

Camp Site Biographies

ALICE HOUSTON

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Alice Houston was born May 19, 1935 in Greenville, New Hampshire. She grew up between there and Newport, Rhode Island. Her family was converted to the gospel when they were young so she basically grew up in the church. She met and married Ron Houston and they had 9 kids together, 7 boys and 2 girls. One daughter died tragically as an infant. They helped raise an Indian daughter through the Indian placement program through the church as well as 4 other neighbor children and for a time their mothers as well. They were also foster parents through the years to 11 mentally challenged teenagers and ended up adopting two of the boys.

Because of the amount of boys in her household she was heavily involved in the scouting program for years and on February 16, 1978 was honored to receive the Silver Beaver award. She was asked to go to girls camp when her kids were getting older, but her husband wouldn't allow it until her daughter was old enough to go, and then she attended every year since either on a ward or stake level. She loves camping and being outdoors in nature. She has held many callings both on ward and stake levels in primary, young women's, and relief society through her life time, and has always been a champion for the youth.

AVONELL WOODS

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Mary Avonell Woods was born on February 24, 1938 to Cyrus & Ina Bundy Gifford in St. George Utah. She is the youngest of 10 children, and as such she was teased and pranked into being the grown up kid she is today. Over the course of her life Avonell has lived in Salt Lake City & LaVerkin, Utah, Panaca, Boulder City, Indian Springs, Caliente, Mesquite, NV and N Las Vegas, NV, where she has lived in the same home in the North Las Vegas Stake since 1960. On Aug 6, 1955 Avonell married her long time crush Russell Fred Woods by a pot belly stove in Mesquite, NV. They were sealed in the St. George Temple in 1963.

While Russell worked as an operating engineer, Avonell pursued her dream of playing house as the mother of 8 children, a perfect family of 4 boys and 4 girls: Ken, Monta Lindsay, Jody, Natalie Littlefield, Janet Spendlove, Stacy, Kelly, and Tiffany Acosta.

Shortly after becoming reactivated in the Church in 1962 Avonell was called to be a primary teacher, her scariest calling ever. Since that time she has served in at least 30 callings and served in some multiple times. Avonell's most treasured callings were those working with the young women of the church where she has served since 1975 until most recently in 2012. And she has even braved girl's camp for 23 Years, which is truly a feat for anyone.

Today Avonell is living the real dream of being a grandmother to 39 grand kids and 20 great grand kids and uncountable young men and women who she has met over the years that call her grandma too. If you ask her she has probably "babysat" them or they had a "crush" on her or she has some great story to tell about them. Avonell has been a great example to everyone she meets of living the gospel and serving her fellow men as everyone she meets becomes a friend. Her family is so proud to call her wife, mom, and grandma.

NANCY LANG STEPHENS

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Nancy Lang Stephens was born in St. George, Utah, and is the 2nd child, 1st daughter of seven children. At the age of 2 years her family moved to Las Vegas, Nevada. Nancy met Warren Stephens in 1957 at a Saturday night dance at 8th & Linden Chapel. She graduated from Rancho high school in June of 1958 and married Warren in that same month. Nancy and Warren have 6 children, 4 daughters and 2 sons. Nancy has 27 grandchildren and one great grandchild; all are a joy in her life.

Over the years Nancy has held numerous church callings a Sunday school, Primary & RS Teacher (Currently) , RS president & YW President (3 times), Ward & Stake YW Camp Director a number of times. She was an Early Morning Seminary teacher for 12 years. Nancy & Warren have served several Missions. First mission was in 1995 in London England. They next served 2 missions in Nauvoo, Illinois starting in 2003 this lasted for 3 years. When they came home they then served down in the Grand Canyon on the Havasupai Indian reservation.

They have also served a Stake mission with Warren in the Addiction Recovery program. Nancy has proved to be a valuable asset to her family, friends & the Church, as well as her willingness to do anything that she is asked to do, she then does it to the best of her ability.

JANETTE SMITH

Janette Smith was born in Fort Worth Texas and is the 3rd of 8 children. She has lived in Las Vegas for most of her life and likewise has been in the North Stake for the majority of her life. Janette was part of the first graduating class of El Dorado High School. She married her high school sweetheart Danny Smith in the St. George, Utah temple, upon his return from his missionary service. Janette is the mother of six children, four sons and two daughters. Each of her sons achieved the rank of Eagle Scout and served as full-time missionaries. Janette is also the grandmother to 20 grandchildren.

Janette has spent all of her life giving of her time and her talents to those in need. She is a gifted teacher and is passionate about teaching and nurturing children. Janette has been involved in early childhood development for more than 18 years for the City of North Las Vegas. When Janette began teaching in 1995 there were 2 classes in 1 center. By 2001 Janette was asked to assist in opening a second center where she became the preschool program director. This program has been very successful and now has over 10 classes.

Janette also assisted in the opening and development of an early childhood development center for the City of Mesquite during these years. At the present time Janette is a full-time teacher at Canyon Springs High School where she teaches Child Development. Janette also supervises a pre-school program that she established at Canyon Springs wherein her students are able to gain real experience with teaching children.

Janette's passion for teaching goes beyond teaching in a classroom. Her personality is such that everywhere she goes and with whomever she speaks, she teaches them the gospel and sometimes with words. For nine years Janette was given the opportunity to teach early morning seminary which she enjoyed very much. Janette has served as a Relief Society President and has served twice as the Young Women's President. She has spent years teaching in primary and serving as the primary chorister. Some of the callings that she has enjoyed most are those that have involved her in trips to Camp Stimson. Janette was the Stake Camp Director for nine years and she has been her Ward's Camp Director a number of times. Janette has a deep and abiding faith in the Savior Jesus Christ and that is evident in the way that she lives her life and in the way that she shares the Gospel and in the way that she has raised her children.

GINGER EWELL

Ginger Ewell moved to North Las Vegas as a young girl. She was active in both church and seminary, graduating from Rancho High School. She married her high school sweetheart and raised 8 children here in our valley. She has great talents and abilities that have made her stand out in anything she sets her mind to. She has served faithfully as the President of Church auxiliaries. She has a great love for music and the youth. She has served as Primary Chorister, Girl's camp music director, Directed Youth Stake Musical Productions, Directed Road Shows and has directed many ward, youth and stake conference choirs. Testimonies were strengthened as she has helped choir members lend their voices to God's army in singing praises unto Him. She has always had an enthusiasm that is contagious.

Ginger has taught early morning seminary here in the valley for 34 years. She has also taught two adult institute religion classes each week for years. She is a popular fireside speaker and has spoken in many youth and women's conferences from one end of this valley to the other. She owns and operates Latter Day Tours which she started 24 years ago with her husband. Over the years she has helped to strengthen countless testimonies through her guided tours of the Church History Sites, teaching along the way as only she can do. Although Ginger has had her share of trials and disappointments she has maintained the motto, "Murmur Not". Let Us All Press On is one of her favorite hymns. Ginger's positive attitude and number 10 testimony is a blessing to all who come in contact with her.

CAROLYN SUDWEEKS

Carolyn Sudweeks is the perfect cheerleader. She was a cheerleader in high school and never quit championing others to do their best. She is a people person and her smile and sunny disposition has won her friends. Her positive influence has been felt by all those who associate with her.

Carolyn was born in Bunkerville, Nevada. Her parents were a strong influence on her. She worked side-by-side with her father in his dairy and learned the value of hard work. Her mother was a very positive person and in times of trial she would say, "It is always darkest before the dawn." Carolyn never forgot her words. Carolyn's parents were less active in the Church and she determined at a young age that she wanted to marry a returned missionary in the temple. She got her wish when she met Duane Sudweeks on a blind date at Brigham Young University. They were married in the St. George temple almost 52 years ago. Together they raised four children in the gospel and have 12 grandchildren.

EMMA SMITH

Emma was born July 10, 1804, in Harmony Township, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, as the seventh child of Isaac Hale and Elizabeth Lewis Hale. Emma first met her future husband, Joseph Smith, Jr., in 1825. Smith lived near Palmyra, New York, but boarded with the Hales in Harmony while he was employed in a company of men hoping to unearth buried treasure. Although the company found no treasure, Smith returned to Harmony several times to court Emma. Isaac Hale refused to allow the marriage because he considered Smith's occupation disreputable. Finally, on January 17, 1827, Smith and Emma eloped across the state line to South Bainbridge (Afton), New York, where they were married the following day. The couple moved to Smith's parents' home on the edge of Manchester Township near Palmyra.

In December 1827, the couple decided to move to Harmony, where they reconciled—to some extent—with Isaac and Elizabeth Hale. Emma's parents helped her and Joseph obtain a house and a small farm. Once they settled in, Joseph began work on the Book of Mormon with Emma acting as a scribe. She became a physical witness of the plates, reporting that she felt them through a cloth, traced the pages through the cloth with her fingers, heard the metallic sound they made as she moved them, and felt their weight. She later wrote in an interview with her son, Joseph Smith III: "In writing for your father I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us. "While in Harmony on June 15, 1828, Emma gave birth to her first child—a son named Alvin—who lived only a few hours.

In May 1829, Emma and Joseph left Harmony and went to live with David Whitmer in Fayette, New York. While there, Joseph finished work on the Book of Mormon, which was published by March 1830.

Emma was baptized by Oliver Cowdery on June 28, 1830, in Colesville, New York, where an early branch of the church was established. During the next weeks, Joseph was arrested, tried and exonerated in South Bainbridge for "glass looking" on the state's vagrancy law (glass looking was a common scam in which the glass looker claimed to have the ability to find buried treasure for a fee). Emma may have been disheartened and Joseph reported a revelation which instructed her to "murmur not" but also comforted her with the assurance, "thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou art an elect lady, whom I have called. "The revelation goes on to state that Emma would "be ordained under [Joseph's] hand to expound scriptures, and to exhort the church" and further authorizes Emma to "make a selection of sacred Hymns" for the church.

Joseph and Emma returned to Harmony for a time, but relations with Emma's parents broke down, and the couple went back to staying in the homes of members of the growing church. They lived first with the Whitmers in Fayette, then with Newel K. Whitney and his family in Kirtland, Ohio, and then into a cabin on a farm owned by Isaac Morley. It was here on April 30, 1831, that Emma gave premature birth to twins, Thaddeus and Louisa, who died hours later. That same day, Julia Clapp Murdock died giving birth to twins, Joseph and Julia. When they were nine days old, their father, John, gave the infants to the Smiths to raise as their own. On September 2, 1831, the new family moved into John Johnson's home in Hiram, Ohio. The infant Joseph died of exposure or pneumonia in late March 1832, after a door was left open during a mob attack on Smith.

On November 6, 1832, Emma gave birth to Joseph Smith III in the upper room of Newel K. Whitney's store in Kirtland. Young Joseph (as he became known) was the first of her natural children to live to adulthood. A second son, Frederick Granger Williams Smith (named for a counselor in the church's First Presidency), followed on June 29, 1836.

While in Kirtland, Emma's feelings about temperance and the use of tobacco may have influenced her husband's decision to pray about dietary questions. These prayers resulted in the "Word of Wisdom". Also, Emma's first selection of hymns was published as a hymnal for the church's use.

Emma and her family lived with friends in Quincy, Illinois, until Joseph escaped custody in Missouri. The family moved to a new Latter Day Saint settlement in Illinois which Joseph named "Nauvoo." On May 9, 1839, they moved into a two story log house there which they called the "Homestead." They lived there until 1842 when a much larger house, known as the "Mansion House" was built across the street. A wing was added to this house, which Emma operated as a hotel.

On March 24, 1842 the Ladies' Relief Society was formally organized as the women's auxiliary to the church and Emma became its founding president, with Sarah M. Cleveland and Elizabeth Ann Whitney as her counselors. The organization was formed to "provoke the brethren to good works in looking to the wants of the poor, [search] after objects of charity...[and] to assist by correcting the virtues of the female community," according to the minutes of the society. Shortly before this, Joseph initiated the Anointed Quorum—a prayer-circle of important men and women in the church that included Emma.

Joseph's death threw both the church and Emma's family into disorder. Emma was left a pregnant widow—it would be on November 17, 1844, that she gave birth to David Hyrum Smith, her and Joseph's last child together.

Emma died peacefully in the Nauvoo House on April 30, 1879.

ELIZA SNOW

Eliza Roxey Snow was one of the most celebrated Latter-day Saint women of the nineteenth century. A renowned poet, she chronicled history, celebrated nature and relationships, and expounded scripture and doctrine. She claimed to be a plural wife of Joseph Smith, Jr., was married openly for many years to polygamist Brigham Young, and was the second general president of the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) from 1866 until her death.

Born in Becket, Massachusetts on 21 January 1804, Snow was the second daughter of Oliver and Rosetta Snow. When she was two years old, her family left New England to settle on a new and fertile farm in the Western Reserve valley, in Mantua, Ohio. The Snow family valued learning and saw that each child had educational opportunities. Eliza worked as secretary for her father in his office as justice of the peace.

When Joseph Smith, Jr., the Latter Day Saint prophet, took up residence in Hiram, Ohio, four miles from the Snow farm in 1831, the Snow family took a strong interest in the new religious movement. Eliza's mother and sister joined the Latter Day Saint Church early on; several years later, in 1835, Eliza was baptized and moved to Kirtland, Ohio, which was at the time the headquarters of the Church. Upon her arrival, Eliza donated her inheritance, a large sum of money, toward the building of the Church's Kirtland Temple. In appreciation, the building committee provided her with the title to "a very valuable [lot]-situated near the Temple, with a fruit tree-an excellent spring of water, and house that accommodated two families." Here Eliza taught school for Joseph Smith's family and was influential in interesting her younger brother Lorenzo Snow in the young Church. Lorenzo later became fifth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Snow married polygamist Brigham Young as a plural wife. She traveled west across the plains and arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on 2 October 1847. There, childless Eliza became a prominent member of Young's family, moving into an upper bedroom in Young's Salt Lake City residence, the Lion House.

Snow served as the first secretary of the LDS women's Nauvoo Female Relief Society in 1842 under the presidency of Emma Smith. Called by Young in 1866 to help bishops organize Relief Societies in local wards and to "instruct the sisters," Eliza traveled throughout Utah Territory encouraging women to attend meetings, sustain priesthood leaders, and support Young's economic programs.

Snow's presidency emphasized spirituality and self-sufficiency. The Relief Society sent women to medical school, trained nurses, opened the Deseret Hospital, operated cooperative stores, promoted silk manufacture, saved wheat, and built granaries. In 1872 Snow provided assistance and advice to Louisa L. Greene in the creation of a woman's publication loosely affiliated with the Relief Society—the Woman's Exponent. Snow's responsibilities also extended to young women and children within the Church. She was a primary organizer for the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association in 1870 and assisted Aurelia Spencer Rogers in establishing the Primary Association in 1878.

Snow served as president of the Relief Society until her death in 1887. By 1888, the Relief Society had more than 22,000 members in 400 local wards and branches.

Snow died on December 5, 1887, in Salt Lake City, and was buried in Brigham Young's family cemetery.

CAMILLA KIMBALL

Camilla Eyring Kimball, widow of the late President Spencer W. Kimball, twelfth President of the Church, died September 20 at her home in Salt Lake City. She was 92.

"The passing of Camilla Eyring Kimball marks the end of the earthly service of one of the great and noble women in the Church's history," said a statement issued by President Ezra Taft Benson and his Counselors in the First Presidency, President Gordon B. Hinckley and President Thomas S. Monson. "She was devoted to her God, church, and family. She was a teacher, a disciple of learning, and spent much of her lengthy life acquiring knowledge. In the Church, she served in many capacities, but perhaps her greatest contribution came as a faithful and ever-devoted companion to her dear husband, President Spencer W. Kimball, who spent so much of his long life in full-time service to the Church. She supported him in all of his endeavors and was at his side for those many years of arduous travel and leadership responsibilities. We extend to her family our love and appreciation. We are confident that her life and contributions leave pleasant memories in their hearts and in the hearts of all whose lives she touched."

Sister Kimball was born 7 December 1894, in Colonia Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico, the eldest of Edward Christian Eyring and Caroline Cottam Romney Eyring's nine children.

When she was seventeen, she went to Provo, Utah, to live with an uncle while she attended Brigham Young University. She also studied at the University of California at Berkeley and Utah State Agricultural College in Logan. She taught school at the Millard Academy in Hinckley, Utah, and at the Gila Academy in Thatcher, Arizona.

She married Spencer W. Kimball in Pima, Arizona, on 16 November 1917. Her husband was called to the Council of the Twelve in 1943 and became President of the Church in December 1973.

She earned Exemplary Womanhood awards from both Brigham Young University and Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho.

Sister Kimball is survived by four children, twenty-six grandchildren, and sixty-two great-grandchildren. Her funeral was held September 26 in the Assembly Hall on Temple Square.

Camilla Eyring Kimball, widow of the late President Spencer W. Kimball.

MARJORIE HINCKLEY

Identified by her husband as the lodestar of their family, Marjorie Hinckley gently guided her children with faith, intelligence and humor. Her happiest role in life was that of a supportive wife and mother.

Born Marjorie Pay on 23 November 1911, in Nephi, Utah, she was the first child of Phillip LeRoy and Georgetta Paxman Pay. She had four sisters and two brothers, but one brother died in infancy. The family moved to Salt Lake City in 1914 where Marjorie began her education. She graduated from East High School in 1929 and went to work at the Owens Illinois Glass Company performing secretarial duties.

As a young girl she was taught by her mother that the best husband for her would be one who loves the Lord. Marjorie met a young man with that qualification living right across the street from her family home. She and Gordon B. Hinckley were married on 29 April 1937 in the Salt Lake Temple by Elder Stephen L. Richards, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (President Hinckley was called to serve as an Assistant to the Twelve Apostles in April 1958, to the Quorum of the Twelve in September of 1961, and became the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on 13 March 1995).

The young couple began their married life in Salt Lake City in a small farmhouse in Millcreek. President Hinckley was employed at Church headquarters in downtown Salt Lake, and Marjorie continued her employment at the glass company until the birth of their first child. As the family increased in size, the Hinckleys built a home on property down the lane from their first house, still in the rural East Millcreek area. By 1954 they were parents of five children, Kathleen, Richard, Virginia, Clark and Jane.

Marjorie was an energetic mother and made good use of humor to settle many of life's difficulties. She was often heard to say, "The only way to get through life is to laugh your way through it." Marjorie loved being a mother and delighted in every moment with her children. She especially enjoyed the sound of the screen door slamming as the children ran in and out of the house. She was sad every fall when the children went back to school because she missed them so much during the day.

An avid reader, Marjorie encouraged her children to gain knowledge by studying and reading. As the family traveled in the car on vacations, she would read to them from the classics. Although her formal education was interrupted by economic stress during the depression, she encouraged her children to seek degrees in higher education. She was a student of the scriptures and often used the words of ancient and latter-day prophets to teach and inspire others.

Living in Utah most of her life, except for a brief time in Denver while her husband was working for the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, Marjorie had the opportunity to travel extensively throughout the world. She developed a special appreciation for the people in the Far East. Hong Kong became a favorite city, and she was delighted when her children and their spouses were able to gather in Hong Kong with her and President Hinckley to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary.

A dedicated student of the lives of her ancestors, Marjorie delighted in the opportunity to share stories of their faith and devotion taken from her research and that of others. Searching for family names in genealogical facilities was a major part of her life. Pedigree charts, pictures and written histories were often visible in her home, and she used this acquired knowledge to encourage others in numerous public addresses.

She developed a close relationship with her 25 grandchildren and 41 great-grandchildren, who always knew she was just a telephone call away. They willingly consulted with her about the joys and challenges in their lives.

Marjorie Hinckley was recognized numerous times, having named for her the Marjorie Pay Hinckley Chair in Social Work and Social Science from Brigham Young University in April of 2003, and receiving an honorary doctorate of humane letters from Utah Valley State College in April of 2001 and the heritage award during the centennial celebration of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers that same year. From BYU she received an honorary doctoral degree in Christian Service in April of 2000. Other recognition included the distinguished Service to Humanity Award in 1998, Freedom Festival Award in 1997 and the Exemplary Womanhood Award in 1996.

Marjorie Pay Hinckley lived almost all of her life in Salt Lake City, but her influence has spread all around the world. She visited nearly every continent. She conversed comfortably with such dignitaries as the queen of Thailand and prime minister of Britain, but felt equally at ease with ordinary people wherever she went.

FRANCES MONSON

Recognized by her husband as the family's beacon of love, compassion and encouragement, Sister Monson lived a Christ-centered life in word and deed. She will forever be remembered for her kindness and quiet, sustained support of her husband in his Church duties.

Born on 27 October 1927, Frances Beverly Johnson was the youngest and only daughter of Franz E. Johnson and Hildur Booth Johnson's five children. Her parents were delighted to have a little girl in the family, whom they promptly named Frances, after her father Franz.

She grew up in Salt Lake City, Utah, as a child of the Great Depression and learned the value of hard work and thrift, which served her well throughout her life. She graduated from East High School and the University of Utah, where she excelled in math and science. When asked why she enrolled in these difficult classes, she replied with a twinkle in her eye, "Because that is where all the cute boys were." Frances was also an accomplished pianist and was often seen playing tennis in Liberty Park during her teenage years. Later, she worked in the accounting department of a large department store to help pay for her college education.

It was also during her university days she met a handsome, strapping young man also of Swedish descent, Thomas Spencer Monson, at the time known as Tommy. "The first time I met Frances, I knew I'd found the right one," he would later say about their courtship. They met in 1944 and were married on 7 October 1948 in the Salt Lake Temple.

The couple was blessed with three children: Thomas Lee, Ann Frances and Clark Spencer. The children soon learned that they had a very special mother. She helped her sons learn about, buy and raise Birmingham Roller pigeons, at one point helping her son to travel to England to meet a Birmingham Roller expert. She allowed one son to keep a pet snake in the bathtub. Most mothers would shudder at the word snake, let alone have one in the tub. The herd, gaggle and flock of family pets eventually included chickens, more pigeons, a dog, geese and other animals.

Daughter Ann Dibb said her mother was always good at bookkeeping, budgeting and "being mindful of where the best bargains could be found." Ann's mother followed the Church's provident living advice of thrift and self-reliance, making her grocery money go further by researching and buying items on sale and then storing them at home. Up until recently she continued to read both Salt Lake newspapers looking for coupons and bargains.

She was known as the family assembler and fix-it person. Early every Christmas morning found Frances assembling bikes, toys and doll houses and on other occasions fixing an electrical switch or plumbing leak. Ann said this was something her father readily admitted was her mother's talent, not his.

She served in the Relief Society and Primary and spent many hours preparing lessons for those callings. She also served alongside her husband when he was called to preside over the Church's Canadian Mission, headquartered in Toronto, Ontario, from 1959 to 1962. Both concur that the mission was a beautiful experience that gave them many opportunities to learn and grow both spiritually and intellectually.

Most importantly, Frances will be best remembered for the love and support she showed to her husband and family and the service she rendered to others. Ann said, "She dearly loved my father and recognized his talents and the gifts that he'd been given and took pleasure in supporting him and helping him magnify the talents that were his." She completely supported her husband in all of his Church duties. She also delighted in being a mother, continually teaching her children the importance of sacrifice and serving the Lord.

Ann shared a tender example of her mother supporting her father in his Church callings. As a newly called member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the then Elder Monson was assigned to speak in general priesthood meeting. Frances tried to stand in the doorway of the Salt Lake Tabernacle to listen to her husband speak, but the ushers wouldn't allow it, so she stood as near to the window as possible to hear the talk. She loved to listen and show her support and accompanied him many times on his visits to the elderly and those with poor health.

Frances radiated patience and compassion when serving others. She tenderly cared for her mother, who suffered from cancer for more than six years. In April of 1988, the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's Villa, an elder-care facility, presented Frances and her husband with the Continuum of Caring Humanitarian Award, honoring both of them for their dedicated and untiring service to the senior citizens of Utah.

Never purposely in the spotlight, Frances Beverly Johnson Monson was always gracious, kind and supportive in everything she said and did. Her quiet influence felt around the world will be missed.

MARY ELIZABETH ROLLINS

Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner is perhaps best known among Latter-day Saints as the young woman who, with her sister, Caroline, rushed to save unbound sheets of Joseph Smith's revelations while a mob was tearing down the Church's printing office in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. Mary's long life spanned most of the early history of the Church and included many notable events. She described her own life as providentially tragic and remembered it as filled with great sacrifice, struggle, and miraculous power.

Born on April 9, 1818, in Lima, New York, just outside of Rochester, Mary Rollins was the second of three children born to John Porter and Keziah Van Benthuysen Rollins. Mary's father worked on the Great Lakes and died in a shipwreck when she was not yet three. Two years before Mormon missionaries arrived in the area, the Rollins family moved to Kirtland, Ohio, to be close to family. When the elders did arrive, twelve-year-old Mary was among the first people to be baptized. Within a year's time, the Rollins family left with many other Kirtland converts to establish Zion in Jackson County, Missouri. There Mary received the gift of interpreting tongues.

When the Latter-day Saints left Jackson County under duress, Mary temporarily settled in Liberty, Missouri, where she met and married Adam Lightner on August 11, 1835. Adam never joined the Church, but he was a strong supporter of both the community and Mary's affiliation. Far West, in Caldwell County, soon became the Latter-day Saints' new gathering place, and the Lightners moved there, establishing a store in town. Though Adam was respected by those antagonistic to the Saints' settlement, their property was nevertheless a casualty of the subsequent Mormon War in Missouri. Joseph Smith ultimately surrendered to state officials, who sought Adam as a witness against him. Instead of testifying, the Lightners fled the state, hoping to find refuge with relatives in Louisville, Kentucky. Unfortunately, the family they sought had moved away, and Mary and Adam struggled for food and shelter.

Eventually, the Lightners heard of a new Latter-day Saint settlement in Illinois on a bend of the Mississippi River. Mary sewed and taught painting lessons to raise money for the journey, and they settled in Iowa across the river from Nauvoo. The Lightners later moved to Nauvoo, and within days of their arrival, Joseph Smith introduced Mary to the then-secret practice of plural marriage. Joseph told her of angelic instructions on the matter, an experience which she demanded in turn. After receiving a confirmatory witness, Mary was sealed to Joseph but continued to live with Adam.

Instead of moving west to Utah, the Lightners spent sixteen years in Minnesota and Wisconsin, battling repeated financial setbacks and witnessing the deaths of four of their ten children. Eventually, on May 25, 1863, the Lightners set off for Utah, traveling by steamboat to Omaha and then by ox team to Salt Lake.

They settled with family, including Mary's mother and half-sister Phebe Burk Bingham, in Minersville, Utah. When a Relief Society was organized there in 1869, Mary was its first president. By 1880 Adam was unable to earn a living, and he passed away in 1885. Mary lived the rest of her life in economic destitution, being supported as a widow of Joseph Smith through remittances by the Church. She frequently spoke at large gatherings, remembering the earliest days of the Church and her experiences in it.

She died December 17, 1913, and was buried in the Minersville Cemetery.