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In Search of Elder John A. Clark

A distant relative of mine lies buried at the foot of Mount Caramel. His burial spot is visited regularly by General Authorities and all students attending the BYU Jerusalem Center make scheduled trips there to pay him homage. My knowledge of his untimely death remained unimportant to me most of my life. I had heard the story of my great, great grandfather, Ezra T. Clark, who had lost two sons in the mission field. One was the son of his first wife Mary, (my lineage) and John was the second son of his second wife, Susan. It was an interesting story, nothing more. Three years ago on a visit home I picked up my oldest brother's letter and read his glowing report of his recently acquired knowledge of John's death and burial. A picture of the gravestone accompanied the letter. I read and reread it. A small conviction began growing within me that I needed to know more about this young man who was buried in Haifa. So I began to write letters, enclosing a picture of the tombstone. After a year of letter writing I had received very few responses and no one seemed to know where I could get any more information. I realized I didn't know which other avenues to explore.

In the fall of 1992 I told the Lord of my problem and explained that I was at a standstill. If this truly was something He wanted me to do, He would have to show me the next step. A week later I received a long distance phone call from Salt Lake City. It was O.C. Tanner's secretary. Someone had forwarded my letter of inquiry to Mr. Tanner. He was the one who owned the original copies of all of John's letters from Palestine and was gracious enough to send me copies of all his information. What a wonderful, clear answer from the Lord.

After I received the letters I began the task of typing them on my computer. It proved to be a difficult job as I began to decipher his writing. Sometimes he wrote the letter horizontally and then vertically over the first letter. Then I received a letter from Gladys Farmer, another unknown relative. She asked me to share some of John's letters at a reunion in Salt Lake that summer. I would get to see the originals. So I pressed on. Just before reunion time the Church Historical Department asked O.C.Tanner for the originals. He complied, so I was especially grateful to have copies. Shortly after the reunion in the summer, O.C. Tanner passed away. So I now