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Buddy Youngreen

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THE DEATH DATE OF LUCY MACK SMITH:  
8 JULY 1775 — 14 MAY 1856

Buddy Youngreen

Several competent historians record the death date of Lucy Mack Smith as having occurred in May of 1855. That date must stand corrected in the light of three historical documents. The first source to challenge the 1855 death date is the journal of John Lyman Smith. In recording a visit with his Aunt Lucy on Monday, 2 July 1855, he writes, "Aunt Lucy has been confined to the bed for 10 months unable to walk with the rheumatism."<sup>1</sup> The second source is a letter verifying the sale of Egyptian papyri, dated 26 May 1856 and signed by L. C. Bidamon, Emma Bidamon (former wife of Joseph Smith, Jr.), and Joseph Smith (son of Joseph Smith, Jr.). The letter mentions that Lucy's death ". . . occurred on the fourteenth day of May last this month."<sup>2</sup> The third document, which establishes the year, day, and hour of Lucy's death, is a letter of Joseph Smith III's to Miss Emma Knight, dated (Friday) 16 May 1856, "Last Wednesday morning at 2 o'clock Grandmother died and yesterday we buried her."<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup>John Lyman Smith, Journal, Entry for Monday, 2 July 1855 (Original and microfilm copy in Special Collections, BYU Library).

<sup>2</sup>A photograph of the original letter is reproduced in *Brigham Young University Studies*, VIII (2):180 (Winter 1968).

<sup>3</sup>Xerox copy of original letter on file in the Utah State Historical Society.