

**Witnesses of the Book of Mormon — Insights Episode 25:  
Did Lucy Harris Support the Book of Mormon?**

**Emma Smith:** Where's Joseph?

**Martin Harris:** Emma, you should be in bed.

**ES:** He's taken the interpreters.

**MH:** He's gone to inquire of the Lord. To see if I might take the pages to show Lucy.

**ES:** You weary the heavens with your demands. What is this? The fourth time you've asked?

**MH:** The third. Just the third. My wife; I need to offer some proof of what we're doing here.

**Joseph Smith:** Take them, but guard them with your life.

**MH:** Thank you, Joseph.

**Lucy Harris:** 'For behold, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto my father.' How many times can it say, 'and it came to pass'?

**LH:** I wasn't finished!

**MH:** Lucy, why do you mock our work? I brought the translations for you, and you alone, to read.

**LH:** You realize that people think you're a fool? Why do you spend so much time with Joseph? Neglecting our family? Wasting our money?

**MH:** Lucy, that's enough.

**LH:** What will you do if he asks for more? Mortgage our farm?

**MH:** If the Lord requires it, yes.

**LH:** Oh, you've lost all respect.

**MH:** That is enough.

**LH:** You're an embarrassment.

**MH:** NOT ONE WORD more.

**Camrey Bagley Fox:** Welcome to our series on the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. My name is Camrey Bagley Fox and we are back with Daniel Peterson, President of the Interpreter Foundation and executive producer of the Witnesses project. Thanks for being here.

**Daniel Peterson:** I'm happy to be here.

**CBF:** So, in the Witnesses film, we see Lucy Harris being not the nicest person, and not supportive of the Church, but we also see that she donated money to the Church early on, so what was her journey in all of that?

**DP:** You know, she's a really interesting character, and I think it's been easy for Latter-day Saints to demonize her, just a little bit, because she does end up playing a kind of negative role, and, she and Martin divorce, which was very uncommon in the United States in the period. But I think she deserves a little bit of sympathy.

One thing is that there's reason to believe that she was, not only hard of hearing, but very deaf. I've seen suggestions that Lucy Harris might've been prone, a little bit, to a kind of paranoia, or persecution complex, or a fear, understandable I think, that people aren't just talking behind her back about her; they're talking right in front of her, and she can't hear them. And so, she's afraid that something is being done that might jeopardize her position. She's the wife of a well-to-do Palmyra farmer, but he's about to spend all his money on what might be a scam.

What will that leave for her? Her husband is going off on some religious fanatic quest, but she is a woman who—a woman, first of all in the American frontier when women had VERY few legal rights, and as a deaf woman on the frontier. You know, she's thinking that Martin is endangering their wealth that he's worked so hard for so many years to build up.

**DP cont'd:** Well the fact is, he IS, and he will, in fact, lose a lot of his money so she has reason to be worried about their finances. How would she support herself if all the money is lost?

But I think we have to know another side of her. She at one point, according to Lucy Mack Smith, had a vision, or a visitation, a dream, it's not quite clear what it is, where a personage appeared to her and showed her the plates and rebuked her a little bit for questioning the Lord's prophet. And so, at least at that point she makes a donation—that's alluded to in the Witnesses film. She makes a donation of \$28.

Now people may think, '[scoffing] \$28 what's that?' Well, this is the late 1820s, that's the equivalent of about \$850 today, so it's, it's not tiny. It's fairly substantial, and it was HER money, it belonged to her. Not to her and to Martin; it was her money. So, she makes a donation. She may be the first donor to support the translation of the Book of Mormon, so I think we need to view Lucy with a little bit more sympathy than we sometimes do, that she's in a really tough situation.

**CBF:** Thank you. That's a totally different viewpoint than I've heard before.