

CHAPTER Eight

“THIS LAND IS NO LONGER MY HOME” THE TREK WEST

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints held its first general conference in the bowery by the Nauvoo Temple on October 6–8, 1845. Immediately following the sustaining of the Church’s General Authorities, Brigham Young announced that members of the Church should prepare themselves to leave Illinois the following spring for a new home in the West:

a country where the air, the water, soil and timber is equally free to every settler without money or without price, the climate healthy, and the people free from unjust and vexatious lawsuits, mobocracy, and oppression of every kind.¹

The following day, Heber C. Kimball acknowledged that “there is a constant running to the Twelve, and saying, ‘Can’t we go in your company?’” He reassured his listeners that “we calculate you are all going in the first company, both old and young, rich and poor; for there will be but one company.”²

Brigham's Saints heeded the call that they believed came from God. Illinois governor Thomas Ford, no friend of the Mormons, recalled that:

During the winter of 1845-'6 the Mormons made the most prodigious preparations for removal. All the houses in Nauvoo, and even the temple, were converted into work-shops.... The people from all parts of the country flocked to Nauvoo to purchase houses and farms, which



Figure 58: Thomas Ford, Illinois' Accidental Governor

Thomas Ford, born in 1800 in Pennsylvania, practiced law and served as judge before discovering that he had been named as the Democratic candidate for governor after the original candidate died just before the election. He won, thanks to the support of Joseph Smith and the Mormons. Yet it was he who abandoned the Prophet Joseph to the mob at Carthage, and he who tricked the Saints into their haphazard and premature departures from Nauvoo. Despite his real achievements in curtailing corruption he left office in 1848 nearly bankrupt, in part because he had refused customary bribes. After his legal practice sputtered, he spent the two years before his death nursing his dying wife and writing a history of Illinois that he hoped would provide for his five young children.

Lithograph, unknown artist and date. Courtesy of the Church History Library.

were sold extremely low, lower than the prices at a sheriff's sale, for money, wagons, horses, oxen, cattle, and other articles of personal property, which might be needed by the Mormons in their exodus into the wilderness.³

In January, months before the Saints scheduled departure in the late spring, Ford hit upon a stratagem to clear them out even earlier. As he explained in a book published posthumously in 1854:

But with a view to hasten their removal they were made to believe that the president would order the regular army to Nauvoo as soon as the navigation opened in the spring. This had its intended effect; the twelve, with about two thousand of their followers, immediately crossed the Mississippi before the breaking of the ice.⁴

This first party, led by Brigham Young and including most of the Twelve, became known as the "Camp of Israel." Originally conceived as an advance party, however, it included only a minority of the roughly 12–15,000 Saints then in Nauvoo, most of whom continued their preparations until later that spring, when they could be sure to find grass for their animals growing on the prairie.⁵

THE HESS FAMILY'S JOURNEY TO MOUNT PISGAH

The Jacob and Elizabeth Foutz Hess family were the first of the Foutz cousins to leave Nauvoo. Worried about the logistics of caring for his partially paralyzed father, the Hess's son, John W., apparently convinced the family to join with his new brother-in-law Daniel A. Miller's party. Daniel and his brother Henry W. Miller were not only younger and stronger than Jacob Foutz, but were also scouts for Brigham's "Camp of Israel," building bridges, establishing campsites, and stockpiling firewood for those to follow. Leaving early in the process also meant that if

the family were delayed, they could be sure that it would take months or even years for the remaining body of pioneers to pass them.⁶

Brigham Young told the Saints that, for every five people in their party, they were expected to supply themselves with a covered wagon (with an axle width of five feet, to standardize the ruts they would form), “3 or 2” yoke of oxen, a waterproofed tent, livestock, and a year’s supply of food, clothing, money, and tools—requirements the “almost destitute” Hess family had no reasonable chance of meeting.⁷ John W. explained that:

The best I could do was to rig up two old wagons and two yoke of oxen, one of which was my own personal property. I had arranged one of these wagons with a bed cord for my father to lie upon, as he could not sit up. It took one entire wagon for his convenience and that was poor enough. This left one wagon to be drawn by one yoke of oxen to carry the outfit for the entire family—eight in number—while all the family had to walk every step of the way, rain or shine; but notwithstanding all these difficulties, we fixed up the best we could, and on the 3rd day of April 1846 we started, crossed the Mississippi River and camped on the Iowa side the first night in a drenching rain.⁸

Things did not get better:

[W]ith our heavy loads and the incessant rain... we could only travel from five to eight miles a day. As my father occupied one of the wagons, the rest of the family had no shelter only what they could get by crawling under the wagons, and much of the time we were obliged to cut brush to lay on the ground to keep our beds out of the water. Women and children walked through the mud and water and wet grass and waded many of the streams so that their clothes were never dry on them for weeks and months.

BILL OF PARTICULARS	
FOR THE EMIGRANTS LEAVING THIS GOVERNMENT NEXT SPRING.	
Each family consisting of five persons, to be provided with	
1 good strong wagon, 25 do Seed grain, well covered with a 1 gal. Alcohol light box.	20 lbs of Soap each family.
2 or 3 good yoke of oxen.	15.
Between the age of 4 and 10 years.	14 or 15 Fish hooks and lines for do.
2 or more mitch cows.	15 lbs. Iron and Steel.
1 or more good beeyves.	A few lbs of wrought nails.
3 sheep if they can be obtained.	One or more sets of saw or grist mill. Tools to company of 100 families.
1000 lbs. of flour or other bread or meal stuff in good sacks.	15.
1 good musket or rifle to each male over the age of 12 years.	2 each of Pally Blankets and ropes to wash only for crossing rivers.
1 lb. Powder,	1 good Seta and hook for each company.
4 do Lead,	From 25 to 100 lbs of Farming & mechanical tools.
1 do Tea,	Cracking utensils to consist of 4 Bake stoves, frying pan, coffee pot, & tea kettle.
5 do Coffee,	10 cups, plates, knives, forks, spoons, & pans as few as will do.
100 do Sugar,	A good tent and furniture in each 2 families.
4 do Cayenne Pepper,	Clothing & bedding to each family not to exceed 500 pounds.
2 do Black do,	Ten extra teams for each company of 100 families.
4 do Mustard,	
10 do Rice for each family,	
1 do Cinnamon,	
1 do Cloves,	
1 do Nutmegs,	
25 lbs Salt,	
3 do Saleratus,	
10 do Dried apples.	
4 bush. of Beans.	
A few lbs of dried Beef or Bacon.	
5 lbs dried Peaches,	
20 do do Pumpkin,	

N. B. In addition to the above list, horses and mule teams, can be used as well as oxen. Many items of comfort and convenience will suggest themselves to a wise and provident people, and can be laid in in season; but none should start without filling the original bill.

Figure 59: Brigham Young's Packing List

This "Bill of Particulars for the Emigrants Leaving This Government Next Spring" appeared in the Nauvoo Neighbor on October 29, 1845, when the Church believed they had until mid-April 1846 to prepare themselves for a trek that would last a few months. Though the Bill warned that "none should start without filling the original bill," mob violence forced many Saints from their homes before they were fully supplied.

The Bill informed prospective pioneers that a family of five would need "1 good strong wagon, well covered with a light box" and "3 or 2 good yoke of oxen between the age of 4 and 10 years" to carry the recommended food stuffs, tools, and other supplies listed here. That expectation proved as wildly optimistic as a summer 1846 arrival in the Valley. Fully loaded wagons were so heavy they had to be repeatedly dug out of the mud and required 6 or 8 head of oxen (3 or 4 yoke) to climb mountain passes and other steep hills. In addition, the recommended 1000 lbs.

of flour spoiled easily in the rain or snow that many pioneers encountered. Later parties were advised to pack more lightly and plan to replenish their supplies at forts and settlements along the way. (And no, that's not a typesetter's error. Early Church members did take coffee, tea, and the occasional medicinal whiskey. Strict observance of the Word of Wisdom was not a general expectation for Saints in good health until the turn of the twentieth century.)

Nauvoo [Illinois] Neighbor, 29 Oct 1845, 3:1; digitized image CHL Nauvoo Neighbor/Vol. 3, no. 23, M205.1 N314 October 29 1845, 3.

Though the family had avoided the bitter cold that bedeviled the Saints who had left in February, they still had to fight their way through thick, gluey mud that swallowed their legs to their knees, their wagons to the axles, and their horses to their bellies.⁹ By the time the Hesses made it to Mount Pisgah, a hundred miles east of Winter Quarters:

our limited supplies were about exhausted and my father was so much worse that it was impossible to move him any further. We therefore constructed a temporary shelter of bark which we peeled off from the elm trees that grew in the vicinity. This was about the 15th of June.¹⁰

Two weeks earlier, on May 30, Brigham Young had instructed families who were not fully prepared for the trek to stay in Mount Pisgah until they were, raising crops, resting and breeding their animals, preparing clothing and blankets, and earning money by hiring themselves out to local Gentiles as casual labor. Already exhausted by the many sacrifices he had made for his family, however, John W. wrote:

Seeing I could do nothing where I was, I concluded to take my own team and what I had and go to Council Bluffs, one hundred miles distant, where the Church authorities were then stopping. I therefore made my fathers family as comfortable as I could with the limited faculties I was in possession of taking my wife and my own team and little outfit, bade the rest of the family good-by and started, traveling in Henry W. Millers company.¹¹

The decision may have made sense to John W. and Emeline, but those they were leaving felt it like a blow.¹² Though Father Jacob Hess knew he was dying, he roused himself long enough to extract a promise from John W. that he would see that his mother and younger siblings were cared for and brought safely to the Rocky Mountains.¹³

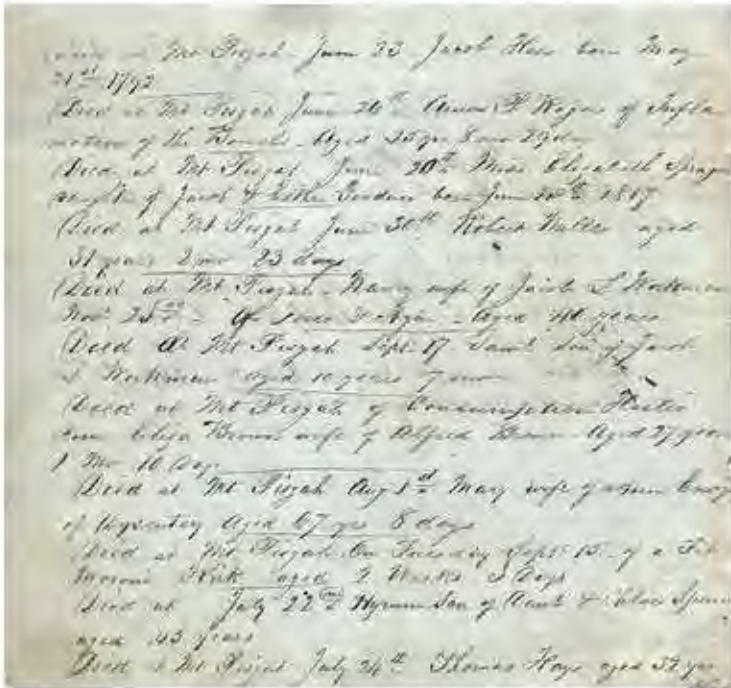


Figure 60: Record of Deaths, Mount Pisgah, Iowa, Summer 1846

Jacob Hess's name appears at the top; his son-in-law Thomas Hay[e]s at the bottom. Hayes' widow, Polly, later married Abram Workman, brother of the Jacob Workman whose wife and son's deaths are mentioned here.

Mount Pisgah Branch journal circa 1846, CHL LR 11973 21, Record of Deaths – 1846, item 68.

A week later, Jacob Hess died. His next oldest son, David, then nine years old, reported a confused memory of burying his father in “hewn timber” before exhuming the body and reburying it in a proper coffin the following spring; he was probably referring to a practice described by Zina D. Young:

enough help could not be had to make coffins, and many of the dead were wrapped in their grave clothes and buried with split logs at the bottom of the grave and brush at the sides, that being all that could be done for them by mourning friends.¹⁴

In the autobiography he composed forty years later, John W. remembered hearing of his father's death:

which took place the 22 June 1846 at the place I had left him. In as much as he could not recover I was thankful to God that He had relieved him from his suffering although it was a dark hour for my poor mother to be left in such a desolate and sickly place without her natural protector with four small children and nothing to live on.¹⁵

In fact, Elizabeth had been left with five children to feed and, as John would have known when he wrote those words, was days away from becoming responsible for three more.

Richard Bennett characterizes the Saints' experiences in Iowa in 1846 as:

a period of unmatched agitation and disruption. Everything was in transition. Their society, economy, leadership councils, even their doctrines, patterns of worship, and religious practices, were uprooted and distended, transported and re-evaluated.¹⁶

This was certainly true for Elizabeth Foutz Hess. When she brought her husband and children into the Church a dozen years earlier, she had believed they were embarking on richer, more meaningful lives on earth as well as in heaven. As she wept over her husband's emaciated body and prepared to consign him to the God she loved, Elizabeth wouldn't have been human if she had not also counted the cost of their discipleship: the loss of homes, three children to death and two daughters, Sarah and Mary Ann (Johnson) who had decided to stay behind in Illinois instead of following the Church; and now her husband, her steadfast and only companion during the wrenching decisions and sorrows of the life they had made together.¹⁷

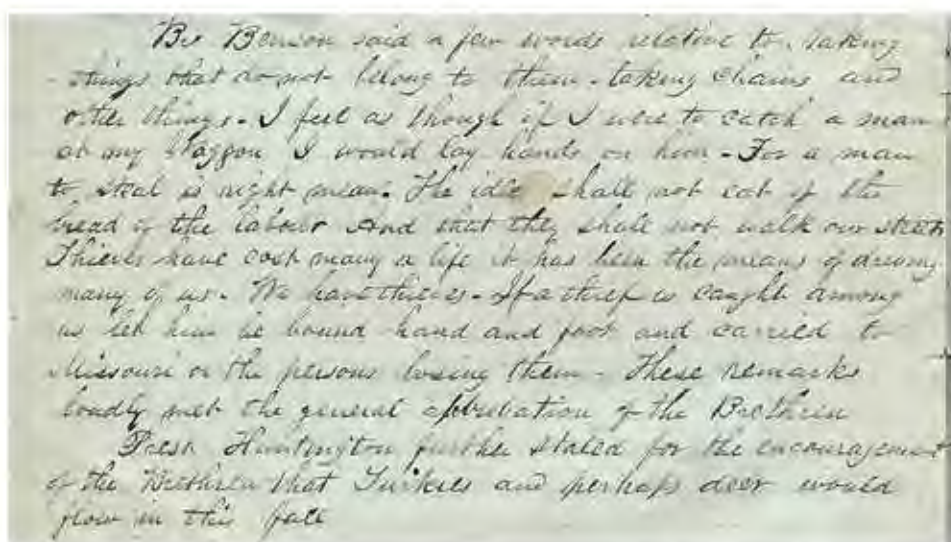
In the first weeks following Jacob's death and John W's departure, Elizabeth relied on the support of her daughter Polly's

third husband, Thomas Hayes.¹⁸ Hayes, three years older than his mother-in-law, was an old friend from Richland County, Ohio who had converted to the faith at the same time as the Hesses, and moved with them to Ray County, Missouri before fleeing to Bear Creek, Illinois; and now Mount Pisgah. But a month almost to the day after Jacob's death, Thomas Hayes also died, probably from a combination of malnutrition and exhaustion.¹⁹ Soon afterward, Polly Hess Hayes' wagon was stolen.

The loss of Polly's wagon was more catastrophic than it may seem. Driven to produce as much food as possible before the winter they hadn't counted on spending in Iowa, Church leadership asked the settlers to delay building cabins until after the October harvest. Since Thomas died July 24, that wagon not only stored all the family's possessions, including foodstuffs, linens, and tools, but probably served as their only home.²⁰

Like the loss of the wagon, the loss of the Hess family's only remaining adult male relative had repercussions that went beyond their love for Thomas and the work and physical protection he provided.²¹ Without someone to represent them in the priesthood councils of the Church, their needs were easy for busy men to overlook at a time when every family, even the most blessed, felt insecure. Thievery was a common problem in Mt. Pisgah. When livestock or other large possessions went missing, the men of the family typically organized a posse and took the matter into their own hands, searching the countryside until the objects were, more often than not, found and recovered (as seen in the next chapter). As women, Polly and Elizabeth were not in a position to organize a posse and go charging off on horseback waving a loaded gun. More important, neither they nor their community had a mechanism that would allow them to represent their needs to the overworked men who could.²²

As the fall hardened into winter, Elizabeth waited in vain for news from John W. and Emeline. Then, about three weeks



Br Benson said a few words relative to taking things that do not belong to them - taking chains and other things. I feel as though if I were to catch a man at my wagon I would lay hands on him - For a man to steal is right mean. He idle shall not eat of the bread of the laborer And that they shall not walk our streets. There's have cost many a life it has been the means of driving many of us. We have thieves - If a sheep is caught among us let him be bound hand and foot and carried to Missouri or the persons losing them - These remarks loudly met the general approbation of the Brethren
Pres. Huntington further stated for the encouragement of the Westsiders that Turkeys and perhaps deer would grow in this fall

Figure 61: Sermon Condemning Thievery in Mount Pisgaah, Summer, 1846.

“Br. Benson” is Ezra Benson, then serving as a counselor to President Huntington, who would be dead within a few weeks. This excerpt points out the physical aggression that maintained public order. Note also Pres. Huntington’s reassurance that the Saints would be able to supplement their diet with wild turkeys and other game as winter approached.

Mount Pisgah Branch journal, CHL LR 11973 21 item 16.

before Christmas, 1846, Bishop David Evans, the man who had converted Elizabeth and her family, passed through Mount Pisgah on his way to Missouri. As the two old friends caught up, Bishop Evans mentioned that both of them had children in the Mormon Battalion: his son Isaac, and both her son John W. and his wife Emeline.

Elizabeth knew, of course, about the Mormon Battalion.²³ Brigham Young, desperate for funds to see his people through the approaching winter and hoping for a strategic advantage in future negotiations with the U.S. government, had agreed to furnish Captain Allen of the U.S. Army with five hundred men to defend Southern California in the war with Mexico. Men who

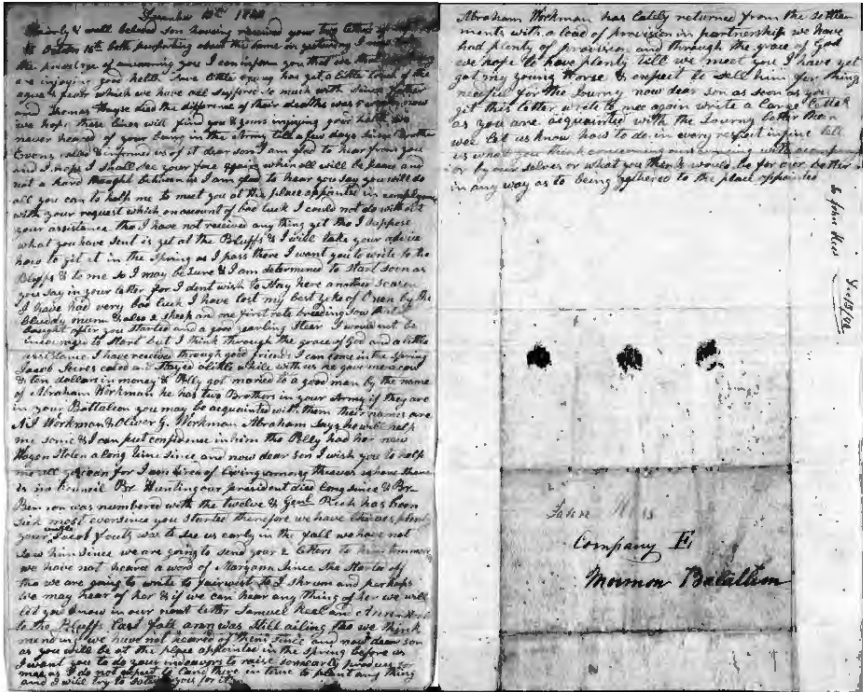


Figure 62: Elizabeth Foutz Hess letter, December 13, 1846/47

Image credit: Elizabeth F. Hess to John Hess, 1846 December 13, Mormon Battalion correspondence collection, 1846, CHL MS 2077.

joined up were expected to surrender the \$42 clothing allowance each as well as a significant portion of their future salaries to Church headquarters, who would in turn use the money to support their families during the hard winter ahead. But John and Emeline had told Elizabeth that they were going to Council Bluffs to earn money to help the family move west in a few months' time, when the roads were once more fit to travel. Could they really have abandoned her and the other children without a word? What would happen to them now?

A few days later, Elizabeth received two letters from her boy which confirmed Bishop Evans' unsettling news. He and Emeline were more than a thousand miles away, preparing to spend the winter in Santa Fe before marching on to San Diego

the following spring. Elizabeth took the evening to read the letters, compose herself, and obtain a sheet of writing paper and some ink. The next day, December 13, 1846, she started a letter to her “Dearly and well beloved son:”²⁴

I can inform you that we that are living are injoying good helth save little emmy has yet a little touch of the ague & fevar which we have all suffered so much with since father and Thomas Hayse died the difference of their deaths was 5 weeks.

After reinforcing their family ties, Elizabeth points out that “we never heard of you being in the army till a few days since [ago] when Brother Evens called & informed us of it,” before immediately reassuring John that “dear son I am glad to hear from you and I hope I shall see your face again when all will be peace and not a hard thought between us.” While Elizabeth wants John to understand the predicament she and his younger siblings face, she is also aware that her access to the financial and protective resources he and other men control is contingent on his goodwill. Her love and regard for her son are authentic. But so is her reluctance to spell out the difficulties his behavior has created for the family, because she worries that such complaints might offend and estrange him further. Notice the way she frames the loss of Polly’s wagon as a breakdown of the institutional priesthood that would otherwise stand in her son’s place:

now dear son I wish you to help me all you can for I am tired of living among thieves when there is no Council. Br. Hunting our president died long since & Br. Benson was numbered with the twelve & Genl Rich has been sick most ever since you started therefore we have thieves plenty.²⁶

She thanks John for his promises of support, simultaneously reinforcing his stated commitment while alluding to the consequences to the family if he fails to honor it.

I am glad to hear you say you will do all you can to help me to meet you at the place appointed in compliance with your request which on account of bad luck I could not do without your assistance tho I have not received anything yet tho I suppose what you have sent is yet at the Bluffs & I will take your advice how to git it in the spring as I pass there.²⁷

Elizabeth details the livestock she has lost over the winter, including her best team of oxen, then anticipates a possible effort on John's part to deflect responsibility for the family's problems on to his Uncle Jacob Foutz. She explains that though "your unkle Jacob Foutz was to see us early in the fall we have not saw him since we are going to send your 2 letters to him tomorrow."

Anxious not to overwhelm her son, she includes what good news she can while providing an instructive example of another young man who looked beyond his immediate self-interest:

I would not be encouraged to start but I think through the grace of God and a little assistance I have received through good friends I can come in the spring. Jacob Secres called and stayed a little while with us he gave me a cow & ten dollars in money & Polly got married to a good man by the name of Abraham Workman.²⁸

Elizabeth sent the letter, and prepared herself to wait as patiently as she could for a reply.

In the meantime, her family soon faced another trial. Mount Pisgah had been founded to take advantage of its spring, which provided the settlers with a reliable water supply.

Unfortunately, it also attracted rattlesnakes, especially in the spring when they awoke from their winter stupor. Thomas Bullock remembered that "April ... brought out rattlesnakes in numbers that evoked memories of Pharaoh's plagues."²⁹ Rattlesnake bites were usually not fatal to humans, but took a decided toll on even previously robust livestock, killing many of the pioneers' horses

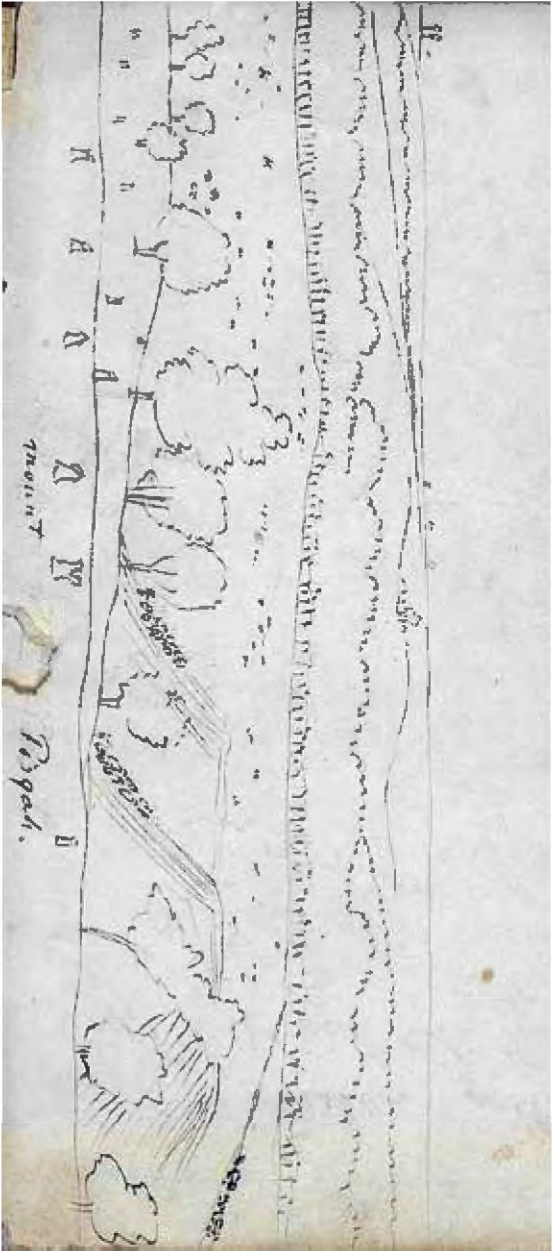


Figure 63: Peter Hanson Sketch of Mount Pisgah

Parley P. Pratt, who named the settlement after the mountain from which Moses saw the Promised Land, described the haunting beauty of its site in his journal. "I came suddenly to some round and sloping hills, grassy and crowned with beautiful groves of timber, while alternate open groves and forests seem blended in all the beauty and harmony of an English park, while beneath and beyond the west rolled a main branch of the Grand River, with its rich bottoms of alternate forests and prairie." Today Mt. Pisgah's springs, a few wagon ruts, and a small monument are all that remain.

Sketch by Peter Hanson, Heber C. Kimball's adopted son, May 1846. Heber C. Kimball papers, 1837–1866, CHL MS 627, Journal, 1846 May–1847 February, 3.

and oxen and further delaying their progress—something that Elizabeth had alluded to in her recent letter.³⁰

David, now aged ten, bore most of the responsibility for cultivating the family's small plots of corn and buckwheat, along with his eight-year-old brother Alma. When David was bitten by a snake, the family initially hoped for the best. But after a year without adequate food or shelter, his half-starved body could not shake off the effects of the venom. He took to his bed, weakening day by day until, after a month, death seemed certain.

Like other women in her time and place, Elizabeth did not have direct access to her community's corridors of financial and legal power. Without a husband or other concerned male relative, she had likewise been denied the indirect access that her more fortunate sisters could claim via their husbands, fathers, or grown sons and sons-in-law. But there was another source of power unique to the Mormon community that she could still claim: the power of a priesthood blessing. David later summed up what must have been at the time a harrowing experience in a single sentence, an unwitting testimony of the family's matter-of-fact reliance on their faith and the priesthood ordinances that made it visible: "In the following spring I was bitten by a rattlesnake, and for over a month was confined to my bed, being finally healed through the ministering of the Mormon Elders."³¹

David goes on to describe an agreement that Elizabeth made with Lorenzo Snow, then presiding over Mount Pisgah, probably as a gesture of her gratitude to the Lord for the healing of her son:

Apostle Lorenzo Snow, early in the Spring of 1847, knowing we had been disabled by the loss of one yoke of our oxen, promised that, if we would let him have our remaining oxen and wagon for the use of the Mormon pioneers, who were going to the Salt Lake Valley, he would see that we had a complete outfit with which to go

to the Lake the following season. No part of this promise ever materialized which caused us two years delay in reaching the Valley, and untold suffering from hunger and privation.³²

At the end of May, 1847, Elizabeth traveled to Council Bluffs. She may have gone to deliver the wagon, planning to return with the help of a son-in-law or friend. She may have gone to help her recently married daughter Ann Elizabeth move into her new home, or to inquire after her share of the money John had told her was waiting for her there, or because her brother Jacob Foutz had received the letters she had forwarded to him from John W., and sent word that, his health being what it was, she would need to come to him if she wanted a visit.

We don't know exactly what she hoped to achieve with the trip. But we do know she was disappointed. The Mormon Battalion payments had been dispersed months earlier. And her brother Jacob, who had saved her family so many times before, could not consider doing so now. His recently married daughter—named Elizabeth for his sister—had fallen ill and appeared to be dying. Brigham Young had asked her new husband, Henson Walker, to join his advance team as a scout. Determined to exercise her faith, young Elizabeth had announced to her family that, dying or not, she had arranged to follow after her husband with the help of his adoptive parents. Unwilling to let their daughter die without them, Jacob and Margaret Mann Foutz, along with their nephew Jacob F. Secrist, were making hurried preparations to accompany the Big Company.

Elizabeth's trip to Council Bluffs effectively stripped her of her last potential sources of rescue. Stunned and in desperate need of comfort, Elizabeth made her way to the house of her old neighbor and daughter-in-law Emeline's sister, Hannah Bigler Miller, on the afternoon of June 1, 1847.³³ Her timing, had she but known it, was inspired.

Anxious to get the advance company to work in the Salt Lake Valley before returning to the main body of the Saints in Iowa that fall, Brigham Young had refused to allow his wives and those of the Twelve to go West with their husbands. Some, like the noted midwife Patty Sessions, would leave as part of the “Big Company” in four days’ time. Others, like Eliza R. Snow, were settling in to await Brigham’s return and their departure the following spring. Freed from the necessity to cook, clean, and look after their husbands and sons, the women decided to put the last few precious days they would spend together praying for and strengthening one another. On their own in a way they never had been before, the sisters opened themselves to overwhelming spiritual manifestations that revealed their own considerable spiritual power and capacity.³⁴

That night, Eliza R. Snow wrote:

tu [Tuesday] June 1st This is truly a glorious time with the mothers & daughters in Zion altho’ thrust out from the land of our forefathers & from the endearments of civiliz’d life... in the afternoon visited at sis. Miller’s in com of Priscinda Zina, sis. Chase, Cristene &c. after supper Whitney, Kimball, Sessions came in and we had a spiritual feest in very deed.... Language cannot describe the scene.”³⁵

Elizabeth knew both Eliza Snow and Patty Sessions from the time they had spent together in Mount Pisgah the previous summer. Later that night, after recording her own description of the “spiritual feast” they had enjoyed together in her journal, Patty Sessions added the following extraordinary words, “sister Hess fell on her knees and claimed a blessing at my hands. I then blessed her.”³⁶

Elizabeth didn’t hope for a blessing; she claimed one. And in return, she received the spiritual endowment she had been longing for since the temple dedication at Nauvoo, the endowment of power and love that would enable her to continue

on in the face of blow after crushing blow. The blessing did not solve Elizabeth's problems, but it gave her the confidence to confront them more honestly and directly than she had previously imagined she could.

Elizabeth and her family had to endure another hot and disease-ridden summer and cold, hungry winter before John W. finally sent them a third letter, which informed them that he and Emeline had made it safely to the Valley.³⁷ This time, Elizabeth responded with the crispness of a woman at home with her own perceptions, even when those perceptions implicated those who had authority over her.

Deare Sone my heart is grieved when I see it is my lot to stay in Pisga another year and you in a fair distant Country from us. last Spring I let my oxen and Wagon go under the promis of gitting to go on this spring but alas my Son I have got to stay altho the Council promised me that I should have agoing on if I would do so. The covinenet of promise is broekn on their part my Son. Their plee is now that you got the oxen out of the hands of this organisation and they are no longer bound to me.... It is hard getting along Without a teem.³⁸

Her years of faith have created an internal sense of dignity that allows her to specify exactly what she needs from John while drawing his attention to the suffering the family has experienced while waiting for his long-promised help:

Dear Son I Want you and your uncle and nephew to unite together and one of you Come this fall and Winter With us and aist [assist] me. This do for God's Sake and for my Comfret [comfort]. Harriett is going to quincy [Illinois] to work for Clothing³⁹ I have suffered much with sickness since I saw you last. You wanted to [k]no[w] if we had heard any thing of Stephen and Mary ann and Sarah. We have not heard

any thing of them since we left Nauvoo where they are gone the Lord only knows.

The most remarkable passages of the letter reveal Elizabeth's growing confidence in her own value. She spends nearly half the letter sharing her thoughts, desires, and spiritual ponderings with the son who has disappointed her so many times:

my Sone when I get to studien [studying] on the past When We was all living on Bair Creek together and the present state some dead some gone I know not where, we and some of the children in pisga and the rest of my friends their in the valley, I can only say, "Thy will be done, O Lord" & "how long till thy handmade can enjoy the society of my companion and here [her] children where sickness Death and parting will no mor bee?" If I had adopted myself into their family [in other words, if she had consented to be sealed to a church leader] I might I suppose have to Come but that I will not do, for you know that father desired that you should direct this affair. my Sone I will not be adopted to any family until I see you. I want that we should all belong to the same family. My Son I have often thought of the dream which I dreamed the mountain which I had to Cross. Shall I not? I have, I think, Clim the mountain of suffering and trial for along time.

She concludes by offering the only material gift she has to give: the work of her own hands.

and now my son I send you some few little things with Jacob Workman: one pair of socks, one pair stockings, some stockin yarn, some sewing thread, and one par of yarn suspenders, and one pair of mittings and one cap for Emaline.... Our best love to you and yours and all enquireing friends.

Six months later, without any word from John W. and facing a third miserable winter in Iowa, Elizabeth found the courage to write a third letter. This one, though shorter than the other two, confidently demands that the Church make good on its earlier promise to supply her with the wagon and team she needs. Moreover, she does not direct it to her branch president, but the most senior official then in Iowa: Apostle George A. Smith, who was charged with overseeing the emigration of the Saints remaining in Iowa. Though she is so unpracticed addressing those in authority over her that her tone verges on the obsequious (she writes “I humbly implore your majasity a favor” and pleads that he “let thy majesty Consider of my situation”)—the short, direct letter is a triumphant witness of the confidence and courage Elizabeth had wrought from her Mount Pisgah ordeal.⁴⁰

The Lord apparently agreed. A few weeks later, Elizabeth answered the door to John W., his tired horse, and some dusty, matted pack mules. In the joyous week of reunion that followed, he told her that she was going to be a grandmother again, and that Emeline sent her love. He also explained that he had arranged to work for Orson Hyde over the winter in Kanessville, but would return in the spring to take his family home.

Even happy endings aren't perfect. The prairie winter that year was so bitter cold that Apostle Hyde dismissed his workers after only a month. As spring approached, and unable to secure any other work, John grew more and more worried. But true to his word, when spring came:

I took all the means I had and bought with it a wagon and a yoke of oxen hitched them up and went down to Pisgah to bring mother's family as far as the bluffs, not knowing where the rest of the outfit would come from but mother helped and with another interposition of kind providence, when I got back I found the country swarming with emigrants on their way to the gold fields of California. On finding that I had come over the road,

they hired me for a guide, giving me two hundred dollars in cash in advance. This was truly a blessing from the Lord that I had not thought of. I was able to get the rest of my outfit.⁴¹

I like to believe that kind Providence offered that particular gift on behalf of their beloved daughter Elizabeth, and that, courtesy of her long ordeal, Elizabeth had earned the spiritual maturity to recognize the gift for what it was, and tuck it warmly about her heart.

Not everyone felt the joy of that gift. To young David's disgust, "the rest of the outfit" included twenty head of sheep. Writing eighty years later, his outrage undimmed, David sniffed that "Barefoot and half clad though I was, the burden of driving the sheep fell upon me, then in my twelfth year."⁴²

John W. managed to dislodge the Forty-niners who had hired them after only a few days:

I could then travel to suit myself, which I did.... On the 27th July I again arrived in Salt Lake Valley, having accomplished one more magnanimous act by bringing my dear mother and her four children to the home of the Saints. I found my dear wife, Emeline, well and with her first children in her arms.... This was indeed a happy meeting.⁴³

The families moved to neighboring houses in Farmington, a farming community about fifteen miles north of Salt Lake City. On March 12, 1852, Elizabeth received her endowments at the Endowment House in Salt Lake, where she was sealed the next day to her beloved Jacob. She lived in her Farmington home, surrounded by her family and serving the God who had never forgotten her, until her death in 1876.



REDEEMING THE NAUVOO COVENANT

When Brigham Young officially announced the Saints' departure from Nauvoo, he reminded his listeners that "When we were to leave Missouri the Saints entered into a covenant not to cease their exertions until every saint who wished to go was removed." He told them that he wanted "to see the same principle carried out now, that every man will give all to help to take the poor; and every honest, industrious member who wants to go" (*Journal History*, 6 Oct 1845). This principle became known as the **Nauvoo Covenant**. Its emphasis on the covenant responsibility Church members bore to God and each other was confirmed three months later when Brigham Young received the revelation now canonized as section 136 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

In the short term, the Church simply didn't have the resources to honor this commitment to its poor. The shortfall was equally agonizing to those who were denied help and their empty-handed leaders. The plight of William Terman and the Union Branch over which he presided was typical. After leading a party of immigrants to Nauvoo in the fall of 1843, he had been ordained a Seventy. But the death of his wife, financial difficulties, and his (non-member) mother's demand to go home in the violent aftermath of the Prophet's murder had returned the family to Franklin County. When a letter from Levi Thornton announced that Brigham Young had called the faithful to go West (see fig. 51), a worried Terman begged the prophet for reassurance that neither he nor his congregation would be damned or forgotten:

March the 7th, 1846

Quincy Township, Franklin County, Pennsylvania

dear Sir I understand that the church is going westward from nauvoo and invites all its members to go long; and hear am I placed under circumstances that I cannot get going along with you this spring and this is what causes me some trouble of mind...there are hear some 8 or 10 faithfull members that are poor and cannot come this spring and they also would like to have a word of comfort from you we all Desire to live in acordence with the will and mind of God... I have received news by letter that my name is Dropped from the 11th quorem of 70tys that I was ordainted into at the October confernece 1844; and before I cam to the East I received License and a recommendation on the 7th Day of March 1845 which is recorded in book A p. 6. No 457.

Brigham received the letter while the Camp of Israel was mired in the Iowa mud. Sickened by the dawning realization that the Saints were going to face a winter in Iowa that most were not prepared for, he couldn't bring himself to reply to one more impossible request. (William Terman letter, CHL CR 1234, box 21, folder 3).

The years that followed were bitter ones for the Terman family. William took to drinking, especially after the death of his second wife Elizabeth (Levi's sister), and was released as Branch President. In a visit to the area in 1857, Elder Karl G. Maeser prophesied that local families should emigrate west to avoid the coming Civil War. In 1860, most of the Union Branch followed the counsel. The Termans did not. In September 1862 and July 1863, the battles of Antietam and Gettysburg were fought within an easy ride of the Terman home, leaving tens of thousands dead. Joseph Smith Terman, William's oldest surviving son, died of wounds he received at the Battle of Cedar Creek, Virginia (Robert S. Haws, "The Robison Family of Morgan Valley, Utah" (typescript, 1997), 4; William Terman reminiscences, circa 1882, 2).

As soon as the transcontinental railroad was finished in the fall of 1869, Brigham Young sent Elders John W. Hess and Levi Thornton to redeem the Saints of Franklin County. Two years later, using the bounty they received for their son's death, the Termans gathered with the Saints at last. They moved to North Morgan, Utah, where they were welcomed by their old Union Branch friends, including the Heiners, Robisons, and Rocks. (William Terman reminiscences).



Figure 64: Aftermath of the Battle of Antietam

The Battle of Antietam was fought on September 17, 1862, just over the state border in Sharpsburg, MD (the home of the Maryland Saints who traveled with the Union Branch Saints to Nauvoo in 1843). Jacob Foutz and Daniel Garn baptized the Terman, Thornton, and Zimmerman families in Antietam Creek, which flowed from the Secrist farm to the battle-field. The building in the background is a Dunker Church.

Photo credit: Alexander Gardner.