took my journey out of the State of Missouri, leaving you shut up in that lonesome prison.⁶⁶

65. Emma Smith to Joseph Smith Jr., April 25, 1837, Joseph Smith Letterbook, p. 35, in *Selected Collections from the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. Richard E. Turley Jr. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), DVD.

66. Emma Smith to Joseph Smith Jr., March 7, 1839, Joseph Smith Letterbook, p. 37, in *Turley's Selected Collections*.

The following year ^{EMMA'S NEPHEW} shortly after Emma's father, Isaac Hale, died—Lorenzo Wasson, the son of her sister Elizabeth Hale Wasson, went west to Illinois to visit his Aunt Emma and Uncle Joseph. While there, he wrote an introduction to a letter from Emma to her estranged family. In it, he rehearsed much of the persecution she had faced with her husband, including an attack on her family in Ohio and the recent experience of being homeless on the bleak Missouri prairie in cold winter weather, robbed of "all worldly treasures." Lorenzo added that for his entire life he had been raised to believe incorrect things about his Uncle Joseph, having an "unprovoked prejudice against him."

Emma then wrote a heartfelt plea. "Lorenzo Wasson is the first one of my relatives that I have had the pleasure of seeing since I left which is ten years last Sept. [1840]." She implored, "I want to hear from you all and especially Mother." Emma shared the names and ages of her living children with a family who did not know the basic facts of her life. She good-naturedly invited her family to "investigate our doctrines and all become good Mormons, as we are generally called." She assured them, however, that there was "no compulsion" to adopt her faith. "You can live here if you are not Mormons."⁶⁷

Lorenzo Wasson joined the Church and served a mission. Soon many other members of Emma's family settled in the region but did not live in Nauvoo. Neither Emma nor Joseph harbored ill feelings for harsh treatment they had received from Emma's family, and not long after Joseph was killed, Emma's oldest brother, Jesse, wrote her a letter seeking to make amends. He acknowledged:

My grey hairs and the falling of my eyesight and many other things admonish me that my time is fast hairstning to a close and that my obligations should all be fulfilled so far as I am able. I have received favors from you which I

67. Lorenzo Wasson to Emma Hale Smith, Undated [ca. December 1840-April 1841], BYU Special Collections. Punctuation and capitalization added for clarity.

believe were bestowed from the pure motive of regard and friendship and it would be vile in me not to acknowledge them as such. I shall not soon forget them neither shall I forget the very friendly visit we received from Joseph Smith and his family one year ago last summer. The liveli-est your husband manifested at that time in our welfare . . . evinced a friendship unexpected and his memory will long be cherished.⁶⁸

After Joseph's death, Emma and her mother-in-law, Lucy Mack Smith, chose to remain in Nauvoo when most of the Saints fled to the West. Nearly two years later, Emma married local resident Lewis C. Bidamon. She remained in Nauvoo with her family until she died on April 30, 1879. After nearly thirty years of close interaction with Emma, Lucy Mack Smith offered this summation of her character:

I have never seen a woman in my life, who would endure every species of fatigue and hardship, from month to month, and from year to year, with that unflinching courage, zeal, and patience, which she has ever done; for I know that which she has had to endure—she has been tossed upon the ocean of uncertainty—she has breathed the storms of persecution, and buffered the rage of men and devils, which would have borne down almost any other woman. It may be, that many may yet have to encounter the same—I pray God, that this may not be the case; but, should it be, may they have grace given them according to their day, even as has been the case with her.⁶⁹

68. Jesse Hale to Emma Hale Smith, March 30, 1845, Photocopy of holograph, Church History Library.

69. Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 503.