

The Sun Ever Shines on Them: The Global Reach of William and Jemima Bidwell Partridge's Family

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I'm pleased to be here, today. I was just wondering how many of you are descendants of Edward Partridge? I thought most of you might be.

I'd like to talk to you today not about the global reach of the current Edward Partridge family, but the global reach of the family of Edward's parents, William Partridge and Jemima Bidwell. William's brother, Dr. Oliver Partridge of Stockbridge, said this about his brother's family: "Wm [Partridge] of Pittsfield & Miss Jemima Bidwell had 8 sons & 4 daughters, all grown & living (when he died in 1836, aged 83½ years) but never all at home together – were in Mass., New York, Missouri, Cuba [etc.]. But 40 minutes in 24 hours did the sun shines on one of them."

I'm getting a little ahead of my story, however. I'd like to tell you how I was introduced to William Partridge.

I've been employed as a rare book librarian at Brigham Young University for nearly 20 years. This, however, is my second tour of duty at the BYU

library. During the 1970s, I worked there for three years and then decided to go to law school at Syracuse University, after which I spent nearly 20 years working at various jobs – most of that time, however, I was a corporate speechwriter.

But back to the library, where, on the morning of October 13, 2003, I was in the rare book stacks looking at a collection of 18th and 19th century American almanacs with a professor of Italian literature named Madison Sowell. As the special collections reference librarian, I had been working with Dr. Sowell to assemble materials that we could exhibit in connection with his upcoming lecture on almanacs as research sources. Somehow we had overlooked this collection of American almanacs.

A rare book cataloger had pointed out to us that this collection existed and was showing us some examples of almanacs the library owned. Professor Sowell pulled one of the boxes of almanacs off the shelf and selected an almanac from 1781. After looking through it, he said we should certainly use this one in the exhibit because it had writing paper interleaved with the calendar pages, which allowed the almanac to be used as a diary – which indeed it had been.

Madison handed the almanac to me, and as I looked at the entries I noticed frequent references to ‘Stockbridge.’ “Western Massachusetts,” I thought to myself. I examined the first leaf of writing paper and saw this inscription: “Diary of my Grandfather Wm. Partridge, b. 1753. H. W. Partridge.” I was shocked. I knew I had Partridge ancestors living in the Stockbridge area about this time. Maybe this was one of them – a distant cousin, perhaps. “Hey!” I said out loud, “I could be related to this man.”

I excused myself and went to my office, where – using my computer – I accessed the *FamilySearch* database, and entered the name ‘William Partridge’ and the birth year ‘1753.’ The search results displayed names I was familiar with: William’s father, Oliver Partridge; his mother, Anna Williams; his wife, Jemima Bidwell; and one of his sons, Edward Partridge, who died in 1840 in Nauvoo, Illinois – my third great-grandfather.

I returned to my colleagues and told them about my discovery. They were amazed! We continued gathering a few more examples of almanacs to use in our exhibit and then they left.

As I thought about the discovery of the William Partridge diary, I thought, “If we have one diary, perhaps we have more.” So I looked through the more than 200 almanacs in our collection. Sure enough, there were more –

45 more. Each (with one exception) bearing William's characteristic marginal notations. If that wasn't remarkable enough, the fact that only the first almanac – the one my friend pulled from the box – had any information connecting it to William Partridge. Had we selected any of the other almanacs with his notations, we would not have been able to collect the entire set to him.

“How likely is it,” I reasoned, “that (1) these almanacs would have been preserved for all these years; (2) that Brigham Young University (of all places) would own them; (3) that Dr. Sowell would select the one (and the only one) that had an inscription identifying the diarist; and (4) that they would literally fall into my hands – me, perhaps the only person who had access to these diaries and who would recognize the connection to William Partridge?” The odds against any of this happening were overwhelming. Yet it all *did* happen.

No one knows for certain how these diaries ended up at BYU. Some of my colleagues speculate that they were acquired several decades ago when the library purchased a quantity of early American almanacs from book dealers on the East and West coasts. Whatever the explanation, they were essentially lost to researchers until Dr. Sowell pulled one out of a box, examined it, and handed it to me.

In 1959, an historical researcher summed up our previous understanding of William's life: "Very little is known of him, he is like his grandfather, Edward and did not become very active in the Community, at least, there is no record of it." These diaries now add much-deserved depth to the life of William Partridge. They define his day-to-day routine, his interests, and his activities. They do not, however, tell us much about what he thought, how he reacted to adversity, or how he felt about family matters. Rather, they show us a man who was comfortable in the background of town and church affairs, yet a man whose support was solicited and valued by community and religious leaders. And they show a man full of vigor and ambition.

Since that October I have transcribed William's notations and have a better understanding of his life in the comfortable farm house he built surrounded by his orchards and pastures, his stone walls and cider mill – images that were no doubt forever etched into the memory of his son, Edward.

None of this would have happened, however, if H. W. Partridge (Harvey Williams, as I would later learn), who was Edward Partridge's nephew, had not taken a few moments to jot his defining entry on the first page of the 1781 almanac: "Diary of my Grandfather Wm. Partridge b. 1753." This entry was the key that unlocked the mystery of who kept these diaries and made it possible

for appreciative descendants to become familiar with the life and times of a hard-working New England farmer, William Partridge of Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

William Partridge

So who was this William Partridge? He was the son of Col. Oliver Partridge, a Yale graduate who is probably well known to you, and who – according to Wikipedia – “was a military commander, politician, and early American patriot” and represented Massachusetts at the Albany Congress of 1754 and at the Stamp Act Congress of 1765 where he supported resistance to the British Stamp Act.” William’s mother was Anna Williams, daughter of Rev. William Williams of Weston and Hannah Stoddard. According to David Dudley Field, William and his brother John settled in Pittsfield in the spring of 1780 north of the east branch of the Housatonic near the Dalton line. His property was at the intersection of what is now known as Partridge Road and Crane Avenue. As best as I can determine his property lay on the east side of Partridge Road near Unkamet Brook. Since Col. Oliver Partridge had helped survey the western Massachusetts countryside for settlement, it’s reasonable to believe that he had recommended settlement sites to his sons, William and John. On July 14, 1781, William records in his diary, “Pater [father – he

frequently referred to his father Col. Oliver and brother Dr. Oliver Partridge in the Latin: pater and frater] Purchase'd Bro^r Jn^o. & my farm". His diary entries indicate a young man busily engaged in work, either on road-building projects, as a hired hand for neighbors, or on his own land. On October 6, 1781, he admitted – perhaps somewhat embarrassed by the fact – that, “I played.”

What did William do when he “played”? It’s intriguing to think about the possibilities, given the fact that recent research indicates that in 1791 Pittsfield enacted a town ordinance prohibiting “any game of wicket, cricket, base-ball, bat-ball, foot-ball, cats, fives, or any other game played with ball” within 80 yards of the town meeting house. Perhaps William was one of those 18th century baseball players!

It’s not clear that William every joined in Revolutionary War activities, like his brother Dr. Oliver Partridge, who served as physician to colonial forces.

I do think he was encouraged to enlist based on a hand-written slip of paper I found in his 1782 diary. The message read:

“M^r. Partridge,
As you are in ~~M^r~~ Merrilss Class
I think it of Importance that you convey
the List to him as soon as possible —
People are picking up the News and you
may loose a Chance by Delay —
I am your humb. Serv^t
W. Little”

Woodbridge Little was an attorney and leading Pittsfield Tory, who had a change of allegiance and became a recruiter for the Continental Army. He wrote as a postscript this additional encouragement to William: “Moses Bartlet, I am told, means to go into y^e Army.”

William apparently never did join the cause. Perhaps, as his diary entries for July 1782 suggest he was too busy hauling stone, boards, and clapboards – presumably for the house that he and John were building. By December the house was finished. On December 11th William recorded: “John & I mov’d to his house to live & have Widow Done for A housekeeper.”

There are some frustrating gaps in William’s record keeping. The diaries for 1787-1788 – among a few others – are missing. Thus we have no record – in William’s hand at least – of his marriage to Jemima Bidwell, daughter of Rev. Adonijah Bidwell in 1787 – the reason I’m here and you’re not listening to someone else! Sometime during those missing-diary years, William must have built himself a suitable home so that he could win Jemima’s hand. In the extant diaries, William’s first mention of his wife is on January 26, 1789, when he wrote: “Went w^h my Wife to Ty-m”.

Their first home was no doubt a wooden structure. But William had grander plans: an impressive brick home – but it would take time. On August 23, 1803 he records: “Began to make brick”. On December 7 and 8, 1819 he counted the results of 16 years of brick making: 40,000 bricks! By 1821 he was getting ready to build. On June 18th, 19th, and 20th he recorded that he had spent the days digging his cellar. On December 22nd he wrote: “I Mov’d into the Brick House”. He was 68 years old! Jemima was 56! The older I get the more daunted I am of such a building project. I’m amazed at William and Jemima’s drive to improve their situation.

In 1826, a tragic accident happened. On September 30th, William writes: “My Wifes Left eye crush’d” [at least that’s the best reading I can make of this word – one of the few in William’s diaries I struggled to decipher and one of the most important. In any case, within a few years total blindness followed. I’ll talk more about this in a few minutes.

Ten years later, on October 28, 1836, William died. On November 3, 1836, *The Pittsfield Sun* ran the following obituary:

“Died, In this town on Friday, Mr. William Partridge, aged 83, one of our oldest and most esteemed citizens.” (p. 3).

Jemima Bidwell Partridge, died on January 28, 1842. Her obituary read, “Died, In this town on Friday last, Mrs. Partridge, relict of Mr. William Partridge, aged 77.” (*Pittsfield Sun*, February 3, 1842, p. 3).

In all, William’s diaries reveal a great deal about himself and to some degree Jemima. They also add some understanding of the lives of his children, who, during his lifetime, traveled far from their cozy, two-story brick home in Pittsfield.

The Partridge Children

But let me get back to Dr. Partridge’s comments about the global reach of his brother and sister-in-law’s family and do some quick geolocating of William and Jemima’s 12 children:

Williams, born in 1788; married Laura Blossom in 1811; died in Onondaga Hill, New York in 1866.

Oliver, born in 1789; married Louise Buck in 1821; died in Pittsfield in 1860.

Emily, born in 1791; married Rev. Joseph Warren Dow – minister here in Tyringham – in 1813; died in Chicago in 1885.

Edward, born in 1793; married Lydia Clisbee in 1819; died in Nauvoo, Illinois in 1840.

Mercy, born in 1795; married Rev. Samuel Whitney in 1819; died in Waimea, Hawaii in 1872.

Maria, born in 1797; married Harvey Brewer in 1847; died in Pittsfield in 1866. She and her husband were reportedly missionaries to Smyrna, Turkey.

Pamela, born in 1799; unmarried; died in Onondaga Hill, New York in 1841.

Samuel, born in 1801; married Sophia Chase in 1830; died in Bedford, Michigan in 1880.

John, born in 1803; married twice: (1) Nancy Chandler in 1841, and (2) Harriet Jane Wheeler in 1847; died in Pittsfield in 1870.

George Washington, born in 1805; married Mary Lopez in 1833; died in 1858 – couldn't locate death place, but he and Mary did live for a time in Cuba.

Cotton Mather, born in 1808; married Mary Parks in 1840; died in Pecatonica, Illinois in 1856.

James Harvey, born in 1810; married Sarah Kezia Farnham in 1856; died in Cranford, New Jersey in 1895.

Of all William and Jemima's children, perhaps the ones having the greatest – and most lasting – impact on the organizations they were involved

with were Edward and Mercy. I'd like to look at their contrasting – and complementary – lives, with a brief mention of some of the others as they become a part of the tangled story.

Edward Partridge

I'll begin with my third great-grandfather, Edward. William introduces us to him with an entry on August 27, 1793: "My third son born". In his typical style, William doesn't immediately name his children in his diary birth entries. Perhaps he and Jemima needed to talk over the possibilities and get a sense for the child's personality before they assigned a name. The next mention of Edward (this time by name) is on February 20, 1810 when William says, "Edward to Lanesbô to live with V. Grovener". This is the beginning of Edward's apprenticeship with Vine Grosvenor, a local hatter, with whom he would serve a four-year apprenticeship.

Following his apprenticeship, Edward went to the state of New York, where he worked as a salesman for Asa Marvin, a hatter. He later went into business with Marvin in Clinton, near Albany. About 1817, he moved to Painesville, Ohio to open a branch of their hat-making enterprise. On August 22, 1819, Edward married Lydia Clisbee – daughter of Joseph Clisbee and

Miriam Howe of Marlboro, Massachusetts. Children soon followed: Eliza Maria in 1820; Harriet Pamela in 1822; Emily Dow in 1824; Caroline Ely (my great-great grandmother) in 1827; a baby boy, who died at birth; Lydia in 1830; and Edward, Jr. in 1833.

Not only was Edward a successful businessman, he was also involved in numerous real estate transactions, and twice served as Painesville treasurer and supervisor of roads. According to contemporary newspaper accounts, Edward's hat store was advertised as the meeting place for community groups, such as the one that met in October 1829 to discuss ways for purchasing land and erecting a school house. Over the years, his involvement in commercial and community affairs earned him a reputation for honesty and good judgment.

In the fall of 1830, four missionaries of the newly established Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stopped by the Partridge hat shop to share a message about a new book of scripture called the *Book of Mormon*. Lydia later reported that her husband "told them he did not believe what they said, but believed them to be imposters. Oliver Cowdery" – one of missionaries – "said he was thankful there was a God in Heaven who knew the hearts of all men. After the men were gone," according to Lydia, Edward "sent a man to follow them and get one of their books."

These four missionaries spent some several preaching and teaching in the Kirtland and Painesville, Ohio area. The missionaries had been sent by Joseph Smith, founder of the church, who in 1820 – as a young man of 14 – had claimed to see of vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Within the next decade he had been directed to an ancient religious text recorded on gold plates, which he translated with divine help into the book that Edward had acquired from the missionaries.

At least one local minister, Sidney Rigdon (a Cambellite preacher and minister of the congregation the Partridge family attended), even offered his pulpit to the missionaries. Within two or three weeks, more than 100 people had been converted. That number quickly increased to 1,000 – including Lydia Partridge and Sidney Rigdon. Edward, however, wanted to meet Joseph Smith, the church’s founder before he committed.

While raised in a religious home, Edward apparently did not affiliate with any denomination during his youth. He reported, however, that he often felt the spirit of the Lord, “insomuch that his heart was made tender, and he went and wept, and sometimes he went silently and poured the effusions of his soul to God in prayer.”

Despite affiliating with Rigdon's Cambellite congregation, Edward was not convinced that his minister – or any minister he knew, for that matter – had any authority to act in the name of God. He was convinced by his own Bible study that it was “absolutely necessary that God should again reveal himself to man and confer authority upon one, or more, before his church could be built up in the last days.” Edward was intent on finding out if Joseph Smith was that person. His curiosity wouldn't wait for spring. Therefore, in December 1830, he and Sidney Rigdon – armed with a charge from Painesville and Kirtland community leaders to investigate Smith and report back their findings – began their journey to Manchester, New York.

By December 10th they had visited the Smith family farm in Manchester and had observed a tidy farmstead with fences and buildings in good order. They queried the Smith's neighbors and learned, as Edward later reported that “no one could say ought against the [Smiths]” before Joseph claimed his divine visions and experiences with the gold plates. The only conflict between the neighbors and the Smiths was on the subject of religion.

Edward and Rigdon found that the Smith family had recently moved to Waterloo, New York so they travelled to meet Joseph in person. They found him preaching in a meeting, which they quietly joined. After the meeting they

moved forward to meet this new prophet. Edward reported on their observations at Manchester and the reports they received from the Smiths' neighbors as to their character. Edward then asked to be baptized into this new religion. Joseph said he would be happy to, but since the Latter-day Saints believe in baptism by emersion and the hour late and the travelers tired, he recommended that the baptism be postponed until the next day.

Accordingly, Joseph baptized Edward on December 11, 1830 – a scant eight months after the church had been officially organized.

Following his baptism, Edward was given priesthood authority and called by Joseph to go on a mission to share this new religion with his family in Massachusetts before he returned to Ohio. William reports in his diary that on December 23rd, “Edward came here”. No mention is made of the purpose of the visit. On January 3, 1831, William writes, “Edward and Cotton [Edward’s brother] went to Tyringham” and on January 5th he writes that they returned.

Edward had not found a receptive audience. He would later reflect upon these events in a letter to his family in 1834: “When I was last at Mass. almost four years ago some of my relatives as I have been informed thought me somewhat deluded, and for aught I know think the same of me yet.” That is perhaps putting it mildly. One of Edward’s daughters recounted how

disappointed Edward was with the reception of the joyful news that he had brought his family: “They pronounced him crazy,” she wrote, “and one of his sisters ordered him out of her house, and said ‘she never wanted to see him again.’” This may well have been his sister Emily who had married Rev. Joseph Warren Dow.

Fearing for Edward’s safety in light of what his family viewed was a confused mental state, Edward’s youngest brother James Harvey agreed to accompany Edward back to Ohio. They left to go west on January 11, 1831. William recorded, “Edward return’d home. Harvey with him”. Edward no doubt welcomed having his brother as a travelling companion. They stopped in New York to visit with Joseph Smith, and found that because of the growth of the church in the Kirtland area – and in light of growing persecution in New York – that Joseph had instructed all of the members – or ‘saints’ as they called themselves – to relocate to Ohio. Edward and James Harvey were in time to join the migration. Edward arrived home in early February, after having been absent from his family for two months.

James Harvey stayed in Ohio for nearly six months, during which time Edward says he also joined the church. Harvey decided not to stay in Ohio, however, and returned to Massachusetts. He arrived back home on July 14th.

William dutifully recorded, “Harvey got home from ye West”. Harvey no doubt kept his church membership private since he seems to have maintained good relations with his siblings throughout the years. He was, however, Edward’s only friendly family contact for the remainder of Edward’s life.

On February 4, 1831, Joseph Smith received a revelation calling Edward to be the first bishop of the growing church, because he was a man whose “heart is pure before me” and “in whome there is no guile.” Edward was instructed to “leave his merchandise and to spend all his time in the labours of the Church.” Since the bishop’s role in the church was entirely new, there were growing pains as both Edward (who was 10 years older than Joseph) and his younger mentor tried to lead the growing church through these beginning years. During Edward’s time, the bishop was expected to concern himself with the temporal needs of the church. Spiritual needs would be addressed by the young prophet Joseph.

The challenge for both was understanding how “the law of consecration” – a concept introduced to Joseph by revelation was to be implemented. A 20th century church apostle defined the law in this way: "The law of consecration is that we consecrate our time, our talents, and our money and property to the cause of the Church; such are to be available to the extent

they are needed to further the Lord's interests on earth . . ." While it is practiced to some extent today, in Edward's day the law was interpreted quite literally: Everyone's property was turned over to the bishop and people receive back from the bishop that portion that was needed to sustain their lives and livelihood. The poor received more than they gave; the rich, less. This experiment in communal living was similar to what New Testament Christians tried to live. It was about as successful. Edward, however, was determined to do his part in caring for the welfare of the poor.

Not unsurprisingly, disputations about property ownership soon arose – and to avoid getting lost in the historical weeds on this topic let me just say that there were too many of the saints in one place with limited resources. Joseph received revelation that instructed a body of church members to relocate to Missouri, where there was more land available. Edward was assigned to go with them as leader.

One historian described the impact of groups of migrating saints from the East on the Partridge family: "In previously hosting traveling saints, Partridge had also exposed his family to whatever diseases the travelers brought with them. Later accounts indicate that the Partridge children were exposed to and caught the measles from one group of visitors around this time [June

1831], and were still recovering from them at the time of Partridge's call to Missouri. In addition, Eliza, the oldest child, was sick with 'lung fever' [pneumonia]. Though his neighbors pronounced him crazy for leaving, Partridge nonetheless trusted that God would watch over his family, and departed on his assigned journey to Missouri. Partridge probably felt tension as he saw with his own eyes his family's sickly condition, yet he heeded Joseph's call to leave them in God's care. He must have fervently hoped and believed that Joseph was seeing God's will correctly." Edward, Joseph, and a few other leaders left Kirtland to prepare places of settlement in Missouri for those who would soon follow.

The missionaries who had been so successful in preaching in Kirtland had continued their missionary work in Missouri among the Native American tribes and white settlers. Here they also found success. Thus when the vanguard of the migrating saints from Kirtland led by Joseph and Edward arrived there were enthusiastic fellow adherents waiting for them.

Most church leaders liked what they saw: fertile land, abundant crops, plentiful wildlife, and lots of acreage for grazing livestock. Edward threw himself into the task of buying land for the groups that were even now on their way to this land of milk and honey – a place that Joseph designated as the place

the Lord wanted his saints to build Zion – a place where there would be no poor among them. Securing the needed land would keep Edward busy the remainder of the year – he would be unable to return to Ohio to prepare his own family for the trip. Lydia would have to make those preparations and join him in Missouri as soon as she could.

In a letter to Lydia, Edward wrote: “You know that I stand in an important station, and as I am occasionally chastened I sometimes feel as though I must fall, not to give up the cause, but I fear my station is above what I can perform to the acceptance of my Heavenly Father.” Then he pleaded with Lydia: “Pray for me that I may not fall.” In the fall of 1831, Lydia and the children, accompanied by a number of other families joined Edward in Missouri.

Edward eventually purchased more than 2,000 acres of land for the saints. He then began to divide it among the saints. Farming families received between 20 and 30 acres to support themselves. Trades people would receive what they need for their livelihood, as well. Within two years, one-third of the Jackson County, Missouri population of 1,200 settlers were Mormon converts. Edward’s success in establishing this prosperous community of believers was

due largely to his business acumen and the fact that he had built a reputation for honesty that earned people's trust.

Inevitably, however, disputes arose with the saints' non-Mormon neighbors, who were nervous about the large number of Mormons settling in their midst – people who tended to vote as a block, were non-slaveholders, and seemed to believe they had a divine mission to take over the surrounding countryside. One non-Mormon Missourian described his fellow Missourians as “a rough, uneducated class, delighting in fighting and quarreling” but also “in the main hospitable.” Locals, on the other hand, described the Mormons as a “tribe of locusts that ... threaten to scorch and wither the herbage of a fair and goodly portion of Missouri.” Tensions were heating up.

On July 20, 1833, a mob of 300-500 men gathered a half mile from Edward's home in Independence with the intent of forcing the Mormon settlers to leave the county. Edward, as the saints' leader, was the target. Fifty armed men surrounded Edward's house and their leader entered the home and pulled Edward outside. Another mob leader told Edward “that [he] must agree to leave the county or suffer the consequences.” Edward responded “if I must suffer for my religion it was no more than others had done before me.” He explained, “I was not conscious of having injured any one in the county

therefore I could not consent to leave it.” Later Edward added: “I knew not what they intended to do with me, whether to kill me, to whip me, or what else I knew not.” The mob stripped him to his “shirt and pantaloons” and spread hot tar over his body and covered him with feathers. Edward described his reaction to this treatment: “I bore my abuse with so much resignation and meekness, that it appeared to astound the multitude, who permitted me to retire in silence, many looking very solemn, their sympathies having been touched as I thought; and as to myself, I was so filled with the Spirit and love of God, that I had no hatred towards my persecutors or anyone else.”

Edward returned home, covered in tar and feathers. His children were horrified, but Lydia and others began – as best they could – to scrape off the caustic substance, which “seemed to have been prepared with lime, pearl-ash, acid, or some flesh-eating substance ...” Mob threats and harassment of the saints continued and by the fall of 1833 church members were forced to move from the county. Many, like Edward, were forced to sell their land for a fraction of its value – or had to abandon it entirely.

The saints moved across the Missouri River into Clay County, Missouri, where they hoped to find refuge, which they did for three years. In 1835, Edward was asked to return to Kirtland, from whence he called to travel to the

East to preach and raise money and goods to assist the poor. Edward, no doubt, looked forward to an opportunity to visit with his siblings and parents, in spite of their strained relationship.

William, who by this time was making very few entries in his diaries – he would die the following year – does not mention Edward’s visit. Edward, however, does reference the cold reception his sister Emily Dow – by then a widow – gave him: “the coldness and indifference yea the insulting manner with which you treated me.” Edward later collectively chastened his family in a letter: “Although my brothers, and sisters, and blood relations are numerous, yet for near seven [years] past, I have not received a letter from any of them, save my brother James H.: by this neglect, I learn in some degree the regard they have for me; for did they love me, and believe as they profess to, that I was deluded, led away, and had embraced a false religion, they certainly would try to reclaim me, by showing me my error or at least trying.”

Poignantly, Edward’s 1835 mission would be the last time he would see his father and mother. In Edward’s diary of this mission he writes on October 7, 1835: “bid farewell to my father & mother probably to see them no more before the resurrection [sic].” Edward returned to Kirtland by the end of

the month. He remained there until the spring of the following year, when he rejoined his family in Missouri.

In Missouri, old animosities were arising again and the saints were asked to leave Clay County to settle in the newly created Caldwell and Daviess counties. Again, Edward was in charge of settling the saints in these new undeveloped areas.

Missouri mobs, however, were intent on forcing all Mormons from the state. By 1838, the Missouri militia began rounding up church leaders and imprisoning them, Edward among them. On May 15, 1839, Edward wrote about these injustices: “Last fall I was taken from my home in Far West Mo. By Genl Clark without any civil process, and driven off to Richmond Ray Co. thirty miles, and kept a prisoner between three and four weeks before I was liberated ...” In another document he described those prison conditions: “We were confined, in a large open room, where the cold northern blast penetrated freely; our fires were small, and our allowance for wood, and for food, scanty; they gave us, not even, a blanket to lie upon; our beds were the cold floor ... the vilest, of the vile, did guard us, and treat us like dogs.”

Once he was released from prison, Edward – like many other church leaders – felt that their lives were no longer safe in Missouri. The October 1838

order issued by Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs underscored this fact. He ordered that all Mormons must be driven from the state or exterminated. The saints began fleeing to Illinois.

Edward and Sidney Rigdon began purchasing property for the saints in that state. Many of the saints, however, were in poor health, including Edward. He wrote to Joseph Smith: “I have not at this time two dollars in this world, one dollar and forty-five cents is all. I owe for my rent, and for making clothes for some of the poor, and some other things ... what is best for me to do, I hardly know. Hard labor I cannot perform; light labor I can, but I know of no chance to earn anything, at anything I can stand to do.”

The saints eventually settled in a town on the Mississippi River they called Nauvoo. Edward was one of three bishops, each presiding over one of the city's wards. While lacking physical strength, Edward struggled to build a new home for his family. But in May 1840, tragedy struck. First, 18-year-old Harriet passed away on May 16th. Then Edward then fell ill. On May 27, 1840, he died. He was 46 years old.

In the course of ten years he had distributed thousands of acres of land to thousands of impoverished saints, had moved his family numerous times to further what he believed to be the Lord's work. His daughter Emily reflected,

“When I look back and remember the great responsibility that rested upon my father as first Bishop – his poverty and privations, and the hardships that he had to endure, the accusations of false brethren, the fault-finding of the poor, and the persecutions of our enemies – I do not wonder at his early death.”

In a touching tribute, William Wines Phelps, editor of the *Times and Seasons* – the church’s newspaper in Nauvoo – wrote this: “few will be able to wear his mantle with such simple dignity. He was an honest man, and I loved him.”

Edward was buried in an unmarked grave in the Nauvoo city cemetery. He is now honored by a modern headstone near the cemetery’s entrance.

After Edward’s death, Lydia eventually came to Utah after the saints were forced to leave Nauvoo. She arrived in 1848. She died in 1878 at the age of 84.

Before his death in 1844, Joseph Smith quietly introduced the doctrine of plural marriage and took two of Edward’s daughters as wives: Emily and Eliza. Following his death Emily married Brigham Young. Eliza married Amasa Lyman (my great-great grandfather) along with Caroline (my great-great grandmother) and Lydia her sisters. Amasa was excommunicated from the church in 1870 for apostasy and the Partridge sisters left him. Two of them,

Caroline and Eliza settled in Oak City, Utah, where they enjoyed their considerable posterity and provided years of compassionate ministry to their family and neighbors.

Mercy Partridge Whitney

Details of Mercy's life come from Mary Zwiep's book *Pilgrim Path*, Patricia Grimshaw's book *Paths of Duty*, and my own gleanings from Mercy's and William's diaries.

Edward's sister Mercy was born on August 14, 1895. William announces her birth with this entry: "My second Daughter born". William mentions occasional trips she made with family members, such as this entry on July 16, 1813: "Ol' & Mercy set out for Onondaga [New York]" – no doubt to visit their brother Williams and his family. Or the trip she made with Edward on February 9, 1815: "Edward & Mercy to Stockbridge & Tyringham & returned the 14th". The trip she is known for, however, is the one she made with her husband to Hawaii.

But first, let's introduce Samuel Whitney, Mercy's future husband. Samuel – born in 1793 – was still a student at Yale when he applied to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, offering his services as a missionary to the natives in the Sandwich Islands. The only problem with

young Samuel was that he was not married. A Yale classmate, Josiah Brewer, suggested that his cousin -- Mercy Partridge of Pittsfield -- might be willing to consider not only Samuel as a husband, but a foreign missionary assignment, as well. Accordingly, Josiah wrote his cousin to ask if she would meet his classmate. On August 3, 1819, Mercy replied: "I see not where would be the harm of a friendly visit from the person you mention, even if it should never be renewed." Samuel's courtship of Mercy was expedited through the interventions of Rev. Smith at Yale and Rev. Heman Humphrey in Pittsfield, whose correspondence determined that Mercy was both physically and spiritually fit for missionary duty, "provided", as Rev. Humphrey put it, "she should be pleased with the man, & sufficient time allowed for consideration." The clock, however, was ticking. The brig *Thaddens*, on which Samuel was tentatively scheduled to sail, was to leave Boston on October 23, 1819.

Apparently both the man and the woman were mutually pleasing, because on October 4th William recorded in his diary: "Mercy Married to Mr. Samuel Whitney of Branford, Connecticut & set out for Connect^t & fm their to Pacific". While Mercy and Samuel were honeymooning in Connecticut, William recorded that on October 9th, "Ol^r set out for Boston with Mercy's things". William's final entry about this whirlwind courtship was this: "Mercy set sail the

23 for the Sandwich Isles”. This was the last William and Jemima would see of their second daughter.

The *Thaddeus* departed on October 23rd with seven young missionary couples, five children, three Hawaiian youth, and one Hawaiian prince returning home. On the day after their departure, Mercy wrote in her diary:

“On board the Brig Thaddeus, under sail. Oct. 24. 1819.

“To you, my Dear Parents, I cheerfully dedicate these pages. Whatever may be interesting, or afford you comfort at some future period, I shall word with pleasure.

“Yesterday I left my native land, and have now gazed upon it for the last time. While receding from my sight I could not but exclaim, farewell beloved Country, and thrice beloved friends, I bid you all adieu! ‘Home, that dearest sweetest spot,’ where I have spent so many happy hours, the remembrance of which will ever afford me much pleasure; I cheerfully bid you adieu. Yes, dear as is that humble Mansion and those beloved friends whom I shall ever love with the strongest ties of natural affection, I can willingly part with you all, if I may but bear a humble part in promoting the glory of God, and be used as an instrument in carrying the glad tidings of salvation to the perishing heathen. As many and great as are the sacrifices which I have made, I do not regret my

undertaking. The souls of the heathen appear precious, infinitely more so than all this worlds good[s]. O that Christians possessed more of a spirit of disinterested benevolence. Were this the case, they would pray with more fervency, that Christ's Kingdom may come: and while their souls were lifted to God in prayer for the destitute and needy, their hands would be contributing for their relief. Such must and will indeed be the case, before the whole world will be filled with the knowledge and glory of God."

The long ocean voyage gave Mercy ample opportunity to reflect on the world she had just left behind. On November 18th she recorded in her diary:

"Nov. 18. ... I could scarcely realize that we, my dear parents, were separated by a vast ocean, so similar were my feelings to what they have frequently been, when in my native country, and surrounded by friends and kindred, near and dear. It reminded me of many happy evenings which I have spent beneath your hospitable roof, where joy was visible in every countenance, and cheerfulness sat smiling on the brow. These are scenes which will never be forgotten, and which I shall ever review with pleasure."

On December 2, 1819, William recorded in his diary: "Thanksgiving". No doubt thinking of Thanksgiving celebrations past, Mercy recorded this:

“Dec. 1. A newspaper has been found, mentioning that tomorrow is set apart in Massachusetts, to be kept as a day of thanksgiving and praise to God for his goodness. We intend to observe it.

“Dec. 2. This day we celebrate a joyful anniversary. Though separated from you, and all our dear American friends; I trust we still cherish a fond remembrance for each other. While sitting around the festive board and partaking of the bounties of providence, you doubtless have frequently thought of me, and I hope as often lifted up your hearts to God, in my behalf. My thoughts have this day dwelt much upon my beloved Country and friends, but not with any desire to return. As much as I love, think of, and desire to see you; I am unwilling to leave the great work in which I have engaged, to visit you.”

A week later, Mercy reflected on the jarring difference between the conditions she was experiencing on board the ship and what her family must be going through: “Dec. 10. ... It is a little cooler, but yet remains uncomfortably warm, which much depresses my spirits. Probably my dear friends are gathering around a large fire and shivering with the cold, while I am experiencing the reverse. The weather is similar to the warmest and most sultry days in August. We are now about three or four degrees north Lattitude.” That same day,

William wrote: “Very Cold some Snow on the ground”. How well Mercy knew her family’s routine!

I don’t remember that William ever recorded a mention of Christmas in his diary. Perhaps it was not the major Christian holiday it is today, but Mercy – almost apologetically – takes note of it in her diary: “Dec. 25. Christmas. Many things have conspired to render this day peculiarly interesting. I would remark that on thanksgiving day we crossed the tropic of Cancer, and today, which we celebrate as the anniversary of our Saviour’s birth, we have passed that of Capricorn. You may perhaps[s] wonder why we should observe Christmas; but we feel that a day on which our Saviour came into the world should be recognized with gratitude. It is a day too (we have reason to believe) when many pious hearts expand with holy emotions [sic] to God, that we are bearing the news of that joyful event, to those who are sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death.) ... With what Seraphic strains did the wise men of old, sing, ‘Glory to God in the highest,’ when they found the Babe of Bethlehem, though wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And to us it is a source of much consolation, that we are permitted in the providence of God, to carry the joyful news that a Saviour is born to a Nation perishing in ignorance and wretchedness.” She then introduces a theme that will replay

throughout much of her correspondence with her parents: “And have not you, my dear friends, occasion to rejoice that the land in which you live is so highly distinguished from many nations of the earth; and that you are permitted from Sabbath to Sabbath to sit under the droppings of the Sanctuary? O how great are your obligations to live devoted to Him from whom you have received these Mercies. Need I tell you how it would rejoice the heart of your absent daughter to hear you were reconciled to God, and devoutly engaged in promoting the cause of Christ? Surely I need not. While I was with you I felt anxious for your eternal welfare, and loved you most tenderly; but never till since separated from you, did I know the strength of that affection which I felt for you. Never, no never while I live, can I cease to love and pray for you.”

The theme of receiving a confirmation of salvation through grace must have been much on her mind during their tedious ocean passage to the Sandwich Islands, because on January 15, 1820, she elaborates even further her concerns for her parents: “Jan. 15. ... We are born to exist forever; and soon we shall pass the narrow boundary of time, the only season allotted us to prepare for death. O my dear parents, I beseech you to remember that your days on earth will soon be numbered and finished; ere long you must stand at the bar of God and be judged according to the deeds done here in the body.

Let one entreat you to humble yourselves before God, and make your peace with him before it is too late. 'Behold, now is the accepted time! Behold, now is the day of Salvation!' A few more days, and your state may be unalterably fixed. Seize then the present moment; delay not lest you be swallowed up in irretrievable ruin.

“Be not offended, my dear parents, if in my concern for your souls, I have cast off that deference which is your due. The thought of a final separation, is almost insupportable. How then can I forbear to warn you, when I see you standing on the brink of an awful precipice, upheld only by the brittle thread of life, which is liable every moment to be cut asunder. But I fain would hope you have been made sensible of your lost condition by nature, and are enquiring, ‘what must I do to be saved.’ Rest not, until you find joy and peace in believing, and your souls recline sweetly on the bosom of Emmanuel. To God I now commend you; praying that at last we may be so happy as to meet in his Kingdom, to enjoy his presence forever.”

At the end of March 1820, the *Thaddeus* arrived in the islands. After securing permission to land, the ship arrived in Kailua Bay on April 4th and was unloaded. Mercy was reunited with her precious belongings, which Oliver had so dutifully hauled from Pittsfield to Boston. Mercy wrote in her diary a

message to her mother: “April 20. ... I believe I wrote to you when at Boston that I was informed we could get at our chests which were stowed in the hold, in two or three months; and on account of the Vessel being much crowded, especially our little rooms, I had many things put away into the hold which I expected to take out, when it was opened especially my dried fruit. But as my chests arrived before the Vessel was much loaded, they were put away where we were not able to get to them on the passage, notwithstanding the hold was opened several times. I expected many of my things would spoil, but when I opened my chests and found most of them had kept perfectly safe, I wished to thank my dear Mother and sisters for the care [in which] they were packed. The apples you gave me are so good as they were when first put up. They will contribute much to our comfort, as we have a barrel of flour and can make them into pies. ...” A taste of home – apples from her father’s orchard, which he took such great pride in.

The first responsibility of this pioneer company of missionaries was to win the trust and friendship of the native people. They began by building a frame house, establishing the first schools, introducing their God and his commandments, and – most importantly – translating the Bible into Hawaiian.

Not to trivialize or minimize the contributions and sacrifices of these early missionaries, one of the intriguing stories I came across in the Berkshire Athenaeum was Mercy's impact of native clothing styles. In an effort to get fabric for clothing for the native peoples, Mercy wrote home for bolts of cloth suitable for making loose-fitting dresses. The only fabric available was intended for mattress covers and adorned with brightly colored floral patterns. The material proved extremely popular with the native population and gave birth to the famous Hawaiian shirts, which are still a fashion hit today.

Letters from home were always a welcome surprise – full of news of family and relations. They also brought disconcerting news. In 1826, Mercy's mother, Jemima, was injured in the eye, as mentioned previously. Mercy reflected on her mother's condition to Clara Willcox Bidwell – wife of a cousin – in 1828:

“... The contents of your letter were such as deeply interested me. Every thing from it is precious, but whatever relates to beloved kindred and friends particularly Parents, brothers and sisters, appears doubly so. The state of my poor afflicted mother, has been much on my mind, ever since I first heard of her loss of sight and it has been my earnest desire that this affliction might be sanctified to the good of her soul. If it should prove the means of leading her

to the Saviour of Sinners for Divine illuminations, and for the enlightening of her mind into the knowledge of Christ, she will have abundant cause to bless God through eternity, that he laid his hand thus heavily upon her. My anxiety for the spiritual welfare of my friends has been great, and I have sometimes thought I could exercise faith in their behalf, but there are times when fear gets the ascendancy, and seems to prevail. Such reasons are peculiarly distressing to my mind. O for stronger faith, and an unshaken trust in the promises of God.”

In 1832, news reached Mercy of Edward’s affiliation with the Mormon Church – another cause of spiritual discomfort for her. She wrote in her journal:

“I received two letters one from cousin C. [Caroline] Ely, & another from br. C [Cotton Mather]. He gave an account of Edward’s leaving his home in Ohio, & joining himself to a sect called Mormonites, & had gone to the Rocky Mountains with a view to convert the Indians. I cannot account for any one’s embracing such a faith as brother C. describes that of the Mormonites to be, who is not given up to a delusion to believe a lie; for I am sure there is no ground for such a faith in the word of God. May Edward be brought to see the error into which he has fallen, repent of his sins & embrace that faith which alone can save his soul.”

The unwelcome – but not unexpected – news of her father’s death in 1836 brought an outpouring of concern for her mother’s welfare. Mercy wrote in her diary an entry addressed to her mother:

“... The letters bringing the intelligence of Father’s death arrived in May just as we were about to embark for O [Oahu] to attend the general meeting of the Miss. [mission] He had arrived at such an age that the news was not wholly unexpected to me, tho I had not anticipated his dropping away so suddenly.

“I hope my dear Mother, that this afflictive dispensation of Divine providence will be sanctified to you, & prove a means in the hands of God, of preparing you to follow him. You are now quite old & cannot expect to live long, at most but a very few years. Perhaps you may be called soon, & as suddenly as he was, to give up your account to the Judge of all the earth. Let me ask, are you prepared to die & to enter into the presence of Him who knows your inmost soul, who is acquainted with every secret thought that has ever passed your mind? And can you give up your account to him with joy? O if you cannot, do not rest a moment, but go to the Saviour & cast yourself at his footstool, & there lie & plead for mercy & pardon, resolving that if you perish you will perish there. This is the only way for you, if you would escape the doom of the finally impenitent. My soul is pained within me, whenever I

think of you as an enemy to God & exposed to everlasting burnings. Can you endure the thought of being separated from God & all holy beings & consigned to the blackness of darkness forever, with none but devils & wicked spirits for your companions? The thought that such a thing is possible, almost makes me shudder. O do not rest while out of the ark of safety, but plead day & night that God would have mercy upon your poor soul – wash it in the Saviours precious blood, & clothe it with the spotless robe of his righteousness. How gladly my dear Mother, would I take you by the hand & lead you to the blessed Saviour, who I have often found so precious to me in time of trial & affliction, & there before his mercy seat would we bow & present your case to an all gracious God – to him who invites the weary, heavy laden sinner, to come & find rest. But no, this cannot be; we shall probably never meet again on earth. But though I cannot pray with you it is a privilege that I may pray for you. Yes, & God can as easily answer my prayers for you if offered in these Isles of the sea, as tho' we met together at his footstool. But if you refuse to listen to the invitations of the Gospel, the day of grace will soon be past. No prayers, no entreaties, no expostulations will then be of any avail. Let me entreat you while the day of life lasts to 'work out your salvation with fear & trembling,' lest the night of death come & find you unprepared for your great & last change.

Now is the accepted time,
Now is the day of grace;
Dear Mother, come without delay,
And seek the Saviour's face.

Now is the accepted time,
The Saviour calls today;
Tomorrow it may be too late,
Then why should you delay?

Now is the accepted time,
The Gospel bids you come;
And every promise in his word
Declares there yet is room.

Lord draw dear Mother's soul,
And feast it with thy love:
Then will the angels swiftly fly,
To bear the news above.'

I know not how to leave this subject, but what more shall I say? Had I the ability, I would fain snatch your precious soul as a brand from the burning; but O how impotent is man – frail, dying man. I must leave you in the hands of God who alone is able to give you repentance & new create your soul, & who will do it for you if you seek aright, & with that earnestness which is required of you. Go to him as a lost & helpless sinner, feeling that you have no goodness of your own to justify you before God, & yield your soul, a willing sacrifice to

him – plead the merits & righteousness of a crucified, risen, & ascended Redeemer, through whom alone you can ever hope for the pardon of your sins.

“Think how you would feel were you in the midst of a vast ocean just ready to perish, & should spy at a distance a single plank, which would save you from sinking could you but lay hold of it, would you not strain every nerve to reach it? & after gaining a firm hold, would you not experience sufficient joy in finding yourself safe, to compensate for all your exertions? We are all on the ocean of life sailing rapidly to eternity. & O how many perish, without suspecting danger near! Jesus Christ is the life boat the only ark of safety, & those alone who enter it are safe – safe from the billows & evils of life, & safe from the storms of Divine vengeance, which will be poured out upon the finally impenitent. O flee to this refuge my dear Mother, while there is hope, that your sinking soul may be saved.”

This was Mercy’s last entreaty to her mother to come to God and be saved.

Mercy and Samuel raised four children in Hawaii – although the children were sent back to the United States for their education when they became old enough. Three eventually returned to Hawaii, but to Oahu not to Kauai, where their parents lived. Samuel became very adept with the language and was an

extremely popular preacher in his assigned circuit, drawing crowds of 1,000 people or more. In September 1845, he became ill and passed away in December of that year. His death was a tremendous blow to Mercy, who stopped writing in her journals for more than two years.

On March 6, 1855 a stranger paid her an unexpected visit. The next day, she wrote an account of this visit in her diary.

“Yesterday P.M. a native who was sitting near the front window while I was busy at work, said to me, ‘there is a For. [foreigner] coming in.’ A stranger entered, we exchanged salutations & I asked him to take a seat, but before he sat down he said to me, ‘I suppose you know I had arrived, - my name is Edward Partridge.’ Said he had a letter for me which I opened & found it was from his mother, – the first line I have ever recd from her pen, & this was quite unexpected. It was dated the 3^r of last May, almost a year ago. She speaks of their trials & persecutions as having been very great, & says, ‘There are many things believed with us, which at first comes in contact with the prejudices of the people at the present day, yet to those that understand them, they are perfectly consistent, & according to scripture, therefore judge not hastily but prove all things.’ In the above sentence, I suppose she refers to polygamy as one thing at least, but I could tell her that polygamy has been proved effectually

here at the Islands in former years, as the destroyer of domestic happiness, & the fruitful source of jealousy & contention. In another part of her letter she says, 'It was by searching the scriptures & obeying the requirements laid down by Christ & his Apostles, that I came in possession of my present belief, the Spirit of God bearing witness of the truth, & I do thank the Lord that I have been brought to a knowledge of these things.' Her letter is written in a very good spirit, & perhaps she is a christian, notwithstanding all her errors. I think I heard that she & your¹ Uncle too were both professors of religion, before they joined the Mormons. Yesterday was Tuesday, the day for my meeting with the sisters of the church. Edward arrived an hour perhaps before time to commence our meet. When the women had assembled, I told him we were about to have a female prayer meeting, but he said nothing about leaving the room, so we commenced the Meet. & he sat here during the whole time, in rather an awkward position. He remained here all night, & left about 10 o'clock today. Mormonism was the principal subject of conversation during his stay, & I learned a good deal respecting their views, which I should think in some respects similar to the Unitarians. E. seems to be trusting principally to his own good works for salvation, but is willing to have Christ supply his lack of perfect

¹ Mercy is writing this entry as she would a letter to her children.

obedience, should he at last come short. He does not believe in the doctrine of original sin, but thinks mankind are born 'pure & holy as the angels.' When I spoke of the new birth or that change of heart which all must experience before they are prepared to enter heaven, he said he did not know what I meant by that expression, as he was not accustomed to hear any thing about a new birth, & it was very evident to me from his conversation, that he knew nothing respecting it from experience.

“On the subject of polygamy he is very tenacious, as I suppose all the Mormons are, insisted that it was right & proper, because it was practiced in the days of the old testament dispensation, &c. &c. I inquired if what I had heard respecting his sisters living in that state was correct, he said it was. And when I told him I should think there would occasionally be jealousy & contention among them, he said they were very contented & happy, & loved each other better perhaps, than they did before marriage. So much for his testimony. Others give a very different version of the happiness of Mormon females. They say that there is very little enjoyment among them, - that in cases where there is only one wife, she lives in constant fear & dread, lest she shall be set aside & another one taken.

“Cousin E. [Edward] is a fine, healthy looking man, about 21 years of age, & resembles your sister M. [Maria] much more than Henry does. He has been living on the opposite side of the Isl. Among the natives – accommodating himself to their customs & habits, & eating fish & poi, of which he says he has become quite fond. Secluded from all civilized society & mixing with the degraded around him, I fear he will soon, be no better than those with whom he associates. My sympathy for him has been greatly excited, & I hope I shall not cease to pray that the Lord would bring him out of all error, & lead him to a right understanding of the scriptures, & a knowledge of himself & his Maker. The book of Mormon I perceived was valued by him more than the Bible, & he said he thought it was more profitable for him to read, as it contained more recent revelations. O let us pray that his coming to these Islids may be the means of his conversion from Mormonism to Christianity. Should this be the case, he will have cause to all eternity, to bless God for sending him hither. – He told me that if he could find any better religion than the Mormons he would embrace it, but he thought most sects or denominations were nothing but hypocrites. I asked him if he included me in that. No. He reply’d, ‘I did not say so,’ but from what he did say there could be

about 'Mormonism,' more particularly about the doctrine of a plurality of wives. She appeared to have a great deal of sympathy for her neices whom she understood were living in the abominable order. She said that when she heard that three of them were married to one man she actually wet her pillow with tears and in fact she shed tears while conversing with me upon the subject. She did not consider them any better than public prostitutes, consequently did not feel like acknowledging relationship with them or anyone that believed such a doctrine. She said it was in direct opposition to the whole tenor of the Bible. I told her that I had not found anything in the Bible that forbid men the privilege of having a plurality of wives but I had read of many men who were considered good men and received the approbation of the Almighty and actually received revelation and the ministration of Angels and yet were polygamists.

“Well she prayed God to give me a new heart that I might understand the Christian religion for she did not consider that Mormomism was Christianity. I replied that I did not wish to believe what she called Christianity for I believed those principles taught by Jesus Christ and his deciples and as modern Christainity does not agree with those principles I was obliged to reject it. She said I would never get to Heaven with my present belief and instead of getting an exaltation in the Kingdom of God I would receive the lowest place

in hell. Said I, the scriptures inform us that we shall receive according to our works, therefore if our works are good we shall receive the reward of the faithful but if our works are evil we shall receive the just retribution for the same. She did not think she should be saved for any good that she could do but if she was ever saved it would be through grace. She thought she should be perfectly satisfied to get the very lowest place in Heaven and that she was unworthy of that = I assured her that she need not expect to get any more than her works merited, if we were to take the scriptures for it.

“She said the Mormons tooke such portions of the scriptures as suited them and rejected those parts that do not suit them. Said I all the difficulty is this, the Mormons believe the Bible as it reads but you have a way of spiritualizing it and making it mean something that it does not say. Now supposing that Noah had have understood the modern way of interpreting the word of God he would no doubt have thought when the Lord commanded him to build an ark that it was a spiritual ark spoken of. Noah understood the Lord to mean just what He said. It is quite likely that the rest of the world understood it to by [be] a spiritual ark therefore they suffered the consequences of their unbelief. In speaking of baptism she did not consider it essential to salvation and asked me if I thought there was any virtue in the water to wa[s]h

away sins. I told her I did not think there was any particular virtue in the water but in the obedience to the requirements of the Almighty. If the Lord establishes the ordinance of bap[t]ism as a means of obtaining the remission of sins. I do not expect to obtain a forgiveness of sins in any other way.

“I had considerable conversation with her upon verious subjects but the doctrine of a plurality of wives appeared to be the most objectionable if there could be any difference but she would not admit that the Mormons had any good whatever. She said that plurality was in direct opposition to the teachings of the Saviour. Men did practice it before his day and the Lord permitted it because they were/ignorant and had no law, but after the coming Jesus Christ it was put down. I asked her if she pretendes to say that the ancient Polygamists were ignorant and without law when the Lord condecended to converage with them and even to eat with Abraham an old polygamist, and then boast of the wisdom of this age when there has been nothing revealed from Heaven for 1800 years. I thought it was strange doctrine. I also asked her to shew me the place in the Bible that says the Saviour put down polygamy. She took the Bible and not being able to find it in the New Testament she turned to the 1st chap. of Genesis and read the 24th verse “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh Now said

she that says wife not wives. I told her that I could not see as that forbid Polygamy, but that I could show her a passage that says the Lord himself gave a man a plurality of wives and certainly you cannot lay that to any lack of law. She said she would like to have me show her the passage. I turned to the xii. chapter of second Samuel and told her to read the 7th & 8th verse. ‘And Nathan said to David Thou art the man Thus saith the Lord God of Israel I anointed thee King over Isreal and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul And I gave thee thy master’s house and thy master’s wives into thy bosom’ &c. She hardly knew what to say to that but in order to make somekind of a move she asked me who David’s master was. I replied that I supposed it meant Saul. She said Saul was not his master and he had no master on the Earth.

“[V]ery well says I you will not deny that he had a master in heaven therefor you can take it as you like, that the Lord gave David Saul’s wives or that he gave him some of his own wives for it sufficeth to say that the Lord gave him his master’s wives. She told me that she did not feel like receiving anyone at her house that believed and taught such principles which I told her was no more than I had expected. I was prepared to receive almost any kind of treatment. I stayed all night with her but should probably not have done so if I had have known of any other place where I could stop.

“Wednesday Mar. 7th/55: This morning after conversing with Aunt till 10 o'clock I arose to depart having previously saddled my horse. I bore my testimony to her that Mormonism was true and Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God. and told her that inasmuch as she did not feel like receiving me at her house as a relative I should trouble her no more and with this understanding I took my leave and turned my course back towards Kalihiwai where I arrived on Saturday Mar. 10th/55.”

Twenty-seven years later, Edward, Jr. returned to Hawaii on another mission. This time as the president of the mission, and he was accompanied by his wife Sarah and two sons, who would also be serving as missionaries. He had occasion to take his wife to Kauai on September 10, 1883 to show her the house where his aunt lived when he visited her. Mercy had died in 1872 and was buried next to her husband Samuel.

The house was falling into ruin, but securing the key from the caretaker, Edward showed his wife around and described his visit nearly three decades earlier. Reflecting on that visit, he penned these thoughts about his aunt:

“I felt hurt when I was turned from her door but harbored no resentment towards my aunt. I felt like I would like to do her a kind action in return for her enmity towards me, and I thought while I stood by her grave and

wrote in my memorandum book the inscription upon her grave, that perhaps the time had come that I could do her a favor by having the ordinances of baptism performed for her and her husband, and if she was sincere in her course of life on earth, she may be convinced of the truth of the gospel in the place to which she has gone, and be grateful to those whom she despised on earth as unfit to associate with her, if they shall perform for her the ordinances of the gospel that she would not, in consequence of her false religious bigotry, perform for herself.”

Conclusion

The lives of Edward, Sr., and Mercy paralleled one another in more ways than they would likely admit: lives given in Christian service of others with an object to touch the lives of unbelievers and lives given in life-long sacrifice for the glory of God.

Perhaps a generous and loving God – to whom both dedicated their lives – has allowed them to be reunited in the warm and loving family circle they enjoyed in their youth, before religious differences sundered their familial bonds.