

A VISIT TO NAUVOO: SEPTEMBER 1846

Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and T. Jeffery Cottle

Thomas L. Kane's words describing his visit to Nauvoo, Illinois are emotionally charged and almost poetic. He recounts not only what he saw in September, 1846, but what he learned from the Mormons themselves about their city following his visit to their temporary pioneer camps in Iowa a few months earlier.

Kane's passionate defense of the Saints permeates his story and one senses the deep humanitarian desire he had in bringing their story of suffering and persecution to the American people. As with any story told several years following its actual occurrence, details are often blurred. Yet current investigation of Nauvoo history has clarified some of Kane's remarks.

Thomas Leiper Kane was born on 27 January 1822 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was the son of a prominent federal judge, John Kintzing Kane, and brother of the famous arctic explorer, Elisah Kent Kane. As a young man Kane was exposed to a wide variety of educational opportunities and he traveled to Europe. Following the completion of a legal education in Philadelphia, Kane was admitted to the bar in 1846 and served as a law clerk to his father. During this period, Jesse C. Little, an elder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), visited Pennsylvania on his way to Washington, D.C. where he planned to obtain aid for Mormon refugees scattered across Iowa.

Elder Little spoke at an LDS Church Conference while in Philadelphia. Kane may have read the newspaper reports of the Mormon exodus from Illinois and decided to attend the church conference. He met Little following the morning session of the conference, and during the ensuing days they had lengthy discussions on Mormonism and the Saints' current plight.

Joseph Smith, the church leader, had been assassinated by anti-Mormons less than two years earlier. Following a brief period of peace between the Mormons and their neighbors after Smith's death, Hancock County was again on the verge of a civil war. The Mormons, pressured by state officials, decided to abandon their homes and farms in Illinois before the conflict widened. An advance company of Saints left Nauvoo in February 1846. Soon others escaped mob action by following Brigham Young to temporary camps in Iowa in preparation for their migration to the Rocky Mountains.

Only infrequently did the suffering of the Saints stir the conscience or elicit the help of the American public in general, but there were always individuals and groups of people who stepped forward to champion their cause and offer shelter, food and help. Little's description of the Saints' tribulations aroused Kane's humanitarian feelings and as a result he offered to help.

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Kane followed Little to Washington, D.C., in a bid to seek aid for the Mormon refugees from the national government. While in Washington, Kane visited the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, and President James Polk. He also furnished letters of introduction for Elder Little to the Vice-President and to the Secretary of the Navy, George Bancroft.

Following their labors in Washington, D.C., Little and Kane traveled to St. Louis, Missouri together. At this point, Kane proceeded to Fort Leavenworth to deliver secret military orders from the Secretary of War to army officials there. These orders also brought much needed aid to the Saints.

The United States Government agreed to enlist a battalion of five hundred Mormon men as part of their Army of the West. The army would travel overland from Kansas to San Diego, California to claim California for the United States during the Mexican War. For the Saints, it provided valuable resources as their men received provisions and wages for their service.

Kane then made a trip to the Mormon encampment at the Missouri River where he arrived on 11 July 1846. During his stay, Kane became ill with pulmonary tuberculosis and nearly lost his life, yet his observations of Mormon daily life impressed him. Their tender care for him during his critical illness won them his never-ending loyalty. While Kane's efforts to assist the Saints initially had more than one objective, he was committed to pursue their interests following his sojourn with them. He wrote his mother during this period, "One part of my unselfish objects has been obtained. [The] Government has befriended the poor Mormons by taking five hundred of them into service, and they will draw rations immediately." A month later, he wrote his father, "I am going to devote much of [my] time when I come home to the Mormons. The book I proposed for my profit [a history of the Mormons], I have not the materials to write, but I will write one for their vindication."¹

Regaining strength enough to travel, Kane returned to Philadelphia, but not before he visited the abandoned Mormon city of Nauvoo. Thomas Kane, only twenty-four years of age, arrived in Nauvoo, Illinois in September 1846. The first Saints had left the city nearly seven months earlier and the exodus continued during the next months as an increasing number crossed the Mississippi to the Iowa shore. The last remaining Saints had just left the city a few days prior to Kane's arrival in the area.

Following his return to Philadelphia, Kane continued in his clerkship and also served as one of the United States commissioners in eastern Pennsylvania. During this period he wrote articles in support of abolition and became an active agent in the Underground Railroad. He served as chairman of the Free Soil State Central Committee of Pennsylvania from 1848-1850. While anxiously engaged in many other pursuits and interests, he nevertheless did not forget the Mormons.

In March 1850, Kane spoke before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, presenting an address on the Mormons which lasted nearly forty minutes. Later a version of his speech was printed in a small booklet numbering eighty-four pages entitled, *The Mormons, A Discourse delivered before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania: March 26, 1850*. A second edition of the booklet was printed soon thereafter with an eight page postscript.

Kane's talk was based on his own observations, but also from information gleaned from the Mormons. The tone was positive; the Saints were described as hard working and devoutly religious. Their life in Nauvoo was seen from Kane's vantage point as an awe inspiring story--an epic. One thousand copies of *The Mormons* were printed in Philadelphia with a second edition following soon thereafter. The Saints used the booklet in their efforts to seek assistance from the government and to ameliorate their image. The Utah territorial delegate to Congress, Dr. John M. Bernhisel, distributed copies of *The Mormons* to leading United States government officials in Washington, D.C., including all the members of Congress and the President of the United States.

The lecture was reprinted in the Church's own newspaper, the *Millennial Star*, in Great Britain and in several Church periodicals in the United States, including the *Frontier Guardian* published at Kanesville, Iowa, a Mormon community named in Kane's honor.

Kane had been criticized for his efforts to defend the Saints as early as 1848. An article that appeared in the *American Courier* in Philadelphia on 15 April 1848 alluded to comments published in the *Warsaw Signal*, a leading anti-Mormon paper in Hancock County, Illinois, which attacked Kane and his descriptions of the Mormon people and their history in Illinois.

While the article in the *Courier* did not malign Kane personally, it suggested that he "may have been misled in some particulars, through exaggerated or di-

rectly untrue statements of the aggrieved parties, but as to the wrong and destitution he wished to impress upon the public mind, a close sifting of the facts will, we doubt not, show that he has erred but little in his statement, from the facts as they really occurred.”² Some criticism was generated by his latest efforts to defend the Saints.

Kane wrote in his second edition postscript, “I have been annoyed by comments this hastily written discourse has elicited. Well meaning friends have even invited me to tone down its remarks in favor of the Mormons, for the purpose of securing them a readier acceptance.--I can only make them more express,” he argued. “The Truth must take care of itself. I not only meant to deny that the Mormons in any wise fall below our own standard of morals, but I would be distinctly understood to ascribe to those of their number with whom I associated in the West, a general correctness of deportment and purity of character above the average of ordinary communities.”³ Undaunted by friendly advice or strong criticism, Kane continued his personal mission in behalf of the Saints.

Especially important was his work during the critical period of the Utah War in 1857-1858. Kane traveled incognito to Utah and secured permission from Church leaders to act in their behalf. A large U.S. Army contingent was preparing to “invade” Utah and to establish newly appointed territorial government. Kane persuaded Alfred Cummings, the territorial governor, that President Buchanan’s charges about the Mormon rebellion were entirely false and as a result the conflict was resolved without bloodshed.

Following his service in the Civil War, Kane made his home in McKean County, Pennsylvania. Kane continued his contact with the Mormons. He and his wife, Elizabeth, visited Utah during the winter of 1872-1873. Elizabeth’s letters home described life in Utah and were eventually published in 1874 by her father.

Thomas Kane received a special patriarchal blessing from Church leaders during this visit, a distinct privilege reserved for the committed Saints. The fact that Kane received such a blessing indicates the deep love and respect the Saints had for their non-Mormon friend.

Kane visited the Saints one final time following Brigham Young’s death in 1877. He assured the Saints that he would continue to support the Mormon cause, and though he had been a personal friend to Young, he emphasized that he was still a friend to all the Saints.

Thomas L. Kane died on 26 December 1883 at the age of sixty-one. Following his death, Elizabeth wrote to Utah,

Your friend suffered intensely until a few hours of his release, his mind was wandering from the outset of the attack. Yet in the intervals of consciousness he was fully persuaded of the approach of death, and made efforts to give us counsel and bid us farewell. In one of these lucid moments he said: ‘My mind is too heavy, but do send the sweetest message you can make up to my Mormon friends--to all, my dear Mormon friends.’ Nothing I could ‘make up’ could be sweeter to you than this evidence that you were in his last thoughts.⁴

Many of Kane’s personal memorabilia, including his patriarchal blessing, are displayed at the Kane Chapel, operated by the LDS Church, at Kane, McKean County, Pennsylvania. Other letters and material relating to Kane and the Mormons are located in the LDS Church’s Historical Department Archives in Salt Lake City. The American Philosophical Society Library in Philadelphia has a collection of Kane material, including several pages of the original draft of his 1850 address. The booklet, *The Mormons*, is rare, but it is found in several institutional libraries and has been reprinted (but currently is out of print). The historic illustrations and photographs printed herein add a flavor to Kane’s own story about “A visit to Nauvoo--September 1846.”

A VISIT TO NAUVOO: SEPTEMBER 1846

A few years ago, ascending the Upper Mississippi in the Autumn, when its waters were low, I was compelled to travel by land past the region of the Rapids. My road lay through the Half-Breed Tract, a fine section of Iowa, which the unsettled state of its land-titles had appropriated as a sanctuary for coiners, horse thieves, and other outlaws. I had left my steamer at Keokuk, at the foot of the Lower Fall, to hire a carriage, and to contend for some fragments of a dirty meal with the swarming flies, the only scavengers of the locality. From this place to where the deep water of the river returns, my eye wearied to see everywhere sordid, vagabond and idle settlers; and a country marred, without being improved by their careless hands.

I was descending the last hillside upon my journey, when a landscape in delightful contrast broke upon my view. Half encircled by a bend of the river, a beautiful city lay glittering in the fresh morning sun; its bright new dwellings, set in cool green gardens, ranging up around a stately dome-shaped hill, which was crowned by a noble marble edifice, whose high tapering spire was radiant with white and gold. The city appeared to cover several miles; and beyond it, in the back ground, there rolled off a fair country, checkered by the careful lines of fruitful husbandry. The unmistakable marks of industry, enterprise and education wealth, everywhere, made the scene one of singular and most striking beauty.

It was a natural impulse to visit this inviting region. I procured a skiff, and rowing across the river, landed at the chief wharf of the city. No one met me there. I looked, and saw no one. I could hear no one move; though the quiet everywhere was such that I heard the flies buzz, and the water-ripples break against the shallow of the beach. I walked through the solitary streets. The town lay as in a dream, under some deadening spell

of loneliness, from which I almost feared to wake it. For plainly it had not slept long. There was no grass growing up in the paved ways. Rains had not entirely washed away the prints of dusty footsteps.

Yet I went about unchecked. I went into empty work-shops, rope walks and smithies. The spinner's wheel was idle; the carpenter had gone from his work-bench and shavings, his unfinished sash and casing. Fresh bark was in the tanners's vat, and the fresh-chopped light wood stood piled against the baker's oven. The blacksmith's shop was cold; but his coal heap and ladling pool and crooked water horn were all there, as if he had just gone off for a holiday. No work people anywhere looked to know my errand. If I went into the gardens, clinking the wicket-latch loudly after me, to pull the marigolds, heart's-ease and lady-slippers, and draw a drink with the water sodden well-bucket and its noisy chain; or, knocking off with my stick the tall heavy-headed dahlias and sunflowers, hunted over the beds for cucumbers and love-apples,--no one called out to me from any opened window, or dog sprang forward to bark



Main Street looking south. Photograph courtesy of Harold Allen Collection.

an alarm. I could have supposed the people hidden in the houses, but the doors were unfastened; and when at last I timidly entered them, I found dead ashes white upon the hearths, and had to tread a tiptoe, as if walking down the aisle of a country church, to avoid rousing irreverent echoes from the naked floors.

On the outskirts of the town was the city graveyard. But there was no record of Plague there, nor did it in anywise differ much from other Protestant American cemeteries. Some of the mounds were not long sodded; some of the stones were newly set, their dates recent, and their black inscriptions glossy in the mason's hardly dried lettering ink.

Beyond the graveyard, out in the fields, I saw, in one spot hard-by where the fruited boughs of a young orchard had been roughly torn down, the still smoldering embers of a barbecue fire, that had been constructed of rails from the fencing round it. It was the latest sign of life there. Fields upon fields of heavy-headed yellow grain lay rotting ungathered upon the ground. No one was at hand to take in their rich harvest. As far as the eye could reach, they stretched away--they, sleeping too in the hazy air of Autumn.

Only two portions of the city seemed to suggest the import of this mysterious solitude. On the southern suburb, the houses looking out upon the country showed, by their splintered woodwork and walls battered to the foundation, that they had lately been the mark of a destructive cannonade. And in and around the splendid Temple, which had been the chief object of my admiration, armed men were barricaded, surrounded by their stacks of musketry and pieces of heavy ordnance. These challenged me to render an account of myself, and why I had had the temerity to cross the water without a written permit from a leader of their band.

Though these men were generally more or less under the influence of ardent spirits; after I had explained myself as a passing stranger, they seemed anxious to gain my good opinion. They told me the story of the Dead City: that it had been a notable manufacturing and commercial mart, sheltering over 20,000 persons; that they



*Nauvoo Temple above the Town of Nauvoo.
Photograph courtesy of LDS Church Archives.*

had waged war with its inhabitants for several years, and had been finally successful only a few days before my visit, in an action fought in front of the ruined suburb; after which, they had driven them forth at the point of the sword. The defence, they said, had been obstinate, but gave way on the third day's bombardment.

They boasted greatly of their prowess, especially in this Battle, as they called it; but I discovered they were not of one mind as to certain of the exploits that had distinguished it; one of which, as I remember, was, that they had slain a father and his son, a boy of fifteen, not long residents of the fated city, whom they admitted to have borne a character without reproach.

They also conducted me inside the massive sculptured walls of the curious Temple, in which they said the banished inhabitants were accustomed to celebrate the mystic rites of an unhallowed worship. They particularly pointed out to me certain features of the building, which, having been the peculiar objects of a former superstitious regard, they had as matter of duty sedulously defiled and defaced. The reputed sites of certain shrines they had thus particularly noticed, and various sheltered chambers, in one of which was a deep well, constructed they believed with a dreadful design. Beside these, they led me to see a large and deep chiselled marble vase or basin, supported upon twelve oxen, also of marble, and of the size of life, of which they told some romantic stories. They said, the deluded persons, most of whom were immigrants from a great distance, believed their Deity countenanced their reception here of a baptism of regeneration, as proxies for whomsoever they held in warm affection in the countries from which they had come: That here parents "went into the water" for their lost children, children for their parents, widows for their spouses, and young persons for their lovers: That thus the Great Vase came to be for them associated with all dear and distant memories, and was therefore the object, of all others in the building, to which they attached the greatest degree of idolatrous affection. On this account, the victors had so diligently desecrated it, as to render the apartment in which it was contained too noisome to abide in.

They permitted me also to ascend into the steeple, to see where it had been lightning-struck on the Sabbath before; and to look out, East and South, on wasted farms like those I had seen near the City, extending till they were lost in the distance. Here, in the face of the pure day, close to the scar of the Divine wrath left by the thunder-bolt, were fragments of food, cruises of liquor and broken drinking vessels, with a bass drum and a steam-boat signal bell, of which I afterwards learned the use with pain.

It was after nightfall, when I was ready to cross the river on my return. The wind had freshened since the sunset; and the water beating roughly into my little boat, I headed higher up the stream than the point I had left in the morning, and landed where a faint glimmering light invited me to steer.

Here, among the dock and rushes, sheltered only by the darkness, without roof between them and the sky, I came upon a crowd of several hundred human creatures,

whom my movements roused from uneasy slumber upon the ground.

Passing these on my way to the light, I found it came from a tallow candle in a paper funnel-shade, such as is used by street vendors of apples and pea-nuts, and which flaring and guttering away in the bleak air off the water, shone flickering on the emaciated features of a man in the last stage of a bilious remittent fever. They had done their best for him. Over his head was something like a tent, made of a sheet or two, and he rested on a but partially ripped open old straw mattress, with a hair sofa cushion under his head for a pillow. His gaping jaw and glazing eye told how short a time he would monopolize these luxuries; though a seemingly bewildered and excited person, who might have been his wife, seemed to find hope in occasionally forcing him to swallow awkwardly measured sips of the tepid river water from a burned and battered bitter smelling tin coffee-pot. Those who knew better had furnished the apothecary he needed--a toothless old bald-head, whose manner had the repulsive dullness of a [man] familiar with death scenes. He, so long as I remained, mumbled in his patient's ear a monotonous and melancholy prayer, between the pauses of which I heard the hiccup and sobbing of two little girls, who were sitting up on a piece of drift wood outside.

Dreadful, indeed, was the suffering of these forsaken beings. Cowed and cramped by cold and sun-burn, alternating as each weary day and night dragged on, they were, almost all of them, the crippled victims of disease. They were there because they had no homes, nor hospital nor poor-house nor friends to offer them any. They could not satisfy the feeble cravings of their sick: they had not bread to quiet the fractious hunger cries of their children. Mothers and babes, daughters and grandparents, all of them alike, were bivouacked in tatters, wanting even covering to comfort those whom the sick shiver of fever was searching to the marrow.

These were Mormons, famishing, in Lee county, Iowa, in the fourth week of the month of September, in the year of our Lord 1846. The city,--it was Nauvoo, Illinois. The Mormons were the owners of that city, and the smiling country round. And those who had stopped their ploughs, who had silenced their hammers, their axes, their shuttles and their workshop wheels; those who had put out their fires, who had eaten their food, spoiled their orchards, and trampled under foot their thousands of acres of unharvested bread; these,--were the keepers of

their dwellings, the carousers in their Temple,--whose drunken riot insulted the ears of their dying.

I think it was as I turned from the wretched night-watch of which I have spoken, that I first listened to the sounds of revel of a party of the guard within the city. Above the distant hum of the voices of many, occasionally rose distinct the loud oath-tainted exclamation, and the falsely intonated scrap of vulgar song;--but lest this requiem should go unheeded, every now and then, when their boisterous orgies strove to attain a sort of ecstatic climax, a cruel spirit of insulting frolic carried some of them up into the high belfry of the Temple steeple, and there, with the wicked childishness of inebriates, they whooped, and shrieked, and beat the drum that I had seen, and rang in charivariic unison their loud-tongued steam-boat bell.

They were, all told, not more than six hundred and forty persons who were thus lying on the river flats. But the Mormons in Nauvoo and its dependencies had been numbered the year before at over twenty thousand. Where were they? They had last been seen, carrying in mournful trains their sick and wounded, halt and blind, to disappear behind the western horizon, pursuing the phantom of another home. Hardly anything else was known of them: and people asked with curiosity, What had been their fate--what their fortunes?

I propose making these questions the subject of my Lecture. Since the expulsion of the Mormons, to the present date, I have been intimately conversant with the details of their history. But I shall invite your attention most particularly to an account of what happened to them during their first year in the Wilderness; because at this time more than any other, being lost to public view, they were the subjects of fable and misconception. Happily, it was during this period I myself moved with them; and earned, at dear price, as some among you are aware, my right to speak with authority of them and their character, their trials, achievements and intentions.

The party encountered by me at the river shore were the last of the Mormons that left the city. They had all of them engaged the year before, that they would vacate their homes, and seek some other place of refuge. It had been the condition of a truce between them and their assailants; and as an earnest of their food faith, the chief elders and some others of obnoxious standing, with their families, were to set out for the West in the Spring of 1846. It had been stipulated in return, that the rest of the

Mormons might remain behind in the peaceful enjoyment of their Illinois abode, until their leaders, with their exploring party, could with all diligence select for them a new place of settlement beyond the Rocky Mountains, in California, or elsewhere, and until they had opportunity to dispose to the best advantage of the property which they were then to leave.

Some renewed symptoms of hostile feeling had, however, determined the pioneer party to begin their work before the Spring. It was, of course, anticipated that this would be a perilous service; but it was regarded as a matter of self-denying duty. The ardor and emulation of many, particularly the devout and the young, were stimulated by the difficulties it involved; and the ranks of the party were therefore filled up with volunteers from among the most effective and responsible members of the sect. They began their march in mid-winter; and by the beginning of February, nearly all of them were on the road, many of their wagons having crossed the Mississippi on the ice.

Under the most favoring circumstances, an expedition of this sort, undertaken at such a season of year, could scarcely fail to be disastrous* Nine children were born the first night the women camped out "Sugar Creek," Feb. 5. But the pioneer company had to set out in haste, and were very imperfectly supplied with necessaries. The cold was intense. They moved in the teeth of keen-edged northwest winds, such as sweep down the Iowa peninsula from the ice-bound regions of the timber-shaded Slave Lake and Lake of the Woods: on the Bald Prairie there, nothing above the dead grass breaks their free course over the hard rolled hills. Even along the scattered water courses, where they broke the thick ice to give their cattle drink, the annual autumn fires had left little wood of value. The party, therefore, often wanted for good camp fires, the first luxury of all travellers; but to men insufficiently furnished with tents and other appliances of shelter, almost an essential to life. After days of fatigue, their nights were often passed in restless efforts to save themselves from freezing. Their stock of food also proved inadequate; and as their systems became impoverished, their suffering from cold increased.

Sickened with catarrhal affections, manacled by the fetters of dreadfully acute rheumatism, some contrived for a-while to get over the shortening day's march, and drag along some others. But the sign of an impaired circulation soon began to show itself in the liability of all to be dreadfully frost-bitten. The hardiest and strongest

became helplessly crippled. About the same time, the strength of their beasts of draught began to fail. The small supply of provender they could carry with them had given out. The winter-bleached prairie straw proved devoid of nourishment; and they could only keep them from starving by seeking for the browse, as it is called, or green bark and tender buds and branches, of the cotton-wood and other stunted growths of the hollows.

To return to Nauvoo was apparently the only escape; but this would have been to give occasion for fresh mistrust, and so to bring new trouble to those they had left there behind them. They resolved at least to hold their ground, and to advance as they might, were it only by limping through the deep snows a few slow miles a day. They found a short of comfort in comparing themselves to the Exiles of Siberia.* One of the company having a copy of Mme. Cottin's Elizabeth, it was so sought after that some read it from the wagons by moon-

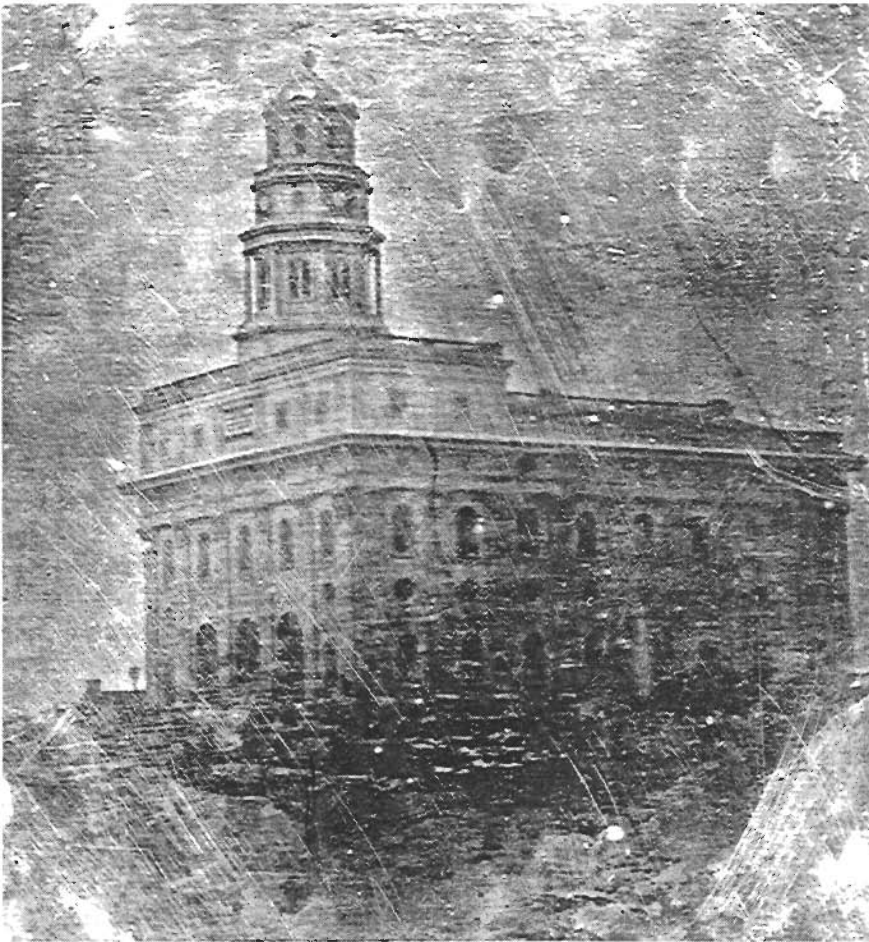
light. They were materially sustained, too, by the practice of psalmody, "keeping up the Songs of Zion, and passing along Doxologies from front to rear, when the breath froze on their eyelashes," and sought cheerfulness in earnest praying for the Spring,--longed for as morning by the tossing sick.

The Spring came at last. It overtook them in the Sac and Fox country, still on the naked prairie, not yet half way over the trail they were following between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers.

* * *

Through all this the pioneers found redeeming comfort in the thought, that their own suffering was the price of immunity to their friends at home. But the arrival of spring proved this a delusion. Before the warm weather had made the earth dry enough for easy travel, messengers came in from Nauvoo to overtake the party with fear-exaggerated tales of outrage, and to urge the chief men to hurry back to the city that they might give counsel and assistance there. The enemy had only waited till the emigrants were supposed to be gone on their road too far to return to interfere with them, and then renewed their aggressions.

The Mormons outside Nauvoo were indeed hard pressed; but inside the city they maintained themselves very well for two or three months long. Strange to say, the chief part of this respite was devoted to completing the structure of their quaintly devised but beautiful Temple. Since the dispersion of Jewry, probably, history affords us no parallel to the attachment the Mormons for this edifice. Every architectural element, every most fantastic emblem it embodied, was associated, for them, with some cherished feature of their religion. Its erection had been enjoined upon them as a most sacred duty: they



Nauvoo Temple. Courtesy of LDS Archives.

were proud of the honor it conferred upon their city, when it grew up in its [splendor] to become the chief object of the admiration of strangers upon the Upper Mississippi. Besides, they had built it as a labor of love; they could count up to half a million the value of their tithing and free-will offerings laid upon it.

Hardly a Mormon woman had not given up to it some trinket or pin-money: the poorest Mormon man had at least served the tenth part of his year on its walls; and the coarsest artisan could turn to it with something of the ennobling attachment of an artist for his fair creation. Therefore, though their enemies drove on them ruthlessly, they succeeded in parrying the last sword-thrust, till they had completed even the gilding of the angel and trumpet on the summit of its lofty spire. As a closing work, they placed on the entablature of the front, like a baptismal mark on the forehead,

THE HOUSE OF THE LORD:
BUILT BY THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF
LATTER-DAY SAINTS
HOLINESS TO THE LORD!

Then, at high noon, under the bright sunshine of May, the next only after its completion, they consecrated it to divine service. There was a carefully studied ceremonial for the occasion. It was said the high elders of the sect travelled furtively from the Camp of Israel in the Wilderness; and throwing off ingenious disguises, appeared in their own robes of holy office, to give it splendor.

For that one day the Temple stood resplendent in all its typical glories of sun, moon and stars, and other abounding figured and lettered signs, hieroglyph and symbols: but that day only. The sacred rites of consecration ended, the work of removing the [sacrosanct] proceeded with the rapidity of magic. It went on through the night; and when the morning of the next day dawned, all the ornaments and furniture, everything that could provoke a sneer, had been carried off; and except some fixtures that would not bear removal, the building was dismantled to the bare walls.

It was this day saw the departure of the last elders, and the largest band that moved in one company together. The people of Iowa have told me, that from

morning to night they passed westward like an endless procession. They did not seem greatly out of heart, they said; but, at the top of every hill before they disappeared, were to be seen looking back, like banished Moors, on their abandoned homes, and the far-seen Temple and its glittering spire.

After this consecration, which was construed to indicate an insincerity on the part of the Mormons as to their stipulated departure, or at least a hope of return, their foes set upon them with renewed bitterness. As many fled as were at all prepared; but by the very fact of their so decreasing the already diminished forces of the city's defenders, they encouraged the enemy to greater boldness. It soon became apparent that nothing short of an immediate emigration could save the remnant.

From this time onward the energies of those already on the road were engrossed by the duty of providing for the fugitives who came crowding in after them. At a last general meeting of the sect in Nauvoo, there had been passed an unanimous resolve that they would sustain one another, whatever their circumstances, upon the march; and this, though made in view of no such appalling exigency, they now with one accord set themselves together to carry out.

Here begins the touching period of Mormon history; on which but that it is for me a hackneyed subject, I should be glad to dwell, were it only for the proof it has afforded of the strictly material value to communities of an active common faith, and its happy illustrations of the power of the spirit of Christian fraternity to relieve the deepest of human suffering. I may assume that it has already fully claimed the public sympathy.

Delayed thus by their own wants, and by their exertions to provide for the wants of others, it was not till the month of June that the advance of the emigrant companies arrived at the Missouri.

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NOTES

¹ Letters quoted in Everett L. Cooley's "Introduction," Twelve Mormon Homes Visited in Succession on a Journey through Utah to Arizona (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund University of Utah Library, 1974), x-xi.

² American Courier 15 April 1848, p. 2.

³ Thomas L. Kane, The Mormons, A Discourse delivered before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania: March 26, 1850 (Philadelphia: King & Baird, Printer, Sansom Street, 1850), p. 85.

⁴ Quoted in Leonard J. Arrington, "'In Honorable Remembrance': Thomas L. Kane's Service to the Mormons," BYU Studies 21 (Fall 1981):400-401.