

Preface

Lord, Roll on Thy Work: The World of Joseph Fielding

Joseph Fielding, one of the original seven LDS missionaries to England and my direct-line ancestor, kept a journal covering his four years as a missionary and into his life in Utah. In creating a context for his journal entries and letters, the length of the biography increased far beyond my initial expectations. I had also not anticipated that I would find so much material on his sisters Mary and Mercy Fielding through their letters and own writings, and as a result I chose to cover their lives in Canada, Kirtland and Missouri as I covered Joseph's in England during his mission.

I spent over four years researching and writing about this family, and even as I wrote, I continued to encounter new sources. Apostles and other LDS Church leaders interacted with the Fieldings, and it became essential to weave them into this biography.

I found it necessary to write about the rise of Methodism in England and North America. Joseph Fielding had been a class leader in Toronto, a responsibility of some standing in the Methodist Church. I worked hard to learn the origins of the study group to which he belonged, and the development of the Charleton settlement where Parley P. Pratt found so many converts, including John Taylor and his wife Leonora Cannon, the latter being the sister of my ancestor George Cannon.

I located a previously unknown (to me) journal kept by Leonora as she emigrated from England to Toronto. Once arriving in the United States, she traveled along the Erie Canal, most likely using the same route as Joseph and Mercy Rachel Fielding had in 1832, and then followed by Mary Fielding and other emigrants. In the spring of 2016, I found myself walking along the banks of the Erie Canal with my husband, our son and his family. It was almost a spiritual experience for me to be there.

I learned that members of the Toronto study group, including John Taylor and Joseph Fielding, rather than cease their search for truth, were willing to be reprimanded by the Methodist Church. Through family letters, it became evident that Joseph's older brother James, a minister of a large congregation in Preston, was intently following the actions of the Canadian study group and offering direction and guidance. James Fielding was also seeking apostles and spiritual gifts but ultimately not only rejected his brother's teachings of the Restored Gospel, but along with his brother-in-law Timothy Richards Matthews, persecuted the LDS Church and its missionaries.

Joseph Fielding served his mission in England at the same time his youngest sister Mercy's husband was a missionary in Canada. Although Joseph passed through Kirtland, he did not live there, but his sister Mary did, and on Christmas Eve of 1837 she married the recently widowed Hyrum Smith. In the spring of 1838, the two apostles who had accompanied the first missionary group to England returned home, leaving Joseph Fielding in charge of the British Mission. Through his eyes, we can see how the missionary work grew, all while he was learning through letters across the Atlantic of the severe trials in Missouri. His relief is palpable when in early

1840 apostles finally return to England, an event for which Joseph Fielding waited with great faith.

Upon his return to the United States, Joseph became a member of the Council of Fifty. He was involved with the extensive planning and preparations to remove the body of the Saints from Nauvoo to the Great Basin. Through his writings and family letters, we learn of the extreme suffering they endured as they crossed the plains, and of Mary Fielding's desperation when halfway through her trek, she realized she might not make it to the Valley.

As much as possible, I have used the voices of the Fielding siblings from their writings and letters. I was deeply touched to find letters by Sarah Maria Fielding Wright, the daughter of James Fielding. Sarah and her daughter Millicent exchanged letters with their Utah cousins into the twentieth century and provided a bounty of genealogical information, including a memoir of Rachel Ibbotson Fielding written by her daughter Ann, the sister of Joseph, Mary and Mercy.

For an unknown reason the Fielding family referred to their birthplace as Honidon. However, local records of the time, including census records, refer to this location as Honeydon, as it is known today. I have quietly corrected some spelling to reduce any confusion. I was surprised to find the exact location of John Fielding's farm in Graveley, although I had to intensely study Google Maps to find this. A lane still named "Fielding's Place" marks the spot.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Geneil Loader Harris, whose husband Blaine is a direct descendant of Mary Fielding Smith through her daughter Martha Ann Smith Harris. Geneil not only directed me to many valuable sources, including the desperate Chimney Rock letter written by Mary Fielding Smith as she crossed the plains in 1848, but she also proofread this lengthy work many times, making countless suggestions and editorial comments.

I also owe thanks to my cousin Annette Randall Haws, whose skill as a writer was invaluable as she proofread this. Her thoughtful gift of a book from the Isle of Man was a delight.

I must thank my husband Ben, who has been patient and tolerant during the years that this biography consumed my life. If you can picture a husband coming down the stairs into my workroom to bring me snacks and pick up my dishes, please put a happy face on that man. It was also nice to see him evolve into a husband who could load, start and empty the dishwasher without comment, even though he has his own projects.

Proofreading a work of this size has been daunting. Publishing online, however, allows me to easily correct mistakes. If a reader finds an error, I would appreciate an email: [juliemarkhamfamilyhistory at gmail.com](mailto:juliemarkhamfamilyhistory@gmail.com).

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