

True Grit and Tall Tales: How Mary Ettie Coray (1827–1867) Got Her Man.

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ABSTRACT

The historical accuracy of Nelson Winch Green's *Fifteen Years among the Mormons* (1858), purporting to be the experiences of Mary Ettie V. (Coray) Smith, has been investigated from a variety of sources. Many parts of the story dealing directly with Mary Ettie's family have been confirmed, though names, dates, and other important facts have been purposely misstated. The more sensational claims cannot be verified. They are most likely an artful combination of real events that happened to other people, rumors, and fiction, concocted by Mary Ettie in order to control her own destiny. After the book was published, Mary Ettie and her husband Reuben P. Smith settled in California.

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, I collaborated with distant cousins on a history of the family of John Wingate McCoy (1791–1877) and Elizabeth Smith (1808–1883) of Brown County, Illinois. My cousins told me about a book on early Mormon life written by a Smith family member, whom they thought might be related to Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet. The book was *Fifteen Years among the Mormons, being the narrative of Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith* (1858), claiming to be the story of Mary Ettie V. (Coray) Smith, as written down by Nelson Winch Green.¹ One of our cousins, Dr. Ralph E. McCoy of Southern Illinois University, had the book in his possession. It was inscribed to the McCoy family by Hugh Darius Smith, a brother of Reuben P. Smith, who appears in the book as Mary Ettie's husband. It was clear that there was no direct connection between our Smith family and the Mormon Prophet, but it was also clear that the book must not be entirely fictional, because of the way it had come into our family. At that time, however, we were unable to learn anything further. Reuben P. Smith was the son of John B. Smith, a "lost" brother of our ancestor Elizabeth Smith. All that was known of John B. Smith was that he had "gone west."

Very recently, the book appeared on the Internet in digital form, as part of the University of Michigan Digital Library "Making of America" project.² We realized that the resources of the Internet might be used to locate other sources bearing on the reliability of the story, and perhaps reveal the missing branch of our Smith family. This goal has been realized. Reuben P. Smith has been found. It is now possible to answer some of the questions about Mary Ettie Coray and her sensational account of Mormon life.

ANALYSIS OF FIFTEEN YEARS AMONG THE MORMONS

From the beginning, *Fifteen Years among the Mormons* raised issues of credibility. Some of its allegations about Mormon leaders and religious practices would have been considered by many Americans of that time to be immoral, or criminal, or both. The press seemed eager to find someone whose credentials would prove the case against the Mormons. But *Fifteen Years among the Mormons* was certainly not the last word on this subject, and far

more serious charges would soon appear. Labeled by Mormons as “lies” or a “hopeless mixture of fact and fiction,” the book is still quoted occasionally by anti-Mormons.

One of the earliest notices of the publication of *Fifteen Years among the Mormons* appeared in *The New Englander and Yale Review*,³ which remarked, “if only a tenth part of her story is true, language cannot express the degradation of the people in Utah.” A letter to Nelson Green from the noted educator Norman Allison Calkins, who received a prepublication copy of the manuscript, asks for further evidence of the reliability of Mrs. Smith.⁴ Unfortunately, Green’s answer has not come to light. After the book became widely known, a number of other opinions appeared. The most detailed is in Sir Richard Burton’s *City of the Saints*, where its faults are enumerated, but in a way that suggests Burton may not even have read the book.⁵ Mary Ettie’s story was quoted liberally by other authors, although Fanny Stenhouse, explaining why her own exposé, *Tell it All*, should be preferred, wrote of it:⁶

Two books appeared, each claiming to be written by genuine Mormon women. They were, however, originally published fifteen or twenty years ago; and although they are still on sale, they are, as a matter of course, silent concerning recent events. The first of these two volumes was really written by a gentleman who was himself neither a Mormon nor had any intimate acquaintance with the system and doctrines of that people. He obtained from the lady—the supposed author—all the information which she was capable of imparting, and then worked it up in a startling and sensational manner, mingling facts and fiction in such a way that the Mormons have always declared that the whole volume was a scandalous libel.

One remarkable assertion that seems not to have been noticed is found in J. H. Beadle’s account of the confessions of William Hickman (*Brigham’s Avenging Angel*, 1872). Beadle (in his *Appendix C*) introduces Mary Ettie’s version of the murder of Jesse T. Hartley, in order to corroborate Hickman’s version of the event. Mary Ettie says she heard the story from Hartley’s widow, whom she encountered while on her way out of Utah. Hickman’s account and Mary Ettie’s are very similar, but Hickman’s contains additional details, thus seeming to prove that Hickman’s account is authentic.⁷ In this context, Beadle writes that “three-quarters” of Mary Ettie’s statements have been confirmed from “testimony lately developed.” “Lately” may well refer to Beadle’s *Life in Utah*, which appeared in 1870: Beadle seems to be saying that he verified most of what Mary Ettie wrote while preparing his own history.⁸

For my purposes, the truth of the allegations against the Mormon leaders was not a significant concern. Rather, I wanted to know whether the story of Mary Ettie and Reuben Smith was factual, and if so, what had become of Reuben’s branch of the family. But if the book were to be mined for clues, I first had to understand its construction. The difficulty of the problem will be evident from a short synopsis. Some points in the synopsis will later be shown to be incorrect statements about verifiable facts, but the synopsis reflects what the book actually says.

Synopsis: Mary Ettie V. Coray⁹ was born in Luzerne Co., Pennsylvania in 1829. Her parents moved to Pike Co., Illinois in the late 1830’s, where her father died in 1841. Her family met the Mormons and moved to Nauvoo, Illinois about 1843, where Mary Ettie was soon married off to Wallace Henderson. In 1846, the family joined the exodus of the Mormons from Nauvoo, spending several years in Iowa and Missouri. Mary Ettie had a son who died in infancy. She lost her second child by a miscarriage. Mary Ettie and Wallace were sent to St. Joseph, Missouri to run a boarding house for itinerant Mormons, said to be involved in counterfeiting, cattle rustling, etc. She met Reuben P. Smith, not a Mormon, when he was a guest at their boarding house. Wallace Henderson took additional wives, which so distressed

Mary Ettie that she finally left him. She reached Salt Lake City in September, 1849. About 1851, she encountered Reuben again, and they were eventually married. They hoped to leave Utah. However, Mary Ettie had knowledge of robberies and murders committed by some of her Mormon neighbors, apparently on authority of Brigham Young. It was clear that Mary Ettie would not be allowed to leave Salt Lake City. When Reuben went to California to sell a herd of cattle, he arranged with a friend to have Mary Ettie meet him secretly on the way out of the city, but she was discovered and detained by agents of Brigham Young. She attempted to escape several times, but was always discovered and detained. In 1855, some unfinished business relating to her father's estate in Pennsylvania came to her attention, and the prospect of an inheritance that could be donated to the church was sufficient for Brigham Young finally to allow her to leave, in the company of Mormon relatives. However, when she reached her uncle in Steuben Co., New York, she was introduced to Nelson Winch Green, and dictated her story. The first edition ends at this point. A year later, Reuben and Mary Ettie finally managed to locate one another. They were reunited at Old Forge, Luzerne Co., Pennsylvania in August, 1858. Their reunion, as well as a Reuben P. Smith's account of what happened to him after he left Utah, was added as a separate chapter in the second edition.

The problems posed by the text are numerous. Among the most basic difficulties is to understand the several viewpoints or frames of reference that it contains. The "editor," Nelson Winch Green, attempts to separate himself from Mary Ettie's story, by relegating his comments to footnotes. But his presence must be kept in mind. *In the present discussion, phrases such as, "Mary Ettie writes," should be understood to mean, "Nelson Green writes in Mary Ettie's voice."* Also, suspicion might legitimately fall on several long passages of a theological or political nature that in no way advance the plot,¹⁰ but which might be considered editorial insertions.¹¹

First, Mary Ettie recites apparent facts, first-hand observations about daily life with her family, neighbors, and acquaintances. Many of these statements are verifiable, and a great number have been confirmed. At this level, the narrative appears very reliable, allowing for the possibility of dates remembered incorrectly or misinterpreted by the printer. Second, observed facts are interpreted. Motives, feelings, and consequences are inferred. For the most part, these are not subject to verification, except where the accounts of the people involved have come down to us. It is likely that some of Mary Ettie's interpretations of other people's thoughts can also be confirmed. Her psychological characterizations of many people she knew are not without interest, even when they are not verifiable. Third, many of these interpretations claim to reflect Mormon gossip of the time, and are presented as an apparently reliable record of "public knowledge." The voice of Mormon public opinion is never far from the narrative, functioning like the chorus in a Greek drama. Finally, there are statements about clandestine events in which Mary Ettie claims to have been a participant or observer. These statements are of course much more difficult to prove. The most striking example of this situation is the murder of Wallace Alonzo Clark Bowman, an event for which Mary Ettie's account may be the only detailed source. The murder is strategically positioned as the centerpiece of the narrative, and clearly with purpose. While the events recounted throughout the narrative, both the mundane and the sensational, are strikingly similar to many other accounts of the period, they may have been embroidered, borrowed, or invented.¹²

Now, Mary Ettie's version of Mormon public opinion can be further characterized as representing mainly women, and in particular, women of humble origins who are not married to or closely related to the authorities of the church. In effect, this was her social circle. Not every member of this implied "chorus" was necessarily a Mormon. Numerous statements seem to presume this rather egalitarian point of reference, bordering on "reverse snobbism."

Probably the most notable is the passage referring to Eliza R. Snow's dramatic role in the Endowment ceremony at the Temple in Nauvoo, where she appears as a seductive Eve in the Garden of Eden (p. 45).¹³ The criticism quoted by Mary Ettie seems to be that it was immodest and indecorous for any woman to portray a seductress with evident conviction, as if to say, "Just who does she think she is, carrying on like that?" (Eliza Snow's role as a poetess is also well known. Perhaps her intellectual talents led to the same sort of criticism captured in Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*: "I am Minerva, the village poetess, / Hooted at, jeered at by the Yahoos of the street...") In Mary Ettie's circle, anyone perceived to be strutting about without having been born to the privilege was suspect. Noble people *might* walk among us, but those whose humble origins were known must not pretend to be anything but common.

The use of public opinion also helps buttress her accusations in another way. Under the theory that "where there's smoke, there's fire," the more plentiful and diverse the rumors that she can cite, the more likely it is that the reader will come to believe that there is some substance behind them. And if the reader dismisses the more extreme rumors, that only makes her version of events seem more plausible. Mary Ettie, or perhaps her editor, had a keen appreciation of the process by which public opinion is formed and manipulated.

Mary Ettie does not seem to have kept a personal journal, and she is recounting events that occurred when she was very young. Moreover, the account was written down by Nelson Green, and then interpreted by the printer. The present location of the manuscript, or indeed of any of Green's papers, is not known. The text as published is reasonably free from misspellings, but it does suffer from errors (whether accidental or purposeful) in names and dates. There are so few exact dates in the text, in fact, that chronology becomes a significant problem. Notes prepared by Leonard J. Arrington, late LDS Church Historian—a small file on Mary Ettie is in his collected papers, now housed at Utah State University Special Collections and Archives, Logan, Utah—identify several discrepancies of dates, to which we have added more. The most obvious is Mary Ettie's birth date. She says she was born January 31, 1829 (pp. 18 and 158-159), but other sources show January 31, 1827, as recorded in the Endowment record at the Nauvoo Temple (1846) as well as a Patriarchal Blessing (1843) and in her brother Howard Coray's "autobiography" (1883). The discrepant dates that we have found it necessary to revise are given in **Table 1**, which attempts to establish a chronology of the main events of the narrative. **Table 1** includes references to a small selection of the events that can be dated independently.

While it is certainly true that the 1829 date makes Mary Ettie's unwanted first marriage more poignant, there are other possible explanations. If the dates and ages she gave the editor were not entirely consistent, he might have attempted to reconcile them and so arrived at a consistent, but incorrect chronology. Or, she might simply have exercised her prerogative to lie about her age during her courtship with Reuben, and never found a graceful way out of that fiction. Editorial decisions about dates were probably also influenced by the effect that Mary Ettie's tender years would have on the reader during the first chapters.

Another possible reason why she would use the earlier date of birth relates to the age of discretion in the common law; that is, at what age may a girl select her own guardian? At what age may she marry without parental consent? In Ante-Bellum Illinois, the relevant age was 14. Her father Silas Coray died January 22, 1841, and his widow and brother-in-law Stephen Abbott were appointed administrators of his estate on February 16, 1841. On October 4, 1841, guardians were appointed for the minor heirs, Uriah Coray (born October

31, 1830) and Elizabeth Coray (born February 16, 1834). No other children were mentioned, implying that Mary Ettie had already reached the age of discretion, and therefore, that she was born in 1827, not 1829.¹⁴

Then, when she married “Wallace” Henderson, she says (p. 27) that she was just one day short of age 14, and thus under the age of consent. If this were true, the marriage would still be considered valid in law (a point that would probably not have been known to most readers), but she makes several mentions of having been married while still a child and without parental consent. Orson Pratt later opined (p. 131) that her marriage would not be valid under the laws of the United States, but was nevertheless valid according to the laws of the LDS Church—thus providing Mary Ettie with another grievance about the incompatibility of Mormon practices with civil law, provided the dates were re-arranged so that she could claim to be married before reaching the age of 14.

It will not take the reader very long to discover that Mary Ettie’s account is skillfully written, if not deviously clever. Also, her literary license is stretched to the fullest possible extent for a variety of purposes. A brief discussion of this problem will clarify the dangers of using *Fifteen Years among the Mormons* as a primary source.

It should come as no surprise that Mary Ettie has concealed or altered the identity of real people. This familiar literary device protects reputations, deflects possible legal action for defamation of character, etc. Mary Ettie, however, kills off her husband “Wallace” Henderson not once, but twice, perhaps to gain double satisfaction. Moreover, that man was actually known to the world as Samuel Henderson, Jr. Mary Ettie manages to avoid giving the name of his father, thus concealing the identity of the Henderson family. In Chapter XI, she finally leaves “Wallace” Henderson because he has had an affair—as well as a child—with an Indian squaw in St. Joseph, Missouri. Mary Ettie travels to Kaneshville, Iowa, to stay with her father-in-law. At that point, we read, “Wallace died, so we heard, of the cholera, which was then raging...” (p. 132). In the next chapter, nevertheless, a startled Mary Ettie sees Wallace striding up the path to his father’s house in Kaneshville with his two new “spiritual” wives in tow (p. 140). The artful use of language—relying here on an ambiguous construction—successfully conveys Mary Ettie’s belief that Wallace has died, without revealing the next twist of the plot, but also without actually misstating the truth, and the unwelcome re-appearance of Wallace has the desired effect on the reader. In a later chapter, Mary Ettie has arrived in Salt Lake City and soon chances to meet Wallace. She tells us that he is headed for Southern California, or perhaps South America (thus giving the impression of considerable uncertainty), and that she later read of his death in the newspaper (p. 170). In effect, she has written him out of the story; his death was not announced in the *Deseret News* at that time, and Samuel Henderson, Jr. did not die until 1904 in Frontier Co., Wyoming, after fathering many children with his other plural wives.¹⁵ His wives’ names, incidentally, are also disguised in the text: Hellen Cutler becomes Ellen Cutter, and Harriet Hawkins’ surname is not given directly.

Once this device is understood, the reader may be more alert. The widely quoted chapter about the “robbery and probable murder” of Dr. Roberts may be one place where it is used to advantage. The Dr. Roberts in question, implied to be unmarried and not a Mormon (p. 212), is induced by Mary Ettie’s charms and other devices into an ambush, and disappears from view. Mary Ettie expresses her belief at that point that the man has been robbed and surely must have been murdered. The reader is meant to share Mary Ettie’s dread that she has become an accessory to murder, or at least to believe the worst about the conspirators. But

what the reader does not know, as found in a statement from descendants of Mary Ettie's brother and sisters and recorded in Dr. Arrington's notes (attributed to Jennie Noel Weeks), is that a son of Dr. Daniel Roberts later married a niece of Mary Ettie, Mary Knowlton Coray (though not until July 24, 1868, long after the book was written), and that the Coray family visited Dr. Roberts many times "after he was supposed to be dead." In addition, descendants have attached a plural wife to Dr. Roberts, and placed his second marriage, as well as baptisms of some of his children by both wives, at Nauvoo.¹⁶ The episode recounted by Mary Ettie appears to be fiction, perhaps based on rumors about the activities of the "Danites," but certainly not related to the actual Dr. Roberts.

Another possible exercise of the literary license would be to graft real events that occurred to different people onto a single character. When this is done, that character is no longer real, but becomes a proxy that can be used to *illustrate* the causes, dynamics, or consequences of a particular social milieu. Thus, we recognize works of Harriet Beecher Stowe or Charles Dickens as valid and effective social commentary, even though we understand that they are fictional accounts.¹⁷ When one considers how extensive Mary Ettie's adventures seem to have been, one might imagine that she has borrowed some of them from other people. Writers of this period were well aware that a book could persuade as well as entertain. The line between truth and fiction does not seem to have been regarded as an absolute in every instance. However, Mary Ettie would be straying into dangerous territory if she took this route, for the efficacy of her narrative depends on its veracity—the premise of a faithful narrative is first set out in the title of the book. This combination of literary methods is the work's principal structural flaw. Turning the public against polygamy and some of the other social innovations of the Mormons could be done in the manner of a novel, but pinning charges of murder and conspiracy on Brigham Young would require attention to the rules of evidence. At this point, it is impossible to be sure to what extent Mary Ettie was *illustrating* rather than *recounting* actual events.

It must be said that Mary Ettie, or her editor, displays a wonderful gift for storytelling. Many episodes are related with exceptional wit, such as the hilarious bedtime scene at Capt. Brown's household (pp. 217-220). The little vignette on the behavior of owls is charming (p. 60). There are many vivid descriptions of places, persons, feelings, and events. There are many passages that deal with the more grueling aspects of pioneer life, particularly the everyday challenges of travel, such as the terrifying ordeals that were so often suffered while fording rivers. While these sections are similar to the accounts that have come down to us from diaries and letters of that era, they are unusually detailed. The dialogue, especially when Mary Ettie is a part of the conversation, is often very sharply drawn. For the most part, the characters have the distinct personalities of real people. Even the authorities of the Church come across sounding like the quotations and writings generally attributed to them. Her relationship with "Wallace" Henderson is recounted with considerable tenderness, apart from their conflicts over polygamy and infidelity. At the other extreme is her hair-raising account of spending a night alone with the body of her dead child, in an isolated cabin surrounded by howling wolves.¹⁸

A number of themes are carried through the entire narrative. The most obvious of these is polygamy. Mary Ettie first encounters this institution as a child at Nauvoo. She has seen young women married off to old men as "spiritual wives," and hears talk suggesting that she is destined to the same fate. She accepts marriage to Wallace Henderson to prevent an even more unequal match (Chapter I). Throughout her time with the Mormons, she feels

threatened by the prospect of having to share a husband with another woman. She knows she could not suffer such a relationship, but objects also on the grounds that even if a woman were capable of submitting to that arrangement, she would still have no say in the matter. In effect, the husband's role was to choose as many wives as he can support, and the wife's to submit to his choices. Her narrative alludes to a well-documented example of this situation. During the episode of the robbery and "probable murder" of Dr. Roberts, Mary Ettie introduces several new characters: Hiram Clawson, his first wife Ellen Spencer, and the two women he is courting and will later marry, Margaret Judd and Alice Young, the very young daughter of Brigham Young. Later that year, after the Dr. Roberts incident, Hiram married Margaret.¹⁹ Some years later, after Mary Ettie had left Utah, Hiram married Alice Young.²⁰ Shortly after that marriage, Ellen wrote to her friend Ellen Pratt McGary, in San Bernardino, California, about the pain she and Margaret felt when Hiram brought home his new wife.²¹ Mary Ettie's opinion of polygamy was certainly shared by other women in Utah. Mary Ettie and others found polygamy incompatible with the notion of *mutual* fidelity. Sir Richard Burton, however, made light of the women's complaints.²² He seemed to think they were over-reacting.

Mary Ettie says she was at first willing to believe that polygamy or "spiritual wifeism" was divinely ordained, as she had been told, but that Brigham Young would surely not condone a woman being forced to participate in it against her will (Chapter IX). But when she finally was able to talk to Brigham Young in person, she found his answer disappointing (pp. 169-170). She began to view the abuses she felt, and the unhappiness of the women she knew, as an inevitable consequence of polygamy (p. 213).

If the book consisted simply of Mary Ettie's journey into and then out of Utah, the result would have been a fine indictment of polygamy, but would not have made a convincing case against Brigham Young. Apparently with this specific goal in mind, a series of chapters is inserted at the center of the book, containing the darkest deeds: the "robbery and probable murder of Dr. Roberts," the murder of Wallace Bowman, and the farcical seduction of Mr. Mack. It is these chapters that are most likely to be quoted today, and whose authenticity is most problematic. The difficulty posed by the account of Dr. Roberts has already been mentioned.

Bowman's encounter with Brigham Young is a fact, though Mary Ettie's version seems to present Bowman's side of the argument. In particular, some other accounts explain that the argument was about whether the Indian slave trade should be allowed in Utah Territory.²³ Mary Ettie notes the presence of Indian slaves in the Bowman party, but does not explain the nature of the slave trade, which, to oversimplify the matter, involved trading firearms for children from local Indian tribes, then selling the children in New Mexico. At least one modern account says—without citing a source—that Bowman was eventually tried and acquitted on charges of threatening Young, but we were unable to locate any other reference claiming such detailed knowledge of the unfortunate sequel. In Mary Ettie's account, John Wesley Norton and James Ferguson,²⁴ disguised as Indians, murder the mountaineer. Writing many years later, Daniel W. Jones, a scout and interpreter who was acquainted with Bowman, explains why he believes Bowman was murdered by Indians, and discounts the rumors that Mormons did it, on the grounds that he would have known about it if it had happened!²⁵ After the murder, Mary Ettie tells us with evident relish, the body was retrieved and then turned over to Drs. Andrews and Williams, "for dissection." The story is framed as a *secret* pendant to the *public* account of the Bowman affair.

We are indebted to Sondra Jones for her detailed exploration of the conflicts between the Mormons and the Mexican traders.²⁶ In particular, Jones has pointed out that earlier historians managed to combine two distinct episodes, that of Don Pedro León Luján in 1851, and the Bowman affair of 1853, into a single incident, resulting in considerable confusion. She also published the document that finally identifies the Wallace Alonzo Clark Bowman reported by Mary Ettie as Dr. C. A. W. Bowman, a native of New York and resident of Abiquiú, New Mexico. Now, the document was a copy of Bowman's license to trade with the Indians in Utah. The fact that it was copied suggests that it was the subject of an official inquiry of some sort in Utah. It is also known that Brigham Young ordered that the "*Mexican*" traders be detained, though not technically imprisoned. No mention was made about what should be done with Bowman, who would not have been considered an ethnic Mexican. However, no record of formal court proceedings seems to have survived. That leaves Mary Ettie as possibly the only source for Bowman's detention, which she places at Salt Lake City, conveniently in the 15th Ward, where she lived. Now, in order for Mary Ettie's account to carry any weight with its intended audience, the facts of the Bowman affair that she says are public knowledge, must be at least consistent with public knowledge. We have come to wonder if she did not get at least that much right, that Bowman himself *was* informally detained ("*Don't try to leave town...*") at least briefly, and an attempt made to find some kind of charges to pin on him, resulting in a copy being made of his trading license from New Mexico. It was not the case that someone simply looked at the license and told Bowman it was useless within Utah Territory, as had already been established by the trial of Don Pedro León in 1851, and then sent him on his way. Someone took the time to make an official copy of the license, which ended up among Brigham Young's papers in the LDS Church History Archives.²⁷ But the significant part of Mary Ettie's story, the conspiracy to murder Bowman on his way out of town, as well as her characterization of the man himself, remains completely unsubstantiated.

In the last of the "dark deeds" chapters, William Mac or Mack, a Gentile merchant, was subjected to Mary Ettie's charms at the behest of the Prophet in order to extract money from him by blackmail. While her reluctant efforts were at first comically disrupted by the presence of the blackmailers' dogs in Thomas Judd's henhouse, an episode recounted with a delicious sense of anticipation, the desired result was eventually achieved. Many real people are identified in these chapters, and while they seem to have lived where Mary Ettie says they lived when the events are supposed to have happened—most of them were her neighbors in the 15th Ward of Salt Lake City—, we have found no other contemporary references to this conspiracy that could shed any light on whether it should be regarded as fact or just a very amusing fiction. However, an alert reader might notice that it is precisely at the points in the story when Reuben P. Smith happens to be absent, that these remarkable events occur.

Perhaps the oddest aspect of the book is its ending in the first edition. Mary Ettie has achieved her goal of leaving the Mormons. She is safely among her relatives in Steuben Co., New York, and has dictated her story. But what has happened to her husband? The book as first published leaves their love story incomplete. If, as some early authors suggested, the book was so fanciful and contrived, it is hard to believe that the editor could not come up with a better ending. But, as we will see, Reuben P. Smith did reappear, the lovers were reunited, and so an additional chapter, containing events that seem too peculiar to have been invented, was added to complete the story in a second edition.

THE LIFE OF REUBEN PEACE SMITH

In the chapter added in the second edition, Reuben P. Smith gives a few brief facts of his life. He was born in Adams County,²⁸ Ohio, the son of John B. Smith and Elizabeth Chapman. The family later settled at Stringtown, Iowa. There were several Stringtowns in Iowa in pioneer days, all of them long since abandoned. The Stringtown in question was in Davis County.²⁹ Starting with the records of Davis County, Iowa, more details are now coming to light. (The dates given below have been revised in light of the analysis contained in **Table 1**. Reuben's middle name is given in voter registration lists and census records. His maternal grandmother was Rebecca Peace. His birth date, July 22, 1823, appears on his death certificate and is confirmed by records of the Chapman family.³⁰)

Reuben's parents were married May 25, 1815 in Adams County, Ohio. John B. Smith (born May 19, 1792, died September, 1849) was the son of Reuben Smith (born June 8, 1767, died September 25, 1840) and Sarah Beach Clark (born May 20, 1773, died January 17, 1834), who settled about 1803 in Adams County, where they raised a large family.³¹ They had come from somewhere in Pennsylvania, and before that, probably from New York and Connecticut. John B. Smith was the eldest son, and the 1850 U.S. Census mortality schedule for Davis County, Iowa, says he was born in New York.

About 1830, the John B. Smith family moved to Rush County, Indiana, probably with Elizabeth's brother Joseph Peace Chapman, who became a celebrated stump orator and newspaperman, sometimes known as "Crowing Joe Chapman," and mentioned in Reuben P. Smith's account (p. 396-397). The family remained in Rush County for a number of years before moving on to Davis County, Iowa. While in Rush County, three of the children were married: Rebecca Smith married Hugh Abernathy, Henry C. Smith married Sarah Ann Junkins, and Reuben P. Smith married Mary Abernathy, apparently a sister of Hugh. When the Smith family moved to Iowa, some of their Abernathy in-laws accompanied them.

In 1847, Reuben P. Smith purchased fifty acres of land from his parents in Prairie Township, Davis County, Iowa.³² Two years later, in May, 1849, Reuben and his wife Mary sold the same land back to his father,³³ at a loss. In September of that year, John B. Smith died³⁴ of "the flux."³⁵ He left no will, and his estate was administered by his eldest son, Henry C. Smith. Elizabeth died September 30, 1853. When the final reports were filed with the Probate Court, Reuben Smith had not received his share of the small estate, because he had left the county and had not appointed anyone to act for him.

Reuben P. Smith's next mention in history is in *Fifteen Years among the Mormons*, when he inquires for a room at the boarding house run by Wallace Henderson and his wife Mary Ettie at St. Joseph, Missouri, apparently in the summer of 1849 (pp. 118-119). Wallace had been sent there to provide lodging for itinerant Mormons and, Mary Ettie tells us, to undertake shady business involving counterfeit money. Reuben is on his way to California, "mainly for his health." Mary Ettie takes notice of him as the best-looking man she has seen in a very long time who was not also a Mormon. Not only that, he is polite and considerate, and helps Mary Ettie through a difficult trip from St. Joseph to her father-in-law's house at Kaneshville, Iowa (pp. 123-129). Reuben remained in Kaneshville for a time, then returned to St. Joseph to make preparations to depart for California with a wagon train in March, 1850 (p. 139).

Meanwhile, Reuben's first wife was apparently still alive in Davis County, Iowa. Although at least four members of the Smith family died during the summer of 1849,³⁶ Mary

Smith and her daughter Rebecca Smith appear in the 1850 census, living with James Abernathy, presumed to be Reuben's father-in-law. A census taken in 1856 does not mention Mary, but Rebecca was now living with the Henry C. Smith family, James Abernathy having died in 1853. By 1860, Rebecca was living with the Hugh Abernathy family, and is listed on the census as Rebecca Abernathy. In 1867, Rebecca *Smith* was married to Daniel Winstead, a laborer on a neighboring farm, at the residence of Hugh Abernathy. Nothing more is known of Reuben P. Smith's first family. Perhaps Mary considered herself a "California widow," one of many women left behind when their men came down with "Gold Fever." She may have sought a divorce, or she may simply have died of cholera, a nearly constant menace in those times.

Reuben did not strike it rich in California, but he seems not to have been a failure, either. He next turns up in Utah, farming in Pleasant Grove Ward, Utah County, about forty miles south of Great Salt Lake City (pp. 234-235). He is listed there in the census taken in 1851. Mary Ettie was overjoyed to when he appeared from a cloud of dust, a dashing figure on horseback. He became enough of a Mormon to be accepted in his ward, and he is included on the 1852 "census" derived from bishops' reports, as a resident of Salt Lake City's 15th Ward.³⁷

Reuben and Mary Ettie were married by Elder Jared Porter in the 15th Ward of Salt Lake City, on May 3, 1852. The marriage was reported in the *Deseret News*, accompanied by a short verse that seems, in hindsight, to warn of events to come, if the newlyweds are not left in peace.³⁸ Mary Ettie's account of the marriage differs in some details and does not give an exact date (Chapter XXII).

Reuben had found employment with an expedition under the Indian Agent, Major Jacob H. Holeman. The expedition left about two weeks after the marriage. At this point, Mary Ettie's account says that Reuben was taking cattle to sell in California, but Reuben's statement in the second edition (p. 397) notes that Mary Ettie had confused the objectives of his two trips out of Salt Lake City (this passage also implies that Reuben vouched for the accuracy of the other parts of the story of which he had first-hand knowledge). The departure of the expedition was noted in the *Deseret News*.³⁹ Major Holeman's expedition traversed Nevada and continued into California. His party returned in the fall of 1852. Reuben was given charge of some horses and mules belonging to the expedition, while Major Holeman continued east over the mountains. Winter set in before the Major could return, and the *Deseret News* reported that he would have to spend the winter at Weber.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Reuben kept the government livestock at Pleasant Grove, where he had farmed the previous year.

About March, 1853, two of the mules disappeared. The narrative says that Reuben advertised for them in the *Deseret News*, which turns out to be true.⁴¹ About this time, Reuben and Mary Ettie were planning to leave Utah. Mary Ettie was not allowed to leave openly, she reports (p.239), but Reuben had arranged with William Mack, the Gentile merchant (later to be the victim of blackmail, as described above), to accompany her to a rendezvous point on the way out of the valley. Reuben was driving a herd of cattle to sell in California. Mary Ettie reports she was intercepted on instructions from Brigham Young on her way to the rendezvous, and so Reuben had to leave without her.

Only a few days after Reuben left for California with his cattle, Major Holeman returned to Salt Lake City and soon discovered that some of his mules were missing. He filed an affidavit in the District Court accusing Reuben of converting government property—three

mules worth \$300—to his personal use.⁴² Reuben describes this incident in his statement, and expresses his belief that the missing livestock had been appropriated by Mormons on their way to San Bernardino, California (p. 398).

Once in California, Reuben sold his cattle and began a series of typical California adventures (p. 404). He worked for about eight months for Solomon Mizer⁴³ at Cosumnes, Sacramento County. He tried mining and ranching. His brother William J. Smith arrived from Iowa, and they bought a farm on Cache Creek (Yolo County), but had to give up that farm due to settlement of a Mexican land grant. They bought another farm in Suisun Valley, Solano County. During this period, Reuben corresponded with Mary Ettie, trying to figure out how to get her out of Utah. He reports that Mormons, some complete strangers to him, kept appearing at his door with news of Mary Ettie, saying that she had abandoned him, or even that she had remarried to someone named Thompson. He sent her \$30 by way of Riley Judd,⁴⁴ a Mormon he had known in Utah, but that man gave only \$20 to Mary Ettie, saying that the rest had been stolen. She wrote back to Reuben that it would be best if he refrained from sending any more money, because it would probably not reach her (p. 405).

By the time Mary Ettie was allowed to leave Utah, May 26, 1856 (p. 351), to attend to some unfinished business relating to her father's estate in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania,⁴⁵ Reuben was nearly convinced that Mary Ettie was beyond reach. He had received correspondence purporting to be from her, which he later concluded had been forged. However, his brother Henry C. Smith, still in Davis County, Iowa, made inquiries, observing that Mary Ettie “was either the best or the most questionable of women.” He was puzzled, but ultimately concluded that they were the victims of some unexplained conspiracy, and advised Reuben that, “if he had such a wife, no earthly power should keep him from her” (p. 407). Reuben was still considering how to reach Mary Ettie when he received a letter from her, very definitely authentic, with “the odor of other days.” He wavered no longer. He set out two days later, July 19, 1858, taking a steamship from San Francisco to the Isthmus of Panama, then traveling by rail across the Isthmus to the port of Aspinwall, where he caught the “Star of the West” to New York, arriving there on August 13, 1858.⁴⁶ In the last twilight of the next day, he reached Old Forge, near Scranton, Pennsylvania, where he found Mary Ettie, her sister Mrs. Phebe Knapp, and their dying mother Mrs. Mary Coray. After Mrs. Coray died, and following the funeral preached by Elder William K. Mott of the Hyde Park Baptist Church, Reuben and Mary Ettie traveled to Steuben County, New York, where Reuben was introduced to Mary Ettie's relatives. They visited Nelson Green, who took down Reuben's statement, destined to become the last chapter of a new edition of the book. And that was the last the public knew of the adventures of Reuben and Mary Ettie.

But Reuben and Mary Ettie did finally reach California.⁴⁷ In 1863, Reuben enlisted at Sacramento as a Private in the First Regiment, California Cavalry, for three years of service in the Civil War. Years later, he applied for a pension.⁴⁸ He had been promoted to Sergeant, and saw action in New Mexico and Arizona, during which he was wounded.

The pension file reveals that Reuben's wife Mary Ettie died of consumption in San Francisco in January, 1867. Mary Ettie's sister Lizzie Ogden⁴⁹ had been close to them, and it was Lizzie who passed on the information that Mary Ettie had converted to Catholicism. Mary Ettie was buried, the family said, at the Odd Fellows Cemetery in San Francisco, but by the time the pension examiner requested evidence of her death, the earthquake and fire of 1906 had destroyed most of the records. Later, the entire cemetery was dug up and relocated to Colma. The surviving records have so far not revealed any further details.

Shortly after the death of Mary Ettie, Reuben rented a room at 416 Clementina Street, San Francisco, with Augusta Henrietta Synon, a widow, and her sister Henrietta Augusta Bartel. The sisters were working as dressmakers. Augusta's husband had been a miner. He had left for British Columbia in the Cariboo Gold Rush, but had died there about 1865. The sisters became friends with Mary Ettie's sister Lizzie and her family. It is not known how long Reuben stayed with the sisters. He was working as a teamster at that time.

However, he must have left at least for a couple years, because he turns up next in Hayward, Alameda County, where he married Mary Bowers on January 10, 1872. In 1873, he obtained a homestead patent for 160 acres just west of Pleasanton, Alameda County, which he sold soon after. Under the provisions of the Homestead Act as revised in 1872, he could subtract his three years of military service from the five-year residency requirement.

This transaction was perhaps not as straightforward as it seems. The land entry case file at the National Archives shows that Reuben applied at the San Francisco Land Office in 1871. Two years later, he presented documents to show he had fulfilled the requirements of the Homestead Act, as amended. He presented his Civil War discharge papers and the testimony of two witnesses. One witness, Dennis Murphy, must have been regarded with some skepticism. At the bottom of one of the affidavits, the preprinted statement that the affiants "are persons of respectability" has been altered to read, "appears to be a person of respectability." The other witness, John Walpert, was a prominent citizen of Hayward, California. The witnesses said that Reuben had resided on the land since January, 1871 with his "wife and children" (acquired, as we have seen, in 1872), and had made improvements, including building a house and a barn, fencing, digging a well, and cultivating ten acres. A few months later, the patent was issued (June 20, 1873), and almost immediately it was recorded "at the request of Charles McLaughlin," a San Francisco tycoon and railroad baron (September 12, 1873). The property was sold September 10, 1873 to Charles McLaughlin for \$1,000 "in gold coins." Thus, Reuben was able to convert his military service into cash. While there is no doubt that these events happened, we are left wondering if they might have been staged. Was Mary Bowers simply an accessory in a scheme to get cheap land? Was the whole episode a ploy by Charles McLaughlin to acquire even more land? Reuben's marriage to Mary Bowers was never mentioned again, nor was his first marriage to Mary Abernathy.

By 1874, however, Mary was gone, and Reuben sought out Augusta Synon. She insisted on marriage, and they were married on March 27, 1874, in North San Juan, Nevada County, by a "wandering Methodist minister." They moved to San Francisco, accompanied by William Bartel Synon, Augusta's son by her first husband. Augusta and Reuben had a son Walter Otto Smith about a year later. They moved around frequently, but many of their friends and acquaintances later testified that Reuben had often talked of his "first" wife Marietta or "Nettie." Some remembered seeing her photograph. Augusta was still wearing the wedding ring that Reuben had first given Nettie. They remembered that Nettie and Reuben had been married at "an Endowment house" in Salt Lake City, and that Nettie had once taught school for Brigham Young's children.

Reuben applied for a pension in 1887, claiming disability from a gunshot wound in his left leg, the result of an encounter with Indians in Arizona during the Civil War, about August 12, 1865. He also had suffered from night blindness and kidney disease, he said. Henry Brink of Boonville, Missouri, testified that he was present when Reuben was shot, and had helped him clean and dress the wound. A detachment of Company H, commanded by Lt. James J. Billings, was in pursuit of a band of Indians near the White Mountains in Arizona.

This is the area east of Fort Apache, on the New Mexico border. They pursued this band to an Indian settlement adjacent to a cornfield, when the Indians turned and attacked. In the engagement that followed, Reuben had shot and killed three or four Indians, but suffered a wound in his left leg. Private Henry Brink testified that he helped Reuben remove bits of clothing from the wound. He remembered that it was the left leg, because for some time afterward, he assisted his Sergeant in mounting his horse, a process that puts all the body's weight on the left foot. The physical examination in 1887 showed a poorly-healed fracture of his left leg, leaving it $\frac{3}{4}$ " shorter than his right leg. By that date, Reuben was also developing cataracts.⁵⁰

The family moved to Berkeley in 1891, so that Walter could attend the University of California. Reuben's health deteriorated to the point where he was accepted into the Yountville Veterans' Home in Napa County, but he was discharged from there in 1895 because of "conversion of home property." He was accepted into the Veterans' Hospital at Los Angeles. He returned home to Berkeley as often as his health would allow, and sent his pension money to Augusta, but after she was seriously injured in front of her home by a streetcar in 1906, he came home to be with her. Frail and very poor, he finally died at 4 PM on February 7, 1907, in their tiny house on Oxford Street in Berkeley.

His widow spent the next two years establishing her claim to a widow's pension, resulting in a pension file of almost 160 pages. Some of the dates reported by Reuben in his own pension application did not agree with dates provided by Augusta.⁵¹ None of the marriages reported by Augusta or her husband could be documented from official records, nor could the deaths of either of their previous spouses. Mr. Synon had died in the wilds of British Columbia, and the San Francisco earthquake had destroyed any record of Mary Ettie's death. Apart from their son, there were no other living relatives of Reuben or Mary Ettie that she knew of. Mr. Synon's mining partner and his family were long dead. But the testimony of Augusta's relatives and friends was sufficient, and she received a pension eventually reaching \$20 per month. Augusta died in 1918, and within a few years, no one remembered Reuben P. Smith.

HOW RELIABLE IS *FIFTEEN YEARS AMONG THE MORMONS*?

Clearly, *Fifteen Years among the Mormons* is not a primary source. It is not even a reliable secondary source. The specific dates that it includes are most often wrong, and at least some of the names are reported incorrectly. In spite of this, a great many of the statements about Mary Ettie's family, friends, and neighbors can be verified from other sources. Mary Ettie's stories take place in a real world that she knew very well. When she relates a story that involves places she had never seen, or persons she had never met, with the possible exceptions of "Dr. Roberts" and Wallace Bowman, she makes that fact clear by attributing the story to someone else. Even Wallace Bowman was a real person.

The level of credibility even for statements supported by external facts is reduced by the unavoidable presence of her editor, Nelson Green. However, the awkward ending in the first edition, as well as the confusing account of how the lovers eventually came to be reunited, argue that Green really did try to keep himself out of the story. He may have made the ending of the first edition sound a bit more romantic, but he refrained in this instance from venturing any further into the realm of melodrama, no matter how tempting it must have been. He did not simply improvise a commercially satisfying ending.

In other episodes, Mary Ettie's account is inaccurate, but close enough to lead us to more reliable sources. Even though her dates are often wrong, it has still been possible to establish a workable chronology. In some cases, the reconciled chronology actually led to the discovery of the corroborating evidence, rather than the other way around.

As if under cross-examination by Nelson Green, a practicing lawyer, Mary Ettie gives the names of other living witnesses who could support her statements. The introduction invites these persons to come forward if they wish to dispute the story, but no statements from these witnesses have come to light. A number of these witnesses can be identified on census records and in other sources. It is not yet known whether any of them left journals or correspondence that might include additional details of the incidents recounted by Mary Ettie.

Long passages of the text deal with the thoughts and feelings of Mary Ettie and the people she met. Conversations are necessarily reconstructions rather than exact quotes. We can suppose that all of these passages are colored by her experiences. They are probably not well suited for resolving questions of historical fact, but they may tell us something about the concerns of the age. Certainly they tell us of the magnificent vistas of the West, reached through unimaginable suffering, and of a great longing for peace and security.

In spite of this, there are certain passages that challenge the reader's sense of plausibility. When the plot hangs on the success of retrieving keys from Nathaniel Jones' pantaloons while he is sleeping (p. 187; Mary Ettie is not even in her own house when she accomplishes this), or when a kit of greasepaints from Reuben's expedition with Major Holeman just happens to be on hand (p. 274), we are probably entering the world of fantasy. But the fantasy is made to fit between the known facts, and so cannot be disproved. This is what the early critics had in mind when they complained that Mary Ettie had mingled fact and fiction.

Reuben's account of his life in California, and his confirmation of those parts of the narrative that he shared with Mary Ettie, are probably genuine. But as almost all of the sensational events happened to occur while Reuben was not present, his corroboration does not really bolster Mary Ettie's accusations against Brigham Young. Even though a modern reader might think it preposterous, Reuben seems to have had implicit faith in Mary Ettie's integrity.

Why did she do it? A statement attributed to family historian Jennie Noel Weeks says that Mary Ettie never wanted to go west, and resented being forced to go with the family when they left Nauvoo.⁵² That may be partly true, though Mary Ettie was certainly not opposed to living in the West. In fact, after her disappointments in Iowa and Missouri, she was eager to undertake the trek to Salt Lake City, where she hoped Brigham Young would grant redress of her grievances (p. 117). But a more fundamental reason for her distress is suggested by the verse that appeared with her wedding announcement in the *Deseret News*. These lines are a challenge both to polygamy and to the Mormon authorities. The bond between husband and wife was sacred, ordained by nature. Whether by introducing a second wife, or by preventing her from leaving Utah with a non-Mormon husband, any attempt to sever it would be contrary to nature, and thus might lead to dire consequences. We may suppose that Mary Ettie availed herself of her earliest opportunity for revenge when she met Nelson Green.⁵³

Another pervasive grievance was the inescapable surveillance of the church authorities. People such as Jesse T. Hartley were publicly accused of heresy or disloyalty

based on information that could only have been obtained through espionage. Mail seemed to have been read by unknown eyes or even forged by unseen hands. No matter how quietly Reuben changed his place of residence in California, a Mormon claiming to be a friend of his would always find him. Mary Ettie clearly felt her privacy invaded, her right to think and act on her own thoughts denied—and her dialogue shows us how it rankled. The U.S. Indian Agent Garland Hurt seems to have experienced the same chagrin, for he elected to risk escape from Utah through the wilderness, rather than ask Brigham Young for written permission.⁵⁴

However, perhaps the best explanation is that Mary Ettie was manipulating Reuben's affections. She had married him, in part, to avoid polygamy. But, after that threat was removed, if she did not share his taste for further adventures in California, might she have used their shared distrust of the Mormons to her advantage, inventing ever more compelling excuses why she could not join him there? By so doing, she could remain with her mother, enjoying the entertainments that the Mormons were so fond of organizing, until an opportunity arose for her to return to her relatives in the East. But when Mary Ettie finally returned to New York, the world had changed. She watched her mother die of tuberculosis. By that time, California must have sounded better to her, and in the end she was ready to be carried off to San Francisco, by then a fabulous boomtown. At each turn, however, she was compelled to stand by the stories she had told in support of all of her previous exploits. She had to maintain her credibility. This view of Mary Ettie the storyteller has the effect of making the story the product of the woman and the woman the product of the story. The purpose she gave to the world, to reveal the truth about the Mormons, served as plausible cover for more personal motives, to maintain the trust of her husband and power over her own destiny.

Regardless of why and how the book came to be written, the fact remains that *Fifteen Years among the Mormons* uses all the techniques of 19th Century narrative fiction, which have the effect of making Mary Ettie's story as engrossing as any Western novel, but at the same time obscuring whatever facts lay at its foundation. We can regard it as illustrating a period of history, but not as proof of historical facts.

Toward the end of the narrative, Mary Ettie and her mother pass through Nauvoo. From the east bank of the Mississippi, where their trek began, Mary Ettie gazes back on her fifteen years with the Mormons, lingering on it as if it were a fading sunset, with more resignation than bitterness. It was a great and noble enterprise, diminished for her by the institution of polygamy and an autocratic administration she found intolerable. Of her large family, only a few were left, the rest used up by the hardships of the West.⁵⁵ But neither she nor Reuben P. Smith would concede defeat. There was nothing to do but continue the adventure. Whatever the dangers and hardships, the West had become a magnetic, invigorating, and ultimately inescapable force in their lives.

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Table 1				
Reconciliation of Events in <i>Fifteen Years among the Mormons</i> with Dates from Contemporary Sources				
Actual Date	Source	Reported Date	Page	Event
January 31, 1827	1, 2	January 31, 1829	18, 158-159	Birth of Mary Ettie V. Coray, Luzerne County, PA. The Patriarchal Blessing (1843) and the Endowment record at the Nauvoo Temple (1846) show 1827. The 1827 date is also found in the "autobiography" of her brother Howard Coray (1883).
January 22, 1841	2,3	January, 1841	18	Death of Silas Coray, Pike County, IL
September 28, 1842	4	Not mentioned		"Maryette Coray" admitted to membership in Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, earliest indication that the family had relocated there.
September 24, 1843	5	September 24, 1840	158-159	Patriarchal Blessing by Hiram Smith. Date as published appears to be a typographical error, since it is not consistent with other information in the narrative. Other members of the family were baptised or blessed in 1840, see the "autobiography" of Howard Coray (1883).
December 21, 1843	6	Not mentioned		Signature of "Mary Ett Coray" appears on petition to Congress from more than 3,000 inhabitants of Nauvoo regarding injustices perpetrated by citizens of Missouri.
January 30, 1844	7	January 30, 1843	27	Marriage of "Wallace" Henderson (Samuel Henderson, Jr.) and Mary Ettie Coray.
January 20, 1846	1	(January, 1846)	41-53	Mary Ettie and her husband participated in Endowment ceremony at the Nauvoo Temple.
October 20, 1846	8	(Summer, 1846)	85	Marriage of Solomon Litton and Mary Jane Porter, daughter of the Samuel Porter family with whom Mary Ettie and her husband stayed in Mercer Co., MO. Mary Ettie calls him "Saul," and identifies the bride incorrectly.
About September 30, 1850	9	Middle of September, 1849	144	Joseph Young company arrives at Salt Lake City. Surviving roster at LDS Church History Archives is incomplete. The list published in <i>Heart Throbs of the West</i> , vol. 11, includes additional names, including an unexplained Henrietta Young that might be Mary Ettie "Nettie" Henderson, who was traveling with the Young family.
1851-1852	10	September, 1851-April, 1852	234-235	Reuben P. Smith farms at Pleasant Grove, Utah County, Utah.
March 8, 1852	11	Not given		Brigham Young "counselled" Mary Ettie at his office. One such session mentioned in the book (pp. 180-183) ended with Mary Ettie being sealed for eternity to Nathaniel V. Jones, butcher and Bishop of the 15th Ward.

May 3, 1852	12	Not given	235	Marriage of Reuben P. Smith and Mary Ettie Coray. See account on pp. 195 and 235, giving the impression that Bishop Nathaniel V. Jones had already left on his mission to Hindoostan when the marriage took place. However, he was not appointed to this mission until August 28-29, 1853, according to the <i>Deseret News</i> . The account says that Reuben had to leave for California only a few days after the wedding, and on p. 397 he indicates the purpose of this trip was the expedition of Major Holeman, the Indian Agent.
Middle of May, 1852	12	Not given	397	Major Holeman's expedition leaves Salt Lake City for Nevada and California.
August 21, 1852	13	After robbery and "probable murder" of Dr. Roberts, which she dates to 1851 (p. xii)		Marriage of Hiram B. Clawson and Margaret Judd. At the time of the Dr. Roberts episode, Hiram, already married to Ellen Spencer and having just extracted a promise that he might someday marry Brigham Young's daughter Alice, was courting Margaret. He and Margaret were meeting secretly at Mary Ettie's mother's house, because Margaret's mother was opposed to their marriage. The Judd family lived close to the Coray family.
January, 1853	12	Not given	398	Major Holeman has returned to Salt Lake City and continued on toward Ft. Bridger. He is delayed there by snow and will not return until spring.
March, 1853	11	Not given	398	Reuben P. Smith advertises for stolen mules.
		April 17, 1853	400, 241-244	Reuben leaves for California, Mary Ettie's attempt to join him is foiled.
April 23, 1853	14	Not given	399	Major Holeman charges Reuben with stealing mules belonging to the U.S. Government.
April, 1853	15	Not given	252-254	Brigham Young meets Wallace Bowman near Provo, Utah, and they have a disagreement.
		(About two months after Bowman's arrival at Salt Lake City)	xi, 275	Murder of Wallace Bowman.
April, 1854	16	Not given	308-311	Murder of Jesse T. Hartley (who nonetheless appears in the 1856 Utah Territorial Census, Greenriver County!)
1854		Not given	245	Mary Ettie appointed secretary of the Female Indian Relief Society. The society was organized by Brigham Young in February, 1854. Whether Mary Ettie ever served as secretary has not been determined.
November 9, 1852	17	News received by Mary Coray, summer of 1855	344	Mary Coray received news at Salt Lake City regarding unfinished business in the estate of her late husband in Luzerne Co., Pennsylvania, and it was for this reason that she and Mary Ettie were authorized to travel out of Utah.

		May 26, 1856	351	Mary Ettie's party leaves Salt Lake City, the day after they obtained a letter of recommendation from Brigham Young, to guarantee safe passage out of Utah.
		(About eighteen months after Hartley's murder, or about June, 1856)	308-311	Mary Ettie, on her way out of Utah, meets widow of Jesse T. Hartley. Whether the conversation she reports actually took place is not known.
		End of October, 1856	386	Mary Ettie's party leaves Pike Co., Illinois on the last leg of their journey to Steuben Co., New York.
		About March 1, 1857	ix	Mary Ettie meets Nelson Winch Green.
		October, 1857	388	End of the narrative in the first edition.
August 13, 1858	18	(Before August 14, 1858)	408	Reuben Smith arrives in New York on the steamship "Star of the West" from Aspinwall, Panama.
		Sundown, August 14, 1858	393	Reuben Smith arrives at Old Forge, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, and is reunited with his wife.

Reported Date and *Page* columns refer to the second and all later editions of *Fifteen Years among the Mormons*. Sources used to establish actual dates are indicated by number, as follows:

- (1) Nauvoo Temple Endowment records.
- (2) "autobiography" of Howard Coray (1883).
- (3) *Probate Record* 3:240, February 16, 1841, Pike County, Illinois.
- (4) Maurine C. Ward, "This institution is a good one: the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, 17 March 1840 to 16 March 1844", *Mormon Historical Studies* 3 (2002): 87-204.
- (5) Patriarchal Blessings, cited in manuscript notes of Leonard J. Arrington, Utah State University Library, Logan, Utah.
- (6) *Memorial of the constituted authorities of the city of Nauvoo*, December 21, 1843, Records of the Judiciary Committee, U.S. Senate, 28th Congress, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
- (7) Cook, 1994.
- (8) Mercer Co., Missouri, marriage returns.
- (9) Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, *Heart-Throbs of the West*, vol. 11, p. 455.
- (10) 1850 and 1852 "census" schedules for Utah Territory (1850 census was taken in 1851, and the 1852 lists are compiled from LDS Bishops' reports).
- (11) LDS Church History Department, *Journal History of the Church*.
- (12) *Deseret News*, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- (13) Janet M. E. Smoak, *Register of the papers of Hiram B. Clawson (1826-1912)*.
- (14) Salt Lake County, District Court, Case Files, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- (15) Sondra Jones (2000).
- (16) Beadle (1872).
- (17) Luzerne Co., Pennsylvania, Orphan's Court, dockets (bond issued for James S. Bedford, executor, Charles W. Potter and Samuel Runyan, sureties, no further action noted, November 9, 1852).
- (18) Immigration passenger lists, Port of New York, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

NOTES

¹ There have been several editions, with different titles and publishers. It is most convenient to use the original title for purposes of this discussion, but all page number references used here refer to the 1870 edition. With the exception of a note to the reader, the first 388 pages are identical in all editions, as are pages 389-408 in all editions that contain the “continuation of the narrative” introduced in the edition of 1859. The known 19th Century editions are:

1858. *Fifteen years among the Mormons*. New York: C. Scribner, 388 pp.

1859 and 1860. *Fifteen years among the Mormons*. New York: H. Dayton, Indianapolis: Asher, 408 pp.

1870. *Mormonism, its rise, progress, and present condition*. Hartford: Belknap and Bliss, 472 pp. (includes additional chapter on recent political events etc.; also, the original note to the reader on pp. iii-iv has been replaced with one dated Amherst, MA, March, 1870; this is the edition most often seen today).

1872. *Mormonism, its rise, progress, and present condition*. Hartford: Belknap and Bliss, 488 pp. (the final chapter has been enlarged).

1876. *Fifteen years' residence with the Mormons*. Chicago: Phoenix, 472 pp. (like the 1870 edition).

1898. *Fifteen years among the Mormons*. New York: C. Scribner, 388 pp. (re-issue of the original version).

² The 1870 edition, under the title *Mormonism, its rise, progress, and present condition*, can be viewed either as digital images or as transcribed text on the Internet at <http://www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=moa;idno=AJK2869>.

³ *The New Englander and Yale Review*, 16:703-704, August, 1858. The anonymous reviewer also observed that publication by Charles Scribner's Sons argued in favor of the credibility of the work.

⁴ Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. The letter is dated January 8, 1858.

⁵ Sir Richard F. Burton, *The city of the Saints, and across the Rocky mountains to California* (New York: Harper, 1862), 207-208. Burton lists eleven specific falsehoods: (1) “Human sacrifices and abominable rites” in the Endowment ceremony, but Mary Ettie’s account reports only rumors of these, though she does imply that the Garden of Eden tableau raised some eyebrows at the time. (2) The last words of Joseph Smith, as she says she *heard* them from John Taylor, are presented differently from the official LDS version, which was *written* by Taylor. (3) The “murder” in Nathaniel V. Jones’ house, which Burton says “never happened,” although Mary Ettie says she found the body at his butcher shop, not at the house, and specifies that the murder must have occurred somewhere else, as the body had clearly been moved. (4) That Jim Bridger was murdered, but Mary Ettie does not say he was, only that she had not yet encountered anyone who knew what became of him after he was attacked. (5) That Gunnison was killed by Danites and not by Indians, but Mary Ettie reports hearing this from the “Heads of the Church” and from Brigham Young himself (p. 318), while Burton inexplicably claims she based her statement on “a dream” and refers to her Chapter XXXVIII, “Rise, Progress, and Present Condition of Mormonism,” which is not part of Mary Ettie’s narrative and which does not even mention Gunnison (her vivid dream in her Chapter XXX, pp. 330-331, relates to her failed attempt to escape and to her fears of “horrid rites” of sacrifice in the Endowment Rooms, not to Gunnison’s murder). (6) That “milking of the Gentiles” (that is, robbery or blackmail) ever occurred, but there are other accounts of the same process. (7) That the Mormons engaged in “coining bogus money,” but Mary Ettie’s account seems not to deal with coining, but with the printing of paper money, and she names two living witnesses who told her they had seen the printing press (counterfeit coins are specifically mentioned in a number of other accounts, however; at that point in American history, the discovery of counterfeit money could hardly be considered remarkable). (8) That the Mormons ever “whittled” unwanted visitors out of Nauvoo, but there are many other accounts of this quaint form of intimidation. (9) That there was ever any “danger of competition in love matters with an apostle,” a reference to several episodes that Mary Ettie had heard of, in which the higher-ranking man used his power to have his rival exiled or even murdered. (10) That there was ever an “imminent peril of being scalped by white Indians,” however, the direct accusations did not deal with scalping, but with shooting, by “Danites” disguised as Indians, certainly a popular subject of rumor and speculation. (11) Slandorous charges against the wives of “high dignitaries,” particularly Eliza R. Snow, whom Mary Ettie singled out for an unseemly portrayal of the original seductress, Eve.

This list seems strange in that it does not include any of the grave accusations that Mary Ettie actually made against Brigham Young and others, relating to murders, robberies, and other conspiracies. Moreover, several items in the list do not reflect what Mary Ettie's account actually says. Is it possible that Burton did not read the book, but was told about it by people in Utah who were unwilling even to repeat the most serious claims that it contains?

⁶ Fanny Stenhouse, *Tell it all: the story of a life's experience in Mormonism* (Hartford: A. D. Worthington, 1875), xii.

⁷ The murder of Hartley was reported in several sources, all of them suffering from the same problem as *Fifteen Years among the Mormons*. In every case, the information that was published has been filtered through an editor, or else appeared long after everyone involved had died, so that none of it could be corroborated. Consequently, there have been divergent opinions on the matter. However, since the publication of Hope A. Hilton's "*Wild Bill*" *Hickman and the Mormon frontier* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), Hickman's participation in this event, as recounted in Beadle's *Brigham's Avenging Angel, confessions and startling disclosures of the notorious Bill Hickman, the Danite chief of Utah* (New York: G. A. Crofutt, 1872), seems not to have been seriously questioned. While everyone agrees that Jesse T. Hartley was murdered, he nevertheless appears on the 1856 Utah Territorial Census in Greenriver County. It is likely that the census was prepared from LDS ward records rather than by door-to-door enumeration. One objective of the census must have been to obtain the greatest possible representation in the U.S. Congress in the event that statehood was approved, thus providing an incentive to list as many names as possible.

⁸ Beadle's claim might mean nothing more than that the same rumors quoted by Mary Ettie were still circulating many years later. Or, to the extent that Mary Ettie's account can be shown to be untrue, it may cast further doubt on Beadle's *Life in Utah*.

⁹ Many variations of her name have been found in primary sources. She is called variously Mariette, Mary Ett, Maryette, Marietta, etc. Also, the surname is sometimes Coray and at other times Corey. Her brother Howard seems most often to have used Coray, but later generations seem also to use Corey. To avoid confusing the reader, the present discussion will use the form of her name given in the book, Mary Ettie V. Coray, or "Nettie" or "Net" among friends and family.

¹⁰ I agree with the view that real life does not have a "plot." History may have a plot, depending on how it is written. But the reader will soon discover that *Fifteen Years among the Mormons* is not real life and, as a work of narrative literature, does have a plot. It cannot be understood except by reference to literary devices.

¹¹ Nelson Winch Green was born in Allegany County (now Wyoming County), New York, July 30, 1819. He entered West Point in 1839, but was discharged in 1842 because of injuries received in a "light artillery drill," for which he received a pension of \$8 per month. He practiced law in Wyoming County and edited several newspapers before editing *Fifteen Years among the Mormons*. On his own initiative, he organized the 76th Regiment, New York State Volunteers, in the Civil War. He was commissioned at that time with the rank of Colonel, but a dispute with a fellow officer who challenged his authority led to a shooting and eventually to his honorable discharge. His later years seem to have been all but consumed with a patent dispute over a well-drilling machine, which he eventually lost when the U.S. Supreme Court reversed a decision it had made earlier in the same matter. He died at Stoneham, Massachusetts, May 12, 1907. For a biographical sketch, see Abram P. Smith, *History of the Seventy-Sixth Regiment New York Volunteers* (Syracuse: Truair, Smith, and Miles, 1867). His military pension file at the National Archives contains many documents in his own hand and with a fluent yet formal style that seems similar to *Fifteen Years among the Mormons*.

¹² Perhaps to counter this criticism of the account of the Bowman murder, Mary Ettie includes (pp. xi and 276) the detail of cutting a lock of hair from Bowman's corpse, and turning it over to the Indian Agent, Garland Hurt, who tells her he passed it on to Judge John F. Kinney to send to the State Department.

¹³ In the description of the Garden of Eden "temptation," Mary Ettie invites the reader to speculate that the ceremony has prurient content, but without actually stating that there is any such content.

¹⁴ Pike County, Illinois, probate records. Mary Ettie states that Abbott donated the estate to the LDS Church (p. 20), but, in fact, the appraisals and accounts indicate the estate was consumed by debts. The last record of the estate, August 17, 1843, is an order for the administrators to sell real estate "or so much thereof as may be sufficient to pay the debts and charges of said estate." Shortly after this, October 23, 1843, Stephen Abbott died at Nauvoo (date quoted by Lyman W. Cook, *Nauvoo Deaths and Marriages 1839-1845*, Orem, Utah: Grandin Book Company, 1994, from the newspaper *Nauvoo Neighbor*, October 25, 1843, and from the Nauvoo Sexton's Record). The widow had taken a "special dower," in lieu of dower land, consisting of "one bed and bedding, waring [*sic*] apparel of herself & family, one cow and calf, her saddle & bridle, one horse to the value of

\$40.00, household and kitchen furniture sufficient for herself and family & provisions for the same for one year.” It appears the death of the administrator, and the relocation of the family to Nauvoo, effectively closed the probate of the estate of Silas Coray, except for a stray parcel of land in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, that would later provide the opportunity for Mary Ettie to leave Utah Territory. Apart from the fact that the probate process was incomplete, there is nothing in the probate records of Pike County to suggest that there was anything unusual relating to the estate of Silas Coray. That the age of discretion for both boys and girls was 14 in this court is demonstrated by other guardianship orders recorded about this time.

The small estate of Silas Coray seems entirely consistent with the fortunes of the family as measured by the 1835 New York State census of Hornellsville, Steuben County, where we find him with a very modest farm and a small quantity of livestock.

¹⁵ Henderson family genealogists Esther M. Carroll, John D. Nash, and Rand Henderson have kindly provided additional information on Samuel Henderson, Jr. However, nothing has come to light to confirm that he spent any time in St. Joseph, Missouri.

¹⁶ Noel, Mary E. R. and Jennie Noel Weeks, *Noel and Roberts master pedigree* (N.p.: n.p., 1974).

¹⁷ Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* appeared in 1852. By the time Mary Ettie and Nelson Green were preparing *Fifteen Years among the Mormons*, it was already a classic of American literature. Someone better versed in the history of literature might wish to explore its influence on narrative form and method in this period. Possibly more important in this regard than *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is Stowe’s sequel, *The Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin; Presenting the Original Facts and Documents upon which the Story is Founded, together with Corroborative Statements Verifying the Truth of the Work* (London: Clarke, Beeton, & Co., 1853), in which the author explains (p. 1) how *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* can be truth and fiction at the same time:

At different times, doubt has been expressed whether the scenes and characters portrayed in ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ convey a fair representation of slavery as it at present exists. This work, more, perhaps, than any other work of fiction that ever was written, has been a collection and arrangement of real incidents, of actions really performed, of words and expressions really uttered, grouped together with reference to a general result, in the same manner that the mosaic artist groups his fragments of various stones into one general picture. His is a mosaic of gems—this is a mosaic of facts.

Artistically considered, it might not be best to point out in which quarry and from which region each fragment of the mosaic picture had its origin; and it is equally unartistic to disentangle the glittering web of fiction, and show out of what real warp and woof it is woven, and with what real colouring dyed. But the book had a purpose entirely transcending the artistic one, and accordingly encounters at the hands of the public demands not usually made on fictitious works. It is *treated* as a reality—sifted, tried, and tested, as a reality; and therefore as a reality it may be proper that it should be defended.

¹⁸ This episode, though altered in the retelling, has remained in the memory of some of the descendants of the John B. Smith family down to the present day.

¹⁹ Margaret was the daughter of Thomas Judd, who is frequently mentioned by Mary Ettie as one of her neighbors in the 15th Ward. Margaret was sealed to Hiram B. Clawson August 21, 1852.

²⁰ October 26, 1856, well after Mary Ettie had left Utah. Mary Ettie says she was present when Brigham Young told Hiram he might someday marry Alice, and Mary Ettie was the first to convey this news to Alice, in the spring of 1852 (p. 209).

²¹ Letter of November 4, 1856, quoted in full in S. George Ellsworth, *Dear Ellen: Two Mormon women and their letters* (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah, 1974).

²² Burton, *op. cit.*, see for example pp. 206 and 207.

²³ Information on Bowman is summarized by Sondra Jones, “The trial of Don Pedro León: politics, prejudice, and pragmatism,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 65 (1997): 165-186, and in her more detailed treatment, *The trial of Don Pedro León Luján: the attack on Indian slavery and Mexican traders in Utah* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000). The various 19th Century accounts differ as to Bowman’s full name, occupation, what led to his falling out with Brigham Young, whether he was imprisoned or not, whether there was a trial, why he was murdered, and of course, who was responsible.

²⁴ The mention of Ferguson here also raises our suspicions. Whatever association he may have had with men who have been claimed as Danites, he also is known to have studied law, and he was the author of a petition on

behalf of Don Pedro León in 1851, and thus shows himself to be sympathetic to some of the pretensions of the Mexican traders. The petition he authored is discussed by Sondra Jones (2000), p. 87. Like Mary Ettie's brother William Coray, James Ferguson was a veteran of the Mormon Battalion of the Mexican War.

²⁵ Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years among the Indians* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1890), 52-56.

²⁶ Jones, Sondra, *The trial of Don Pedro León Luján: the attack against Indian slavery and the Mexican traders in Utah* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000).

²⁷ Sondra Jones found the document in the Brigham Young Collection, box 47, folder 36, in the LDS Church History Archives, Salt Lake City. It is dated January 22, 1853 and signed by John Greiner, Indiana Agent in New Mexico. It authorized Bowman, and eleven "peons" in his employ, to trade with the "Utah Tribe of Indians" between the Grand and Green Rivers for the term of six months. Were it not for the existence of this document, or perhaps even in spite of it, one might imagine that some of the details that Mary Ettie could have known about the case of Don Pedro León in 1851 were absorbed into her account of the Bowman affair in order to make it more detailed, and thus apparently more credible.

²⁸ Or more likely in adjacent Highland County, as noted in the transcript of his Civil War discharge papers that found its way into his homestead application file, and as implied in two land patents obtained by his father in Rush County, Indiana, which give the family's place of residence as Highland County, Ohio (1827-1828).

²⁹ Stringtown was also precisely on the route of the Mormons during their exodus across Iowa in 1846. Mary Ettie must have passed within a mile of Reuben at that time. Moreover, some of her distant relatives, including a fifth cousin of her father named Silas Corey, were among the neighbors of the Smith family in Rush County, Indiana before they moved to Iowa. This sort of coincidence turns up frequently in family history research in the Midwest.

³⁰ Bobbye Phillips, personal communication.

³¹ These dates are repeated in bible records from many different branches of the Reuben Smith family.

³² Davis County, Iowa Deeds, vol. A, p. 52.

³³ Davis County, Iowa Deeds, vol. B, p. 308.

³⁴ Reuben's statement in the book, p. 396, says his father died in 1847, evidently a typographical error. While Nelson Green was not one of those people who made their 7's with a hook at the top, so that they resembled 9's, his handwriting was not especially neat, to judge from his letters in his military pension file at the National Archives.

³⁵ Dysentery.

³⁶ US Census, 1860, mortality schedule for Davis County, Iowa.

³⁷ This "census" is actually a collection of lists that appears to be derived from LDS bishops' reports. The individual schedules have been microfilmed by the Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

³⁸ *Deseret News*, May 15, 1852:

'Tis nature's voice that speaks so sweet,
Whenever kindred spirits meet:
And nought the golden cord can sever,
That draws and binds them thus together;
And thus the chain of union
Binds kindred, loving hearts in one.

³⁹ *Deseret News*, May 19, 1852: "Major Holman, Indian Agent, left this city about two weeks since, with an official escort of 25 or 30 men, as rumor says, on an excursion to Mary's river or Carson valley, to treat with the Indians. Wishing to know the truth of rumors, we called at the office of Superintendent of Indian Affairs for this Territory, when we were informed that no report of Major Holman's movements or designs had been received at that office. The station assigned the Major by the Superintendent was in the south part of the Territory, as we had supposed, that being the only vacancy, according to the proclamation of the Governor on that subject previous to the arrival of the Major in the Territory. We cannot put that and that together, i.e., how the Major can be on official duty, as Indian Agent, while he is several hundred miles from his post and going still further. So we are obliged to serve our readers as we are served, and leave the subject where we found it."

⁴⁰ *Deseret News*, January 22, 1853: "Major Holman is at Weber with animals and will not be able to come in until Spring."

⁴¹ *Deseret News*, March 19, 1853: "\$10 REWARD. STRAYED or stolen from Utah County, Pleasant Grove ward, two dark brown Mules, branded i.A. on the left thigh. Any person returning said Mules to the subscriber in the 15th Ward or at Holliday and Warner's store shall receive the above reward. R. P. SMITH."

⁴² Case file, Salt Lake County District Court. The records of this court are currently housed at the Utah State Library and Archives, Logan, Utah.

⁴³ Solomon Miser or Miser b. September 6, 1823, Putnam Co., Ohio, d. September 30, 1876, Latrobe, California, is buried in the Miser family cemetery, Rancho Murieta, Sacramento County, California.

⁴⁴ William Riley Judd, son of Mary Ettie's neighbors Thomas and Teresa Judd.

⁴⁵ Orphan's Court dockets, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania note the appointment of an administrator November 9, 1852, but no further action seems to have been taken.

⁴⁶ National Archives, Immigrant Passenger Lists, Port of New York. Reuben is listed as R. P. Smith, age 39, laborer. Reuben's actual age at this time was 35, but the ages he gave to census takers, etc. were seldom very accurate. Most of the other passengers were listed as "miners," probably unsuccessful ones on their way home.

⁴⁷ It is not known exactly when Mary Ettie came to California, but there is a passenger list entry, one R. P. Smith arriving alone in New York from Aspinwall, Panama, October 15, 1860, with the correct age (36) and occupation (teamster). As happened earlier in the story, did Reuben again leave his wife to attend to business in California, and then return in 1860 to escort her there? If Reuben and Mary Ettie were in transit in 1860, that would also help to explain why no one has managed to find them on the 1860 census. About the same time, Mary Ettie's sister Aurilla Dusenberry traveled from Perry, Pike County, Illinois to Provo, Utah. They left Provo for Los Angeles, California on September 7, 1860, just five days before the arrival of the census enumerator, thus depriving history of the names of any other family members who might have been traveling with them. The dates of their migration are given in the diaries of Aurilla's son, Wilson Howard Dusenberry, transcribed by the Daughters of Utah Pioneers in *Our Pioneer Heritage*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City, 1958), pp. 231-255.

⁴⁸ The details of Reuben Smith's life that follow are drawn from the pension file at the National Archives, unless otherwise stated.

⁴⁹ Harriet Elizabeth "Lizzie" Coray, youngest sister of Mary Ettie, was born February 16, 1834 in Luzerne Co., Pennsylvania. Throughout Mary Ettie's adventures, Lizzie remained close to her mother until she married Richard R. Cordon (or Cardon) in 1854. Lizzie and her husband and their infant daughter Henrietta accompanied Mary Ettie and her mother out of Utah as far as Steuben County, New York in 1856. Mary Ettie's account says Lizzie and her husband returned to Pike County, Illinois, where their sister Aurilla Coray Dusenberry was living, probably early in 1857. No further record of Richard Cordon has been found, but Lizzie must have remarried to someone named Ogden, as Reuben's widow had known her as Lizzie Ogden. The Wilson Howard Dusenberry diary notes that she was a widow living in California. Reuben's pension file seems to say that Lizzie and her family died of consumption.

⁵⁰ Reuben was in interesting company. Henry Brink turns out to have been Charles Henry "Doc" Brink, best known to history as a rider on the Central Overland Pony Express, who happened to be involved in the famous gunfight in which James Butler Hickok became "Wild Bill" Hickok. Reuben's other witness from his Civil War days was Abraham W. Rapelye, who was a "mail agent" in Visalia when the 1860 census was taken. After the war, he was a horse trainer.

⁵¹ Asked by the pension examiner to comment on the discrepant dates, Augusta's sister Mrs. Henrietta A. Fowler observed, "I desire to state that Reuben Smith was not a bright man, and would make many mistakes in dates." Reuben's son made a similar statement.

⁵² The short statement is an item in the small file of notes about Mary Ettie in the papers of Leonard J. Arrington, cited above. The statement is interesting enough to be quoted in full: "Mrs. Jenny Weeks, family genealogist in Salt Lake City, says that Maryette never did want to come West with the Saints and was never happy here. She was vengeful about her family forcing her to come. She persuaded her mother to go back to New York. Her mother never did give up the church, but Maryette was never really converted to the church.

"Maryette's relative, Dr. Roberts, came through Utah and went on to Missouri; members of the family visited him in later years—after he was supposed to be dead.

"Howard Coray was one-handed from birth, so he couldn't have done much by way of the Danites.

"The family have many things of Howard and Mary Jane. Brigham Young tried to get Mary Jane to sign a statement that many things in the *History of Joseph Smith by his Mother* were not dictated by Mother Smith. But she refused to sign it; she contended that she took it down faithfully. Later, Brigham Young was somewhat ashamed of what he had done and put her on the board of the Brigham Young Academy. She has minutes of some of the early meetings of the Board, since burned in a fire. She stood by her guns on the Mother Smith history."

The statement calls Dr. Roberts a relative of Mary Ettie, but that was not true at the time the book was written. Mary Ettie's niece did not marry Dr. Roberts' son until 1868, by which time Mary Ettie was already dead. Also, contrary to what is implied in the statement, Mary Ettie did not accuse her brother Howard Coray of any involvement with the Danites. Jennie Noel Weeks (1902–2001) compiled extensive genealogies of the Coray and Roberts families, which appear to be quite accurate. However, much additional information has come to light since they were written.

⁵³ The process of writing *Fifteen Years among the Mormons* is described at several points in the book. Nelson Green had Mary Ettie write down her stories, and also kept notes of their interviews. He considered that the book had been prepared too quickly to eliminate all errors, but that any lingering imperfections were minor. From the rest of Green's career, as well as his military pension file, we might surmise that he was legalistic to a fault. It is hard to believe that he discarded the papers and correspondence that went into this work, but what his family might have done with his papers after his death is still to be determined. It appears that at least three of his four children were published authors.

It is tempting to conclude that Nelson Green did not conspire with Mary Ettie to falsify her story, and that Reuben implicitly believed Mary Ettie's accounts of what had happened to her in his absence. The parts of the story that Reuben observed, as well as those that happened after she met Nelson Green, seem more likely to be accurately recounted.

⁵⁴ For an account of Garland Hurt's career in Utah, see David Bigler, "Garland Hurt, American friend of the Utahs" (*Utah Historical Quarterly* 64:125-147, 1994). Hurt later explained that, in those days (1857), no one left Utah without first personally obtaining a letter of recommendation from Brigham Young. Mary Ettie gives an example of this indispensable document (p. 350).

⁵⁵ She had lost her father, three brothers, and a sister since leaving Pennsylvania. Of her remaining siblings, Howard and Aurilla survived to old age in Utah. Lizzie seems to have died in California, and possibly Phebe as well.