

## Katharine Smith Salisbury and Lucy Smith Millikin's Attitudes Toward Succession, the Reorganized Church, and Their Smith Relatives in Utah

*Kyle R. Walker*

Several letters have emerged in recent years that reflect Smith family members' attitudes concerning the succession question. It is well known that Emma Hale Smith, Lucy Mack Smith, and William Smith stayed behind when most of the Saints made their epic trek west, and there exists material documenting their respective views toward succession following the martyrdom.<sup>1</sup> However, little has been written about the rest of the Smith family—the three Smith sisters—who stayed in Illinois following the deaths of their brothers and the migration of the Saints to the West. The two following documents shed light on the attitudes of two of the three sisters of the Prophet, Katharine Smith Salisbury, and Lucy Smith Millikin. The letters serve to illuminate the sisters' disposition toward Brigham Young and the Utah Saints, the Reorganized Church following the 1860 organization, and their Smith relatives who went west.

### **Katharine Smith Salisbury and Lucy Smith Millikin**

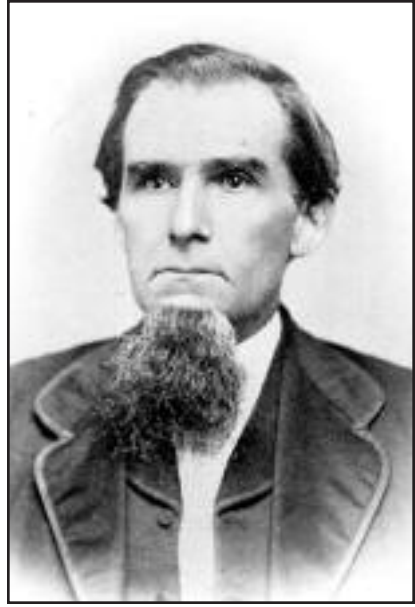
Katharine Smith Salisbury, the second daughter and seventh surviving child of Joseph Sr., and Lucy Mack Smith, was born 28 July 1813, in Lebanon, Grafton County, New Hampshire.<sup>2</sup> She was an eyewitness to many important events of the Restoration, including hefting the covered gold plates after Joseph had brought them into the Smith home.<sup>3</sup> Shortly after

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*Lucy Smith Millikin, date unknown.  
Courtesy of LDS Church Archives.*



*Arthur Millikin, date unknown.  
Courtesy of LDS Church Archives.*

the plates were retrieved, Katharine was active in ensuring the safety of the plates—on one occasion hiding them in her bedcovers as a mob searched the

Smith family home.<sup>4</sup> She was subsequently baptized by David Whitmer in Seneca Lake at the Church's first conference, held 9 June 1830.<sup>5</sup> Katharine married Wilkins Jenkins Salisbury on 8 June 1831, shortly after the New York Saints migrated to Kirtland.<sup>6</sup> She fully accepted her brother's calling as a prophet of God, and testified to the same throughout her prolonged life.<sup>7</sup>



*Katharine Smith Salisbury, ca. 1890.  
Courtesy of Buddy Youngreen.*

Lucy Smith Millikin was the youngest child of Joseph, Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith, the only child born at Palmyra, New York, on 18 July 1821. Her husband, Arthur Millikin, was a native of Maine,

born 9 May 1817. He joined the Church in 1836 and participated in the Battle of Crooked River, in which he was severely wounded. The two were married by Joseph Smith on 4 June 1840, in Nauvoo, Illinois.<sup>8</sup> The Millikins spent much of their early married life caring for their aged mother, Lucy Mack Smith, and the latter expressed her appreciation for the tender care exhibited by this couple in her history.

### The Letters

At the time these two letters were written, Katharine was living in Fountain Green, Hancock County, Illinois; while Arthur and Lucy were twelve miles away in Colchester, McDonough County, Illinois.<sup>9</sup> Both sisters had been visited by their nephews Joseph F. Smith, Samuel H. B. Smith, and John Smith as the latter traveled to and from their various mission assignments. In fact, the impetus for the writing of these letters appears to have been recent visits and correspondence from these nephews. During the summer of 1863, Joseph F. and Samuel H. B. Smith were released from their missionary labors in Europe, and, as indicated in the letter, had recently stopped in Colchester on their way home to Salt Lake City.<sup>10</sup> After their visits in the late 1850s and early 1860s, the nephews corresponded with their relatives in Illinois.

The first of these documents is a letter from Arthur Millikin to his nephew John Smith dated 25 July 1863. It is in Arthur's handwriting and the original has remained to this day in the private possession of John Smith's



*Wilkins Jenkins Salisbury and Katharine Smith Salisbury grave, Webster (formerly Ramus), Hancock County, Illinois, December 2001. Although the name inscription on the grave marker reads "Katherine" (with an "e"), she spelled her name Katharine (with an "a").*

*Photograph courtesy Alexander L. Baugh.*



*Arthur Millikin and Lucy Smith Millikin graves, Colchester, McDonough County, Illinois, May 2002. Photograph courtesy Alexander L. Baugh.*

descendants. Although written by Arthur, the letter likely reflects the sentiments of both him and Lucy, as Arthur indicated he was writing at Lucy's request. The second letter, addressed "dear nephews," appears to have been directed to John Smith, Joseph F. Smith, and Samuel H. B. Smith, and is dated 11 September 1865.<sup>11</sup> It is part of the John Smith Papers donated to the BYU Library on 8 March 1991 by LDS Church Patriarch Emeritus Eldred G. Smith and his sister Cleone Smith Isom. This letter had remained in the possession of descendants of Hyrum and John Smith until the time of its donation.<sup>12</sup>

### **Significance of the Letters**

It appears from the two letters that neither Katharine Salisbury nor the Millikins were opposed to doctrines adhered to by the church in Utah led by Brigham Young, though it is sometimes assumed they were opposed. Katharine expressed a desire to be united with her relatives in the West, indicating that she would be exceptionally "glad if all of us the connexion one and all could live in a Society together and believe in one Lord one Saveioure one faith one baptismem." Similarly, the Millikins supported their

nephews who were laboring as Latter-day Saint missionaries, even wishing them success in their proselytizing efforts. However, the Millikins' letter also highlighted disagreement related to administration, perhaps reflective of the remaining Smith family at large. They felt that the authority to preside rightfully belonged to the Smith family. Nevertheless, they were not opposed to a Smith descendant in the LDS Church assuming such leadership, even encouraging John Smith "and all the Smith family" in the West to look into the matter of succession and ascertain whether they were "not the rightful successors of Joseph the Prophet & Hyrum the Patriarch & should lead & govern the Church in the last days." This is significant, as the Reorganized Church (now called the Community of Christ) had been established several years before either of these letters was written.

The attitudes of both families toward the Reorganized Church are also of interest. Arthur expressed the feeling that Joseph Smith III would "gather a large church around him," but does not indicate his family's involvement or support in his nephew's endeavors. Katharine, on the other hand, was noticeably hurt that Joseph Smith III and his siblings had not invited her to "take a helping hand with them," and felt that her family had been "entirely for-saken" by the Reorganization.<sup>13</sup> This counters accounts of Katharine's descendants who reported that she was involved with the Reorganization from the very first, and claims that the whole Smith family were anxiously awaiting Joseph Smith III to rise to his previously ordained position as the successor to his father.<sup>14</sup>

## The Documents

Colchester July 25 / 63

Dear Nephew<sup>15</sup>

Your Aunt Lucy says I must sit down & write a few lines to you away over yonder preaching the Gospel in an unknown tongue.<sup>16</sup> Well John I am not up to writing much & preaching none. therefore you must not expect a very long letter from me.

Samuel<sup>17</sup> & Joseph<sup>18</sup> called to see us as they were passing through on their way home Samuel stoped with us a week Joseph stoped an hour.. They were both well & in good spirits. Mary B.<sup>19</sup> is going home with them on a visit Joseph Smith<sup>20</sup> of Nauvoo is preaching & making many proselytes, he takes a strait forward course and I believe he will gather a large church around him I think you & all of the Smith family should look into this matter & see if you are not the successors of Joseph the Prophet & Hyrum the Patriarch & should lead & govern the Church in the last days.

I do not see how you boys can preach Brigham the successor to Joseph or that he has eny more authority than he had when Joseph died. I never

believed it nor never shall believe it. We are all well & I believe all of our connections are in these parts as Sarah is going to write I will close my scrabbling for the time.

Good bye John I hope you will have good success in all your undertakings

(write often)Yours TrulyArthur Millikin

September 11 1865

Dear nephews your most welcome letters came Safe to hand and found us all well and exceding glad to hear from you Since i wrote to you i have had a leter from Don<sup>21</sup> he is well and in nevada teretory at the Silver mines he said he intended to Stay their till Spring he was geting good wages and he thought if he kepet [kept] his hea[l]th that he would be able to come home in about a year we also heard from Alvin<sup>22</sup> he is Still teaming from the bluffs to denver Aunt Sopronia<sup>23</sup> and Aunt Lucy<sup>24</sup> and familys are well Don M.<sup>25</sup> is in the army he is now in georgia he enlisted for one year they get a leter from him every week mary<sup>26</sup> is well She is in St louis i got a leter from her a Short time ago She has never ben back Since you was here we expect her here this fall i wish she had gone home with you for She has Seen a greateal [great deal] of trouble Since then i mean to write to her to come and Stay with me this winter for we have ben blessed with a good crop and i think that we will have a plenty to eat till fred<sup>27</sup> can raise another i and fred are living by ourSelfs Solomon<sup>28</sup> hea[l]th is not very good he buried his wife last winter Lucy<sup>29</sup> and children are well Samuel Duke<sup>30</sup> died the last of July

Alvin wife<sup>31</sup> i[s] living in one part of the house with us She wishes to be remembered [by] you and your wifes we have had a very wet Se[a]son here and Som very warm wether it is raining to day very hard you Spoke about joseph and the boys<sup>32</sup> we do not See nor hear from them much oftner then we do from you Since they have ben e[n]gaged in their church afairs they have entirely forsaken us they manife[s]t no interest in our eternal wellfare they have never invited us to come and take a helping hand with them if they had i do not know but that my Sons would be on a mission now instead of hunting for gold for my part i Should feel Safer about them if they were in the employ of their hevenly father joseph<sup>33</sup> and john<sup>34</sup> for my part i would be excedind [exceedingly] glad if all of us the connexion one and all could live in a Society together and believe in one Lord one Saveioure one faith one baptisem and See eye to eye and rejoice in the holy one of isreal this is the Sincere desire of my heart john i do not think that maria<sup>35</sup> is mad nor Sarah<sup>36</sup> but i think that they are a wating for a leter from you i will give you Don[s] address direct to Austin nevada teritory in the care of L wines i expect you will have a leter from him before you get this write as often as

you can both of you and i will do the same tell Lovina<sup>37</sup> that iam very much obliege to her for the leters She has writen to me give my love to all the friendes and relation please excuse my por - writing for i don't write often and than only to Don i cannot think of anything more at presant all appears to be peace and plenty i heard that joseph<sup>38</sup> had Sold his part in the farm and was agoin to move up north he got one thousand dollars if you get any news from Don or Alvin write i have writen two leters to Don and one [to] Alvin So adieu

This from your effectionate Aunt  
Katharine Salisbury

### Notes

1. For information on Emma Hale Smith, see Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Doubleday: Garden City, New York, 1984); on Lucy Mack Smith, see Lavina Fielding Anderson, *Lucy's Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir* (Signature Books: Salt Lake City, 2001); and on William Smith, see Calvin P. Rudd, "William Smith: Brother of the Prophet Joseph Smith," M.S. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1973.

2. There is some discrepancy over Katharine's birth date. Lucy Mack Smith dates it as 1812. See Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool, S. W. Richards, 1853), 41; as does Don Carlos Smith, see Don Carlos Smith, "Smith Family Genealogy Record [ca 1840]," LDS Church Archives, Family and Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter cited as Church Archives). However, the earliest known source gives the date as 1813. See Joseph Smith, Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-1, 10, Joseph Smith Papers, Church Archives. Katharine swore in an affidavit that her date of birth was 28 July 1813. See Katharine Smith Salisbury, Affidavit, 15 April 1881, Library-Archives, Community of Christ, Independence, Missouri.

3. Herbert S. Salisbury, "The Prophet's Sister Testifies She Lifted the B. of M. Plates," *The Messenger* (Berkeley, California), October 1954, 1, 6.

4. Mary Salisbury Hancock, "The Three Sisters of Joseph Smith," *Saints' Herald*, 101 (25 January 1954):12.

5. Joseph Smith, Jr. *The History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev. 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 1:84-86.

6. Margaret O. Ford, ed., *Early Marriages in Geauga County*, (Burton, Ohio: n.d.), 205. This marriage was performed by Sidney Rigdon at the home of Katharine's sister, Sophronia.

7. Katharine was the only Smith family member who lived into the Twentieth century, passing away 2 February 1900.

8. *Times and Seasons* 1 (8 June 1840):127.

9. Fountain Green is near present-day Webster, formerly known as Ramus and Macedonia during the time the Saints were in Nauvoo.

10. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 204. John Smith was not released from his labors in Denmark until 1864.

11. Only John and Joseph F. Smith are mentioned by name in the letter, and the letter was likely mailed to John, as it remained with his personal letters. However, because Samuel had also visited his Smith relatives in Illinois during this time period and information in the letter relates specifically to his family, we can assume that it was directed to him as well. For more information on the nephews' visits, see Buddy Youngreen, "Sons of the Martyrs' Nauvoo Reunion—1860," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 4 (Spring 1980): 351-70.

12. David J. Whittaker, "Register to the John Smith (1832-1911) Papers," L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

13. Eventually both sisters would be received into the Reorganized Church "on their original baptism," but this did not take place until 1873.

14. See Frederick V. Salisbury, "The Teachings and Testimony of My Mother," 1926, typescript copy, 14, Carthage County Courthouse, Carthage, Illinois; also Hancock, "The Three Sisters of Joseph Smith," 11.

15. The nephew this letter is addressed to is John Smith (1832-1911), the eldest son of Hyrum and Jerusha Barden Smith, who later served as presiding patriarch in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

16. John Smith was serving in the Scandinavian Mission in 1863.

17. Samuel Harrison Bailey Smith (1838-1914), the only son of Samuel Harrison and Mary Bailey Smith.

18. Joseph F. Smith (1838-1919), the only son of Hyrum and Mary Fielding Smith and the sixth president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

19. Mary Bailey Smith (1837-1916), daughter of Samuel Harrison and Mary Bailey Smith.

20. This has reference to Joseph Smith III (1832-1914), eldest surviving son of Joseph and Emma Hale Smith.

21. Katharine's son, Don Carlos Salisbury (1841-1919).

22. Katharine's son, Alvin Salisbury (1838-1880).

23. Katharine's sister, Sophronia Smith Stoddard McCleary (1803-1876). Sophronia lived near the Millikins in Colchester, McDonough County, Illinois.

24. Lucy Smith Millikin (1821-1882).

25. Katharine's nephew, Don Carlos Smith Millikin (1843-1932), eldest child of Arthur and Lucy Millikin. Don was serving in the Civil War in 1865.

26. Mary Bailey Smith, daughter of Samuel Harrison and Mary Bailey Smith.

27. Katharine's youngest son, Frederick Salisbury (1850-1934).

28. Katharine's eldest son, Solomon Jenkins Salisbury (1835-1927).

29. Katharine's daughter, Lucy Salisbury Duke (1834-1892).

30. Katharine's son-in-law, married to Lucy.

31. Mahala Aldrich (1836-1901).

32. Katharine is referring here to Joseph Smith III and his siblings.

33. Joseph F. Smith (1838-1919).

34. John Smith (1832-1911).

35. Katharine's niece, Maria Stoddard Wooley (1832-), daughter of Calvin and Sophronia Smith Stoddard. Sophronia lived with this daughter in Colchester, Illinois.

36. Katharine's niece, Sarah M. Millikin (1848-1913), eldest daughter of Arthur and Lucy Millikin.

37. Lovina Smith Walker (1827-1876), eldest child of Hyrum and Jerusha Barden Smith.

38. Joseph Smith III.