

## Among the Poorest of Saints: Mormon Migration to and Through Burlington, Iowa, 1846–1887

*Robert H. Goodwin*

Through most of the mid-nineteenth century, Burlington was Iowa's preeminent city. It was the hub of trade for eastern Iowa, the eastern gateway to Iowa's interior, and from thence an exit to the West. Founded in 1833 and originally called "Flint Hills," by 1846 Burlington had grown from a small hamlet along the Mississippi River in Des Moines County to a "gay and bustling" city of three thousand.<sup>1</sup> Ten years later, boasting scenery that could not be "excelled in the world for beauty," Burlington had grown to a population of over fourteen thousand people.<sup>2</sup> During the 1830s, the community served briefly as the capital of the Iowa territory. It continued as the political center of the new state for many years afterward. With the exception of Nauvoo, Illinois, Burlington was the largest city along the upper Mississippi River, above Quincy, Illinois.

In 1846, the year of the Mormon exodus from Illinois, Burlington was the only city of any size above Nauvoo. Although the route of the Mormon exodus and migration west from Nauvoo through Iowa bypassed Burlington to the south, the city played a small but significant role as a place of refuge and security for those Saints too poor to continue on. Burlington played this role in two important ways—first, as a city of refuge for the poor Saints and second, as an immigration point or temporary resting place for immigrating Latter-day Saints on their journey to "Zion."

In 1846, as the largest city close to Nauvoo, Burlington provided protection and employment for hundreds of Saints fleeing Nauvoo. In the mid-

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1850s, Burlington provided a place in which emigrating Saints from Europe were able to find temporary employment to earn enough money to continue their journey to Zion. During the 1870s, the route through Burlington was one of several key routes west from Chicago used by the Church to bring trainloads of European converts to Utah.

### **Burlington and the Mormons, 1840–1846**

Located only thirty miles upriver from Nauvoo, Burlington was no stranger to the Latter-day Saints. Considerable trade and travel existed between Burlington and eastern Iowa on the west bank of the Mississippi and Nauvoo on the Illinois side. Church leaders and other residents from Nauvoo could often be seen in Burlington, as well as businessmen, politicians, or residents from Burlington in Nauvoo. After the Church acquired the steamboat *Maid of Iowa*, semiregular pleasure excursion trips were made to either Quincy or Burlington. These “festive occasions were usually heightened by the presence of tasty foods, a fine band of music, spirited orations, or even a salute of cannons.”<sup>3</sup> As part of Nauvoo’s Fourth of July celebration of 1842, dignitaries from St. Louis, Quincy, and Burlington were invited to participate in the festivities. Three steamboats were employed to convey these visitors to and from Nauvoo.<sup>4</sup> In 1843, another steamboat full of visitors from Burlington attended Nauvoo’s Fourth of July celebration.<sup>5</sup>

Besides commercial and recreational ties, the Church also maintained political and legal ties between Burlington and Nauvoo. The Church regularly employed Burlington attorney James W. Woods as its legal counsel to present the Church’s case in various legal problems. On the day of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Woods was in Carthage and Nauvoo where he was trying to effect their release.<sup>6</sup>

Burlington’s press, most notably the *Burlington Hawkeye*, kept a close eye on the Mormons to the south. The *Hawkeye*, Iowa’s leading Whig newspaper, regularly carried articles concerning the Mormons in Nauvoo. Of particular interest to *Hawkeye* readers was the tense political situation caused by friction between the Mormons and the “old settlers” in Hancock County. The *Hawkeye*, though not always sympathetic to the Church or its beliefs, consistently tried to maintain a neutral stance in its editorials concerning the Church throughout the 1840s. In October of 1843, as the first stirring of trouble surfaced in Hancock County, the editor of the *Hawkeye* wrote about concerns of the “old settlers”: “The prairie between Fort Madison, Warsaw, and Carthage has changed from dreary prairie to one studded with houses and good farms. Seven years ago along the old Rock Island Trace, a dreary waste, were fields, good sod fences, six miles long. As long as the Mormons

are harmless they should be treated well. We shall never convince them that they are a deluded people, in as far as their religion is concerned in any other way.”<sup>7</sup>

During the events of 1844–45 leading up to the exodus of the Saints from Nauvoo, Burlington and her citizens kept a wary eye on the situation. In October 1845, when anti-Mormon sentiment broke out toward the few Saints remaining in Montrose, Lee County, and Augusta in southern Des Moines County,<sup>8</sup> the *Hawkeye* reported on the anti-Mormon meetings but refused to editorialize on the results.<sup>9</sup>

### **Burlington as a Place of Refuge, 1846–1852**

Even before the first wagons crossed the Mississippi River from Nauvoo to Montrose in February 1846, it became apparent that not all of the Mormons in Nauvoo were going to be able to procure the necessary wagons, teams, and supplies to leave because they were too sick, crippled, or feeble to make the journey westward through Iowa that year. During the October 1845 general conference, Brigham Young extracted a promise from the Saints in Nauvoo, known as the “Nauvoo Covenant,” wherein he required that all members sacrifice all they had, even their own wagons and teams if necessary, to help the poor leave for the West. But in the spring and summer of 1846, the entire efforts of the Twelve Apostles and of the Saints were put into getting those already along the trail across Iowa to their winter destination at the Missouri River. It would be September before Brigham Young, hearing of the plight of those still left at Nauvoo, was able to send wagons and teams back to help those who had remained behind.<sup>10</sup>

The Mormon exodus from Nauvoo caused prices for some items—wagons, ox teams, and supplies—to be sold for much more than they were worth. On the other hand, property that was worth hundreds or even thousands of dollars became practically worthless. Aaron Johnson sold his property, worth \$4,000 for only \$150. Jacob Weiler’s \$2,000 home went for \$200. John D. Lee was offered \$800 for his home, which he valued at \$8,000. He refused the offer, and it was later sold by the Church committee for a mere \$12.50.<sup>11</sup> Most of these Saints simply took what they could for their property and followed the rest of the Saints across the river and onto the trail across Iowa. Many Saints, however, could not sell their property. Enoch B. Tripp, with his wife, simply “took a little bedding & clothing & fasened up the hause with the ballance of our things in it & took a Steam Boat in the evening for Burlington Iowa.”<sup>12</sup>

Those Saints who knew they could not get the necessary means to travel with the main body of the Saints made whatever plans they could to leave



*Aaron Johnson home.  
Photo courtesy Church Archives.*



*Jacob Weiler home, left.  
Photo courtesy Church Archives.*

Nauvoo with their families to search for employment, hoping to earn enough money to outfit themselves for the trip. While many went to St. Louis or other Mississippi towns, Burlington, with its population, active business climate, and proximity, offered an attractive option. In April 1846, Alfred Cordon and James Burgess went to Burlington to seek employment. Cordon recounts: "I went up to Burlington under the impression that in this place I could get employment. Elder James Burgess accompanied me. Just before we entered into the City we retired into the woods and poured out our souls in supplications to our God for his blessings to rest upon us and to grant us employment or cause the same to be done. We went into the City and found the family of T. J. Filcher, who received us very kindly. The same evening we got into employment."<sup>13</sup> After finding employment and working for a few days, James Burgess went back into Nauvoo to bring their families to Burlington.<sup>14</sup>

Others were not as fortunate to be able to leave before fall. By September, between a thousand and fifteen hundred Latter-day Saints were still in Nauvoo. These were the poorest and most destitute. The mob, growing anxious, was determined that no Mormon would remain. Hostilities broke out in mid-September and culminated in the "Battle of Nauvoo" where some 150 Mormon defenders held off almost fifteen hundred "Regulators," as they called themselves, for six days before finally surrendering. As part of the surrender agreement, all Mormons agreed to disarm and leave the city immediately. Within days, the remaining Saints left the Mormon city. Three hundred gathered across the river near Montrose in what became known as the "poor camp." Everyone else left by steamboat for either St. Louis, Burlington, Galena, or Davenport. Most were forced to leave with nothing but the clothes on their backs and what they could carry with them. By the end of the year, over three hundred Saints were scattered along the Mississippi River towns above Nauvoo, unable to go to the West with the main body of the Church. The majority of these scattered Saints settled in Burlington.<sup>15</sup>

The Burlington newspapers followed the events of September 1846 closely. On Thursday, 17 September, the day of the formal surrender by the Mormons in Nauvoo, the editor of the *Hawkeye* decried the lack of sympathy displayed by Burlington's citizens: "Here we are, within thirty miles of the most awful and terrible scenes that ever occurred in this part of the country. Blood has been shed—lives have been lost—wives have been made widows and children have been made fatherless—and yet there seems to be very little feeling or excitement, in view of it all. . . . There is much suffering among the Mormons [and] we believe . . . [that] the sympathies of our citizens should be awakened in behalf of these, and such aid afforded them

as is needed and can be rendered.”<sup>16</sup>

A week after the surrender of Nauvoo, the editor of the *Hawkeye* observed the flight of the Mormons from Nauvoo:

Since our last publication the civil war in the vicinity of Nauvoo has terminated. The citizens of Nauvoo surrendered to the Anti-Mormons on Thursday last, by laying down their arms and permitting their enemies to march into the city without molestation. As we understand it, the terms of capitulation were that all the Mormon residents of Nauvoo should leave in a few days. . . . By Friday evening last, hardly a Mormon was to be found in Nauvoo, and nearly all the new settlers had left. The place looks quite desolate. Every Steamboat that has visited our landing within the past week has been loaded with Mormons. . . . What with steamboats, stages and private vehicles, we have our full share of the overplus [sic] population of Nauvoo.<sup>17</sup>

As far as accepting the Mormon refugees, the editor of the *Hawkeye*, anticipating that many who had just arrived would find refuge in Burlington, took a more pragmatic approach. Concerning the influx of Mormons, he wrote: “We must tell them plainly that their presence will be tolerated among us as a mere matter of necessity. . . . It behooves them, then, as long as they remain among us, to obey the laws and conduct themselves as good citizens. Those who have the means among them should not let the poor of their order suffer nor become a burden to those among whom they have found shelter.”<sup>18</sup>

Though this posture was conciliatory and took into consideration the feelings of Iowans in Lee and Des Moines Counties, the editorial did little to allay the fear of the refugees arriving in Burlington. Enoch B. Tripp stated, echoing the feelings of many of the refugees, “Here we landed in the midts of our enimes among Stangers without money.”<sup>19</sup>

Despite their fears, the Mormon refugees were not molested. Most were able to find employment and a kind, if not sympathetic, reception. Several found work as shoemakers, cabinet makers, or as workers in other trades. Alfred Cordon found work as a shoemaker, working for S. Van Dusen & Co.<sup>20</sup> Hiram Winters worked as both a shoemaker and a builder of hydraulic cisterns.<sup>21</sup> At least one Saint, Grant Campbell, worked in the lumber industry, felling trees in the Wisconsin pine forests and bringing the trees down the Mississippi River to Burlington.<sup>22</sup> Alfred Cordon also reported, “There are quite a number of old Pottery friends here,” probably referring to Mormon immigrants who had come from the “Potteries” in Staffordshire, England, whom he had known while he had labored as a missionary there.<sup>23</sup> It is possible that these English emigrants from the “Potteries” found work with David and Dennis Melcher, who had opened the Melcher Pottery outside of Burlington.<sup>24</sup>



During the winter of 1846–47, the Saints living in Burlington organized themselves into a branch of the Church. They also held regular church meetings and conducted some proselytizing in the nearby area without interference. Reporting to Brigham Young on 25 January 1848, branch president Alfred Cordon summed up their experience and activities:

I have been in this place ever since the scattering took place in Nauvoo and found a number of brethren, and it was considered wisdom by us to organize ourselves into a branch of the Church and commenced to hold meetings and attend to the breaking of bread and enjoyed ourselves very well, considering that this was not our abiding place—a [sic] many have been and are now anxiously inquiring into our principals. I have baptized a few and have two more to lead in the waters of baptism tomorrow evening—amongst the number a brother and sister Leonard whom you will hear from as they intend to writing you: they are well respected and have considerable influence in this town. It is very likely a number more will embrace the work in this place: There is quite a number of old Pottery friends here and are making all preparations [sic] for to come to you. As for myself I shall come to you as soon as convenient, but I am not able to do a great deal. We have four children, and I have been sick with the chills and fever ever since the 6th of August, but am now gaining a little strength. Emma and children are well. When we organized ourselves in a branch I was chosen President, but have not done much preaching as I had not any special council to that effect. We fell grateful [sic] to you that you have sought out a resting place for the Saints and long to be with you.<sup>25</sup>

Of the new converts, the Leonards, Bradford and Ann Elizabeth, would later gather to Salt Lake City where they ran a dry goods store. For a time, the branch flourished as they continued to meet together.

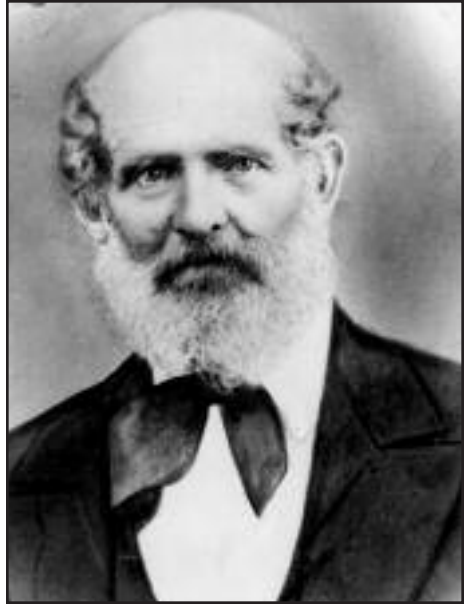
While in Burlington, the Saints longed to be with the main body of the Saints and labored to raise enough money to buy wagons and teams so they could join the Saints encamped at the Missouri River. By spring of 1847, the first group was able to leave for the West. This company was led by Daniel H. Wells, who had spent the previous winter at Burlington unsuccessfully trying to convince his wife to join the Church and come west with him and the Saints.<sup>26</sup>

In December 1847, the Burlington Saints were visited by Zebedee Coltrin. Coltrin had been with the first company entering the Salt Lake Valley earlier that year and was en route to Wisconsin on a mission. He described the Salt Lake Valley and the trip across the plains, assisted with several baptisms and ordinations, and attended the Christmas festivities.<sup>27</sup> Concerning his visit, Alfred Cordon reported: “Elder Zebedee Coltrin came along in December and a great many attended our meeting when news had spread, that there was one in town from the camps of Israel. Bro. Coltrin stayed with us a few days and then left for Wisconsin. The excitement kept up for several weeks, Priests, Lawyers, Merchants, and everything else crowd-

ed to meeting, and everything went off well.<sup>28</sup>

Upon hearing Coltrin's description of the Salt Lake Valley and the gathering of the Saints there, the Burlington Mormons desired more than ever to join with the body of the Church. Those who could do so made rapid preparations to leave in the spring of 1848.<sup>29</sup> Each spring thereafter, as families obtained the means to make the journey west, Mormon companies left Burlington to join the main body of Saints who had temporarily settled in Kanesville, Iowa.

After almost two years, many of the Burlington Saints secured enough money to buy the wagons and teams necessary for the trip. As families left, Mormon numbers in Burlington and the surrounding area dwindled. By July 1848, only about fifteen or sixteen families remained,<sup>30</sup> with a few others in the surrounding countryside. In 1852, Brigham Young issued a call for all Saints who had not yet made their way to Utah to make plans to do so that year. In accordance with this plea, most of the remaining Saints in Burlington left in 1852 for Salt Lake City. By 1855, the number of members remaining in Burlington had dwindled, as all but a few families had made their way to the West.<sup>31</sup>



*Zebedee Coltrin.*  
*Photo courtesy Church Archives.*

### **Migration to and through Burlington, 1856–1887**

The second round of Mormon migration through Burlington started in 1856 with a change in the route the Church used to bring new European converts to Utah. Previous to 1855, 93 percent of all Latter-day Saint European immigrants entered the United States at New Orleans and then proceeded up the Mississippi River to St. Louis. From St. Louis, the usual route was up the Missouri River to Kanesville, Iowa, or Westport, Missouri—the designated outfitting stations for the overland trail to Utah. Starting in 1855, because of the developing railway network in the United States, immi-



grants were able to enter through New York, Philadelphia, or Boston. From these cities, they were then able to take various railroads west to Chicago where they transferred to the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad for the trip through Illinois, across the Mississippi River, and on to Iowa City, Iowa, the railroad terminus.<sup>32</sup>

For three years, 1856–58, Iowa City served as the Church's outfitting station. There, European immigrants switched from train travel to wagons or handcarts for the trek across the plains to Utah. It was at this time that Burlington again became a temporary resting place for some of the poorest of the European converts who were financially unable to continue.

Previous to 1856, a few immigrant families had made their way from St. Louis to Burlington. These families came individually to find work for a season, hoping to earn enough to finance their trip across the plains. In 1856, however, because of a decrease of funds in the Perpetual Emigrating Fund, a large number of immigrants were required to stay and work for a space of time before continuing on to Utah.

The first ship of the season sailing from Liverpool was the *John J. Boyd*, which left port on 12 December 1855 and arrived at Castle Garden in New York Harbor on 16 February 1856. It consisted of 447 Scandinavian Saints from Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, along with 42 British and 30 Italian Saints.<sup>33</sup> Two-thirds of these Saints did not have the means to continue their journey to Utah. Apostle John Taylor greeted the Saints on their arrival in New York. There he found employment for some, and the rest were placed aboard the train for Chicago under the care of Alexander Robbins Jr.

Once in Chicago, Robbins divided the Saints into three groups. One group went to St. Louis, where they eventually made their way to Florence, Nebraska, to join the migration to Utah that year. Another group was sent to Alton, Illinois, to find employment. The last group, consisting of around 150 immigrants, made their way to Burlington under the leadership of Elder Christian Christiansen. In a letter to the editor of *The Mormon* (published in New York City), Alexander Robbins described the process of dividing the passengers at Chicago and their progress to Burlington. He wrote:

Burlington, March 1, 1856

To the Editor of the Mormon:—Dear Sir:

You will see by the above that I am at Burlington, terminus of the railroad by which a portion (one hundred and nineteen adults, and a number of 'bairns') of the Mormon immigrant passengers, per ship J. J. Boyd have with one exception arrived in safety. . . . On the 28th, the emigration train having arrived in the morning [at Chicago], we separated the passengers and baggage, some two hundred adults taking the cars for St. Louis, with Bro. Peterson, and one hundred and eighteen for Burlington, which I have placed in charge of Bro. Christian Christiansen. Bro. Christiansen has been very efficient and assiduous in getting places to make his

countrymen comfortable, and has succeeded well, and I think those who have come here will soon do well. Work is going to be abundant here this Spring, and these are just the kind of men that can do it.<sup>34</sup>

Once in Burlington, Elder Christiansen, who had been sent as a missionary from Utah to preside over the Scandinavian Saints in the Midwest, proceeded to find employment for the new immigrants in the Burlington area. He later reported:

On the 29 of February, 1856, about 150 Scandinavian emigrants arrived in Burlington, Iowa, to be placed under my jurisdiction [sic], as they, through lack of means, were unable to continue the journey to Utah that year. I assisted them in the transportation of their luggage across the Mississippi River on the ice, and brought them to a house belonging to an apostate 'Mormon' by the name of Thomas Arthur, of whom I had hired a room for the accomodation [sic] of the emigrants—the only one I could Secure in the whole town. On that day the editors of the Burlington papers announced to the public the startling fact that the town had been "taken" by the "Mormons." Without friends or money I stood in the midst of my poor brethren not knowing what to do, but I set to work in earnest and succeeded [sic] in finding employment for some of the brethren who subsisted on corn meal, bacon and other articles of food which they received as advance payment for their labors. For the young men and women I also secured places as servants, and in Burlington alone I found places for 50 of them. I also hired wagons and took some of the emigrants to Montrose and Keokuk in search of employment. Thus, in less than a week after the arrival of the emigrants at Burlington, all who were able to work had found something to do. . . . My next step was to organize the Saints into branches of the Church, over which I appointed presidents. After a little while everything went well, and in a remarkably short time the emigrants earned means enough to continue their journey to the Valley.<sup>35</sup>

Even though he placed most of the new arrivals in employment around the countryside, some were still without work and needed assistance. The poverty and sickness among the group seemed to be a particular problem. The situation, however, was solved in a most peculiar way. Elder Christiansen recounts: "But there were a number of other persons, who needed financial aid, and as I had no money I approached one of the emigrants who had a twenty dollar gold piece, but he was an unbeliever and refused to lend his money to me, or anyone else, even for the relief of the sick. A few days later he died, and his widow promptly advanced me the means, thus I secured the necessary medicines and other things needed by the sufferers."<sup>36</sup>

Having taken care of the needs of the poor and sick, Elder Christiansen traveled to St. Louis for a conference of the St. Louis Stake on 6 April 1856. While there, Christian Christiansen was sustained as second counselor to the stake president, James Hart, with the particular calling of overseeing the

Scandinavian Saints in Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. During that same conference, the several Burlington branches created by Christian Christiansen earlier were organized into the Burlington Conference. Christian Frederick Nelson was called to preside over this conference. At the time of the St. Louis conference, it was estimated that there were 107 Danish, along with 87 other Saints living in southeastern Iowa, including the areas around Burlington, Montrose, and Keokuk.<sup>37</sup>

The public reaction to so many new immigrants flooding into the area was slight. On the day of their arrival, the *Daily Iowa State Gazette* announced the arrival, stating, "Some two hundred Mormons from Sweden, Norway, and England, arrived in this city yesterday, on their way to Salt Lake City."<sup>38</sup> The Burlington *Hawkeye*, the same day, announced that Burlington had been "Taken by the Mormons" but followed with the bland statement that "Four hundred and fifty Norwegians, arrived in this city yesterday by rail. They are on their way to Great Salt Lake to join Brigham Young and the Mormons."<sup>39</sup> Neither announcement was necessarily reactionary or hostile, though both papers overstated the numbers of immigrants arriving, the *Hawkeye* by nearly three hundred.

The arrival of large numbers of immigrants was not that unusual for Burlington in the 1850s. During the early part of the decade, many thousands of gold seekers passed through Burlington on their way to the California gold fields. Burlington had provided many of the gold seekers with provisions for the journey and became an outfitting point for many taking the northern route to the West. By 1856, Burlington saw itself as a destination for emigrants from abroad, hoping to capitalize on the growth and prosperity they were sure would follow.<sup>40</sup>

In this atmosphere of growth and prosperity, the Saints who arrived in Burlington with Christian Christiansen were able to stay a year or more, working to earn the means to continue their journey to Utah. Some, like Andrew and Mariane Andersen, ended up staying several years before being able to leave for Utah. They finally arrived in Salt Lake in the summer of 1859.<sup>41</sup>

The next year, in 1857, this same scene was reenacted with the immigrants from the ship *Tuscarora*. The *Tuscarora*, with 547 Saints on board under the leadership of Richard Harper, left Liverpool, England, on 30 May 1857 with the intent of "going to the States that season, there to labor and procure means to enable them to cross the plains to Utah another year." Instead of traveling directly to the outfitting point at Iowa City from Chicago, the company took the train to Burlington, where they intended to find employment.<sup>42</sup>

As immigration to Utah took place in 1858 because of the "Utah War,"

most of the families from the *Tuscarora* stayed at least two years before being able to complete their journey to Zion. The family of Jorgen and Christina Maria Smith (Smidt) stayed in the vicinity of Burlington until 1861.<sup>43</sup> Others followed the advice given at the April 1858 conference in St. Louis and moved to the vicinity of Omaha and Florence, Nebraska, where employment was more plentiful. By the end of the year, most of the Scandinavian immigrants had left Iowa for Nebraska.<sup>44</sup>

In 1859, the Church found it more economical to reroute the immigration of the European Saints through Quincy, Illinois, to Florence, Nebraska, rather than send them to Iowa City.<sup>45</sup> This route bypassed Iowa altogether, taking the Saints southwest from Chicago to Quincy and then west across Missouri to St. Joseph by rail. From there, they proceeded up the Missouri River to the vicinity of Omaha and Florence. Between 1859–69, Florence and Omaha served as the main outfitting station for the Saints. As a result, Burlington's place as a temporary stopover or resting place for poor Saints declined. Those who had not yet left for Nebraska on their way to Utah gradually did so over the next few years. It would be another fifteen years before Burlington would see trainloads of Latter-day Saint European immigrants enter the city again.

In 1867, the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad reached Council Bluffs, Iowa, from Chicago. This progress enabled Church leaders to again reroute the course of migration. This time the route was directly from Chicago to the Council Bluffs/Omaha area aboard the Chicago and Northwestern. In 1869, the Union Pacific Railroad was completed to Utah as part of the transcontinental railroad, making it possible for immigrating Saints to travel by rail all the way from the east coast to Utah. With the increase in competing rail lines, the Church took advantage of the best deals that could be made in transporting the Saints west from New York. In 1870, a competing line, the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad, was completed from Burlington to Omaha. The Church took this opportunity to get the lowest possible fares between Chicago and Omaha as it switched between the competing railroads.

With the opening of the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad in 1870, Church migration again passed through Burlington. Burlington became a transmigration point along the route west as trainloads of immigrants transferred from the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad to the trains of the Burlington and Missouri Railroad.

Public reaction in Burlington during the 1870s and 1880s toward the Mormon immigrants was less cordial than during the earlier periods of Mormon migration through the city. With trainloads of Mormon immigrants again coming through their city, the local newspapers took notice, reporting the passing of Mormon immigrants through town. On 28 May 1874, the

Burlington *Hawkeye* reported, "Six carloads of Mormons from foreign shores arrived Monday afternoon via A.T.P.&W. [sic] Railway special train. They continued to Salt Lake on the B.&M.R.R. train. They were cleaner and better looking than the majority of Mormon emigrants usually appear."<sup>46</sup> On 4 June 1874, just a week later, the *Hawkeye* again reported that "Ninety Mormon emigrants arrived on the T.P.&W. R'y at ten o'clock, Tuesday night, and continued on their way for Salt Lake, via the B.&M.R.R.R., Wednesday morning."<sup>47</sup>

Although comments like these were not necessarily hostile or threatening, they did reflect a change of attitude. Whereas twenty-five years earlier the attitude of Burlington's citizens had been sympathetic—probably because the Mormons had been wronged and were destitute, having been forced to flee their homes—in the 1870s and 1880s, the citizens' attitude had changed to one of suspicion and prejudice. This change in attitude was probably caused by the widespread feeling in the United States of antagonism toward the Mormons and their religious practices, especially that of polygamy or plural marriage. It was during this time that the federal government was putting extreme pressure on the Church to discontinue what the government considered was the "barbaric" practice of polygamy. In light of such nationwide antagonism, it is understandable how the citizens of Burlington would be suspicious as trainloads of Mormons passed through their town. In an 1878 tongue-in-cheek article concerning the Mormon immigration through Burlington, the editor of the *Hawkeye* echoed this suspicion and prejudice:

The Mormons now number about three hundred thousand, one-half of that number living in Utah, and they are the ugliest people that ever frightened the daylight. We have seen probably about eleven hundred Mormon immigrants pass through Burlington within the last five years. The first delegates were so awfully homely the railroad officials made them hide under the car seats when the train passed through [sic] the stations, and every successive crowd was uglier than the one that preceded it. We don't care if Utah is full of Mormons, and we don't care how much they multiply, but they shouldn't be allowed to go out except after dark.<sup>48</sup>

Although this kind of attitude reflected the general prejudice at this time toward the Church, and particularly toward the foreign converts traveling through to Utah, nothing was ever done to prevent or impede their passage through Burlington.

The Mormon immigrants, however, considered their short stay in Burlington as only one of many stops or layovers they faced along their route of migration. Most did not even mention their brief stay. Those who did mention Burlington did so only in passing. Typical of the comments made by these immigrants are the following:

Arriving at Burlington this a.m. Here we change cars again. Remained about half an hour.<sup>49</sup>

About midday we crossed the Mississippi to Burlington, where we changed cars and had to wait while a steamboat passed through the bridge.<sup>50</sup>

Came through LaHarpe 8:30 & Mississippi River at Burlington & laid over. Paid for straw bed.<sup>51</sup>

With the many stops and transfers the immigrants had to face on the journey between New York and Utah, their stay in Burlington was usually uneventful.

Isaiah M. Coombs, who passed through Burlington 4 February 1876, perhaps sums up best the Saints' experience in migrating to and through Burlington during this period. He wrote: "Have just been told by the conductor that we will have to lay over at Burlington tonight again. . . . Arrived here about 9 o'clock and received a very kind reception at the waiting rooms in the railway station at the hands of the keeper thereof, Mr. Edgar Brobst, who signs himself 'Depot Police.' Have been out with the brethren purchasing some provisions. Have performed my ablutions and feel much better."<sup>52</sup>

## Conclusion

The Mormon migration experience through Burlington lasted from the last days of Nauvoo to the last days of the Church-sponsored immigration in the 1880s. During this time, the community provided a place where Saints could stop for a few hours to "freshen up" and buy a few provisions or to a few years to earn enough money to continue their journey to Zion. The total number of Mormons passing through Burlington was never very large—only about three thousand—of the approximately ninety to a hundred thousand who immigrated to Utah during this period. But for the poorest of Saints, those who needed a temporary place where they could stay and earn the means to continue their journey to Zion without molestation, Burlington provided a temporary place of refuge and safety.

## Notes

1. J. B. Newhall, *A Glimpse of Iowa in 1846; or the Emigrant's Guide and State Directory* (Burlington, Iowa: W. D. Skillman Publisher), 67–68.

2. H. H. Hartley and L.G. Jeffers, *Business Directory and Review of the Trade, Commerce and Manufactories of the City of Burlington, Iowa for the Year Ending May 1, 1856*, (Burlington, Iowa: Hawk-Eye Power Press, 1856), 3, 5. The *Business Directory and Review* estimates the population of Burlington in 1856 anywhere from 11,000 to a little less than 16,000.



3. Donald L. Enders, "The Steamboat Maid of Iowa: Mormon Mistress of the Mississippi," *BYU Studies* 19, no. 3 (spring 1979): 321.
4. Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff, His Life and Labors*, comp. Matthias F. Cowley (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1916), 187. See also Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 5:385, 435 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).
5. *History of the Church*, 5: 490.
6. James W. Woods, *Memoirs*, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
7. *Hawkeye* (Burlington, Iowa), 19 October 1843, 5.
8. In 1840, several Latter-day Saint families settled in the neighborhood of Augusta, De Moines County, Iowa. Eventually, a branch of the Church was located there. By 1 April 1843, eighty-four members were living in the Augusta Branch, which included Saints living on both sides of the Skunk River, the boundary between Des Moines and Lee Counties. In 1844, the Saints at Augusta and other Iowa settlements were advised to move to Nauvoo, which most did. By the fall of 1845, there were apparently still some Latter-day Saint families living in the vicinity of Augusta. See Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1941), 35.
9. *Burlington Hawkeye and Iowa Patriot*, 16 October 1845, 2; 23 October 1845, 2; and 6 November 1845, 2.
10. For a full account of the plight of the poor camps and the efforts to relieve them, see Richard E. Bennett, "Dadda, I Wish We Were Out of This Country: The Nauvoo Poor Camps in Iowa, Fall 1846," in Susan Easton Black and William G. Hartley, eds., *The Iowa Mormon Trail: Legacy of Faith and Courage* (Orem, Utah: Helix Publishing, 1997), 155–70.
11. Susan Easton Black, "Nauvoo on the Eve of the Exodus," in *The Iowa Mormon Trail*, 41.
12. Enoch B. Tripp, *Journal*, 1846, Perry Special Collections.
13. Alfred Cordon, *Journal*, April 1846, LDS Church Archives, Family and Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
14. Alfred Cordon, *Journal*, April 1846, LDS Church Archives.
15. See Bennett, "The Nauvoo Poor Camps in Iowa, Fall 1846," 155–70.
16. *Hawkeye*, 17 September 1846, 2.
17. *Hawkeye*, 24 September 1846, 2.
18. *Hawkeye*, 24 September 1846, 2.
19. Enoch B. Tripp, *Journal*, 1846, Perry Special Collections.
20. Alfred Cordon, *Journal*, April 1846, LDS Church Archives. See also Newhall, *A Glimpse of Iowa in 1846*, 67–68.
21. Andrew Jenson, "Hiram Winters," *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971), 4:692.
22. Caroline Campbell Nash, *Life Sketch of Grant Campbell* (n.p., n.d), 2.
23. Alfred Cordon, *Journal*, 1846, LDS Church Archives. The Potteries, or the Potteries Conference, consisted of Latter-day Saints residing in Staffordshire, England, from 1840 to 1869. On 29 June 1840, the branches of the Church in the area were organized as the Staffordshire Potteries Conference with Elder Alfred Cordon as president. See Jenson, *Encyclopedic History*, 832.
24. Federal Writers' Project, *A Guide to Burlington, Iowa*, 2nd ed., rev. (Burlington, Iowa: Acres-Blackman Co., 1939), 74.
25. Alfred Cordon to Brigham Young, 25 January 1848, LDS Church Archives.

26. Bryant S. Hinckley, *Daniel Hanmer Wells: and Events of His Time* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1942), 47–48.
27. Alfred Cordon, Journal, December 1847, LDS Church Archives.
28. Alfred Cordon to George A. Smith, 2 July 1848, LDS Church Archives.
29. Alfred Cordon, Journal, January 1847, LDS Church Archives.
30. Alfred Cordon to George A. Smith, 2 July 1848, LDS Church Archives.
31. Journal History of the Church, 8 April 1855, LDS Church Archives, 9.
32. See Kenneth W. Godfrey, “Immigration to Nauvoo,” in S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson, eds., *Historical Atlas of Mormonism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 62.
33. Jenson, *History of the Scandinavian Mission*, 107.
34. Journal History of the Church, 1 March 1856, 1.
35. Jenson, *History of the Scandinavian Mission*, 107. See also the voyage accounts of the John J. Boyd in *Mormon Immigration Index CD* (Intellectual Reserve Inc., 2002).
36. Jenson, *History of the Scandinavian Mission*, 107. See also the voyage accounts of the John J. Boyd in *Mormon Immigration Index*.
37. “Minutes of the half-yearly conference held in St. Louis,” Journal History of the Church, 6 April 1856, 7. It is not clear just which branches were included in the Burlington Conference and whether this included the non-Scandinavian Saints. In the October conference, membership was reported as follows: Keokuk (non-Scandinavian) 50, Keokuk (Scandinavian), 35, Burlington 53, Union Township (Des Moines County) 23, Fairfield (Jefferson County) 13 (non-Scandinavian). See Minutes of the St. Louis Stake, 1854–1858, LDS Church Archives.
38. *Daily Iowa State Gazette* (Burlington, Iowa), 1, no. 210 (1 March 1856): 2.
39. *Daily Hawkeye and Telegraph* (Burlington, Iowa), 1 March 1856, 3.
40. Hartley and Jeffers, *Business Directory and Review of the Trade*, 4.
41. Rae Lou W. Olsen, *Mariane Nielsen (Jespersen)*, (n.p.: 1994), 2.
42. *Millennial Star* 19, no. 24 (13 June 1857): 376; 19, no. 31 (1 August 1857): 489. See also the voyage accounts of the *Tuscarora*, 1857, in *Mormon Immigration Index*.
43. Eugene H. Halverson, *Christine Marie Bertelsdatter Birkedal a Utah Pioneer* (n.p., n.d.), 2.
44. Jenson, *History of the Scandinavian Mission*, 122.
45. For a complete discussion of why the route was changed to Florence, Nebraska, via Quincy, Illinois, see Fred E. Woods, “Two Sides of a River: Mormon Transmigration Through Quincy, Illinois, and Hannibal, Missouri,” *Mormon Historical Studies*, 2, no. 1 (spring 2001): 119–47.
46. *Hawkeye*, 28 May 1874, 5. The T.P. & W, or the Toledo, Peoria, and Western Railroad, was sometimes used to avoid the crowded terminals in Chicago. From Galesburg, Illinois, to Burlington, the T.P. & W. used a branch line of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad.
47. *Hawkeye*, 4 June 1874, 3.
48. *Hawkeye*, 28 September 1878, 5.
49. Robert Taylor Burton, Diary, LDS Church Archives. See also the voyage accounts of the *Wisconsin*, 1875, in *Mormon Immigration Index*.
50. Peter Olsen Hansen, *An Autobiography of Peter Olsen Hansen, 1815–1895*, comp. Leland Hansen Ashby (Salt Lake City: L. H. Ashby, 1988), 193. See also the voyage accounts of the *Wyoming*, 1875, in *Mormon Immigration Index*.
51. Lorenzo Brown, Journal of Lorenzo Brown, typescript, Perry Special Collections, 254. See also the voyage accounts of the *Wyoming*, 1876, in *Mormon Immigration Index*.
52. Isaiah M. Coombs, Diary, 4 February 1876, LDS Church Archives. See also the voyage accounts of the *Montana*, 1876, in *Mormon Immigration Index*.