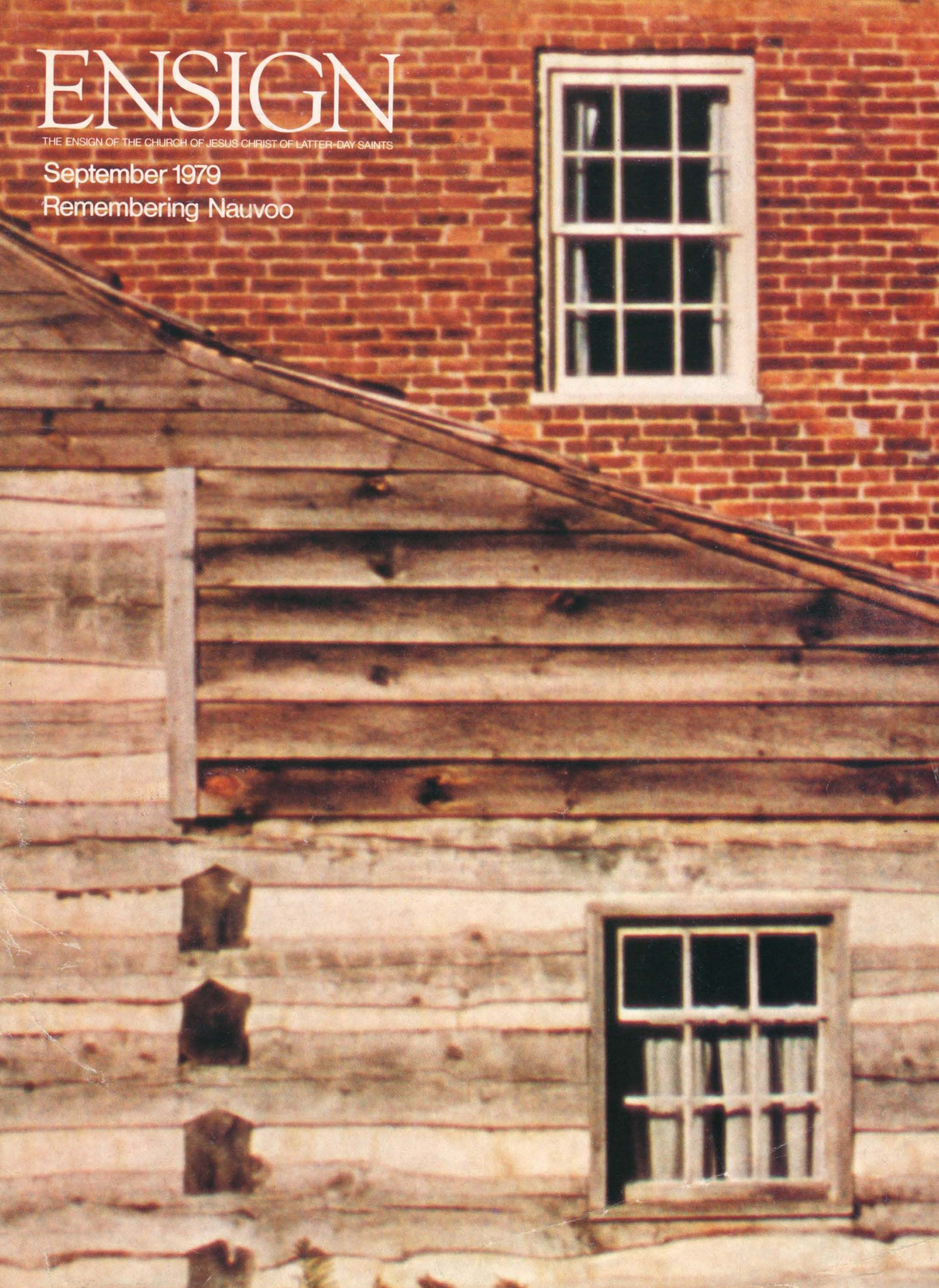


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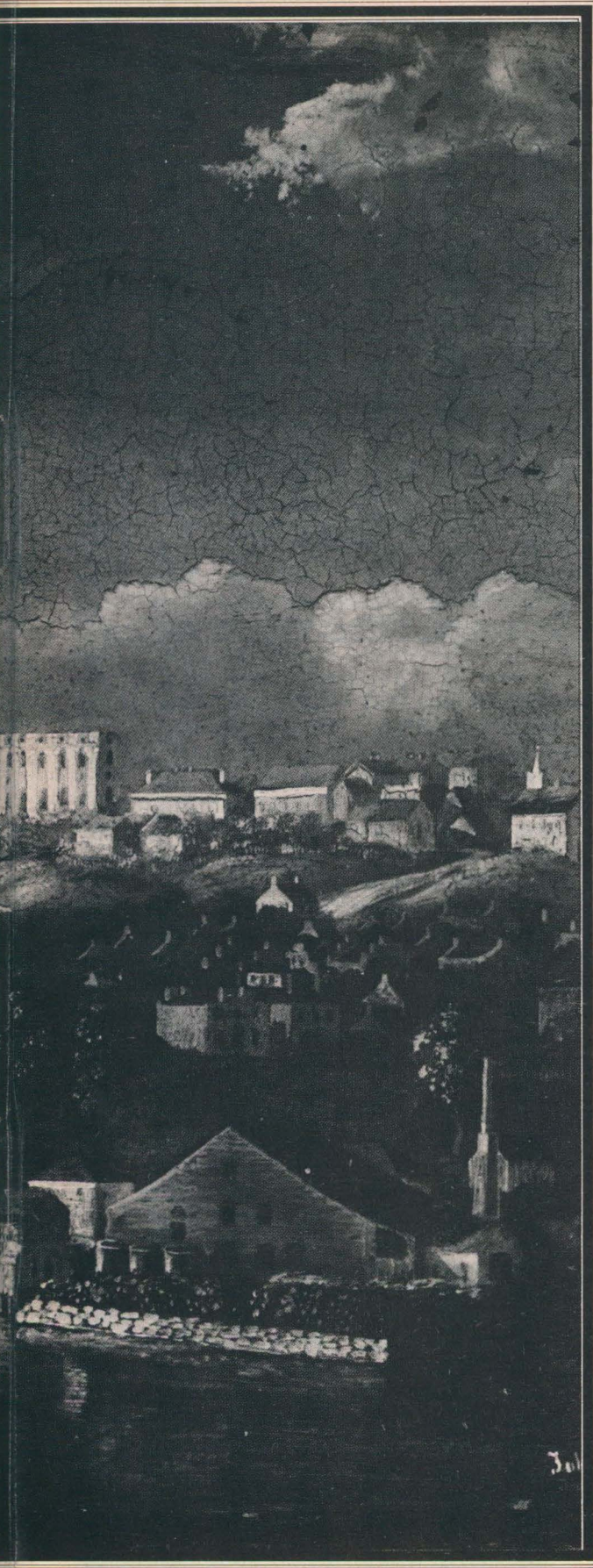
THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

September 1979

Remembering Nauvoo







Painting by John Schroder, c. 1840

They Came to Nauvoo

By Lavina Fielding Anderson
Assistant Editor

After the Prophet's martyrdom, Nauvoo became "the City of Joseph" to the Saints. But it was their city, too. Some Saints came early, when the city was still known as Commerce. Others arrived later, but their sacrifices were just as great. For a time, many saw it as a refuge from their tiring travels—a symbol of the gathering of the righteous.

Their stories are the stories of Nauvoo: the insistent spirit of gathering that brought them to this new Zion, the problems of adjusting to Nauvoo and of making that unhealthy bend in the Mississippi adjust to them, their beloved memories of Joseph Smith in both life and death, the hard-won and dearly cherished temple, and the sorrow of leaving their city behind.

For Mosiah Lyman Hancock, Nauvoo was one in a series of refuge cities. He was born in Kirtland where his parents had met and married the year before. From there they moved to Missouri. He was only four when his family was driven out, and he remembers walking barefoot across the ice into Quincy, "for there were so many poor Mormons there; and mother said she wanted to get where we could have a home of our own, even if we had to camp under a tree for a while." So they went on to Commerce—some of the first to arrive—and camped under a cherry tree until they could build a home.

As a carpenter, his father had a grimly appropriate duty during those desperate first months in Nauvoo—coffin-making. But it was not always enough to support the family, especially when he was sick. "I have pulled up grass and ate it, also basswood buds and elmbark," Mosiah wrote in his autobiography years later. With his whole family ill, Mosiah would fill a quart cup at the spring about sixty yards away and painfully return on his hands and knees, placing the cup ahead of him and then crawling till he reached it, repeating "the pilgrimage until my knees and elbows would be worn near the bone!"¹

Author's original spelling has been retained, following standard historical practice. See reasons for spelling variations in "Nineteenth-Century Spelling," ENSIGN, Aug. 1975 — including uncertain spelling conventions and expression of spelling as an personality.



But all the hardships in Nauvoo were not caused by sickness and poverty. Margaret Gay Judd Clawson, who came to Nauvoo with her family as a child of ten in the spring of 1841, recalls trials of a purely human sort. From the day of her mother's baptism, "her one thought . . . was to gather with the Church, and now she was in their midst." They first found shelter in the crowded city with a former traveling companion, Chauncy Noble, and his "grumbling" nonmember wife. Her mother's misgivings and her determination not to quarrel were all one-sided, for Mrs. Noble "took great pleasure" in recounting "all the apostate lies she could hear."

The final straw came, however, when Mrs. Noble became enraged at the sight of little Margaret reading the Book of Mormon and threw a cup of water over her and the book. The Judds were "delighted to get out of a comfortable house into all the discomforts of a shanty" where they could at least set their own tone for the home.² Like many discontented people, Mrs. Noble finally left, but not before she had persuaded her husband away too.

Louisa Barnes Pratt, taught the gospel by members of her family who were already baptized, felt the same passionate desire to gather to Zion. She



Bathsheba W. Smith.

and her husband, Addison Pratt, left their home in Buffalo, New York, at the same time the Saints were being expelled from Missouri, so the Pratts settled in Indiana. But Louisa was still restless, even though they had a fine farm, lived near her sister, and she had a horse and carriage of her own to use. "Those who did not know the inward workings of my mind complimented my pleasant surroundings. In vain I

strove to be contented; my heart was set on going to the church." Finally they were able to make the necessary arrangements, and Louisa, leaving her beloved sister, her comfortable home, and her peaceful life for the privations and discomforts of Nauvoo, comments, "I never felt in finer spirits."

The difficulties of making a living in Nauvoo were suddenly increased when Addison was called as one of the first missionaries to the Pacific islands. Faced with the prospect of supporting herself and their four children, Louisa says, "My heart felt weak at the first, but I determined to trust in the Lord, and stand bravely before the ills of life, and rejoice that my husband was counted worthy to preach the gospel."

Pluckily she arranged to build a com-

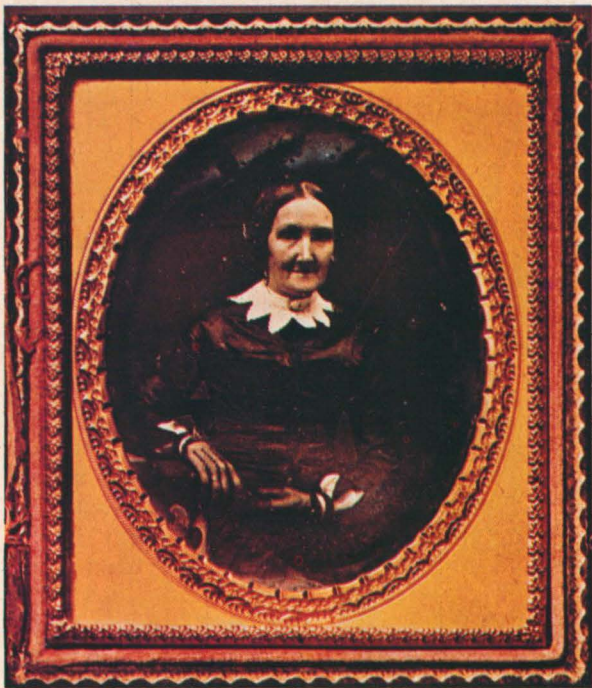
fortable home, nursed her children through the measles, trained her own horse, tailored for a clientele that included the Prophet and Hyrum, and started a school. Like the other residents of the city, she shared the grief of the Church at the martyrdom. "I thought the Church was ruined forever!" she remembers. "I rushed into my garden when the news was confirmed and poured out my soul in such bitterness as I had never felt before. . . . The women were assembled in groups, weeping and praying, some wishing terrible punishment on the murderers, others acknowledging the hand of God in the event. I could feel no anger or resentment. I felt the deepest humility before God. I thought continually of his words 'Be still and know that I am God.'" Added to the grief was fear lest the mob attack Nauvoo, leaderless and defenseless.

When the Twelve returned, Louisa heard Brigham Young's own grief-stricken words, "'Had I been here, Joseph should not have gone to Carthage.'" The bare idea that any one, or many, had been in fault was terrible to me. Had Joseph given the command, every man, woman, and child would have stood to his defense, even to the loss of their own lives." Her deepest comfort came from Willard Richards, the only man to escape unwounded from the events at Carthage: "He said everything to console the people: what it was to accomplish a purpose in the Almighty disposer of events; referred to many remarks of the Prophet Joseph during his confinement, showing that he was aware of his approaching dissolution; of the hymns they sang in prison, and how calm he was."

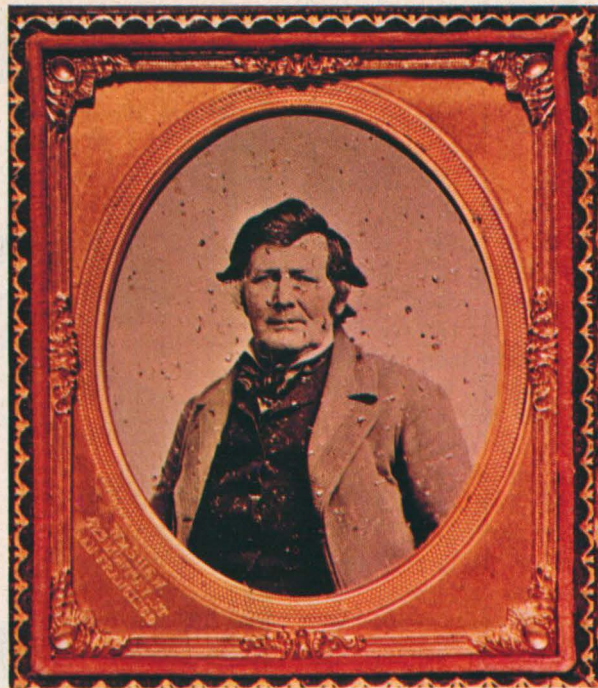
The Prophet's sacrifice increased her own devotion. "We all struggled hard to bear our great bereavement, and not suffer our lips to curse our enemies. Our hands and hearts were employed to hasten the completion of the Temple. The sisters even resolved to pay fifty cents each towards buying nails and glass." By the utmost sacrifice, Louisa scraped together the amount and then, en route to the temple office, was assailed by the long list of things her family needed. But she resisted this "temptation" and firmly resolved, "'If I have no more than a crust of bread each day for a week, I will pay this money into the treasury.'" I went forward, paid over the money, and returned, feeling a secret satisfaction." The next morning, a brother leaving town tossed her a silver dollar as he passed.

Without her husband or other relatives, Louisa was among those who felt overwhelmed by the exodus, and wrote to Brigham Young for advice. His answer was cheerful and clear: "Ox team salvation is the safest way." Wondering why "those who had sent my husband to the ends of the earth did not call to inquire whether I could prepare myself for such a perilous journey," she heard the answer: "'Sister Pratt, they expect you to be





Louisa Barnes Pratt.



Addison Pratt.

smart enough to go yourself without help, and even to assist others.' The reply awakened in me a spirit of self-reliance. I replied, 'Well, I will show them what I can do.' " She rose to the occasion, outfitted herself, and drove out of Nauvoo feeling "comparatively happy."³

For others, Nauvoo was more of a gathering place than a home. Andrew Jackson Allen, for example, was a Kentuckian who heard the gospel and, curious, went with his brother James to Nauvoo, "having Dezier [desire] to se the proffert Joseph Smith & the temple." Their timing was bad; they arrived only a few days after the martyrdom. "I had expected to Be baptised when I got to Nauvoo But the proffit Beeing killed and the people feeling so Bad I Returned Home and did not."

Then in 1845, he heard the Saints being summoned to gather in preparation for the exodus, and "the Spirit that had prompd me on former accasions still prompd me to gether with the Saints, and I soaled [sold] my possessions for what I Could get and Emmigrated to nauvoo in /46 in frebruary, And was Baptized my self and wife in the Missou. rivver in april and started to the west with the Saints not knowing where they would settle down."⁴

The laconic understatement of Brother Allen's account contrasts with the picture of Nauvoo left us by others for whom the city was home, if only temporarily. Two of these were Howard Coray and Martha Jane Knowlton, and their memories centered on the Prophet. Howard, baptized in Illinois in January 1839, met the Prophet at April conference in Nauvoo and was hired

on the spot as his clerk.

One evening in a playful mood, the Prophet jokingly said, "Brother Coray, I wish you were a little larger. I would like to have some fun with you." Disregarding an arm crippled since birth and the seventy pounds Joseph Smith outweighed him by, Howard was eager for the challenge—and ended up with a broken leg.

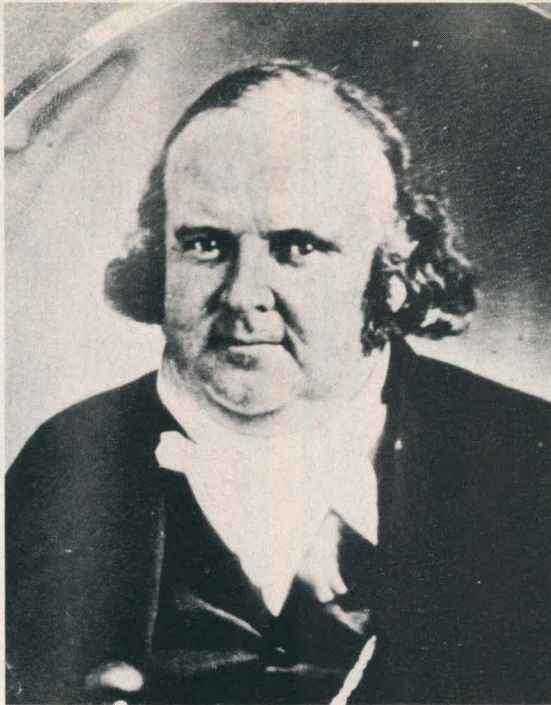
The Prophet, smitten by remorse, watched over his convalescence anxiously and, when asked for a blessing, promised Howard: "You will soon find a companion, one that will be suited to your condition, and whom you will be satisfied with. She will cling to you, like the cords of death; and you will have a good many children."

A few weeks later, Howard remembered the Prophet's blessing as he attended conference. "My eyes settled upon a young lady, sitting in a one horse buggy . . . She had dark brown eyes, very bright and penetrating; at least they penetrated me; and I said to myself, she will do; the fact is, I was decidedly struck." Instead of going home for dinner after conference, he lingered on the grounds until he saw the young lady walking with a female acquaintance of Howard's. He promptly planted himself squarely in their path and met "'Miss Martha Knowlton from Bear Creek.' I, of course, bowed as politely as I knew how, and she curtsied, and we then fell into, somewhat familiar conversation. I discovered at once, that she was ready, off hand, and inclined to be witty; also, that her mind took a wider range, than was common for young ladies of her age.

This interview, though short, was indeed



very enjoyable; and closed with the hope that she might be the one whom the Lord had picked for me; and thus it proved to be. I shall not go into all the details of our courtship; suffice it to say, every move I made, seem[ed] . . . in the right direction. I let Bro. Joseph into the secret. . . . He seemed to take uncommon interest in the matter, took pains to see her and talk with her about me, telling her that I was just the one for her.”⁵ Their marriage was both happy and fruitful. Of their thirteen children, twelve grew to adulthood. Both Howard and Martha were involved in helping Lucy Mack Smith produce her influential biography of her Prophet son, though Martha’s contribution was the most substantial.



Willard Richards, the only man to escape uninjured from Carthage Jail, comforted the Saints by telling them of the Prophet’s fore-knowledge of his death.

The Prophet Joseph took an active part in Nauvoo’s daily life. Years later in southern Utah, Brother J. W. Crosby recalled some warm and neighborly memories of him: “He was strong and active, and could build more rods of good fence in one day than most men could do in two; and he always left his fence clear of everything that might gather fire, such as underbrush, loose limbs, and tall strong weeds.

“He was orderly. His woodyard was an example of order. Logs were neatly piled and all trash cleared away. If he did not finish the log on which he was chopping, the remnant was laid back on the pile, and not left on the ground for a stumbling block. The chips he made he picked up himself into a basket, and put them in a wooden box which stood in the woodyard, or carried them into the house to be burned.”

Once when the Prophet’s ax was stolen, Brother Crosby loaned him his own—not purely as an act of neighborly charity—since he knew the Prophet’s “unfailing habit” of resharpening a borrowed ax before returning it.⁶

Marriage, raising families, and making a living were the great substrata of life that continued regardless of persecution, martyrdom, and exodus. Missions were too.

Bathsheba Wilson Bigler Smith, a West Virginia convert, sent her husband George

on two missions within the first two years of their marriage. She was left with the responsibility of plastering their new log home in Nauvoo and of caring for their young son and vegetable garden. A letter dated 16 July 1843, soon after his second departure, contains a few sentences that share her sorrow at the separation: “O my Dear it is nothing to cry when one feeles as I did when I saw the boat going down. I was pleased to think you would not have to wait any longer, but then how could I bare to have it carry you off so rappidly from me. I watched it untill I could not see it any longer then I held my head for it aked. . . . George A. [their little son] cryes pa. He feeles bad. He wants to see

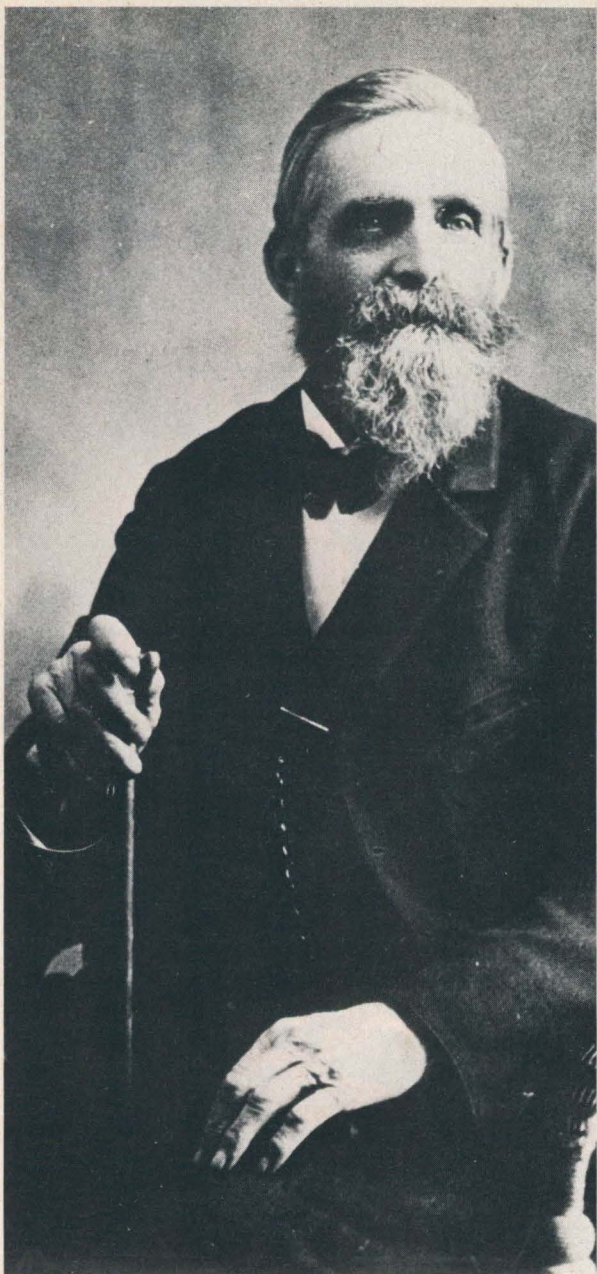
you. He often goes to the door to see you.”⁷ But their sacrifice meant service. George would later become a counselor to Brigham Young; Bathsheba herself would preside over the General Relief Society for years.

The missionaries themselves sometimes left with heavy hearts. Lorenzo Hill Hatch, a convert from Vermont and an orphan after his parents died in Nauvoo, left Nauvoo for his first mission on a cold, rainy April day in 1844. “Amagen [Imagine] my feelings onley 18 year old boy Elder preaching to Strangers & turned out of Dores & derided.” A seventy-year-old uncle was interested and called a meeting of the neighbors. Lorenzo “felt So Small” at the prospect of preaching alone; he “Spent the Day in Prayer & reading my pocket Bibel. The time came. A full house asembled.”

And the results? “I had greait liberty,” said the young elder, using a phrase that, in those days, meant inspired discourse. “Now that I am 69 years of aige & have held thousands of publick meetings & have ben greatly blest but no time have I felt more of the power of God than at that meeting.” At its end, two women, including his aunt, testified “that I had brought them the gospel.”

Two months later, Lorenzo was holding meetings with Elders Erastus Snow and William Hyde when Brother Snow “Said Something was rong in Nauvoo & he must go & See the Saintes.” It was June 27, the day of the martyrdom. The news was





Lorenzo Hill Hatch, who arrived in Nauvoo at age seventeen in 1843, later crossed the plains with the Saints in 1850 and assisted in the colonization of Lehi, Utah; Franklin, Idaho; and a settlement in Arizona.

confirmed by a letter from Lorenzo's relatives, which also stated that Sidney Rigdon was the leader of the Saints. In the very act of reading it, Lorenzo records, "I received the word of the Lord which Said Brigham Young is the man God has chosen & I have never doubted the thruth of this from that time to the Present. My hart has been fild with gratitude for I was 15 hundred mildes from Nauvoo & no man to councel with. God alone was my Suport."⁸

Meanwhile, back in Nauvoo, the Lord was making his will known to people about the man whom he had chosen to lead the Church. George Laub would not begin his journal until 1 January 1845, but he included a sketch of his life up to that point and poured into it his memories of that last year at Nauvoo. Among those memories was Joseph Smith's famous King Follett Discourse of 7 April 1844, a major doctrinal statement on the nature of God. George's journal also contains one of the earliest known contemporary accounts of an equally famous event: when "the mantle of Joseph" fell upon Brigham Young, 8 August 1844. George recalls being in the congregation, listening attentively to Sidney Rigdon claim to be "guardian" of the Church. But "when President Young arose to address the congregation his Voice was the Voice of Bro. Joseph and his face appeared as Joseph's face, & Should I not have seen his face but herd his Voice I Should have declared that it was Joseph."⁹

Probably not everyone had this experience, but for those who did and for others to whom the Spirit bore a different but equally strong testimony, the way was clear. Many of them had poured their labor into the temple, nearly all contributing from their scanty resources, many working one day in ten as tithing labor, and some working full time on it. For them, the sacrifice was worth it, even though they abandoned the temple within weeks of its dedication. With the reticence of those writing about sacred things, Lorenzo Hatch notes that he "got my Endowments the last day that the Tempel was opend."¹⁰ Almost immediately they crossed the river, prepared to go west.

Tempered by tragedy and strengthened by sacrifice, the members of the Church prepared to begin the next chapter of their search for a home. □

Notes

1. Mosiah Lyman Hancock, *Autobiography*, typescript, Church Historical Dept. Archives, pp. 17, 19-20.
2. Margaret Gay Judd Clawson, *Autobiography*, microfilm of holograph, Church Historical Dept. Archives, pp. 3, 13-15.
3. Louisa Barnes Pratt, "Autobiography," *Heart Throbs of the West*, comp. Kate B. Carter (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1947), 8: 224-36.
4. Andrew Jackson Allen, *Autobiography*, holograph, Church Historical Dept. Archives, pp. 140-41.
5. Jeffery O Johnson, "Martha Jane Knowlton Coray: 'Masculine in Her Strength of Character,'" manuscript, Church Historical Dept., pp. 3-5.
6. Martha Cragun Cox, comp., "Reminiscences of Joseph Smith," typescript, Utah Historical Society, pp. 5-6.
7. Bathsheba Bigler Wilson Smith, Letters, cited in Kenneth M. Godfrey, Audrey Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, book manuscript, Church Historical Dept. chapter five, "Nauvoo: Bonds of Affection and Affliction," pp. 1, 9.
8. Lorenzo Hill Hatch, *Autobiography*, holograph, Church Historical Dept. Archives, unpaginated.
9. Eugene England, ed., "George Laub's Nauvoo Journal," *BYU Studies* 18 (Winter 1978): 166.
10. Lorenzo Hill Hatch, *Autobiography*.

