

## Fay and Sina — Courtship letters

By Mary Jane Fritzen

Jennie Holbrook Groberg's parents, Lafayette Hinckley Holbrook and Alsina Elizabeth Brimhall, wrote many letters to each other while Lafayette was on his mission to New Zealand. Through these letters, their courtship grew into an engagement, and their love bloomed. The following is just a small sample of their letters. If you are interested in reading more, a CD of the letters can be provided.

I hope you can feel their love for each other and gain some love and understanding and appreciation of what wonderful ancestors we have. But first, a little background from the personal history of Alsina Elizabeth Brimhall Holbrook:

*Somewhere in the halls of the B. Y. A. in my 17th year, I met this companion, the father of our eleven children...The experiences of four years at BYA were romantic...strengthening of my knowledge of Gospel already learned in home and in our wards...In 1897 I took out my Degree of Bachelor of Pedagogy well assured I would only teach school until my future husband should return from his mission to New Zealand.*

*Misses Delia and Eva Maeser gave him a farewell party at the Maeser home. While they were all busy with games he and I slipped away and he gave me a tiny pearl-handled gold pen, with which I gave him, a few months later, the promise of remaining true as his bride-to-be. His letters were a*

*constant inspiration and kept my star of hope shining brightly.*

Personal correspondence reveals one's heart. The following is a peek into Sina and Fay's. Letters took at least a month to get to one another, so they often crossed paths. The original spelling and punctuation are retained.

### #2 from Sina, July 14, 1897

*When I think of how near I came of not having the priveledge of dipping this beautiful pen in ink for you, Fay, I feel that I cannot be too grateful. Nine days have passed and still the picture of a departing missionary every now and then is brought to my view.*

### #6 from Fay, August 18, 1897

*Your lovely letter came two days after my arrival in Auckland. How can I repay you for the world of good it did me. Like the sun emerging from a cloud, did it lighten my somewhat depressed soul. Its effects were inspiring...Have just heard from Pres. Richards. Will labor amoung the Maoris.*

### #7 from Fay, August 25, 1897

*It seems to me I am just about doing what you said, writing all the letters. This makes six I have written and I have only received one. Quality not quantity counts; to me your one was worth more than my six.*

### #8 from Sina, September 1, 1897

*No doubt before this letter reaches you you will, according to my reckoning, have been travelling as a Minister of our Gospel without purse or scrip in a land comparative-*



**Lafayette and Alsina after his mission to New Zealand**

*ly uncivilized, and oh, so far away from us. I have often thought with what a happy spirit you said good-bye...Fay, you have my prayers and best wishes.*

### #9 from Fay, September 22, 1897

*The last mail, I was highly favored receiving five letteres; two from you...Sina, why did you tell me you could not write? Your letters are capital and you are an ideal correspondent.*

### #15 from Sina, November 28, 1897

*Tonight as I was coming up from the depot the thought voluntarily expressed itself within me "I am the happiest girl in the world." And oh that I might always feel that way...As long as I am happy in writing you shall hear from me. As ever still true until mutually agreed merely friends, I remain, Lovingly yours, Sina*

### #18 from Fay, Dec. 13, 1897

*On Sat. the 4th of this month if you could have seen me, you would have found me reclining up against a tree, in a little clearing, in the midst of a dense forest, fondly devouring my monthly mail. Did you ever get letters, that you sort half hated to read; for the simple reason that the joy they afford and that you have anticipated so long, will so soon be over. This is my condition, and for*

## Editors Note

This is the first newsletter in the new format. There will be two issues a year (Spring and Fall) with each family of D.V. and Jennie's children taking a turn, starting with Mary Jane and working down.

When it's your turn, you should write 2 different articles. The first, on an ancestor (Groberg or from your in-law side) that you think the rest of the family would like to know more about. The second, about what is going on with your own family. Pictures are important for both articles.

All families are welcome to submit updates or information they think would be of interest to the rest of the family, such as births, marriages, missions, graduations, special accomplishments, etc. We hope each family will submit news items as they occur, since their turn for in-depth articles will only come every 5 1/2 years. I will be in touch with each family as their turn comes around. Thanks to Mary Jane for getting us started and thanks to Matt Powell for his invaluable help.

We continue to get more names for Temple ordinances. It's hard to say what is available, as it is always in flux. But email me anytime (tomgroberg@gmail.com) with requests (2 or more options) and I'll send you what I can. We need all the help we can get and this is a great opportunity to help your ancestors.

joy, and joy, alone, I forbear reading them as long as possible. Of course not very long.

Sina if you will promise to cook the gooseberries and share them with me, I will promise to even have a keen appetite for them...To the weaknesses and follies of the flesh there seem to be no end in my case. My nature may present a ruggedness and unevenness rarely equalled in others. There is both sun shine and rain to be met with in my disposition. In many respects my conscience is a thorn in my side. However I always preferred the right, and have a sense of honor, and reasons to believe that I shall always be industrious.

Sina, if with all this I find favor in your sight, and you think you could share half of these defects in life with me (or rather help me to overcome them) you have the privilege of doing so. If your answer is favorable, I can only say that I will try and make life as pleasurable for you as my nature will permit, and may God do the rest.

...Think I have considered both sides of your nature, and I have made it a matter of prayer. In answer to your question, the present alone is plain to me, but my future, to a certain extent, now lies in your hands. If your answer is favorable please state a time, when we can apprise our parents of our intentions, and obtain their consent. We must have their consent. You set the time and I shall write your's and mine. Happy New Year! Yours as Ever, With love and best wishes.

**#19 from Sina, December 31, 1897**

...Xmas day found Jennie and I at home alone...At twilight just as we had both concluded that Xmas days were most lonely, we were suddenly aroused by the most charming strains of music...The occasion of such joy was the dear Old Academy quartette...Thus aroused from our somewhat lonely state we determined to go and seek more joy. Ere two more New Years are ushered in and pass away may you be happy in the presence of those who now are waiting your return to them. I close this letter with loving wishes from the same.

**#21 from Fay, January 5, 1898**

Yesterday I travelled all day in the rain, and thinking my coat only a burden did not carry it this time. When the post-mistress presented me with a bounteous mail, my countenance lighted, a perpetual smile crept all over me and once more that perfect happiness took possession of me.

**#23 from Sina, March 6, 1898**

Picture to yourself a being whose happiness at this moment has reached it seems to me its utmost point. Not but what that same person expects to see happier moments but the thoughts that such will be the case, alone fills me with such a world of gratitude that it seems to me under present conditions I can ask for nothing else...With this sweet

# Fritzen Family Highlights

## Anny and Brian

Life in Spokane has treated us well with the beautiful surroundings and mild spring temperatures. Anny enjoys her work at Gonzaga University, especially her wonderful colleagues. Like everyone else in the city, we caught the basketball bug and even attended a couple GU games in the Kennel. Brian continues assisting senior prosecutors in the Spokane County prosecutor's office, a great learning experience. He has also been rebuilding the engine of our old Subaru. (In the meantime, he convinced Anny that he "needed" a motorcycle. She relinquished her concerns about life and limb once she realized that a tank of gas for the bike only costs \$5.) Our church service keeps us busy and constantly aware of our shortcomings and our blessings. For fun we enjoy attending the symphony and bike riding. The other day we rode 20 miles around Lake Chatcolet just across the border in Idaho. You should come and join us sometime! Our best times are time with Rosalee, Rick and the nieces and nephews who live just an hour and a half north of us. Anny loves that the first thing the kids ask when they walk in the door is "Where's Brian?!" After a year and a half, this looks to be a place where we are quite happy to stay.



**Mary Jane with Clair and Ethan Ballard**

mom. Although with 6 kids ranging in ages from 13 to 4 months, there is very little staying at home that actually occurs. We enjoy spending time as a family in the great outdoors skiing, camping, hiking, boating and watching the children (Lindsey, Jacob, Emily, Ethan, Claire and Allyson) in their various activities of ballet, swimming, soccer, singing, and eating their toes. Anny and Brian live about an hour and a half away and we enjoy their company as well as their help with our brood. We also keep busy with our various church callings building the kingdom in our neck of the woods. (Rick was recently called as Stake President)

## Rosalee and Rick

The Ballards enjoy living in Sandpoint, Idaho even if it seems like it is winter 9 months of the year. (The summer makes it all worth it.) Rick still enjoys working on teeth and Rosalee is a "stay-at-home"

## Mary Jane

I am enjoying associations in Idaho Falls, and looking forward to making a presentation about the I.F. area's pioneer LDS experience for a Mormon History Association conference at Layton in June.



**Anny and Brian Case (left) Rick and Rosalee Ballard family**

undaunted assurance I give to a worthy Elder in Israel most freely a hand that may be weak; but a heart that will be true to the end...It does my heart good to know how thoroughly you are enjoying your missionary labors...Trusting this answer will make you as happy as it leaves me I remain in true devotion. Yours forever, Sina.

**#28 from Fay, May 1, 1898**

Three months have passed since the last letter I received from you...It seems so long... Here I am writing every mail, and have no knowledge that you are getting it back on me...Sina, if I could only have some of your letters here, to answer your questions, to mingle with your spirit which fills your letters; then I would know how to write and it would be so easy. In case this letter does not harmonize with your feelings, excuse me upon the ground that my love and confidence in you remain unchanged, unless it be with time they have become deeper seated...Please remember me and give my love to your family and friends. Your affectionate Fay.

**#30 from Sina, May 9, 1898**

Fay your'e the best boy in the world to write me such a dear good, long letter in answer to none...I really felt as though I could not write again until I could give definite answer to your sacred offer...Fay I am so happy. I know not what pa thought when at a late hour in the night after I had retired I arose and handed to him as he sat reading in the adjoining room, the letter that I had read mid tears and smiles of sudden joy. I only know that owing to the sleepless night I spent, I was still resting when he left for the train next morning and I did not get to see him for three weeks, during which time I received a letter in answer to my request to know that he was pleased. Well, it was only a page; but it was one of those pages in which each word left its imprint of perfect joy and satisfaction. And

Fay, you know I have no mamma that can at present share her children's joy; but who knows but what someday she will be returned to us in health and strength?...I imagine you will get about four from me all at once.

Write me long, longer, longest letters and believe me always. Sincerely yours, Sina.

**#32 from Fay, June 3, 1898**

My Dear Sina, This month I have been twice happy by the receipt of two of your lovely letters...You with all your heart have given all my heart desires, and most blest and happy I am to receive such a gracious gift so freely given...Let us be cheerful, while awaiting the answers of our parents...I have always loved and honored your father, and hope it has been reciprocal...With prayers and all my love, which you may distribute among the members of the family and friends as you see fit, I remain your loving Fay.

On May 15th, 1901, Lafayette Hinckley Holbrook and Alsina Elziabeth Brimhal were married in the Salt Lake Temple.

These letters of the past will help us in the present and in the future. When we say in our Church that "families are forever," we are referring to families in the ancient and kindred sense, not in the two-generational household sense. Elder Bradley D. Foster of the Seventy said to the RootsTech 2013 conference. "We all belong to the great family of Adam." Future family history centers will be in our homes and this will benefit our children. Psychiatrists measuring children's self-reliance found that those best able to handle stress knew the most about their family history.

I am grateful for parents who not only exemplified "Living in the light of the Gospel," but also preserved family history, past and present, blessing our future.



**Lafayette and Alsina Holbrook Family at their Provo home, 1936. D.V. Groberg (3rd from left, top row) is holding David. Jennie (3rd from left, middle row) has Julia. John and Mary Jane, at the feet of Lafayette (4th from left, middle row).**

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