

## The Forgotten Daughter: Julia Murdock Smith

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Julia Murdock Smith was one of the Murdock twins adopted at birth by Joseph and Emma Hale Smith in 1831. She played a prominent family role as the oldest and only female child in the Smith household. Her life experiences included adoption; the untimely death of her birth mother, twin, and adoptive father; religious conflict; false rumors about paternity; bittersweet reunification with her birth father; young widowhood; marriage to a purported alcoholic; and ill health. Much of her life and character can be gleaned from a number of primary and contemporary sources, and it is from these records that Julia emerges as a high-spirited, yet sensitive, woman who tried to understand life as it took her around one unexpected, and often tragic, bend after another. This article is an attempt to reconstruct some of the details relating to her interesting, and often painful but remarkable, life.<sup>1</sup>

### **Julia's Birth and Adoption: The Story behind the Story**

John Murdock was born 15 July 1792 in Kortwright, Delaware County, New York, to Eleanor Riggs and John Murdock Sr.<sup>2</sup> At the age of twenty-seven, he left home and within three years had settled and begun homesteading property in Orange Township near Cleveland, Ohio. Julia Clapp

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was born was born 23 February 1796 in Warrensville, Ohio, and belonged to a prominent local family.<sup>3</sup> Her mother had been one of the area's first female settlers in 1806, and her father was a judge.<sup>4</sup> The details of the young couple's meeting and courtship are not known. John and Julia were married on 14 December 1823 by Julia's uncle, a justice of the peace.<sup>5</sup> A year after the marriage, their first child, Orrice, was born. John Riggs and Phebe followed in 1825 and 1828.<sup>6</sup> By this time, John and Julia were homesteading thirty-five acres in Orange Township, and during the next two years, they bought more land to support their growing family.<sup>7</sup> In September of 1829, they buried an unnamed infant.<sup>8</sup>

The young Murdock couple had strong Christian religious values, although at first glance their denominational loyalties may seem fickle. Their spiritual wanderings were those of what are now known as Christian primitivists who wandered from one preacher's flock to the next in search of New Testament principles.<sup>9</sup> John's journal records that he "kept searching the scriptures and looking to find a people that lived according to them, but could not find such a people." He mentions associations with the Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Calvinistic Baptists before 1825. But, he writes, "I withdrew myself from them and stood about two years aloof from all religious sects and my wife in company with me."<sup>10</sup> Between 1825 and 1827, he preached for the Methodists but decided he did not agree with their doctrines either. Julia's opinions on matters of doctrine are not known, but her pious husband later described her as one who "adorned her profession by a godly walk and conversation."<sup>11</sup>

Around 1827, John and Julia Murdock and many other local Baptists joined a new Baptist offshoot, Disciples of Christ. The Murdocks were persuaded in part by several members of Julia's family who joined the Disciples.<sup>12</sup> John Murdock even preached on the circuit with Alexander Campbell, the movement's founder, and another staunch adherent, Sidney Rigdon.<sup>13</sup> Julia Clapp Murdock's personal church activity is not recorded, but her family's relationships to prominent Disciples certainly would have thrust her into the thick of church happenings.

The Disciples grew quickly in numbers, but John Murdock was among a number whose theology gradually drifted away from that of the Disciples church. As a Christian primitivist, he had unified with the church because of its grounding in New Testament teachings. However, he had felt an increasing need to find a church that had divine authority to administer rites such as baptism and confirmation. The Disciples of Christ church did not claim this authority. He later wrote, "I continued a member with them, about three years, I think, but at length finding their principal leader, Alex Campbell, with many others, denying the gift and power of the Holy Ghost,

I began to think of looking me a new home.<sup>14</sup>

In November 1830, Mormon missionaries representing the Church of Christ came to northeast Ohio. They preached a restored New Testament Christianity led by a divinely authorized prophet-leader. John was baptized into the Mormon faith on 5 November 1830 after spending an entire night reading the Book of Mormon. He took the book home to Julia and read it to her. According to John, she too believed the record to be true and was baptized nine days later.<sup>15</sup> Other local Disciples, including the prominent Mentor minister Sidney Rigdon, joined the Mormons as well.

The rest of Julia's relatives remained Disciples. This would not have been significant in that era of ever-changing religious alliances except for the hostility that quickly grew between the two churches. Alexander Campbell and Sidney Rigdon, formerly "brothers in the faith," exemplified the tensions between the Disciples and the Mormons by arguing publicly. The conflict also resulted in a split between the Murdocks and the Clapps. John Murdock tersely recorded in his journal, "I visited Father Clapp's family [and] preached the [Mormon] gospel to them. They were very unbelieving and hard."<sup>16</sup> Later, John explained in a letter to his daughter Julia, "Your Grandfather Clapp and [his] family were so bitterly opposed to the [Mormon gospel] that there was no sociability between them and your Mother or me during her lifetime after we obeyed the Gospel; altho previous to that the greatest friendship existed between us and the whole family connection."<sup>17</sup>

John began traveling as a Mormon missionary almost immediately after his baptism. He first preached successfully in his own neighborhood, building up a local congregation of about seventy or eighty members.<sup>18</sup> But his missionary work left him little time to care for his property. "Being thronged with inquiries," he explained, "I quit other business and left my own house and moved my family in with Bro. C[aleb and Sis. Nancy] Baldwin and gave my full time to the ministry."<sup>19</sup> The Baldwins were also Mormon converts, and they lived less than three miles from the Murdocks.<sup>20</sup> The Murdocks' move probably took place in February 1831 when Julia was seven months pregnant.

John's journal records that his wife fully embraced their new religious faith. However, the last year of her life must have been very difficult; for, as the birth of the twins approached, John was away on a preaching mission, and Julia found herself estranged from her own family while caring for their three small children in a neighbor's home. The twins were born at the Baldwins' home on 30 April 1831.<sup>21</sup> John barely made it back in time from his preaching assignment to be there for the delivery. Six hours later, Julia, his wife died.<sup>22</sup> He wrote: "The children were born without any great agony or pain to the Mother, and all appeared to be doing well, except the after-

birth was not taken away, yet there was no suspicion [sic] of death or danger. I had just at this time went to the door to speak to some person when she sent for me to come in. Immediately I went to her bed. She appeared to look fresh and be doing well, but she told me she was going, and reached out her hand and shook hands with me and every person in the room and bid us farewell, and immediately folded her hands across her own stomach, shut her eyes, and went to sleep in Jesus.”<sup>23</sup>

John was not able to grieve for long. He had five children to care for (two of them newborns) and an impending missionary assignment. Before his departure, he placed the three oldest children in the temporary care of local Mormons.<sup>24</sup> However, the newborn twins needed a wet nurse and constant care. Given the recent estrangement and religious tension that developed between him and his in-laws over their faith, John deliberately did not place his children with the Clapps, despite the fact that they were nearby and could have provided well for them. Instead, he turned the care and keeping of the children over to Joseph and Emma Smith. Years later, his daughter Julia criticized him for this decision in a letter, “If [my mother] has seen the way her family have been divided and estranged she must feel unhappy, I think.”<sup>25</sup> But John explained to his daughter, “I was now left with five small children, the question was what shall I do with them, is it duty to place them in the hands of those who oppose . . . the authority of God . . . (for this is what your mother’s relatives did) or shall I place them where they can be taught in the faith and principles of salvation?”<sup>26</sup>

John could have remarried as soon as the desire and opportunity presented itself and then possibly reclaimed his twins. However, he had experienced an extremely unhappy childhood because of an abusive stepmother and probably wanted to avoid his own children having stepparents if possible.<sup>27</sup> Joseph Smith III later commented to that effect. He wrote that John “preferred to leave [Julia] with [Emma] who had no girl children, than to take her home . . . [to a] step mother’s tender mercies.”<sup>28</sup> John recorded in his journal, “[I] decreed in my heart, that a second wife in my house, should never tyrannize over a first woman’s children.”<sup>29</sup>

Murdock did not make it clear as to whether Joseph asked for the children. His journal records that he took the infants to the Smiths as a gift, and this is the version perpetuated in some popular Mormon literature.<sup>30</sup> However, John told a variation of this story to Julia nearly thirty years later, which implied that the Smiths initiated the idea to take the children and then set strict guidelines about their future relationship with their birth father:

Brother Joseph, hearing of the death of my wife and the two children left, sent word to me that he would take the children and raise them, and also sent a man and

woman for them, and I sent them to him. He then lived in Kirtland and when I afterwards went to Kirtland Sister Smith requested me not to make myself known to the children as being their father. It was a hard request and I said but little on the subject. She wanted to bring the children up as her own and never have them know anything to the contrary, that they might be perfectly happy with her as their Mother. This was a good thought, yet selfish, and I was sensible it could not always remain so. Joseph told me it would one day all come to light, which it appears has taken place without my divulging it, for I have always held my peace. . . . I resolved to wait till time and providence should divulge the matter.<sup>31</sup>

The above passage may make John appear like a passive man who gave up his children too easily. However, it is important to consider the fact that a single father of newborn twins and three older children to care for left few options for men in his day. In today's world of infant formula, healthy babies, paid parenting leave, and increased social support for single fathers, the solution might have been different.

The constraint placed by Emma that the twins would not know John as their father is not so different than closed adoptions of the twentieth century. John's comment about the policy is interesting. He stated that Joseph requested the twins, not that he offered them, which contradicts his earlier accounts. Perhaps an anguished birth father reconstructed that part of the story, consciously or not, to soften his role as the abandoning father to his estranged and bitter daughter. He also defended himself against Julia's accusations that he gave her up. Three things are clear from his journals and letters: (1) he tried to fulfill his fatherly responsibilities; (2) he was committed to his missionary labors; and (3) he sometimes lacked the ability to express emotions except in terms of his religious faith. One less-sympathetic biographer of Murdock described him as "upright to the point of rigidity, over-sensitive," a man who "found personal relationships difficult."<sup>32</sup> Perhaps the heartache associated with emotional relationships was simply too painful for him to express.

Joseph and Emma lived in a cabin on the Isaac Morley farm in Kirtland with their new twins until mid-September 1831 when they moved in with John and Alice (sometimes Elsa) Johnson in nearby Hiram, Ohio. In late March 1832, tragedy struck the Smith family. While the eleven-month-old twins were ill with the measles, a mob broke into the Johnson home. The mob tarred and feathered Joseph and, in the process, exposed Julia and Joseph Murdock Smith to the night air. Five days later, young Joseph died.<sup>33</sup> Many of the mobbers were members of the Disciples of Christ, and though none of the rabble were Clapps, the irony remains that members of the Disciples church may have indirectly contributed to the death of the Clapp grandchild.<sup>34</sup>



*John and Alice Johnson home, Hiram, Ohio, 2002.  
Joseph and Emma Hale Smith lived with the Johnsons from September 1831  
to September 1832. They were living here when a group of local citizens  
tarred and feathered Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon. Exposure to the cold  
air may have caused the death of Julie's twin brother Joseph.  
Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.*

During the next few years while John was away doing missionary work, his oldest children remained in foster care. During this time, young Julia became a permanent member of the Smith family. After returning from a mission in June 1832, John caught up with his children. He wrote, "Found that my little son Joseph had died. I had left my eldest son Orrice with Benjamin Bragg and John with Philo Judd and Phebe with Syrenus Burnet. I had to pay them all full price for keeping my children. But my daughter was still doing well with Bro. Joseph, the Prophet."<sup>35</sup> At the end of that summer, Joseph Smith received a revelation instructing John Murdock to fill another preaching assignment but not until "your children are provided for." This same revelation clarified Murdock's major church responsibility in no uncertain terms: "Thou shalt continue proclaiming my gospel until thou be taken."<sup>36</sup> John responded, "[I] accordingly sent my three oldest children to Bishop Partridge . . . with some money for their support. . . . I disposed of my property and gave some to Bro. Joseph, sent some to the Bishop in Mo. for the support of my children. . . . And now I was prepared to travel and preach

the gospel without being cumbered with either family or property.”<sup>37</sup> During part of the winter of 1832–33, he preached locally and even boarded with the Smith family for a time. He later stated that he never tried to reclaim Julia, although as he watched his little toddler every day, it must have been difficult to honor Emma’s “hard request” not to become a father again to her.<sup>38</sup>

Despite her parents’ efforts, Julia discovered her Murdock ties at a young age—and in an unpleasant way. She bitterly recalled to her biological brother, John Riggs Murdock: “Mine has been no easy life. Until I was a child of five years old I was happy, it was then I was first told I was not a Smith, and by Mrs. Walker, she was little older than myself, and she done it through spite. . . . From that hour I was changed. I was bitter even as a child. O how it stung me when persons have inquired, ‘Is that your adopted daughter?’ of my foster mother. John, you little know what I suffered in my early life, and even since I was grown.”<sup>39</sup>

In this same letter to her brother, she repeated a question she would ask her birth father—a question common among adoptees in any time period. She asked, “Why was it, I have often said to myself, that I could not have been raised with my own blood and kin and not with strangers, and bear a name I had no claim on?”<sup>40</sup> The struggle was made more intense by the knowledge that “her own blood and kin” lived in the same town of Nauvoo, Illinois, during her youth. Seemingly, the Murdocks kept alive the emotional conflict: “I shunned you and my father [the Murdocks], and why? Because I had a dread of being taken from those I was raised with and loved [the Smiths], with the same love that should have been yours. Many a sleepless night I have spent thinking of this when I was child. But I was a woman in thought, even then. After seeing some of you [the Murdocks], I have almost cursed the day I was born. . . . I chose to love those I knew.”<sup>41</sup>

Julia’s position in the Smith household fed anti-Mormon propaganda as well. Enemies of Joseph Smith, distorting his teachings on plural marriage, branded the Mormon Prophet a philanderer. Julia was aware that her presence fed the rumor mill. Again, in comments made to her brother, she stated: “John, did you have any idea of the opinion of the people here in regard to my birth? If you had not, I can tell you, it has been a received opinion that Joseph Smith was my Father, but that my Mother was some unfortunate girl that was betrayed by him. Is that not enough to make me miserable, to have such a stain on my mother’s name as that is?”<sup>42</sup> As late as 1884, Julia’s adoptive brother, Joseph Smith III, still had to defend her legitimacy. In answer to an inquiry letter, Joseph briefly described Julia’s origin and life and then branded the man who made the accusation “a jackal in spirit if he attempts to fix polygamic origin on [Julia].”<sup>43</sup>

## Childhood and Youth

Julia's childhood in the Smith household changed as additional brothers joined the family—Joseph III in 1832, Frederick in 1836, Alexander in 1838, Don Carlos in 1840 (who lived just over a year), an infant son in 1842 (who did not survive), and David Hyrum, born five months after his father's death in 1844. Julia's life as the oldest child and only girl would likely have been filled with child-care responsibilities and household chores. On the other hand, the Smith family's situation as occasional boarders and at times refugees may have complicated or compromised some aspects of living in a normal household.

Julia's relationships with the Smith family in her youth is largely unrecorded. We can only follow backward the thread of the relationships she maintained with them into adulthood. Her letters show that she maintained relationships with her Smith brothers into adulthood and that she was especially close to Joseph III. Joseph III was only a year and a half younger than she; and, as children, they were partners in work and play. Adulthood took them separate directions, but they corresponded by letter. In later years, Joseph III visited the Murdock family in Utah on Julia's behalf, and he wrote extensively of her life. “[She was my] adopted sister and the only sister I ever knew. . . . [W]e boys . . . held her in great esteem and affectionate regard, and . . . in every respect treated her honorably and considerably—quite as we would have treated a sister born of the family.”<sup>44</sup>

Julia's letters were tender and maternal toward the younger Smith boys. One particularly sweet letter, sent to her dying brother Frederick, speaks of her sorrow at his continued ill health and her hopes that spring would revive his spirits.<sup>45</sup> Although the letter probably did not reach him before he passed away, it remains a memento of sisterly care. Julia also wrote warmly about David Hyrum, the youngest Smith child and thirteen years her junior. Julia was old enough to remember his birth just after his father was killed; and, from her letters, it is apparent that she shared the special bond of helping to raise him. Julia missed the small boy terribly when she moved away from home during her first marriage. A letter she sent Emma in 1852 expresses her pleasure and pain “in Seeing those Drawings of Davids God Bless his little Soul for remembering his absent Sister. . . . Tell him his Sister had a long crying [sic] spell over them and She Kissed them over and over again. . . . (She will treasure them as a Holey prise).”<sup>46</sup> Later in life, Julia grieved at David Hyrum's mental and physical deterioration, from that of “our Darling of Old when he was our Pet the Baby.”<sup>47</sup>

Julia's relationship with Emma was the most solid and rewarding that she seems to have had. Several of Julia's letters to Emma survive, and they

are warm, intimate, and at times gossipy—the kind of letters a trusting daughter sends a mother. In an uncharacteristic and touching expression of positive emotion toward Emma, she wrote, “She ha[s] been more than a Mother to me, and loves me as one of her own.”<sup>48</sup> This is the only reference in any surviving letter she makes to “belonging” to anyone. In turn, Julia was likely a valuable source of comfort and assistance to her adoptive mother, and the two were probably often allies in a family of men.

Julia’s relationship with her adoptive father is more problematic for the historian to interpret. While away from home, Joseph was known to have sent loving greetings to his daughter. In 1832, he wrote that “the thoughts [sic] of home, of Emma and Julia, rush upon my mind like a flood and I could wish for [a] moment to be with them.”<sup>49</sup> Julia was six years old when Emma wrote that “the children feel very anxious about you because they don’t know where you have gone.”<sup>50</sup> Soon afterward, in another letter, Emma remarked, “I could hardly pacify Julia and Joseph [III] when they found out you was not coming home soon.”<sup>51</sup> In his letter written to Emma two weeks after being taken into custody by Missouri authorities, Joseph had a few passing thoughts about Julia. “Julia is a lovely little girl,” he wrote. “I love hir [sic]. . . . She is a promising child, tell her, father wants her to remember him and be a good girl.”<sup>52</sup>

Julia’s feelings in adulthood toward Joseph Smith are not known. Joseph’s early death denied her the opportunity to develop a mature relationship with him. She rarely mentioned him in letters. Along with her childhood love for him, she perhaps came to feel some ambivalence toward him or perhaps some resentment toward him for the religious faith that cost him his life and that caused both her and Emma so much suffering and her legitimacy to be questioned.

Julia spent her youth in Nauvoo. The Smiths lived for four years in a crowded log home known as the Homestead on the banks of the Mississippi River. In August 1843, the family moved into the Mansion House, a combination home and hotel that offered greater stability and that enabled Julia to spend the rest of her growing-up years. Friendships also played a significant role during this time. Julia was known to have often played with Eunice Billings, a young girl who later remembered Julia as her “constant companion.”<sup>53</sup>

Julia also attended school intermittently with her brothers and friends. Her formal education began in Kirtland in 1837 when Eliza R. Snow moved in with the Smiths and taught six-year-old Julia and Joseph III.<sup>54</sup> For the first year or so in Nauvoo, there was no organized school available for the Smith children to attend, so Emma taught Julia reading as well as sewing and cooking. Sporadic, low-quality education was not uncommon on the American

frontier.<sup>55</sup> Illinois classrooms at the time were privately funded, attendance could not be enforced, and schoolrooms had few teaching resources.<sup>56</sup> However, Julia's parents made her education a priority. They and other Nauvoo families pooled their resources to hire the best teachers they could. When Julia was eleven, her former schoolmistress Eliza Snow again taught her along with thirty-six other pupils on the chilly second floor of Joseph's red brick store in Nauvoo.<sup>57</sup> Another tutor, a well-educated Mormon convert, James Monroe, also taught the Smith children and others their daily lessons.<sup>58</sup> Julia had an excellent attendance record at one school; her only absence was caused by sunstroke.<sup>59</sup> Eventually, she learned to read well enough to teach her younger brothers to do so. She excelled in math and learned to paint from Mary Elizabeth Rollins.<sup>60</sup> Musical training was probably part of her regimen as well, as a watercolor portrait of her at age twelve, painted by Sutcliffe Maudsley, shows an image of an organ in the background.<sup>61</sup> The following interpretive description of Julia provides details of her appearance and guise gleaned from the Maudsley painting: "After February in 1842, Julia Murdock Smith's two baby brothers died within a few months of each other, so she dressed for her portrait in black silk for mourning and holds the grief symbol, a large handkerchief. Instead of white sleeves from elbow to wrist, she has more black silk. This amount of black indicated that Julia is taking on adult mourning practices. Only white cuffs and white lace at the neck relieve the shade. Her hairstyle elaborately uses all her long hair, with front braids looping below her ears and ringlets on the neck, with many braids coiled in a bob."<sup>62</sup>

The portrait has since been lost; only a black and white photograph of the original remains.<sup>63</sup> But even that copy shows that her prominent facial features had already emerged—large eyes, thick hair, and a forceful mouth. These features are also prominent in a photograph taken of Julia as an adult.

Julia's moods were apparently as intense as her looks. As an adult, her moods were changeable: laughter, bitterness, melancholy, affection, and sarcastic humor in letters.<sup>64</sup> Friends reported similar behavior as a child and youth. When she was about eight years old, Julia threw a tantrum one time by banging her head on the floor in an imitation of Sidney Rigdon's daughter. According to Joseph III, this behavior did not go over well, and she did not try it again.<sup>65</sup> When she was a little older, she threw a fit in school when her tutor, James Monroe, punished her for playing during study time. She left the room, and James heard her saying that he was "hardhearted" and "had no more heart than a hog." Later, she sent a tearful apology, and James promised that if her behavior improved, he would allow her back into class and he would not tell Emma about it.<sup>66</sup>

Nauvoo represented security and happiness to Julia, but it also became

a place of tragedy for the Smiths. Following her father's and her uncle Hyrum's murders in June 1844, the family and thousands of Latter-day Saints mourned their loss. Joseph's death must have been traumatic for the children. However, for Emma and the children, their private loss was almost swallowed up in the public sadness. Joseph III later recalled the following: "Mother [was] overwhelmed with her grief and we children [were] sympathizing as children will without fairly comprehending the importance of such an event. I remember the hours of seclusion of the family from intrusion, the gloom and the dread of the time, awaiting until the bodies were brought home, they being placed in their coffins, in the southwest corner of the dining room, and the gathering of the little group, my mother and her children—my brothers Frederick and Alexander, and my adopted sister, Julia, and myself."<sup>67</sup>



*"Young Woman Standing Next to Piano"*  
 This is a black-and-white photograph of a portrait by  
 Sutcliffe Maudsley. It is tentatively identified as Julia  
 Murdock Smith. The original painting is lost.  
 Courtesy of LDS Church Archives.

Soon after the martyrdom, relations worsened between Emma and Brigham Young, Joseph's first major successor. The children were bound to be caught up in the confusion and politicking. Sometime during the winter of 1844–45, Lucy Messerve Smith, a housemaid, reportedly heard Julia repeat some of Emma's opinions spoken against Brigham Young. Joseph III responded, "There are two in this family that will be sorry for going against

[Brigham and] the Twelve as they do.”<sup>68</sup> Within a few years, many of Julia’s friends and neighbors left Nauvoo to settle in Utah. John Murdock was among those who followed Brigham Young westward. Julia, of course, remained with her mother Emma. At the wishes of her Smith brothers, Julia shared equally with her brothers in the family inheritance when Joseph’s estate was settled.<sup>69</sup>

Because of anti-Mormon agitation, Emma and her children spent the winter of 1846–47 in Fulton City, Illinois, 150 miles up the Mississippi River from Nauvoo. There the children attended school and made new friends. “It was then a small village of some 4 or 500 inhabitants,” Joseph III later recalled. “East and south of it was a swamp, prairie wilderness. I saw grass six feet high in low wet places. . . . A lot of us drove down to a town 18 miles on the road from Fulton to R.I., Sterling, I think, in sleighs, had suppers and a dance, then back by moonlight.”<sup>70</sup> Julia was probably a member of that group, as she loved to go to dances and to socialize.

On 23 December 1847, Emma Smith married Major Lewis C. Bidamon. Julia, age sixteen, gained a stepfather and three stepsisters (all younger than she). Within two years, she moved away from home, so Lewis probably did not play much of a “fatherly” role in her life. No letters between Julia and Lewis survive, but occasionally she sent greetings to him in her letters to Emma. Julia and Joseph III referred to him as “the Major.”<sup>71</sup>

As an older teenager, Julia was contacted by the Clapp family, her birth mother’s family. Henry Moore, her mother’s cousin, came to Nauvoo in 1848, but the two did not visit because Julia was in St. Louis.<sup>72</sup> Instead, he wrote to her a year or two later. She later recalled, “He did not call on my foster Mother, not knowing what her feeling might be, he said. But he could rest assured of one thing, she would have received him kindly on my account. . . . I wrote to Cousin Henry to this effect, and he answered it.”<sup>73</sup>

### **Marriage to Elisha Dixon**

In 1849, at the age of eighteen, Julia married Elisha Dixon. Concerning the courtship and marriage, Joseph III wrote: “[A] slender, blue-eyed, fair-skinned, light-haired fellow came to town. He was a magician by profession, a most successful prestidigitator, who had been traveling about as a gypsy king. He had become ill and found it necessary to stop at Nauvoo to recuperate, boarding meanwhile at our house along with a friend named Charles Pease. Before the winter was over he had fallen in love with my sister Julia and married her. She was of age and, of course, her own mistress, and though the man was practically a stranger to us, Mother did not feel she could assert any authority to prevent her making the alliance. Besides, he seemed hon-

est enough, and of pleasant disposition.”<sup>74</sup>

Emma disapproved of Elisha, who at thirty-six was twice Julia’s age.<sup>75</sup> Emma probably felt uneasy, not knowing Elisha’s family who lived in Mechanicsville, New York.<sup>76</sup> Emma may also have worried about his unusual occupation and his health problems. He was a small man. Julia once happily reported that he had reached 135 pounds.<sup>77</sup>

After the marriage, Elisha found a job that paid forty dollars a month in St. Louis. However, a cholera epidemic caused him to return to Nauvoo a short time later.<sup>78</sup> Finding herself unable to keep up the Mansion House, Emma turned over the management to Elisha for a year. She was pleasantly surprised when he made some badly needed improvements.<sup>79</sup> Soon after, his health failed and doctors advised him to go south to warmer climates. In December 1849, he set out alone for Cuba. He made it as far as St. Louis, where his health worsened. A letter from Emma the following month (January 1850) reports that “Julia is with me and is almost as lonely as I am.”<sup>80</sup>

Apparently, Elisha returned to Nauvoo. The 1850 census lists his occupation as a tailor, and he and Julia were again running the Mansion House.<sup>81</sup> They did this until the spring of 1852. Then, the young couple moved to Galveston, Texas, where Julia again battled loneliness. Elisha did bookkeeping and tended bar on a river boat and at least once was gone for a two-week stretch.<sup>82</sup> In a letter to Joseph III, Julia describes one anxious night awaiting his return from a trip to New Orleans: “It was very lonesum I Can tell you while he was gon. . . . I thought he would be home on the Steamer that would be in on Teusday [sic]. Well that night It Came on to Blow from the East and It Blowed big Guns as the Sailors would Say and I could not sleep all that night. I could hear nothing but the Gulf Roring, the next morning . . . the Steamer came in to the Harbor with Couolors flying safe and sound and Mr. Dixon had not come so you see I had all my troubel for nothing as is generly the case. Well I was not looking for him until the next Tuesday and was in the Dinning Room on Sunday Morning . . . when the Door opend and in walk the Gent him Self. Well and harty he came back.”<sup>83</sup>

An exuberant letter, written 25 March 1852, begins with tender affection for Emma and David Hyrum and sentimentally recalls her departure from Nauvoo. In the same letter, Julia enthusiastically describes the warm climate and lush vegetation of the South. With a blithe, prosaic air, she writes, “Oh this is the land for me where we have warm dayes and beautiful cool moon lights [sic] nights and were [where] the breases that Fan your brow come laden with perfumes from the Orenge and Lemmond Groves and the roar of the Gulf lulls you to Sleep.”<sup>84</sup> She describes her fright at hurricane weather but ridicules Texan astonishment at the appearance of snow. “Whi

[Why] does it fall in flakes says one as tho It would fall in chunchs It made me laugh but I just inputed [sic] to there Ignariner [ignorance].”<sup>85</sup>

The same letter reveals a fondness for animals underscored by a glimpse Julia sometimes gives into her “deeper” self. Julia commented on her pets, three birds and a dog, and inquired about animals at home. At the same time, however, she quotes “one of Moores poems” in relation to the death of a family pet named Chloa. The poem shows her bitter understanding that loving inevitably brings grief:

Oh ever thus from child hoods hour I have seen my fondest hopes decay  
I never nursed a tree or flower but It was the first to faid and die  
I never nursed a dear Gazell to glad me with Its Dark haught cry  
but when It came to Know and love me well It was Sure to Day [die].<sup>86</sup>

The melancholy sentimentality that was so much a part of Julia manifests itself again in a letter written a year later: “In childhood we see everything through a coulerd Glass as It were and It Coulers every things in the most Brilyent light and Pleases our eye, but as we grow older we see through a Glass Still . . . but it is a magnifying one and we see things as they [really] are.”<sup>87</sup>

Julia had planned a trip to Mechanicsville, New York, to visit her in-laws during the summer of 1853, but plans changed when another major tragedy changed her life.<sup>88</sup> In April or May 1853, the boiler on the ship that Elisha was on exploded. He was thrown into the ash pan and was badly burned. He suffered painfully for three weeks before he died.<sup>89</sup> His friend Charles Pease, with whom he had gone into business, was also “badly injured and greatly shattered in nerves.”<sup>90</sup> Julia brought Charles back to Nauvoo and cared for him until he too died a short time later.

Julia returned to Nauvoo a twenty-two-year-old childless widow. Though she must have grieved, she also seems to have recovered quickly. In any case, she kept abreast of the local gossip and within due time was in the thick of social events. In an 1855 letter, she teased twenty-two-year-old Joseph III about various women in the community. Joseph himself was to marry within a year, about which time he wrote to a friend, “Can it be possible that you are as great a talker as my sister Julia is[?] She sits at my elbow now and talk of confusion[!]”<sup>91</sup> Her nature apparently did not change over the next several years. A letter she wrote in 1870 complained that a Nauvoo friend “gives me little news No more than Your Self. She seemed to have none to write. It must be dry times up there as well as here.”<sup>92</sup>

Julia’s sometimes snide sense of humor and perceptiveness show in her gossip letters. According to Julia, one woman, who had just returned from

a visit to the East, was much the same except that there was “a good deal more of her than formerly.”<sup>93</sup> Another time she mentioned a friend who had just gotten married: “Weddings are getting too common for any use here. . . . Mary is happy as a bird they say. I hope she may always be so, but I doubt it, for between you and me and the gatepost, he is not much.”<sup>94</sup> Julia held a four-year-old grudge of some kind against a woman, about whom she said, “She ask me to come and make her a visit this summer (I will if I get drunk).”<sup>95</sup> And commenting on another woman, she wrote, “She is deceitful as the [devil], I think and I ought to know by this time what she is.”<sup>96</sup> Yet another comment shows her frustration at communicating by letter. “How can we tell if they like our letters, if perhaps we should differ in any particular point, how are we going to settle it by letters[?] We can hardly convince a person they are wrong sometimes when we are with them, then how much harder [is] it . . . to do so by letter?”<sup>97</sup>

Julia’s status as a widow did not keep her from enjoying an active single life. In a letter to Joseph III in 1855, Julia, then twenty-four, described herself as “wild as a March hare!”<sup>98</sup> She then recounted the exciting events of an Independence Day celebration: “O, Could you have seen our town about 7 o’clock; everything was in motion. I had a good deal of fun that day at the expense of the country people coming in to see the elephant and you would have laughed too could you have seen some of them. It was fun alive. I was in excellent spirits that day and went on the high key. . . . After supper was over they all wanted to come down here and so Mother finally gave her consent for them to do so, and we went it on the light fantastic toes until daylight caused us to part.”<sup>99</sup>

Julia went on a wild river trip the next day, an excursion that several of her female friends would not make because the water was too rough. But it not too rough for Julia! She wrote that “we went at all hazards and had a delightful time of it.”<sup>100</sup>

### Marriage to John Middleton

One of the men on the July 1855 river trip was a man five years older than Julia, John Jackson Middleton.<sup>101</sup> The Middletons were original settlers of Nauvoo and prominent merchants.<sup>102</sup> Julia married him on 19 November 1856, three years after her first husband died.<sup>103</sup> Joseph III reported that soon afterward, Julia joined the Catholic Church, “for her husband was one [a Catholic] and he was strongly opposed to ‘Mormonism.’”<sup>104</sup> Later, Middleton even tried to talk his brother-in-law, Joseph III, out of preaching in behalf of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, of which Joseph III became the prophet and president in 1860.<sup>105</sup>

The Middletons of Hancock County were apparently prosperous and socially elite.<sup>106</sup> However, John had personal problems. Alcoholism had kept him from taking orders as a priest, and during his early marriage to Julia, he failed as a lawyer.<sup>107</sup> He and Julia bought a small farm two miles south of Nauvoo along the Mississippi riverbank where they lived until John tired of farming. Joseph III later described his brother-in-law as “one of the finest penman [*sic*] I ever saw, an excellent intellect, but the most outrageous slave to his appetites I ever saw; lazy and vicious in an extreme. An Irishman of lordly pretentions.”<sup>108</sup>

It would only be fair to note that almost all information about John Middleton’s character comes through Joseph III’s reports and that Joseph strongly disliked him. Julia never mentioned her husband’s alcohol use. She said that he was sick for a long time, which may or may not have anything to do with drinking. Joseph III reported that John’s drinking estranged him from his own family members, including repeated attempts to borrow money and acts of physical violence against his own father.<sup>109</sup> Joseph III also wrote candidly about his personal negative encounters with John over religious and financial matters.<sup>110</sup> There appears to be no reason to disbelieve his accusations. Joseph III portrayed John as one who was prone to violence, and if that accusation is true, then Julia lived with at least the threat of possible violence. However, neither Julia nor anyone else ever said that John physically abused her. Emma commented at one point that Julia’s life had been “trying,” which could refer to many different experiences. John Riggs Murdock, years later, attributed his sister’s death to a “severe blow that she had received,” without elaborating.<sup>111</sup> He also said Julia “had been very unfortunate in her second marriage,” but again he did not elaborate.<sup>112</sup>

After Julia Clapp Murdock’s death in 1831, John Murdock married four more times. He first remarried in 1836, but his second wife died in Far West, Missouri. A third wife died in Nauvoo. In March 1846 in Nauvoo, he married a fourth time—Sarah Zufelt Weire. John, Sarah, a son Gideon (from John’s third marriage), George Weire (Sarah’s six-year-old son), and a two-year-old foster daughter, Mary Cooper, made the Mormon trek west under Brigham Young’s leadership in 1847.<sup>113</sup> Julia’s brothers, Orrice and John Riggs, ages twenty-two and twenty-one, had gone west with the Mormon Battalion.<sup>114</sup>

About the time of her second marriage, Julia was contacted by her brother, John Riggs Murdock. John wrote to Julia in May 1858 from Nebraska where he was stationed on military business.<sup>115</sup> John’s letter to Julia has been lost, but her reply was forwarded to their aging biological father, who copied the letter into his journal and replied in early 1859. He wrote an uncharacteristic emotional response, “with feelings of gratitude to

my Father<sup>116</sup> in Heaven for the privilege of [receiving your letter]. . . . It was a great treat . . . like receiving intelligence from the dead. . . . For, my Dear Julia, you have been a lost child to me all your days. . . . ‘Shall I live to see my daughter?’ I will strongly hope I may, and I pray for it. Yet, I want you to come to me, for I am almost 67 years old and my nerves so affected I cannot write. . . . I want you both [Julia and John] to come and see us before I lay my body down, that I may talk with you and bless you before I die.”<sup>117</sup>

John’s impassioned letter to his daughter included a religious plea “to come here, that we may all be taught together in the principles of Salvation and attend to the Ordinances of the House of God, that we may be one in every deed.”<sup>118</sup>

The reunion her father wanted never happened. There were other pressing events in Julia’s life. Her own husband’s dissatisfied restlessness led him to sell their farm and Julia to sell her city lot in Nauvoo and forty acres of farmland. Leaving Nauvoo, the couple headed to St. Louis with about \$5,000, at least half of it belonging to Julia.<sup>119</sup> In St. Louis, the Middletons bought a home on Chestnut Street, and John found work as a clerk for the Pilot Knob Mountain Iron Company, and then he found work with a pork processing company.<sup>120</sup> Joseph III visited the Middletons in St. Louis and was singularly unimpressed. John’s alcoholism was out of control. He drank heavily and was very rude.<sup>121</sup> Julia did not discuss John’s drinking problems as one of his “illnesses” she refers to in an 1870 letter to Emma. In fact, she tried to be cheerful about her situation: “You know my Husband has been sick for so long & also you know he has done no Business for nearly Three years now & as times are at present It seems impossible for him to get any thing to do here so we are obliged to sell our Home & give up all unnecessary furniture & commence the World a new once more. Well this looks a little hard but Dear Mother Trusting in Our Good Lord I hope we shall come out all right yet.”<sup>122</sup>

An 1871 letter written by Emma describes Julia’s life in less optimistic



*Julia Murdock Smith Middleton.*  
*Courtesy of Community of Christ Archives,*  
*Independence, Missouri.*

terms—loneliness, health problems, and homesickness—with comments that “poor Julia has a trying life.”<sup>123</sup> Interestingly, Julia and her birth father John were both experiencing marital problems: John’s fifth marriage failed, and they divorced in July of 1859.<sup>124</sup>

Joseph III wrote to his sister for awhile, but their correspondence may have dropped off when he and Julia disagreed about slavery. Julia was pro-slavery before the end of the Civil War and maintained racial prejudices afterward.<sup>125</sup> In 1872, she wrote from St. Louis about festivities on New Year’s Day: “Even the Colord Gentry were out in Full forse. It was really amusing to see them apeing all the dignity and Pomposity of White people.”<sup>126</sup>

Julia’s nostalgia for home was as strong at age forty as it had been at age twenty. In St. Louis, she missed her other family members, especially her mother Emma and her youngest brother David. In an 1870 letter to Emma, Julia refers to a photo of Emma with infant David taken in 1845: “Oh I wish I could see you to Night, but I can only see your picture with Dave’s little Bald Head resting on your arms as he used to look when I sang him to sleep so many years ago. What Changes has come since then. It makes me feel Quite Old to . . . think of Rocking that Young Man to sleep in my arms. I could not do It now.”<sup>127</sup> Two years later, Julia wrote in a similar vein from St. Louis: “I missed the Old familier Voices & the kind Familier Faces of the Long ago, when by going a short Distance I could see my Own & my Husbands, Familys. Well the memories of those days serve to keep Green our Feelings of Youth & will last as long as our Lives.”<sup>128</sup>

### Julia’s Final Days

John deserted Julia in 1877 and headed for New Mexico as a vagabond. She returned to Nauvoo with only her clothing and a featherbed.<sup>129</sup> By this time, she was suffering from painful sores on her back and breasts.<sup>130</sup> It was at this same time that Emma’s health was failing. Julia moved in with her (and Lewis) so that they could care for each other. Julia lived with Emma until Emma’s death in 1879. Julia and her Smith brothers were at Emma’s side when their mother quietly died. She is named in Emma’s obituary among the Smith children who mourned her passing, although the obituary took care to qualify that she was adopted, as all references to Julia did throughout her life.<sup>131</sup>

After Emma’s death, Julia lived with her brother Alexander for a time before going to live with the Moffitt family, who were neighbors and friends of the Middletons.<sup>132</sup> Like the Middletons, the Moffitts were an established, prosperous Catholic family. They lived in a large frame home on a hilltop

outside of Nauvoo surrounded by peaceful forests and meadows. Here, Julia made her final home, where she was cared for by James and Samantha Moffitt, who apparently had a habit of “taking in strays.”<sup>133</sup> However, Julia was not a stray neighbor, since they had been friends for a long time. In a letter written to Joseph III over twenty years earlier from St. Louis, Julia spoke highly of the Moffitt family: “You want to know how I like Mrs. [James] Moffitt by this time. I tell you I think he has done well in getting her, and she has got a paragon of a husband I tell you. For they don’t make any better men than James nowadays, do you think so? Sama[n]tha is a good girl. She is much pleasanter than I used to think she was.”<sup>134</sup>

During her time in St. Louis, she maintained correspondence with the family. Samantha Moffitt and Julia also became close friends. Samantha even named her fourth child Julia.<sup>135</sup>

Julia was living with the Moffitts when her brother, John Riggs Murdock, came to visit. He had named his oldest daughter Julia in 1852, probably after his mother, but his contacts with sister Julia show that he had not forgotten her.<sup>136</sup> According to Joseph III, John Riggs visited her at least once during her young adulthood. In 1880, while traveling from Salt Lake City to the East on business, John stopped in Nauvoo. His journal records the visit. “[Julia] had been very unfortunate in her second marriage. I found her at the home of a Mr. Moffet, whose wife took care of her with a sisterly kindness. Julia’s foster mother, Emma, had died, and she was left without a home and under the most distressing circumstances. She was suffering from a cancer in her right breast. This was caused by a severe blow that she had received. I remained with her about one month, but on leaving I left sufficient means to provide for her and to cover the expenses of her burial and of a tombstone. She died soon after my departure and was buried in the Catholic cemetery.”<sup>137</sup>

Julia died on 12 September 1880 and was laid to rest in the Moffitt family plot in St. Peter and Paul’s Cemetery.<sup>138</sup> She is buried immediately behind the joint grave of James and Samantha Moffitt, a position usually reserved for children and close relatives.

## A Final Word

This woman, who left no descendants, is claimed by members of both the Smith and Murdock families. Lachlan Mackay, a descendent of Frederick Granger Williams Smith and the Historic Sites Coordinator for the Community of Christ, refers to her as “Aunt Julia.” S. Reed Murdock, a descendant of John Murdock, has prepared biographical and literary studies on his “Aunt Julia” as well. Further, she seems to have more than one “patron

faith”—archivists and historians from both the Community of Christ and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have encouraged completion of research on Julia’s life.

Significantly, Julia Murdock Smith Dixon Middleton was baptized by proxy on 16 December 1884. Two days later, her endowment was performed for her. Both of these vicarious ordinances were performed in the St. George Temple. Then, on 19 December, she and the entire Murdock family were spiritually “adopted” into the Hyrum Smith family in that same temple, further uniting the two families in what is now a rather unorthodox manner but in a way that was standard practice before 1894. Gideon A. Murdock, son of John Murdock and his third wife Electa Allen, recorded the experience at the end of his father’s journal: “By request of John R[iggs] Murdock and my Self, Joseph F. Smith of the first Presidency of the Church and John his Brother Patriarch of the Church concented [*sic*] that Father and his relatives could be adapted [*sic*] into their Father’s family who was Hyrum Smith the Patriarch of the Church and Brother to the Prophet. Consequently John R. and myself went to the Temple at St. George in December 1884 and finished up the work that had not been done before. . . . The ordinance of adaption was attended to with Elder John L. Smith Standing Proxey for the Patriarch Hyrum Smith.”<sup>139</sup>

Sectarian issues never seemed to have been important to Julia herself, despite her relatives’ connections to the LDS, RLDS, or Catholic churches. In stark contrast to the writings of her prominent family members, her writings never debate religious subjects. Although at times the language she uses is highly religious, it is “nondenominational.” However, she expresses a general religiosity. Her letters often refer to God, His blessings, His divine will, and His mercy. In a letter to Emma, she pleads to be remembered in Emma’s prayers just as Emma and family were remembered in her own.<sup>140</sup> A letter to Joseph III invokes God’s blessings on him for his patient care of David Hyrum, their youngest brother who ended up in an asylum.<sup>141</sup> Yet another letter shows how important both God and family were to Julia: “I bid you adue for a time but may God in his mercy Grant It may not be forever. . . . Every night I breath[e] a prayer to him to Grant that we may all meet again in this World and he has promised that if we prayed in Sincerity of Hart we Should receive and in this promis I trust.”<sup>142</sup>

Julia’s character remains elusive—but not completely. In her letters, there are more than just glimpses of the dark-angel child, the adventurous young socialite, the sarcastic gossip, the devoted daughter, the bitter and insecure adoptee, the sick and world-weary woman, the loyal friend, and Christian believer. There are common themes in her life and writings—themes of relationships, grief and loss, and enjoyment in the natural world.

The following lines summarize both the bitter and the sweet in Julia's longings, taken from a poem she wrote to Emma in 1852:

So loath we part from all we love  
 From all the links that bind us  
 So turn our hearts as on we rave  
 To those we have left behind us.  
 And when in other times we meet  
 Some Isle or wood enchanting  
 Where all looks flowery wild and sweet  
 And not but love is wanting  
 We think how great had been our bliss  
 If heaven had but assigned us  
 To live and die in sanis [scenes] like this  
 With some we've left behind us. . . .  
 As travelers oft look back at Eve  
 When Southward darkly going  
 To gaze upon that light we leave  
 Still point behind them glowing  
 So when the close of pleasures day  
 To gloom hath near consign-d us  
 We turn to catch one fading ray  
 of joy that's left behind us.<sup>143</sup>

## Notes

1. Previous studies that deal indirectly with Julia but give helpful information about her life are Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (New York: Doubleday, 1984); Marjorie Newton, "Father of Joseph's Daughter: John Murdock," *Journal of Mormon History* 18, no. 2 (fall 1992): 177–93; and S. Reed Murdock, *John Murdock: His Life and Legacy* (Layton, Utah: Summerwood Publishers, 2000).

2. See John Murdock, "Synopsis of My History," typescript, 163, LDS Church Archives, Family and Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives.

3. See John Murdock, "A Brief Synopsis of the Life of John Murdock, Taken from an Abridged Record of his Journal, Written by Himself," typescript, 3, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; hereafter cited as Perry Special Collections.

4. *Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve*, vol. 2. (Cleveland: Women's Department of the Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1986), 101.

5. Murdock, "A Brief Synopsis of the Life of John Murdock," 3.

6. Murdock, "A Brief Synopsis of the Life of John Murdock," 3.

7. Cuyahoga County, Ohio Tax Records, 1828–1831 show that John Murdock owned two adjacent lots in Orange Township, totaling ninety-two acres and valued at \$259. On 23 October 1830, Murdock bought an additional hundred acres in a nearby tract for \$150 (valued the next year by the assessors at \$253).

8. Murdock, "A Brief Synopsis of the Life of John Murdock," 3.

9. See Dan Vogel, *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City:

Signature Books, 1988), 1–16.

10. Murdock, “A Brief Synopsis of the Life of John Murdock,” 3.

11. Murdock, “Synopsis of My History,” 163.

12. Among the member list of the early Disciples Church appear the names of Judge Orris Clapp, Julia’s father, and Benjamin Blish, Julia’s great-uncle, who performed her marriage. Julia’s mother, Phebe Blish Clapp, was an active member. In 1829, Julia’s brother Matthew Smith Clapp, at age twenty-one, was officially “born again” into the Disciple Church. He later became a Disciple preacher and married founder Alexander Campbell’s daughter. Four of Judge Orris’s grandsons later entered the Disciplist ministry. *History of Geauga and Lake Counties, Ohio* (Philadelphia: Williams Brothers, 1878), 221, 252. Another local history confirms that Judge Clapp’s family was “known widely as the cause of the [Campbellite] Reformation.” A. S. Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve* (Cincinnati: Chase and Hall Publishers, 1875), 243.

13. Richard L. McClellan, “Preparing the Way: Sidney Rigdon’s 1820s Ministry,” paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Mormon History Association, Lamoni, Iowa, May 1993, 4.

14. Murdock, “A Brief Synopsis of the Life of John Murdock,” 5.

15. Murdock, “Synopsis of My History,” 163.

16. Murdock, “A Brief Synopsis of the Life of John Murdock,” 6.

17. John Murdock, “Autobiography,” 147 (microfilm copy), LDS Church Archives.

18. John Murdock, “Journal of John Murdock,” 1 (microfilm copy), LDS Church Archives.

19. John Murdock, “Journal of John Murdock,” 1.

20. Murdock, “A Brief Synopsis of the Life of John Murdock,” 6.

21. Murdock, “A Brief Synopsis of the Life of John Murdock,” 6.

22. Murdock, “Autobiography,” 147. John did not record whether the loss of their child in 1829 was due to complications of pregnancy. Similar problems or a resultant weakness may have helped cause Julia’s death after delivering the twins in 1831.

23. Murdock, “Autobiography,” 148.

24. Murdock, “A Brief Synopsis of the Life of John Murdock,” 8.

25. Murdock, “Autobiography,” 149.

26. Murdock, “Autobiography,” 148.

27. Murdock, *John Murdock: His Life and His Legacy*, 32.

28. Joseph Smith III to E. L. Kelley, 7 August 1884, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri; hereafter cited as Community of Christ Archives.

29. John Murdock, “An Abridged Record of the Life of John Murdock, Taken from his Journal by Himself,” typescript, 3, LDS Family History Library, Kirtland, Ohio.

30. See for example, E. Cecil McGavin, *The Family of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1963), 127.

31. Murdock, “Autobiography,” 148–49.

32. Newton, “Father of Joseph’s Daughter,” 193.

33. This story is recorded in several places, including Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 41–42. The infant twin Joseph is sometimes referred to as “the first martyr of the church” because of the circumstances of his death.

34. Richard L. McClellan, “The Battle for Hiram,” Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Mormon History Association, Park City, Utah, May 1994, 12–13.

35. Murdock, “A Brief Synopsis of the Life of John Murdock,” 8.

36. Doctrine and Covenants, LDS 1981 edition, 99:6, 9.

37. Murdock, “Synopsis of My History,” 163.

38. Murdock, “Synopsis of My History,” 164; Newton, “Father of Joseph’s Daughter,”

180.

39. Murdock, "Autobiography," 141.
40. Murdock, "Autobiography," 141.
41. Murdock, "Autobiography," 141.
42. Murdock, "Autobiography," 141.
43. Joseph Smith III to E. L. Kelley, 8 August 1884, Community of Christ Archives.
44. Joseph Smith III, "The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith (1832–1914)," *The Saints' Herald* 82, no. 7 (12 February 1935): 208.
45. Julia Middleton to Frederick Smith, 4 April 1862, Community of Christ Archives.
46. Julia Dixon to Emma Bidamon, 25 March 1852, Community of Christ Archives.
47. Julia Middleton to Joseph Smith III, 5 January 1877, Community of Christ Archives.
48. Murdock, "Autobiography," 142.
49. Joseph Smith to Emma H. Smith, 13 October 1832. Community of Christ Archives, published in *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 253.
50. Emma Smith to Joseph Smith, 25 April 1837, LDS Church Archives, cited in Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 62.
51. Emma Smith to Joseph Smith, 3 May 1837, LDS Church Archives, cited in Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 64.
52. Joseph Smith Jr. to Emma H. Smith, 12 November 1838, 2, published in Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 368.
53. Hyrum L. and Helen Mae Andrus, *They Knew the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1974), 152.
54. Eliza R. Snow, *Eliza R. Snow: An Immortal* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 8.
55. George W. Givens, *In Old Nauvoo: Everyday Life in the City of Joseph* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 237–38.
56. Brian D. Jackson, "Preparing Kingdom-Bearers: Educating the Children of Nauvoo," *Mormon Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (2002): 62.
57. Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 132.
58. Brian D. Jackson, "Preparing Kingdom-Bearers," 62; Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 214–15.
59. Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 214–15.
60. Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 90, 100, 215.
61. Carma de Jong Anderson, "A Historical Overview of the Mormons and Their Clothing, 1840–1850" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1992), 114.
62. Anderson, "A Historical Overview of the Mormons and Their Clothing," 112.
63. The black and white photograph is located at the LDS Church Archives. A drawing of the original painting may be found in Anderson, "A Historical Overview of the Mormons and Their Clothing," 113.
64. Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 188.
65. Cited Murdock, *John Murdock: His Life and Legacy*, 271.
66. Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 214–15.
67. Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, ed., *Joseph Smith and the Restoration* (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1952), 84–85.
68. Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 212.
69. Smith, "The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith," 207. Joseph III cites "forty acres of a very good farm and a town lot" as her inheritance. Julia owned several pieces

of property in Nauvoo and Sonora Townships during the early 1850s. Hancock County, Illinois Land Records, 1850, Nauvoo Restoration Society Database, LDS Family History Library, Nauvoo, Illinois.

70. Joseph Smith III to Israel A. Smith, 24 January 1903, Community of Christ Archives.

71. Julia Middleton to Emma Bidamon, 8 September 1873, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California; hereafter cited as Huntington Library.

72. Murdock, "Autobiography," 142.

73. Murdock, "Autobiography," 142.

74. Smith, "The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith," 207.

75. Hancock County, Illinois, Census, 1850, Nauvoo Restoration Society Database, LDS Family History Library, Nauvoo, Illinois.

76. Julia Dixon to Emma Bidamon, 18 March 1853, Community of Christ Archives.

77. Julia Dixon to Emma Bidamon, 25 March 1852, Community of Christ Archives.

78. Land records show that Elisha Dixon (without Julia listed as co-grantee) bought a lot near the Mississippi riverbank in Nauvoo on 18 May 1850, on the southeast corner of Water Street and Hyde Street. Several lots that Julia inherited from the settlement of Joseph Smith Jr.'s estate were sold in 1851 under both Julia's and Elisha's names. Hancock County, Illinois Land Records.

79. Emma Bidamon to Lewis C. Bidamon, 7 January 1850, Community of Christ Archives.

80. Emma Bidamon to Lewis C. Bidamon, 7 January 1850, Community of Christ Archives.

81. Hancock County, Illinois Census, 1850, Nauvoo Restoration Society Database, LDS Family History Library, Nauvoo, Illinois.

82. Julia Dixon to Emma Bidamon, 25 March 1852, Community of Christ Archives.

83. Julia Dixon to Joseph Smith III, 25 March 1852, Community of Christ Archives.

84. Julia Dixon to Joseph Smith III, 25 March 1852, Community of Christ Archives.

85. Julia Dixon to Joseph Smith III, 25 March 1852, Community of Christ Archives.

86. Julia Dixon to Joseph Smith III, 25 March 1852, Community of Christ Archives.

87. Julia Dixon to Emma Bidamon, 18 March 1853, Community of Christ Archives.

88. Julia's letters give hints about Elisha's family—but nothing that can be traced. In 1853, she says the family all lived in Mechanicsville, New York, except for Elisha's sister Eliza, who had married a rich farmer with five children and was living near Albany. According to a New York gazetteer, in 1853, there were two villages called Mechanicsville, neither of an appreciable size. A third Mechanicsville, in Saratoga County, was incorporated formally in 1859 but apparently already existed as a neighboring hamlet to the town of Half Moon (also in Saratoga County). *Historical and Statistical Gazetteer of New York State* (Syracuse: R. P. Smith, 1860; reprint, Interlaken, New York: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1980), 589, 593 (page references are to reprint edition). Conceivably, the Dixons could have referred to that section of Half Moon as Mechanicsville before its formal incorporation. Several Dixons are listed in Saratoga County in the 1850 Federal Census. Only one Dixon is listed in Half Moon, and her name is Eliza. Ronald Vern Jackson and Gary Ronald Teeple, eds., *New York 1850 Census Index*, vol. 1 (Bountiful, Utah: Accelerated Indexing Systems, 1977), 556.

89. Smith, "The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith," 207.

90. Smith, "The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith," 207.

91. Joseph Smith III to Emma Knight, 4 May 1856, Community of Christ Archives.

92. Julia Middleton to Emma Bidamon, 12 January 1870, Huntington Library.

93. Julia Middleton to Joseph Smith III, 5 January 1877, Community of Christ

Archives.

94. Julia Dixon to Joseph Smith III, 30 April 1855, Community of Christ Archives.
95. Julia Dixon to Joseph Smith III, 10 July 1855, Community of Christ Archives.
96. Julia Dixon to Joseph Smith III, 30 April 1855, Community of Christ Archives.
97. Julia Dixon to Joseph Smith III, 30 April 1855, Community of Christ Archives.
98. Julia Dixon to Joseph Smith III, 10 July 1855, Community of Christ Archives.
99. Julia Dixon to Joseph Smith III, 10 July 1855, Community of Christ Archives.
100. Julia Dixon to Joseph Smith III, 10 July 1855, Community of Christ Archives.
101. Hancock County, Illinois Census, 1850. According to this source, John was born in Pennsylvania, the oldest child of Irish immigrants Stinson and Alice Sheridan Middleton.
102. *History of Hancock County, Illinois* (Carthage, Illinois: Board of Supervisors of Hancock County, 1968), 548.
103. Hancock County, Illinois Marriage Index, 1829–1857, 2:40. The ceremony's officiator was M. Waldenmeyer.
104. Murdock, "Autobiography," 142; Smith, "The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith," 207.
105. "The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith (1832–1914)," *The Saints' Herald* 82, no. 13 (26 March 1935): 401–2.
106. Smith, "The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith," 401.
107. Joseph Smith III to E. L. Kelley, 7 August 1884, Community of Christ Archives.
108. Joseph Smith III to E. L. Kelley, 7 August 1884, Community of Christ Archives.
109. Smith, "The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith," 208.
110. Smith, "The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith," 207–8, 401–2.
111. J. M. Tanner, *A Biographical Sketch of John Riggs Murdock* (Salt Lake City: *The Deseret News*, 1909), 169–70.
112. Tanner, *A Biographical Sketch of John Riggs Murdock*, 169–70.
113. Newton, "Father of Joseph's Daughter," 181.
114. Orrice and John Riggs were both members of Company B of the Mormon Battalion. John Riggs, although younger, married first. He married Almira Lott on 13 November 1849. Orrice married Margaret Ann Molen on 16 June 1850. They both married around the same time as their younger sister Julia. Susan Easton Black, ed., *Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1830–1848*, 50 vols. (Provo: Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), 32:33, 36:61–62; also Newton, "Father of Joseph's Daughter," 181.
115. Murdock, "Synopsis of My History," 152.
116. A typed version of this record in Murdock, "A Brief Synopsis," 8, reads "Mother in Heaven," but the holograph of the journal clearly reads, "Father in Heaven."
117. Murdock, "Autobiography," 142–43.
118. Murdock, "Autobiography," 149.
119. McGavin, 180; Joseph Smith III to E. L. Kelley, 7 August 1884, Community of Christ Archives.
120. Joseph Smith III to E. L. Kelley, 7 August 1884, Community of Christ Archives.
121. Smith, "The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith," 208.
122. Julia Middleton to Emma Bidamon, 12 January 1870, Huntington Library.
123. Emma Bidamon to Joseph Smith III, 5 December 1871, Community of Christ Archives.

124. Newton, "Father of Joseph's Daughter," 187.
125. Smith, "The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith," 207–8.
126. Julia Middleton to Emma Bidamon, 19 January 1872, Huntington Library. Julia may also be commenting on the affected mannerisms of some white people, but her racism is unfortunately evident.
127. Julia Middleton to Emma Bidamon, 12 January 1870, Huntington Library.
128. Julia Middleton to Emma Bidamon, 19 January 1872, Huntington, Library.
129. Smith, "The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith," 208.
130. Joseph Smith III to E. L. Kelley, 7 August 1884, Community of Christ Archives.
131. *The Saints' Herald*, 26 November 1935, 1520. Reprinted from *Nauvoo Independent*, 9 May 1879.
132. Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 306.
133. Genevieve Simmons, interview by the author, 23 May 1993.
134. Julia Dixon to Joseph Smith III, 30 April 1855, Community of Christ Archives. James Moffitt married Samantha A. Newton on 13 February 1855. They had been married only a few months when Julia wrote about them. *History of Hancock County*, 1299.
135. Julia Middleton to Emma Bidamon, 12 January 1870, Huntington Library. Julia was a common enough name that the child may not have been named specifically for Julia Murdock Smith, but the likelihood exists. Hancock County, Illinois Census, 1880, Nauvoo Restoration Society Database, LDS Family History Library, Nauvoo, Illinois; also Family Group Record of James J. and Samantha Moffitt.
136. Julia, daughter of John Riggs and Almira Lott Murdock, was born 23 December 1852. See Black, *Membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 32:33.
137. J. M. Tanner, *A Biographical Sketch of John Riggs Murdock*, 169–70.
138. Genevieve Simmons, "Nauvoo St. Peter and Paul Records, Catholic Church, 1852–1988," Nauvoo Restoration Society Database, LDS Family History Library, Nauvoo, Illinois.
139. Murdock, "Synopsis of My History," 183, 185, punctuation standardized. Included in the spiritual adoption are John and all his wives (including Julia Clapp Murdock) and all his children (including Joseph and Julia Murdock Smith). The LDS temple ordinance dates for Julia Clapp Murdock include the sealing to John Murdock, 3 November 1865, by Heber C. Kimball; "second anointing," 7 June 1867, by George A. Smith; "endowment," 5 July 1877, with Agnes Hendrix acting as proxy. See Murdock, "Synopsis of My History, 168–85.
140. Julia Dixon to Emma Bidamon, 25 March 1852, Community of Christ Archives.
141. Julia Middleton to Joseph Smith III, 5 January 1877, Community of Christ Archives.
142. Julia Dixon to Emma Bidamon, 25 March 1852, Community of Christ Archives.
143. Julia Dixon to Emma Bidamon, 25 March 1852, Community of Christ Archives.