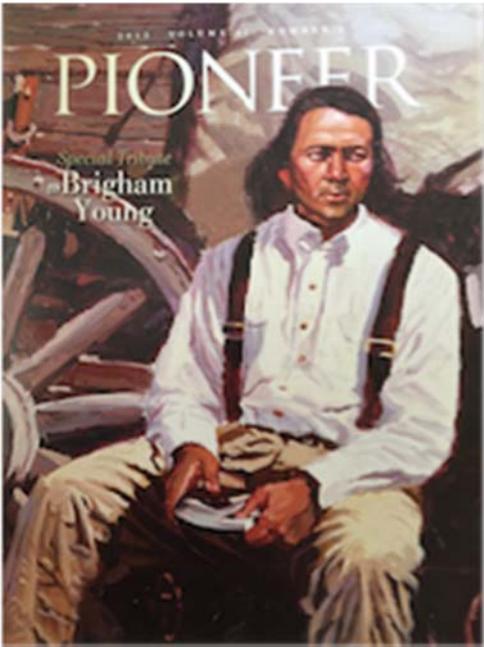


2016 JOSEPH SMITH SENIOR FAMILY REUNION TALK

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The cover of the Sons of Utah Pioneers 2015 quarterly magazine is a painting of Brigham Young by artist, Glen Edwards from the fourth annual Church History Museum international art competition. It's a wonderful image of him at the age when he was taking up his responsibilities to preserve Joseph's work in the restoration of the gospel. I love his contemplative pose, which bespeaks his personality. There is also a special issue of the SUP magazine in 2014 that focuses on Hyrum Smith with a wonderful painting of Hyrum on the cover. Copies of these are available by contacting my husband, John Elggren, at the Sons of Utah Pioneers National Office 801-484-4441, or your family member, Don Lee.

It's a pleasure to be here with you at the Winter Quarters Mormon Trails Visitor Center this beautiful Sunday evening. A few years ago my Uncle Truman F Clawson was the Director

here. Tru is the great grandson of Brigham Young, past president of the Brigham Young Family Association, and he sends to you his heartfelt greetings. His accomplishments here were many, and I hope you don't mind if I brag on him a bit. He had the opportunity to work out an agreement with the City of Florence, so the Church could take over the care of the cemetery and beautiful garden across the street. He also was able to add the bronze sculpture of the handcart family with their toes barely touching the ground, as angels lifted them along their way. During Tru's time here, President Hinckley counseled with him and decided that this hallowed ground was the right place for a temple. Tru was able to secure the purchase of the additional land needed, so the temple could be built. The magnificent sculpture of the grieving parents burying their baby, installed on the cemetery grounds many years ago, is by our uncle, Avard Fairbanks. Just across the Missouri River, Brigham Young reorganized the First Presidency in 1847 and was confirmed the second and longest serving President of the Church, so this is a very special location to me and to my family.

Gracia Jones asked me to share with you what I think Brigham Young's heart was really like. He was a complex and interesting man. He preferred to keep a low profile. He was not a person who sought the spotlight; in fact he avoided it. I think this is one of the reasons he was so valuable to the Prophet Joseph Smith. When Joseph needed support, Brigham was always there and available. Unfailingly he supported the Prophet, and because he didn't seem to need public approval or recognition, he was able to work behind the scenes, as he did in Missouri in 1838 evacuating the Saints while Joseph and other more visible leaders were in prison. Perhaps it was one of the hardest moments in Brigham's life, when the Prophet, so beloved by him, was killed, and Brigham, of necessity, had to emerge from his grief and accustomed supportive role and transition to a place where he was so very visible. He really was not comfortable there. I believe it was extraordinarily

difficult for him. He was one of those people who shielded himself with humor. He really didn't want to lay his heart open for all to see. It is hard to know his heart because he would deflect any attention with a ready humor. However we see it at such moments, when the handcart groups of 1856 were rescued and arrived in the valley. He greeted each of them with tears running down his cheeks. He had very deep, and tender emotions, but with few exceptions, he kept them out of public view. It must have been enormously difficult for him to return to Nauvoo following the martyrdom, and have to assert himself and become very public, but he realized the Prophet and the Lord had carefully prepared and positioned him to do it, so he rose to the occasion.

Brigham Young believed in the joy of life. As a child he had promised his dying mother that he would not grow up to be an angry man, a promise he kept. These were difficult days for the Saints following the loss of the Prophet, but it was Brigham's way, that even when you are having terrible troubles, you should also have joy. During that period of time between Joseph's death and the evacuation of Nauvoo, we have record of several occasions when Brigham and these grieving people took time together to laugh and be happy.

One of the events was a family reunion that was held in the Seventies Hall. Many of these people were related, the extent of which they discovered when they were in Salem Massachusetts searching for buried treasure to try to pay off the very pressing Kirtland Temple debts. In Doctrine and Covenants 111, the Lord tells them not to concern themselves about the debt, and that there were more treasures than one in Salem. He tells them to inquire diligently concerning the more ancient inhabitants and founders of the city. It is evident they obeyed and discovered their common ancestors, so before leaving Nauvoo, they gathered together as an extended and loving family. It included the Smith, Young, Richards, Kimball, Pratt and other families. Mother Smith was an honored guest. It was a wonderful event despite the threatening mobs hanging around the outskirts of town.

Another event was a party at which the apostles served a formal dinner to the Smith widows, and if you count them up, there were a lot of Smith women who had lost their husbands and were now widows. The brethren dressed in their best attire, and with a white towel draped over one coat sleeve; they seated the ladies at beautifully set tables and served a lovely meal carrying the trays around. Emma and Brigham were both there. Heber C. Kimball recorded in his journal that the evening was a happy occasion like the old days. Before the Prophet's death, they had often enjoyed this kind of wonderful association together and shared such festive evenings.

All of these people truly loved each other. They had bonded together through their trials, heartaches, stresses, strains and happy times. This was information that was somehow lost among Emma's descendants. They came to believe that Brigham Young had been a rival to Joseph Smith throughout the time of the restoration, and even that he had been the source of the violence against the Smith family. They needed information. They needed to be updated with truth and the facts as recorded by many witnesses at the time.

Michael Kennedy, seeing this need, sent a message to the Brigham Young Family Association inviting them to send an emissary to the Joseph Smith Jr. family reunion in 2007, and (for lack of a

better phrase) bring an apology. Our initial reaction was, what???! What does that mean? We just didn't know what they were dealing with or what they actually needed. I wrote a letter to Elder Dallin Oaks, who a few years earlier had given a wonderful talk to the Young Family about the relationship between Brigham Young and Emma Smith. Surely he would be able to help us. Elder Oaks responded quickly with a packet containing his research and references and an invitation to use any and all of it, but about the apology he said, I can't help you with that. That is up to you.

Clearly, this was not a job for the Church. This was a family-to-family matter. As I was agonizing over what to do next, my daughter, Jennifer, came into the room and said, mom why don't you just write an apology? As I was about to explain to her why that was a ludicrous notion at best, the words began to fill my mind, all of it from beginning to end. I turned to my word processor and started typing, because it was not coming from my own mind, but through the veil. I typed as fast as I could, so that I didn't lose it. When I finished, I read it over, and tears sprang to my eyes. I audibly said, thank you; I don't know who is here helping me, but thank you. I think this must be what they need, and I don't know why.

I emailed the statement to the Brigham Young Family Officers and Board of Directors, explained how it was received, and wished them well with how to proceed, as I was leaving on a Texas Temples Tour. They set up a meeting with Michael Kennedy, and he sent the statement to the First Presidency. They sent it back and said, okay. If you want to know Brigham Young's heart, listen to this, because I think this is Brigham Young's heart:

For a century and a half we have grieved over the loss of the fellowship of our dear Emma Hale Smith, her children and her descendants. We feel in our hearts an abiding longing to join once again these two families in a common celebration of their ancestors, two men who loved each other and gave their lives together in the service of the Lord, Jesus Christ. The Prophet Joseph Smith, who stands at the head of this dispensation, is second only in our affections to the Lord Himself, and we hold in the highest esteem our progenitor, Brigham Young, whose dying words in this world were the repeated name of his greatest friend and mentor, Joseph.

If there are any misunderstandings that continue to exist in the lexicon of traditions in our family concerning the Prophet's beloved wife whom we revere as a truly great and saintly lady, we would commit ourselves to do whatever is needed to publish to the world our deep regard for her noble life.

It would be our earnest desire to rebuild that bridge of friendship between our two families that existed not so long ago.

(The First Presidency requested that the last sentence be given orally:)

Please accept our regrets for things past and things lost, and our hand in love and fellowship for the future where all is to be gained.

Now I didn't know why they needed to hear those particular words, but they surely did. As soon as they heard that Brigham died speaking the name of Joseph, it rang familiarity to them, because

two years later, Emma died with Joseph's name on her lips in the same way. They didn't know that Brigham and Joseph were companions and friends who loved each other; that Joseph mentored Brigham and prepared him. They just didn't know these things.

It was a real learning experience for the Young Family to realize that these descendants of Emma Smith, not only had lost sight of the close friendship that had always existed between Emma's family and Brigham's family, they actually had become convinced that Brigham Young was responsible for the martyrdom, an accusation which none of us had ever before heard.

As things progressed, I became the designated emissary from the Young Family. I can just hear Brigham on the other side of the veil saying, "it's time to send in the women. Mary Ellen is handy; she'll do, and we'll back her up." Now I'm here to tell you that it was scary, and it was difficult, and I kept thinking, why aren't the priesthood holders taking care of this? Then I learned that Gracia Jones had been the courageous lone descendant of Emma Smith to come into the Church and be endowed, and she stood alone for many years. I soon realized that I was on a mission, and I'd better buck up and rise to the occasion. It turned out to be a real eye-opener, and an amazingly wonderful experience in 2007.

As I became acquainted with Gracia and Ivor Jones, Michael and Darcy Kennedy, and other descendants of Emma Smith, we leaned to love each other very quickly. Our bond was restored very quickly. As we talked, we realized that repeatedly in the scriptures the Lord says, things will be visited upon families down to the third and fourth generation, so we're figuring that's just where we are. We are down to the third and fourth generation. That many generations have died away. Now maybe we can restore the original, precious relationships between our families, and that was Michael's feeling...it's time to do this.

I began to realize that women are the anchors in the families, and family matters need to be addressed by the women. We cannot be by-standers where our families are concerned. When rifts develop in families, the women need to step up and help people to stop hating and stop being angry, to find forgiveness, and heal up the rifts. The Celestial Kingdom will be a family, and we need to learn how to live in a family peaceably and with love.

I think Brigham's one regret in life may have been his estrangement from Emma Smith, which he could not control. He respected her choices, and he continued to care about her throughout his life even though some bitter things were passed between them, because of other people who reported falsehoods to each end of the line. They were 1300 miles apart, and they fell victim to other people's miscommunications, which were sometimes even intentional causing a division between them, which should never have happened.

I am really pleased to be with you at this time, because nine years have passed since this message was delivered to the Joseph Smith Junior Family, and it is evident that the healing is in process. There was one man who was particularly upset with me nine years ago, and it was a wrenching experience for me personally. I was hesitant to come back with the prospect of seeing him and upsetting him again, but his sweet daughter wanted to take me to visit him and his wife. My

husband was with me this time, and to my great relief the bitterness was gone out of his face and out of his voice. I can't tell you how wonderful that was. The name Brigham Young no longer made flames shoot out of his eyes. Something wonderful had happened here.

Another extraordinary thing happened in 2007, which was the endowment of Robert Smith. I never thought I would see the reconstruction of the Nauvoo Temple in my lifetime, but not only have I seen it, I have gone inside for the endowment ceremony of a descendant of Joseph and Emma Smith. It was one of the most remarkable spiritual experiences of my life. I can tell you just a little bit about it. In the Terrestrial Room, one of the things that happens there is a prayer circle, and if you step into the prayer circle, you must commit yourself to harbor no bad feelings among those in the circle. As we were approaching that part of the ceremony, word came down the row to me that we were going to the prayer circle; please come to the circle. I needed that invitation because I felt like an outsider. I think there were about twelve of us in that circle, and represented were descendants of Hiram Smith, Greg Frogley, Gwen and John Smith. Two of my cousins from the Brigham Young family had joined me, so there were three of us in the circle. Mike and Darcy Kennedy and, of course the person being endowed, Bob Smith, represented the Joseph and Emma Smith family. We stood in that circle together and made that commitment that there would be no hard feelings among us. It was the most amazing experience, and that room suddenly became so crowded. We could feel their embraces through the veil, and we could hear their joy. I'm not a person who cries easily, or expresses emotions; I guess I'm Brigham Young's great great granddaughter or something. But I was completely overpowered by the Spirit, and tears started to run out of my eyes involuntarily, my nose started to run, and water was just running down my face and down my veil. I could see it, and I just let go and said okay. I have never been so overwhelmed with the Spirit. Yesterday I asked Bob to recall his impressions of that day. He too felt the crowd around us, and he said, I know Joseph and Emma were there; I know for sure they were there, he repeated. I too know they were there, and Brigham and my great great grandmother Emily Partridge, who loved Emma Smith. And not just these, but there were many gathering, and they were rejoicing, and there was singing going on. When we went through the veil into the Celestial Room, it was full. We could feel them there, and we all knew that there were many present from the other side. We were enveloped in a grand celebration, and we all felt it. By ordinance we had committed ourselves that we were done with hard feelings.

The Nauvoo Temple symbolizes the restoration of the gospel in the fullness of time. Read Revelation 12 with new eyes and new meaning. The woman is the Lord's Church, clothed in the sun, the power of the priesthood, with the moon at her feet, representing other churches with no authority, but only the ability to reflect the light of the sun. The child is the restoration of the gospel to the earth. When the woman is travailing in birth, the dragon is there to devour the child as soon as it is born. Following the death of the Savior, Satan succeeded for a time, but in this dispensation, Satan fails, Revelation 12 is fulfilled, and the gospel and all things are restored, not just from past dispensations but also from this dispensation. Now that temple is restored, and for great purposes. The loss of the descendants of Joseph and Emma Smith had to be restored. The relationship of the Smith and Young families also had to be restored. It was a privilege to be in that temple which symbolizes the restoration of all things in the fullness of time, our time.

I would like to finish with some quotes from Brigham Young that might give you an additional glimpse into his heart even if veiled by humor. Richard Holzapfel, one of our excellent speakers when we were visiting Carthage Jail, uncovered this charming bit of trivia. A popular pass time for young and older women in Nauvoo was to collect autographs in little autograph books. These were not just autographs, but also included some choice messages and bits of advice. In one of these autograph books that has survived, we find some interesting names and rhymes starting with the poet W. W. Phelps:

Two things will beautify a youth,
That is: Let virtue decorate the truth
And so you know, every little helps,
Yours, W. W. Phelps

Next the Prophet Joseph Smith, having read the previous entry writes:

The truth and virtue both are good
When rightly understood,
But clarity is better, Miss-
That takes us home to bliss
And so forthwith
Remember, Joseph Smith

And finally Brigham Young:

To live with Saints in Heaven is bliss and glory,
To live with Saints on Earth is another story.

This little autograph book is a treasure with each entry adding on to the previous entry using some of the words. It's so delightful.

On one occasion President Young dictated a letter to a disgruntled sister who had asked that her name be removed from the records of the Church. His response is both humorous and instructive, which was always the case. His humorous answers were always instructive.

Madam,

I have this day examined the records of baptism for the remission of sins in the Church, and not being able to find your name recorded therein, I was saved the necessity of erasing your name therefrom. You may therefore consider that your sins have not been remitted you, and you may consequently enjoy the benefits therefrom.

Brigham Young also said things like this: "The Prophet was the greatest man on earth." He also said, "it was my duty to throw my influence around Joseph. Yes, I tied the people to the Prophet Joseph Smith, every cord I could get hold of, I hooked it to Joseph." So, throughout the rest of his time as Church President, the people would never forget the Prophet. He said, "I know my apostleship; I am an apostle of Joseph. Later he said, I said this because I am Brigham Young, an apostle of Joseph Smith and of Jesus Christ. While he had a humorous side, he was a devoted and deeply spiritual leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. During his leadership, he had many interviews with Joseph, who came to him on numerous occasions. He was so low in 1845 he pleaded with the Prophet to come back because he missed him so very much. Joseph appeared to him to reassure him, but then chastened him a bit because Joseph had his own responsibilities and was very busy on the other side of the veil. He needed Brigham to step up and handle his

responsibilities on the earth. There were other occasions when Joseph gave him vital information including showing him the valley of the Great Salt Lake and marking the exact place to build the temple. Here was Joseph standing on Ensign Peak with an enormous flag that draped down into the valley, saying, "Build the temple where the ensign points, and you will prosper."

Joseph's appearances tended to decrease, as Brigham got older and waxed stronger in his own personal confidence, but I believe both of them and many others are watching over us now, and continue to assist us. Certainly we felt their guidance in our efforts to reunite our families. Let us remember that we are an example to the world. As people come into the Church, they join the family because it is the family of Jesus Christ. When we take the sacrament, we renew our covenant to take His name. It is His family, not just Joseph's, not just Brigham's; it is the family of the Lord, and all who have sincere hearts are welcome. It is a very expansive family, not a narrow exclusive family, but an all-inclusive family. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.