

**“There is the Greatest Excitement in
This Country That I Ever Beheld”:
Mormonism’s New England Ministry of
the Forgotten Eli P. Maginn**

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The story of Eli P. Maginn is an unusual Mormon story that speaks of activities conducted in the periphery of Mormonism, away from the pulsing complexity that often characterized the center of Mormon gravity in its formative years. This outlying circumstance elevates the story’s importance because Eli P. Maginn (ca. 1818–1844) reminds us that much of the broad scope of the early church remains to be mined, that more remains to be understood and disseminated about the Mormon past for us to make sense of the genesis of the religion and its people. Maginn’s life not only augments what we already know about the early Saints but also adds angles and dimensions requiring us to reconsider ensconced traditions.

This is a story illustrating the early missionary work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in North America.¹ In the absence of Maginn’s personal records and institutional compilations of the church’s missionary records, which were not kept at this time, Maginn’s role during the formative period of Mormon history survives through a few items of

¹The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, referred to hereafter in this study as the church or LDS Church, was founded as the Church of Christ and known as the Church of Latter Day Saints at the time of Maginn’s affiliation, obtaining its current appellation in 1838.

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Historian's Office,
Great Salt Lake City, Sept. 16th 1854.

Elder A. M. York,

I shall feel obliged by your giving me
as many particulars as you can gather of the history of
Elder E. P. Maginn, and to assist you in so doing, I
propose the following questions:

When and where was he born?
 What are the names of his father and mother?
 Where was he educated?
 Did he make any profession of religion previous to joining the church?
 Did he hold any office in Church, State or Military, or in any other?
 When, where and to whom was he married?
 When, where, and by whom was he baptized, confirmed, or ordained?
 What offices did he hold in this church?
 What missions did he perform, and the date?
 What societies did he work?
 What branches of the church did he raise up or enlarge?
 At what time did he gather to settlements, and under what circumstances?
 Did he keep a journal? If so can you procure it for me?
 Was he not abused by being taxed for tithing, and under what circumstances?
 Date, place, and manner of his death?

Your prompt attention will oblige,
 Yours truly,
 Geo. A. Smith
 Historian.

George A. Smith, letter to Aaron York, September 16, 1854, Historian's Office Letterpress Copybook, courtesy of the LDS Church History Library.

primary documentation along with fragmentary references found in records created by his associates and other contemporaries. The reader will note the importance of the expansion of Mormon missionary work via reports from the field found in the indispensable church periodical literature of the time. Attitudes about Mormonism and its missionaries as published in the newspapers of the day also help provide texture to the account. The record keeping church was at the time in the elemental stages of a cultural consciousness of the past that later characterized the church. Despite the documentary limitations, the surviving records portray dimensions of Mormonism necessary in understanding its establishment and perpetuation.

The portrait of the life of Eli P. Maginn is more than an addition to the voluminous heroic portraits of Mormon pioneers that have been produced throughout the years; it is a story about the range of devotion, sacrifice, courage, and zeal, coupled with reversals and disappointments, exhibited by many of Mormon's early converts. While not a traditional biography-length treatment—Maginn was only twenty-six when he died—this study assembles together many mostly ignored historical fragments that allow a rather broad view, especially in the absence of a personal record, of a significant player in early Mormonism. Had a comparable portrait come to light a hundred years ago, Maginn's name may have been an oft-cited example in Mormon annals of the early appeal of the gospel message as well as complications of early discipleship.

The construction of the Mormon past rounded a significant corner in 1854 when thirty-seven-year-old George A. Smith accepted the role as historian of the church. A younger cousin of Joseph Smith, the large, bewigged son of LDS Church Patriarch John Smith had been a Mormon apostle for fifteen years. His call to be Church Historian followed the noteworthy tenure of Willard Richards, who died in March 1854. The focus of the Church Historian had extended during the Richards years from its narrow origins focusing primarily on Joseph Smith to an enlarged perspective that, while continuing the documentation of Smith's life, started to expand to gathering and preparing materials chronicling the growth and development of Mormonism.

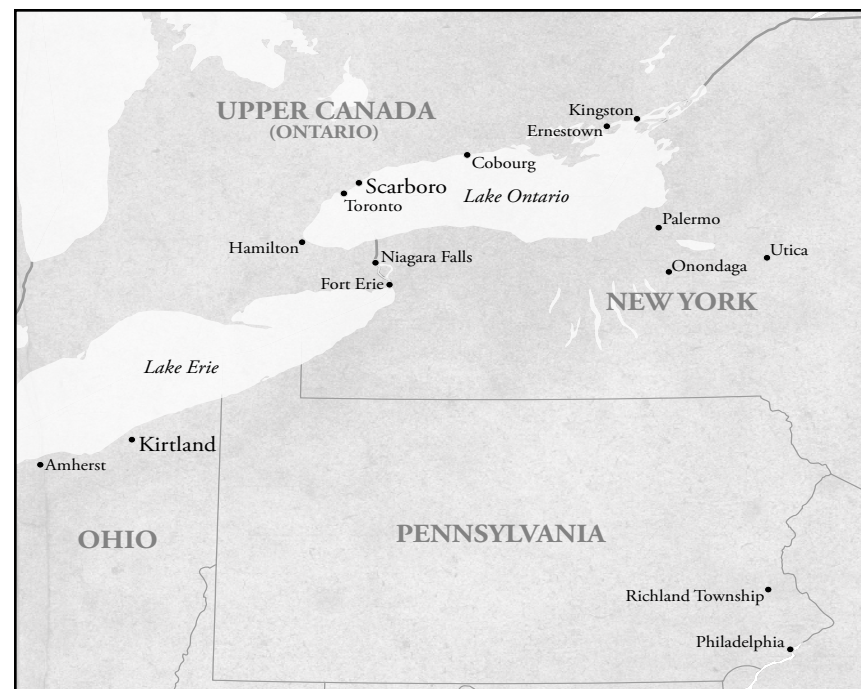
In what eventually became one of the more important organizational records of the period, Smith solicited as the first entry into the Historian's Office Letterbook what may now appear to be a surprising inquiry. In September 1854, to Aaron M. York, a forty-seven-year-old Maine native and evidently a former associate of Maginn, Smith queried, "[Give] me as many

particulars as you can gather of the history of Elder Eli P. Maginn.”² Elder Smith requested genealogical and personal information as well as particulars of Maginn’s church service. While not explicitly stating such, clearly his query was meant to gather details about Maginn’s rather astonishing career as a missionary, almost exactly ten years after Maginn’s death.³ Though it is not known how York was connected to Maginn, York immigrated to Utah in 1850 and, according to the U.S. census of that year, lived in Salt Lake City, Utah. The 1856 Utah census shows him residing in Provo, Utah. York died in Santaquin, Utah, in 1881. While something of Maginn’s reputation had apparently followed him to Utah’s valleys, little documentation had been pulled together in Great Salt Lake City identifying his life and legacy. In the absence of a posterity, had Aaron York responded with answers to Smith’s inquiry, perhaps Eli P. Maginn would have, after all, become remembered as one of the more influential, productive, and devoted missionaries of his era. But, apparently, York did not reply to the request.⁴

²Maginn is pronounced Muh-gin and is variously spelled in the surviving records as Maginn, Magin, and McGin.

³George A. Smith, letter to Aaron M. York, September 16, 1854, Historian’s Office Letterbook, 1:1, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, hereafter CHL. The inquiry asked these questions: “Where and when was he born? What are the names of his father and mother? Where was he educated? Did he make any profession of religion previous to joining this church? Did he hold any office in Church, State or Military previous to joining this church? When, where, and to whom was he married? When, where, and by whom was he baptized, confirmed, or ordained? What offices did he hold in this church? What missions did he perform, and the date? What miracles did he work? What branches of the church did he raise up or enlarge? At what time did he gather to Kirtland, & under what circumstances? Did he keep a journal? & if so can you procure it for me? Was he not abused by being tarred & feathered, & under what circumstances? Date, place, and manner of his death?”

⁴While George A. Smith did not recover information about Eli P. Maginn, there is evidence that LDS Church Assistant Historian Andrew Jenson took interest in Maginn in the early part of the twentieth century. George Abbot Morison and Etta M. Smith, *History of Peterborough, New Hampshire*, 2 vols. (Rindge, N.H.: Richard R. Smith, 1954), 1:187–88. However, it is likely that insufficient information about Maginn resulted in Jenson’s neglect of Maginn in his *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History, 1901–1936); or especially his *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1941),



Map of Upper Canada, New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.
Map by Brandon S. Plewe.

regarding entries about missionary work in Massachusetts, 482; New Hampshire, 574; and New York, 578–79. Brief descriptions of Maginn did not begin to appear until the last decade of the twentieth century (though references were made to Maginn in Richard Shelton Williams, “The Missionary Movements of the LDS Church in New England, 1830–1850” Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1969); Peter Crawley, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church*, 3 vols. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1997–2012), 1:186–87, 216, 288; Ronald O. Barney, “A Man That You Could Not Help Likeing’: Joseph Smith and Nauvoo, Illinois, Portrayed in a Letter by Susannah and George W. Taggart” *BYU Studies* 40, no. 2 (2001): 165–79; Marilyn J. Crandall, “The Little and Gardner Hymnal: A Study of Its Origin and Contribution to the LDS Musical Canon” *BYU Studies* 44, no. 4 (2005): 136–52; Ronald O. Barney, “The Forgotten Elder Eli P. Maginn,” paper delivered at the Mormon History Association conference, Killington, Vermont, 2005; and Connell O’Donovan, “The Mormon Priesthood Ban and Elder Q. Walker Lewis: ‘An Example for His More Whiter Brethren to Follow’” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 26 (2006): 48–100.

Whether by design or coincidence, there was a fragmentary transfer of culture to the second and third generations of Latter-day Saints after the founding era through several church-published historical series. Those who *knew not Joseph*, including children born to first generation Saints and convert-immigrants, found it necessary to acquire a cultural consciousness of their first prophet and the early church by oral tradition. Of course, the serialized “History of Joseph Smith” had appeared in the church’s organs—the *Times and Seasons* followed by the *Deseret News*, and was reprinted for English Saints by the *Latter Day Saints’ Millennial Star*. The likelihood of Mormon households gathering and preserving the lengthy and piecemeal “History” was not probable, and the only other book-length portrayals of Joseph Smith before the last decade of the nineteenth-century were somewhat tainted, according to the Mormon faithful.⁵ But once George Q. Cannon took the reins of LDS publishing in the 1860s, little by little the void of information about Mormon beginnings was gradually mitigated. By the end of the 1880s, Mormons had the first full-scale *approved* biography of Joseph Smith (by Cannon in 1888, following his serialization of Smith’s story, 1878–1881), as well as notable stories about the early Saints, among others, printed in the church periodical the *Juvenile Instructor* and *The Faith Promoting Series*.⁶ And while there were numerous references to those who made significant contributions to early Mormonism in this ground-breaking literature, there was nary a mention of Maginn.

Maginn’s Beginnings and Family

Eli Maginn was not a common Latter-day Saint of his time. And while he never lived long enough or circulated in the required circles for memorialization or remembrance, his story is arguably one of the most illustrative of early Mormonism’s attraction to the religiously inclined in the early nineteenth-century. Because of Maginn’s determined zeal, his story is also about the means by which Mormonism expanded. This account will

⁵Lucy Mack Smith’s biographical sketch of her son Joseph was published by Orson Pratt in 1853, but because Brigham Young censured the “many mistakes in the work,” after a few years the residual of the 1853 printing was destroyed. Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church*, 3:91–97. Edward W. Tullidge’s 1878 biography of Smith, *Life of Joseph the Prophet* had limited appeal due to Tullidge’s separation from the LDS Church. Ronald W. Walker, *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 310–11.

⁶See George Q. Cannon’s eight-volume *Faith Promoting Series* in the 1880s.

portray Maginn’s attachment to the fledgling Restorationist movement through his missionary exploits, giving insight into the manner in which Mormonism perpetually refreshed itself through the work of its missionaries, especially in New England. Besides Maginn’s charismatic appeal, which directly resulted in the creation and maintenance of several congregations in the American northeast, he and a handful of his like-minded missionary associates inadvertently proved the stimulus for production of one of the most important of all Joseph Smith documents—the “Church History” account published in March 1842, commonly known as the Wentworth Letter (but best identified, as the reader will see, as the Barstow-Wentworth letter), initially published only in Nauvoo’s *Times and Seasons*.

The family of Eli Maginn encountered Mormonism in 1836 in Upper Canada—in Scarborough Township, a collection of villages along the north shore of Lake Ontario, just east of Toronto. As Canada, after the end of America’s Revolutionary War with Britain, assembled its disparate geographical constituents, primarily French and British/American, into a governable people, the Canadian “Constitutional Act of 1791” divided the province of Quebec into two southern provinces—Lower Canada in the East and Upper Canada to the West. Upper Canada, suggesting its position in regards to the headwaters of the St. Lawrence River versus the river’s drainage in Lower Canada, had been created, in part, because of the influx of “refugees” from America after the eighteenth-century revolution. Upper Canada’s first Lieutenant Governor—John Graves Simcoe—initiated a steady immigration into the area by generous land offerings. As many as 6,000 British loyalists, who fled to Upper Canada from America after the war, settled in Upper Canada, which was renamed the province of Ontario in 1841.

Within a handful of years after the American colonies’ severance from Great Britain, the Dennis family—Eli Maginn’s maternal grandparents—relocated from eastern Pennsylvania, just north of Philadelphia, farther north to what was called the Niagara Frontier. It was a daring move considering the volatile circumstances marking the time. Richland Township in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, had increasingly drawn English colonists since its founding in the 1680s. Indeed, William Penn, one of the colony’s founders built his estate in the county. A century later the region, known as part of the Atlantic Coastal Plain, served as strategic ground in the colonists’ fight against the motherland in America’s Revolutionary War.

The year before the American Constitution was ratified and George Washington was appointed president of the United States, Ezekiel and

Ann Heacock Dennis gave notice in mid-1788 to their Quaker countrymen in Richland Township that they were leaving the district to move all they owned—along with, apparently, their national loyalties—to the region known as Niagara (Lake Ontario), which separated the newly founded country from the British domain of Canada. Ezekiel and Ann Dennis with their nine children received acknowledgement in May 1788 from the local congregation of Quakers that “they are members of our religious society and upon enquiry we find their lives and Conversation hath been in a good degree orderly, and have settled their affairs to satisfaction,” and were therefore recommended “to friends at Niagara or Elsewhere where the bearers hereof may sojourn.”⁷

At a time of competition between Europeans, Americans, and Native Americans in the region, Eli Maginn’s maternal family, the Dennises, first established themselves near Fort Erie on the Niagara River just opposite of present Buffalo, New York. Eli’s paternal family and the Dennis family intersected near the turn of the nineteenth century when his father James Maginn married Susannah Dennis, though the circumstances of Eli’s parents’ meeting and union are not known.⁸ The Maginn family eventually

⁷United States of America, Quaker Meeting Records, 1681–1935, Richland Monthly Meeting, Men’s Minutes, 1786–1806, accessed December 2014, www.ancestry.com/2189/31906_28408900410/100053187?backurl=http%3a%2f%2fsearch.ancestry.com%2f%2fcgibin%2fse.dll%3findiv%3dtry%26db%3dQuakerMeetMins%26h%3d100053187&ssrc=&backlabel=ReturnRecordThe Dennis family tax records, indicating very modest wealth—fifteen acres and two head of livestock for Ezekiel Dennis—are found in Richland Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, 1783–1786, Bucks County Pennsylvania, Tax Records, 1782–1860, accessed December 2014, www.ancestry.com/2188/32363_22544001113/2656059?backurl=http%3a%2f%2fsearch.ancestry.com%2f%2fcgibin%2fse.dll%3findiv%3dtry%26db%3dBucksCoPAtaxrec%26h%3d2656059&ssrc=&backlabel=ReturnRecord.

⁸Lee F. Heacock, “Pioneer Families of Canadian Niagara Frontier,” trans. Larry Arnett, *Buffalo Evening News*, May 2, 1931; Orson Hyde, letter to “My Dear Wife,” July 18, 1837, *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 11 (August 1837): 551. Contradictory sources suggest James as being from either Virginia in the United States or Wales. But his mother’s family members were clearly transplants from America to Upper Canada. They were Quakers who had removed from Pennsylvania to the “Niagara Peninsula of Canada” in the latter part of the eighteenth-century. In 1925 James F. Brennan, the town historian for Peterborough, New Hampshire, erroneously identified Maginn as an Englishman, though the Canadian connection to England could accommodate the designation. Several

settled in Scarboro Township (later Scarborough) found along the north shore of Lake Ontario, which before 1790 was more wilderness than frontier. The Mississauga Tribe dominated the area and was a presence into the first third of the next century. According to the “Toronto & Home District Directory” of 1837, Eli Maginn’s father, James, had land in “Concession D, Lot 34” in Scarborough Township. (What was once a collection of small villages in Scarborough Township became in the mid-twentieth century annexed into the eastern district of metropolitan Toronto, Ontario.) Scarboro, as it was initially identified, was named by Elizabeth Simcoe, the Lieutenant Governor’s wife, after the similarity of the limestone cliffs in Scarborough, England. Scarboro remained lightly populated and unsurveyed until the mid-1790s. A late nineteenth-century chronicler wrote that “approaching Scarboro from Lake Ontario, one cannot but be struck with the boldness of the shore line, as compared with the rest of the coast, both east and west of this township. . . . Close to the lake shore the surface is much broken with ravines from fifty to a hundred and fifty feet in depth.” Reaching three hundred feet above the lake, the glacially formed region grabbed the attention of the early settlers. But it was the promising agricultural area a couple of miles inland from Lake Ontario that mostly appealed to the first pioneers.⁹ Several Scottish immigrants capitalized on their early arrival and influenced the developing culture of the area. Locals touted the landscape as “some of the best farming in Upper Canada . . . scarcely, if at all, inferior to the best in Great Britain.”¹⁰

After the land surveys were established in the 1790s “some grants of land were made in recognition of military services during the American war, and to United Empire Loyalists.” A survey of a cross-section of the earliest settlers shows geographical origins in Scotland, England, Ireland, Wales, and the American states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Connecticut.¹¹ The pattern of settlement in Upper Canada paralleled that of the British colonists

of those who have mentioned Maginn in their writings since then have accepted Brennan’s misapplication.

⁹David, Boyle, ed., *Township of Scarboro, 1796–1896* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1896), 10, 14, 30.

¹⁰Boyle, *Township of Scarboro*, 64; Barbara Myrvold, *The People of Scarborough: A History* (Don Mills, Ontario: City of Scarborough Public Library Board, 1997), 30, 35, 38, 40, 43, 52.

¹¹Boyle, *Township of Scarboro*, 27, 29–60.

in America. Rudimentary homes, farms, commerce, and education were slowly augmented by the civilizing feature of cultural advances. Scarboro village, initially the largest settlement in the township, comprised about forty acres. From a population of 89 in 1802, twenty years later 477 called the township home. By 1830 the size of the population almost trebled. Over two thousand lived in the several villages in Scarborough Township in 1835. Civil accouterments grew to include churches, a school, post office, general store, blacksmith shop, a grist mill, and numerous saw mills. However, little progress in disseminating worldly learning had reached Upper Canada by the time Eli Maginn first engaged with schoolmates and teachers.¹²

The greatest influence for many, not unlike that of their fellow colonists to the south, was religion. Eli Maginn grew up in an environment influenced by Christianity in its several variations. Before the white Europeans, French Catholic missionaries made inroads among the Native Americans in the region. Once white settlers pierced the frontier, Presbyterians first made claim upon the area, eventually forming several congregations in the township. Following the Presbyterians were the Dutch Reformed, another strain of Calvinist derivation, and not surprisingly, the Anglicans/Episcopalians and Methodists established congregations among the villagers. Despite the Quaker origins of Maginn's maternal family, there is evidence that at least some of the Maginn's became Methodists.¹³

As Eli Maginn approached his adult years, several cultural events transpired in Scarboro Township that undoubtedly influenced his emerging world-view and prospects for the future. The establishment of a public school provided him with a basic education that rendered him literate, and a library organized by the townspeople at the Presbyterian church allowed him access to further learning. Forty-six subscribers, "chiefly farmers, living in some instances . . . miles apart [united] to place themselves and their families in touch with the best thoughts of the best literary and scientific writers of that time and of past time." Consequently, a committee of twelve was appointed to manage the affairs of the library, including which books to be included in the collection. "No book of a seditious, deistical, or licentious character was to be allowed on the shelves," at the same time that Voltairian thought, on the one hand, and republicanism, on the other, were openly advocated in many quarters. Another influence—the prevail-

¹²Boyle, *Township of Scarboro*, 180–182, 185, 187, 224, 267.

¹³Boyle, *Township of Scarboro*, 137, 157, 162–64.

ing societal mores—was marked by the religious influences upon the villages. This included a temperance society formed in 1834 by the dominant Presbyterian minister of the area, which was perhaps a reaction to the two dozen public houses—"where whiskey could be had" and the post roll-call habit of the militia in treating the men "to a drink of beer, which was carried around in a pail." Young men Eli's age, witnessed foment, such as it was, when an 1837 rebellion erupted that threatened government institutions in Toronto, though four hundred of Scarboro's finest marched in support of the government. Thus, cultural boundaries and their alternatives were both present.¹⁴

Another societal disruption came to Scarboro in the spring of 1836. That year Parley P. Pratt, a married twenty-nine-year-old New Yorker who had been a Mormon almost since its inception in 1830, debated whether he should remain in Kirtland, Ohio, to reestablish his ebbing temporal moorings or to take leave of his wife for the missionary work to which he had been called when appointed a Mormon apostle in February 1835. Relieved of indecision by a blessing of prophecy that he received from his colleague, fellow apostle Heber C. Kimball, he was promised that "Thou shalt go to Upper Canada, even to the city of Toronto, the capital, and there thou shalt find a people prepared for the fullness of the gospel, and they shall receive thee, and thou shalt organize the Church among them, and it shall spread thence into the regions round about, and many shall be brought to the knowledge of the truth." By April 1836, "after a long and tedious passage in a public coach" of about two hundred miles, he was at Niagara Falls, preparing to enter into Canada. Portending his work to raise from ruins a spiritually brutalized world, the sight of the remarkable "Falls" reminded him of the intersection of God's majesty and human fate: "Generations may pass in long succession; ages may roll away and others still succeed; empires may rise and flourish, and pass away and be forgotten; but still thy deafening, thy solemn and awful voice is heard in one eternal roar. The temples of marble may moulder to dust, the monuments of the great may crumble to decay, the palaces of kings fall to ruin and their very place become unknown, their history forgotten in the almost countless ages of antiquity; and still thy sound is heard in everlasting moan, as if mourning over the ruins of by-gone years."¹⁵

¹⁴Boyle, *Township of Scarboro*, 198–99, 217, 220, 233–34.

¹⁵Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (rpt; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 130–32. For background of this particular Upper Canadian venture see also "History of Orson Hyde" in "History of Brigham

With Toronto as his objective, it took a couple of days to get to Hamilton at the head of Lake Ontario. There, penniless, he found a benefactor who paid his passage by boat from Hamilton to Toronto. He viewed his mission as a portion of the palliative offering to gather the *elect* before the Second Advent of Jesus Christ.¹⁶

Pratt was not the first Mormon to venture beyond the borders of the United States. Joseph Smith announced a revelation in early 1830 requiring Oliver Cowdery, Hiram Page, Josiah Stowell and Joseph Knight Sr. to “go to Kingston,” a publication center in Upper Canada (Ontario), to obtain a copyright to publish the Book of Mormon in Canada, though the venture ended in disappointment.¹⁷ But two years later, Brigham Young, who joined the Mormons earlier in 1832 at age thirty-one, with his brother Joseph, made their way north and preached to the Methodists in Kingston in the winter of 1832–1833. Phinehas Young, another of Brigham’s brothers, along with Eliel Strong, Eleazer Miller, and Enos Curtis also proselyted in Upper Canada in June 1832 and baptized among others the extended James Lake Jr. family. They “labored in Canada about six weeks with great success, raised the first branch in British America (Ernestown), and returned home rejoicing.”¹⁸ Brigham Young, still in his pre-apostle days, raised his

Young” *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star* 26, no. 50 (December 10, 1864): 791–92, serialized as “History of Orson Hyde” 26, no. 47 (November 19, 1864), 742–44; 26, no. 48 (November 26, 1864): 760–61; 26, no. 49 (December 3, 1864): 774–76; 26, no. 50 (December 10, 1864): 790–92; Myrtle Stevens Hyde, *Orson Hyde: The Olive Branch of Israel* (Salt Lake City: Agreka Books, 2000), 72–74; and Richard E. Bennett, “A Study of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Upper Canada, 1830–1850,” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1975, 56–60).

¹⁶Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers, Revelations and Translations, Volume 1: Manuscript Revelation Books*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2011), 35–36, hereafter *JSP*; *The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), Section 29:7, hereafter D&C.

¹⁷Michael Hubbard MacKay, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, Grant Underwood, Robert J. Woodford, and William G. Hartley, eds., *JSP, Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, Richard Lyman Bushman, and Matthew J. Grow (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2013), 108–112.

¹⁸Eliel Strong and Eleazer Miller, “Extract of a Letter,” March 19, 1833, *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1, no. 12 (May 1833); Janet Franson Jeffery, *History*

ministering voice in Upper Canada again in May 1833, “baptizing as many as ten converts a day.”¹⁹ Orson Pratt, Parley’s older brother, also briefly crossed into Quebec (Lower Canada) while involved in proselytizing in the upper tier of central Vermont during the summer of 1833, though his venture was of little consequence.²⁰ Later, in October 1833, Joseph Smith himself, with Sidney Rigdon and Freeman Nickerson, who had family living in Mount Pleasant, Upper Canada, departed Kirtland to discover the *elect* in the area beyond Lake Ontario.²¹ This venture occurred when tensions for the Mormons brewed in western Missouri in the few weeks just prior to the Saints’ complete expulsion from Jackson County, Missouri, begging the question about what may have been Smith’s larger interest in Upper Canada at the time. While this was a brief investigation, clearly Smith sensed an opportunity from his visit to the British realm.

In 1836 Apostle Orson Hyde, a Connecticut Yankee by birth and a former Methodist and Campbellite before becoming a Mormon in 1831,

of the James Lake, Jr. Family (Murray, Utah: Roylance Publishing, 1990), 21.

For an overview of Mormon initiatives in the 1830s in Upper Canada, see Larry C. Porter, “Beginnings of the Restoration: Canada, An ‘Effectual Door’ to the British Isles” in V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter, eds., *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987* (Solihull, England: Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987), 3–43.

¹⁹John G. Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 34; Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 35–36; Ronald K. Esplin, “The Emergence of Brigham Young and the Twelve to Mormon Leadership, 1830–1841” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1981), in *Dissertations in Latter-day Saint History* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2006), 37.

²⁰Orson Pratt, *The Orson Pratt Journals*, comp. Elden J. Watson (Salt Lake City: Elden Jay Watson, 1975), 20; Breck England, *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985), 33.

²¹Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *JSP, Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2008), 14–16. See also historical background in Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, Brent M. Rogers, Grant Underwood, Robert J. Woodford, and William G. Hartley, eds., *JSP, Documents, Volume 3: February 1833–March 1834*, edited by Ronald K. Esplin and Matthew J. Grow (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2014), 320–25.



Orson Hyde, photograph by Marse-
na Cannon, ca. 1850, courtesy of
LDS Church History Library.

joined Parley Pratt “for a season” in Upper Canada. Mormonism was taking hold, and Pratt had “called for help.” Elder Pratt, then called away for a period, left the forceful and determined thirty-one-year-old Hyde to shoulder the work. With little else to launch a campaign, Hyde had the good fortune of being challenged to a debate by “a learned Presbyterian priest.” At first refusing but then relenting, before “about one acre of people assembled in a grove,” the verbal exchange between Hyde and the minister lasted for two hours, producing little, Hyde said, until he became enshrouded with “the Spirit of God.” As a result of his compelling appeal, “About forty persons were baptized into the Church in that place (Scarborough) immediately after the debate.”²² Not much is known about the group converted into Mormonism, but it is possible that the Maginn’s were among the number. A request by Orson Hyde from Liverpool to his wife, Marinda, in July 1837 to give “Father Magin” his respects suggests that James Maginn, Eli’s father, may indeed have been a religious protégé of Hyde. That Hyde’s wife lived in Kirtland, Ohio, at the time also suggests that perhaps James Maginn with his family had relocated from Scarborough, Upper Canada, to Kirtland within a year of

²²“History of Orson Hyde,” 791–92. See also Hyde, *Orson Hyde*, 72–73 and Howard H. Barron, *Orson Hyde: Missionary, Apostle, Colonizer* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers, 1977), 80–82.

their baptism.²³ It is likely that the whole of James and Susannah Maginn’s family, including Eli who was about eighteen at the time and the third of their seven children, accepted Mormonism in 1836.²⁴ Besides this study of Eli Maginn, little is known about the individual fates of the Maginns within Mormonism other than scant information about his older brother Ezekiel, and equally brief evidence about their younger sister Anna.²⁵ The message of the Restoration, though, completely enveloped young Eli.

Mormonism Expanding in 1830s

The missionary contact with the Maginns in the mid-1830s was part of Mormonism’s concerted ambition to warn the world of the pending judgment of God, gathering as many as possible of those who would heed the word of salvation prior to Jesus Christ’s Second Advent. Just a year after its organization, the church’s noteworthy June 3, 1831, conference in Kirtland, Ohio, provided the platform wherein prospective Mormon missionaries

²³Bennett, “A Study of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Upper Canada, 1830–1859,” 56–59; Orson Hyde, letter to “My Dear Wife,” July 18, 1837, *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 11 (August 1837): 551.

²⁴Available records do not reveal the exact date of Maginn’s birth. The Maginn’s family outline by Lee Heacock stated he was born in either 1817 or 1818. A sketch of Maginn that appeared in the *Boston Weekly Bee* and reprinted in Nauvoo, Illinois’ *Times and Seasons* in May 1843 indicated that he was twenty-four at the time. Therefore, I have taken the 1818 birth date for this study. “Mormonism” *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 13 (May 15, 1843): 205.

²⁵Ezekiel Maginn, born in Canada in 1813, clearly gathered to Missouri with the Saints. After the Missouri ordeal he relocated to Adams County, Illinois, where the 1840 Illinois census listed his residence. According to the 1880 U.S. Census he lived in Union, Lewis County, Missouri.

Anna Maginn (or, Hannah, as she was also identified), Eli’s younger sister, was born in Scarborough, Upper Canada (Ontario), on June 20, 1824. After her religious endowment in Nauvoo on January 2, 1846, and her plural marriage to William D. Huntington, who died later in 1846, nothing is known of her eventual circumstance. Susan Easton Black, comp., *Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1830-1848* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University), at Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, hereafter FHL; *Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register*, FHL.

There is evidence that Eli’s brother Charles remained in Upper Canada.

were “endowed with power from on high,” supplying them with the where-withal to identify, baptize, and gather the “elect.”²⁶ This institutional idiosyncrasy was thereafter associated with the LDS Church. The June 1831 conference proved to be one of the pivotal milestones of the early church.

An exploratory venture into Vermont a few months later in the fall of 1831 by thirty-year-old Jared Carter, a Connecticut native who had married in 1825 in Benson, Vermont, inaugurated the New England missionary initiative.²⁷ After his own February 1831 baptism in New York at the hand of Hyrum Smith, he with Ebenezer Page in September 1831 returned to preach in Benson. With Page moving on, Carter labored in Benson until January 1832 before relocating to New York, though he apparently later in the year returned to Benson teaming up with his brother Simeon to warn the locals of the unfolding demise of the wicked.²⁸ The work in Benson carried on through 1832. Simeon Carter reported to Sidney Rigdon late in the year that upon his own entrance in Benson he “found a company of dear brethren and sisters very much persecuted; but they are firm in the faith of the everlasting gospel; the number was about thirty, but is now about forty.” Assembling in conference in August, Simeon wrote that there were “fourteen elders and several priests and teachers present.”²⁹ The peripatetic ministry by missionaries to the region indicated the optimism they held for the reception of Mormonism in the early 1830s.

A gathering of missionary elders fifty-five miles west of Kirtland in Amherst, Ohio, at the end of January 1832, proved significant to build upon the swelling enthusiasm for the Mormon venture in the American North-

²⁶For example “John Whitmer History, 1831–circa 1847,” Karen Lynn Davidson, Richard L. Jensen, and David J. Whittaker, eds. *JSP, Histories, Volume 2: Assigned Histories, 1831–1847*, (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2012), 39–41; Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 53; Newel Knight, autobiography and journal, ca. 1846, 30, CHL; George A. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool and London: Brigham Young Jr., 1867), 11: 4 (November 15, 1864), hereafter *Journal of Discourses*; Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, June 3, 1831, 1–5, CHL, hereafter Journal History.

²⁷Williams, “Missionary Movements,” 14–18.

²⁸“Jared Carter Journal, 1831 January–1833 January, 20,” CHL; “Extracts of Letters from the Elders Abroad,” *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1, no. 9 (February 1833).

²⁹Simeon Carter, letter to Sidney Rigdon, [n.d.], *The Evening and Morning Star* 1, no. 6 (November 1832).

east. A dozen sets of Mormon elders were coupled together and through a revelation received by Joseph Smith were assigned proselytizing duties far away from Ohio, several to the “south” and “western countries,” and four to the “eastern countries.”³⁰ Among the assignees, besides the Pratt and Johnson duo, Orson Hyde, then twenty-seven, and Samuel Smith, Joseph Smith’s twenty-four-year-old younger brother, departed from Ohio for the “eastern countries,” which proved to be the American Northeast. The intrepid Hyde and Smith, whom Hyde described as “a man of good faith and extreme integrity,” though “slow of speech and unlearned,”³¹ after a tepid reception in New York State, moved on to New England in June 1832, first in Connecticut and then Massachusetts. After a short reconnaissance of Rhode Island, the missionaries returned to Massachusetts, targeting the Boston area. It is likely that these are the two who provoked scandal in Boston by baptizing about fifteen members in 1832. Boston clergyman Joshua V. Himes noted the influence of the missionaries in his August 1832 preface to Alexander Campbell’s *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon*, the influential early critique of the only material evidence of Joseph Smith’s prophetic call, the Book of Mormon. Himes had imported Campbell’s “review” to stem “others from becoming the miserable subjects and dupes of these singular fanatics.”³² The Hyde/Smith duo made palpable progress: “We raised up a branch in Boston of some 25 or 30 members,” “a branch of some thirty in Bradford, Massachusetts,” as well as making inroads into Lowell, Massachusetts, Saco, Maine, and Providence, Rhode Island. In what Hyde described as “one of the most arduous and toilsome missions ever performed in the Church,” covering “two thousand miles on foot, teaching from house to house, and from city to city, without purse or scrip, often sleeping in school houses after preaching—in barns in sheds, by the wayside, under trees, and etc.,” they then returned to Kirtland after raising their warning voices during an eleven-month venture to New England.³³

³⁰*JSP, R&T, MRB* 1:179–83 (D&C 75).

³¹“History of Orson Hyde,” 774–75.

³²Alexander Campbell, *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon: With an Examination of Its Internal and External Evidences, and a Refutation of Its Pretenses to Divine Authority* (Boston: Benjamin H. Greene, 1832), 3–4.

³³“History of Orson Hyde,” 775–76; Williams, “Missionary Movements,” 19–38. See also Craig K. Manscill, “Missionary Activities in New England in the Early 1830s,” in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: The New England States*, eds. Donald Q. Cannon, Arnold K. Garr, and Bruce A. Van Orden (Provo,

Also commissioned at the Amherst conference, Orson Pratt and Lyman Johnson were appointed to “take their Journey into the eastern countries,” leaving February 3, 1832. They “traveled in an easternly direction through Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York City, to Hurlgate on Long Island” (where Pratt baptized his brother Anson), making their way on the roadways and turnpikes lined with northeastern hardwoods “on foot, without purse or scrip, and carrying our change of clothing in our hands.” From New York they continued northward into Vermont and then New Hampshire, where they “tarried twenty-six days in the regions round about Bath, held twenty-one meetings, and baptized fifteen,” one of whom was future Mormon apostle Amasa M. Lyman.³⁴ In northern Vermont they baptized fourteen, including some in the Farr and Snow families, themselves later contributors to the faith’s expansion. Pratt and Johnson circulated in Vermont and New Hampshire for a full year until February 1833. Pratt’s report upon their return declared they had “traveled on foot near 4,000 miles, attended 207 meetings mostly in places where they had not heard the word,” “baptized 104 persons, and organized several new branches of the church.”³⁵ It is difficult to overstate the zeal and commitment exhibited by the early Mormon missionaries, while gleaning little more than experience and other seekers.

The hyperbolic promises made to the fledgling missionaries regarding end time preliminaries—then a common theme among the early Saints—may have disappointed the Mormon legates had not their message taken root. Instead, there were measurable results. Ten months after the January 1832 Amherst conference, the church’s paper *The Evening and the Morning Star* reported: “New churches have been built up in Missouri; in Illinois; at Fulton, near Cincinnati, Ohio; at Guyandotte, Virginia; in Spafford, Onondaga Co.; at Tompkins, Delaware Co. and at Essex Co. N. York; at Benson, North Troy, and Charleston, Vermont; at Bath, New Hampshire; in N. Rowley and Boston, Massachusetts, and how many in other places we can not say.”³⁶

Utah: Brigham Young University, Religious Studies Center, 2004), 124–27.

³⁴Edward Leo Lyman, *Amasa Mason Lyman: Mormon Apostle and Apostate, A Study in Dedication* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press), 8–9.

³⁵Pratt, *Orson Pratt Journals*, 11–16; “Extracts of Letters from Elders Abroad” *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1, no. 9 (February 1833); “Letters” *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1, no. 10 (March 1833).

³⁶“The Gathering” *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1, no. 6 (November

To complement their demonstrable success, clerical jargon referencing the world’s plight of unbelief such as the “distress of nations,” the “judgments of God,” and “the Lord is making short his work” moved the missionaries to action.³⁷ What was the message of the Mormon missionaries during in the early 1830s that distinguished them from the traditional Christian world? In William McLellin’s case, who was baptized in August 1831 by Hyrum Smith and commissioned at the Amherst conference, after grabbing his valise and embarking on his missionary venture, “the most frequent topic in his sermons was the Book of Mormon, evidences in its behalf, prophecies about its coming forth, testimonies of its divinity, and validations of its worth in opening the glories of the latter days.” He also discussed many topics pertinent to Joseph Smith’s early declarations, such as the gathering of Israel, priesthood authority, and the impending judgments of God.³⁸ On the other hand, his counterpart during the same time period, Orson Pratt, preached to those who would listen primarily about the first principles of the gospel (faith, baptism, remission of sins, gift of the Holy Ghost), the scattering and gathering [restoration] of Israel, the New Covenant, gifts of the spirit, more revelation and miracles, the two sticks mentioned in Ezekiel and chapters 29 and 49 of Isaiah (that dealt with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon), and the resurrection and millennium.³⁹ The missionary declarations, while using verbiage common to much of the Christian world, cast a new light on biblical context that engaged an anticipatory world in hope for the prophetic promises apparently left undone.

Coupled with advocacy of tenets familiar to most denominational adherents was the more caustic millenarian mindset, also common to most Christians, that represented Mormon thinking at the time.⁴⁰ Jesus was bound to return to earth. The righteous had hope, but woe to those who

1832).

³⁷“The Gathering” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, (November 1832).

³⁸John W. Welch, “The Acts of the Apostle William E. McLellin” in *The Journals of William E. McLellin, 1831–1836*, eds. Jan Shippo and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies and University of Illinois Press, 1994), 19.

³⁹Pratt, *Orson Pratt Journals*, 16–38 (February 1833–April 1834).

⁴⁰See Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998) and Dan Erickson, *As a Thief in the Night: The Mormon Quest for Millennial Deliverance* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998).

ignored the righteous commands and predictions of a wrathful Creator. Indeed, in the absence of the anticipated world-scurge- Prelude to the Second Advent, there was little justification for missionaries to ply their labors calling the world to repentance. Generally off-putting to a segment of the population, the cry of gloom and doom had to be tempered with more palatable declarations of hope that generally found currency in comparatives between Mormon consistency with biblical Christianity: they had apostles—we have apostles; they baptized by immersion—we baptize by immersion; they had gifts of the spirit—we have gifts of the spirit; and they had miracles—we have miracles. The missionaries often amalgamated their message to suit the circumstances.

Given the popular disregard held for Mormons at the time, their determination demonstrated a remarkable level of faith and courage. Buttressed by revelatory language from the prophet assuring impermeability—“No weapon that is formed against [thee] shall prosper, and every tongue which shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn”⁴¹—those who stepped into the noxious arena did so with confidence. They were empowered by grand thoughts to accompany the faith-instigated *endowment of power from on high* claimed by the Saints since their June 1831 conference.

The promised harvest of converts from the devoted effort of the missionaries meant not only more members but also more congregations and more conferences outside the Mormon centers in Kirtland, Ohio, and Independence, Missouri. A public report appearing in *The Evening and the Morning Star* in November 1832 presented the situation: “Since the gathering commenced, which is a little over a year, the number of disciples which have come from the east, and which have been baptized in this region, is 465[;] Children and those not members, about 345[;] Total 810.”⁴² But as many of those “gathered” were drawn to the Mormon population centers, the rise in the early 1830s of societal opposition from “old settlers” both strengthened and weakened the Saints. Zion in western Missouri eventually proved to be everything but a refuge for “the pure in heart.”⁴³ Progress in Kirtland, despite hiccups, moved at a steady clip. Organizationally and structurally the Saints began to look like a church, even though they had forfeited their foothold in Missouri.

⁴¹JSP, R&T, MRB 1:187 (D&C 71: 9–10); “The Gathering,” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, (November 1832).

⁴²“The Gathering,” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, (November 1832).

⁴³JSP, R&T, MRB 1:400 (D&C 97:21).

The first swell of missionary work in the “eastern countries” following the Amherst conference lasted about a year. After a hiatus to Kirtland from their labors, several of the missionaries returned to New England determined to continue their duties. While many who joined during their initial endeavors had themselves gathered to Kirtland or Zion (Independence, Missouri), enough of a membership residual remained that missionaries capitalized on an already established foundation to reinvigorate the work. Orson Hyde and Lyman Johnson, still in their pre-apostolic days, returned again to the Northeast, initially focusing on Bath, New Hampshire, in June 1833. Other missionaries followed. Bath, a picturesque area now known as the land of covered bridges and located near the Connecticut River forming the border of New Hampshire and Vermont along, with St. Johnsbury, Vermont, thirty miles north of Bath, and Saco, Maine, became Mormon centers of sorts. Quietly Mormon converts multiplied in the Northeast. John F. Boynton in his pre-apostolic days, for example, with Evan M. Greene had “baptized about one hundred and thirty” in the region,” before reporting from Saco, Maine, in January 1834, that he had “baptized about forty in this section.”⁴⁴ Newly baptized Erastus Snow periodically raised his voice in both his native Vermont and New Hampshire. After his February 1833 baptism, Snow later wrote, “I then desired to preach the Gospel, and began to search the Scriptures of divine truth, and took the word of God for my guide, that I might be able to instruct others in the way of truth and holiness and to warn the inhabitants of the earth to prepare for those things which the Prophets had declared should come upon them in these last days.”⁴⁵ While remaining obscure and lacking substantive permanence, the “eastern countries” had produced enough of a Mormon presence, with sufficient devoted personalities, that there was a carry-over into the 1840s.

It was primarily an exigency of ominous scale that stemmed the momentum. An emergency that focused the attention of the Mormon faithful concerned the two-year disappointment in western Missouri. With the Saints forced from Jackson County in November 1833 and driven north across the Missouri River to Clay County, by mid-1834 sufficient ire had built among the dispossessed that the recovery of western Missouri lands became the paramount church endeavor. In what became known as Zion’s

⁴⁴“Brethren in the Lord,” *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2, no. 17 (February 1834): 134.

⁴⁵Quoted in Andrew Karl Larson, *Erastus Snow: The Life of a Missionary and Pioneer for the Early Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1971), 17.

Camp, the two brigades marched that spring from two angles to Jackson County, Missouri. Composed of over two hundred volunteers/draftees, the lines, originating nine hundred miles away in Kirtland, Ohio, and eight hundred miles from Pontiac, Michigan, converged in western Missouri in June 1834. At the same time that Zion's Camp melted into disappointment, however, missionaries in the East still continued their work of gathering. With church branches established and strengthened by new recruits, regional conferences drew upon the most experienced missionaries who spread the culture of Mormonism.

Kirtland leaders Bishop Edward Partridge and Isaac Morley followed by assignment in Massachusetts in the spring of 1835 to help stabilize fledgling congregations as well as to obtain donations for the poor before returning to Kirtland in the fall. Others like Noah Packard (who established a small branch in east central Massachusetts—Cummington in 1835), Hazen Aldrich (who served in New Hampshire and Vermont in 1835), Daniel Stephens (who “traveled through the States of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, preaching by the way”), and John P. Greene also proselytized in New England in 1835.⁴⁶ Freeman Nickerson, who would later become a significant Mormon delegate in Boston in the early 1840s began his missionary career on Cape Cod in 1835.⁴⁷ To ensure not only continuity but also to capitalize on the forward progress of the faith, New England provided the stage for the first major endeavor of the LDS Church's newly called Quorum of the Twelve.

Upper Canada (Ontario)

After the mid-1834 ordeal of the Saints' march to reclaim their plundered lands in Missouri, a dozen of the Zion's Camp veterans were selected in February 1835 as the church's Twelve Apostles, a significant step in not only the organizational structure of Mormonism but also in the accentuation of the church's missionary labors. Established as a “traveling

⁴⁶“A Synopsis of the Life and Travels of Noah Packard/written by himself” (n.p.: n.p.); Cummington Branch, Record of Members, 1835-1836, CHL; Hazen Aldrich, letter to John Whitmer, Kirtland, December 12, 1835, *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 3 (December 1835): 237-38; Daniel Stephens, letter “To Friends in the East” *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 2 (November 1836): 414.

⁴⁷Williams, “Missionary Movements” 75-88.

high council,” the body's first venture together, just three months after their formalization, focused on the northeastern United States and Upper Canada. The collective venture proved to be the “only time in church history when the entire group [served] together in official missionary capacity,”⁴⁸ though there were later efforts to do the same. After interim visits en route to New York and Upper Canada, the Twelve arrived in New England to support church members and conduct conferences for adherents who had not immigrated to the primary centers of Latter-day Saint membership.⁴⁹ The labor lasted five months, with the mission concluding in September. Other Mormon elders, like John P. Green and Hazen Aldrich, explored Mormon possibilities in Canada in this period. Greene, “[a]fter a tedious journey” in May 1834 played on the Nickerson family connections in Mount Pleasant, baptizing two there “which increased the church in that place to 43.” Hazen Aldrich's three-month venture just north of the Vermont/Canada border in 1836 took him “up a circuit in the towns of Stanstead, Hatley, Compton, and Barnston,” where he “baptized eleven, and many more were searching the scriptures to see if the things preached were so.”⁵⁰

Another first for the Twelve Apostles came in 1836 when quorum members Parley P. Pratt and Orson Hyde conducted their ministries in Upper Canada. It was not the Maginns, however, that proved to be the Mormon apostle's best catch during this 1836 mission across the northern border of the United States. John Taylor, who had been a Methodist exhorter while still a teenager in England, emigrated from Britain six years previously to join his parents in Upper Canada. After three years of marriage, the twenty-seven-year-old British import initially rebuffed Parley Pratt's entreaties but after investigation and reflection later yielded to the missionary's declarations. Taylor and his wife were baptized at Black Creek on the outskirts of Toronto on May 9, 1836.

Within a short time, benefitting from his previous ecclesiastical expe-

⁴⁸Williams, “Missionary Movements,” 75; Esplin, “The Emergence of Brigham Young and the Twelve to Mormon Leadership,” 61.

⁴⁹For a firsthand view of the apostolic mission, see apostle William E. McLellin's journal covering May-September 1835 in *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 170-210.

⁵⁰John P. Greene, letter to O. Cowdery, *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 1 (October 1834): 7-8; Hazen Aldrich, letter to O. Cowdery, October 10, 1836, *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 2 (November 1836): 414.

rience, John Taylor was placed by the apostles in charge of church affairs throughout the province of Upper Canada, raw though it was at the time. A year-and-a-half later, as he explained, “I was presiding over a number of churches in Upper Canada,” when he had an impression—he, too, would become one of the Mormon apostles. Soon “[a] messenger came to me with a letter from the First Presidency, informing me of my appointment and requested me to repair forthwith to Kirtland [Ohio] and from there to Far West [Missouri].”⁵¹ Years later his elevation to the LDS Church presidency became a novelty among the Ontario locals. Recollecting the time, an Ontario chronicler in 1896 noted that earlier in the century, “Mormon missionaries invaded the township and secured a number of converts, among whom was John Taylor, a Methodist preacher (some say he was also a teacher), who ‘forsook all and followed’ the disciples of Joseph Smith. . . . In 1880 he became head of the Church of Latter Day Saints, as successor to Brigham Young.”⁵² Parley Pratt’s promised influence, with his cohorts in the ministry in Upper Canada, produced dividends that had lasting effect upon the young faith.

The missionaries who left their Kirtland homes in the mid-1830s missed the singular spiritual phenomenon associated with the completion and dedication of the Kirtland House of the Lord in 1836, but they also escaped a mounting tension that warmed, heated, and then eventually combusted among their fellow Saints. In the context of an American national financial crisis, the Panic of 1837, dissonance within the church then spread to its farthest reach and bore in to its deepest depth to date. The complexity of the fallen credibility of the Kirtland Safety Society—the Saint-sponsored financial institution—fueled dissent and a panic of its own that extended beyond Joseph Smith’s ability to control. Along with fractures throughout the Mormon populace, the second tier of the Mormon hierarchy, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, shuttered. The counterintuitive dispersal of a small contingent of church leaders from Kirtland to Great Britain, led by Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde, proved over time to renew flagging Mormon confidence amidst uncertainties in Kirt-

⁵¹Sam Taylor and Raymond Taylor, *The John Taylor Papers: The Apostle, Vol. 1, 1836–1837* (Redwood City, Calif.: Taylor Trust, 1984), 13, 25; B. H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor, Third President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons, 1892), 28–29, 38–39, 44, 47.

⁵²Boyle, *Township of Scarboro*, 176, 268.

land and between the Saints and their Missouri neighbors.⁵³ However, for the Saints the pause in open conflict on the north side of the Missouri River deteriorated into full-scale trauma in 1838. Mormonism looked anything but robust in 1837–1838.

With pervasive economic difficulties in America, Upper Canada had its own problems in 1837, political ones that triggered a pending insurrection by reformers who were grieved as usurpers had taken control of regional government. While violence was avoided at the time, unsettled conditions in the area festered for several years. Coincident to the growth of Mormonism in Upper Canada, the assignment of the Kimball quartet to England, and the fracture in Kirtland, Ohio, Joseph Smith—the Prophet—temporarily retreated from the battleground to visit the newly converted Mormons in Upper Canada. With his brother Hyrum, his counselor Sidney Rigdon, and apostles Thomas Marsh and David Patten, they reconnoitered the area to find suitable places to create “other stakes of Zion or places of gathering, so that the poor may have a place of refuge, in the day of tribulation which is coming swiftly on the earth.”⁵⁴ In August 1837, four years after his first visit to Upper Canada, and a year after the Maginns accepted Mormonism, the Mormon prophet’s small party appeared in Upper Canada.⁵⁵

Eli P. Maginn Comes of Age

Scarborough’s population of Saints warranted the regular gatherings, where church leaders could nurture the flock. The Saints in conference, having the Mormon leader himself among them, undoubtedly boosted an already resolute teenaged Eli Maginn. Like almost all who connected to Mormonism at the time, the prospect of God’s personal emissary, like unto Moses, surely animated the young man’s mind. There Joseph was, thirty-one at the time, the mortal instrument of the Almighty in the flesh. It is

⁵³James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, David J. Whittaker, *Men with a Mission, 1837–1841: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 23–25. Willard Richards and Joseph Fielding accompanied the apostles and were later joined by a handful of others for the endeavor.

⁵⁴N. K. Whitney, R. Cahoon, V. Knight, letter to “the Saints scattered abroad,” September 18, 1837, *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 12 (September 1837): 562.

⁵⁵Myrvold, *People of Scarborough*, 74; Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith, Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 339.

not a stretch to suggest that Maginn's first encounter of Joseph Smith may have paralleled a reporter's initial impression of the Mormon leader sixteen months later:

Joe Smith, the leader and prophet of the sect, who professes to have received the golden plates on which the Mormon creed was transcribed, and who has figured so conspicuously in fight, is a tall muscular man, with a countenance not absolutely unintellectual. On the contrary, it exhibits much shrewdness of character. His height is full six feet, and his general appearance is that of a plain yeoman, intended rather for the cultivation of the soil, than the expounding of prophecy. Without the advantage of education, he has applied himself, with much industry, to the acquisition of knowledge; and although his diction is inaccurate, and his selection of words not always in good taste, he converses very fluently on the subject nearest to his heart, and whatever may be thought of the correctness of his opinions, no one who talks with him, can doubt that his convictions of their truth are sincere and settled. His eye betokens a resolute spirit, and he would doubtless go to the stake to attest his firmness and devotion, with as little hesitation as did any of the leaders of the olden time.⁵⁶

The young, plain-spoken, home-spun prophet with such an imposing visage did not disappoint Maginn. The most poignant moment of the conference revealed to Eli Maginn that the religion that he had embraced the previous year, if he had not learned it before, was composed of humans who ranged from rascality to sublimity. (And it was not always clear to some who was who.) The conference brought to a head a leadership crisis of sorts among the locals. Sampson Avard, a missionary in the area, had inveigled his way into assuming influence and authority over the Canadian Saints. Parley Pratt, however, had inserted John Taylor as the presiding elder the previous year. The conflict and disparity of views brought out a side of Joseph Smith that portrayed a chastening dimension of the otherwise warm and genial leader. Avard was the object of his reproof, a prelude to the consequential conflict the following year where Avard turned on Joseph resulting, in part, in Smith's incarceration in the jail at Liberty, Missouri. Once Avard had felt Smith's sting at the conference, the Prophet then turned his censure to young John Taylor who had allowed Avard to impose his influence upon the Scarborough Saints. It is likely that Eli Maginn, not

⁵⁶Correspondence of the U.S. Gazette, *Adams Sentinel* [Gettysburg, Pennsylvania], December 30, 1839, in *Uncle Dale's Readings in Early Mormon History, Old Newspapers, Pennsylvania*, accessed February 9, 2015, www.sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/PA/adam1830.htm.



Map of Missouri, Iowa, Illinois. Map by Brandon S. Plewe.

yet twenty, took notice of and learned from the disciplinary measure. However, before his departure to return to Kirtland at the end of August 1837, Smith, recognizing Taylor's inexperience along with his determination and potential, had him ordained a high priest and reappointed him to preside over the Saints in Upper Canada.⁵⁷

By this time Maginn was familiar with the common experience of Latter-day Saint converts: spiritual confirmation after hearing the restoration message; baptism by immersion into the church; joint purpose with other Mormon acolytes in a shared cause that they grasped with gravity; and an extraordinary sense of duty, transcending merely an acceptance of the unpopular faith. Another conference of Scarborough Saints held just four months after the Prophet's August visit proved to be the "coming of age" for Eli Maginn. While particulars of his appointment are not known, after the second Scarborough conference Maginn launched a personal crusade at age nineteen to warn in his view a corrupt and enfeebled world that God's work was at hand. Ordained a Mormon priest at the December 1837

⁵⁷Roberts, *Life of John Taylor*, 43.

conference, he immediately left his Canadian home with his also newly-appointed missionary companion, Charles Henry Hales, to begin a proselytizing career that virtually consumed the rest of Maginn's abbreviated life.⁵⁸

Maginn Begins His Ministry

Eli Maginn entered the ministry during the period when the Latter-day Saints' center of gravity ricocheted between Ohio's Western Reserve and the Missouri and Mississippi river valleys in the third decade of the nineteenth century. A myriad of influences incident to common reactions of religious fervor during the church's infancy and adolescence produced religious conflict marking them outsiders among their own countrymen.⁵⁹ Wherever the Mormons gathered during the Age of Jackson, they were, either immediately or eventually, an annoyance to their neighbors. While the premise of American freedom was based upon a liberality that beckoned differences, the Mormons exceeded the limits of toleration in part because of their tendency to gather in dominating numbers. Their contrasting orthodoxies of faith, polity, commerce, behavior, sociality, and spirituality antagonized their countrymen's conventions. Diverse entities, especially those professing singular access to the divine, had a hard go of it in antebellum America. "Theocratic authoritarianism and popular sovereignty were incompatible, so [Joseph] Smith's extension of his religious ideology into . . . the Jacksonian era placed the Mormons on a collision course with the rest of America."⁶⁰ And once the personality of the Mormon prophet entered the conversation, it is easy to understand resistance to the Mormons: "It was not a hatred of the alien; the role of a prophet was well known to every believer in the Bible. It was more a fear of the familiar gone awry. Joseph was hated for twisting the common faith in biblical prophets into the vis-

⁵⁸Charles Henry Hales, biographical sketch in *Seventies Quorum Records, 1844–1975, Second Quorum of Seventies*, 208, CHL. Hales, a Kent, England, native born in 1817, immigrated to Canada in 1832. A farmer and brick mason, he immigrated to Utah in 1852, where after participating in civic and ecclesiastical service, he died in 1889.

⁵⁹R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 25–47.

⁶⁰John E. Hallwas, "Mormon Nauvoo from a Non-Mormon Perspective," in *Kingdom on the Mississippi Revisited: Nauvoo in Mormon History*, eds. Roger D. Launius and Hallwas (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 161–62.

age of the arrogant fanatic."⁶¹

Because of their limited numbers, minority status, and being held in almost uniform disregard, Mormon community defeat became inevitable. Now shivering in uncertainty regarding God's preoccupation with them, the contemporary consciousness of oppression that both scarred and fueled them for generations colored every collective move they made. Insecure and unsure of the immediate future despite their contrasting rhetoric of the time, this formative phase nevertheless produced a theological and religious practicum from which they crafted a surprising sustainability.

Despite their complicated circumstances, wait-and-see did not describe their reaction to oppression, real or imagined. Jesus' last sweeping charge to his disciples—"go ye therefore and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19)—became for the Mormons their own order of business. Consequently the call to proselytize their newly embraced faith became to adherents symptomatic of the warp and woof of the young religion in spite of their tenuous circumstances. With the September 1830 revelatory commission from Jesus to Joseph Smith just five months after the church's formalization for the faithful to "bring to pass the getting of mine Elect,"⁶² males, hesitant and eager alike, were subject to missionary assignments to replicate among others their own religious conversions. Naturally, because most early converts hailed from the American Northeast, New York State and the coastal and interior states of New England became objects of the early missionary campaigns.

Eli Maginn's first proselyting ventures with Elder Hales, though their territory is not known, covered the last month of 1837 and early months of 1838.⁶³ That same period proved decisive for Mormon destiny in northern Missouri where the church then headquartered. The volcanic tremors that escalated before year's end concluded with declarations of governmental interdiction to remove the Mormons from the state boundary. Newspapers throughout the country regularly included reports of the most recent encounters between the Saints and Missourians. In the winter, temporarily shelving his missionary valise, Eli joined his fellow believers in Missouri at the height of their predicament. Upon his arrival there and befitting his inclination for preaching, he was ordained a missionary seventy on January 19, 1839, in northwestern Missouri's Far West, then the center of Mor-

⁶¹Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 553.

⁶²JSP, *R&T*, MRB 1:36 (D&C 29:7).

⁶³Hales, biographical sketch, 208.

monism.⁶⁴

Eli's older brother Ezekiel had also gathered with the beleaguered Saints in Missouri. His own situation was not encouraging. Ezekiel later deposed that he had, after Governor Lilburn Boggs's infamous extermination order, witnessed the pillage of Apostle Lyman Wight's home.⁶⁵ Both of the Maginns were caught up in the plight of unwelcome Mormons. One of the brothers, probably Eli, with Amasa Lyman had been assaulted by a local Missouri vigilante party that humiliated and injured them by forcing an exit-from-town ride on "a cannon," a lighter insult it was thought than a "ride on a rail."⁶⁶ Nevertheless the harsh behavior only portended more drastic intimidation and tension. In another incident at Tenny Grove, Missouri, a Mormon refugee camp about twenty-five miles east of Far West, "Elder Maginn" in April 1839 went scrounging to find corn for the camp returning so late that it was feared he had "fallen into the hands of the mob."⁶⁷ The fear, the flying rumors, true and false, ignited a civil confrontation that eventually forced the Mormons eastward on the run. The Mormon dilemma in America was no longer second hand for Eli Maginn. He thereafter spoke by experience.

Once expelled from Missouri, like many of the Saints, Maginn tested the circumstances of life along the Mississippi by investigating the river town of Commerce. But that fall of 1839, instead of clinging to the Mor-

⁶⁴Journal History, January 19, 1839. An entry in the ordination record of the time indicates that he was ordained an elder on January 24, 1839, the dispute in dates and ordination at least suggesting that he had attained the Mormon higher priesthood. General Church Recorder, Far West and Nauvoo Elders' Certificates, 1837-1838, 1840-1846, CHL.

⁶⁵Clark V. Johnson, ed., *Mormon Redress Petitions: Documents of the 1833-1838 Missouri Conflict* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992), 284.

Ezekiel Maginn's tenure in Mormonism is not known after this period. In the U.S. 1880 census he is identified as living in Union, Lewis County, Missouri. The census stated: Ezekiel Maginn, born 1813 in Canada; age 67; farmer; married; father's birthplace Virginia; mother's birthplace Pennsylvania; with wife Pauline, age 62, born in Kentucky, National Archives and Records Administration, hereafter NARA, in FHL.

⁶⁶Heber C. Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 5:249 (September 20, 1857).

⁶⁷Journal History, April 23, 1839; Eldon Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801-1844* (Salt Lake City: Smith's Secretarial Service, 1968), 37; "Biography of Sidney Rigdon," *Journal of History* 3, no. 4 (October 1910): 404.

mon fragments who found refuge in western Illinois, Eli returned to his home ground of Upper Canada. Whether his determination to preach Mormonism came by way of an institutional or personal call, he could not be deterred even by the obvious necessity of rebuilding Mormon stability after the Missouri debacle. Instead, he returned to his missionary labor to search for the elect along the lakeshore villages lining Lake Ontario. A hundred miles east of his Scarborough home, Maginn soon replaced two elders for a time in a village near Coburg, Upper Canada, who in departing left "him to finish the[ir] work."⁶⁸ Already the young elder was viewed by compatriots as competent.

Apparently having scoured the Lake Ontario countryside to his satisfaction, the following year Maginn, generally operating alone, worked the New York villages of Oswego and Onondaga counties on the American side of the lake. A fellow laborer wrote of the twenty-two year old in October 1840, "Elder Maginn has lately been through this place [Palermo, New York] and made us a good visit; we truly had a time of rejoicing with him, as he had been through the tribulation in the West, and was prepared to bare testimony of the sufferings of the saints: he has now gone to Onondaga, about thirty miles distant from this place, and is opening a door in that place."⁶⁹ Already seasoned, Maginn proselyted and baptized now equipped by his Missouri experiences and the difficulties associated with preaching among a skeptical people. Religious seekers like Onandago County native Ezra T. Whitehead responded and was baptized by Maginn on October 26, 1840.⁷⁰

Mormonism in 1840s New England: Maginn Makes His Mark

While Elder Maginn later returned to briefly preach and minister in New York State in following years, from this juncture he focused his efforts in New England. Though the latter region was new to him, its populace was somewhat familiar with Mormonism. From northeastern Ohio in the early 1830s, Mormon missionaries fanned north and east toward the eastern population centers of America. By 1832 Mormon elders engaged the citi-

⁶⁸Homer Duncan, autobiographical sketch, ca. 1900, CHL.

⁶⁹Benjamin C. Ellsworth, letter to Brother Robinson & Smith, October 18, 1840, Palermo, New York, in *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 2 (November 15, 1840): 219.

⁷⁰Whitehead remained in the region during his life. He eventually affiliated with the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints before his death in Mexico, Oswego County, New York.

zens of New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine. While many Mormon converts relocated to Mormon centers in either Ohio or Missouri, some of the New England branches of the LDS Church formed during that period persisted throughout the decade.⁷¹ The continuing waves of Mormon missionary endeavors in New England capitalized on the decade-old residual upon which to build a noticeable, if small, Mormon presence in the American northeast.

The missionary elders' ventures into New England coincided with the Industrial Revolution's escalation as it steamed forward in American cities, nowhere more pronounced than in New England. The region's industrialization, shifting economics, and culture provided young people, not only young men but also young women who hailed from the rural countryside, with urban opportunities. Boston entrepreneurs poured capital into nearby locales where textile manufacturing provided employment for the massing working class. In contrast to a past dominated by agrarianism, one fifth of the region's households by this time were financially supported by "Manufacturing & Trades." Industry put bread on the tables of many of the region's residents—the very populace eyed by the Mormon missionaries as a fertile field.⁷²

Paralleling the industrialization of antebellum America, a revival of religious fervor swarmed in both rural and urban settings. The post-revolutionary era of the nineteenth century's beginnings felt the emotive influence of famed American religious luminaries such as Francis Ashbury, Lyman Beecher, Charles Grandison Finney, and Alexander Campbell, provocateurs of America's Second Great Awakening. Strange and marvelous events filled the disenfranchised with hope that the biblical God still inhabited the heavens with interest in stirring the religious pot once again. Prophets and holy men and women aplenty popularized their particular appointments by God, some as personal expression and some with institutional promises to those who embraced their call. Of the many, few attracted the widespread attention of Joseph Smith with his claims of extra-biblical revelations. Most of those who took notice spared no restraint in condemning Smith's perpetrations as hoax and swindle. As Mormons multiplied and then gathered together, they simply could not avoid contro-

⁷¹Williams, "Missionary Movements;" Manscill, "Missionary Activities in New England in the Early 1830s."

⁷²1840 Federal Census, Peterborough, New Hampshire, NARA.

versy. Spontaneous rumor and fantastic speculations only accelerated the animosity driven by their annoying presence.⁷³

The early success of Mormon missionary efforts in the 1830s in New England prompted other ventures into the region. Joseph Smith, himself, having once visited Boston during a brief journey with Newell K. Whitney in late 1832, traveled with an entourage to Salem, Massachusetts, in 1836.⁷⁴ Further inroads were made in New England during Wilford Woodruff's noted work on Maine's Fox Islands in 1837–1838, as well as other Atlantic coast cities.⁷⁵ The Twelve Apostles again returned to the area en route to their mission to Great Britain in 1839, with several ministering to locals before disembarking for Liverpool.⁷⁶ Thus, by the time of Eli P. Maginn's New England objective, a number of encouraging ventures by the Saints had been established in the region.

Maginn shared his missionary agenda with a handful of other Mormon missionaries who, like him, entered into the region in the early 1840s. Mostly youthful—Maginn (born ca. 1818), Erastus Snow (born 1818),⁷⁷

⁷³J. Spencer Fluhman, *"A Peculiar People": Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

⁷⁴Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 188, 328–29.

⁷⁵Thomas G. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, A Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 55–66; see also entries for July–August 1837 in *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898*, ed. Scott G. Kenny, 9 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1983–1985), in *New Mormon Studies CD-ROM: A Comprehensive Resource Library* (Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates, 2009), 1:165, hereafter *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*.

⁷⁶Williams, "Missionary Movements," 142.

⁷⁷Erastus Snow (1818–1888) converted to Mormonism in 1832 while in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, and soon thereafter shared the faith with others in the region. Exuberant and determined, Snow became, as it appears, the de facto leader of the missionaries in New England in the early 1840s. An original Utah pioneer, he later became a Mormon apostle. He also became instrumental in opening Scandinavia to Mormonism before becoming an important leader in southern Utah. He died in Salt Lake City. For this period, the best sources for his activities are his journal, volumes 2, 1838–1841, and 3, 1841–1847, CHL; the "Autobiography of Erastus Snow: Dictated to His Son Franklin R. Snow, in the Year 1875," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 14 (1923): 109; and Larson, *Erastus Snow*, 61–76.

Benjamin Winchester (born 1817),⁷⁸ and George J. Adams (born ca. 1811)⁷⁹— the men in their twenties, joined one fatherly devotee Freeman Nickerson (born 1779),⁸⁰ determined to revitalize the labor of the 1830s

⁷⁸Benjamin Winchester (1817–1901), a Pennsylvanian, became a Mormon when he was fifteen. A talented, ambitious young man, he earlier had served in Zion's Camp as the youngest member, and after his duty in New England became editor of *The Gospel Reflector*, an independent Mormon-oriented periodical (besides other publications such as *History of the Priesthood*, a significant Mormon piece for the time). While in Philadelphia he also served as the primary Mormon ecclesiastical leader in the city for a time. He later ran afoul of Mormon leaders and was unchurched, later joining with Sidney Rigdon's following. See biographical portrait of Winchester in David J. Whittaker, "East of Nauvoo: Benjamin Winchester and the Early Mormon Church" *Journal of Mormon History* 21, no. 2 (1995): 31-83; his career with the church in Philadelphia in Steven J. Fleming, "Discord in the City of Brotherly Love: The Story of Early Mormonism in Philadelphia" *Mormon Historical Studies* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 3-27; and the postulation of Jonathan Neville, *The Lost City of Zarahemla: From Iowa to Guatemala and Back Again* (New York: Let Me Read It.com, 2015), who argues Winchester's heretofore unacknowledged literary influence in the content of Nauvoo's *Times and Seasons*.

⁷⁹George J. Adams (1811–1880), from New Jersey, had lived in Boston during the 1820s and 1830s. Markedly talented and with great energy, he had accompanied several of the Twelve Apostles on their second apostolic mission to Great Britain in 1841. Returning to the United States in May 1842, he joined with Freeman Nickerson to build the work in Boston. After a falling out with post-Joseph Smith church leaders, he became a Mormon excommunicant and later played a role in James J. Strang's movement. Ever religiously determined, he sequentially became a Campbellite, started his own church, then led a colony of hopefuls to Palestine in 1865. He died in Philadelphia. For an overview, see Peter Amann, "Prophet in Zion: The Saga of George J. Adams" *The New England Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (December 1964): 479.

⁸⁰Freeman Nickerson (1779–1847), a Massachusetts native, became a Mormon in April 1833 at Dayton, New York. Erastus Snow's brother Zerubbabel baptized him. A father of nine, he ventured with Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon to Upper Canada in the fall of 1833, focusing on Mount Pleasant, where a small branch was organized with Eleazer Nickerson as president. A veteran of Zion's Camp, he was also one of the early settlers of Commerce, Illinois. After Nickerson created a Mormon presence in Boston, local cleric Tyler Parsons published his debates with Nickerson in *Mormon Fanaticism Exposed* (1841). With most of the Mormons, Nickerson was driven from Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1846 and died at Chariton River, Iowa, in January 1847. For an overview of his life see Maxine Fenstermaker Rasmussen, comp., *A Ripple in the Pond: The Life Story of Freeman*



Peterborough, New Hampshire, ca. 1890s, photographer unknown. Collection of the Monadnock Center for History and Culture, Peterborough, New Hampshire, by permission.

in New England. The missionaries worked cooperatively by traveling the Massachusetts/New Hampshire Mormon circuit in support of one another.⁸¹ Peterborough, New Hampshire, and environs initially became Eli Maginn's neighborhood. It was there where he first made his significant impact.

It should be noted that prior to Maginn's arrival in Peterborough, a question persists about Maginn's whereabouts from the fall of 1840 to the summer of 1841. Maginn, as noted, is identified as having been in Palermo, New York, in the fall of 1840. He did not appear in Peterborough, New Hampshire, until July 1841. Where was he during that period? Though absence of confirming as well as tenuous evidence likely precludes the pos-

Nickerson and Huldah Chapman (n.p.: n.p., 2008).

⁸¹While there was no Mormon *circuit* like those in other Christian missionary districts, best represented by the Methodist practice, circuit is the most descriptive term to portray their manner of ministry and interaction in New England until the church was established well enough to have the several local congregations fall into the Mormon classification of *conference*.

sibility he was in Great Britain at the time, an “Elder Magan” appears as an LDS Church missionary in England in the spring of 1841, as reported by Mormon apostle Wilford Woodruff, then part of the Church’s apostolic mission to Great Britain. Because Eli Maginn noted in a March 1842 letter to Joseph Smith that he had “travelled through eighteen States and British Provinces,” it is possible that he referenced an earlier missionary visit to Great Britain during the period in question. A local Peterborough, New Hampshire, historian in describing Maginn many years later also indicated that Maginn was an “Englishman,” which the historian perhaps could have construed from information about a British missionary experience by Maginn. However, there is no Maginn or “Magan” mentioned in the list of Mormon missionaries serving in England at the end of 1840 in the LDS Church’s Manuscript History of the British Mission. This latter record also identifies converts from Great Britain who immigrated in the spring of 1841 to the United States from England on the ship *Harmony* on May 10, 1841. No Maginn or Magan is identified as being on that emigrant ship, probably the only emigrant ship from England carrying Mormons that season that would have put Maginn in a position to be in New Hampshire in July 1841.⁸²

Dubbed later as “Our Town” in 1938 due to Thornton Wilder’s Pulitzer-prize winning play by that name being written while he lived there,⁸³ the progressive village of Peterborough, founded in 1739, was located in south central New Hampshire, eighteen miles north of the Massachusetts border, and seventy some miles northwest from Boston. Watered by the lovely Contoocook River flowing through the village, the growing town

⁸² Wilford Woodruff’s *Journal*, 2:83, April 6, 1841 (the reference also eventually appeared in Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Period I: History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev. 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1971), 4:332); E. P. Maginn, letter to Joseph Smith, March 22, 1842, Salem, Massachusetts, *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 13 (May 2, 1842): 778–79; James F. Brennan, “Talk on Mormonism,” 1925, Men’s Club, All Saints Church, Episcopal Parsonage, January 11, 1925, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Collection, The Monadnock Center for History and Culture at the Peterborough Historical Society, Peterborough, New Hampshire, hereafter referred to as MCHC; Manuscript History, British Mission, December 31, 1840; May 26, 1841, CHL.

⁸³ Lamar C. Berrett, ed., *Sacred Places, New England and Eastern Canada: A Comprehensive Guide to Early LDS Historical Sites* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999), 61.

claimed 2,163 souls in the 1840 federal census, 180 more than were counted in 1830.⁸⁴ A thousand of Peterborough’s populace were youngsters under the age of twenty. Women of childbearing age (20–50) outnumbered their male counterparts, 513–345, explained in part by increased numbers of women working in the area’s mills. Just over half the households were farm families, and just under half relied upon “Commerce,” “Manufacture & Trades,” and “Learned Professions & Engineers” for their livelihoods.⁸⁵ By 1843 the village consisted of “4 houses of public worship, 1 town hall, 2 school houses, 1 Academy, 2 taverns, 2 cotton factories, the Phoenix employing 101 hands, and the other, 50 hands. One foundry, employing eight hands; 4 stores, 1 jeweller’s shop, 2 grist mills, 3 machine shops, 3 blacksmith shops, 2 wheelright shops, 1 cabinet shop, 1 tin shop, 1 stove manufactory, 5 shoe makers’ shops, 1 book store and bindery, 1 hatter’s shop, 1 cooper shop, 1 sleigh shop, 4 joiner shops, 1 Reed manufactory, 1 lead pipe manufactory, 1 gun shop, 1 livery shop, 1 slaughter house, 3 regular practicing physicians, 1 Botanic physician, and 3 lawyers.”⁸⁶ Civically and culturally advanced, the village also sponsored in the early 1840s a pauper or poor farm to assist less fortunate townfolk.⁸⁷ With a varied economy, the picturesque wooded setting had become a regional center and “one of the most flourishing towns in [the] vicinity.”⁸⁸

Religious inclination by Peterborough’s residents had a long tradition as it did through much of New England. The status of God’s influence in the early 1840s varied from passivity to what at one time was called a “revival,” enlivening the pulpits and pews of Peterborough. The Presbyterians had held sway for decades, but through lack of leadership and commitment, Peterborough was without pastoral leadership at the time of the American

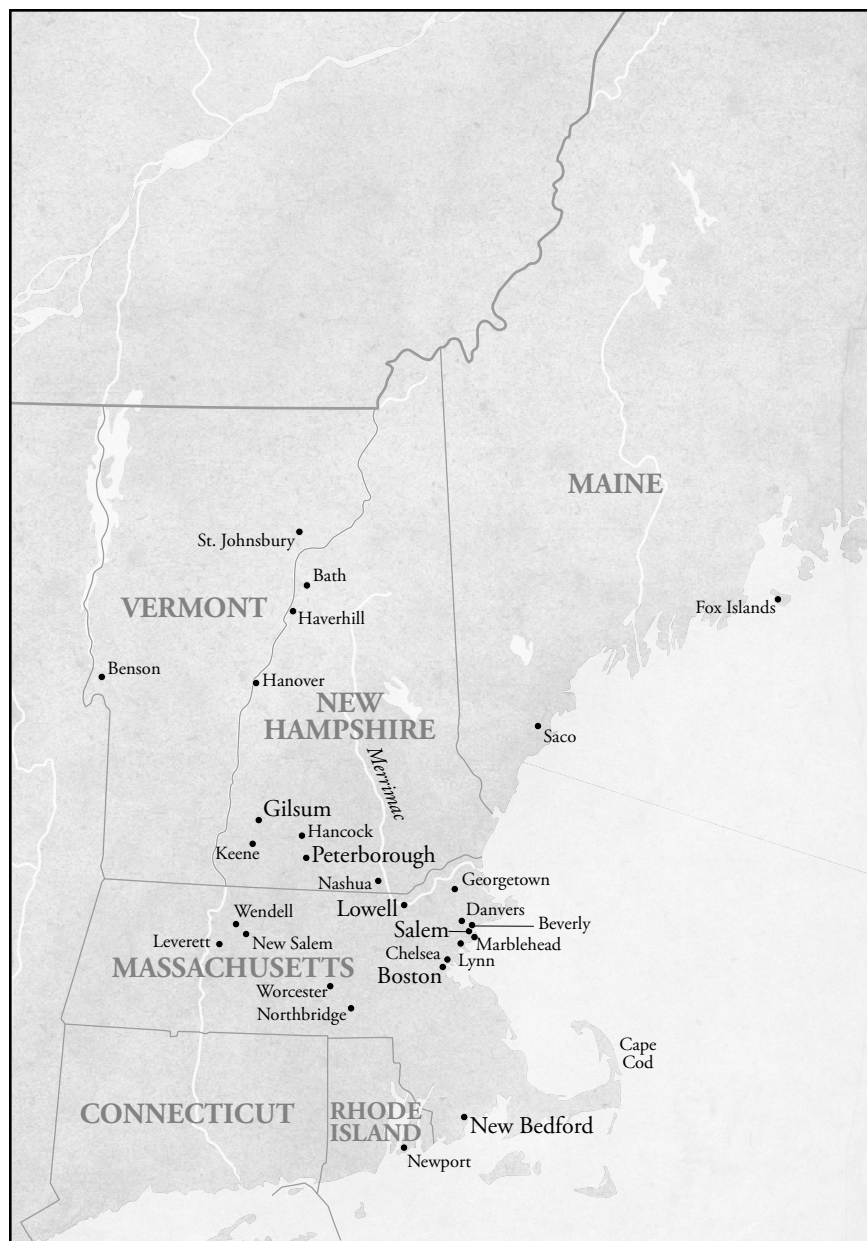
⁸⁴ Albert Smith, *History of the Town of Peterborough. Hillsborough County, New Hampshire* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1876), 242. Of note, Smith chose not to mention a Mormon presence in the community when he recounted religious influences on the town, not surprising in most other settings. However, given the emphasis upon Mormons in the 1840s in several of the subsequent historical portraits of Peterborough, Smith’s account is short-sighted.

⁸⁵ 1840 Federal Census, Peterborough, New Hampshire, NARA.

⁸⁶ Ebenezer Fairbanks in *Historical Sketches of Peterborough, New Hampshire: Portraying Events and Data Contributing to the History of the Town* (n.p.: Peterborough Historical Society, 1938), 196.

⁸⁷ Peterborough Town Records, 1760–1855, FHL.

⁸⁸ *Boston Recorder*, August 26, 1842.



Map of Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Maine, and Rhode Island.
Map by Brandon S. Plewe.

Revolution. Once the pulpit was filled, the minister's conduct disappointed church goers and the pulpit went vacant again. In 1799 a Congregationalist clergyman took over the village's pastoral duties. But soon Presbyterians who missed their previous liturgical worship applied to have their own services. By the time Elder Maginn began his Peterborough ministry, the Methodists and Baptists each had twenty years of tenure there as well. To awaken religious interest, a number of townspeople pushed for more suitable meetinghouses and upgraded religious services resulting in buildings of worship being constructed or remodeled just before Maginn made his appearance.⁸⁹ As in other parts of New England, Mormon missionaries apparently made headway in Peterborough in the 1830s, though their work does not appear to have endured.⁹⁰

Peterborough, anything but a sleepy little hamlet, felt the tug of diverse influences upon its residents. "Often our peace was broken in upon," a long-time inhabitant recalled, "and our usual quiet disturbed." First there was the "revolutionizing political campaign of 1840," then "the advent of Millerism, followed closely by that of Mormonism, in the labors of Maginn and nearly all the prominent Latter Day Saints."⁹¹ Also, coincident to the arrival of Mormonism in Peterborough, described by another as "the newest invented delusion of the devil," Unitarianism had also "taken deep root" there. Together with "Universalism, its twin sister," heterodox Christianity refreshed religious debate among the populace.⁹² And then there was the moral cry of temperance that undoubtedly sparked controversy among the citizenry, not to mention disappointment among the less orthodox. While its mills clanked and whirred with textile production, Peterborough's cultural and social fabric stretched under the stress of reform. In July 1841, 461 residents joined a Temperance Society, clearly a growing societal expression that indicated consternation with the moral status quo.⁹³

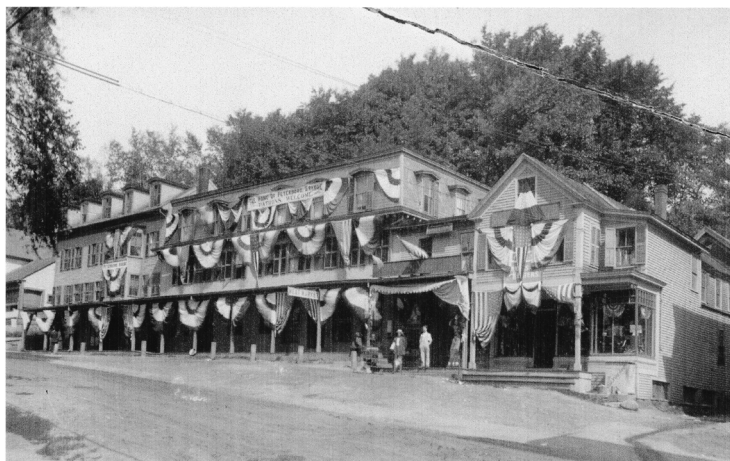
⁸⁹Smith, *History of the Town of Peterborough*, 83–102; Smith in *Historical Sketches of Peterborough New Hampshire*, 193–96.

⁹⁰See Mary Richey, letter to Dear Friends [Sarah Cunningham of Rockford, Illinois], September 2, 1833, Peterborough, New Hampshire, photocopy of holograph in author's possession.

⁹¹*Proceedings of the Sesqui-Centennial Celebration Held at Peterborough, N.H., Thursday, Oct. 24, 1889, with the Action of the Town and Its Committees Incidental Thereto* (Peterboro': Peterboro' Transcript Office, 1890).

⁹²*Boston Recorder*, August 26, 1842.

⁹³Smith in *Historical Sketches of Peterborough New Hampshire*, 185.



Goodrich Block, Peterborough, New Hampshire, date and photographer unknown. Collection of the Monadnock Center for History and Culture, Peterborough, New Hampshire, by permission.

That same month, as recalled by a Peterborough villager George B. Gardner, the Mormon came to town. Gardner recorded, “One Sabbath about the first of July 1841 while sitting and listening to our Methodist Priest, it being warm weather and all the windows opened, my ears caught the sound of some man a preaching in the Town House just across a narrow lane which sounded like music in my ears. On inquiry after meeting I learned it was a man by the name of Eli P. Maginn, a Mormon Elder from Nauvoo, Illinois.”⁹⁴ Others also took note of Maginn’s entrance into the village. One old-timer, sixty years after the fact, remembered to a Peterborough historian in 1900 that he recalled “quite vividly” the impression of seeing the first Mormon stride into the community.⁹⁵ That a non-Mormon

⁹⁴*The History of George Bryant Gardner*, 9 pages, quoted in Forrest Rick McConkie and Evelyn Nichols McConkie, comps. and eds., *George Washington Taggart, Member of the Mormon Battalion: His Life and Times and His Wives, Harriet Atkins Bruce, Fanny Parks, Clarissa Marina Rogers, and Their Ancestors, 1711–1901* (n.p.: Jennie’s Family Histories, 1997), 2.

⁹⁵Unknown writer, letter to James Brennan, ca. 1900, Brennan Correspon-

resident remembered Maginn’s arrival in Peterborough over a half-century later says something about the immediate and enduring effect the young elder had on the community.

Maginn’s impact, indeed, proved transformative. Before the year’s conclusion the Mormon elder had helped influence what some called a revival among the religiously inclined, resulting in numerous villagers becoming Mormon partisans.⁹⁶ Among the first to be baptized by Maginn were those of the John Nay Jr. family, who are reported to have become Mormons in August 1841. First it was a trickle and then a regular stream of converts filled the Mormon rolls over the next several months, such as Luther Reed, a forty-four-year-old New Hampshire native, who responded by baptism on November 7, 1841. On November 27, 1841, Maginn baptized six more.⁹⁷ By Christmas 1841 about twenty had hearkened to the Mormon’s appeal.⁹⁸

While it is difficult to separate the influence of the message from the man, for some it was primarily the message. One resident, Ashbel Haskell, announced to his family after hearing Eli for the first time, “I’ve been to a Mormon meeting,” where the “preacher Elder Maginn, spoke more good sense than all the ministers I ever heard.” While Ashbel cowered in the face of conversion through criticism by neighbors, his family became Mormon believers, including his son Thales, who later became important in southern Utah circles.⁹⁹

For others, Maginn was the draw. His success, in part, can be explained by his imposing presence and facility in religious discussion. Maginn, in

dence, Misc., MCHC. While the account introduced the possibility that the missionary in view may have been a man named Hicks, other evidence narrows the identity to Maginn.

⁹⁶The reader will note the frequent references to baptismal numbers in this essay and its footnotes. While some are defensible as accurate, it is clear that many statements about baptismal totals are generalizations, though none are gross exaggerations.

⁹⁷Joan Nay, “The Nays in Peterborough, New Hampshire,” paper given at Mormon History Association, May 2005, Killington, Vermont, the date of the Nay family baptisms based on Circleville [Utah] Ward Records in CHL; Smith in *Historical Sketches of Peterborough New Hampshire*, 185.

⁹⁸Snow, journal, 2:19, ca. January 12, 1842, CHL.

⁹⁹Thales Hastings Haskell, *Autobiography*, 1867, CHL; Zula Rich Cole, “Ashbel, His wife and Children” *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1960), 3:526–27.

his early twenties, was later described in a Boston newspaper sketch as having the appearance of a “man farther advanced in years.” Illuminating his frame of “six feet in height, and of rather a commanding appearance” was “an honest, happy smile.” The newspaper portrait claimed his preaching style to be “truly astonishing” and noted “if a thorough knowledge of the scriptures, talent, tact, sound reasoning, and powerful argument, are qualifications, then Elder Maginn is fully qualified for the duties of his office, and must pass as truly a master workman. He seems perfectly intimate with all the old apostles and prophets, and it is truly astonishing with what facility he quotes the scriptures from memory, giving chapter and verse, with the greatest ease, and correctness.”¹⁰⁰

Peterborough’s town historian in 1925, a former New Hampshire legislator who inexplicably gathered Maginn’s profile eighty years after the missionary left the Contoocook River town, stated that Maginn “was a lively, ready speaker and had the bible at his tongue’s end, being everywhere ready to meet clergymen or laymen in religious controversy.”¹⁰¹ So entrenched was Maginn’s brilliant legacy in Peterborough that in the early 1940s he was described as “Matching every man in town with his alert and enthusiastic command of the Old Testament.”¹⁰² But, as one would imagine, local clergymen recognized the threat, precluding him from preaching in any of the local churches. He, however, could not be constrained. He soon arranged for services in a village hall that filled to capacity so that “the people were obliged to stand in the street.”¹⁰³ A later Peterborough historian wrote, “Elder Maginn, partly by his message and partly by his own magnetic personality, attracted people from afar and near to his meetings in Peterborough. The churches would have none of him although they

¹⁰⁰“Mormonism” *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 13 (May 15, 1843): 206, reprinted from what was written by one of Joseph Smith’s closest Nauvoo associates, though it is attributed to a local Mormon in Boston. “A Seeker after Truth,” printed in the *Boston Bee*. The masquerade was a public relations ploy common in the nineteenth century. See Jeffery O. Johnson, “Joseph Smith, Willard Richards, and the *Boston Bee*,” paper delivered at the 2008 Mormon History Association conference in Sacramento, California. Thanks to Jeff Johnson for providing the author with a copy of his paper.

¹⁰¹Brennan, “Talk on Mormonism,” 1925.

¹⁰²Donald A. Purdy, “Mormons and Peterborough, N. H. Address Delivered July 24, 1941, Plymouth Conference,” typescript, 2, CHL.

¹⁰³Brennan, “Talk on Mormonism,” 1925.

had been willing to open their doors to the Millerites. He was obliged to hold his meetings in the little hall in the Goodridge Block on Main Street. The meetings were so crowded that the speakers were accustomed to stand at the windows and address the larger overflow crowds waiting outside as much as they did the people who filled the hall to capacity.”¹⁰⁴ Maginn’s reputation grew, drawing residents from outlying villages that came to town in their “four-horse coaches” to hear his declarations.¹⁰⁵

Building momentum the longer he stayed, the entire community became aware of the Mormon preacher, though most remained just curious and skeptical. Elias H. Cheney, a boy at the time, noted that Mormon growth in Peterborough “convulsed the town” while attracting a number of their “excellent citizens.” Though never submitting, Cheney often attended their services, which he described as differing “little from a Methodist or Free Will Baptist service.” Claiming “the sect took the scripture a little more literally,” he also noted their zeal manifest in the manner they sang their hymns; “fervid” was the word he used to describe the singing. So catchy was one hymn in particular that he said he sang it often thereafter. It was the great Mormon hymn introduced in 1836 at the Kirtland House of the Lord dedication, “The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning.” Cheney recounted the fourth verse as originally printed of “The Spirit of God.”¹⁰⁶

We’ll wash and be washed, and with oil be anointed.
Withal not omitting the washing of feet,
For he who received the [“receiveth his”] penny appointed
Must surely be clean at the harvest of wheat.

We’ll sing and we’ll shout with the armies of heaven,

¹⁰⁴Morison and Smith, *History of Peterborough, New Hampshire*, 1:187–88.

¹⁰⁵James F. Brennan, “Talk on Mormonism,” 1925. One of the reasons for addressing Mormonism before the community at that time, Brennan stated, was that the 1840s episode of Mormonism in Peterborough had been neglected. The religion, he stated, “was one which encompassed a large number of the people of the town and <materially> changed their ways <of life.>”

¹⁰⁶W. W. Phelps, “The Spirit of God,” in *A Collection of Sacred Hymns for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Selected by Emma Smith* (Nauvoo, Ill.: E. Robinson, 1841), hymn 252.



Erastus Snow, photograph by Marsena Cannon, ca. 1850, courtesy of LDS Church History Library.

Hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb;
Let glory to Him in the highest be given,
Henceforth and forever, amen and amen.

Cheney stated that the “irreverent” among them mocked the Saints substituting “amen and amen” with “Joe Smith and McGin.”¹⁰⁷

With Mormonism’s influence rapidly enlarging, Maginn’s work created uncomfortable personal connections in the community. George B. Gardner, mentioned above, eventually applied for baptism. As Gardner recorded,

¹⁰⁷Elias H. Cheney, “Recollections of Peterborough Churches in the Early Forties of the Nineteenth Century: Address Delivered at Union Meeting in Union Congregational Church, Sunday Evening, August 22, 1915,” in *Historical Sketches of Peterborough New Hampshire*, 250. This Mormon hymn took special hold in Peterborough. In 1844 two of Eli Maginn’s converts, Jesse C. Little and George W. Gardner, published the first Mormon hymnal that included music with the lyrics. “The Spirit of God [Like a Fire is Burning]” was included as hymn “No. 1” in their collection of sacred music. Marilyn J. Crandall, “The Little and Gardner Hymnal: A Study of Its Origin and Contribution to the LDS Musical Canon,” 136–52.

The day was set when he [Maginn] should visit me and attend to the ordinance. I was working in my shop when I saw him coming. I took off my blacksmith apron and laid my hammer on my anvil and went with him to the water, left my wife a crying. Old Father Peneman [the Methodist minister] a threatening to dispose me (he having a mortgage on my property), some neighbors a prophesying that I should lose all my customers. But I burst those bands and was baptized by Elder Eli P. Maginn, on Monday, November 20, 1841, in the [Contoocook] River. While this was going on, the Methodist Sisters gathered around my wife a telling her that she had got to give up her husband for he had joined a poor deluded people and would go off and leave her.¹⁰⁸

Still, the missionary’s message proved attractive and compelling, enough so that many familial and fraternal circumstances were altered.

As stated previously, northeast Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire became a Mormon missionary circuit, the handful of missionaries traveling between communities sharing duties when required. Eli, for example, had assisted Erastus Snow in November 1841 in Salem, Massachusetts, so in January 1842, with the fledgling Peterborough flock expanding, Erastus Snow “at the earnest solicitation of Elder E.P. Maginn” left Salem for Peterborough. Traveling the eighty-five miles by “cars [railway] to Boston thence to Lowell [L] & Nashua thence by stage to Peterboro,” he assisted Maginn for two weeks.¹⁰⁹ Snow made an impression during his brief stay in Peterborough. Joel Damon, a local hatmaker wrote to his Unitarian-minister brother in Boston, referencing Snow. Having listened to him twice, he described Snow as a “pretty smart saucy little fellow,” whom he compared to “an abolition or temperance agent.” Still, there was a spirit of allowance in Damon’s characterization about the Mormons. Speaking of Snow, he wrote, “The Mormon has got out people who have not been at meeting so long that they scarcely knew how the inside of a meeting house looks or knew how to behave . . . and to appearance some have been converted and become good men who have heretofore been the reverse. So far so good.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸“History of George Bryant Gardner,” 2.

¹⁰⁹Snow, journal, 2:19 (January 1842).

¹¹⁰Joel Damon, letter to Rev. David Damon, February 22, 1842, offered for sale in the Rick Grunder Book’s catalogue at the time of access, <http://www.richgrunder.com/Manuscripts%20for%20Sale/Damon%20Letter%201842/damon.htm>.

A New Era of Missionary Work: Maginn the Veteran

Joseph Smith and companions fled Missouri jurisdiction in April 1839 after four and half months of incarceration in Liberty, Clay County. Within weeks the final hold-outs in Far West, Missouri, resignedly abandoned what had been the Mormons' ambitious effort to reestablish a center in northwestern Missouri, like the others they had tried to build in Kirtland, Ohio, and Independence, Missouri. But instead of fleeing west across the Missouri River to Indian lands, yet farther away from American institutions and a hostile populace, the befuddled Saints got wind that the western-most extension of Illinois, bordered by the Mississippi River, might hold promise as a refuge. Within weeks hundreds and then thousands poured into the region of Adams and Hancock County, Illinois. When Smith himself purchased property in Commerce, Hancock County, the next Mormon destination had been established in May 1839.

At the same time when protective measures might have been the only priority enacted to salvage what was left of the refugees, the underlying mandate to spread the gospel compelled church leaders. Gathered together after complete humiliation that bred anger and vindication for the blatant injustices suffered by most of them, nothing could repress their earnest yearnings after what they had been through. Not only plotting the reestablishment of Mormon institutions within a geographical jurisdiction, the call to cast their nets to gather the elect could not be subordinated to what might appear to be greater exigencies. Reviving among the Saints the vision of the last days and the imminent return of Jesus Christ, a consequential May 4–6, 1839, assembly of Saints in the Mississippi River city of Quincy, Illinois, ignited a wholly unexpected recovery of Mormonism. Located sixty miles downstream from the peninsula on the Mississippi River where land had been purchased by the Prophet, Quincy was populated by numerous benevolent settlers who mothered the desperate evacuees from their Missouri plight. The conference held in the local Presbyterian camp ground brought church members together with half a dozen of the church apostles and their prophet to plot yet another unimaginable episode in the brief history of Mormonism. Among a number of matters of immediate concern, such as the relocation of the Saints upstream and a mission to the nation's capital by Sidney Rigdon to represent before federal officials a Mormon appeal for redress from their Missouri fiasco, the conference resolved to drive the church to a new level of action through an enlarged initiative of missionary labor. The primary stir was a plan for the Twelve Apostles to prepare for a mission to Europe later that year.

Along the north Atlantic seaboard, Erastus Snow, just twenty-three in 1841, appears to have been the principal leader of the New England Mormon missionary enterprise. A native of St. Johnsbury, Vermont, Mormonism imaginatively and literally drenched Snow at age fourteen when he first heard the preaching of Orson Pratt, then a twenty-one-year-old missionary. And while Snow achieved lasting fame for being the apostle (ordained in 1849) who opened Scandinavia to Mormonism mid-century, his incubation as a missionary began right after his baptism with his own endeavor in New England, first in Vermont and then New York and New Hampshire. He was later ordained an elder in August 1835.

Continuing his missionary labors in the eastern states, Erastus Snow's work, as shown in his December 1836 report to Mormon headquarters from Pennsylvania at the age of eighteen, portended the rare devotion that characterized the rest of his life: "laboring entirely alone . . . I have travelled about 1600 miles, back and forth; preached 220 sermons; obtained 20 subscribers for your interesting paper, and baptized 50 persons" while organizing three church branches.¹¹¹ Apparently without restraint, his service touched a number of other eastern cities in Virginia, Rhode Island, and New York, before finally focusing on Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.¹¹² Continuing his zealous commitment, with Benjamin Winchester he worked the streets and alleys of Philadelphia in 1840 where a Mormon congregation had been growing since 1839. Another of his associates, Lorenzo Dow Barnes wrote to Nauvoo leaders in July 1840 that Snow "will probably remain in this section of country some length of time and proclaim the gospel."¹¹³ After donning the missionary mantle for most of a decade, abiding the "counsel" of the Mormon prophet himself, Snow planned a return to Nauvoo in the fall of 1841. However, Mormon leaders Hyrum Smith, Joseph's older brother, and William Law, one of the church's First Presidency, on a rare venture to the East visited Snow in Philadelphia the first part of July 1841 after their own reconnaissance of New England. They carried with them a written but unpublished premonition, a revelation, dictated by Joseph Smith in August 1836 during his own survey of the area. The

¹¹¹Erastus Snow, letter to O. Cowdery, December 30, 1836, *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 4 (January 1837): 440.

¹¹²Erastus Snow, letter to "Messrs Editors," October 31, 1840, *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 2 (November 15, 1840): 221.

¹¹³Lorenzo Barnes, letter to "Messrs. Robinson & Smith," July 8, 1840, *Times and Seasons* 1, no. 12 (October 1840): 182.

255-word declaration promised a number of things that were to happen in Salem, Massachusetts, including the assurance that there were “many people in this city, whom I will gather out in due time for the benefit of Zion” (D&C 111:2). With this document in hand, Hyrum Smith and William Law cornered Erastus Snow in Philadelphia and, according to Snow, “councilled that I should not return to Nauvoo in the fall but that I should go immediately with Bro Winchester to Salem, Mass and try to establish the kingdom in that city. . . . They left with us a copy of a Revelation given about the people [of Salem] in 1836 which said the Lord had much people there whom he would gather into his kingdom in his Own due time and they thought the due time of the Lord had come.” Compelled both by his desire to return to Nauvoo as well as adhere to the counsel given him by Smith and Law, Snow determined to make his decision based upon biblical protocol—casting lots. “I therefore after writing on one ballot Nauvoo and on the other Salem prayed earnestly that God would show by the ballot which way I should go.” He drew the piece of paper that “had Salem on it twice in succession and . . . then resolved[,] as soon as I had filled <the> appointments I had out [in Philadelphia,] I would go to Salem.”¹¹⁴

Upon his September 3, 1841, arrival with Winchester in the city, “14 miles northeast of Boston by railroad fair,” Snow expressed optimism about the place: “Salem is situated on a small Bay, is said to be one of the first settlements of the country, a han[d]some and quiet place; numbering about 15,000 inhabitants. This was the place of our destination and to be the field of our labors. We arrived Strangers and alone but trusted in God to direct our course.”¹¹⁵ Finally hiring the Masonic Hall by the month for congregational gatherings, Snow and Winchester began to advertise in the papers and held their first meeting on September 6. Within a few days of their arrival, in collaboration with Freeman Nickerson in Boston, they published the eight-page pamphlet *An Address to the Citizens of Salem and Vicinity*. Announcing their intent to preach God’s revelations, old and new, in the environs as well as describing the plight of the Mormons during and after their Missouri ordeal, the first print run of 2,500 required a second printing.¹¹⁶ It was another daring step for the continuing Mormon enter-

¹¹⁴Snow, journal, 2:3–4. See also the summary of Snow’s missionary activity in Pennsylvania in Larson, *Erastus Snow*, 61–66, and his work in New England, 68–76.

¹¹⁵Snow, journal, 2:11–12.

¹¹⁶Snow, journal, 2:13; Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon*

prise in the Bay State.

Soon Winchester returned to Philadelphia where he continued to build a substantial Mormon presence, leaving twenty-three-year-old Erastus Snow alone to anchor the work in Salem. “I continued to labor and soon began to baptize and extend my labors to Danvers, Beverly, Bradford, Lynn, Marblehead, Boston, Lowell, Petersburg [sic] and many other places,” Snow stated, “in all of which many believed and obeyed the Gospel, and branches of the Church were organized.”¹¹⁷ But it was in Salem, where 150 years earlier accusations of and convictions for witchery among the Puritans pervaded the town but which since then had prospered into one of America’s most important seaports, that Elder Snow influentially represented Mormonism. Pleasant as the place seemed at first, Snow was not without his challenges. Besides finding that the “people in Salem were generally rig[i]d sectarians,” he also “found a bitter enemy to the truth in the person of the Rev. Mr A. G. Comings, editor of the ‘Genius of Christianity’ who called himself a Christian Baptist.” The two finally squared off in what eventually became a six-evening debate held in the Mechanic’s Hall “before an audience of 4 or 500 people.” When Comings’s arguments against Mormonism descended to “chiefly epithets and insults” Snow wrote that “the public feeling” finally turned his way. “The chief good which resulted from that discussion was it caused many to investigate the doctrine who otherwise would have thought it unworthy of notice. My meetings afterwards were much better attended than before.”¹¹⁸

With Snow settled in Salem, Maginn continued undeterred in Peterborough, New Hampshire, located about eighty miles west and north of Salem. An 1842 recapitulation of events in Peterborough by town locals summarized the impact of Mormonism on the village after a year:

A Mormon Society has risen up in our midst . . . called a sect of “Latter Day Saints.” Some good it must do . . . , and some harm from it . . . [M]any a sinner it has broken . . . and smoothed the pimpled and carbunched faces of many. . . . I do not say what else it has done. It has made Christians—it has made them of that sect that has used up and discarded all the religions of the world, and centered all the gospel and all that is good under heaven in a single ism, and that is, in Mormonism. They are strictly a sect with one ism, with one single

Church, 1:171–72. The text of the pamphlet was also published in the *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 1 (November 15, 1841): 578–84.

¹¹⁷Snow, “Autobiography of Erastus Snow,” 109.

¹¹⁸Snow, journal, 2:16–17.

idea, one ruling note. It is easy to conceive of all the effects which result from the prevalence of this faith. The dumb may almost be said to speak. Men who could not talk before, may under the excitement of this new religion ring a long list of changes on one single idea. Many imagine that it is inspiration that has loosened their tongues and made them so unlike what they were.¹¹⁹

Joel Damon, quoted earlier regarding Erastus Snow, also described to his Unitarian brother at this time Eli Maginn's influence on Peterborough. Damon was annoyed. Settling down for a relaxing respite at a wayside tavern, Damon wrote of Maginn, "That confounded Mormon spoiled my visit. It was short at best, and he made it nothing. . . . I have not much but mormonism to write about[.] The way brother McGin makes proselytes is a caution. He baptized one or two the Sabbath we were down, and since [then] enough more to make the whole number about thirty. We hear rumours of some twenty of thirty more that are coming forward soon." As the Methodists and Baptists also mounted their own campaigns, Damon lamented, "they beat the bush and the mormon catches the birds." He also described to his brother Maginn's strategy in discussion. The missionary "would not give a simple yes or no to a question but instead of answering directly would tell you what Paul or James or John or somebody else said about something or other. . . . To use a vu[l]gar comparison [it] put me in mind of the paddy's flea[;] you put your thumb on him and he is not there." Frustrated, he concluded, "There is cunning and craft enough about them [the Mormons] but very little candid fair argument."¹²⁰

Damon, of course, was not the only one in Peterborough put off by Maginn's methods and influence. The Taggart family who lived just outside Peterborough, in a smaller village called Sharon, became part of the Mormon assembly in the larger town. George W. Taggart joined first in December 1841 when he was twenty-five.¹²¹ The Mormon message both captivated and jostled the family over the following months. One brother, twenty-four-year-old Sam, refused the Mormon message even though half

¹¹⁹"Annals of Peterborough for 1842," *Historical Sketches of Peterborough New Hampshire*, 187, ellipses in original from missing text.

¹²⁰Damon, letter to Damon, February 22, 1842.

¹²¹"Baptised into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints Dec 1841 in the Town of Peterborough NH by Ely P Magin[.] Ordained to the office of Deacon June 11th/42 under the hand of Elder E P Magginn[.] George Washington Taggart, notebook, 1837–1857, CHL. See also Barney, "A Man That You Could Not Help Likeing," 165–79.

his family leaned toward conversion. Writing to a younger brother, Albert Taggart, then twenty-two, Sam informed Albert of Maginn's negative sway over the family and concluded his letter in lyrics, meant to be sung to the tune of *Auld Lang Syne*:

let mormonism be forgotton
and never brought to mind
let mormonism be forgotton
in the days of old magin.¹²²

A few weeks later another unbelieving brother, sixteen-year-old Henry who later died at the second battle of Bull Run, wrote to Albert that "the old man," their father Washington Taggart, fifty-six, who he described as being "pretty Dambd cocked," "is going into the Drink next Friday." Henry assured his older brother that he had not been duped like the others: "[I] don't work out to get Money to give to Joe Smith no how. it makes me swear to think of it."¹²³ But soon their mother Susannah and younger brother Oliver, eighteen, also submitted to Maginn's call. Mormonism proved hard on many families.

While most of her family rejected the Mormon message, Emmeline Woodward, from "her mother's entreaties and the persuasive preaching of Mormon missionary Eli P. Maginn" became a Latter-day Saint upon turning fourteen on March 1, 1842. Her precocious sense about matters of gravity did not eliminate censure from those close to her. She later wrote, "As soon as Mormonism began to flourish were they not harassing me on every side[.] did they not tear me from my beloved hom[e] and the arms of a tender parent to keep me from Mormonism."¹²⁴ Her mother and a sister joined her in belief, but her older siblings rejected Mormonism. Known as Emmeline B. Wells after her marriage to Mormon leader Daniel H. Wells, she became one of the most influential women in both the LDS Church, including being general president of the women's organization—the Relief Society—and nineteenth-century Utah Territory, where she became a not-

¹²²S. W. Taggart, letter to Albert Taggart, May 31, 1842, Peterborough, New Hampshire, Albert Taggart, Correspondence 1842–1848, CHL.

¹²³Henry Taggart, letter to Albert Taggart, July 20, 1842, Peterborough, New Hampshire, Albert Taggart, Correspondence, 1842–1848, CHL.

¹²⁴Carol Cornwall Madsen, *An Advocate for Women: The Public Life of Emmeline B. Wells, 1870–1920* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2006), 18.

ed advocate of women's suffrage.

The quick grasp of the Mormon message by the Peterborough converts had to be fulfilling to young Maginn. Jesse C. Little, just three years older than Eli, began looking into Mormonism when Maginn first began his ministry in Peterborough the summer of 1841. By the spring of 1842, he willingly consented to baptism at the hand of Elder Maginn.¹²⁵ He was a young man with great promise. Eventually becoming leader of the Peterborough congregation, followed by several years of influential work directing regional church affairs and being point person for the church among government leaders, Little became second counselor in the church's Presiding Bishopric fourteen years after his baptism. The same day that Little became a Mormon, Maginn also baptized a young cousin of the Taggarts, Naamah Carter, who later became Brigham Young's thirty-ninth wife. Naamah was remembered among Sharon, New Hampshire, locals (where the Taggarts lived near Peterborough), as a fourteen year old who had worked in the local mills to assist her "impoverished parents." Her new religion did not sully her reputation as an "intelligent" girl who had "gained the respect of the town, when working girls were so unpopular."¹²⁶ There were many others, of the rank-and-file, who made their own contributions once in the fold. By the end of 1842 the names of 116 townspeople, some being principle citizens of the community, filled the Mormon branch's roster, which was also part of village chronicle.¹²⁷ Clearly, the villagers did not know quite what to make of Mormonism at the beginning, but the overt disdain for the emerging faith in other settings did not weaken Mormonism's foothold in Peterborough, though there is evidence of inter-religious

¹²⁵"First heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached by Elder E. P. Maginn summer of 1841[,] believed it true. Embraced it. And was by him baptize & Confirmed April 3 1842. Was Ordained by him a Priest and then an Elder." J. C. Little, letter to Andrew Jenson, May 6, 1890, Littleton, Utah, Jesse Carter Little, Letters 1890-1891, CHL.

¹²⁶Purdy, "Mormons and Peterborough," 2.

¹²⁷Smith, in *Historical Sketches of Peterborough New Hampshire*, 195. Here a contemporary Peterborough historian uses Jesse C. Little's record of LDS Church members in Peterborough in 1842, numbering 116, "48 males and 68 females." He also explained that the church "has been for the most of the time under the charge of the Rev. Mr. McGinn, who first founded it," though the other New England missionaries were also mentioned as assisting Maginn.

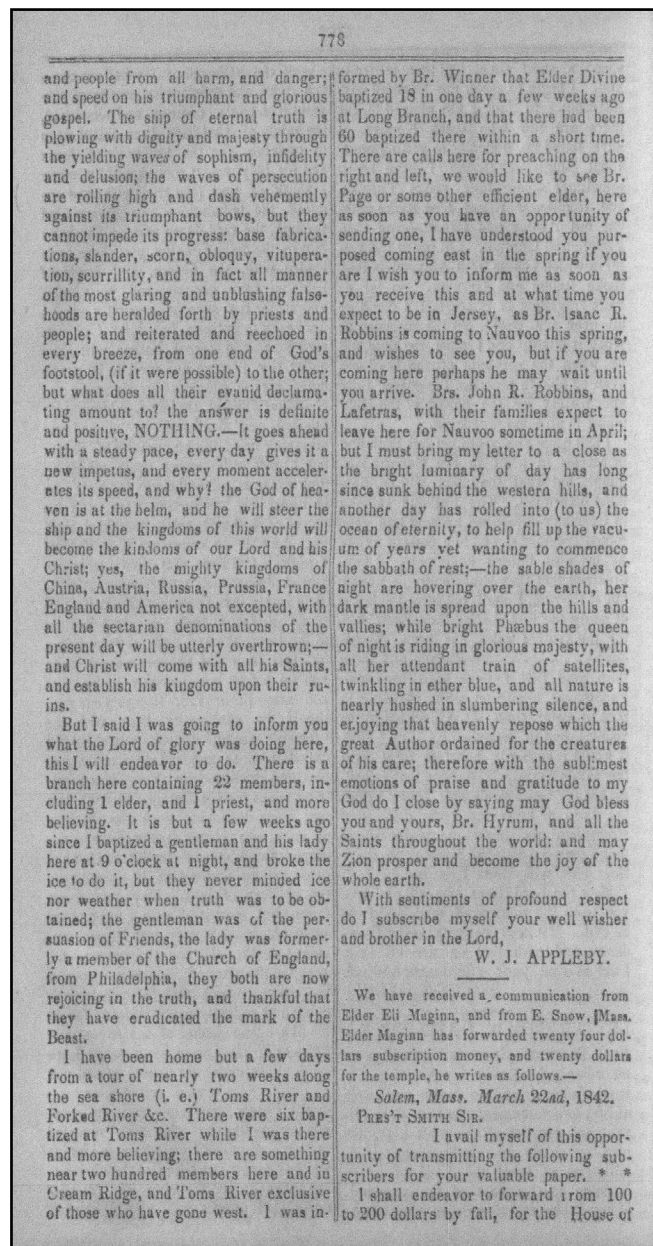
conflict with the Saints.¹²⁸

The religion's expansion in the region complicated the Mormon circuit. The growing number of adherents required ministration and administration. Maginn returned Erastus Snow's January 1842 favor by assisting Snow in Massachusetts two months later, arriving in Salem on March 20 just two weeks after Snow had formalized branch organizations in Salem and Boston. Snow's own enthusiasm regarding Latter-day Saint growth in his area obviously charged his Peterborough compatriot, for two days after his arrival, Maginn excitedly penned a letter to the Mormon prophet himself. In devotionally florid prose reminiscent of the New Testament epistles, Maginn announced that he felt "to rejoice in the prosperity of the work of the God of the Saints, which is truly prosperous in New England." It was in this communication that Maginn outlined to the Nauvoo leader, and consequently to the body of Saints through the letter's publication in the *Times and Seasons*, the recent scope of his own work and Mormonism's advance in New England: "I have been absent from Peterboro two weeks, have preached three or four times in boston, Salem Marblehead, Chelsea &c. and purpose [propose] returning to Peterboro next Sunday, where I have been laboring with good success, thirty-six have obeyed since last fall, at New Salem, Mass. thirty-five to forty obeyed since August last, Leverett eighteen or twenty [the latter two communities located eighty miles or so west of Boston], Gilsum, N. H. twenty to thirty."¹²⁹

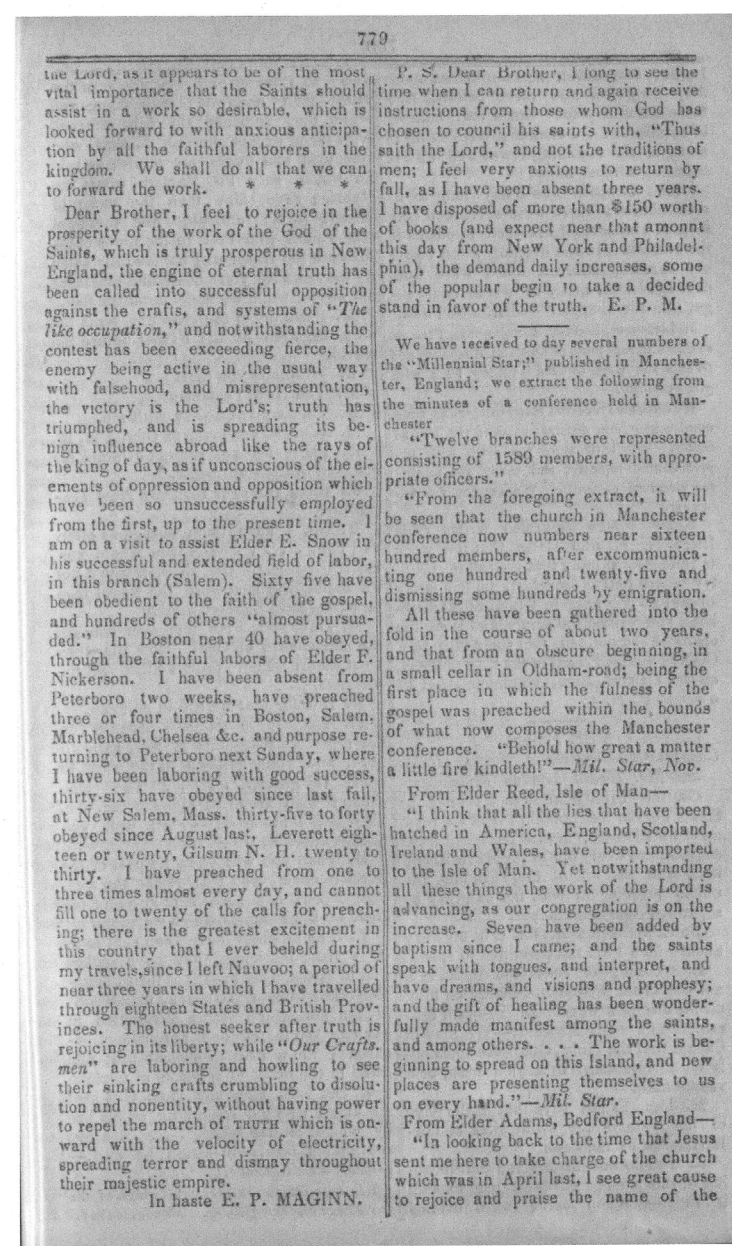
Maginn's report, written three years into his ministry, attributed to himself and his associates some of the Latter-day Saints' most progressive work to date. Comparable to the several outstanding missionary ventures now heralded as early Mormon milestones, the report, published for all in the Mormon capital to read, surely encouraged Nauvoo's growing populace. Describing Erastus Snow's formidable work in Salem, just north of Boston, Maginn wrote that "sixty five have been obedient to the faith of the gospel and hundreds of others 'almost persuaded.'" Besides the rise of work in Salem, Maginn explained, "in Boston near 40 have obeyed, through the faithful labors of Elder F[reeman] Nickerson." Maginn exulted to Joseph that "there is the greatest excitement in this country that I ever beheld during my travels, since I left Nauvoo." To qualify his assertion, he wrote that over the previous three years he had "traveled through eighteen States

¹²⁸"Annals of Peterborough for 1842" *Historical Sketches of Peterborough New Hampshire*, 188-89.

¹²⁹Maginn, letter to Joseph Smith, March 22, 1842. See also Snow, Journal, vol. 2, for the month of March 1842.



Eli P. Maginn, beginning of letter to Joseph Smith, March 22, 1842, 3, no. 13 *Times and Seasons* (May 2, 1842): 778.



Eli P. Maginn, conclusion of letter to Joseph Smith, March 22, 1842, 3, no. 13 *Times and Seasons* (May 2, 1842): 779.

and British [or perhaps Canadian] Provinces,” preaching by the way.¹³⁰ Clearly something unusual had happened for the Mormons in that part of New England.

While Maginn serviced church needs over the next two years in several Massachusetts sea villages and towns such as Boston, Salem, Lowell, and later New Bedford, he made his deepest mark in the environs of southern New Hampshire. Though Peterborough produced the primary response to Maginn’s message, other hamlets such as Keene in southern New Hampshire received his solicitation. The village of Gilsum, birthplace of Joseph Smith’s mother Lucy Mack, also proved fertile ground. Mack family members still lived there. With a population in 1843 of 645 residents and located about twenty miles northwest from Peterborough, Gilsum encountered Maginn’s tactics as he used the Macks’ favorable reputation to further his Mormon objectives. With recently assigned missionary Austin Cowles, a former counselor to the Nauvoo Stake president who was twice Maginn’s age, the elders traveled to Gilsum in 1841, where they “held a protracted meeting in the old Meeting House.” The venture eventually netted between “twenty to thirty” who accepted Mormonism resulting in establishment of the “Gilsum Branch of Latter Day Saints.” The Macks, along with the several dozen others who accepted the religion during this period, were remembered favorably by locals years later.¹³¹

The religious excitement provoked by Eli Maginn’s work in southern New Hampshire consequently improved the profile of Mormonism. The demand of interest required, he wrote in his March 1842 report to

¹³⁰Maginn, letter to Smith, March 22, 1842. Disappointingly, there are no extant local records from any of the New England church units during the early 1840s, save it be New Bedford that will later be referenced. Information describing the activity in this area is based on reports (formal and informal), correspondence, missionary journals and records, and later written local histories of Peterborough.

¹³¹Silvanus Hayward, *History of the Town of Gilsum New Hampshire, from 1752 to 1879, with Maps and Illustrations* (Manchester, N.H.: John B. Clarke, 1881), 93, 123–24. Of interest, Hayward used Gilsum Branch records to include his account of the “Mormons, or Latter Day Saints,” giving a general description of the Mormon presence in Gilsum through the time of his publication. The branch records’ current location is not presently known. Wilford Woodruff wrote that at the Boston conference of September 9, 1843, mentioned below, Maginn reported the membership numbers for “the Church in Gilsum, N. H. containing 42. Among the No. are two Cousins of President Joseph Smith, one the postmaster of the Place.” *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 2:286.

church headquarters, preaching “from one to three times almost every day,” though he was only able to “fill one to twenty of the calls for preaching.”¹³² Peterborough matured sufficiently as an established church branch that it became a center of Mormonism during this period, a way-station for missionaries and others, traveling between Nauvoo and the east coast or abroad.¹³³ Significantly, within a year or so after Maginn’s arrival, the Peterborough branch rivaled in numbers the other established churches in the town. Before Maginn and his colleagues were finished in Peterborough, “235 of the people of this vicinity were converted to Mormonism, 130 of them from Peterborough.”¹³⁴ It was this upwelling of the faith in southern New Hampshire that likely caught the attention of George Barstow prompting his winter of 1841–1842 query of John Wentworth regarding Joseph Smith and the Mormons in Nauvoo.

Maginn’s first account to Joseph Smith was followed five weeks later by a second report the first week of May, a communication revealing Maginn’s stark realization that the work had outgrown the missionary. With an undertone of complaint, he wrote that in the previous six months, sixty-seven had “obey,d” [been baptized] in Peterborough. “I have labored alone the whole time,” a common practice for the time, he explained, except for the time of Erastus Snow’s visit, working “incesantly day and night preaching from once to 3 times almost daily. I am much exhausted at present and should be glad to have assistance.” He portrayed the heavy labor of his colleagues in Massachusetts and pled, “Is it not the will of the Lord that we should have some help[?]” He proposed that “20 Elders might find all they could perform in this vicinity.” Underscoring his desperation he lamented, “I feel that great responsibility rests upon me” now that “I have severall Hundred under my charge a part of the time.”¹³⁵

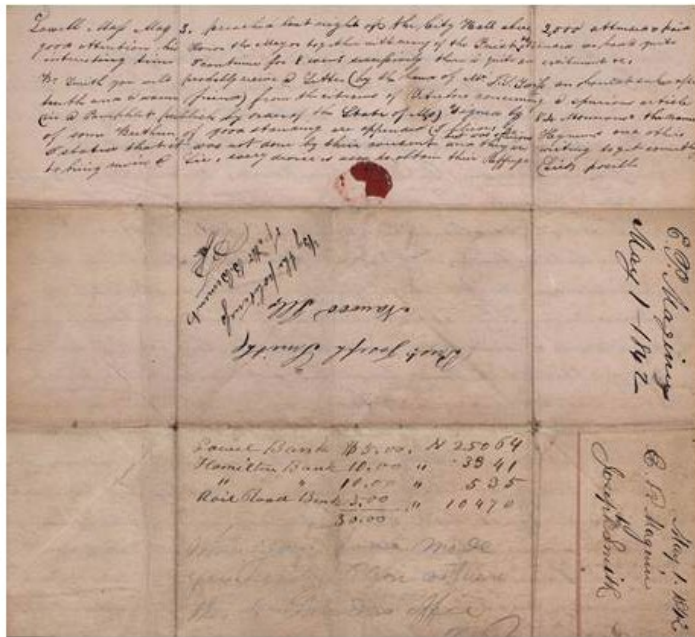
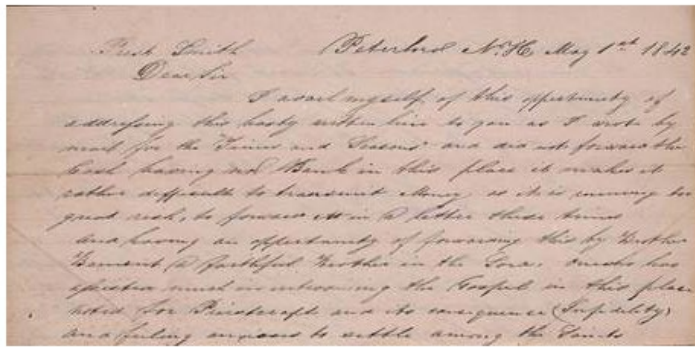
The letter also expressed a common perplexity experienced by all missionaries who assumed the missionary frock thereafter: one of his fellow laborers had his own way of doing things. Freeman Nickerson, Maginn’s mature colleague, having plied Massachusetts’ coastal communities for

¹³²Maginn, letter to Smith, March 22, 1842.

¹³³While staying in Peterborough on July 16, 1844, for instance, Brigham Young heard confirmation of the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Young, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, 170.

¹³⁴James F. Brennan, “Talk on Mormonism, 1925.”

¹³⁵Eli P. Maginn, letter to Joseph Smith, May 1, 3, 1842, Peterborough, New Hampshire, and Lowell, Massachusetts, Joseph Smith Papers, CHL.



Handwriting sample of Eli P. Maginn, letter to Joseph Smith, May 1, 3, 1842, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church History Library. Courtesy of LDS Church History Library.

converts since the mid-1830s, was a man of great experience and talent. His energies had been focused in Boston since May 1841, where he had helped raise a branch of thirty, including baptizing the man whose ship-

ping office later served as a meeting place for the Saints.¹³⁶ He was good at what he did. George Benjamin Wallace, introduced to Mormonism by Nickerson remembered that, “after conversing with him for about 15 minutes I was convinced that I was building up on a sandy foundation.”¹³⁷

With the region’s missionaries drawing attention to the upstart religion, it was not surprisingly that, like those in other New England communities, Boston’s fourth estate had shown interest in Mormonism. A piece that appeared in early April 1842 in the *Dollar Weekly Bostonian* solicited from the Mormon representative in the city, Elder Nickerson, a request for “the statistics” or particulars about his church. Sixty-three-year-old Nickerson willingly responded on April 11, 1842. Besides supplying the paper with information about his own ministry in Boston, having “commenced preaching in Boston on the 30th of May [1841]” resulting in the baptisms of “fifty persons” in the area, he also identified his nearby missionary colleagues and their nearby success in Salem, Peterborough, and Northbridge.¹³⁸ He closed the letter with this assertion: “I do believe the end of this age is near at hand, and the fullness of the gospel is preached, and the honest in heart, or the elect of God will be gathered in from the four quarters of the earth, and a new era, a reign of righteousness will commence on the earth, which will continue for a thousand years.” Therefore, he concluded with a warning to “the people of the destruction which will take place in this generation, that is now on the earth, and teach them how they may escape, and come through and abide the day of the second coming of Christ.”¹³⁹

The forthright declaration, certainly not outside the boundary of Mor-

¹³⁶Freeman Nickerson, letter “To the Editor of the Daily Ledger, April 11, 1842” reprinted in the *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 14 (May 16, 1942): 797–98. Also reprinted in *The Independent Treasury* [Elyria, Ohio] 1, no. 23 (27 April 1842); and the *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star* 3, no. 4 (August 1842): 66.

¹³⁷[Freeman Nickerson, letter to Editor] *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 5 (February 1836): 271; Earl Moroni Wallace, “Histories of George Benjamin Wallace,” 1996, CHL.

¹³⁸Northbridge, early residence of later Mormon apostle Ezra T. Benson, was a mill town located forty-some miles southwest of Boston. Erastus Snow worked the Northbridge area in 1841: Snow, journal, vol. 2, 15, August 1841; Erastus Snow, letter to Dr. Robinson, October 10, 1841, Northbridge, Massachusetts, *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star* 2, no. 10 (February 1842): 149.

¹³⁹Nickerson, letter “To the Editor of the Daily Ledger, April 11, 1842.”

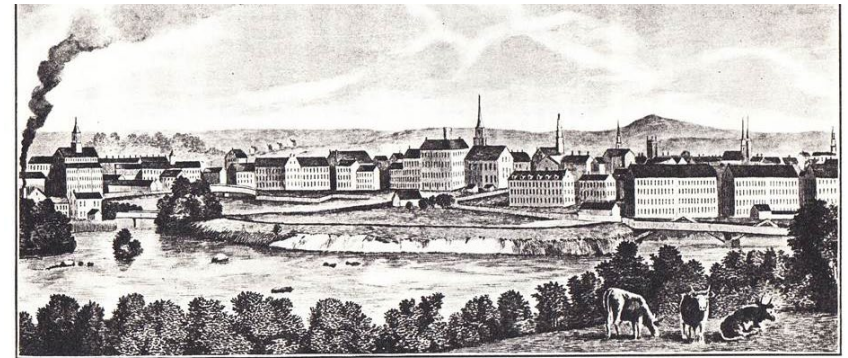
mon orthodoxy, was apparently considered by Maginn as well as Erastus Snow to be too apocalyptically explicit regarding the world's fate. They had become, apparently, sensitive to such a public disclosure in sophisticated and pluralistic Boston. Early missionaries had been reminded for a decade that their message should be limited to the basic principles of Mormonism that included the declaration that God had spoken again through a prophet; that the principles of faith, repentance, and baptism were church basics; that the Book of Mormon had been translated by the prophet; and that the gifts of the spirit were available to believers. Millennialism provoked controversy, which church leaders had learned had much less appeal than the simpler message that had become *de rigueur* for its missionaries. After reading Nickerson's response in the Boston newspaper, and perhaps from statements in other instances, Elder Maginn complained in his letter to Joseph Smith that Nickerson was trying "to *prove that the Millennium has commenced already*."¹⁴⁰ While crediting Nickerson with having "labored ardently" and having striven "to do good," Maginn grumbled that the senior elder "has a rather imperfect understanding of the work, and has many singular notions."¹⁴¹ The following month Erastus Snow echoed the same sentiment to the Mormon prophet: "Father Nickerson though a good hearted old man is nevertheless enthusiatic and childish and unwise and is not the man that ought to be placed in Boston. . . . He shuts up a great many doors and ears in consequence of his lack of wisdom. . . . He talks to opposers and sectrians of all the mistyries of the Kingdom and [a] thousand wild notions of his own."¹⁴² Not wanting to "opperate against" Nickerson, Maginn obliquely suggested that perhaps Elder Nickerson should be recalled, but left it to the prophet to "pursue the course best calculated to preserve the Honor of the Cause."¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰Nickerson, letter "To the Editor of the Daily Ledger, April 11, 1842." Mormons during this period held variant views on the millennial/apocalyptic theme, though *end times* thinking clearly placed them among the millennialists. Erickson, "As A Thief in the Night," 65-75.

¹⁴¹Maginn, letter to Smith, May 1, 3, 1842.

¹⁴²Erastus Snow, letter to Joseph Smith, June 22, 1842, Boston, Massachusetts, Helen Vilate Bourne Fleming Collection, 1836-1963, CHL.

¹⁴³Maginn, letter to Smith, May 1, 3, 1842. It appears that no action was taken against Nickerson after the appeal of Maginn and Snow. Nickerson still represented the LDS Church in Boston and Cape Code in February 1843. "Mormon Conference" *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 8 (March 1, 1843): 125. However, George J.



East View of Lowell, Massachusetts, 1838. John Warner Barber in George F. Kenngott, *The Record of A City: A Social Survey of Lowell, Massachusetts* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912).

Maginn in Lowell, Massachusetts

As momentum plateaued in Peterborough a year after Maginn's arrival, without explanation Elder Maginn also reported to the Mormon prophet in his May 1842 letter his new field of labor: Lowell, Massachusetts. Setting almost midway between Peterborough and Boston, fifty and thirty miles respectively, Lowell was the most important textile-producing city in America at the time. Maginn, in his communication to Joseph Smith called it "the largest manufact[uring] city in the U.S." Lowell had become a primary model illustrating the development and expansion of the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution in the United States. In many ways a significant contrast to the village of Peterborough, Lowell, includ-

Adams also began service as a missionary in Boston in early 1843, indicating that perhaps a transition from Nickerson to Adams occurred in early 1843. (Maginn replaced Adams in Boston later in that spring.)

In July 1844 Nickerson sponsored a pamphlet published in Boston titled *Death of the Prophets Joseph and Hiram Smith, Who Were Murdered While in Prison at Carthage, Ill., On the 27th Day of June, A.D. 1844*. (Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church*, 1:274-76.) Upon his eventual settlement in Nauvoo, Nickerson was held in sufficient esteem to become a Nauvoo Stake high councilor in August 1845. He died two years later in Iowa while preparing to relocate with the Saints to the West.

ed a population ten times larger than Peterborough and sported most of the accouterments of urban America at the time, including railway transportation for both goods and people. Though Boston claimed over 93,000 citizens (fifth largest population in the country), Lowell's 21,000 ranked as America's eighteenth in 1840. The city "boasted the largest concentration of industry in the United States before the Civil War."¹⁴⁴

The most important physiographic feature of the city was its proximity to the Merrimack River, the substantial waterway that, with a drop of thirty feet at the city's location, powered the industry that characterized the town. It was also fed by the Concord River, which emptied into the Merrimack, making the city's setting prime for water-powered industry. One nineteenth-century chronicler of Lowell wrote, "Herodotus, with fine felicity, calls Egypt a gift from the Nile. In a similar sense, Lowell may be called a gift from the Merrimack."¹⁴⁵ Once mill rights were distributed and secured, a dozen companies had built textile mills that lined the Merrimack River banks at the time Eli Maginn took stock of Lowell. It was a bustling municipal enterprise. Though a modest cotton firm had operated in the city since the 1790s, it was the man for whom the city was eventually named—Francis Cabot Lowell—who marked the identity of the community.

After a two-year reconnoiter of English fabric mills prior to the War of 1812 and the intriguing capture of the technology upon which they were based, the enterprising Lowell returned to the United States, and with a handful of men of similar bend, determined to capitalize on what he had learned. In not only a technological revolution advancing the technique of the British power-loom, the means by which they raised the capital to materialize their vision also transformed American business economics. By enticing money from a number of Boston capitalists, "the Boston Associates," they not only transformed the mechanics of the textile industry in Massachusetts, they also entrepreneurially transformed the consolidation of capital into manufacturing enterprises that, besides establishing new economic precedents, launched Lowell into being "one of the nation's great wonders."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 134.

¹⁴⁵Charles Cowley, *Illustrated History of Lowell* (Boston: Lee & Shepard; Lowell, Mass.: B. C. Sargeant and Joshua Merrill, 1868), 2.

¹⁴⁶Cowley, *Illustrated History of Lowell*, 38; Robert F. Dalzell Jr., *Enterprising Elite: The Boston Associates and the World They Made* (New York: W. W. Norton

Maginn, of course, was not interested in industry but in the people who manned the looms. The industrialization of New England in the 1820s and 1830s, and Lowell in particular, lured many young people—women and men—from the countryside to the urban centers. Some 6,000 women and 1,800 men worked Lowell's looms and factories in 1837, figures that roughly remained static (female employees increasing by 200, males decreasing by 300) at the time Maginn arrived in Lowell. Illustrating their importance to the industry, the average wage of females, after their board at factory houses, was \$2; the men made, after boarding, 30¢ per day.¹⁴⁷ Women proved indispensable to the textile mills and made the one-product city a formidable one for another fifty years. The working class character of the population appeared to the missionaries to portend interest in religion, promising mortal and eternal hope beyond the mundane of life in the factories. With the regional success they had already experienced, Lowell held promise as evidenced by fact that a number of the young female factory works grasped Mormonism.

Christianity, as one would suppose, expanded concurrently with the burgeoning textile industry in Lowell. During Maginn's early 1840s venture in Lowell he confronted a city with at least two dozen congregations. The Episcopalians established their presence first in the early 1820s. They were followed by Baptists, Congregationalists, Universalists, Methodist Episcopalians (who later built the largest Protestant meetinghouse in Lowell by the time that Maginn arrived there), all with established congregations by 1830. During the 1830s besides multiple flocks emerging from the conventional denominations, the Roman Catholics (in particular the "sons of the 'Emerald Isle'") and Freewill Baptists also came to town. Somewhat coincidental to Maginn's entry into Lowell's environs, over a half-dozen new congregations opened their doors to parishioners.¹⁴⁸

With bay area newspapers having already informed residents of Mor-

& Company, 1987), 47; Peter Temin, ed., *Engines of Enterprise: The Economic History of New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 109–52; Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 348.

¹⁴⁷Dalzell, *Enterprising Elite*, 47; *The Lowell Directory and Almanac for the Year of Our Lord, 1842* (Lowell, Mass.: Oliver March, Powers & Bagley, 1842), 20–23.

¹⁴⁸*Lowell Directory and Almanac*, 24–25; Cowley, *Illustrated History of Lowell*, 86, 88, 92.

monism and most recently its Missouri troubles, curiosity presented a ready audience for the Latter-day Saint message. Soon after his arrival Maginn hired Lowell's City Hall, "the most splendid and popular in the place," scheduling a "Course of Lectures of 2 weeks," preaching every evening. He exuberantly announced to the Mormon prophet that on May 2 he preached at "City Hall" where, along with the mayor and many of the local clergy, "above 2,000 attended & paid quite good attention." Already, he stated, nine had "obey,d."¹⁴⁹ What was imaginative hope the previous year, Mormonism had taken root in numerous localities in the northeastern United States, despite an unfavorable reception. Mid-May 1842 the Eastern press had taken note:

The spread of this singular delusion is one of the most remarkable signs of the times. . . . The extension of this sect is proceeding rapidly, not only in the West, but in the very centre also of the most populous and educated portion of New England. In Boston, it is stated, a church was established in March last, numbering thirty converts; it is now filled with a large congregation. From this point they have radiated throughout the neighboring towns. In Chelsea, Medway & Salem, the foundations of Mormonism have been laid. In the last named town nearly seventy have been baptized into the faith. They have extended themselves also into New Hampshire. At Peterborough seventy were baptized in one day, and the church in that place numbers over 100 members.¹⁵⁰

While particulars in this tenor of exasperation may have been slightly exaggerated, Mormonism had certainly dented the larger context of American religion in New England.

Maginn and his missionary associates recognized the significance of making known pertinent information about Mormonism, in part to combat distorted propaganda published by foes of the faith, but also to heighten the awareness of the maturing religion and its premises to their prospective contacts. During this period, none was more prolific than Parley P. Pratt, whose literary advocacy set the standard for the early Saints. Erastus Snow and Benjamin Winchester had both taken their hand at pamphleteering in 1841, Winchester first with publication of *Plain Facts, Shewing the Origin of the Spaulding Story, Concerning the Manuscript Found*, and then together with Snow in publication of *An Address to the Citizens of Salem*. Maginn, while not crafting text himself, printed Parley Pratt's hypo-

¹⁴⁹Maginn, letter to Smith, May 1, 3, 1842.

¹⁵⁰*Adams Sentinel* [Gettysburg, Pennsylvania] May 16, 1842.

thetical broadside advancing Mormonism, *An Epistle or Demetrius, Junior, the Silversmith*, likely after he had relocated to the Lowell/Boston area. The printed materials were distributed at the public lectures they periodically held in the large cities.¹⁵¹

With so much having been accomplished over the previous year, great excitement had been mounting among the elders for an eastern conference of the Mormon priesthood to be held on May 18, 1842, in New York City, the first of this breadth in the area. "Delegates" were called upon to report the LDS Church's condition in their areas of labor. "Elder E. P. Maginn, of one of the quorums of seventy elders," after only a brief encounter with Lowell, represented his recent work there as well as a report of Peterborough's branch, now consisting of seventy-one members, including one priest and one teacher. Also noted were Maginn's recapitulations of the situations in Gilsum, New Hampshire; and the central Massachusetts villages of New Salem, Wendell, and Leverett. Elder Maginn then "addressed the audience at considerrble [*sic*] length, giving an interesting narrative of his travels and labors, and some valuable instruction to those who have been called to the ministry." He also received an unusual assignment in the absence of a report on the condition of the Hempstead branch on Long Island. While the conference ensued, "Elder Maginn was deputed to proceed to that branch and regulate it." Covering the twenty plus miles to Hempstead, performing a quick reconnaissance, Eli then returned to the conference and stated that "he found the branch in a better state than it was represented to be" noting "that it consisted of 36 members, 1 elder, 1 priest, and 1 teacher." Despite reports from some of the delegates of the normal frustrations of growing a church, a confident and promising tone characterized the conference.¹⁵²

And they had good reason for optimism. Erastus Snow's rehearsal of circumstances in New England to Joseph Smith the following month described the scene: "The great wheel is rolling in this country more rapidly now than ever in Peterboro Lowel Boston and Salem. . . . There is tremendous excitement here in Boston at present." The missionaries began to think about their work on a grand scale. Fellow missionary George J. Adams, whom Snow included in his report as "a first rate fellow" had engaged for a debate at Boston's huge Marlboro Chapel, site of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison's famous and eruptive July 4, 1838, speech and venue for the New

¹⁵¹Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church*, 1:186-87.

¹⁵²*Times and Seasons* 3, no. 17 (July 1, 1842): 844-46.

England Anti-Slavery Convention.¹⁵³ Adams, described as being “rather slim built, about 34 years of age,” was a “black-manned revivalist who had the Bible—and Shakespeare as well—at his fingertips,” and who had a flare that once held “dramatic aspirations.” But Heber C. Kimball’s sermonizing captured his talented imagination and instead of the stage Adams became a Mormon in February 1840.¹⁵⁴ Besides the Marlboro Chapel, which held nearly 3,000 people, the Boston members had also “hired Boylston Hall,” another Boston landmark that held “near 1,000” for “regular preaching.”¹⁵⁵ The missionaries now envisioned their work equal to what once may have been looked upon as hyperbolic promises.

The Barstow-Wentworth Letter

The work of the Mormon missionaries to New England in the early 1840s, while also producing a substantial gathering of adherents to the faith, also somewhat unwittingly raised the profile of Mormonism sufficiently in Massachusetts and New Hampshire that a thirty-year-old Boston lawyer named George Barstow took more than a casual interest in what undoubtedly appeared to him to be a phenomenon for which he needed to make account. The result of Barstow’s interest in and inquiry about Mormonism, ignited because of Mormon success in New England, was publication of what became for the remainder of Joseph Smith’s life the public summary of Mormonism to the world. The document first published as “Church History” in Nauvoo’s *Times and Seasons* in March 1842, later transcended the moment and acquired status thereafter as one of the most important statements of history and doctrine about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

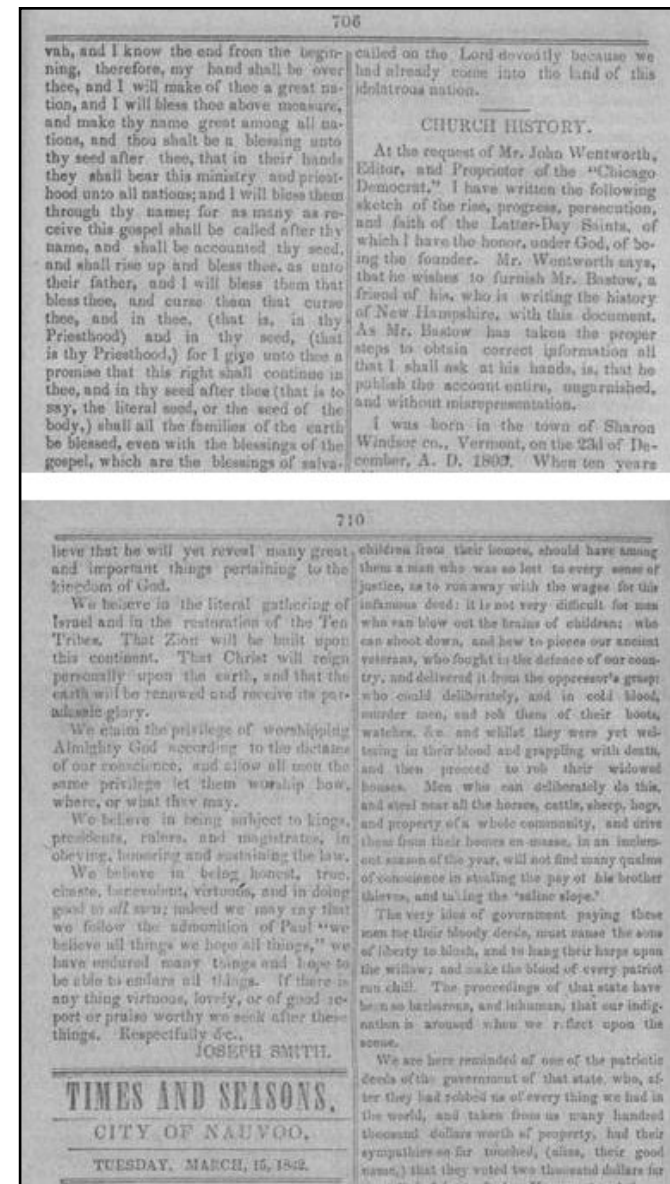
George Barstow, misidentified as Bastow in the *Times and Seasons*’ text of what has become known as the “Wentworth Letter,”¹⁵⁶ (more aptly iden-

¹⁵³Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1998), 246–47.

¹⁵⁴Reprint from the *Bostonian* in the *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 19 (August 1, 1842): 863; Amann, “Prophet in Zion: The Saga of George J. Adams,” 479.

¹⁵⁵Snow, letter to Smith, June 22, 1842. A report of George J. Adams’s debate with a noted Boston clergyman at the Marlboro Chapel was reprinted from the *Bostonian* in the *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 19 (August 1, 1842): 863–64; and 3, no. 20 (August 15, 1842): 886.

¹⁵⁶The *Times and Seasons* is the only place the letter was initially published after its creation. George Barstow did not publish the letter he provoked. John



Beginning and conclusion of “Church History” 3, no. 9 *Times and Seasons* (March 1, 1842): 706-710.

tified as the Barstow-Wentworth Letter), was born in 1812 in Haverhill, New Hampshire, a village on the border of New Hampshire and Vermont, just a dozen miles south of Bath where Mormonism was a lively topic in the early 1830s. Barstow attended nearby Dartmouth College in the mid-1830s anticipating a legal career.¹⁵⁷ Barstow was a seventh generation American, one of his ancestors having sailed from England to the colonies in 1635.¹⁵⁸ Despite a legal practice that sprouted and later blossomed in Boston, Barstow retained a deep interest in his native state that never abated; he determined to have a say in how New Hampshire would be understood by the world.

Although New Hampshire is small in geographical size (forty-fourth among the fifty United States) and relatively obscure in the scope of influences upon America today, save it be an early and influential primary during presidential election years, the “Granite State” emerged with the lofty status of being ninth of the original thirteen states that broke from their motherland at the end of the eighteenth century. A significant feature of New Hampshire is that in 1784, four years prior to becoming one of the United States in 1788, the first of a three-volume history of the geo-political configuration of New Hampshire and her charms was published. Jeremy Belknap, a Bostonian born in 1744 and educated at Harvard College to be a Congregational minister determined to enlighten the world regarding the history of New Hampshire in his hefty volumes published between 1784 and 1792. Belknap’s interest in his adopted state derived from his ministry in Dover, New Hampshire, beginning in 1767. While other former colonies were profiled soon after the Revolution, a work of Belknap’s magnitude was unparalleled. Serving in the ministry until the end of his life, “Belknap was in constant debt to his printers, [and at one time the] members of

Wentworth, the middle man, apparently had no interest in the letter as well, as it never made it to the columns of his newspaper, *The Chicago Democrat*. See Edward J. Brandt, “The Articles of Faith: Origin and Importance” *Pearl of Great Price Symposium: A Centennial Presentation* (Provo, Utah: Department of Ancient Scripture, Brigham Young University, 1977), 69–77.

¹⁵⁷John M. Comstock, *Obituary Record of the Graduates of Dartmouth College and the Associated Institutions for the Year Ending at Commencement, 1884* (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth Steam Press, 1884), 7; J. Q. Bittinger, *History of Haverhill, N.H.* (Haverhill, N.H.: Cohos Steam Press, 1888), 314.

¹⁵⁸Arthur Hitchcock Radasch, *The William Barstow Family: Genealogy of the Descendants of William Barstow, 1635–1965* (n.p.: n.p., 1966), 1, 126.

the Massachusetts legislature offered to buy Belknap clothes to replace the ragged ones he wore.” It should be noted that his New Hampshire history is only one of the several significant contributions Belknap made to early American historiography. While his history remained obscure among his countrymen, his two volume *American Biographies*, “brought him notice among his peers, and led to his election to the new American Philosophical Society, in 1784.” But it was not until 1835 when the French writer Alexis de Tocqueville, in his noted *Democracy in America*, “wrote glowingly of Belknap’s forgotten *History of New Hampshire* that the work got the credit it deserved.”¹⁵⁹ William Cullen Bryant, America’s first great poet and an influential newspaper editor, declared “that Jeremy Belknap was the first writer to make American history attractive.”¹⁶⁰ “[I]n the period immediately following the Revolution,” stated Charles Clark, “James Sullivan wrote a history of Maine, Edmund Randolph wrote a history of Virginia. . . . Thomas Jefferson wrote his famous *Notes on the State of Virginia* . . . and Hannah Adams wrote *A Summary History of New England*. But by far the best contribution to this literature was Jeremy Belknap’s *History of New Hampshire*.”¹⁶¹ As the course of events played out, it was a generation after Belknap’s 1798 death that his own significance and his New Hampshire history became known and appreciated.

Before admiration for Belknap’s work emerged, another chronicler, John Milton Whiton, in 1834 published *Sketches of the History of New Hampshire from Its Settlement in 1623 to 1833*. Whiton’s intent, he wrote, “is but an outline, intended chiefly for those who lack time or inclination to encounter a large work. Valuable as is the History of Belknap its size and cost exclude from the number of its readers a large portion of the citizens

¹⁵⁹Quote from the biographical sketch of Jeremy Belknap under his portrait hanging in the New Hampshire state capitol in Concord, New Hampshire. De Tocqueville’s statements about Belknap are found in Appendix F of volume 2: “The reader of Belknap will find in his work more general ideas, and more strength of thought, than are to be met with in the American historians even to the present day [late 1830s].” Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* Henry Reeve, trans., 2 vols. (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 2: 414–15. See also Clifford K. Shipton, ed., *Sibley’s Harvard Graduates*, 15:1761–83 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1970).

¹⁶⁰David C. Switzer, review of *Belknap’s New Hampshire: An Account of the State in 1792*, *Historical New Hampshire* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1974): 126–30.

¹⁶¹Charles E. Clark, “History, Literature, and Belknap’s ‘Social Happiness’” *Historical New Hampshire* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 16.

of New Hampshire.” Lamenting the inaccessibility of Belknap’s work, “Our State History is not to any great extent in the human mind.”¹⁶² But Whiton’s 204-page work never did catch on and languished in obscurity while there was somewhat of a revival of Belknap’s portrait of New Hampshire.

A half-dozen years after Whiton’s history was published, George Barstow, the Boston lawyer, wrote to a friend in 1840 to say that “although you may consider it almost madness for a juvenile attorney to write after Belknap and Whiton have written, yet I believe that neither of those men can be called a philosopher, or lover of nature, or a beautiful composer—all of which are requisite for a good historian. Ergo, a good history of New Hampshire has not been written.” And, he told his friend, although “I have not mentioned my history even to my intimate friends,” “I have got two thirds of the history of New Hampshire written.”¹⁶³

Barstow was not intimidated by convention. His disposition to revise and reform had already manifested itself by the time he took on Belknap and Whiton. Five years earlier, while at Dartmouth College, the stifling orthodoxy and propriety he encountered in the administration and faculty led to aggravation and disappointment for Barstow. To another friend in January 1836, within months of leaving Dartmouth, he castigated “the detestable bigots of that cursed college faculty” who derailed his education and his career by their “cursed hand of . . . petty power that happened to have me in its grasp.” Had it not been for their intransigence, he claimed, “I might . . . have graduated with my class respectably, at least, and took a fair start in life.” Resentful, he fumed that he “wished [that] the whole posse of that bigoted cabal [merited] the lowest dept[h]s of Hades.” He likely alienated himself from the faculty by advocating the adoption of “liberal[ism] in religion, as well as in government.” He told his friend, “There is a disposition increasing[ly] to throw off the shackles of precedent and [to] set up anew . . . on the grounds of *expediency* and *utility*.” Continuing his derision, he stated, “The shade of orthodoxy lingering around the walls

¹⁶²John M. Whiton, *Sketches of the History of New Hampshire, From Its Settlement in 1623, to 1833* (Concord, N.H.: Marsh, Capon and Lyon, 1834), iii. Incidentally, in his treatment of religion in New Hampshire, Whiton did not mention what was apparently a Mormon presence in the southern sector of the state in 1833. Whiton, *Sketches of the History of New Hampshire*, 200.

¹⁶³George Barstow, letter to Asa Fowler, March 12, 1840, Boston, Massachusetts, Asa Fowler, Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, New Hampshire, hereafter NHHS.

of Dartmouth, will not much longer inspire veneration.”¹⁶⁴ Thus, it is not surprising that Barstow in 1842, at the ripe age of 30, planned to revise the historical canon of his native state, and perhaps he saw Mormonism as iconoclastic enough to aid his effort.

Barstow, more ambitious than to just re-plow old ground, planned a fresh rehearsal of New Hampshire’s saga, something beyond a compilation of anecdotes and honorific platitudes about people and events. His methodology, he told his readers upon publication, included investigation “of the state records and papers deposited at Concord [the state capital] in the public archives.” Professing an objective of telling the “truth” and still filled with vinegar, he dared “censure where I thought censure to be due” while applauding “superior virtues” when warranted. “Above all,” he said, “I have sought to place in bold relief those examples of moral greatness which are fitted for the instruction and emulation of posterity.” Revising what he claimed was an antiquated method of historical portrayal, he claimed his “smooth path of connected narrative” to be a far better read than earlier publications requiring the reader to “toil up the rugged ascent of time-worn documents, and broken, disjointed annals.”¹⁶⁵ Included in Barstow’s objective was a look at the full scope of what influenced his home state. And something was then stirring in southern New Hampshire that caught his attention, turning heads in south central New Hampshire and northeastern Massachusetts where Barstow then lived. The commotion was enough that he troubled his former college classmate, John Wentworth (who had graduated from Dartmouth in 1836), to ascertain the background of the upstart Mormon faith, then headquartered in Illinois.

It is worth noting here that Long John Wentworth, as he became known because of his six-foot six-inch, three hundred-pound frame, was a twenty-seven-year-old New Hampshire native and Dartmouth alumnus when he served in 1842 as editor of the *Chicago Democrat*. Already a rising star in Illinois circles, besides his publishing career he also became a successful attorney and politician, being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Illinois as well as serving as Chicago’s mayor. He owned a significant portion of land in Chicago abutting what is now Chicago’s Midway Airport. Perhaps most importantly, the young editor had gone on

¹⁶⁴George Barstow, letter to James M. Rix, January 2, 1836, Yarmouth Port, Massachusetts, James Madison Rix Papers, Correspondence 1836–1856, NHHS.

¹⁶⁵Preface to George Barstow, *The History of New Hampshire from its Discovery in 1614, to the Passage of the Toleration Act, in 1819* (Concord, N.H.: I. S. Boyd, 1842).

record lamenting Missouri's treatment of the Saints and argued in support of Mormon rights. A spring 1840 editorial in the *Chicago Democrat*, while not advocating the religion per se, stated: "The minister, who is afraid to encounter the doctrines of Jo. Smith should be made to quit the pulpit; and the man who enlists in a personal crusade against the Mormons, who have a right to preach just what they please, should suffer the proper penalty for larceny, arson, or murder, as the case may be." Wentworth's gestures toward Mormons later compromised him among his peers: "There is but one Col. John Wentworth in Illinois" wrote the editor of the *Peoria [Illinois] Register*. But "We have had some misgivings, from his approbatory notices of the Mormons lately, that he was about to become one."¹⁶⁶ The Saints, themselves, had taken notice of the unusual advocacy for their rights. Reprinting the editorial and praising Wentworth's "genuine principles of PURE REPUBLICANISM," the *Times and Seasons* editorialized that "we were highly pleased with [Wentworth's] remarks."¹⁶⁷ Thus, already having a favorable reputation among the Saints and assuming that Wentworth communicated with Joseph Smith in behalf of Barstow's inquiry, there is little wonder that the reply he received had such a positive, forthright representation of Mormonism.¹⁶⁸

Explanation of Joseph Smith's presentation of "Church History" begins: "At the request of Mr. John Wentworth, Editor, and Proprietor of the 'Chicago Democrat,' I have written the following sketch of the rise, progress, persecution, and faith of the Latter-Day Saints . . . to furnish Mr. Barstow [*sic*], a friend of his, who is writing the history of New Hampshire."¹⁶⁹ It is deduced that Wentworth then forwarded the information to Barstow, though Wentworth, himself, chose not to publicize the account of Mormonism that fell into his hands.¹⁷⁰ However, assuming Joseph Smith's nar-

¹⁶⁶*Peoria Register*, 27 May 1842.

¹⁶⁷"Chicago Democrat" *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 7 (February 1, 1841): 302–3.

¹⁶⁸John Wentworth, who corresponded with Brigham Young in 1845 and 1846 regarding the Mormon dilemma in Illinois, retained an interest in Mormonism as late as 1874. John Wentworth, letter to Brigham Young, et al, February 25, 1845, Washington, D. C., and Wentworth, letter to Brigham Young, January 2, 1846, Washington, D.C., Brigham Young Collection, CHL; John Wentworth, letter to Edward W. Nash, June 24, 1874, Chicago, Illinois, John Wentworth Papers, Chicago Historical Society, hereafter CHS.

¹⁶⁹"Church History," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842): 706.

¹⁷⁰Wentworth's books and files were destroyed in "the great [Chicago] fire"

rative of early Mormonism reached him, Barstow, whose original intention was to publish the history of his home state to the time of his writing, trimmed his account to terminate the history of New Hampshire at 1819.

Indeed, his book, published on June 4, 1842, was titled, *The History of New Hampshire from its Discovery in 1614, to the Passage of the Toleration Act, in 1819*,¹⁷¹ the latter phrase identifying legislation that thereafter precluded the state from subsidizing religious bodies with state monies. Joseph Smith's account of Mormonism never made it into New Hampshire's annals, its initial publication appearing only in the *Times and Seasons*.

Over time Wentworth remained interested in and tried to communicate with George Barstow as late as 1881, even after Barstow moved from the east to the west coast where he, too, distinguished himself by being elected to the California state House of Representatives, serving as speaker. In addition, Barstow also became professor of medical jurisprudence at what is now the University of Pacific. Barstow, who married but did not father children, died of liver cancer in San Francisco in 1883, five years before the passing of his friend John Wentworth.¹⁷²

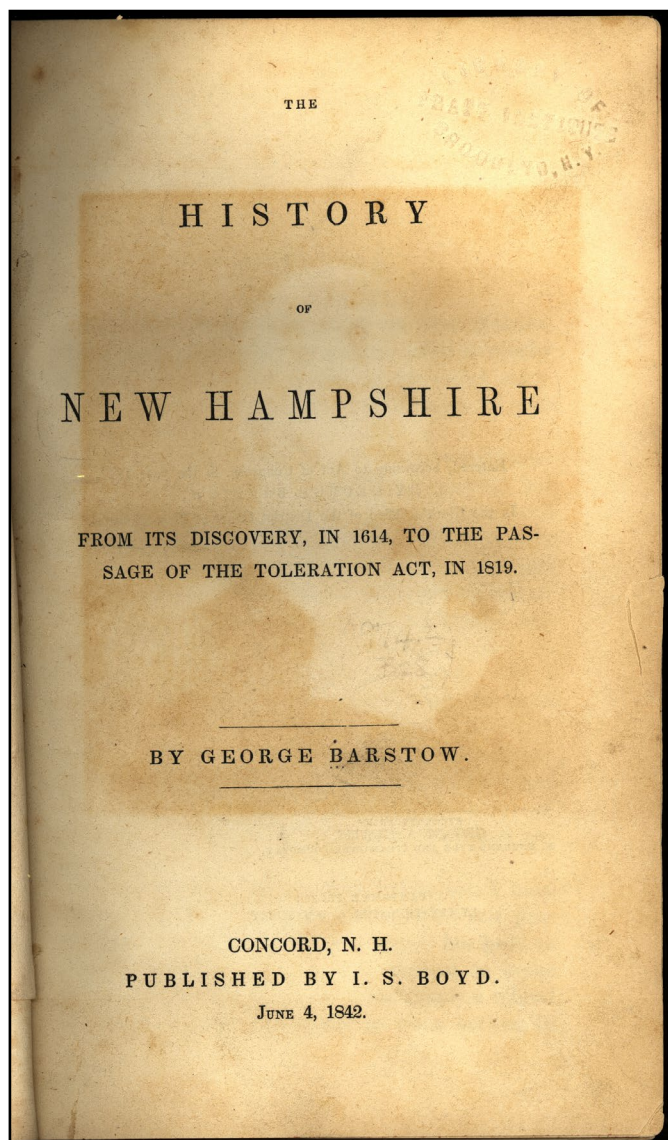
The same month of March 1842 that Joseph Smith received Eli Maginn's New England report portraying the vitality of missionary work in New England, the Mormon prophet announced his new role of editor of the church's primary organ, Nauvoo's *Times and Seasons*.¹⁷³ Ebenezer Robinson, a principal and partner with Joseph Smith's late younger brother Don Carlos Smith of Nauvoo's *Times and Seasons* since its inception in No-

in 1871, precluding investigation of his correspondence with Joseph Smith. John Wentworth, letter to Zebina Eastman, November 15, 1873, Chicago, Illinois, and John Wentworth, letter to Chester Brewster, April 9, 1881, Chicago, Illinois, John Wentworth Collection, CHS.

¹⁷¹Barstow, *History of New Hampshire*.

¹⁷²Bittinger, *History of Haverhill, New Hampshire*, 314; Charles H. Bell, *The Bench and Bar of New Hampshire: Including Biographical Notices of Deceased Judges of the Highest Court, and Lawyers of the Province and State and a List of Names of Those Now Living* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1894), 171; Comstock, *Obituary Record of the Graduates of Dartmouth College and the Associated Institutions*, 7; Radasch, *The William Barstow Family*. Barstow, like Wentworth, also invested in the newspaper business by purchasing one-half interest in the *Manchester [New Hampshire] Democrat* in the mid-1840s, though he later relocated in California. George Barstow, Mortgage from Ebenezer Barstow, April 6, 1846, in Sale of Manchester Democrat, NHHS.

¹⁷³"To Subscribers," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842): 710.



George Barstow, *History of New Hampshire* (Concord, New Hampshire: I. S. Boyd, 1842).

vember 1839, relinquished his role as the publication's editor on February 15, 1842, with these words: "I now take leave of the editorial department of the *Times and Seasons*, having disposed of my entire interest in the printing establishment, book-bindery, and stereotype foundry, and they are transferred into other hands. The Editorial chair will be filled by our esteemed brother, President Joseph Smith, assisted by Elder John Taylor, of the Quorum of the Twelve, under whose able and talented guidance, this will become the most interesting and useful religious journal of the day."¹⁷⁴ Joseph Smith, whose prophetic tenure numbered less than a dozen years at this point, immediately, though uncharacteristically, inserted himself into the organ's text.¹⁷⁵ In the following issue, not only did the Prophet begin publication of what is now called the Book of Abraham, with accompanying illustrations of papyrus fragments, he also initiated, for the first time in print, his account of several of the foundational theophanies that empowered the establishment of Mormonism, along with a summary of the faith's history and generalized beliefs. Titled "Church History" in the March 1, 1842, issue of the *Times and Seasons*, the text of what has been known as the Wentworth Letter became part of Mormon literature.

This was the first time Joseph had personally rehearsed his First Vision in print, though Orson Pratt had printed the story in 1840 in his missionary tract *A[n] Account of Several Remarkable Visions*, published in Edinburgh, Scotland. Joseph Smith's "Church History" also recounted the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the church's organization, among a number of other particulars about the beginning of Mormonism, and an

¹⁷⁴"Valedictory" *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 8 (February 15, 1842): 695.

¹⁷⁵After February 1842 John Taylor generally ran the *Times and Seasons* as what today would be called managing editor, with Wilford Woodruff functioning as the business manager, though from time to time Joseph Smith influenced the content of the church organ in a role as executive editor. Previously, in both *The Evening and the Morning Star* and the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, Joseph Smith refrained from direct editorial influence upon the text of the periodicals, though he likely assumed a more hands-on role with his editorial position for the *Elders' Journal* in Far West, Missouri, 1837–1838.

Weighing in on the recent disputed arena of Book of Mormon geography as the premise of his contention, Jonathan Neville has argued that both Benjamin Winchester and the Prophet's younger brother William Smith, the latter during his tenure as editor of Nauvoo's newspaper, *The Wasp*, wielded influence in what was published in the *Times and Seasons* during mid-1842. Neville, *Lost City of Zarahemla*.

outline of the removal of the Saints from the east to an era of persecution in Missouri. His account closed with the doctrinal rehearsal that is now identified as Mormonism's thirteen "Articles of Faith."¹⁷⁶ The 2,700 word "Church History" report holds an extraordinary place within Mormon historiography and the lexicon of Mormon thought. B. H. Roberts, one of Mormonism's most important early explicators, wrote in 1907 that "It is one of the most valuable of our original historical documents, and gives in concise form the very best statement possible of the rise, progress and doctrines of the Church up to the time it was written."¹⁷⁷ Mormon apostle Bruce R. McConkie, in 1984, declared that outside the standard scriptural works printed by the LDS Church, the Wentworth Letter was the first of "the five greatest documents in our literature."¹⁷⁸ Harold Bloom, the noted literary critic, commented in his characterization of Joseph Smith in 1992 that the Wentworth Letter was "the best pages of prose that [Joseph Smith] ever composed."¹⁷⁹ In the past generation, without portraying the larger contextual background of the document, a number of academic pieces have been produced addressing The Wentworth Letter and its importance to Mormonism.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶"Church History" *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842): 706–10. See publication and appraisal of "Church History" in *JSP* H1:489–501.

¹⁷⁷B. H. Roberts, comp. and ed., *The Seventy's Course in Theology—First Year: Outline History of the Seventy and A Survey of the Books of Holy Scripture* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1907), 110.

¹⁷⁸Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrines of the Restoration: Sermons & Writings of Bruce R. McConkie*, ed. Mark L. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989), 280–81.

¹⁷⁹Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 82.

¹⁸⁰Whittaker, "The 'Articles of Faith,'" 63–92. Other background information on the Articles of Faith can be found in T. Edgar Lyon, "Origin and Purpose of the Articles of Faith-1" *The Instructor* (August, September, October 1952): 230–31, 264–65, 275, 298–99, 319; Lyon, "Joseph Smith—The Wentworth Letter and Religious America of 1842" [given December 5, 1954] *The Annual Joseph Smith Memorial Sermons* 2, Sermons 11–20 (Logan, Utah: Institute of Religion, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1966), 116–27; Preston Nibley, "The Wentworth Letter" *The Improvement Era* (February 1962): 96–97, 114, 116, 118; Brandt, "The Articles of Faith: Origin and Importance," 69–77.

While the introduction to publication of "Church History" in the *Times and Seasons* includes the phrase, "I have written the following sketch," it is likely that

By mid-1842, Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo were themselves taking notice of what was happening in New England. The *Times and Seasons* published regular reports of the progress along the Atlantic seaboard highlighting the work of the missionaries. Along with the seeded pieces coming from the *Boston Bee*, the *Times and Seasons* reprinted other newspaper reports as well as correspondence from the missionaries themselves. While Mormon elders served in other parts of America at the time, New England proved to be a focal point with demonstrable success that could only hearten Mormons at home in Nauvoo.¹⁸¹

Joseph Smith, as per his personal convention, had a scribe produce the actual text of the essay. For example, David J. Whittaker made a case in 1987 that the antecedents of the Articles of Faith that conclude "Church History" were first crafted by others. David J. Whittaker, "The 'Articles of Faith' in Early Mormon Literature and Thought," in Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, eds., *New Views of Mormon History: Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 63–92. Regarding Smith's use of scribes see Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History" *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4 (Summer 1971): 439–458; and Jessee, "Joseph Smith and the Beginning of Mormon Record Keeping" in Larry C. Porter and Susan Easton Black, eds., *The Prophet Joseph: Essays on the Life and Mission of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1988), 155. See also Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church*, 1:241–43. During Joseph Smith's life, the text of "Church History" was also included in the February 1844 publication, *Correspondence between Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Col. John Wentworth* printed by John E. Page and L. R. Foster in New York City. Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church*, 1:241–43. Also of interest, when I. Daniel Rupp requested of Joseph Smith a summary of Mormonism for publication in his encyclopedia of American religions (1844), the Prophet sent to him the "Church History" text, updated by William W. Phelps with the addition of 250 words to the text. William W. Phelps, Historical article, 1843 Sept., *CHL; JSP*, H1:503–16. Of note, further contextual information about the Barstow-Wentworth letter appears in an overview of the national influence of Dartmouth College graduates, including George Barstow and John Wentworth's relationship and their intersection with Mormonism, in Richard K. Behrens, "From the Connecticut Valley to the West Coast: The Role of Dartmouth College in the Building of the Nation" *Historic New Hampshire* 63, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 44–68.

¹⁸¹*Times and Seasons* 3, 15 (June 1, 1842): 813; 3, no. 17 (July 1, 1842): 835–36; 3, no. 19 (August 1, 1842): 863–65; 3, no. 20 (August 15, 1842): 886; 3, no. 21 (September 1, 1842): 899–900.

“An Exposé of Joe Smith and the Mormons”: The New England Response to John Cook Bennett

At the same time the Mormons were making unprecedented progress in the American Northeast, events were afoot at Mormon headquarters in Nauvoo, Illinois, that eventually spilled over to negatively affect their work in New England. After a year in New England, the missionaries had succeeded in drawing the attention of the public to Mormonism. Regional awareness was palpable. Mormon scandal in Nauvoo, such as Joseph Smith's bankruptcy, became fodder for gossip across the land through Boston newspapers and reprinted in other cities. While negative publicity almost always diminishes reputations among the general populace, the public outline of Mormonism in New England actually expanded to reach a segment of the population amenable to revolutionary alternatives to tradition. The missionaries had simply accomplished too much in New England to ignore. After reporting the “great [Mormon] stir” in New Hampshire, one Boston newspaper queried about the Mormon future in “Boston and vicinity,” concluding “What will the end be?”¹⁸²

What is more, John C. Bennett (1804–1867), the Mormon insider who had been expelled from the LDS Church and Nauvoo earlier in the year, campaigned against the Saints with ribald tales of Mormon outrages in a national tour that drew crowds in east coast cities like New York and Boston. Bennett, an eccentric character from most every description, had multiple gifts and talents that appealed to his countrymen. A year older than Joseph Smith, he was born in southeastern Massachusetts just outside New Bedford, though he grew to manhood in Ohio. By 1826 Bennett had satisfied requirements at the time to be accepted into the medical field as well as having entered into marriage. Broad in his ambitions, besides early interest in law he dabbled in the Methodist lay ministry besides becoming a Mason, a demonstration that he operated both within and without cultural norms. With boundless ambition, he marshalled his considerable energy toward Methodist leaders in Ohio to establish a religion-draped institution of higher education. Cleverer than patient and wise, Bennett pushed several religion-sponsored ventures in Ohio and Indiana that included first the Methodists and then the Campbellites, the attractive reaction to contemporary religious stasis inspired by the father and son team of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. What initially may have appeared to

be a worthy endeavor, eventually found Bennett on the outs with all those with whom he tried to create alliances: the Methodists, Campbellites, and the medical profession of the time. Still, he managed to wiggle himself into the trust of Ohio's Willoughby University for a time. It was while at Willoughby, located near the Mormon center at Kirtland, that he launched his campaign, which had provided him with a measure of scientific fame: the transformation of the tomato's reputation from being a noxious plant to a beneficial staple for human consumption. But Bennett's numerous aspirations in various locales continued to meet resistance. Bennett was aware of Mormonism for most of its existence, and had met Joseph Smith and other leaders in Ohio. Later, like the Saints, he relocated to Illinois. Finally, after exhausting a myriad of interests, including an initiative to muster a militia body in Illinois, he recognized in Mormonism an opportunity to amplify his instincts and motivations.¹⁸³

John C. Bennett became a Latter-day Saint in September 1840. In hindsight, he has generally been characterized as a charlatan and his alignment with Mormonism just another opportunity to exploit the moment for his own purposes. The summary of his own explanation for joining the much maligned sect in his 1842 exposé *The History of the Saints* suggests lofty motives for entertaining Joseph Smith's church: “I never believed in them or their doctrines. . . . [I determined] to make an attempt to detect and expose the movers and machinery of the [Mormon] plot.”¹⁸⁴ But because of his quixotic record, explanation of his actual motives for attaching himself to the Mormons remains elusive. Perhaps at the outset, Bennett may have seen within Mormonism something extraordinary—outside the norm of that in which he had been disappointed so many times—a collection of credulous people, vulnerable though they appeared to be, that would appreciate him and what he had to offer. No doubt his charismatic and calculated interventions on behalf of the Saints accelerated his acceptance. Within a brief period of time, Bennett catapulted to Mormon leadership causing wonder in the minds of numerous of Joseph Smith's followers. On February 4, 1841, within five months of his baptism, the newcomer was nominated as Nauvoo's first city mayor and was appointed the following day as major general of the Nauvoo Legion, a local militia unit that conformed closely with his previously inclinations. Two months later he be-

¹⁸³Andrew F. Smith, introduction to John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints: or An Expose of Joe Smith and Mormonism*, 3rd. ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), viii–xi.

¹⁸⁴Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 5–6, emphasis in the original.

¹⁸²Reprinted in *Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star* 3, no. 4 (August 1842): 65–67.

came an assistant president of the LDS Church, to temporarily replace the ailing Sidney Rigdon.¹⁸⁵ The speed of his acceptance among the Saints, even by Joseph Smith, was unprecedented. But meteors leave trails and it was not long before questions about Bennett's behavior and background triggered investigation that soon illuminated his questionable past.

Bennett's understanding of Mormonism at his entrance into the church is explained only in his exposé, but it is questionable that at the outset Bennett knew much if anything about Joseph Smith's innovative theology regarding marriage. However Smith's inner circle, of which Bennett was now a part—operating in secrecy to protect the potentially cataclysmic marital variance—soon became aware of Smith's implementation of the Old Testament practice of plural marriage among church leaders. The maneuver clicked with Bennett's heterodox if not libidinous instincts. Soon a number of women in Nauvoo were compromised by Bennett who, church leaders later charged, had invented a libertine version of Smith's theological justification for polygyny as being a tenet of orthodoxy. The clandestine shroud covering the intrigue played into his devious designs, allowing Bennett for a time a measure of legitimacy without exposure.¹⁸⁶ Besides the surreptitious marital irregularities, Smith and the Saints were enmeshed in complex civic controversy involving government leaders of both Missouri and Illinois, making for remarkable circumstances among the Nauvoo Mormons from any outsiders' view. Though suspicions about Bennett's past had circulated among the Saints later in 1841, including his abandonment of his wife, it was not until May 1842 after information of Bennett's duplicitous and insidious personal behavior emerged that pressure from Smith and others forced Bennett to resign as mayor. Church discipline removed Bennett from fellowship later in the month. Bennett's welcome by the Mormons ended. The former Nauvoo mayor, however, was not done with Mormonism. His dismissal provoked a barrage of counterattacks in the following months against Smith and the Saints through a willing press, beginning with one of Illinois' most important newspapers, Springfield's

¹⁸⁵Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History and Theology*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013), 1:515–44; Smith, intro to Bennett, *History of the Saints*, xix; Richard E. Bennett, Susan Easton Black, and Donald Q. Cannon, *The Nauvoo Legion in Illinois: A History of the Mormon Militia, 1841–1846* (Norman: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2010), 93.

¹⁸⁶Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 1:515–26.

Sangamo Journal.¹⁸⁷

Sensing an opportunity to couple the nation's relish of scandal and ready distain of things Mormon, Bennett parlayed his intimate knowledge of Mormonism with his ambitions in two forms. The first was a public appearance campaign beginning the summer of 1842 following his route from Nauvoo to the East. In July and August he made expository stands in Cincinnati, Ohio; Louisville, Kentucky; Cleveland, Ohio; and then Buffalo and Greenbush, New York. Word of his exploits reached Joseph Smith in Nauvoo who sent emissaries eastward to counter Bennett's verbal harangue. In late August Bennett paired with Origen Bachelor, the evangelical preacher who had written a rejoinder to Mormonism in 1838 titled *Mormonism Exposed Internally and Externally*,¹⁸⁸ for a three-day lecture series against the Saints in New York City.

From New York City the ex-Mormon departed for Boston on September 7 and arranged a three-performance in the Marlboro Chapel in Boston, the same site where George J. Adams had defended the Saints three months earlier. Bennett, five foot nine inches tall “with black eyes, black hair sprinkled with grey, dark complexion, and rather a thin face,” donned his general's uniform from the Nauvoo Legion while regaling the audience with gossip of scandal and corruption.¹⁸⁹ His tag-team partner was George W. West, who was accustomed to the attention gained by the pulpit. West bore somewhat of a sullied reputation after bouncing from Methodism, to Episcopalian piety, to Presbyterianism. No matter to Bennett. Bennett's business was controversy and the site for his exposition was noted for the best of it.

During September 14–16, 1842, Bennett and West performed again a few miles north in Salem, Massachusetts. Bennett should have known that his fulminations would not carry without reply. Erastus Snow, Salem's resident Mormon elder, challenged Bennett and West to a public debate. They declined. Bennett was not there to argue; his business was to expose

¹⁸⁷B. Carmon Hardy, *Doing the Works of Abraham: Mormon Polygamy, Its Origin, Practice, and Demise* (Norman: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2007), 51–53; Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 526–34; Smith, intro to Bennett, *History of the Saints*, xxii–xxvi.

¹⁸⁸Origen Bachelor, *Mormonism Exposed Internally and Externally* (New York: Privately published, 1838).

¹⁸⁹“Mormonism—Gen. Bennett, &c.” *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 24 (October 15, 1842): 955–56.

and compromise Smith and the Saints and to arouse the eastern elite to the threat of Mormon encroachment.¹⁹⁰

While campaigning against the Saints eastward, he continued to pen his literary exposé, meant to complement his lecture series. Though his negotiations with New York City newspaper editor J. Gordon Bennett fell apart, undaunted, Bennett arranged for Boston publisher Leland and Whiting to launch his published diatribe against the Mormons. With a contract signed on September 12, 1842, two months later *The History of the Saints: An Exposé of Joe Smith and the Mormons*, comprised of nearly 350 pages, appeared. Clippings, letters, testimonials, and other documentation validating Bennett composed the first forty-seven pages of text. Four-fifths of the rest of the book was a collection of critiques that had already been published against the Saints, including *Mormonism Unveiled*, *Mormonism Exposed*, *Mormonism Portrayed*, and *Mormonism in All Ages*.¹⁹¹ Bennett caused concern among the missionaries. Freeman Nickerson, still serving in Boston in November 1842, frustratingly wrote that Bennett had “become the godfather to all the lyes that ever has ben written that he could collect since the church arose with all that he could invent and put them in one book.”¹⁹² As it turned out, Bennett’s work received poor reviews from, among others, the *New York Tribune* and the *Boston Post*: the book was “nothing more than a collection of all newspaper trash about the Mormons that has been published for the last few years,” and a “heap of monstrosities.”¹⁹³ Still, Bennett’s influence had the attention of the Mormon missionaries in New England, though, of interest, Bennett’s charges of marital

¹⁹⁰Andrew F. Smith, *Saintly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 107–21.

¹⁹¹E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled; or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, Ohio: E. D. Howe, 1834); La Roy Sunderland, *Mormonism Exposed and Refuted* (New York: Piercy and Reed Printers, 1838); William Harris, *Mormonism Portrayed; Its Errors and Absurdities Exposed, and the Spirit and Designs of Its Authors Made Manifest* (Warsaw, Ill.: Sharp and Gamble Publishers, 1841); Jonathan B. Turner, *Mormonism in All Ages: or, The Rise, Progress, and Causes of Mormonism; with the Biography of Its Author and Founder, Joseph Smith, Junior* (New York: Platt and Peters, 1842).

¹⁹²Freeman Nickerson, letter to Albert Nickerson, November 4, 1842, Boston, Massachusetts, CHL.

¹⁹³Smith, intro to Bennett, *History of the Saints*, xxix–xxxiii.

irregularities among the Mormons—among his most scandalous accusations—were apparently not directly addressed or discounted by Maginn and his New England associates.¹⁹⁴ Coincidentally, three other books critical of Mormonism were published in the printing centers of the American East in 1842 exacerbating the missionaries’ problem: the aforementioned Turner, *Mormonism in All Ages*; another iteration of Sunderland’s *Mormonism Exposed*; Joshua V. Himes, *Mormon Delusions and Monstrosities, A Review of the Book of Mormon, and An Illustration of Mormon Principles and Practices* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1842); and Daniel P. Kidder, *Mormonism and the Mormons: A Historical View of the Rise and Progress of the Sect Self-Styled Latter-Day Saints* (New York: G. Lane and P. P. Sanford, 1842).

In the missionary district of southern New Hampshire and northeastern Massachusetts, Eli P. Maginn, now working from Lowell, Massachusetts, calculated to take advantage of the moment by entering the arena of public debate, with Bennett as a target. Along with the seeding performed by favorable items about Mormons placed in the *Boston Bee*, Maginn used, among other means, the Lowell press to defend his religion. He found in August 1842 a willing Lowell newspaper, the *Vox Populi*, or voice of the people, an “Independent Newspaper, Devoted to Local and General Intelligence” to advance his thinking, though it appears that *Vox* used Maginn as a curious oddity as much as anything.¹⁹⁵ Founded the previous year, the paper was described as a “sensational enterprise combining journalism, politics and reform.” The *Vox*’s purpose was described as a counter to the Whiggish-influenced media that dominated the local press.¹⁹⁶ The weekly, one of several Lowell papers, became a Mormon watcher in January 1842, addressing the rise of Joseph Smith, followed the rest of the year by numer-

¹⁹⁴Snow, journal, 3:33–34, September 1842; Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, a People of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 350–53.

Once Bennett left the east coast his lectures continued through Buffalo, New York; Kalamazoo, Michigan; and Chicago, Illinois, through the end of the year. The following year he mounted another campaign beginning in Illinois before reaching Massachusetts again where he took to the lectern through the end of March. Smith, *Saintly Scoundrel*, 129–34.

¹⁹⁵*Vox Populi*, August 13, 1842. Two other Lowell, Massachusetts, newspapers, the *Lowell “Courier”* and the *Lowell Journal* also published information about the Mormons in the early 1840s.

¹⁹⁶Cowley, *Illustrated History of Lowell*, 124.

ous references to the Mormons, Nauvoo, and other curiosities about the Saints.¹⁹⁷ As news of the chasm between John C. Bennett and the Saints spread across the land in mid-1842, the *Vox* weighed in on the back-biting rift: “Great ‘flare up’ among the Mormons.—Joe Smith, the great founder of the Mormon Church and King of the Commonwealth of Mormons, at Nauvoo, Illinois, and Gen. John C. Bennett, Ex-Mayor of the city of Nauvoo, have had a regular ‘set to.’ According to Joe’s exposition of the character of his quondam friend Bennett, he has been a great hypocrite and knave. Smith backs up his statements by pretty strong testimony. On the other hand, we are told that Bennett used Joe up and with equal severity. We presume that neither of them would like to have the ‘truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth’ told of them. This loving pair should remember the fate of the Kilkenny cats.”¹⁹⁸

Elder Maginn used the *Vox* the next month to his advantage in reply to the “falsehoods and misrepresentations, begotten by the Father of lies, and brought forth by La Roy Sunderland” (a leader among the anti-Mormons voices since 1838). Dispelling rumors and innuendo, Maginn sarcastically cast the oppositions’ character: “And who can have the hardihood to dispute such *consistent* statements when informed they are recorded in ‘Mormonism exposed,’ ‘Mormonism unveiled,’ ‘Mormonism refuted,’ ‘Mormon monstrosities,’ &c., together with La Roy Sunderland’s hieroglyphics in his Anti-Mormon Almanac, with its hoofs, horns, and cloven foot, and principally all the r[e]ligious papers in this country and Europe? But any person that can believe such foolish absurdities will be prepared to believe [anything].”¹⁹⁹

The *Vox* later carried particulars of an April 1843 debate at Lowell’s Chapel Hall between Elder Maginn and John Palmer, a “professor of dancing, elocution, rhetoric, theology,” where Bennett again became an issue. With the topic of the debate being “whether the Mormons were the true church,” Maginn “mounted the rostrum;—but before he had fairly wormed himself into his subject, his time (20 minutes) had expired.” His opponent then “went like hemlock splinters right straight into the Mormon camp, knocking Joe Smith into a cock-up-hat and routing the whole Nauvoo Le-

¹⁹⁷*Vox Populi*, January 22, 1842; May 28, 1842; June 4, 1842; July 2, 1842; July 16, 1842; July 23, 1842; August 13, 1842; September 17, 1842; November 18, 1842; December 30, 1842.

¹⁹⁸*Vox Populi*, July 16, 1842.

¹⁹⁹*Vox Populi*, August 13, 1842.

gion.” Palmer, the report smirked, then “mistaking John C. Bennett’s famous book of *exposure* for the bible, consumed the balance of his time in copious extracts from that *moral text book*, introduced and embellished with strains of eloquence which created a decided ‘sensation.’” After the shellacking, Maginn jumped to respond. He, according to the article, “went pell-mell into John C. Bennett and his ‘expose,’” leaving no doubt about his command of Mormonism nor his disposition to parry and fend. Oftentimes such exercises served little purpose other than providing a vent for the missionaries. In this case, the entertainment for the audience was described by the *Vox Populi* report as “one of the greatest farces ever enacted in Lowell.”²⁰⁰

Growth of Mormonism in New England in the mid-1840s

As noted, it was the concerted effort of several missionary enthusiasts in New England that precipitated the swell of Mormonism in the area in the early 1840s. The initial cadre was followed by others who continued making inroads into the region’s Latter-day Saint presence. Julian Moses, for example, a young man in his early thirties arrived in the Boston/Salem area in August 1842 where, impressed upon his arrival, wrote that “a great work was going on in the cities of Boston, Salem, Lowell, New Bedford and many other places in that region of [the] country.” Moses, author of a pamphlet published in Philadelphia in 1841 defending Mormonism, also circulated in southern New Hampshire in late 1842 where he visited Peterborough and Gilsum, staying “a few days in the place preaching almost daily.” After a season of proselyting he stated, “Elders Erastus Snow, E. P. Magin and myself were the principle Elders laboring in that region.”²⁰¹

While Lowell, Massachusetts, became temporarily important to Elder Maginn’s ministry as part of the string of seaboard Mormon congregations,

²⁰⁰*Vox Populi*, April 28, 1843.

²⁰¹Julian Moses (1810–1892), born in Connecticut, first encountered Mormons when he was nineteen. Known as an educator, he experienced the common vicissitudes of American Mormons, including settling in the Utah. A missionary several times, including service in the Society Islands. “Autobiography of Julian Moses,” ed. Chris Cummings (n.p.: n.d.), 48–51, CHL.

The 1841 pamphlet printed by Moses was titled, *A Few Remarks in Reply to an Anonymous Scribbler, Styling Himself “One Who Hates Imposture,” but Found to be an Imposter Himself and Ashamed to Tell His Name*, identified in Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church*, 1:133–34.

the New England circuit, or conference as it was unofficially coming to be known, continued as fluid as ever for the missionaries of the region. But Peterborough, New Hampshire, was never far from Maginn's mind. He continued to nurture the flock and to proselytize the community's townsfolk.²⁰² His work was augmented by other missionaries besides Snow and Moses, including Orasmus Bates, the Pratt brothers, Hyrum Smith, William Law, and George J. Adams.²⁰³ Others, like Jeremiah Willey who from Nauvoo in 1842 returned to his home ground of New Hampshire to preach the gospel, made Peterborough a temporary stop. Willey's itinerary included two weeks in Peterborough, where "Elder Magin had bin" before moving on to other New Hampshire villages.²⁰⁴ But, augmented by itinerant support, it was Eli Maginn who anchored the Peterborough Saints, leaving an enduring impression that survived for generations. Traveling back and forth the sixty miles between Lowell and Peterborough, for example, he represented the Peterborough branch at a Salem missionary conference in the late summer of 1842 (where he baptized four) and at year's end was identified in Peterborough as—"Elder McGinn of the Mormon denomination"—one of a handful of the town's clergy.²⁰⁵

Maginn's work never caught on in Lowell like it did in Peterborough. Despite a common industrial component in Peterborough, the contrasting natures of the communities precluded the success first imagined in Lowell. A more genteel, rural atmosphere in Peterborough better fit Mormonism at that time than Lowell's working-class environment with its social problems and exploitations.²⁰⁶ On the other hand, besides the textile industry, Low-

²⁰²As examples, see "History of George Washington Wilkins, address delivered at Spanish Fork, Utah, Dec. 14, 1933," accessed March 2, 2014, www.familyhistorypages.com/Wilkins.htm; and Joseph E. Wilkins, letter to J. F. Brennan, March 25, 1908, Spanish Fork, Utah, MCHC. See also Jeremiah Willey, *Reminiscences ca. 1837–1859*, 19, CHL.

²⁰³Naamah C. T. Young, letter to J. F. Brennan, March 4, 1908, in Morison and Smith, *History of Peterborough New Hampshire*, 2:918; Purdy, "Mormons and Peterborough," 2.

²⁰⁴Jeremiah Willey, *Reminiscences* [ca. 1837–1859], 19, 21, CHL. Willey later joined the caravan of New Englanders, led by Maginn, who immigrated to Nauvoo in 1843.

²⁰⁵"Conference Minutes" *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 2 (December 1, 1842): 31–32; Smith in *Historical Sketches of Peterborough New Hampshire*, 189.

²⁰⁶British Mission parallels and contradictions in the appeal of Mormonism

ell, also known for antebellum abolitionist activism, exhibited progressive measures concerning social matters of race, including an integrated public school system as early as 1826.²⁰⁷ Maginn may have baptized as many as twenty-six during his stay in Lowell. When Benjamin Grouard ministered to the people of Lowell in the summer of 1843, prior to his departure to the South Pacific where he and three others had been assigned to open the Pacific to Mormonism he wrote, "I found a small branch of the church there consisting of 40 members who received me with much joy & administered to my wants."²⁰⁸ Though Maginn had made significant inroads in Peterborough, Lowell was entrenched in Christianity and the conventional denominations won the Christian victory in Lowell. It is no surprise that an 1846 volume written by a local clergyman lauded Lowell's contemporary religious circumstances, noting twenty-three "regularly constituted religious societies" without mentioning the Mormons.²⁰⁹ A generation later in a rehearsal of religion activity in Lowell, a local historian again omitted any mention of the Mormons, though the religion that once proved somewhat of a sensation in the town was lumped with the other inconsequential ones: "Besides the [traditional] churches herein chronicled, others have been formed at various times, which acquired no permanent foothold, but

based on class and culture prevailed at the same time on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. See the differences of the missionary endeavor between efforts in the large cities of Britain and the Midland potteries in, Malcolm R. Thorp, "The Setting for the Restoration in Britain: Political, Social, and Economic Conditions" in Bloxham, Moss, and Porter, *Truth Will Prevail*, 44–70.

²⁰⁷O'Donovan, "Mormon Priesthood Ban," 55–58.

²⁰⁸O'Donovan, "Mormon Priesthood Ban," 66; Benjamin F. Grouard, journal, August 4, 1843, CHL. In the fall of the following year Lowell, along with Boston, became a center of controversy among Church members, requiring Wilford Woodruff's intervention. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:472, 474. The focus of the post-Maginn period of the 1840s in Lowell, Massachusetts, centers on the personality of Q. Walker Lewis, a faithful African-American Mormon priesthood holder in Lowell, charges against missionaries of the sexual compromise of Lowell's Mormon female factory workers, and the fact that all "the mail [male] members resigned their offices in that branch of the church except one coloured Brother [Walker Lewis]." See O'Donovan, "Mormon Priesthood Ban," 76–79; W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 106, 109, 160, 260.

²⁰⁹Henry A. Miles, *Lowell, As It Was, And As It Is* (Lowell, Mass.: Nathaniel L. Dayton, Merrill & Heywood, 1846).

experienced all varieties of fortune, and passed into the limbo of oblivion, leaving no discernible footprints on the ever-changing sands of time.”²¹⁰

Though Maginn did not capture the hearts of populace living along the Merrimack as he had in Peterborough with those living by the Contoocook, the general region continued to feel his influence. Consistent with earlier strategies, on the second day of 1843 “according to previous arrangement” Elders Maginn and Snow again swapped jurisdictions: Snow (now with his family) assuming responsibility in Peterborough and Maginn (still single) returning to Salem. It was a lively time. By the end of February, Snow having baptized ten more in Peterborough, the missionaries returned to their normal posts,²¹¹ but not before a significant Boston conference was held the second week of February 1843. Beginning on Thursday, February 9, the “16 Elders, 5 Priests, 4 Teachers, and 3 Deacons, together with a large and respectable assembly of all sects and denominations, both Infidel and Christian” met to transact church business and to declare “the new and everlasting covenant” meant to inspire and encourage the attendees. Several elders reported their labors in the branches where they primarily ministered, such as Freeman Nickerson who gave totals for Boston and Cape Cod, Erastus Snow reported on church progress in Salem and Georgetown, while Eli Maginn, who had been chosen secretary of the conference, did the same for Peterborough and Gilsum, New Hampshire, as well as Lowell, New Salem, Wendell, Northbridge, and Leverett, Massachusetts.²¹² A

²¹⁰Cowley, *Illustrated History of Lowell*, 102. Also, the *Lowell Directory for 1859* (Lowell, Massachusetts: H. A. Cook, and S. A. McPhetres, Publishers, 1858), in its section on religious institutions, makes no mention of the Mormons, indicating that there was no Mormon presence in Lowell by the end of the 1850s. The situation apparently remained static throughout the nineteenth century as *The Illustrated History of Lowell and Vicinity, Massachusetts*, (Lowell, Massachusetts: Courier-Citizen Company, 1897), included nothing about the Mormons in Lowell in the section on the mainstream religious denominations and “Other Religious Societies.”

²¹¹Snow, journal, 3:38.

²¹²This group of cities was at the time the general outline of the New England Conference, if such an entity had been created. Leverett is located seventy-five miles west of Lowell, fifty-four miles southwest from Peterborough; Wendell, sixty-eight miles west of Lowell; New Salem, sixty-two miles west of Lowell, and twelve miles from Leverett. While Maginn had firsthand knowledge of the others, Erastus Snow was the elder that revitalized Northbridge, located forty-seven miles southwest of Lowell and just southeast of Worcester. In an October 1841 letter, he

sympathetic summary from the conference that appeared in the *Boston Bee* before being reprinted in Nauvoo’s *Times and Seasons* gave dimension to what had happened in New England in the previous year and a quarter: “in the space of about fifteen months, a society that was only known among us by report, now actually numbers near one thousand in this immediate vicinity, and their preachers seem imbued with the spirit and determination to carry every thing before them; for, in fact, they all seem to have the Bible at the end of their tongue. On Friday evening the congregation was addressed in a very able and lucid manner by Elder Maginn, on the subject of signs and wonders.” The following morning, exhibiting less restraint than might be expected in a public declaration, Elder Maginn spoke “on the subject of false spirits that was to come forth in the last days, [and] for the overthrow of mystic Babylon; and he proved the impossibility of the religious world being able to discover between true miracles and false ones—and they were not given to make men believe, but to edify the Church.”²¹³ While the missionaries had to craft their message to fit the audience, there was no mistake about the ultimate objective.

George J. Adams, with whom Eli Maginn had served for a year on the New England circuit and who had apparently shared the missionary task for a time in Boston with Elder Nickerson, returned to Nauvoo at the end of March 1843. (Before the year was over Adams was called by church leaders to open missionary work in Russia, though the plan did not materialize.) Before leaving New England, Adams introduced Maginn to the Boston Saints as his replacement “for the present,” giving “him a high recommendation as an able minister of the fullness of the gospel.”²¹⁴ A few weeks later, the *Boston Bee* measured Maginn as Adams’s replacement: “When Elder Adams left here, some weeks since . . . it was supposed that no one could be found competent to fill his place—that meetings would decline—Mormonism die away, and finally sink into its original nothingness.” On the contrary, the appraisal continued, “if a thorough knowledge of the scriptures, talent, tact, sound reasoning, and powerful argument, are quali-

related he had labored for a month and that the “branch numbering nearly thirty in this place [is] apparently in a proper[ous] condition.” Erastus Snow, letter to Robinson, October 10, 1841.

²¹³“Mormon Conference” *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 8 (March 1, 1843): 124–25.

²¹⁴“Mormonism” *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 12 (May 1, 1843): 180, reporting an April 1, 1843, article in the *Boston Weekly Bee*.

fications, then Elder Maginn is fully qualified for the duties of his office.”²¹⁵

A Hiatus for Elder Maginn among the Saints on the Mississippi

Though witnessing the realization of his initial designs as a missionary, clearly Eli Maginn had objectives other than his missionary career. His March 1842 letter to Joseph Smith included this yearning: “I long to see the time when I can return and again receive instructions from those whom God has chosen to council his saints with, “Thus saith the Lord.” Initially planning on returning to the Mormon capital by fall of 1842, duty postponed his intentions. He and Erastus Snow, who also calculated the conclusion of his own missionary tenure and his return to the Saints with his family, then agreed that Eli would winter in Nauvoo.²¹⁶ Still, the work demanded Maginn’s presence. It may have been the exuberant planning of a substantial number of Peterborough Saints to gather with the body of the church on the Mississippi that finally materialized Maginn’s plans. After two years in New England, Elder Maginn temporarily stepped down from his missionary mantle and returned to Nauvoo, though his absence was felt, one Saint lamenting, “I missed Elder Maginn’s honest countenance.”²¹⁷ It is not clear what his future plans entailed, but during May 1843 he accompanied the anxious emigrants on the twelve hundred mile trip to Mormon headquarters. The departure of the large body, included forty from Peterborough and twenty from Lowell, Massachusetts, was a major event in Peterborough later commemorated in their 1939 “Bi-Centennial Celebration” by “a covered wagon float representing the Mormons leaving Peterborough, and going west.”²¹⁸ The Peterborough and Lowell travelers along with a few others made their way to Albany, New York, and shortly crossed the rest of the state westward on the Erie Canal.²¹⁹ The group final-

²¹⁵“Mormonism” *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 13 (May 15, 1843): 205–07, from a report published in the *Boston Weekly Bee*.

²¹⁶Maginn, letter to Smith, March 22, 1842; Snow, letter to Smith, June 22, 1842.

²¹⁷Letter to editor of *Boston Weekly Bee*, reprinted in “Mormonism” *Times and Seasons* (June 15, 1843): 235. Maginn later explained that his original intent was only to go as far as Utica, New York, suggesting he planned to work among the Utica Saints again.

²¹⁸Purdy, “Mormons and Peterborough,” 1.

²¹⁹*American Masonic Register and Literary Companion* (Albany, New York),

ly reached Nauvoo and the Mississippi River the second week of June 1843.

Most of the religious immigrants had no other objective than to gather with the Saints, an inherent component of the missionary message to which they responded. They may have known that Illinois economics were in a shamble, and that Nauvoo’s commerce was founded primarily on the construction of housing to accommodate the growing populace, which had increased the previous year by twenty-five percent with the influx of British converts.²²⁰ Most Saints had agrarian backgrounds. But many of the Peterborough and Lowell converts were acquainted with urban industrialization. Jonas Livingston, for example, one of Peterborough’s most visible citizens and one of the first thirty who Eli Maginn had baptized, was the owner of cotton mills. On June 10, soon after his arrival in Nauvoo, Livingston and another Peterborough associate met with the Mormon prophet “about establishing a cotton factory in Nauvoo.”²²¹ It was one of the most concrete proposals at the time to modernize the city. But the grand scale of industrialization that animated some did not materialize. Steam mills proposed in December 1841 had never taken shape. John C. Bennett’s proposal for a wing dam and canal down Main Street to enlarge the city’s economic capacity was judged impractical, though the Nauvoo City Council finally passed an ordinance in December 1843 authorizing a “dam in the Mississippi River,” which also came to naught. Thus, circumstances in Nauvoo did not allow much more than home industry and a business district in the community.²²² Still, the Peterborough and Lowell Saints came rejoicing, and Eli Maginn was one of them.

On the surface Nauvoo appeared to be one of the most robust of Mis-

May 27, 1843. This report stated that “Seventy-five persons” composed the group traveling on “the Erie Canal. . . . They were principally from New Hampshire. Some twenty of them were from Lowell, Mass.” The record of their arrival in Nauvoo was recorded as “about 40 Saints from Peterboro.” Joseph Smith, *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, ed. Scott H. Faulring (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 387.

²²⁰Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 144, 156, 167.

²²¹Smith, *An American Prophet’s Record*, 383 (June 10, 1843); Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 484.

²²²“Steam Mills” *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 4 (December 15, 1841): 630; Flanders, *Nauvoo*, 151–55, 188; Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 480–495; John S. Dinger, *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011), 188.

Mississippi River cities. Indeed, its growth and maturation goaded jealousy from other Hancock County locals while many others marveled at its rise from almost nothing in the previous four years. Still, perhaps inevitably, fractures from many angles provoked instability. At the same time that the majestic temple rose at the bluff's ridge, tension loomed from influences both outside and inside the church. The prophet himself had spent part of the previous fall on the underground, evading extradition to Missouri for capital crimes through a complex circumstance that involved both Missouri and Illinois officials.²²³ Internal dissent had also shown its enervating face by this time. Still, the faithful among the Saints provided an unmistakable stability that fostered the religion and gave hope to its believers. Life in Nauvoo was multifarious by any measurement.

Undoubtedly marveling at the sight of the river city's growth, having witnessed it at its beginnings, Maginn quickly immersed himself in Nauvoo's religious culture. Besides participating in the Saint's esoteric redemptive rituals on behalf of their deceased ancestors and friends on Sunday, June 18, 1843, in the unfinished temple he "preached in the fore part of the day" much to the "edification" of the Saints.²²⁴ Demonstrating his rapid connection to Mormonism's center, the next Sunday, June 25, he again "addressed the meeting." But just as he was building steam his sermon was interrupted by an event of great magnitude that shook the entire community. "In the midst of [Maginn's] discours President Hiram Smith came to the stand & requested the Masonic fraternity to meet him at the Lodge Room in 30 minutes." In front of the marshaled force, created in part to serve as a protective moat around Joseph Smith, Hyrum explained that his brother had been cornered and arrested by a Missouri sheriff and Carthage, Illinois, constable near Dixon, Illinois.²²⁵ In what afterward became an amus-

²²³Jeffrey N. Walker, "Invoking Habeas Corpus in Missouri and Illinois" in Gordon A. Madsen, Jeffrey N. Walker, and John W. Welch, *Sustaining the Law: Joseph Smith's Legal Encounters* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2014), 384–96.

²²⁴Maginn served as a witness to baptisms for the dead in the Nauvoo Temple's basement font. Nauvoo Baptisms for the Dead, Book C, 43, FHL; *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:243.

²²⁵*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:245; "Missouri vs. Joseph Smith" *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 16 (July 1, 1843): 241–43; "Illinois and Missouri" *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 19 (August 15, 1843): 292–94. The event prompted a poetic rehearsal of the fiasco by Eliza R. Snow titled "The Kidnapping of Gen. Joseph Smith," *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 18 (August 1, 1843): 288. The Nauvoo City Council passed a measure on June 29, 1843 "concerning Strangers and contagious diseases" with the

ing episode to the Mormons, Joseph was rescued by a Mormon posse who, in turn, arrested the sheriff and constable. But the episode caused both the Missouri and Illinois governments and locals to believe that Joseph Smith had again subverted the law through the guise of habeas corpus, which became one more combustible on an ever growing mound of tinder that did not need much to ignite it.²²⁶

The intrigue of Eli Maginn's influence is magnified when it is noted that during his Mississippi River valley visit that summer of 1843, having virtually no experience among the Saints who had gathered there for most of four years, he is said to have performed the baptism of Hiram S. Kimball, known as a hard nut to crack.²²⁷ Kimball, a distant relative of Mormon apostle Heber C. Kimball, moved in 1833 to what became Nauvoo when it was called Commerce. Having the advantage of being one of Nauvoo's first land agents, his profile grew with the Saints' presence. A Vermonter born in 1806, Kimball married Sarah Melissa Granger, the daughter of Oliver Granger who had been influential during the Mormon occupation of Kirtland. Hiram Kimball, while a non-Mormon, became an assistant adjutant general in the Nauvoo Legion—the local militia, in June 1842, as well as serving as a city alderman from 1841–1843. While Kimball wielded influence as a merchant in the growing Nauvoo community, Sarah's profile also increased as she became one of the community's leading women, being one of the founders of Nauvoo's women's Relief Society the year before Maginn arrived in town. Regrettably particulars of Maginn's connection with Hiram Kimball are not known. The young man fresh from his missionary success in New England must have made quite an impression upon Kimball, known to resist becoming a Mormon. That young Eli Maginn, twelve years Hiram's junior, could arrive in Nauvoo without notice and influence Hiram Kimball to finally accept Mormonism suggests Maginn's perceptible influence and command of the Mormon message.²²⁸

veiled objective of keeping legal threats to Joseph Smith at bay. Dinger, *Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, 179–180.

²²⁶Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 504–08.

²²⁷Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 2:372. (The profile of Kimball's wife, Sarah Melissa Granger, adjoins Hiram's on 2:372–74.) The date used in Hiram S. Kimball's biographical sketch states that he was baptized by Maginn on July 20, 1843. As Maginn departed Nauvoo for the East the first of that month, the date provided for Kimball's baptism must be questioned.

²²⁸Hiram S. Kimball profile in Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Rich-

While in the area Maginn also spent time familiarizing himself with the surrounding region, including the Iowa side of the Mississippi River, part of Mormonism's circle of influence. One spot that caught his attention was an Iowa village not far from the river. Located twenty-miles north of Nauvoo, near the Skunk River in Lee County, Iowa, Augusta had been an object of Mormon interest since the Saints first regrouped after their Missouri ordeal. At an August 7, 1841, conference of the Mormons who lived across the Mississippi from Nauvoo, fifty were reported as living in the Augusta branch, which had been organized as part of the Iowa Stake, with Joseph Smith's uncle John Smith as president.²²⁹ A year-a-and-a-half later, eighty-four were attached to the branch that was reorganized at a conference held there.²³⁰ Later that month, in April 1843, the leading church apostles with others gathered "about 200 Saints" together in Augusta, which by that time was a "flourishing village" with "three saw mills and two flouring mills," complemented by excellent "water privileges." The town clearly offered opportunities for Mormons drawn to the Mississippi River valley.²³¹

While likely investigating the area for his own future domestic possibilities, Maginn attended a gathering of townsfolk in Augusta, a land promotion. Seizing an opportunity to speak, he declared to his listeners a bright future for the area, stating that they ought to know that the Mormon prophet "had blest" Nauvoo "and that it was destined to become a mighty City." So impressed with Maginn's speech was the host of the assembly that he invited "the Mormon and all the dignitaries of the place to dine with him," where they had a sumptuous feast "with the utmost harmony and good feeling—all in anticipation of the future greatness of Augusta." Per-

ard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *JSP, Journals, Volume 2: December 1841–April 1843*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011), 468; Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 26–27.

²²⁹"Conference Minutes" *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 22 (September 15, 1841): 547–48.

²³⁰"Minutes of a conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, held at Augusta, Iowa Territory, April 1st and 2d, A. D. 1843" *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 10 (April 1, 1843): 159; (cont.) *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 11 (April 15, 1843): 175–76.

²³¹*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:228.

chance, a former Peterborough resident William Smith—no relation to Joseph—referenced the incident in a letter to family members still in Peterborough. A conversation ensued between Maginn and Smith, who had immigrated to the Mississippi River valley from New Hampshire in 1838 before Maginn's exploits in Peterborough. Maginn likely astonished Smith when he announced that he was one who had recently "built up a society of Mormons" in Peterborough numbering "125 members,"²³² something regarding the Mormons that Smith had probably already heard from his Peterborough correspondents.

The result of the gathering was the sale of several Augusta home lots. But if Maginn's survey of Iowa was for suitable land, he determined that Nauvoo better suited his circumstances. Returning to the Mormon capital, he bought a city lot for \$90, located a few blocks south and east of the temple site, the purchase of which was finalized in July 1843.²³³ Though his initial designs that season were on Utica, New York, the Nauvoo journey may have crystalized his objective to include a return to Nauvoo where he would build a home among the Saints.

His "Friends" vs. Eli P. Maginn

Eli Maginn's stay in Nauvoo and environs beginning the second week of June concluded at the end of July's first week. Perhaps chaperoning those he converted and purchasing land entirely satisfied his western trip. Whatever the reasoning, he had obligations in the East. With his younger sister Anna, whom he had not seen for several years and who had apparently arrived in Nauvoo prior to Eli's visit, he joined an outbound body with the Northeast as their objective. Departing the first part of July 1843, the small, but formidable group including Mormon apostles Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, and George A. Smith and a few others, left Nauvoo on a Mississippi River steamer.²³⁴ Stopping downriver first in Warsaw, Illi-

²³²Alice Felt Tyler, "A New England Family on the Illinois Frontier" *Papers in Illinois History and Transactions for the year 1942* (Springfield: The Illinois State Historical Society, 1944), 80–81. While Maginn is not mentioned by name in the correspondence, the circumstantial evidence favors him as being the object of William Smith's communication.

²³³The transaction was recorded on July 6, 1843—"lot No. six (6) in Block No three (3) in Kimballs addition to Nauvoo"—Nauvoo (Ill.). Registry of Deeds, Records of Deeds, Book A, 1842 Apr.–1843 Sept., 190–92, CHL.

²³⁴*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:259; Young, *Manuscript History of Brigham*

nois, they soon docked in Quincy, where Anna Maginn left the party.²³⁵ Continuing past St. Louis, the entourage changed course at the Mississippi River confluence with the Ohio River, one of interior America's great waterways. Eastbound they passed or stopped at Ohio River ports such as Paducah, Louisville, and Cincinnati. However, by the end of the month, they found themselves beached on a sand bar, the water being too low to ascend farther. Disembarking, the party then took a stage to Pittsburgh.²³⁶ But by this time, Elder Maginn had already separated from his traveling companions, heading for Upstate New York planning to attend the scheduled church conference in Utica.

Once his summer objective, by the end of July Maginn he had returned to Utica, New York, populated with 13,000 citizens, the Empire state's seventh largest city, to attend the general conference to be held there. Maginn, probably known to the Saints by reputation, was chosen secretary of the conference beginning on July 29, 1843. When the elders in attendance were called upon to "present their credentials" to the conference, Maginn "arose and read an especial appointment that he had received from the first presidency, and the quorum of the twelve, signed by the president and secretary of the twelve, to take . . . charge [of] and preside over the church in the [cities] of Boston, Lowell, and Peterboro." The appointment, of course, reflected what he had been doing before his Nauvoo hiatus, but it also indicated he had been entrusted with responsibility over the heart of the New England circuit. The conference unanimously "accept[ed] the appointment and standing" of Maginn. "[O]n motion," the conference then appointed Eli to preach a couple of times each at the local "City Hall" and at the "Universalist church." He also "baptized three individuals" during a conference

Young, 134.

²³⁵While the ultimate whereabouts of Anna Maginn is unknown, three years later on January 29, 1846, at age twenty-two, she became a plural wife of sixty-one-year-old William Huntington, Nauvoo Stake high councilor and city sexton, just prior to the initial evacuation of Nauvoo. Becoming the presiding Mormon authority in Mt. Pisgah, Iowa, he became ill and died there later in the year. *Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register*, FHL; Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "All Things Move in Order in the City": The Nauvoo Diary of Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs" *BYU Studies* 19, no. 3 (1979): 289; Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia* 1:368-69. Later Huntington family histories do not include Anna's connection to Huntington.

²³⁶*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:259-85; Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth*, 109.

intermission.²³⁷ Maginn had peaked in influence and status among the Saints in the Northeast.

The following month, however, machinations were afoot that punctured any inflated hubris that he might have acquired. Perhaps surprisingly, the overland venture to Nauvoo earlier in the year with his Peterborough and Lowell friends had provoked harsh feelings toward him, the extreme degree of dissatisfaction of which Maginn was likely unaware. He was later to discover that during his visit to Nauvoo and the surrounding area, after receiving complaints from several of those traveling to Nauvoo with Maginn, a committee of three had been appointed by the "Quorum of the Seventy," to inquire "into the validity of certain rumors detrimental to the character & standing of Elder Maginn." The investigation brought forward a number of serious charges against him. As he came to learn, two of the Lowell immigrants had already held hard feelings toward him before the journey west claiming that "Elder Maginn Chastised the Saints in Lowell in a public meeting." They accused Maginn of complaining to them that while he presided over their branch that they had withheld financial support from him, something he had apparently become accustomed to in Peterborough.

But boorish behavior was trifling in contrast to the other allegations. Maginn was charged with extorting money from the Nauvoo-bound émigrés with whom he traveled to Nauvoo. One of the appointed investigative committee was William Hyde, a returning missionary who had in Worcester, Massachusetts, joined the Peterborough/Lowell caravan on their westbound journey.²³⁸ Hyde, no close relation to Orson, claimed that Maginn had been chosen "agent" of the overlanders, but who after his selection had then threatened to leave the party "unless he had [monetary] assistance." Maginn, Hyde claimed, had complained that "he had not the means that he

²³⁷"General Conference Minutes" *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 19 (August 15, 1843): 300-302.

²³⁸William Hyde (1818-1874), a missionary en route to Nauvoo with his companion Benjamin S. Wilber in May 1843, was a New Yorker who was Maginn's age. Hyde had been a Mormon since 1834. Thereafter he shared many of the difficulties encountered by the Mormons in the 1830s. He had already served a mission to New York and Maine (Fox Islands) at this time and had witnessed the Missouri difficulties before settling in Nauvoo where he married. He then returned to the New England mission field, establishing a branch in Woodstock, Vermont. After the Saints' expulsion from Nauvoo, he served in the Mormon Battalion, immigrated to Utah, served in the Utah War, before settling in Hyde Park, Utah.

could possibly get through.” (Maginn’s plea coerced \$24.50 from the travelers for his own expenses according to the charges.) Compounding this, Hyde alleged, was that the Saints were each charged an extra 25¢ for steamer passage because Maginn stayed “in the Cabin” rather than the steerage section forced on the others. Hyde then raised the stakes by questioning the means by which Maginn paid for his Nauvoo lot earlier in the year.²³⁹ It may have been painful and perhaps predictable, as some missionary relationships go, for Maginn later to become informed that a former missionary companion, Austin Cowles, corroborated all that Hyde had claimed.

But what must have chagrined Maginn most was the claim by Luther Reed, one of his first baptisms in Peterborough, that the \$11 Reed and his wife had given Maginn as a donation for the Nauvoo Temple had been paid to the temple fund in Maginn’s own name. Confronted by Reed, according to the complaint, Maginn wiggled out of responsibility finally agreeing that “if the Lord [prospered] him on his Mission,” he would “refund the money at some future period.” From this, Reed stated, his feelings were “much injured.” Other complaints were leveled, including another especially disappointing one by George W. Taggart, another of Maginn’s early converts. Besides introducing the Taggarts to Mormonism, Maginn had prior to their westward trip written for the Taggarts a letter of introduction and endorsement to church leaders in Nauvoo making Taggart’s allegations of misappropriation of church funds sharp indeed.²⁴⁰ Coincidence of physical circumstances brought the scandal to a head. By the time the charges had been gathered to be forwarded to several of the Twelve Apostles who were then in New England, a number of them being the very men with whom Maginn had journeyed east earlier in the summer, Elder Eli Maginn was also in New England.²⁴¹

The charges stemmed from something more than misunder-

²³⁹Charles Thompson, B[enjamin] S. Wilber, and William Hyde, letter to Quorum of the Twelve, August 31, 1843, Nauvoo, Illinois, Brigham Young Collection, CHL.

²⁴⁰Thompson, Wilber, and Hyde, letter to Quorum of the Twelve, August 31, 1843; *Taggart Family Newsletter* 17 (Summer 2002): 6.

²⁴¹While the Nauvoo Stake High Council functioned at the time and handled charges brought against church members, because the allegations against Maginn occurred outside Nauvoo it is likely that jurisdiction for the matter fell to Twelve Apostles, whose authority over church affairs had significantly expanded (in August 1841) upon their return from their mission to England. Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men With A Mission*, 313-17.



Boylston Market, Boston. Boylston Hall was located on the building’s third floor. Photograph by John B. Heywood, ca. 1860-1870. digitalgallery.nypl.org.

standing and miscommunication. To begin, there existed a less-than-systematic means concerning the collection and dispersal of church funds by church agents in the field. This, coupled with ambiguity about how elders were to sustain themselves while on the missionary rolls, made confusion and confrontation inevitable. The monetary component of proselytizing was underlain at the time with what amounted to a vow of poverty on the part of the missionaries. The biblical text that established the precedent was derived from Jesus commissioning his disciples to serve in their ministries “without purse or scrip and shoes,” i.e., without monetary or

material compensation.²⁴² Sustenance at God's hand was all that was to be expected by the Mormon elders. Missionaries understood that upon their departure as church delegates that they were to rely upon the mercy of God whom they believed would soften the hearts of those they encountered, Mormons and non-Mormons alike, to provide them with shelter, food, and raiment. During Mormonism's formative period, and then later throughout the nineteenth century, Mormon missionaries adhered to the Lukan expression.²⁴³

Maginn and his associates in the field were expected to devote their energies to build the Kingdom of God, all the while collecting donations as church agents to help sustain headquarters operations. Two financial applications in particular fell into Maginn's responsibilities: subscriptions to the *Times and Seasons*²⁴⁴ and donations to the construction of the Nauvoo Temple and Nauvoo House, both then underway. For New England converts, as elsewhere, donations for the temple's construction fit the expected premise of "tithes and offerings."²⁴⁵ But discrimination about how donated monies were distributed was ill-defined. Expenses incurred by missionaries were understood by some to merit compensation from tithes and offerings. Complaints were actually few. But extreme cases like Maginn's and William Smith's case in 1844, created an issue of that aspect of missionary work. In William Smith's situation "The Saints brought forward their tithings for the Temple," from which "Elder Wm. Smith [known to buck Mormon convention] took to the amount of \$150 dollars for the Temple and \$25 or \$30 dollars for his own use," a practice later held against him.²⁴⁶

²⁴²Luke 22:35.

²⁴³For example, see W. Woodruff, letter to O. Cowdery, November 26, 1836, *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 3 (December 1836): 431; W. Woodruff, letter to Elders Robinson & Smith, October 7, 1840, *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 3 (February 15, 1841): 311; "The Twelve" *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 19 (August 2, 1841): 487; "Mission to England" *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 20 (August 15, 1842): 879; Benj'n Brown, letter to "Dear Brother," December 27, 1844, *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 24 (January 1, 1844[5]): 766.

²⁴⁴Maginn is identified in the *Times and Seasons* as an agent for the periodical: "List of Letters" 3, no. 6 (January 15, 1842): 668; "List of Letters" 3, no. 12 (April 15, 1842): 766; "Agents" 3, no. 16 (June 15, 1842): 830; "Agents" 3, no. 17 (July 1, 1842): 846.

²⁴⁵Malachi 3:8–10.

²⁴⁶*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, October 18, 1844, 2:475–76.

Because handling of church monies had not been codified, in Maginn's circumstances appropriate representation of what he had collected from the Saints exceeded sensibilities among the donors.

Maginn surely understood the expectations of propriety in handling church funds. With obsequious inclinations to please and appease Joseph Smith, as did others like him, he assured Smith of his loyalty and understanding of what was going on in Nauvoo. His March 22, 1842, communication from Salem, Massachusetts, besides enclosing \$24 from recruited subscribers for the *Times and Seasons* and \$20 for Nauvoo Temple construction he had collected, included a pledge "to forward from 100 to 200 dollars by fall, for the House of the Lord, as it appears to be of the most vital importance that the Saints should assist in a work so desirable."²⁴⁷ The April 15, 1842, issue of the *Times and Seasons* credited Maginn with remitting \$25 of subscription money, "which is the highest amount on the list . . . by far."²⁴⁸ Two weeks later Maginn's May 1, 3, 1842, report to headquarters related he had "forwarded a check from the Asiatic Bank to the Leather Manuf. Bank for the Sum of \$45" half of it being "for the Temple." And to reinforce his credibility, he felt it necessary in the May communication to account for a hitch in getting funds to church headquarters on time; under the circumstances, he claimed, it was "running too great [a] risk" to dispatch the funds in a timely manner.²⁴⁹ More careful, and therefore immune from accusations, was Erastus Snow. Rather than generalizing Salem Branch donations made to him, he provided specific particulars to church headquarters of donors by name and the amount of contributions as well as deposits he made to secure the money in local banks.²⁵⁰

While Elder Maginn provided explanation to church leaders what he had done with the money he gathered, the complaint against Maginn demonstrates the absence of his inclination to inform those he had shepherded with accountability about the money he had gathered for the church. It also suggests that he acted aloof by withholding details about his travel plans and keeping his fellow travelers ignorant of information that they viewed as essential to their interests. As a result, his method of

²⁴⁷Maginn, letter to Smith, March 22, 1842.

²⁴⁸"List of Letters" *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 12 (April 15, 1842): 766. Perhaps this is the twenty-four dollars spoken of in Maginn's March 22, 1842, communication.

²⁴⁹Maginn, letter to Smith, May 1, 3, 1842.

²⁵⁰See e.g., Snow, letter to Smith, June 22, 1842.

handling the westward venture was bereft of the requirements necessary to retain the confidence of his fellow Saints. Whatever the reasons were for his detached demeanor, relationships were gravely and perhaps permanently fractured.

In the meantime, still not knowing about the charges made against him, from the Utica conference Eli Maginn made his way the 260 miles to Boston representing his work at a planned conference held in Boston's Boylston Hall. The three-day gathering held September 9-11, became an important forum, due in part to the rapid expansion of the LDS Church in the area. Presiding authorities at this conference were seven of the Twelve Apostles, led by Brigham Young. The thrust of the sermonizing appears to have been directed toward those who represented Mormonism as missionaries. The conference report, prepared by one of the Twelve Apostles in attendance, Wilford Woodruff, makes clear that the apostles sensed that some course correction was necessary for the elders. Along with hearing reports about the status of the religion in New England, the messages of the apostles pointedly addressed the deficiencies.²⁵¹

Maginn's report to church leaders and Boston conference attendees, for example, provided information about the size and growth of the branches he served for the previous two years: Boston (182 members), Peterborough (88), Gilsum, (42), New Salem (45 to 50), Wendell (40), and Leverett (35). Others described their work, such as Erastus Snow's report on Salem (75 or 80) and Benjamin Grouard's on Lowell (with 48 members).²⁵² After representations of the branch strength in the region were presented, Parley Pratt took the podium: "Some Elders tell us that they have taught the gathering according to the Scriptures. But it is not sufficient to teach the principle from the Scriptures alone. . . . [W]e need the voice of a Prophet in such a case and we have it," he challenged. Maginn apparently took Pratt's words personally, for as soon as Pratt sat down Maginn jumped to defend himself. He "for one," he explained, taught "the gathering according to the scriptures" and that he "considered all modern Revelations scripture as well as those given anciently."²⁵³ But this was only the beginning of a long weekend for Elder Maginn.

While Brigham Young, who spoke several times during the conference

²⁵¹Minutes of the conference held in the CHL were transcribed into Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:11-30.

²⁵²*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:286-87.

²⁵³*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:287-88; Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:12.

about several matters, he then pled with congregants to support construction of the Nauvoo Temple and Nauvoo House, as well as the missionary venture to the Sandwich Islands, then about to be launched: "Can you do something for them?" He then used Maginn as the bad example of selfish reluctance to give when the Lord commanded. Citing an incident that likely occurred on their outbound trip from Nauvoo earlier in the year, Young, who was seventeen years Maginn's senior, stated, "Elder Maginn had an ivory cane. I asked him for it, but he declined making me a present of it. Not long after, he had it stolen from him in a crowd, and it now does neither of us any good." The moral of the story: "Perhaps your purse may slip through your pocket, or you may lose your property; for the Lord can given and take away."²⁵⁴ Surely Maginn felt the sting of the rebuke, but he made no reply, according to the meetings' minutes.

The same day, Heber Kimball, one of the chief apostles, then stood and took his own sardonic licks at the local missionaries, including Maginn: "We [speaking of the Twelve] are not Polished stones like Elder Babbit, Elder Adams, Elder Blakesley & Elder Maginn &c. But we are rough Stones out of the mountain, & when we roll through the forest &nock the bark of[f] from the trees it does not hurt us even if we should get a Cornor knocked of[f] occasionally."²⁵⁵

Later in the session, Young stood again and excoriated the young missionaries with an accusation that may have been specifically directed at Maginn: "Many elders seek to Build themselves up & not the work of God. But when any one does this no matter who he may be he will not prosper even if it was one of the Twelve. . . . [W]hen I see men preaching to build themselves up & not Zion I know what it will end in." Responding to the elders' perceived reply, he continued, "But say you I am young. I dont Care if you are young. . . . Be faithful or you will not be Chosen for the day of Chusing is at the door."²⁵⁶

Still, the following day's session on Sunday, September 10, found Eli Maginn providing the opening invocation. The Monday closure of the conference contained Brigham Young's final address, including his last use of Maginn's role as a missionary to further the admonitions of the Twelve. Again returning to the theme of the Saints providing means for the four missionaries bound for the South Pacific, he stated, "We call on the church-

²⁵⁴*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:290; Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:14.

²⁵⁵*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:297; Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:21.

²⁵⁶*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:295.

es to fit out these men with necessaries. Elder Eli P. Maginn and Elder Philip B. Lewis we call on them to fit them out. If Elder Lewis does not, Maginn will do it himself. This takes the responsibility from us.”²⁵⁷ The pointed preachments, several tailor-made for Maginn, may have resulted from the Twelve’s awareness of the accusations made against Maginn, though they were not formalized by letter until the end of August. Another contributing factor to the condemnation may have been the case brought before the Twelve earlier in the year when they were forced to confront the recalcitrant Benjamin Winchester, one of the early New England missionary cohort, who had, defiantly criticized local Philadelphia branch members compounded by rejecting the “council of Hiram [Hyrum Smith], Joseph [Smith], & the Twelve & tearing to peaces the saints instead of building them up.”²⁵⁸ Whether or not Maginn, because of their earlier association, was tainted by Winchester’s obstinacy is not known.

Or it may have been that Young and the other apostolic leaders simply disagreed with what was going on among the New England branches and the manner in which missionary work was carried on by Maginn. In the larger cities, the young missionaries, attempting to raise the Mormon profile in the area, had rented the towns’ largest hall to call out the urban clergymen for debate and public display. That was not the way Brigham expected things to be done. He later instructed, “[S]ome Elders who go on missions . . . are so full of fancied intelligence, preaching, counsel, knowledge, and power, when they go out into the world,” that they neglected the fundamental premise that “God has chosen the obscure and weak, to bring them up and exalt them.” “Let an Elder hire the best halls in large cities to begin with, and go to lecturing, and it will take him a long time to raise a Branch of this Church. But let him begin among the poor of the earth—those who live in the cellars, and garrets, and back streets; ‘for,’ says the Almighty, ‘I am going to take the weak things of the earth, and with them confound the wisdom of the wise.’”²⁵⁹ Perhaps the apostles’ phenomenally successful experiences in England among the working class had confirmed their scriptural sensibilities to those most susceptible to the gospel message. How Maginn took all of this is not known.

Without corroborating evidence it is difficult to judge the circum-

²⁵⁷ Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:27.

²⁵⁸ Wilford Woodruff’s *Journal*, 2:234–35.

²⁵⁹ Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:267–268 (April 8, 1855); 8:354 (March 3, 1861).

stances directed at Maginn as they continued to unfold. There remains uncertainty about when the Twelve Apostles received the complaint about Maginn drafted on August 31, 1843. However, the third week in September 1842 Wilford Woodruff endorsed Maginn, who had by this time apparently decided or had been assigned to Maine as his next venture. The recommendation by Woodruff, introducing Maginn, was written to Woodruff’s Maine friends to whom he had ministered in the late 1830s.²⁶⁰

By September 28, 1843, Eli Maginn clearly knew he had been charged with defalcation, including particulars of the allegations, for he penned a lengthy letter to Brigham Young explaining and defending his actions. He provided no information about how he heard about the wrenching charges. His defense explicated details point-by-point pleading he had been unfairly charged. Regarding the indictment made by William Hyde concerning Maginn’s own passage to Nauvoo, he convincingly explained the situation when he joined the caravan, and stated “I never have asked Money of any church [branch] for myself. If I ever rec[eive]d money it was entirely unsolicited as I am abundantly able to prove.” As for the allegation of charging an extra 25¢ per head as the group’s agent for the convenience of his own travel, he furnished a copy of his passage contract negating the claim. Of the accusation of him using church funds to purchase his town lot in Nauvoo, he stated that part of the money he used was “borrowed and part of it was for Books sold for Eld [Benjamin] Winchester which is unpaid at the present time.”²⁶¹ He was “at a loss” to understand how he had been thusly charged.²⁶² He then moved on to the charge of his early convert, Luther Reed.

“The Testimony of Luther Reed in the main is strictly true,” he wrote. Maginn claimed that he had received money from people “both in and out of the Church” and, in effect, admitted that he may have misapplied the Reeds’ money. When confronted by Reed after Reed checked the Nau-

²⁶⁰ Wilford Woodruff’s *Journal*, 2:311.

²⁶¹ This had reference to publications prepared by his missionary colleague Benjamin Winchester, then operating out of Philadelphia. Though later best known for his book *The History of the Priesthood* (1843), Winchester’s independent semi-monthly periodical, *The Gospel Reflector*, printed between January and June 1841, was an innovative effort by the young elder to serve the dual purpose of informing converts about particulars of their new church and to attract the attention of those interested in investigating Mormonism.

²⁶² Eli P. Maginn, letter to Brigham Young, September 28, 1843, Boston, Massachusetts, Brigham Young Collection, CHL.

vo Temple records, Maginn told his now erstwhile friend that he would make it “right” if he had been in error. Reed was put off, apparently, beyond repair. Regarding the funds he had been given from Peterborough Saints, Maginn admitted that he had been given “\$60” but that “It was expended in traveling in N. England before I started for the West.” He also rebutted the George W. Taggart charge, another of his converts, explaining that both Taggart and Reed simply misunderstood the background of the circumstances wherein monies were expended. One by one, he countered the complaints, though he admitted that the charge wherein he flippantly boasted that “I should be glad to have some of the Brethren build me a Brick house” in Nauvoo was “folly” on his part. Understanding the gravity of the allegations, he summarized: “upon the whole of the charge I would wish respectfully to say that I feel perfectly innocent, that I can prove the statements that are herein set forth as substantially true,” but was willing, nevertheless, “to abide the decision of your Honorable body.”²⁶³

There is no record of the Mormon Quorum of the Twelve’s determination about the allegations and Maginn’s refutation. Nor is there indication about how his rebuttal affected those who had charged him. But he clearly did not thereafter fulfill his July 1843 commission from church leaders to lead the work in “Peterborough, Lowell, and Boston” or to Maine, whether by choice or church direction. Still, from Maginn’s next move it appears that he had made his case sufficiently that there was no misgiving about his continued service as a missionary. Only this time, it would not be a return to the old New England circuit.²⁶⁴ Few reverses can pierce one’s enthusiasm, which had been based on love, fealty, and faith, like the betrayal that Eli must have felt after his former religious protégés turned on him as a result of their transit with him from New Hampshire/Massachusetts to Nauvoo earlier in the year. Still, if Maginn had not aggravated and alienated his charges by boorish and detached demeanor, given the remarkable service he had provided to them, it is likely that misunderstandings and oversights would have been forgiven. If there were apologies made, if there were reconciliations, they likely did not reverse what was clearly a disappointment of gargantuan proportion to the young elder. His life thereafter followed another course.

When Maginn did not return to Peterborough, evidence suggests the

²⁶³Maginn, letter to Young, September 28, 1843.

²⁶⁴There is no evidence that Maginn ever ministered again in Peterborough, New Hampshire, though he returned to New England but in another venue.

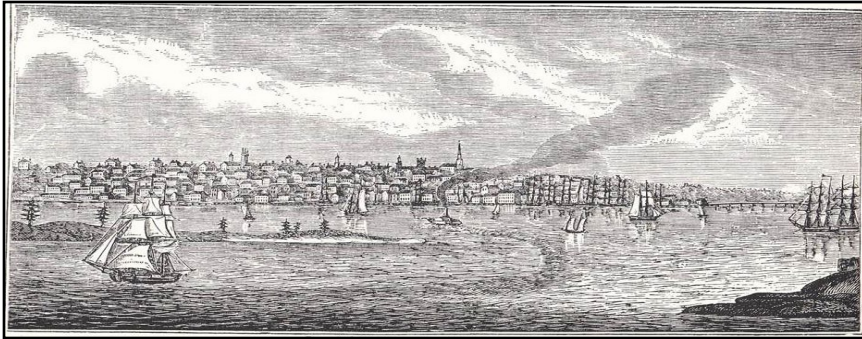
Peterborough Branch went on without him. The local Saints’ stability shows that the Mormon escalation of the early 1840s exceeded Maginn’s personal presence. While a number of Peterborough’s most influential Saints immigrated to the Mississippi River valley, the village and its remaining Mormon citizens maintained a respectable, if outsider, religious entity. Because of its tactical location along the corridor between New England to the West, the Peterborough Saints hosted numerous missionaries and church leaders through the mid-1840s, including Brigham Young and Orson Pratt who learned in mid-July 1844 of Joseph Smith’s death while visiting the Peterborough congregation.²⁶⁵ Jesse W. Crosby, who served in the area in October 1844 reported to the New York Mormon periodical, *The Prophet*, “I have just returned from Peterborough; the church numbers eighty members, all in good standing who expressed their determination to uphold the Twelve, by a hearty vote, not one dissenting spirit.”²⁶⁶ That same month, Mormon apostle Wilford Woodruff along with Joseph’s brother William Smith also spent time in the village with none other than New Hampshire’s governor, John H. Steele. Woodruff wrote regarding this visit that he rode into town with Steele, a long-time resident of Peterborough. Steele’s relationship with his Peterborough childhood friend Jesse C. Little, presiding elder of the Mormon congregation, later proved consequential to the Saints with Steele interceding on Little’s and the Saints’ behalf with a strategic letter of introduction to United States President James K. Polk. That introduction, of course, and later meeting with the president eventually led to federal assistance to enlist the Mormon Battalion in America’s war with Mexico in 1846.²⁶⁷

While Mormon strength continued in Peterborough, the Saints never did overcome the suspicions of other locals. There was particular concern about emigration of the new converts who were viewed as duped victims. Family and friends of those responding to the call to “gather,” witnessing their loved ones departing for parts unknown to them, continued to fuel

²⁶⁵Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 111–12; England, *Orson Pratt*, 96.

²⁶⁶Jesse W. Crosby, November 19, 1844, *The Prophet*, reprinted in “Extract” *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 23 (December 15, 1844): 749.

²⁶⁷*Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 2:475; David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, *Army of Israel: Mormon Battalion Narratives* (Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 2000), 32–37; B[rigam] H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century I* 6 vols. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), 3:67–68.



Southeastern View of New Bedford, Massachusetts, 1860. Engraving of John Warner Barber in Frank Walcott Hutt, ed., *A History of Bristol County, Massachusetts* 2 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1924).

the apprehension of neighbors. One fellow living in Hancock, just north of Peterborough, who watched friends and family sever their local ties, wrote to friends in Illinois to ask if they knew what it was that provoked the dramatic change in their loved ones: “I want you should write to me what you know about the mormons which are settled as I understand in your vicinity[.] if you know any thing about them I wish you would write me for <thear> are some of my friends that are following this doctrine of Joseph Smith, and it is a false delution. I think my Uncle Timothy has sold all his property and intends to start for Norveuo next spring with Wm Nay & John and thear is various stories about these Mormons and I should like to hear something that we can depend upon and if you can learn any facts relative to them it would be high highly gratifying.”²⁶⁸ It was one thing to embrace the controversial religion; it was quite another matter to completely disrupt generations of familial and filial associations and depart for the wilderness. Puzzlement and anger inevitably affected many touched by but outside of Mormonism.

The drain of eastern Saints affected most areas of the New England circuit. Erastus Snow worked to prepare and then lead Massachusetts Saints to the Mormon capital. Leaving his wife and children in Salem, he journeyed for a month the 1,300 miles to Nauvoo beginning March 9, 1843, getting things ready for a fall immigration of as many of his charges as were willing to gather. Before leaving Nauvoo a month later he contracted for a

²⁶⁸Ephraim Weston, letter to James Cunningham family, April 10, 1844, Hancock, New Hampshire, holograph in private possession, copy in possession of author.

house to be built for him and his family, planning for his own settlement in Nauvoo. Upon his return to Salem in June 1843 he found that “all the experienced elders had left the east soon after I did,” including Elder Maginn. For three months Snow then labored to resolve problems within the several congregations “in that conference over which I presided” before his return to the West. “I traveled from one church to another & preached,” he wrote, “and set the churches in order & baptised and streng[th]ened the saints, inn Boston, Salem, Lowell, New Bedford, Peterboro & Northbridge & continued my labours in this manner till September.” He then wrapped up his New England ministry and led a company of seventy-five in early October from Massachusetts to Nauvoo where they arrived on November 5, 1843.²⁶⁹ Maginn and Snow likely did not cross paths while Maginn forged his way east. Whatever disciplinary status had been imposed upon Maginn, if any at all, he did not return to the east coast to replace Snow.²⁷⁰ Rather than revisiting northeastern Massachusetts, Maginn ventured first to Newport, Rhode Island, in the fall of 1843 where he is reported to have preached and baptized in November 1843,²⁷¹ before returning again to the Bay state for the winter. But this time it was in New Bedford in southeastern Massachusetts that he plied his once formidable energies.

The Demise of Eli Maginn

Eli Maginn, charismatic and compelling character that he was, lived in a time when geographical mobility was increasingly more available to young men in America, and Canada for that matter. Many males his age moved about looking for economic opportunity or stability. Maginn, on the other hand, counterculturally assumed the clerical mantle when his contemporaries had other more earthbound ambitions. American men during the Jacksonian period commonly married at the age of majority. Among his numerous missionary cohorts, marriage was by far the norm. Yet, having vast experience for several years across the entire northern tier of the United States, not to mention Upper Canada, surviving records indicate a missionary commitment, sans female companionship. While Maginn eventually married at age twenty-six, in the previous six years of his life with but two brief interludes—one in Missouri and the other in Illi-

²⁶⁹Snow, journal, 3:40–45; *Nauvoo Neighbor*, November 8, 1843.

²⁷⁰For a brief view of the post-Eli P. Maginn/Erastus Snow period in the mid-1840s in New England, see Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 337–39.

²⁷¹Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church*, 1:408.

nois—he sacrificed domesticity, instead representing Mormonism on the front lines.

At the conference held in Boston in the fall of 1843, Maginn heard it reported by locals that church activity was down in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Of a hundred members, only a third of them attended meetings. One of the problems was the absence of someone to take charge of the congregation: “If a good one was to come, good might be done,” they reported.²⁷² New Bedford, a nearly two-hundred-year-old seaboard whaling center located sixty miles south of Boston, and just across the bay from Martha’s Vineyard, claimed just over 12,000 residents in 1840. Before the nineteenth century, the area was predictably composed of immigrants from Protestant Great Britain. In the first half of the nineteenth century, though, Irish Catholics settled in Massachusetts, including New Bedford, en masse.

The former slave and soon-to-be influential black abolitionist Frederick Douglass relocated to New Bedford from Baltimore in 1838, four years before Mormonism took hold in the city. New Bedford’s prosperity grasped his imagination: “I visited the wharves, to take a view of the shipping. Here I found myself surrounded with the strongest proofs of wealth. Lying at the wharves, and riding in the stream, I saw many ships of the finest model, in the best order, and of the largest size. Upon the right and left, I was walled in by granite warehouses of the widest dimensions, stowed to their utmost capacity with the necessaries and comforts of life.” The workforce, naturally, drew his interest: “almost every body seemed to be at work . . . every man appear[ing] to understand his work.” The successful sea industry spilled into the town: “Every thing looked clean, new, and beautiful. I saw few or no dilapidated houses, with poverty-stricken inmates; no half-naked children and barefooted women,” all complemented by “the splendid churches, beautiful dwellings, and finely-cultivated gardens; evincing an amount of wealth, comfort, taste, and refinement.”²⁷³

William Hutchings, in parallel to his Mormon brethren in northeastern Massachusetts, launched the church organization New Bedford, with cooperation from Freeman Nickerson and Erastus Snow. Soon almost three dozen had joined with the Saints, most having been attracted by Hutchings

²⁷²Wilford Woodruff’s *Journal*, 2:286–97.

²⁷³Frederick Douglass in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave & Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), 103–104. An overview of the early history of New Bedford is found in Leonard Bolles Ellis, *History of New Bedford and Its Vicinity, 1602–1892*, 2 vols. (Syracuse, N.Y.: D. Mason & Co., 1892).

himself. Hutchings was one of the elders at the February 1843 Boston conference, representing the New Bedford branch. But sometime later in 1843 “a large number of the members were expelled” from the congregation, most of the disgruntled asking that their names be removed from church rolls. Explanation of the reason for the exodus of members is not known, a later report stating that “it cannot be ascertained” why they left. It was at this juncture in late 1843 that Eli P. Maginn arrived in New Bedford from Newport, Rhode Island, though there is no record of why he gravitated to New Bedford. At the time of Maginn’s arrival in New Bedford, without missionary companion and still unattached, there were “about sixty members” in the branch, though as mentioned some phenomenon had disenchanting a significant part of the congregation.

Part of the instability in the branch came from fluctuating leadership. William Hutchings was unanimously elected “presiding elder” at the outset. But by September 1843, branch members had voted to “wait for Elder Wm Smith [the prophet’s brother] to come and preside over the branch.” The appointment of William Smith, then doing missionary work in the northeast, never materialized. Thus, in the days before local leaders were installed by their church superiors, on October 26, 1843, Eli P. Maginn was nominated by branch members as presiding elder. But because there was “not more than one third of the Church present” they postponed a vote until the next meeting. Two weeks and two meetings later, Maginn’s nomination vaporized, and branch consensus returned to Hutchings being the presiding elder. But Hutchings resigned at the end of December, reflecting the instability of local leadership. Yet by the first week in February 1844, Hutchings was again nominated to preside over the branch, confusion obviously prevailing. Hutchings finally left the post at the end of March, and by year’s end he had renounced Brigham Young, professing belief that Sidney Rigdon was Joseph Smith’s rightful heir.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴New Bedford Branch (Massachusetts), Record 1842–1851, CHL. Numerous other New Bedford Branch members followed Hutchings’s defection. While the branch continued into at least the early 1850s, organized Mormonism disappeared from the city in the late nineteenth century. Mormonism is not even mentioned as having existed in the city in a municipal history written in 1892 with sections on contemporary “Churches and Religious Societies” and “Extinct Churches” of New Bedford. Ellis, *History of New Bedford*, 532–595. See also Daniel Ricketson, *New Bedford of the Past* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1903), where a discussion of religion in the city also does not include mention of Mormons.

Maginn apparently did not let his now defunct nomination to be the New Bedford leader sap his participation with the branch, despite what appeared to be a negative referendum on his name being advanced. Given that he stayed among the New Bedford Saints, it is not known whether or not he then viewed himself as a missionary. If not a missionary, what was he? Again, nothing survives revealing his circumstances. In December 1843, with his substantive tenure in preaching and defending the gospel over the previous several years, he was called upon to give “some instruction [to the branch] concerning the order of the Church.”²⁷⁵ But by this time something else beyond settling affairs in the local church caught his attention.

Abigail Seekel Ricketson was a twenty-two-year-old church member, who along with family members Joseph and Elihu had earlier joined the LDS Church at the hands of William Hutchings. Eli Maginn, four years older, took notice of the young, marriageable woman. Over the winter of 1843-1844, the eligible young adults committed themselves to one another. After three months in New Bedford, on January 27, 1844, Eli P. Maginn married Abigail Ricketson, apparently a substantive young woman with strong familial ties in the community.²⁷⁶ It is difficult to overstate the extensive experience and maturity, tempered with disappointment, obtained by Maginn over the previous half-dozen years, but the prospects of marriage and a family undoubtedly provided a palliative prospect for his life.²⁷⁷ The marriage clearly indicated that Maginn had moved to a new stage of

²⁷⁵New Bedford Branch (Massachusetts), Record 1842–1851.

²⁷⁶Abigail Seekel Ricketson and Eli P. Maginn, in *Vital Records of New Bedford, Massachusetts to the Year 1850*, 3 vols. (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1941), 2:356. The Ricketson’s were a distinguished family in New Bedford circles. Daniel Ricketson, *The History of New Bedford, Bristol County, Massachusetts* (New Bedford: by the author, 1858).

²⁷⁷“The Descendants of Mingo and Dinah” Internet website, created to chronicle matters of race and religion regarding Mormonism in Lowell, Massachusetts, suggests that Maginn married a woman named Hannah in the early 1840s, making his marriage to Abigail Ricketson in January 1844 a polygamist union. However, there was no marriage to a woman named Hannah nor likely any other woman. Any reference to a Hannah Maginn, from which the notion of a marriage to Eli is apparently derived, alludes to his sister Anna, also referred to in records as Hannah (see fn. 25). The website also misidentifies Maginn’s parents and family background. http://people.ucsc.edu/~odonovan/Mormon_Chronology.html, accessed May 2015.

his life, though no documentation informs us about his motives, thinking, or plans at the time. After his marriage, perhaps, he planned to return to Nauvoo to settle among the Saints on the property he had purchased the previous year. Or maybe he had been so nonplussed by his experiences the previous year that Nauvoo and its amenities no longer held interest for him. Whatever his designs, in early 1844, at the same time that Joseph Smith launched from Nauvoo a national campaign to bring before the country the decade-long plight of the Saints in Missouri and Illinois by presenting himself as a candidate for United States president, the new groom’s health took a turn for the worse.

Eli Maginn apparently had contracted consumption, later known as tuberculosis, though at the time consumption sometimes proved to be a catch-all for undiagnosed diseases that brutalized one’s body. It is not known how long he had the affliction. Tuberculosis, if that was the malady that afflicted him, was characterized by a chronic cough, often producing blood. The bacterial tuberculosis produced tubers mainly centering in the lungs that eventually choked the life out of the victim. Also producing fevers, night sweats, and weight loss, tuberculosis resulted in a marked dissipation of strength and well-being. Before the nature of the malady was discovered toward the end of the nineteenth century, it had a pandemic effect upon young adults in America. No class of people was immune. Pervasive because it passed from family member to family member in close quarters, most New England families had experience with the disease. Tuberculosis “killed more people in New England, particularly in the Boston area, than any other disease” at the time.²⁷⁸ Over half the people who contracted “consumption” died from it. From whom, when, or how Maginn got the disease that punctured the life out of him is not known. But surely his last days were not pleasant.

A final mystery remains. Sometime after his marriage in the early months of 1844 he returned the eighty-some miles north to Lowell, Massachusetts. Assuming that in the seaport town of New Bedford he had Ricketson family connections to assist in his care as his life ebbed, why he later left his new beginnings to return to Lowell, Massachusetts, is puzzling. Perhaps there was some unfinished business of one sort or another. It is also not known if he went alone or with his new bride. At any rate, he returned to the industrial center of America when prognosis for his survival

²⁷⁸Constance Manoli-Skocay, “A Gentle Death: Tuberculosis in 19th-Century Concord [Massachusetts],” accessed March 2014, www.concordma.com/magazine/winter/03/tuberculosis.html.

likely looked bleak. Three months to the day after his marriage to Abigail Ricketson, April 27, 1844, he died in Lowell from consumption. He was twenty-six.²⁷⁹

Later, two months to the day, the Mormon prophet himself with his brother Hyrum were cut down by gunfire in Carthage, Illinois, the most catastrophic blow to date for the Saints. Much has been written about how Joseph and Hyrum's deaths provoked several contentious claims to church leadership, fragmenting the already tenuous situation of Mormon loyalties. Many of the prophet's most trusted cadre, the Twelve Apostles, were scattered in the northeastern United States at the crucial time. Word spread of the Mormon leader's assassination, finally reaching the east coast three weeks after the killings. Brigham Young and Orson Pratt learned of their prophet's death in mid-July while in Peterborough. The tragedy anxiously drew them home. The emergency also quickly pulled Heber Kimball and Wilford Woodruff from Boston, soon connecting with Lyman Wight and Orson Hyde in Albany, New York, all on their way home to church headquarters. The Twelve became a body again in Nauvoo on August 6.²⁸⁰ Little healing and comfort followed. Festering wounds swelled and oozed. But the pain was not restricted to western Illinois. While the Mormon presence remained in the Northeast for many years, the martyrdom and its ballooning aftereffect, compounded by the continuing stream of immigrants gathering to the Midwest, effectively stemmed the brief 1840s' New England missionary initiative. Once bursting with opportunity and potential, the Mormon gathering along the Atlantic seaboard never revived in the nineteenth century. The death of Eli Maginn, instrumental in fostering the surge of Mormonism in the Northeast, coincided with not only the Prophet's death but also the demise of the once courageous scheme of young elders raising their warning voices in New England.

A significant missionary career expired with him. Never having established himself among the Saints at the church's center, nothing is extant showing that notice was taken of his demise. As the church increasingly grew, recognition by the institution for the individual works of the laity like Maginn became less likely. While little of an institutional memory for

²⁷⁹ *Vital Records of Lowell, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849*, 4 vols. (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1930), 4:202. Maginn's wife Abigail, herself, died in New Bedford of consumption three years later on October 9, 1847, at the age of twenty-two. *Vital Records of New Bedford, Massachusetts to the Year 1850*, 3:112. No offspring are known to have been born to Eli and Abigail Maginn.

²⁸⁰ Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 112.

Eli P. Maginn survives, his name was not forgotten among those he influenced most. And, perhaps surprisingly, the histories created by non-Latter-day Saint Peterborough chroniclers decades after Maginn's retreat from the Contoocook River Valley considered him and his brief work in terms reserved for the unusual and extraordinary. Among the Mormons, numerous memoirs later written by those to whom he had introduced Mormonism briefly noted his influence in their lives, though these references never made it into official LDS Church annals.

His death in Lowell produced nary a mention, locally or beyond. A published "Necrology of Lowell," deaths of notable Lowellians, for 1844 includes nothing about the once influential elder.²⁸¹ Outside his death later being compiled with the city's official record, the only other remnant of Eli P. Maginn in Lowell was merely a sentimental one. In 1849, preparing for westward immigration to Utah, George W. Wilkins, another to whom Maginn had delivered the good news, wrote: "I planted a pine tree at the foot of his grave before I left for the west."²⁸² Not much of a monument, but it was a gesture indicating remembrance of a significant pioneer of Mormonism in New England, fleeting as his reputation has proven to be.

²⁸¹ Cowley, *Illustrated History of Lowell*, 214.

²⁸² Note on letter from J. F. Brennan to Naamah and C. T. Young, March 18, 1908, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Collection, MCHC.

While a cemetery was established in Lowell in 1841, with grounds "laid out after the French style, combing therewith somewhat of the English mode of landscaping gardening," it is not known if the itinerant Maginn found rest there or not. Inquiries of the Lowell, Massachusetts, city department of Parks, Recreation, and Cemeteries confirm that a cemetery record for Eli P. Maginn's burial exists, but it does not indicate in which Lowell cemetery he is buried, nor do they have any "way of finding out where he is." Cowley, *Illustrated History of Lowell*, 123; Victoria Turlis, Principle Clerk, letter to author, September 16, 2003, Lowell, Massachusetts.