

## HISTORY OF ABIGAIL SMITH ABBOTT

*Maurine Carr Ward*

The 1842 Nauvoo School Records were listed in Volume one of *The Nauvoo Journal*. One of those schools was taught by Abigail Abbott. The school was at her residence in the Nauvoo 1st Ward on lot 23 in a log house near the upper stone house in Old Commerce. She taught forty-six students between April 19, 1842 and July 29, 1842. Who was Abigail Abbott? The following records or excerpts provide a glimpse into one of Nauvoo's school teachers:

### AUTOBIOGRAPHY<sup>1</sup>

I, Abigail Smith Abbott, have this day, February 4, 1856, in Ogden, Utah, commenced an autobiography of myself; to be preserved by my household and heirs as a sacred memorial of my moral worth, perhaps to the latest generation of my posterity, by whom I wish to be held in honorable remembrance.



ABIGAIL SMITH ABBOTT

I was born in the town of Williamson, Ontario County, New York, September 11, 1806.<sup>2</sup> My mother, Lydia Harding Smith died when I was six weeks old and my father married Mehitable Adams when I was nine months old. . . .

At seventeen I was taught to be somewhat religious, although my father did not belong to any religious

denomination, yet he was a very moral man. I generally said my prayers in secret and my desires for my own salvation were but known to myself. For some time I experienced great anxiety pertaining to the salvation of my soul. My prayers were answered with a dream. I dreamed that I was on a high, elevated plain which was a beautiful green. Standing alone and at a little distance from me, I saw a large company of people arrayed entirely in white apparel, who seemed to be marching at a slow pace, singing a song that sounded more glorious than any song I had ever heard before. I was filled with rapture and anxiety to learn the song and be associated with them. I did not go to them but learned one verse of the song. I awoke and sung this song and recited it to my friends and told them my dream. The song was erased from my memory and from that time on I have not been able to recall it.

I went to visit my uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Smith, who lived in Allegheny County. I had learned to be a good linen weaver, and Mrs. James Abbott, Senior, hearing about me, offered me a job weaving linen, which I accepted. I remained there until I was married to her son, Stephen Abbott, on December 11, 1825, at the age of nineteen. . . .

On the second of April 1826, we moved to Danville, New York. My husband went into the cabinet making business with Samuel A. Smith, which lasted two years. Mr. Abbott bought out his partner and engaged in partnership with his brother, James Abbott. At about this time there was a great upheaval in all the churches that spread from town to town and city to city until the sound went through the United States. Early in 1830, the news was circulated from press to press about the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith. At this time we moved to Hornellsville, living there six years. Mr. Abbott went west to Perry, Pike County, Illinois and purchased a quarter section of land. . . . We started on the 14th of April, 1837, traveling from Olean Point down the Allegheny River on a flat boat to Illinois and landed at Naples, twelve miles from our new home. This journey took us five weeks. Through the summer we built our home and cultivated our land. The second day of December our youngest son was born. A

promising child indeed, to be blessed with a strange land. We enjoyed good health and prospered from year to year.

Mr. Abbott and myself had the opportunity of investigating the principles of the Gospel called Mormonism. We were instructed by Joseph Wood and William Burton. Our minds were not easily turned from our former principles, but after three months' study, we were in full faith of the principles and promises of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We moved to Nauvoo in the fall of 1842, shortly after we were baptized. My husband worked in Nauvoo and on the river until October 1843, when he became ill with pneumonia and died<sup>3</sup> October 19. At the time of his death he was preparing to go on his second mission. Joseph Smith, the prophet, spoke at his funeral and said that he had been called on the other side to fill his mission.<sup>4</sup>

After Mr. Abbott's death there was nine months' sickness in my family that exhausted our money, compelling myself and the three eldest daughters to seek work. I took a small group of children to teach, besides fencing and tilling one and one-half acres of land. [In May of 1846 when the Saints were leaving Nauvoo, Abigail took her family moved first to Keokuk, then to Garden Grove, Iowa. Here she also taught school during the winter of 1846-47. In 1848 the family moved to Winter Quarters, then crossed the Missouri River to live on Mosquito Creek. Here Abigail taught school again.]

On the 6th of July 1849, I gathered my children together, eight in all, and one son-in-law, and started for the valley of the mountains in George A. Smith's company. As we had to walk across the plains, I made moccasins for my children to wear, as I did not know when I would get shoes for them again. We came in contact with many Indians but were never harmed by them, for instead of fighting them everyone gave them food.

Four months to the day we arrived in Salt Lake. We went to Ogden [Weber County] on October 26, 1849 where we had friends and took ten acres of land for a farm. We built a three-room log house with a dirt roof. I got some cows that the people were not using and made cheese and butter, selling it to people going through the country to the California gold mines. In 1857 Johnston's army was sent to Utah which proved to be a blessing in disguise. We exchanged butter, eggs, chickens and cheese for sugar, flour and clothing. After the harrowing time we lived in Nauvoo, we praised God for giving us the beautiful and peaceful valley of the mountains, Utah.

#### AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MYRON ABBOTT

1834, about this time a man by the name of Joseph Wood, a Mormon Elder came in that vicinity [Perry, Pike, Illinois] preaching the gospel of Christ. My Father went to hear him preach and embraced the gospel. . . . My father moved to Nauvoo in the year 1842. In the spring of 1843 he was called on a mission to the Southern States and in order to fill his mission, he in company with some other brethren went to rafting lumber down the Mississippi River to obtain means for their families to live upon. Through the exposure being in the water the most of the time he took cold and died on the 16th of October 1843 leaving my mother and eight children depending on her for support. . . . He was a true Latter Day Saint, ever willing and ready to respond to every call that was made of him by the authority of the church, and was much respected by all who knew him, he owned some town property, he owned some stock in the Nauvoo house, done work on the Nauvoo Temple, he also owned part of some property at the upper stone Landing on the Mississippi River, it was owned by him and Liman White [Lyman Wight].

My mother was a woman of poor health and the trials and trouble that she had to undergo in privations of every description. Many times we were all prostrated upon beds of sickness with fever and ague, and not one of us able to help the other to a drink of water, and many times not having anything to eat.

In the year 1846 at the time the Saints were expelled from Nauvoo, a man came to our house and told my mother that he would give her ten dollars for our property if she would leave the furniture and give the Deeds to him. Mother told him that was a very small sum for so much property. His reply was you have got to leave any how and you can take that or nothing.

. . . in the fall [1847] we moved to Garden Grove, here we spent the winter, the little cabin with my sister Emily (her husband, Edward Bunker, was with the Mormon Battalion). My mother taught school all winter, wading through snow to her knees for about one mile and a half and then many times washing until ten o'clock at night, taking care of the sick and myself drug wood to burn from the timber to burn with rags sowed on my feet for shoes.

In the spring of 1848 mother got a piece [of] brush land to clean up. She got a young man to mow the brush down with a brush sythe. Mother and I and sister Lydia piled the brush and burned the brush and got a man to plow it and I harrowed it into Buck wheat all of which she payed out of

her school bill. We raised about fifteen bushels of buck wheat and we thought ourselves rich. We then had two cows to give us milk. . . . In the fall of 48 we moved to Winter quarters.

#### JOURNAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH<sup>6</sup>

Abigail crossed the plains in Captain George A. Smith's 4th Company in 1849. The outfitting post was Kanesville, Iowa, leaving July 4, 1849. This group included Captain Dan Jones' Welsh Company. There were 120 wagons which arrived in Salt Lake on October 27 and 28, 1849. The record shows Abigail, age 42, with 1 wagon, no horses, no mules, no ponies, 6 oxen, 2 cows, 2 loose cattle, no sheep, no pigs, no chickens, 1 cat, 1 dog, no ducks, no doves, 1 gun, no pistols, and no cattle died or strayed.

#### NOTES

1. Abigail Smith Abbott. "Autobiography." typescript in Utah State University Special Collections, Logan, Utah.
2. Abigail died in Willard, Box Elder. Utah on July 23, 1889 at the age of eighty-two.
3. *Nauvoo Neighbor*, Wednesday, October 25, 1843, p. 3, shows the deaths for the week ending Monday the 23rd, including Stephen Abbott, 39 years, remitting fever.
4. Lois E. Jones, one of Abigail's descendants wrote how Abigail felt about leaving her husband's burial spot in Nauvoo: "She has said, 'I had no means to erect a monument, or even a slab to mark my beloved one's grave, but I planted some morning glories on the grave and left him there to sleep and rest.'"
5. 1849 Supplement, p. 8E, Salt Lake Historical Department.

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#### NAUVOO TEMPLE PRAYER CIRCLE

The following are names of the Brethren who composed the first Prayer Circle held in the Nauvoo Temple, 20 January 1846 [copied from the Journal of Samuel Whitney Richards].

Zebudee Coltrin  
 Wandal Mace  
 William Anderson  
 Benjamin Brown  
 Curtis E. Bolton  
 Abel Lamb  
 John Coltrin  
 Phinehas Richards  
 Levi Richards  
 John Loveless  
 F. D. Richards  
 Charles Patten  
 Graham Coltrin  
 Thomas B. Richards  
 Samuel W. Richards

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