



STORIES OF

# the Children's Songbook

HOW THE PRIMARY SONGS CAME TO BE

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PART ONE

*A History OF Primary and  
Children's Music*

# Part One

The following timeline chronicles the development of Primary and music materials for children. The timeline outlines this section and highlights the administration of each general Primary president through the publication of the 1989 *Children's Songbook*.

- 1835 *A Collection of Sacred Hymns, for the Church of the Latter Day Saints* published
- 1878 The first Primary organized
- 1880 *Hymns and Songs* published
- 1880 Tune Book for the Primary Associations of the Children of Zion published
- 1880 General Primary Association organized with Louis Bouton Felt as president
- 1904 *Deseret Sunday School Union Music Book* published
- 1905 *The Primary Song Book* published
- 1925 May Anderson second general Primary president
- 1940 *Little Stories in Song* published
- 1940 May Green Hinckley third general Primary president
- 1943 Adele Cannon Howells fourth general Primary president
- 1951 *The Children Sing* published
- 1951 LaVern Watts Parmley fifth general Primary president
- 1969 *Sing With Me* published
- 1974 Naomi Maxfield Shumway sixth general Primary president
- 1980 Dwan Jacobsen Young seventh general Primary president
- 1985 *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* published
- 1988 Michaelene Packer Grassli eighth general Primary president
- 1989 *The Children's Songbook* published

1835

A Collection of Sacred Hymns, for the Church of  
the Latter Day Saints Published

In 1830, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation instructing his wife, **Emma Hale Smith** (1804–1879), to “make a selection of sacred hymns” (D&C 25:11). This was just three months after the publication of the Book of Mormon and the organization of the Church. The hymns selected by Emma set a worthy standard for subsequent additions. The collection of ninety hymns included thirty-three by the following Mormon authors: twenty-six attributed to W. W. Phelps, three to Parley P. Pratt, one to Thomas P. Marsh and Pratt, and one each to Eliza R. Snow, Edward Partridge, and Philo Dibble. The remaining fifty-seven texts were adapted or rewritten versions of hymns in general use by the Baptists and Campbellites. Phelps was to correct and print the anthology but was delayed because the Book of Commandments was being prepared and printed. Then the Independence printing press was destroyed by a mob, and a new one had to be acquired. Finally, the hymnal was published in August 1835 in Kirtland, Ohio, by F. G. Williams & Company. (In December 2006, one of three known surviving hymnals was sold at auction for \$273,600). A replica of *A Collection of Sacred Hymns, for the Church of the Latter-day Saints* was published in 1973 by Herald Heritage Reprint and is available at the Kirtland Temple store and LDS bookstores. The little book measured 3×4½ inches and could fit in a coat pocket. None of the songs were directed specifically to children.



**Emma Hale Smith**  
First General Relief  
Society President

The brown pocketbook contained texts only, with no music notation. Hymn texts were sung to familiar melodies and often interchanged. A conductor might say, “We will now sing Hymn 86 to the tune of the ‘Old Oaken Bucket.’” The same text might be sung to another melody another week by another congregation. This practice continued until music notation was included with hymn texts, and explains the use of more than one melody for some hymns even today.

As an example, a common meter for many songs is 7777. That means the text (such as “Jesus, Once of Humble Birth,” Hymn 196) has seven syllables on each of the four lines. The words will fit any other melody that is also described as 7777, such as Hymn 306, “God’s Daily Care” (a favorite Primary prayer song selected for the hymnbook). The following Primary melodies are also 7777 and could be interchanged: Thanks to Thee, 6;

Heavenly Father, Now I Pray, 19; A Song of Thanks, 20; Thank Thee, Father, 24; We Are Reverent, 27; Little Lambs so White and Fair, 58; Dearest Mother, I Love You, 206; and Rain Is Falling All Around, 241. For more about meters, see page 405 of the 1985 hymnbook.

Music has always been an important part of worshipping God. The Latter-day Saints have sung wherever they gathered, whether at homes, churches, temples, or campfires. They sang songs for rejoicing, for encouragement, and for solace. They sang doctrines of the kingdom, and their songs became prayers unto God.

## 1878            The First Primary Organized

**Bishop John W. Hess** had been concerned about the rowdy behavior of the young boys in the Farmington Utah Ward. He called a meeting of the mothers to discuss ways they might help to guide the minds of their children. **Aurelia Spencer Rogers** (1834–1922), one of the mothers, reflected upon the idea and wondered, “Could there not be an organization for little boys wherein they could be taught everything good, and how to behave?”<sup>[1]</sup> She told **Eliza Roxey Snow** (1804–1887), her friend and the Relief Society general president, about her idea. Eliza suggested the organization be called “Primary.” Aurelia thought that they would probably want to have singing in the meetings, and so the girls ought to be included “to make it sound as well as it should.”<sup>[2]</sup> Sister Snow discussed the matter with John Taylor, President of the Council of the Twelve and presiding officer after the death of Brigham Young. He approved and directed Bishop Hess to call Sister Rogers to preside over an organization of the children in Farmington. She was set apart August 11, 1878, with her counselors, **Louisa Leavitt Haight** (grandmother of Apostle David B. Haight) and **Helen Mar Cheney Miller**. Soon after, **Rhoda H. Richards** was chosen as secretary, with her daughter Sarah as assistant, and **Clara A. Leonard** as treasurer.

In the next two weeks, the new presidency visited every home in the ward. They recorded the names and ages of 224 children and invited them



to the first Primary meeting. On Sunday, August 25, 1878, Bishop Hess, Eliza R. Snow, and the new presidency stood before 215 children who had come to the rock chapel for instruction.



**Aurelia Spencer Rogers**  
Founder and First Ward  
Primary President

There were no manuals, no teachers, and no visual aids. In her life story Aurelia wrote, “We were very weak indeed, but felt to lean upon the Lord in all humility.”<sup>[3]</sup> The women taught lessons on honesty (don’t go into orchards and melon patches that are not your own); manners (don’t quarrel with your brothers and sisters); and safety (don’t hang on to wagons, a practice which is not only wrong, but dangerous). They carried out service projects, such as planting gardens, and also taught the children to sing. Aurelia wrote, “We wish to encourage in our children a love for music, also a love for all things beautiful.”<sup>[4]</sup> Sister Snow’s poem, “In Our Lovely

Deseret,” helped to teach many gospel precepts. It was sung to the tune of a popular Civil War song, “Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!,” and became a favorite with the children. The chorus of the same tune was also used as the melody for “Jesus Loves the Little Children.”

Sister Snow organized Primaries throughout the territory as she visited in her capacity as general Relief Society president. She felt strongly that “the very best talent in our midst should be employed to preside over the Primary Associations . . . women who loved children and had the faculty of drawing them to them.”<sup>[5]</sup> Her enthusiasm for the work spread throughout the valley.

Aurelia Rogers was the mother of twelve children, five of whom died as infants. She became a beloved role model. She wrote:

I smile when I hear modern mothers say they can't find time to teach Primary. . . . For sixty years I did my big wash by hand; I kneaded and baked bread sometimes twelve loaves a day; sewed all our clothes with a needle and thread and thimble; swept my floors with a broom made from willows I gathered on the river bank; scrubbed my furniture with sand and rags. I've worked in the fields; I've battled grasshoppers; I supported a large family while my husband was on a mission. I did have hardships and sorrows, but it was a good life because I loved my husband, my children, my neighbors and my home. Above all, I loved my Heavenly Father.<sup>[6]</sup>

Sister Rogers served as both Relief Society secretary and Farmington Primary president for fifteen years. She was then called to serve as a Primary general board member, serving twenty-nine years until her death in 1922. As a project for the Jubilee celebration of the Church, the Primary general board sponsored the publication of Aurelia Spencer Rogers' *Life Sketches of Orson Spencer and Others, and History of Primary Work*. Each ward contributed to the effort, which was the first of general Primary projects. In the dedication of her book, Aurelia lovingly wrote: “Our children are our jewels; we have counted well the cost; May their angels ever guard them, and not one child be lost.”<sup>[7]</sup>

1880            *Hymns and Songs: Selected from various authors,  
for the Primary Associations of the Children of Zion*  
Published by Deseret News Printing and Publishing

One-hundred twenty-one pages of songs with words only were in the *Hymns and Songs* publication compiled by Eliza R. Snow. Several songs were given titles, but most were identified only by a number, as were the hymns in Emma's pocketbook. The collection included some of today's favorite hymn texts such as "The Spirit of God," "Joseph Smith's First Prayer," "Do What Is Right," and "O My Father." The remaining pages were children's texts. The following four texts have been included in every songbook since 1880: "All Things Bright and Beautiful," "Dare to Do Right," "I Thank Thee Dear Father," and "I Think When I Read That Sweet Story," formerly entitled "Child's Desire." The suggested melodies, however, did not survive.

1880            Tune Book for the Primary Associations of the  
Children of Zion Published

Eliza R. Snow enlisted **Mrs. Doctor Ferguson** to arrange and notate music for many of the Primary song texts. The result was a forty-page tune book printed in Salt Lake City by the Juvenile Instructor Office. The book included fifty-nine Mormon and non-Mormon hymns with both words and music, which was reissued through the 1890s. Suggestions were included for combining melodies in this collection with other texts in the *Hymns and Songs*.

1880            The General Primary Association Organized with  
Louie Bouton Felt as President

Before the Farmington Primary was one month old, Eliza Snow had organized another in the Salt Lake City Eleventh Ward. **Louie Bouton Felt** (1850–1928), served as president, and two years later was called as the first

general Primary president. When asked to serve, she replied, “I am not worthy and am so ignorant. I could not fill that position. I’m sure I could not.” Sister Snow said, “If you thought you could we would not want you.”<sup>[8]</sup> Louie held three positions for the next five years—ward Primary president, stake YLMIA counselor, and general Primary president. She served as general Primary president from the time she was 30 until she was 75 years of age (1880–1925). Her service spanned five prophets—Presidents John Taylor (1877–1887), Wilford Woodruff (1887–1898), Lorenzo Snow (1898–1901), Joseph F. Smith (1901–1918), and Heber J. Grant (1918–1945).

As a young bride, Louie had been called by Brigham Young to go with her husband to settle the Muddy River Mission in Nevada. The hardship of the 300-mile journey had caused a miscarriage, and further complications left her unable to have children. Though childless herself, Louie knew how to influence children for good. She entered their games and danced with them, and was described as “a child among the children, happy in the things she and they loved.”<sup>[9]</sup> She took classes to receive a kindergarten teaching diploma, and moved Primary teaching from rote and drill methods to developmental child-centered teaching, viewing the teacher as a leader rather than a taskmaster. Eventually, Louie encouraged her husband to take two other wives so that he would have posterity. She helped to raise their children, and her generous husband continued to support her Primary work by paying all her travel expenses. She suffered rheumatism but placed duty above discomfort by attending meetings with a slipper on one foot.



**Louie Bouton Felt**  
First General  
Primary President

Sister Felt gave her home as collateral for the initial printing of *The Children's Friend*. The magazine was published in 1902 as a resource for teachers and included lessons for each primary grade. Her friend and secretary, May Anderson, helped her wrap the magazines in brown paper, hand address them, tie them with string, and carry them to be mailed. A Primary songbook was printed in 1905, and The Latter-day Saint Children's Convalescent Home and Day Nursery was established in 1922. During her forty-five-year presidency, the Primary general board expanded to twenty-six members, and Primary membership grew to more than 61,000 children.

1904

*Deseret Sunday School Union Music Book*  
Published

The *Deseret Sunday School Union Music Book* was prepared for the Sunday School, but also served the needs of Primary. The book was reprinted as the *Deseret Sunday School Song Book* and then as *Deseret Sunday School Songs*. Several additional reprints were made into the 1930s. The music collection contained hymns, songs, and voluntaries. At the turn of the century there were very few books written for children, and even fewer songs. Children sang nursery rhymes and game songs or adult folk songs. Preparing a collection of songs for children was very progressive.

1905            *The Primary Song Book* Published by the Primary  
General Board

*The Primary Song Book* was prepared with May Andersen directing the selection of songs. The collection updated Eliza Snow's hymnbook and tune book, which had been reissued through the 1890s. *The Primary Song Book* contained ninety-three songs, including marches, voluntaries, and seasonal songs. "Little Johnny Vegetable" and "The Toothbug Song" were two of many favorites. "The Primary Penny Song" motivated children to contribute to the building of the Children's Hospital in Salt Lake City. As they sang "Five pennies make a nickel, two nickels make a dime," boys and girls would drop their coins in a little Primary bank "for the crippled children who cannot walk or run, who have to lie in bed all day and cannot join our fun."<sup>[10]</sup> The small brown book contained the "Fairies and Elves March" and other pieces with imaginative moods. The level of the music was rather demanding and definitely meant for an adult to play, because there were many left-hand octaves and up to five flats in the key signatures. The collection was updated eight times, adding holiday songs such as "A Hallowe'en Surprise," "Jolly Old St. Nicholas," and "Up on the Housetop." By 1948 the edition had 131 songs.

1925–1939    May Anderson Second General Primary President

As a young convert to the Church, **May Anderson** (1864–1946), was invited to stay with Louie Felt while Brother Felt went on a business trip. After he returned, Sister Anderson was invited to stay on with them. May's given name was Mary, but there were many other Marys in Louie's circle of family and friends, and so she called her May. The two women enrolled in a kindergarten-training course and opened a school of their own. May was asked to be an instructor at the University of Utah Training School and was counselor to Louie in the Eleventh Ward Primary presidency.

When Louie became general president, she asked May to take notes for her at meetings, and in 1890, May was sustained as general secretary. After fifteen years as secretary, she became first counselor to President Felt. She was the first editor of *The Children's Friend* and directed the publication of *The Primary Song Book*. Following twenty years of service as counselor, Heber J. Grant, who served as the seventh President of the Church (1918–1945), called May to be the next general Primary president. Fourteen years in this calling made a total of forty-nine years' service on the general level.



**May Anderson**  
Second General  
Primary President

May Anderson was hesitant when asked to serve as Sister Felt's secretary because she was uncomfortable about speaking in public. Throughout her devoted service she prayed, "Father, put my feet in the path you wish me to tread, and I'll do the best I can."<sup>[11]</sup> During her presidency, the LDS Children's Convalescent Home and Day Nursery (located on North Temple between Main and West Temple) was financed by children's birthday pennies, and eventually by an annual Penny Parade. The fiftieth Primary "Jubilee" birthday was celebrated in 1928 with parades and programs, and the first Primary handbook was printed in 1930. Primaries had been organized worldwide under her direction, and enrollment was 100,000 children with 18,000 leaders serving them.

The first two general Primary presidents, though childless themselves, had shaped the first sixty years of the organization. President Felt and



President Anderson greatly enriched the lives of the children of the Church.

1940            *Little Stories in Song* Published by the Deseret  
Sunday School Union

A collection of songs for younger children was prepared in 1940. The book included “All Things Bright and Beautiful,” “Once Within a Lowly Stable,” “Father, We Thank Thee for the Night,” and “Little Lambs So White and Fair,” which still exist in today’s songbook. The major contributors to the book were Moisselle Renstrom (1889–1956) and Frances Kingsbury Thomassen Taylor (1870–1952), two Latter-day Saint early childhood educators and musicians. Sister Renstrom was a teacher who knew the range for children’s voices, wrote so that it was easy to play, and taught well with her rhymes. In addition, her work was doctrinally accurate. Her songbooks, *Merrily We Sing*, *Musical Adventures*, and *Rhythm Fun*, have been used by early childhood teachers throughout the world. Sister Taylor received her musical education in piano, organ, harmony, and counterpoint at the University of Utah and Columbia University, and served as secretary of the General Primary Association for eight years. Her songbook, *Kindergarten and Primary Songs*, was used in many Junior Sunday Schools.

1940–1943    May Green Hinckley Third General Primary  
President

**May Hinckley** (1881–1943) had served as a missionary in the Central States Mission, and then became the first manager of the business office at the Salt Lake Medical Clinic. She was stake YWMIA president when she married Bryant S. Hinckley, a widower with thirteen children from two previous wives who had died. Five of the children were still at home, one of them being Gordon Bitner Hinckley. After Bryant and May were married, he was called to serve as president of the Northern States Mission in 1935. She was an effective mission mother, serving as president of the mission’s

Relief Society, Primary, and YWMIA. She often closed her correspondence with “Let us love. Let us serve. Let us work together.”<sup>[12]</sup>



**May Green Hinckley**  
Third General  
Primary President

Five months after returning from the mission field, President Heber J. Grant (1918–1945) called Sister Hinckley to preside over the Primary. He said, “May, we’re going to give you 102,000 children.”<sup>[13]</sup> She expressed her feelings of inadequacy, but her husband encouraged her to try it. During her presidency, an official Primary seal was designed, the scripture theme—“And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:28)—was adopted and the Primary colors of red, yellow, and blue were selected. Lynn Fausett was commissioned to depict the first Primary meeting, and his mural was dedicated in the rock meetinghouse in Farmington, Utah. The focus of

Primary was changed from recreational to scriptural activities. President Hinckley encouraged 18,000 teachers and leaders to “brighten the home, strengthen the hands of parents, and teach the gospel to children during their most impressionable years.”<sup>[14]</sup> Home Primary replaced many Primary meetings in the mission field because of wartime gas rationing, and leadership and conference meetings were eliminated as well as other travel.

May Hinckley suffered acutely from arthritis, and in 1943 entered the hospital for treatment. She insisted that she did not want to go to the hospital, since that was where people go to die. While she was there, she contracted pneumonia. She passed away the day after her sixty-second birthday, just three years after being called to lead the Primary, and eleven years after her marriage. Once childless, she had served thirteen of her husband’s children, hundreds of missionaries, and more than 102,000 children of the Church.

#### 1943–1951 Adele Cannon Howells Fourth General Primary President

**Adele Howells** (1886–1951) brought a wealth of experience and vision to her Primary callings. She had traveled the world with her husband, David, distributing silent movies made in the United States. They had a costume company which provided for many Hollywood productions, and owned many acres of grazing land in northern Utah as well as a ranch in the Uintah Mountains of eastern Utah. David served as the first bishop of the Wilshire Ward in the new Hollywood California Stake, and they were instrumental in obtaining the land for the Los Angeles Temple. When her husband died suddenly of a heart attack, Adele wrote in her diary, “I can’t keep my mind off my terrible loss,”<sup>[15]</sup> and prayed that she would be able to press on. While trying to decide whether to remain in Los Angeles or return to Salt Lake City, she received an answer to her prayer. She was called to serve as a counselor to her friend, May Hinckley. “What a Godsend work is!” she wrote. “I’m so busy I have not time to think about myself and how lonesome I am.”<sup>[16]</sup>

Addie, as her friends called her, was a refined and generous woman. She believed in developing cultural and artistic skills in children as well as in promoting their spiritual education. She had been an English teacher and was appointed editor of *The Children's Friend*. When her service with May was abruptly ended, she wrote, "It poured rain during the night as if nature was weeping for May's death." She generously paid for May's hospital expenses, and wrote in her diary, "I have said good-bye to one of my dearest friends." [17]



**Adele Cannon Howells**  
Fourth General  
Primary President

Two months later, President Grant called her to serve as the fourth general Primary president. As counselors, she chose Dessie Grant Boyle (her lifelong friend and the prophet's daughter) and LaVern Watts Parmley. She established new creative sections in *The Children's Friend*, and began a

weekly local radio story time in 1946. The program was called *Children's Friend of the Air*, and it was followed in 1948 by a local TV quiz show called *The Junior Council*. Children contributed to the Penny Parade and donated nickels to help erect a "This is the Place" Monument. President Howells donated her own time and money to the building of a new Primary Children's Hospital, and invited children to give dimes to "buy-a-brick" for the effort. After the war, Primary children in the United States were encouraged to help Primary children in war-torn countries. Children donated clothing and toys to be shipped to Europe.

President Howells believed in the enriching effect of beautiful art and commissioned three murals for the baptismal area of the Idaho Falls Temple. To help children learn scripture stories, she personally paid for a series of Book of Mormon paintings by Arnold Friberg. Prints were published in *The Children's Friend* as part of the fiftieth anniversary of the magazine, and Sister Howells donated the originals to the Church. These unique paintings brought Brother Friberg to the attention of Cecil B. DeMille, who hired him to design sets and costumes for the epoch motion picture, *The Ten Commandments*.

For her community service, Adele Howells was elected to the Salt Lake City Hall of Fame. She always acted on her belief that material blessings were a means to helping others, and taught her three adopted children, "We must not keep everything for our own comfort."<sup>[18]</sup>

Several days after speaking in the Tabernacle for Primary general conference, she passed away. Her childhood rheumatic fever had weakened her heart, and her friend Dessie said she died "in the harness" as she had always hoped she would.

## 1951            *The Children Sing* Published

The "blue book" collection of songs for children was prepared by a joint committee from the Sunday School and Primary Association general boards. The songbook contained 199 songs and 13 devotional preludes. The

cover had an imprint of three children singing, and the contents were organized into seven categories with a divider page for each section.

This book contained “God Gave Me Dear America,” which was sung with energetic actions; a five-page arrangement of the “Crusader’s Hymn” (now entitled “Beautiful Savior”); and the original words to the “Handcart Song” (no text credit). Many hymns were included as well as seasonal songs such as “Jolly Old St. Nicholas.” The book was for the American Latter-day Saint, and required a high level of piano proficiency.

*Author’s Note: When I was eleven years old, I was asked to be Primary pianist for the Salt Lake Whittier Ward. I especially loved the classical preludes and postludes in the back of the blue songbook. Primary was on a weekday and I came straight from school to the meeting. I had everything I needed in one book. Although I had been studying piano for four years, many of the songs required a great deal of practice for me to play.*

The songs we learn in Primary remain indelible in our minds. How is that possible? At general conference, President Kimball was able to sing the words to every hymn even when he was ill and not able to stand and address us. During the filming of a Primary satellite program, President Ezra Taft Benson sang spontaneously to a group of children seated around him. This was a few months before he died, yet he remembered every word to his favorite Primary song, “I Am a Mormon Boy.” How can a song you have not sung for fifty or sixty years remain secure in your memory? Some of us are hard-pressed to remember who spoke in sacrament meeting last week, let alone what they spoke about. Yet, if you were to hear the tune to “Give Said the Little Stream,” all of the words would float back into your memory. Advertisers are willing to pay huge sums for catchy commercials because they know we can’t get the jingles out of our heads! If you watched TV in the 1950s, you will remember, “You’ll wonder where the yellow went when you brush your teeth with \_\_\_\_\_.” That jingle is over fifty years old, yet we can fill in the blank with Pepsodent. Research in connection with Alzheimer patients has shown that words and music memorized together remain after other parts of memory are lost. Knowing this should prompt us to teach the songs as permanent, singable testimonies laminated to children’s souls. William Wordsworth (1770–1850), a British poet,

expressed the idea by saying, “The music in my heart I bore. Long after it was heard no more.”[19]

## 1951–1974 LaVern Watts Parmley Fifth General Primary President

**LaVern Parmley** (1900–1980) was the mother of three children, an experienced schoolteacher, and a longtime Primary worker. Her youngest child was five years old when she was called to the Primary general board by Sister Hinckley, and she gave continuous service for the next twenty-five years. Sister Parmley served as a counselor to both her predecessors and had seen the Primary enrollment grow to more than 157,000 children. Children often referred to her as “Sister Primary.” With two sons of her own, and many brothers in a family of eleven children, she considered boys to be her “specialty.” Scouting for the eleven-year-old boys and Cub Scouting were introduced into Primary in 1953. President Parmley became the first woman ever called to a national Scouting committee and the first woman to receive the Silver Buffalo, the highest honor given in Scouting. The Great Salt Lake Council of the BSA said of her, “Probably no other woman has done more to develop and conserve America’s most precious resource—Boypower.”[20]



**LaVern Watts Parmley**  
Fifth General  
Primary President

The new Primary Children's Hospital on Twelfth Avenue and D Street in Salt Lake City was completed and dedicated in 1952. Years later, after an additional wing had been added, Sister Parmley said, "I think the most rewarding thing I've ever done in my life is to work with the hospital and to see... how many children it has helped."[\[21\]](#) At the conclusion of her service in 1974, the Church donated all medical facilities, including her beloved Primary Children's Hospital, to a non-profit organization.

During President Parmley's administration, the Primary general board consisted of seventy capable women who worked hard to perform to her high expectations. They were assigned to visit wards and stakes, and to prepare lesson manuals, training meetings, and general Primary conferences. For the April 1957 General Primary Conference, Sister Parmley asked Naomi W. Randall to write a new song to focus on teaching



children the gospel. The introduction of “I Am a Child of God,” the result of Sister Randall’s words and Mildred T. Pettit’s music, was an enduring contribution from her leadership. New Primary music materials were prepared, and *Sing with Me*, the first of three volumes, was published in 1969. Also, under Sister Parmley’s administration, *The Children’s Friend* magazine simply became known as the *Friend* in 1971. She served with two Church Presidents: David O. McKay (1951–1970) and Joseph Fielding Smith (1970–1972).

## 1969            *Sing with Me* Published

**Judith Wirthlin Parker**, Primary music chairman, directed the preparation of *Sing with Me*, which was distinguished by its bright orange cover. Musicians within the Church were asked to write on particular gospel topics to create a volume that would teach the doctrines through music. “The Golden Plates,” “Tithing,” “Book of Mormon Stories,” and many other songs were created that appealed to children and taught principles specific to the Church.

*Sing with Me* was published in 1969 and contained 217 songs. It was followed by an additional twenty-six songs and thirty-nine poems in *Activity Songs and Verses* in 1977. *More Songs for Children* was completed in 1978 with thirty-four songs, and then finally *Supplement to More Songs for Children* in 1982. The supplement had ten songs, including new class songs and songs from recent Sacrament Meeting presentations. Copyright information was included for the first time in the last supplement. The entire set of “orange” publications had expanded to 297 songs and thirty-nine verses.

Originally, it had been thought that each group of songs would be added to the first hardback spiral book. But in the end, each group was a separate item. That meant the total cost was higher, and it also meant a lot of looking to locate a particular song. The combined cost of the “orange” songbook materials, published from 1969 through 1982 was in excess of \$12.

1974–1980 Naomi Maxfield Shumway Sixth General Primary  
President

After serving eleven years on the Primary general board under Sister Parmley, **Naomi Shumway** (1922–2004) became the sixth general Primary president. As a leader, she combined a gentle manner and a giant capacity for dedication. Primary enrollment was 588,000 children and 116,000 leaders. In 1975, the Primary Parade was replaced with the Primary Birthday Pennies which encouraged members to donate to the Children's Medical Center according to their age.



**Naomi Maxfield Shumway**  
Sixth General  
Primary President

Sister Shumway was active in Scouting and received the Silver Fawn Award. Under her direction, Primaries throughout the world participated in the Primary centennial year with programs, parades, fairs, and tree plantings. She requested the writing of a musical to commemorate the life of Aurelia Spencer Rogers and the beginning of Primary. *Aurelia* was presented at the Promised Valley Playhouse, and scripts were available for use outside the valley. She said, “The needs of children are still the same as they were a hundred years ago, even though they might be met in different ways.” [22]

Responding to the worldwide growth of the Church, plans were made to combine the best parts of Junior Sunday School and Primary. New manuals were in process when the consolidated schedule was announced, and Primary was held on Sunday and expanded to one hour and forty minutes.

#### 1980–1988 Dwan Jacobsen Young Seventh General Primary President

**Dwan Young** (1931–) was called to the Primary general board in 1970, the year that her mother completed seventeen years of service on that board. Sister Young is the mother of five children, an accomplished musician, an active Scouter, and the recipient of the Silver Beaver, Silver Antelope, and Silver Buffalo Awards.



**Dwan Jacobsen Young**  
Seventh General  
Primary President

When Sister Young became president in 1980, Primary enrollment was 600,000 children and 126,000 leaders worldwide. With the consolidated meeting schedule, Primary was held on Sunday as it was when first organized. The additional block of time in Sunday Primary was named Sharing Time, and leaders were encouraged to actively involve children in teaching each other. Once again, the *Friend* magazine provided appropriate stories and activities that leaders could adapt for Sunday use. During her presidency, new lesson manuals were completed and the Gospel in Action program was implemented.

President Young's board consisted of fourteen women plus the presidency and executive secretary, and stake visits were as invited or assigned by the Priesthood. The wives of Area Authorities received auxiliary training to help with worldwide needs, and the auxiliary offices were moved into the Relief

Society Building to unify the work. President Young described Primary by saying, “Children worldwide are being taught the Gospel of Jesus Christ by loving teachers who are growing as they are serving.”[23]

The priesthood advisors to Primary requested that the Primary music resources be consolidated under one cover. This would reduce the cost of music materials. It was also suggested that the songs should be simplified so that more people in the Church could use the book. A survey of the use of Primary songs was made, and the majority of the preparation of the *Children’s Songbook* was done under Sister Young’s direction.

1985            *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* published

The 1985 hymnbook was published on the 150th anniversary of the first hymnal and is considered part of the scriptural canon of the Church. After issuing a call for submissions, the General Music Committee of the Church evaluated over 6,000 new hymns as well as those contained in the previous hymnal. They carefully sifted out those seldom sung and preserved hymns that represented the finest of former generations. Many of those retained have undergone editing of both text and music. The book contains 341 hymns; seventy-nine are *new* hymns and twenty-six are from Emma’s first collection. User-friendly features include seven indexes and a section on how to use the hymnbook. Each hymn includes a tempo marking, introductory brackets, author and composer birth and death dates, and scripture references. For the first time, ten songs written for children were included in the hymnbook.

1988–1994    Michaelene Packer Grassli Eighth General Primary President

**Michaelene Grassli** (1940–) became general Primary president in April 1988 after serving five years as a board member with President Shumway

and eight years as second counselor to President Young. She had spent many hours driving to meetings in Salt Lake from her home in Pleasant View near Ogden, Utah. Her stewardship included 664,000 children and 134,000 leaders.



**Michaelene Grassli**  
Eighth General  
Primary President

Sister Grassli participated in the development of the new songbook and saw the project to its completion in 1989. She said, “I don’t think the Church has published anything more lovely than this songbook. It was intended for families to use in their homes as well as for use in Primary. It does what the rest of the world can’t do for children, but what we do best—teach the gospel.”<sup>[24]</sup> Her presidency directed the work of translating and recording the songs. She was selected as the 2006 Utah Mother of the Year.

In April 1989, the completed *Children's Songbook* was presented at a celebration in the Assembly Hall. Authors, composers, and others who had worked on the preparation of the book attended. A children's choir performed, and the following unique features of the book were explained:

1. Beautiful two-page four-color illustrations divide the book into seven sections, with another 150 pieces of small art used to extend the message of the songs.
2. The accompaniments have been simplified and introductory brackets, fingering, and chord symbols are marked.
3. Obbligatos, descants, and ostinatos are provided to challenge older children.
4. Each song has several scripture references, and birth and death dates and maiden names are given for authors and composers.
5. The table of contents lists every song in each section, and there are three indexes—author/composer, topic, and title and first line.
6. A section called “Using the Songbook” provides instructions for teaching, conducting, and accompanying, and includes a chord chart and a dictionary of symbols and terms.
7. Copyright and royalty information is included on the page with each song.
8. The new book is directed to children as well as leaders, and contains 255 songs and thirteen preludes.

There have been many changes since the early music collections. Songs no longer encourage Saints to come to Zion as did the original verses of “The Handcart Song.” With the expansion of the Church, generic patriotic songs were needed to meet the needs of all Primary children. The songs in the 1989 *Children's Songbook* were selected to teach gospel principles in a worldwide Church. As its preface reminds us, “Music is a language that everyone can understand. Children all over the world sing these same songs.”<sup>[25]</sup> May the songs build testimony and strength in this generation, so that every child might know how and remember to act like a child of God.

# Notes

Line drawings by Beth Maryon Whittaker for my Aug./Sep. 1983 *Friend*, Sharing Time page 34–35 used by permission. Additional drawings of Emma Smith and Michaelene Grassli are the author's.

1. Rogers, *Life Sketches of Orson Spencer and Others, and History of Primary Work*, 207.  
[\[return\]](#)
2. *Ibid.*, 209.  
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3. *Ibid.*, 215.  
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4. *Ibid.*, 229.  
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5. Madsen and Oman, *Sisters and Little Saints*, 13.  
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6. *Ibid.*, 27; *Women's Exponent*, 8 Dec. 1879, 110.  
[\[return\]](#)
7. Rogers, *Life Sketches*, iii.  
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8. Madsen and Oman, *Sisters and Little Saints*, 29.  
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9. *Ibid.*; *Journal History of the Church*, 28 Apr. 1928, 4.  
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0. *Deseret Sunday School Songs*, 160.  
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1. Madsen and Oman, *Sisters and Little Saints*, 94.  
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2. Peterson and Gaunt, *The Children's Friends*, 41.  
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3. *Ibid.*, 53; "English-Born Leader Guides Destiny of 102,000 Children," *LDS Church News*, 4 Apr. 1964, 20.  
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4. Madsen and Oman, *Sisters and Little Saints*, 110.  
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5. Peterson and Gaunt, 67; Adele Howells' diary entries.  
[\[return\]](#)
6. Ibid.  
[\[return\]](#)
7. Ibid., 68.  
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8. Ibid., 75.  
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9. Graham, *A Children's Songbook Companion*, 8.  
[\[return\]](#)
0. Peterson and Gaunt, *The Children's Friends*, 95.  
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1. Ibid., 97.  
[\[return\]](#)
2. Madsen and Oman, *Sisters and Little Saints*, 190.  
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3. General Conference Primary Openhouse talk, unpublished.  
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4. Peterson and Gaunt, *The Children's Friends*, 157.  
[\[return\]](#)
5. *Children's Songbook*, preface, iii.  
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