

## A TESTIMONY WRITTEN BY MARTHA TUTTLE GARDNER

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Two months after Joseph Smith organized what was then called the Church of Christ at a Fayette, New York farm, Martha Ann Gardner was born in Boston, the second child and first daughter of second-generation Bostonians, Edward and Catherine Geyer Tuttle.<sup>1</sup> In 1842, just after Martha's twelfth birthday, her parents joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, then headquartered in Nauvoo, Illinois.

Little is known of the Tuttle's conversion to Mormonism. Genealogical records do not reveal much about Martha's parents. They do show that Henry, Martha's older brother, was baptized in September, 1843, with Martha following in November.<sup>2</sup> Edward and Catherine Tuttle were presumably converted through the efforts of one or more of the many missionaries coming to the New England states in 1842. In any case, removal of their family from Boston to Nauvoo that year manifest the Tuttle's full conversion to Mormonism.

Peculiar to the Latter-day Saints whom Martha and her parents joined in Nauvoo was the practice of testimony-bearing. The Tuttle's had, no doubt, learned of the formal testimonies of eleven witnesses to the Book of Mormon plates printed in each copy of the Book of Mormon. In Nauvoo, Martha heard Joseph Smith and Brigham Young testify. Like hundreds, perhaps thousands, of early Latter-day Saints, Martha wrote her own testimony of these experiences for her posterity. Such documents, in sum, constitute their authors' convictions of the Restoration. A recently discovered copy of the following "testimony written by Martha A. Gardner," shares, from a prosaic perspective, what it meant to be an ordinary Latter-day Saint in the midst of the unfolding Restoration.

Martha meant no attempt at formal history. Written two years before she died at the age of ninety-five, this brief document only mentioned the high and low points along Martha's memory lane; and this, too, for the purpose of testifying through her history. From this perspective, the events and emotions Martha remembered well are informing. They tell us what she felt was most impor-

tant for her posterity to know about her and her Church. For instance, Martha wrote reverently of listening to Joseph Smith and as mournfully as she could of his martyrdom. She wrote faithfully of the critical moment in Mormon history when, according to Martha, "truly the mantle of Joseph had fallen upon Brigham Young." Martha speaks then of the *Prophet* Brigham Young as naturally as she had the *Prophet* Joseph. Martha wrote worshipfully of receiving her endowment in the Nauvoo Temple. She wrote scornfully of the persecution that pushed the Saints from Nauvoo, and her pen mixed emotions when she recalled that the same persecution caused her to bear her first child, a son, trailside in what is now Laramie County, Wyoming. Martha would have us know that these events were the most important of her life, the ones she "distinctly" remembered, written as she would have her posterity remember them.

Martha's intentions evidently came to fruition. A copy of her "testimony" in the handwriting of Opal Jackman Harper, a great-granddaughter of Martha Tuttle Gardner, was found in 1993 in a chest that belonged to Harper. The spelling, grammar, and corrections occurring in that copy have been preserved here.

### TESTIMONY WRITTEN BY MARTHA A GARDNER

I came to Nauvoo in June 1842 with my parents, Edward and Catherine N. Tuttle. Through the summer of that year I became acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum, and I attended to hear him preach on the Sabbath day at the Grove and listen to his voice which was so inspiring. Yet there are some things that transpired just prior to his martyrdom, which left a lasting impression on my mind.

I distinctly remember the Grand Parade of the Nauvoo Legion and Masonic Fraternity together. All were in uniform with the Prophet Joseph at the head on his favorite black horse. Emma his wife, and Joe Duncan

rode beside him.<sup>3</sup> This occurred but a short time before his death. It was truly a grand and beautiful sight, one that I shall never forget.

I was also present at the time he preached his last public sermon. Standing He stood on the roof of a shed or low building with a large congregation gathered around to listen. This was also a very impressive occasion.<sup>4</sup>

When the Prophet Joseph and his brother were taken to Carthage it was a time of great anxiety for the Saints. Consequently no one retired to rest as they knew not what to expect when morning dawned. The sorrow and darkness that seemed to overhang the whole place when news of the martyrdom reached the city can well be imagined. When the bodies were brought into the city thousands of the Saints were gathered on the main street to witness the sad arrival of our martyred Prophet and Patriarch. The bodies were taken to the Mansion House, where they lay in state and were viewed by many of the devoted followers of these great men.

During this crisis many of the Apostles were abroad on missions. I well remember the Sunday morning the sorrowing Saints were gathered together in the little Grove where they were accustomed to meet. Sidney Rigdon presented his claim as successor to the Prophet Joseph making quite an impression upon the people. But Brigham Young, Pres. of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, had just arrived in Nauvoo from his mission in time to attend the afternoon meeting. In a voice not unlike that of the Prophet Joseph, [Brigham] told the people that although Joseph was dead, Joseph had left behind the keys of the Kingdom and had conferred the same power and authority that he himself possessed upon the Twelve Apostles and the church would not be left without a leader and a guide. Truly the mantle of Joseph had fallen upon Brigham and he spake with power even to the convincing of the Saints, assuring them they had nothing to worry about as all would be well if they would hearken to the word of God and The council of his servants and keep His Commandments.<sup>5</sup>

Then the Prophet Brigham Young had the Nauvoo Temple finished with a strong guard kept over them as the enemy was continually trying to bother them. It was finally finished some endowments were given there. I received that sacred ordinance there in 1845.<sup>6</sup>

In 1846 the exodus from Nauvoo began. I was camped on the bank of the Mississippi River when the

mob came all painted black, and searched the wagons, took our guns and insulted the women as we waited to be ferried across the River. Finally we got across and started on our journey and arrived at Winter Quarters where we camped for the winter.

It was here that I became acquainted with Walter E. Gardner. We were married April 28, 1847.<sup>7</sup> It was here also in August 1847 that my Father was killed.<sup>8</sup> In 1848 we started on our perilous journey across the plains with Pres. B. Young as our leader.<sup>9</sup>

My son Ira was born in a place called Shoe Bend about a month before we arrived in Salt Lake City, which we reached in September.<sup>10</sup> There we found many Saints but few houses as they were built in a fort where we lived till 1851. Then we moved to Payson where we lived during the Indian War. the Indians stole our horses and did a great many other<sup>11</sup> [here some pages are missing]

My son Edward was born Mar. 1, 1851 was the first child born in Payson

[The following note was made by the copyist, Martha's granddaughter, Opal Jackman Harper]  
Mrs. Martha A. Gardner was 93 at the time she wrote this testimony. She died at the age of 95.<sup>12</sup> She had 10 children, 88 grandchildren, 114 great-grandchildren, 2 great-great-grandchildren.

#### NOTES

1. According to the Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register, Martha was born on June 8, 1830.

2. This information is taken from a Family Group Sheet completed by Martha Tuttle Gardner.

3. I believe that Joe Duncan was the name of one of the horses being ridden, presumably by Emma Smith.

4. Joseph delivered this speech from a frame building near the Mansion House in Nauvoo on June 18, 1844, nine days before his murder. William Clayton remembered the spirit of this speech in his diary. Joseph said, Clayton wrote, to prepare to act defensively against the gathering mobs. "He concluded by invoking the Great God to bless the people." As quoted in Lyndon W. Cook and Andrew F. Ehat, *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 384. Also see the *Documentary History of the Church*, 6:498-500.

5. This “transfiguration,” which occurred on August 8, 1844, is one of the most well attested spiritual manifestations in Mormon history. Professor Milton V. Backman, Jr.’s collection of Writings of Early Latter-day Saints includes over a dozen primary accounts from men and women who, like Martha, recorded the details of what they heard, saw, and felt as Brigham Young shouldered the prophetic mantle of Joseph Smith. See the heading, “Transfiguration,” in Professor Backman’s database collection now available from Infobases.

6. According to the Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register, Martha actually received her endowment on February 6, 1846, even as the first wagons were pulling out of Nauvoo.

7. Though they did not meet until 1847 at Winter Quarters, Walter Elias Gardner, like Martha Tuttle, was born and raised in Massachusetts. Born in 1828, Walter was two years older than his bride-to-be. Unfortunately, Martha tells us very little about Walter. Genealogical records show that Walter and Martha had ten children. Walter died in Salem, Utah in 1886. Martha outlived him by fifty-five years until her death in 1921.

8. Here too Martha tells us very little. The cause of Edward Tuttle’s death remains unknown, but choice of the word, “killed,” suggests possible foul play or accidental death.

9. This was President Young’s second and final trip over the Mormon Trail to Utah. He had led the original group of Mormon pioneers into the Salt Lake Valley in July, 1847. He returned to Winter Quarters that same year where he was sustained as President of the Church. Martha followed President Young into the Salt Lake Valley in the summer of 1848.

10. Ira Walter Gardner was born on July 9, 1848, at what genealogical records call Horse Creek. Martha remembered the place as Shoe Bend. Professor LaMar C. Berrett, expert on the Mormon Trail, did not know exactly where Shoe Bend was. This is one of very few or perhaps the only reference to such a place. Further research may reveal the exact location of Shoe Bend.

11. This became known as the “Walker War,” after the anglicized name of Ute chief, Wakara. Unfortunately, the remainder of what Martha wrote on this subject is missing. For more on the Walker War, see Howard A. Christy, “The Walker War: Defense and Conciliation as Strategy,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 47 (Fall 1979): 395-420.

12. This is mistaken information. Martha lived to be 91 years old.