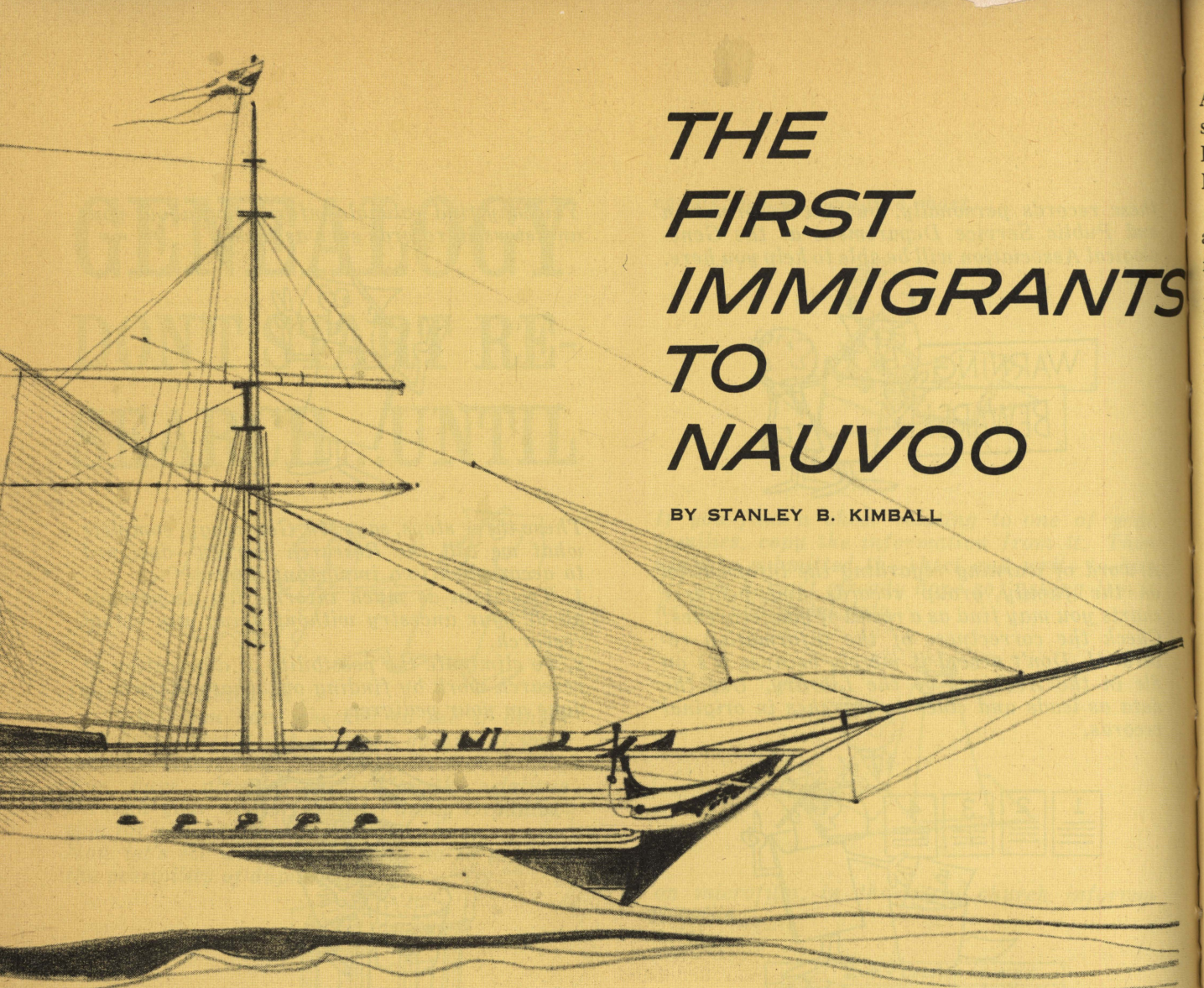




The Improvement Era

March 1963

THE ERA



THE FIRST IMMIGRANTS TO NAUVOO

BY STANLEY B. KIMBALL

The first foreign mission of the Church began when Heber C. Kimball and associates landed in England July 20, 1837.¹ Nine months later there were between 1,500 and 2,000 members of the British Mission. Since that time tens of thousands of converts have immigrated to this country—first to Nauvoo, later to Utah. This flood of immigrants began with a company of forty-one under the direction of Elder John Moon.

Sometime in November 1837, Heber C. Kimball went to the village of Wrightington in Lancashire (near Preston, which was then church headquarters in England). On the way he stopped at the home of a Francis Moon, a member of the Church. There he learned that the family of Matthias Moon had “sent a request for me to visit them.”² He did so, but felt that the family was prejudiced against the gospel. Several days later upon his return from Wrightington,

Elder Kimball felt “forcibly led” to the Moons. This time he was enthusiastically received and shortly afterwards baptized Matthias Moon, his wife Alice Plumb Moon, and their four daughters, Hannah, Dorothy, Lydia, and Alice. Sometime later the rest of the family consisting of five sons was baptized. Their names were Richard, William, John, Thomas, and Hugh. Elder Kimball reports that the sons were good musicians and the daughters were excellent singers.

Before Elder Kimball left England, April 20, 1830, he had baptized about thirty of the Moon family. The five sons of Matthias were all ordained to be “fellow laborers,” or missionaries.

For the next several years various members of the Moon family worked to spread the gospel. At a general conference of the Church held in Preston on

April 15, 1840, for example, Elder John Moon represented the Church at Daubers Lane neighborhood, Elder Francis Moon at Blackburn, and Elder John Moon at Leyland Moss.³

After the death of Father Matthias in 1839, his wife and some of the children and other members of the family decided to immigrate to the United States. Accordingly they left their home in Penwortham for Liverpool on May 20, 1840, where the Moon family became the core of the first company to leave England. The company consisted of Alice Moon, her brother-in-law Henry Moon, her sons John and Hugh, seven others of her family, Francis Moon, another Henry Moon, William Sutton, William Sitgraves, Richard Eaves, Thomas Moss, Henry Moore, Nancy Ashworth, Richard Ainscough, and twenty other members of these families.⁴ This company was officially organized by Brigham Young and others of the Council of the Twelve on June 1, 1840, Brigham Young's thirty-ninth birthday.⁵

This company under John Moon was blessed by Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young and given directions on how to reach Nauvoo. John Moon's younger brother Hugh was instructed by Elder Kimball to keep a record of their trip to Nauvoo. Since his comments are very brief they are here quoted.

"June 6, about four o'clock we were let loose in the river and set sail. June 7, Sunday most of us were sick, June 8, we had a strong boisterous wind. June 9, some of us began to be a little better.

"From this time until the eighteenth of June we had much sickness and sea-sickness, and flucks. Had a strong head wind. June 19, the passengers were aroused to much excitement by the sailors beating the old cook. The Captain and First and Second Mates were called. They laid hold of the sailor who began the fight to put him in irons, but all the balance took sides with him. After quite a stir they got the sailor quieted down again. June 28, we had a fine day, but much sickness again. July 2, we got to the banks of New Foundland, saw fishing craft, bought some fish. July 17, we cast anchor in the sight of the city of New York. We stopped in the river two days, then came to the city, stayed in the city eight days."⁶

During the eight days in New York City, Hugh, at least, stayed with some members of the Church there, the Addison Everett family.⁷ On July 28, the company started overland for Nauvoo. They took steamboat and train for Philadelphia, and slowly proceeded by way of Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. They arrived in St. Louis April 21, 1841, after nearly nine months on the way from New York.

They had done no traveling between August 21 until April 3, but spent the winter in Pine Township

near Allegheny City, not far from Pittsburgh. While there their Uncle Henry Moon died January 19, 1841 at age seventy-one. Their brother Thomas also died on October 2, 1841.

From St. Louis they took a river-steamer and arrived at Montrose, Iowa, (opposite Nauvoo) April 16, where they immediately moved into a log cabin about half a mile from the river.⁸ Shortly afterwards they all took sick with the fever from which their mother Alice Moon died August 14, 1841 at Montrose.

Hugh was ordained a high priest in the Masonic Hall at Nauvoo January 12, 1845, and John was called on a mission to Maine. In April 1846 he moved to Nauvoo where he married Maria Emeline Mott, a daughter of Able Mott of Montrose.

During the mobbings at Nauvoo in 1846, he, his wife, two sisters, and a brother John, moved back to Montrose. In May of 1848 Hugh made himself a wagon and moved his family west. He fell in with the Moses Witeer company which later joined Amasa Lyman's company, and they all reached the valley of the Great Salt Lake October 18, 1848.⁹

Apparently John Moon remained behind in Montrose for some time. The record says that he died of cholera en route to Salt Lake City on July 12, at age forty-five. This would place the year of his death in 1854.

When this first company of converts arrived in New York City, 1840, they sent a notice back to England of their success which was printed in the *Millennial Star*, September 1840. It reads: "When thousands and tens of thousands are emigrating from this land to America, New Holland, etc., hoping by their industry to get a morsel of bread cheaper, and easier than they now do, and thus escape the miseries of hunger which some are already enduring, we rejoice that a few poor Saints find it in their hearts and can get the means to do likewise."

The second company of 200 converts left Liverpool on the *North America* September 7, 1840 under the direction of Elder Theodore Turley and William Clayton. The third and last company for that year left October 15th on the *Isaac Newton* with fifty Scotch Saints. They sailed for New Orleans, a more direct and less expensive route since it was an all water journey via New Orleans up the Mississippi to Nauvoo. Thereafter the New Orleans route was the main one.

This change of routing was undoubtedly the result of a letter which Joseph Smith wrote in October 1840 to the twelve in England in which he said, "I think that those who came here this fall did not take the best possible route, or the least expensive."¹⁰ Brigham Young himself directed all migration until April 1841 when he returned to Nauvoo. By that time

[illegible][illegible]

Journals of the time listed the date sailed, the name of the ship and the port from which it sailed, the group leader, number of Saints aboard, and the port of entry, popular of which was New Orleans at the mouth of the Mississippi River.

1,020 converts had migrated.

Francis Moon, uncle of John and Hugh, wrote two letters back to England entitled "Advice to Emigrants." In the second one, printed in the *Millennial Star* in February 1842 he warned future emigrants in a candid fashion that they would face difficulties and advised them to lay in a "good supply of patience," to have "great courage," and to put on the "whole

armour of God," to beware of "some whose tongues are smoother than oil, but the poison of asps is under their tongue." He says that they would find some who are wicked and deceitful.¹¹

In spite of this frank advice so many converts desired to emigrate that it taxed the Church to take care of them and to absorb them into the economy of the harassed and persecuted stakes in and around Nauvoo. In relation to this problem the Council of the Twelve, just before they left England for their return trip to Nauvoo, wrote a General Epistle to the Saints in England on April 15, 1841, setting forth the following advice and admonition.

“It will be necessary, in the first place, for men of capital to go on first and make large purchases of land, and erect mills, machinery, manufacturies, etc., so that the poor who go from this country can find employment. Therefore, it is not wisdom for the poor to flock to that place extensively, until the necessary preparations are made. Neither is it wisdom for those who feel a spirit of benevolence to expend all their means in helping others to emigrate, and thus all arrive in a new country empty-handed. In all settlements there must be capital and labor united, in order to flourish. . . . Building cities cannot be done without means and labor. . . . We would also exhort the saints not to be in haste, nor by flight, but to prepare all things in a proper manner before they migrate.”¹²

One of the last things the apostles did before leaving England was to appoint Elder Amos Fielding as "agent of the Church, to superintend the fitting out of the Saints from Liverpool to America."¹⁸ This was occasioned by the fact that many Saints had been robbed and cheated by pickpockets and others who took advantage of their poor judgment and inexperience while in Liverpool awaiting ship. This step eventually led to the chartering of vessels for the purpose of saving passage money, buying provisions wholesale, and avoiding bad company, and ultimately to the creation of the Perpetual Emigrating Fund which functioned from 1849 to 1887.¹⁴

Such is the story of the first immigrants to Nauvoo. Incomplete records show that over 3,300 British converts migrated to Nauvoo by the time of the exodus west in 1846.¹⁵ The strength and faith of these converts did much to build up and fortify the Church during the period of persecution when Joseph Smith was murdered and the Church was driven by mobs from Nauvoo. *(Continued on page 209)*

The First Immigrants
to Nauvoo

(Continued from page 180)

FOOTNOTES

¹See author's article, "First Mission to Great Britain," *The Improvement Era*, Vol. 64, no. 10, Oct. 1961.

²For this story see Orson F. Whitney's *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (2nd ed., Salt Lake City, 1945), pp. 162-165.

³*Documentary History of the Church*, IV, pp. 116, 118.

⁴See *DHC*, IV, 134, and photo, page 180 of this article, for those of this company who appeared on the ship's manifest.

⁵In 1840 seven of the Council of the Twelve were in England for the following reasons: On July 8, 1838 Joseph Smith received a revelation (contained in D&C 118) that the Council of the Twelve must be organized "and next spring let them depart to go over the great waters, and there promulgate my gospel. . . ." Accordingly seven of the subsequently formed council arrived in Preston, England, April 20, 1840, exactly two years after Elder Kimball and others finished their mission there. The apostles in England in 1841 were Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, George A. Smith, Orson Hyde, and Willard Richards.

⁶This journal and other papers pertaining to the Moon family are contained in "Biographical Sketches of the Moon Family of Malad, Idaho" typed MSS, Brigham Young University Library, 1955. The section of Hugh Moon is contained in pages 23-38. The section just quoted is from page 25.

⁷Addison Everett later became a carpenter on the Nauvoo Temple. *DHC*, VII, p. 326.

⁸Many members of the Church, including Brigham Young and Wilford Woodruff, originally lived in Montrose before moving to Nauvoo. Some lived in an abandoned army barracks. While the company of John and Hugh Moon was the first to leave England, it was not the first to arrive in Nauvoo. The first converts actually to arrive were about 100 members of the second group led by Elder Turley and William Clayton in October 1840, nearly seven months before John and Hugh Moon. The reason for this was the nearly eight month layover of John and Hugh in Pennsylvania.

⁹In Salt Lake City, Hugh camped in the field of Simon Baker and helped him with his crops. Later they moved to their "appointed location" in the first ward, lot number 1 of block 17, and built a cabin 10 by 41 feet. He later made a living making molasses from beets. From this he started making a "strong drink . . . for medicinal purposes. . . ." He later bought a farm in Farmington, Utah, and stocked it with cattle and hogs. When the Authorities requested him to stop making strong drink he dutifully complied and went into the rope and twine business.

In 1861 he and his family were called to the "Dixie Mission." He took two of his wives and ten children with him and

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stayed in St. George for five years.

In 1869 he moved to Malad, Idaho, and bought a farm there. One year later he died at age 55. In the interests of the Church Hugh Moon had sacrificed much. He left his home in England, lost most of all he had in the Nauvoo area, gave up two profitable businesses in Salt Lake City at the request of the Authorities and to accept a call to go on a mission. (For this story in detail see MSS cited in note 6.)

¹⁰DHC, IV, 230.

¹¹His first letter, written November 1840 and printed in the *Star* February 1841, was of no special importance but does contain the following interesting facts about economics in Nauvoo in late 1840. A worker earned about \$1.00 a day for farm work plus one-fifth of the potatoes he dug, or one-eighth of the corn he cut. A 196 pound barrel of flour cost \$4.50, potatoes twenty cents a bushel, beef and pork 3 cents a pound, butter 10 to 14 cents a pound, and sugar 12 cents a pound.

¹²DHC, IV, p. 346.

¹³*Idem.*

¹⁴The Fund advanced money, which had been collected by the Church in Utah, to poor emigrants in England for transportation. They were expected to repay the loan as soon as possible after arrival in Utah.

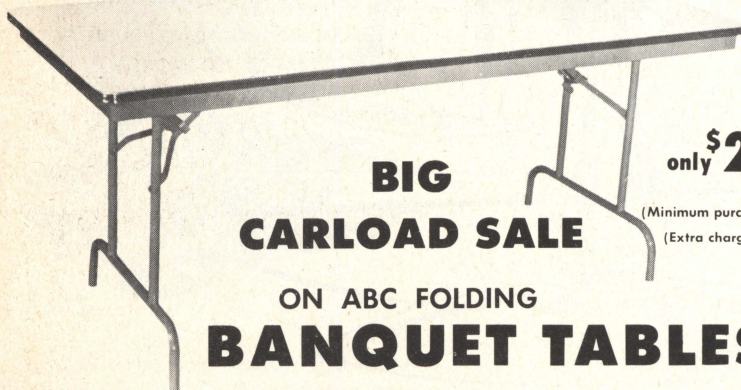
¹⁵By 1920 over 52,000 British Saints had migrated. Eleven General Authorities of the Church, including President John Taylor, were British-born. For these and other interesting statistics see Richard L. Evans, *A Century of Mormonism in Great Britain* (Salt Lake City, 1937), pp. 242-248.

Peace

(Continued from page 185)

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