

A YOUNG GIRL'S MEMORY OF NAUVOO:1846-1847

Charmaine A. Burdell

Paulina Johannah Eldridge was born in 1806¹ in Stokes County, North Carolina to Fredrick William Eldridge and Anna Elizabeth/Elizabeth Ann Hauser/Houser. The family were members of the Moravian Church, originally living in Bethania, Surry County, then moving to Germantown, Stokes County.²

For reasons unknown, Anna left Fredrick and moved to Indiana¹ in 1828 with her three younger children, Solomon, Emanuel, and Anna Charlotte. Her twenty-two-year-old daughter Paulina and her husband, Zeno Worth, moved with her. Another son, John Eldridge, was born in Stokes County, North Carolina in 1804 and had married Cynthia Ann Howlett, from Morefield, Switzerland, Indiana in 1837.

Anna was living in Shoals, Martin County, Indiana when she died on 28 January 1840 and was buried in the Spring Hill Cemetery. Her will was filed in Martin County, Indiana and Stokes County, North Carolina, by her son Levi Eldridge. Levi was probably an older son and possibly lived in North Carolina.

By 1844, Zeno and Paulina were living in Bedford, Lawrence County, Indiana³ The following year Zeno died, leaving Paulina alone with her small children: Eliza Jane, Lewis W., Julia Ann, Mary Elizabeth, and Joseph Z. Paulina's brother John, who had joined the Mormon Church in 1836, was living in Nauvoo, Illinois. Paulina decided to move to Nauvoo, also. It is not known when she espoused the Mormon faith and if that was her reason for moving, or if she simply chose to relocate near her brother.

Paulina made the move in the spring of 1846, at a time of turmoil and persecution in the lives of the Nauvoo Saints. John did not remain in Nauvoo, but

followed the advice of church leaders and turned towards Iowa. He was located in Pottawattamie County, Iowa in March 1847⁴. By 1847 the majority of the members of the LDS Church had left Nauvoo and settled in Missouri or Iowa. Hostile non-Mormons, responsible for driving the Saints from their home, remained in the beautiful city. New inhabitants purchased lands and homes once belonging to the Mormon people.

Paulina was left in Nauvoo alone among strangers after her brother moved to Iowa. She died there on 22 March 1847 and was buried in an unmarked grave in an unknown location.

The following is a retrospective letter, written by Paulina's daughter, Mary Elizabeth Worth Peoples, 15 February 1888 in Petaluma, California. She tells her memories of a sad and tragic time in her life when she was a young, seven-year old girl in Nauvoo, Illinois. The letter describes the Battle of Nauvoo seen through a child's eyes and gives a poignant account of the plight of orphans after the Mormon exodus. Punctuation and spelling are shown in this transcription exactly as written in the letter.

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My father and mother was born and raised in North Carolina in the year of our Lord 18 6 [1806] and moved to Ind. in 1828 My mother's father was English her mother germien [German] Their name was Eldridge My fathers name was Zeno Worth His brother David Worth is still living in N.C. I was born in Bedford Lawrence Co. Ind. December 25, 1839 My father died Aug. the 10th 1845 In the Spring of 1846 my mother moved to Nauvoo, Hancock Ill. taking with her her 5 children She among thousands was lead to believe in the continuation of the

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CHARMAINE A. BURDELL is a descendant of Paulina Johannah Eldridge Worth and the owner of the following letter. She welcomes any additional information on Paulina's family before and after the Nauvoo period. Send data to Charmaine A. Burdell, P. O. Box 505, Petaluma, CA 94953-0505.

spirit of proficy in the churches preached by the Mormans but she was not in harmony with them in some other of their docterins such as poligimy as I believe they had only just began that at that time All though very few of the members knew of it at that time as far as I can remember I do not think she intended to follow them any further I well remember how freighted many women and children was at the time the city of Nauvoo was beseaged and one woman came to mothers house leading her sick son crying and said the bullets whistled through her house mother lived on the opiset side from where the battle was fought We could hear the cannons and guns so plain it seemed as though the balls might be passing over our heads as mother had ocasion to send I and my sister older than I up town for some thing we could not help feeling a little freighted and trembled as we hastingly tred along the side walks and the roaring of the canon balls so near but mother was not afraid we thought why should we be She said God would take care of us She would talk to others and try to encourage them. Finly the cannons and guns was hushed and the solders came marching in and went in every house asked if they were Mormans At the sight of the sword and gun and bayonet I clung close to mothers side as long as she showed no sight of fear I did not think there was much danger My mother told them her condition

that her oldeest son was sick in bed and she invited the solders in the room to see him They spoke rather kindly to her and told her to leave as soon as she could. This was in the fall of 1846 I was 7 years old the following

This Sep. 16 1888  
 My father and mother was born  
 in North Carolina in the year 1783  
 of our Sarch. 186. and moved to Ind  
 in 1828 My mother's father was  
 Englishmen. mother's given name  
 was Eldridge My father name was  
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Christmas day. Apauling remarkable memory I could remember things my older sister and brother could not I can remember hearing mother say she intended to stay rite there and do the best she could for her children She had made a living with her needle being an experiance tayloress and all ways had got all the work she could do but allass now placed among strangers and enymies as she had taken the name of Morman which of course she thought was rite I no she was a good christian I have seen her sit and weep and pray for her children that they might be cared for Her health failed that bitter cold winter I cannot I will not try to describe all that poor soul did suffer God knows it all She died a marter for her faith no friends no one to help she lay on her bed not abel to turn her self for week I remember heareing a lady ask her one day if she was willing to die She said yes she prayed to die every day to be out of her misery She got some one to write to her youngest brother to come and get us children and be a father to us as near as he could She never wrote to him of her condition soon enough to live to see him all though he was only 45 miles His only way was to go up the Mississippi river on a boat the river being frozen at that time he could not go I think mother had been dead 2 or 3 weeks when he came she silently passed away on the 22 of March 1847 without any one to watch her last none but us children with her we thought she was asleep when we went to bed late that night I often thought since she mite of been dead when we went to bed when we woke next morning we went to her bed side to find her cold and still in death her suffering was over We sent to the neighbors to tell them They came and and [sic] preformed the necessary duties and that night several young and giddy folks came and sit up with the corps and the next day two men came with a wagon to take our Dear Mother away from us to bury her out of our site we then more fully realized (perhaps they did not bury her at all) our condition They would not let one of [us] go to see where they layed her No they took her away and left us alone We did not know where to go at first my sister 2-1/2 years older had stayed with a Mrs. Dr. Teel I think that is the name to do chors before mothers death she said we would go there for we was very cold and hungry There we went in and saw the tabel spread with luxury not one crust did she give my little brother 3 years old and myself but said they would keep my older sister 9 years old and Mrs. Teel told her sister to take me to Mrs. Browns and my brother some other place I don't no just where they did take him that night Mrs. Joseph Smith the protinded prophits wife took him Mrs. Brown took me and gave me food and rament and was a mother to me untill my Uncle came for us My little brother so young

cried to go home to mother and anoyed them so much they put him out doors one evening I supose it was the survent that did it He went to the old vacant lonely house and stayed all night alone a cold frost night The next morning the niece of Mrs. Smith who lived a short distance one vacant block between her house she heard him crying and went and took him and cared for him This is the story she told my Uncle when he came I did not no anything about it I only knew Mrs. Smith took him first and then Mrs. Walker had him when Uncle came for us I went to see him once while he was thare he seemed to be contented She had a little boy about his size Mrs. Brown wanted Uncle to give me to her he said no he would not part us so far he would take us all home with him Oh this was a happy day for us We had longed to see our Uncle and now he had come we did not realize our condishian yet neather did we think we would soon be seperated to meet no more on earth as I have written concirning our seperation in a former page I will now try all tho it is painfull to pen these things I feel a duty to do so for the good of my children. . .

#### NOTES

1. Death Certificate of Mary Elizabeth Worth Peoples shows the age of her mother, Paulina. Also March 1992 IGI, North Carolina, p. 7459.
2. Adele Fries. *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, vol. 6, p. 2874.
3. *History of Lawrence County, Indiana: 1884*. p. 183.
4. Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Patron submission file, Reference 86-155-03-19.