

## LOST MORMONS

*Lyman D. Platt*

Martha Love was a good-looking young woman of Irish descent who was living in Nauvoo in 1844. Where did she come from? Under what circumstances did she join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? What were her feelings about brother Sanderson whose family she followed when they moved to St. Louis in 1845? Where did she go when brother Sanderson died 13 September 1845?

Sidney Rigdon's sons Algernon and John stopped in St. Louis with the family on their way to Pittsburgh to visit friends. "The last conversation that I had with them as we were saying goodbye, the boys declared that they would return to the church and knowing that they were at the time sincere, I expected for some years to hear from them, but was disappointed." (*Autobiography of Henry W. Sanderson*, p. 12)

Wilkins J. Salisbury and his wife, Catherine Smith, sister of the Prophet, were married in January of 1831. Wilkins was a member of the First Quorum of Seventy. He was schooled as an attorney. After the Mormon Exodus, they lived at Plymouth and Webster in Hancock County. He worked as a blacksmith. He died in Webster of typhoid fever on 28 October 1853. Catherine died in 1900. Both are buried in the Webster Cemetery. (*History of Hancock County*, p. 124)

The history of Hancock County says, "Many of the Mormons remained in this area, refusing to follow Brigham Young in the 1846 exodus to Utah. A great number of the families now living in this area are descendants of the Mormons who never left. . . . Some of these are the Salisburys, Millikins, Ellisons, Lamberts, Stevensons, Pilkingtons, and Siegfrieds. Many others possibly could also be named." (*Ibid.*, p. 210)

William Adams in 1877 says, "On my travels through Iowa I found many Saints who had left Nauvoo, and had settled down by the way, whose families had grown up and married into outside families and did not know how to leave them and gather with the Saints. . . . I met a number that was firm in the faith and would gather to the valleys of the mountains." (*Biography of William Adams*, p. 32)

The 1851 census of Ontario Province in Canada lists 245 persons as Mormons, scattered through twenty-three counties. Some of these were in well-organized branches of the church and remained faithful. Others died there. What was the name of the eight-year-old son of Cyrus and Lucinda Hunt who died by choking to death in 1851? What of John Ward, whose wife was of nonreligious preference and his children were Methodists? He was the only Mormon in Huron County, yet he declared his belief. Did he die in full fellowship? What of the twelve Mormons dispersed in six counties in Quebec Province in 1851? Did they remain faithful?

These are only a few examples of hundreds, undoubtedly thousands, whose personal spirits were touched with the message of the restored gospel when it was preached to them, and who for one reason or another were unable to gather with the Saints in the Rocky Mountains. Their identity is important. Their loss was critical to the vitality of the early church. Some of the descendants of early Mormon pioneer couples who made it to Utah are now reaching into the 30, 40, and 50,000s. If the total number of descendants of these lost families were known, it would stagger the imagination of most of us.