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### Mary Aikens Smith

Mary Aikens, the daughter of Nathaniel and Mary Tupper Aikens, was born 13 Aug 1797 in Barnard, Windsor, Vermont. She was the seventh of 10 children. As a young woman she became a school teacher, teaching in Vermont and northern New York. While teaching in Stockholm, New York, she became acquainted with Silas Smith, a widower, to whom she was married 4 Mar 1828. Silas's first wife's name was Ruth Stevens; they were married 29 Jan 1806. The following are their children: Charles, born 11 Nov 1806; Charity, born 1 Apr 1808; Curtis Stevens, born 29 Oct 1809; Samuel, born 3 Oct 1811; Stephen, born 8 Jan 1815; Susan, born 19 Oct 1817; and Asahel, born 12 Oct 1819. Ruth died 14 Mar 1826.

Of the children named above, Charles, Samuel, and Asahel, died in childhood. Susan lived to be married, but died soon after that event. Curtis was married three times, but outlived all his wives, also all his children but one, a boy named William. Charity never married. Stephen was twice married. By the first marriage a son named Silas Augustus was born; by the second marriage a son named Fredrick was born.

Three sons were born to Mary and Silas; Silas Sanford 26 Oct 1830, John Aikens 6 Jul 1832, and Jesse Nathaniel 2 Dec 1834. All were born at Stockholm, New York.

In the summer of 1830 Joseph Smith Sr., Silas's brother, visited the family and taught them the gospel. Although Silas received the testimony of his brother concerning the Latter-day work, he was slow about yielding obedience to the Gospel, owing to the opposition of his brother Jesse, his wife Mary, and his older children. Silas was baptized in the summer of 1835 near Potsdam, New York, by Hyrum Smith. At this time Mary did not join the Church, but remained a member of the Presbyterian Church. The family, consisting of Silas and Mary, the sons Silas, John, Jesse, Curtis, and Stephen, and Silas's mother, Mary Duty Smith, migrated to Kirtland, Ohio in the spring of 1836, with Mary taking a recommend from her church along with her. Mary Duty Smith died soon after their arrival, on 25 May 1836. She had expressed a desire to be baptized, but being infirm it was not done. She was 93 years old. The boys Curtis and Stephen did not join the church and soon after returned to New York.

When Mary came to Kirtland, Ohio, it was not with any intention of uniting with the "Mormon" Church. One Sunday she took her son, Jesse, and attended the neighborhood Presbyterian Church, of which she had become a member. The services had not been interesting to her, and after the concluding services the front view of the Kirtland Temple was very vividly presented before her eyes and these words borne in upon her mind, "There thy best friends and kindred dwell; there Christ thy Savior reigns." She left, never returning to the Presbyterian Church again. She was baptized 18 Jul 1838 by Hyrum Smith.

At this time the saints were gathering in Missouri, so the Silas Smith Family started for Far West, Missouri. After a difficult trip, they were about five miles from Huntsville, Missouri, when they were met by a man with a copy of Governor Bogg's exterminating order, which was to the effect that all "Mormon's" leave the state at once or suffer death. They camped there for one day and started back the next morning. They mistakenly followed a leader, who was supposedly appointed to lead the saints to safety, and traveled to the west bank of the Mississippi about ten miles from Louisiana, Pike County, Missouri. Provisions were very scarce. Not being able to get any grinding done, they ate boiled or hulled corn for three weeks at a time. While living here John Aikens, their 6 year old son died. They buried him in the woods about three miles from where they were camped.

Eventually it was ascertained that the leader they had followed was not appointed to pilot this group of saints. They broke camp 21 Feb 1839, crossed the Mississippi, and stopped at Pittsfield, Pike County, Illinois. Here a branch of the church was organized, with Silas as the Presiding Elder. Silas traveled to Commerce to attend a special Conference where he met with the Prophet Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, and his brother's Joseph, John, and Asahel. He was counseled to move his family to Commerce without delay, and returned with that intention. He was taken sick soon after his return from Commerce and continued to decline until he died 13 Sep 1839. He was buried near Pittsfield at a spot where several of the members of the Branch were laid.

At the time of her husband's death Mary had one of her feet severely scalded, her son, Jesse, was so ill she feared for his life, and her other son, Silas, had the misfortune to get the bone of his right thigh broken in a fall. She and her boys were taken in by the Chandler Rogers family who provided a home and needs for about six weeks. They were then moved to Nauvoo, where Joseph Smith provided them a room in a house known as the Upper Stone House where Hyrum Smith lived at the time. The family stayed there until the spring of 1840.

With the help of the boy's Uncle and Mary's brother in law, John Smith, they moved to a little town called Ambrosia. Mary's sons were able to attend a few months of school here. John Smith moved to Montrose, a town across the river from Nauvoo, and Mary and her sons soon followed. They traded an old wagon for two acres of land and were able to plant it to corn. Here they passed the summer. A good neighbor was kind to them, giving them a pig. They took their corn to a nearby mill to have it ground, but it came back so coarse and badly mangled that it could not be eaten. Brigham Young happened to pass that way and heard Mary tell about her disappointment over the spoiled grist. He said, "Let me carry it back to the mill, its just on my way." He took the sack and marched off with it. He reached the mill, dryly remarking to the miller, "The widows meal is too coarse for her sieve." When they got the grist back it was all that could be asked for in the way of meal.

Having had a heifer driven off and killed by someone for beef, the family decided to move back to Nauvoo. This was in Feb 1843. They lived for a short time in Hyrum Smith's Office, a small brick building, then moving to the foot of Main Street, and living in a small log house provided by Joseph Smith. Next they moved to a place in the lower part of town to a house given to Mary by Joseph Smith. It was a log house with two rooms. Here Mary taught school during the summer. That fall Mary's Uncle Silas Tupper, having joined the church, came to Nauvoo, moved his family in with them through the winter.

Mary was very anxious to have her boys learn to work, so they moved to a place named String Prairie in Lee County, where her sons worked for various employers. Some of these men were very abusive especially to "Mormons", which prompted Mary to return to Nauvoo. This was at the time that the State Militia frequently came to Nauvoo, causing much unrest and eventually the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his Brother Hyrum. She and her sons viewed the martyrs at the Mansion House and shared the deep sorrow in the hearts of the saints. Mary was taken sick with chills and fevers, but the family survived on the boys dig-

ging potatoes on shares, and Silas got work at the Nauvoo House Store.

Mary received her endowments in House of the Lord at Nauvoo 23 Dec 1845 and was sealed to her spouse, Silas Smith, 15 Jan 1846, also in Nauvoo Temple.

Mobs began to attack the settlements around Nauvoo, burning their houses and stacks of hay and grain. It was feared that they would also attack Nauvoo, so in May of 1846 Mary and her sons moved across the Mississippi River to Lee County, Iowa. Here they lived in a house that was on the outskirts of the timber fronting the prairie, belonging to Abraham Newberry. He was very kind to the family. The boys were able to hoe corn and Jesse was able to earn his first pair of boots. There was still much unrest, as they could hear the cannon shots being fired at the saints still in Nauvoo. At this time a team and wagon came for the family, in charge of a man by the name of Fisher. He belonged to O. M. Allen's company, and had promised John Smith, Mary's brother in law who had gone on ahead, that he would bring them. They disposed of their scant household goods to neighbors, killed their pigs, but they still had to leave behind the family clock and Grandfather Asahel Smith's writings. They started their journey west, driving their two cows, and finally reached Winter Quarters the last day of November 1846. Uncle John Smith welcomed them and they moved into one room of his cabin.

In June of 1847 they started west again. They stopped at Elk Horn, as the stream was very high. The cattle swam over, but the wagons were ferried on rafts. They were organized with Perrigrene Sessions as their captain of fifty, though the Company was known as Parley's Company. Silas drove Mary's wagon and Jesse drove Uncle John Smith's wagon. There was plenty of wild game and one of their fifty, Isaac Brown, was an excellent hunter and kept the camp supplied with fresh meat. At a stream called "Little Sandy", they met a Pioneer Company on their way back to Winter Quarters, including Brigham Young, Willard Richards, and others. A meeting was called and they were told that a

gathering place for the saints had been found and that a City had been laid out and named Great Salt Lake City, Great Basin, North America. Parley's company stopped one day with them and then resumed their journey west, reaching the Great Salt Lake Valley on 25 Sep 1847.

When they reached the settlement they found that a fort had been constructed with just a few cabins adjoining the wall. The family was assigned a building spot, where four cabins were soon erected. One was for Mary and her two boys, Silas and Jesse. It soon became apparent that foodstuff was very scarce, so she and her boys voluntarily put themselves on rations, which consisted of about one half a pound of flour per day for each person. They had no vegetables and very little meat, but they did have some milk from their cow.

They went to work and planted an acre of wheat, a little west of the Temple Block, on a lot that had been assigned to Mary. They also planted corn, beans, and other vegetables. They were just getting large enough to show on the row when crickets appeared and commenced eating all of the crops. They tried turning water onto the crops to drown the crickets, but it was impossible to drown them, as they would revive after being under water for a long time. All of the people, male and female, turned out armed with sticks and clubs to beat and kill crickets. A little before dusk the creatures went to roost under clods or in nearby bushes, only to renew their attack as soon as the sun appeared the next morning. It was a wearisome task for the pioneers as they fought the crickets for two or three days, praying constantly for help to save their crops. Help, in answer to their prayers, did come. Great flocks of sea gulls appeared in the fields. The gulls would fill themselves with crickets and then seek the water ditches and after drinking, disgorge themselves and immediately return to fill themselves again. Is it any wonder that Mary looked with affection upon the gulls with their pretty eyes and dainty feet?

About this same time an Indian scare occurred and the family had to move into the fort for protection. The scare turned out to be a false alarm, but Indi-

ans were sometimes a real threat to the early pioneers.

After this the family moved to several places in northern Utah. They were continually clearing land and planting crops. Mary made cheese to sell to the emigrants who were going to the gold mines in California. Silas and Jesse suffered from mountain fever and several accidents that required super human efforts from Mary to care for them and take care of the crops and daily chores. When available, Mary would send her boys to school, as she thought their education should come first and foremost.

In 1851, the family was asked by Brigham Young to move to Parowan and help build the church and a town in that area. Mary carried the word to her boys. Accordingly they answered the call, sold their city lot, procured a wagon and a little money, and left for Parowan. Except for occasional visits to Salt Lake City, Mary spent the remaining twenty-six years of her useful and eventful life in Parowan.

About this time Silas and Jesse both married, but Mary continued to live with their families. With pride and satisfaction she watched her sons become prominent figures in the civic and religious activities of the community. They served with distinction in many fields: both filled foreign missions, served in the state legislature, in military and exploring expeditions and both became stake presidents in Colorado and Arizona. Mary felt rewarded for her years of struggle and sacrifice by having her sons become respected leaders in affairs of both church and state. She helped them with their families; taught the older children the three "R's" and gave them many valuable lessons on good habits and proper behavior, which they always remembered.

The following extract from a letter to her son, Jesse, gives an insight into her nobility of character and her strong spirituality. "Strive to live daily in that way that you can feel an assurance that you are accepted of your Father in Heaven; that your heart is pure and your walk is just as becomes a saint of the Most High God." This was also the

theme by which she conducted her life.

Had she lived until 13 Aug she would have been eighty years old, but she passed to the other side of the veil at 7:00 p.m. on 27 April 1877. The funeral was held 30 April 1877, and on the same day her two sons laid their noble Mother to rest in the Parowan, Utah Cemetery.

Footnote: This story was gleaned from the Journal of Jesse N. Smith.