

PERUSAL SCRIPT

*Mary Fielding
Smith*

MOTHER OF A PROPHET

—HER TREK WEST—

by
MYRTH ELIZABETH BURR



Newport, Maine

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Mary Fielding Smith: Mother of a Prophet

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Dedication

To all the women
around the world
If this work touches your life
in any way...

This is dedicated
to you.

*“When people suffer and die
for a cause...
a new soul quality is born.”*

Preface

This poignant story, deeply moving, depicts the faith, dreams and drama of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as they were forced to leave Nauvoo and make their home in the west where they could worship in peace. It is an inspiring, spiritual, literary account researched and written solely by the author Myrth Burr, who has faithfully researched dairies, journals, and scriptures seeking insight into the time period of the Mormon Pioneers and the contents of this book. Her desire is that 'People out of the past will come to life' through her dramatic presentations and the reading of this book. It has been performed to thousands over the past few years as a "ONE WOMAN SHOW."

The presentation has been enjoyed and well received by numerous audiences of church and civic groups throughout Utah and the Intermountain West, including L.D.S. Church Office Building, Salt Lake City, Utah and in the presence of general authority wives.

After reading the various accounts of Mary Fielding Smith, Myrth Burr was inspired by the life of this plucky little lady, and was driven to study more about her. She then felt the desire to share the power of her faith, ideals and her sorrows and trials with others.

Introduction

The setting of this presentation begins in the Salt Lake Valley, late summer of 1848.

Mary found, while searching the valley for her new home, a spring of crystal clear water, which is believed to be Millcreek in the Sugar House area. It was here she wanted to live and raise her family.

John was instrumental in building her a house. Mary lived a quiet life caring for her children and growing plenty of food for her family.

Mary felt great comfort knowing her family would never be hungry, cold or dirty again. She knew she was finally at home in the valley where she belonged.

Myrth Elizabeth Liston Burr, was born March 9, 1921 to Hazel G. Riddle and Don Carlos Liston in Escalante, Utah. Myrth spent her early years living in Escalante, and Cedar City and moved to Orem, Utah to attend high school. Myrth graduated from Lincoln High School where she served as the Student Body Vice President in 1939. Myrth studied home economics at BYU before she married Dick Wayne Burr on November 17, 1941. Dick and Myrth raised four children: Jay, Eileen, Barbara and Robert. She has 22 grandchildren and great grandchildren. She passed from this world on February 14, 2015.

Myrth was active in her family and community throughout her life. As a savvy business woman she helped make Burr Family Farms a successful endeavor, receiving special recognition as Outstanding Farmers of the year.

Myrth was active in the Cultural Arts community in Utah. She was well known for her dramatic presentations and firm belief that pioneers (and others) can come to life through the medium of storytelling/theatre. She served as President of the Utah Valley Theater Guild. She was a long time member of the Provo Arts Council. Myrth wrote and published several plays: Ruth & Naomi, Mary Fielding Smith: mother of a prophet, and Queen Esther, all of which she also performance to thousands of people in Utah, the United States and around the world.

Myrth served as docent at the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City for many years. She was a Halloween enthusiast and had always had a rousing Halloween party for the entire family and neighborhood.

MARY FIELDING SMITH: Mother of a Prophet - Her Trek West by Myrth Elizabeth Burr

1W About 60 minutes. Inspired by the Doug Fryer painting of Mary looking for her lost oxen while imploring the help of the Lord, Mary's brother and small son searched for the oxen for hours to no avail. Mary sensed something wrong and on her knees pleaded with the Lord for help. She arose from her prayer, then walked with calmness and assurance a short distance down a little stream of water until she stood on the banks of the Missouri River. There, she found the oxen fastened to a clump of willows growing in the bottom by a spring creek. Mary relied heavily on the Lord and spoke to him often. The play tells the story of Mary as she set sail on a rickety sailboat, left England in the 1800s and came to a new world looking for opportunity. Little did Mary know that she would also cross a thousand miles of prairie in a wagon, suffer hardship, hunger, and sorrow before she found her home in the valley at the tops of the mountains. **ORDER #2004**

Mary Fielding Smith Mother of a Prophet Her Trek West

MARY: Oh! I've been out doing my chores—I love this little farm of mine. When we entered the valley, Brigham Young had the valley mapped out into city lots. One for each of us. I looked on the map and there in bold letters was “Mary Smith” 2nd North 2nd West. It was gratifying to be assigned a city lot as an inheritance, but I had come a long way, suffered much hardship and heartache. I felt like I would like to have my own little farm.

One morning I climbed on Old Sam, Hyrum's big white horse that I brought with me, and I rode south of the main settlement of the Salt Lake Valley until I came upon a beautiful stream of water. I followed the stream up a hill rising gently to the East. I came to some springs gushing forth forming a pool of cool, clear water. I stopped, sat down. How refreshing it looked to my hungry soul after all the dust I had eaten while crossing the prairie. The sage brush and willows were growing strong and tall. I visualized fruit trees, a big garden, grain waving in the summer heat, a cow, some chickens. Yes, all this I could see. We would never be hungry again. The sun was blazing high over the massive mountains. And there was peace. I never could have believed the valley would be so beautiful. I knelt in prayer.

I went back, yoked up the oxen, packed up the wagons. I had driven my oxen thirteen hundred miles across the prairie, I would surely be able to get this much farther down the road. This is the place I would call my home.

John, a fine young man, went about, and with great effort managed to build this house for me. The children, what gems they are.

It was a hard life when we first came into the valley. But we cleared and plowed and planted—and all is well. Would I do it again? Of course I would. Well...on second thought, if I had of known all the hardship that I would encounter in this new land of opportunity I might not ever have left England. Opportunity—it has been worth all the effort and struggle just to be here in the tops of the mountains and worship in freedom.

I'm rambling and you came to hear my story. I was born in England 1801 to good parents. My father worked the land for a rich uncle, therefore we had food to eat. Times

were hard in England. Many people filled the streets looking for work, food, a better way of life, anything.

My family was refined, intellectual. Therefore I received, under the circumstances, a good education. Our desire was always for the finer things of life.

1834 found me uneasy. I needed more to fill my life. My brother Joseph Fielding and my sister Mercy had already immigrated to the new world looking for opportunity. I felt I too must go.

I bought passage on a rickety old sail boat, and there we rocked and rolled for six long weeks across the Atlantic Ocean. The Atlantic was cold and the sea was rough. Along with the rolling ship and other conditions, it was sometimes difficult to keep down the moldy food and slimy water. We existed on hard sea biscuits.

Finally we entered the St. Lawrence River, sailed down the water way and landed at Quebec. I was now indeed in the new world looking for opportunity. I was more than pleased to find my brother Joseph and sister Mercy. We were close-knit and traveled and stayed together through all of our difficult and good times.

It was at a boarding house in Toronto that we met the Mormon missionaries and they taught us of a new religion. We studied about a young boy who questioned the religious revival that was heard preached on every street corner.

Immigrants were flocking to the shores of the new world looking for religious freedom. Therefore preachers were found on every corner. It commenced with the Methodist, but soon became general among all the sects in that region of the country. It created no small stir amongst the people. Preachers crying out "Lo, here," and another "Lo, there," Some were contending for the Methodism; some for the Presbyterian, some for the Baptist religions, "Come hear me, I have the truth." Another would call out, "Nay, come hear me, I have the truth."

The young boy Joseph Smith, 14 years of age, stated that his mind was confused and greatly excited because the cry and tumult was so great and incessant. One day Joseph read the Epistle of James, first chapter, fifth verse, which states: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." So in accordance with this he wrote, "I retired to the woods. It was a beautiful clear day early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. I had gone into the woods to pray. I kneeled down to offer up the desires of my heart, when

I was immediately seized upon by some power which did entirely overcome me, and did bind my tongue so I could not speak. Thick darkness seemed to gather around me, and it seemed for a time as if I was doomed to sudden destruction. At that very moment, I saw a pillar of light over my head which descended gradually over me. I then saw two heavenly personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake to me calling me by name and said, pointing to the other, "This Is My Beloved Son, Hear Him."

After repeated visits from heavenly messengers Joseph knew he had a sacred work to do. He had been instructed by these heavenly messengers to bring back to earth, in these latter days, the ancient church of 'Jesus Christ.'

We studied the Book of Mormon, we felt the spirit. The book was a miracle. We believed. We were baptized. We moved with the next body of saints to Kirtland, Ohio. It was here that I met the Smith family—Mother and Father Smith—what genteel people. We met the Prophet Joseph, his wife Emma, his brother Hyrum—who was at that time Patriarch of the church. Hyrum had lost his wife, Jerusha, leaving a small family of five.

I had always looked forward to romance and marriage. Though I scarcely knew him, this handsome man proposed to me in a very proper, courtly, dignified and somewhat romantic way.

We were married the day before Christmas in the quietness of the Kirtland temple, by the Prophet himself. I loved Hyrum and his little brood.

I was ecstatic when I knew I was to have a child of my own.

The Church was growing very fast, there was much work to be done.

We, on many occasions, accompanied Joseph and Emma on Church assignments.

I felt like a queen as I walked beside them, sat beside them, and heard the Prophet bear sweet testimony that he had seen two personages standing in the air above him whose brightness and glory exceeded anything he had ever seen. And one said, "This Is My Beloved Son, Hear Him."

We were happy doing the work of the Lord, and the busy things of everyday life.

Little did we know what lay ahead for each of us.

I often looked at the gracious Emma, “Elect Lady” the Lord had called her. Indeed she was. She was committed to Joseph’s heavenly assignment. She was by his side bearing sweet testimony of it. Believing in him, helping him restore this priceless truth once more to the earth.

With all this beauty they did not escape sorrow.

One day Emma found it in her heart to tell me about the sorrow they had endured.

“Mary,” she said, “we have three living children; we have already buried four. Little Alva was born—such a beautiful child. He lived about three hours. Joseph carried my heart out of the door with him as he took that lifeless little body out for burial. I was too weak to go. It was April 19, 1831 that I delivered twins, a boy and a girl—they died the same day.” Emma went on. It was evident she needed to release the sadness clutching her heart.

"Sister Murdock, over in Orange County, on that very same day gave birth also to twins—a boy and a girl. She died shortly after. Brother Murdock was beside himself. A few days later he came to our door with the crying babies in his arms. As the tears flooded down his face, he pleaded with us, ‘Please, can you adopt these little babies and feed them and take care of them for I cannot.’ I took them in my arms, ‘Of course we will,’ I said. At last I had babies in my arms to hold. How happy I was to have babies of my own. I fed them. I loved them. I rocked them. I sang to them. They were such a comfort to me especially when Joseph was away on long Church assignments.

"The babies had a severe case of the measles when they were 11 months old. Julia had practically recovered but the little boy was still very sick. Joseph returned home one night and insisted he sleep on the trundle bed with the little boy so I could get some much needed rest. We named him Joseph II."

Emma continued, “It was March 24, 1832. In the cold of the night, vicious mobsters broke into the house. They grabbed Joseph by the legs and dragged him out into the cold night. They beat upon him unmercifully. The more they beat upon him, the more vicious they became. I ran after them begging, pleading, pounding upon their backs, ‘Please just leave us alone,’ I said. But they dragged him out into a nearby field and covered him with tar and feathers. I ran back to the house, the covers had been pulled from the little boy. The night was cold. He was chilled through. He developed a bad cough and died three

days later.

“Four years and four dead babies.” Emma said. “Maybe there will be more. We must go on.”

The Church was growing like prairie fire.

Converts were joining the Church, there was no place for them to live, so we crowded them into our homes. The faster the Church grew, the harder Satan fought.

Mobs gathered. They were vicious. Threats were made. Professors of religion were our worst enemies. They were losing their members to our Church. They were violent. They rose up in mobs to protect their own flocks. “There is debt on the Smith family property. We’ll seize the land. We’ll take the manuscripts, the golden plates, yes, we will even take the mummies. Visions, hogwash, we will drive these Mormons from the face of the earth!”

We all lived in extreme danger. We packed up and left. Some even in the middle of the night. We went to Far West, Missouri. Here we soon were busy acquiring property, building homes, planting grain fields, gardens.

It seems everywhere we went there were mobs. Again, the mobs rose up. Mormons were raped, beaten, ambushed, threatened.

One night about dusk, a loud, frightening knock came on my door. No one ever came to my door at this hour. The children gathered around me and clung to my skirt. I cautiously opened the door to find a foul mouthed sergeant holding a bayonet to Hyrum’s back. He shoved him into the room. “Madam, you have two minutes to provide whatever you want for this man before I haul him off to jail with that visionary man—don’t talk to him don’t touch him. You have one minute left before I shove this bayonet clear through him.”

“Quick, children,” I said. “Get a clean shirt, his shaving mug, a coat.” Then he was dragged out the door and thrown into the wagon with Joseph whom they had already captured.

The foul mouth of the sergeant was gall to my ears for we believed, among other things, in human dignity.

Twenty-four hours later our little son was born. Needless to say, my strength was gone. My spirit was broken. A gloom hung over the house. Annie Grinnels, good soul that she was, was living in our home. She tried to prepare something for us to eat. There was a shortage of food. The mobs had destroyed our crops. Hunger gnawed at our stomachs.

Faithful George Mills, also living with us, kept wood on the fire. Even that did not warm our souls.

Emma, five months pregnant, came to see me. She said, “Ever since Joseph brought the golden plates home all the powers of hell have been directed toward us.”

It was February, cold, bleak. My baby was three months old. I received word from the jail that Hyrum wanted me to come and bring the baby. Of course we would go. Emma and young Joseph II wanted to go with us. Our hearts were full of joy.

Don Carlos, Joseph’s younger brother, offered to drive us there. We gathered what supplies we could, a little extra food, quilts, and some clean clothes.

The morning arrived and Don Carlos drove up in the wagon, the one with the long wagon bed. “Dear sisters, are you ready to go? The horses are ready and raring to be on their way. Come, let us pack the wagon.”

“Yes, Don Carlos, we are ready. Here, help us lift these quilts, they are heavy. Hot rocks are in each one; hot rocks to keep us warm. All together now, up, up. I know they are heavy, but they will keep us warm. One more and—one more—one more. Seven in all, and one for you, Don Carlos, to place under the wagon seat to keep you from freezing. We will place the quilts and hot rocks around the outside of the wagon. And we will sit in the middle.”

“All right dear sisters. Everyone in? And did we get that little baby? Yes. If everybody is settled, we will be on our way. Giddy-up. Come on now—haw—haw—haw. Get around there. Travel will be rough, the wagon wheel ruts are deep and frozen. We have a good team of horses. Yes, we’ve got Old Sam, Hyrum’s big white horse. He’ll pull us through. It is rough—haw, haw. Gee, don’t let the hot rocks roll on you. It will be some better when we get settled into the frozen tracks. Come on, Sam—come on. There, you can do it. Haw—gee—there now, that’s better. It’s beginning to snow. 40 miles—two long days’ travel. We’ll make it. Giddy up.” Click, click, click.

"Uncle Don Carlos, it's been two days. When will we be there? I'm cold."

"I know, Joseph, I'm cold too. We're all cold. I think my hands are frozen to the reins. I see just ahead, there, the jail. Whoa, there—whoa. Now, if I can get my body to move I will go summon the guards. They said come in. Let me take the baby and each of you be careful getting down from the wagon."

As Mary climbed from the wagon and waited for guards, thoughts raced through her mind.

If I live to be a thousand I will still hear the iron key turn in the lock and the door swing open on its raspy hinges.

We were ushered in and the door slammed shut. The conditions of the jail were unbearable.

But what a happy reunion we had. We were allowed to visit all night.

At dawn the Prophet and Hyrum gave the baby a name and a blessing. They named him Joseph Fielding Smith. Little did I realize or even comprehend that this little baby named in a jail would some day be the President of this great Church in the tops of the Rocky Mountains.

The guards told us to leave and the door slammed shut. Needless to say, we drove home in silence.

Again, malicious attacks were directed against the Saints. People were beaten, stalked, ambushed. Crops were destroyed, haystacks and barns burned. Everywhere we went we were besieged by the mobs.

Then came the fateful month of June 1844. Governor Boggs had issued his infamous extermination order, which had the same effect as declaring an open season on MORMONS, as you would wild animals.

We packed up and moved. Our destination was Commerce, Illinois. It began to rain. Emma was concerned about the new version of the Bible Joseph had been working on. She knew the mobs would greedily grab it if they could get their hands on it. She sewed two large pockets in the underside of her skirts near the bottom, one on each side. There

she hid a five pound Bible on one side and the other side she hid a five pound manuscript. She carried a child in each arm also helping the other children and giving aid to Mother and Father Smith.

Commerce became Beautiful Nauvoo—a city built on a hillside overlooking the mighty Mississippi.

Joseph and Hyrum were released from Liberty Jail. The guards knew they were not guilty.

Again, we were busy rebuilding our lives, our homes, the temple, planting grain fields, gardens, orchards, and going about our lives being happy furthering the work of the Lord.

It was in Nauvoo that our little Martha Ann was born.

Then Governor Ford, as big a bully and a coward as Governor Boggs...Illinois was no longer safe for us.

A price of thirteen hundred dollars was placed on Joseph's head. The Prophet, Hyrum, and Porter Rockwell went across the river in hiding, at the same time making plans to go West.

Mobsters paraded through the streets shouting, "Cowards, cowards—bring them back or we'll burn Nauvoo." Emma couldn't stand to have Joseph called a coward so she sent word for them to return.

They came back only to be taken to jail one last time. They—were killed in cold blood by cowardly mobs with blackened faces. It seemed our world had ended.

They brought the bodies back to the Mansion house. I don't know how we ever got through the next few days. Emma was pregnant, she had never enjoyed good health. Maybe it was the intense heat of the day. All in all, she fainted away most every time she approached the bodies. The bodies lay side by side on the daybed facing west, their skin was ashen white. The children wept bitterly. People filed by, by the thousands. We sat up all night with the bodies of our husbands. I have never known such grief.

The next day a mock burial took place. Sandbags were placed in the empty coffins, nailed shut and buried after the funeral. The bodies had already been buried secretly in the

basement of the unfinished Mansion house.

A second burial took place some time later. In the middle of the night the bodies were dug up and taken to the spring house and buried side by side. The spring house was placed back over the graves and all traces of action concealed. The excess dirt was dumped into the Mississippi River.

All was quiet for a while.

Again, the mob regained their ‘courage’ and began burning homes, haystacks, abusing people. Persecution increased, violence continued, armed hoodlums stalked the streets.

Brigham Young asked for six months for us to prepare to leave. It was evident that we would have to leave immediately.

I planned to go. I sold or traded everything, anything I could. I traded for another wagon, more horses, grain, anything I thought I would need to help me go west.

I had twenty people living in my home. The Church had grown so fast a place had to be provided for them to live, so we crowded them into our homes—again.

The Smith family called a meeting where we each expressed our fears and feelings. Emma was in charge. “Mary,” she said. “Don’t go—stay. Let us keep our families together. If we don’t worship openly, the mobs won’t bother us. This is the first home I have ever had. Joseph has always been so busy doing the work of the Lord there has never been time for him to build a home of our own. Nine children I have bore, adopted two, six out of eleven I have lost in death.”

Tears were close as Emma continued. “My parents remain bitter to the end because of my marriage to Joseph. Seventeen years I have been married to Joseph, and all is lost. Would that I could have been buried with him. My unborn child will never see his father.”

“Then there’s old Brigham Young. He blames me for Joseph’s death. Said I should not have sent for Joseph to return from across the river. Why doesn’t he leave me alone. He is always at my door telling me what to do. Asking for more records. He is not the one to stand in Joseph’s place. It should be our 14-year-old son, Joseph. I could act in the regency roll until he is of age. The council will not hear of it. The Lord called me ‘Elect Lady.’ How proud I was to stand by Joseph’s side and bear testimony of the work.

"I compiled the song book. I was first President of the Relief Society. Still am. I can still hear Joseph's sweet voice when he made that sacred promise to the sisters of the Relief Society. He said, 'This is a charitable society, and according to your nature, it is natural for females to have feelings of charity and of benevolence. If you live up to the principles of your religion, angels cannot be restrained from being your associates. How great and glorious will be your reward in the Celestial Kingdom.'"

"I can't go —. Mother Smith, this empty feeling inside of me, why can't it go away? This awful emptiness, is it the reward for all the suffering and persecutions we have endured? I can't go any further."

I was concerned. "Emma, there is no time for self pity or bitterness. To stay, we will be severed from the vine and die outside the Church. I must go—every fiber of my body says I must go. I must go and take the children west where they can worship in peace. Mother Smith, will you go with us?"

"Not unless you promise to bring my old bones back here to be buried. No, Mary, I can't go. I'm too old. But go, Mary. Go and take the children where they can worship the God of their choice in peace. My heart cries now! For I will never see my grandchildren again."

The first exodus began in February 1846. The roads were deep rutted and frozen. Gradually the saints were forced out — many in the middle of the night without sufficient food, clothing or bedding. They huddled together in the wagons for warmth.

I held on as long as I could and was among the last to leave. I kept on preparing; Trading or bartering for anything I could. Another wagon, supplies, horses—anything.

Finally, we were ready to leave. We packed the wagons, harnessed the horses and cleaned up around our yards. We were proud people. This was no time to let down our image.

It was September. Ripe peaches, pears, plums were hanging ready to harvest. All we could do was drive off and leave them. We drove west to the river. There we stopped. We turned and looked back one last time at our home. It was in flames! The mobs were burning Nauvoo!!

I turned my eyes westward never to look back—no one will ever know the ache or longing in my heart as I put mile after mile between me and Nauvoo. We boarded the raft, crossed