

## THE 1845 DIARY OF CLAUDIUS VICTOR SPENCER

*Maurine Carr Ward*

One year ago, a small diary was purchased by the Special Collections Department of Utah State University. Actually, it was only two months of a diary—25 January 1845 to 18 February 1845—and it appeared to have been torn from a larger account. No name is attached to the diary; however, some clues as to its author are evident.<sup>1</sup>

The content of the journal suggests that it was written by a young man in his late teens or early twenties. On Friday, 7 February, he penned these words: “[W]ent to Major Roes. Told his Wife that My name was Spencer that I came from Nauvoo.” Young Spencer lived with his father and mother and, apparently, with a brother or someone named Gilbert.

### The Spencer Families in Nauvoo

So the author of the diary could be determined, the Spencer families living in Nauvoo during the time of the diary had to be identified.

Daniel Spencer and his wife, Chloe Wilson, were from West Stockbridge, Berkshire, Massachusetts. Their son, Daniel Jr., was the first to become interested in the strange, new Mormon sect. When he chose to join with this religion, his father and mother and Baptist minister brother, Orson, chose not to associate with him further. Daniel Jr. continued to tell them of his beliefs, though, and soon baptized Orson and another brother, Hiram, and their families. Eventually, Daniel Sr., Chloe, and the families of their three sons were all in Nauvoo, Illinois. Chloe died in Nauvoo in 1843. Her husband died there in November 1844.

All three of the Spencer sons were involved in building not only the Church but also the cities where the Saints resided. Hiram<sup>2</sup> died in August 1846 near Mt. Pisgah, Iowa. Daniel Jr. paid tribute to Hiram while

describing his death:<sup>3</sup>

I wish here to make affectionate and honorable mention of my brother Hyrum, whose life before association with our people, and his devotion and loyalty after joining them, were worthy of the highest praise. He was as brave in spirit as he was powerful in physique. He left Nauvoo with the first out-going Saints as captain of fifty in the company organized under my presidency. During the journey from Nauvoo to Garden Grove he organized the labor force of the camp, and took contracts from the settlers bordering our route of travel, to chop timber, split rails, etc., thereby procuring sustenance for the camp and acquiring other much needed means for the feeble and ailing. The next morning after his arrival at Garden Grove he voluntarily started back to Nauvoo. Through great efforts he succeeded in emigrating several poor families, and also sold some of the property left by the three Spencer brothers, taking payment in stock cattle. Immediately trumped up writs and attachments were issued to hold the property until the mob which was gathering should come into Nauvoo. By almost superhuman exertions he escaped with the cattle and means—crossing the Mississippi sixty miles above Nauvoo, while the sheriff and posse were waiting to intercept him forty miles below the city—and all but reached the camp of the Saints at Mount Pisgah; though he did so as a martyr, his exposures, anxieties and labors having killed him. He died some miles east of the settlement, and the body was brought there for burial.

Orson Spencer<sup>4</sup> was a graduate from Union College in Schenectady, New York. He became a school teacher and also began to study law—but instead found an inter-

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est in religion. He then joined the Baptist Church, the church of his parents. Upon graduation from a theological college in Hamilton, New York, he served as a Baptist minister for twelve years before affiliating with the Mormons in 1841. Orson lost his wife, Catherine Curtis, in March 1846 at Indian Creek, Iowa, on their exodus from Nauvoo. Brigham Young then called Orson on a mission to Great Britain, leaving six small children, all under the age of thirteen. Later, in the Salt Lake Valley, Orson became the chancellor of the new University of Deseret. In 1852, he went on a second mission to Europe, returned home in 1853, and then labored in the United States mission until 1855. He moved to St. Louis, where he was the editor of the *St. Louis Luminary*, published by the Church. While in St. Louis, he was called on a mission to the Cherokee Nation but became ill with "chills and fever" and returned to St. Louis where he died 15 October 1855.<sup>5</sup>

Daniel Jr.<sup>6</sup> worked at his father's farm as a youth but desired to become a merchant. By the time he joined the LDS Church, he had a successful store. While in Nauvoo, Daniel served two missions, was on the city council, and was voted as the mayor of Nauvoo at the death of Joseph Smith. Daniel acted as a bishop at the Missouri River and led a company across the plains to the Salt Lake Valley. There, he again engaged in various business ventures, became involved in the legislature, and was one of the original members of the board of regents of the University of Deseret. He was called as president of the Salt Lake Stake for nineteen years and was first counselor in the British Mission presidency for three years. Daniel died in Salt Lake City on 8 December 1868.<sup>7</sup>

#### The Diarist

Two of the Spencer families had sons who may have authored the little journal. Charles Henry Spencer, the son of Hiram and Mary, was born in December 1827 and would have been age seventeen. Writings in the diary and other accounts, however, point to twenty-year-old Claudius Victor Spencer, the son of Daniel Jr., or Sophronia as the author. Specifically, the diary of the father, Daniel,<sup>8</sup> for the period from 25 January 1845 through 18 February 1845 parallels the unidentified journal. Also, Daniel was married at the time to his second wife, Sarah Lester Van Schoonoven, and had adopted her son by a previous marriage, a boy named Gilbert.

Who then was Claudius Spencer?<sup>9</sup> Other questions might also be asked. Where is the rest of his journal? How was his life shaped by the early Church environment and his Spencer heritage? The following information summarizes his life:

Claudius Victor Spencer was born 2 April 1825 in West Stockbridge, Berkshire, Massachusetts. His mother, Sophronia, died when he was seven years old. Two years later, his father remarried, giving Claudius a stepbrother named Gilbert who was two and a half years younger.<sup>10</sup>

Claudius moved to Nauvoo with his father's family in the early 1840s. One day in January 1843, Heber C. Kimball gathered a group of young people to his home to warn them of the evils and temptations around them. The next week, the group met in Lorin Farr's schoolroom, where they studied the scriptures and were exhorted to keep good company and remain pure from the evils of the world. After several more such meetings, Joseph Smith advised them to organize themselves into a society for the relief of the poor. William Cutler was selected president. Andrew Cahoon, Claudius Spencer, and Stephen Perry were asked to draft the organization's constitution, which was accepted on 28 March.<sup>11</sup>

Claudius drove the first team in his father's wagon company between Winter Quarters, Nebraska, and Salt Lake City in 1847. There, like his father, he farmed the ground. They also formed a partnership with Jacob Gates and Jesse C. Little in a ranch in Rush Valley, central Utah—until they were forcibly removed by the soldiers from Camp Floyd in March 1859. Claudius also followed his father in civic and government interests. Claudius was a member of the territorial assembly and of the Salt Lake City Council, serving for many years as supervisor of the streets in the city.

The Mormon Church was always dear to Claudius. He served two missions to Great Britain. He was given the charge of 350 Saints on the ship *Manchester* as it sailed from Liverpool to New York in April and May 1861. From June to September 1853, Claudius led a group of 250 saints from Kanesville, Iowa, to Salt Lake. He was a president of the Thirty-Seventh Quorum of Seventy when it was organized and was a stake patriarch at his death.

He was married five times. His first wife was his cousin, Maria Antoinette Spencer, daughter of Hiram and Mary Spencer. His other wives were Georgiana King, Susannah Francis Neslen, Louisa King, and Matilda Price.

Claudius built a large home, known as the "Spencer House," at 252 South State Street in Salt Lake City. The house later became the home of many of the federal officials in the valley and was a point of interest for tourists. His home for twenty-nine years was on Social Hall Avenue, less than a quarter of a mile from his first home. He was eighty-six when he died there on 5 January 1910.

This skeletal history of Claudius is brief and does not disclose his personality and character. Following are four more intimate, personal accounts from his life. The first is the two-month journal written in 1845 from Nauvoo.

#### Journal of Claudius Spencer, 25 January-18 February 1845

##### Saturday, January 25th 1845

Rose Early in the Morning—the Weather mild. Went to Fillmores<sup>12</sup> With Hayt Hendrix and ~~w~~ H Spencer to get Wood and Timber for to Fix the Bridgs on the New Laharp Road the Supervisor not being there wee couled not accomplish our object went to Pattent Land and got a Load of Wood when I returned found Mr Sperry<sup>13</sup> at our house, Brother Brigham Young Called in the Evning and took tea with us Paid Father 2 Soverings, left an Appointment to Preach at the Musick Hall, on the Morrow

##### Sunday 26th

Rose Early in the Morning, The Weather mild. done my choores, attended Meeting at the Musick Hall. heard instructions from Patriarch John Smith—also from H[eber] Kimble they spoke of the Nesessity of Union, in Families, and exhorted Parents to bee agreed in all things and teach their children to Pray, exhorted members to treat their Presidents with respect, in the afternoon I heard from Mr Houston and Tailor<sup>14</sup> that the Charter was repealed. remarked that it was a good Licence for the Mob went to the Concert Hall in the evning<sup>15</sup>

##### Monday 27th

The Weather Cold and Cloudy—spent the Day in drawing sand for the Temple; had much sport with the Workmen, Last Load the men nearly filled my Box—told them it was to much Load must throw out som Mr. Weldon took out nearly a Pint and said [inserted above line] the order was obeyed. I drove it to the Temple. ~~Fath~~ Alpheus Cuttler remarked that I always [unclear] drew big loads. in the Evening Alpheus Cuttler[,] Reynalds Cahoon[,] O. Spencer and thier Wives visited at our house. I had the Pleasure of Waiting on them. made this book in the Evning

##### Tuesday 28th

Rose early in the morning. the Weather Cold and Pleasant, Got the Team Ready for my Father to Go to Carthage in Company with John Williams O[rrison] Spencer. D[aniel] Hendrix and Mr Wilky for the Purpos of having my Grandmothers<sup>16</sup> Will Proved.<sup>17</sup> Spent the forenoon in Study—in the afternoon carried Mother and Lowesa Hendrix—to Deools [Deuel's]. Kept house allone. Mr. Fillmore[,] [Samuel] Bent called to knok [know?] wat action wouled be taken in regard to the Charter Mr Fillmore thought that if wee wer to act. ~~that~~ without an immediate [inserted above the line] appeal that Warrents wouled bee issued for the Mayor Alderman and Councelors—and if not given up

##### Wendsday 29th

The Weather Clear and coole. went to the Farm with Team—drawed 35 Rails, Mr. Sperry went out and looked at the Farm. wee got home about 1.O.C. [one o'clock] spent the after part of the Day in study. in the Evening Borrowed a grammar of L Hendrix she took tea at our house. William Hendrix hurt his arm playing with Gilbert. Gilbert and Father Went to Brewsters to Meeting; 28th took one pair of Sheep Skin Mittings of James Hendrix to apply on what he owed us.

Active Transitive Verbs Govern the objective Case. A Verb must agree with its Nomnitave Case in number and person

##### Thursday 30th

The Weather Pleasant Drawed 5 Loads of Wood



*Claudius Victor Spencer*

from Rigins<sup>18</sup> Lot, called to see William Hendrix—had an introduction to Mr and Misses More. heard the report concerning the Wether being collord like Blood. 15 Doogs wer killed in the City so reported. City Council met in the afternoon Resolved to support the Charter—~~in~~ by every Legal and Honorable means. Father and Mother went to Cahoon to Meeting. (2d quorum of 70<sup>ies</sup> meet at the Concert Hall. Mr Sperry staid with us. Retired to Bed—10 O Clock)

Friday 31st

The Weather Cold and Cloudy. drawed on Load Wood for Colton from Hunters Lot Returned Library Book. Notes on Mexico. Drawed the Life of Napoleon. Finished Hauling Wood from Rigins Lot—in the Evning Mother Went to Meeting at Houstens. Lowesa Hendrix[,] Jane Coner[,]<sup>19</sup> Mr Sperry and Daniel Hendrix took Tea with us, in the Afternoon.

In the Evening helped Father Write a Letter to M

Reese<sup>20</sup>

Satuday Feb 1st 1845

Rose Early in the Morning Went to Drawing Hay. Hauled 3 Loads Before Noon. Mr Phineas Richards Took Dinar With us—saw Mr Shumway<sup>21</sup> Who had just Returned from his Mission to Brown County. he thought ther was no Danger from Mobbers in that County. Staid one Night With a Mobercrat who said that ther Was 4000 men signed to Drive the Mormons in the Spring. Sevrel Meetings Wer held Millitary Balls so Called Wer held at Warsaw No Ladies allowed to bee Present. in the Afternoon drawed Load of Hay took a Ride with D an[d] A Cahoon

Sunday 2d

Went To Musick Hall heard Brigham Young Preach into the Evning Went To Orsons to Borrow Baggs. Betsy Hendrix[,] Miss Fora and Miss Chase was there. had an introduction to Miss Chase attended Singing School returned home at intermision

Monday 3d

Started for Warsaw at 1/2 7 arrived at about 11 O Clock. spent about 2 1/2 hours in purchishing Bran,<sup>22</sup> had some co[n]versation with a Gentleman concerning the Death of Joseph and Hyrum Smith he appeared to think it did not concern him. Bought 27 bushel of Shorts 8<sup>cts</sup> per bushel—8 bran[,] 5 bushel of Shipings—16<sup>cts</sup> per bush started for Nauvoo 1/2 1 O Clock arrived at about 6 in the Evening. City Election was held 845 Votes Poled for O Spencer Mayor Daniel Spencer Alderman Mr Harris Mr Rich and Whitney

Tuesday 4th

The Weather verry cold, mended baggs. heard of the Death of Mr Whitneys Purchased 6<sup>cts</sup> Worth of Camphor of Judah called at James Hendrix. found Catherin much afflicted with the Headach. Returned Baggs that was borrowed of Clark and O Spencer. also a History that belonged to Chloe Spencer

Wendsday 5th

Drawed 1 Load of Wood for Mr Colton also 5 load of Stone for Arsenal—Went to Quorum meeting Signed 4 dollars for the Building of President Youngs House

Thursday 6th

Attended Brother [Alonzo Wells] Whitneys Funeral—Br Young Preached a good Discourse.<sup>23</sup> I went to the Grave Yard With our Team, Paid Blacksmith 6 1/4<sup>cts</sup> for drilling hole in End of Waggon Tong

Friday 7th

Started for Mack Queens Mill to buy Corn.<sup>24</sup> Arrived at Gidians Mound at 11 OClock spent about 1 hour in making trades had an invitation to take dinner did not accept it Sold the old Lady 8 yds of Callico at 20<sup>c</sup> per yd which cost 7<sup>c</sup> per yd took Corn at 25<sup>cts</sup> per bushel—inquired the Road to the Mill went out of my Road—called at Mr Logans tried to sell a Shawl did not succede went to Major Roes. told his Wife that My name was [inserted above line] Spencer that I came from Narvoo and woled [would] like to Buy a Load of Corn and Stay over the Night with them the Major was in the other Room Sick with the Headach I told him my Business—he said he had no Corn to sell for trade Directed me to go to Squaier Edmunds about 3 Miles from thare it was Nearly Night he did not ask me to stay with him bid me Goode N-day in a distant manner. I returned the Compliment and left the house very independantly. arrived at Sqr Edmunds a litle before Sunsett. tried tried [sic] to sell som goods for Corn couled not doo it they appeared to bee an Ignorent filthy Family. he remarked that the Mormons had got to Work fight or steal for a living as the people and State had gone against them directed me to go to Jim Jidens [?] which was 2 Miles distant. I Started and arrived thare at dark. or Near it asked permission of the Womman to stay all Night Sh let me stay I had first rate accommodations charged me 3 1/2<sup>cts</sup>. Paid 1 yd and a half of callico 9<sup>cts</sup> in money this made me about 30 Miles travail

Saturday 8th

Rose Early in the Morning went to Mr Richardsons to buy Corn for Goods found him at Brekfast after he had finished I told him my buisness (Says he Young Man I will apprise you of one fact and then see if you can sell me Goods—I own an Interest in a Store) this was a curve I inquired whare wouled bee the best place to buy Grain and he directed me some 2 miles from his house. I started went about 1/2 way—I did not feel clear in going turned My team

about went back by his Door went over the Mound that I stopt on the Day before went to Logans asked 4 dollars for Shawl finally agreed to throw off a bit they offerd me \$3.75 I took them up—the Shawl cost 1.75. I got ready to start for home about 12 oClock arrived about 4 in the afternoon.

Sunday 9th

Attended Meeting at 70<sup>ies</sup> Hall in the Evening went to Masonick Hall heard J[ohn] E Page Preach he spoke on the differance in true and false Religion Exhorted the Saints to Obey Counsel

Monday 10th

Father General C C Rich[,] Orson and Cather[in]e Spencer went to carthage they gave their Bonds as Alderman of the City. Miss Catherin Walker called to see if she couled hire out for the summer.

Tuesday 12th [11th]

drawed load of Wood from Rigins lot took it to Seventies Hall in the Afternoon Drawed 3 Loads of Stone for Amasa Lyman. Mr Ele[in]k smudge] was taken for the Muder of Joseph Smith.<sup>25</sup>

Wednesday 13th [12th]

drawed 5 Load of Stone for Amasa Lyman in the Evening attended Quorum Meeting The first Quorum of Seventies that ever met with their Wives. heard Remarkes from President J[oseph] Young[,] Renalds Cahoon. Br Young told the Bretheren not to anticipatete to much happiness for those that anticipate things somtimes get Disampointed. Mr Elliot had his trial before Mr Johnson. was committed to Jail—taken to Carthage in the Night

Thursday 14th [13th]

The Weather Cool and Cloudy drawed 2 Loads of Stone for A Lyman It Rained so that I had to stop—in the ~~Evening~~ Afternoon Father and Mother Went to James Hendrix a visiting Spent the Evning at home

Friday 15th [14th]

The Weather Warm and Rainy Rose about daylight very Sick with the Sick head Ach. went to my Fathers' bedside and had him lay hands on my head. I got som relief. In A short time Father got up and lid on hands again. got more relief but continued unwell through the Day<sup>26</sup>—Mr Spery took Dinner

and supper with us. took a horse to keep for Mr Lancaster Gibbert [Gilbert] carried the History of Napolian Bonapart to the Library for me also one Book for Orson. I spent the Evening at home

Saturday Feb 15th 1845

The Weather cold my health improved Gibbert and Father drewd 2 loads from ~~lower~~ upper steam Mill for Jenkins<sup>27</sup>, in the afternoon Gibbert drewd Stone for Amasa Lyman, which finished Paying up the \$5,00 Subscription I attended Fencing School. kept by E. Elsworth Spent the Evening at home in Study—

Sunday 16th of Feb 1845

The Weather Verry pleasant Attended Meeting at the ~~Seventies~~ Concert Hall heard a discourse From Orson Pratt on the Previous Existance of Man, Mr Pratt thought It might be Possible that Man had a Law given him and that he had free agency to Obey or Disobey that Law, and that Penalties wer affixed. did not know but the different Situations in which wee see Mankind Situated might bee owing to the differance of conduct in the previous state of Existance

Monday 17th 1845

The Weather warm Bought Leather for Boots Paid Mr Horn \$1,00 in Money. in the afternoon attended Mechanics Meeting<sup>28</sup> Brother Taylor said that for one he wanted to see the people of Nauvoo free. If they was persecuted by Mobs without he wanted to see them free from embarresment at home—this is as the statement as near as I can recolect spent the Evening at D. Cahoons

Tuesday 18th 1845

The Weather Warm and Pleassant workd at home cleaning out yards and sawing Wood—Sq[ui]r[e] [Daniel] Wells and his Mother took Diner with us. Henriet Rice Mr Wright and Lady took Tea with us—at about 1/2 Past 6 O.C. P.M. [unclear] attended Concert in the Evening—

**Stories from the Reminiscences of Claudius Spencer**

The next three stories by Claudius are from his “Reminiscences” that he wrote in 1901 to teach his children that the heavens were not sealed from revelation—as claimed by Protestant religions. He concludes his

typescript with the words, “I affirm that the events I have written are true and I have placed my signature hereto this second day of April, four o’clock p.m., being the hour and the day of the month on which I was born, seventy seven years ago.” His signature then follows: C. V. Spencer, S L City, April 2d 1901.<sup>29</sup>

**A Wise Choice—[p.5]** In the fall of 1845 Brigham Young set me apart for an express mission. I filled the mission with good success, returning in the spring of 1846. When the steamer on which I came back struck the landing at Nauvoo I jumped ashore and started for our old home east of the Temple. On the way up I noticed there was a change, that I did not meet anyone I knew. When I reached the house I found it closed. After a time got a stick of timber and beat in the kitchen door got the front door open and while leaning on the front gate I saw three men coming across the square that fronted our home. One of them leading a pony, another one a coil of rope on his shoulder. When they got in hailing distance one hollered “Are you a g—d..Mormon” I answered back “It’s none of your business what my politics or religion is, I am free born and white” One of them said “I can understand youre the son of the old Mormon cuss we run across the Mississippi last winter. Now if you will sign an agreement to give up Mormonism we will guarantee peaceable possession of this home and you will do that or get on this mare pony and strike out for your Mormon camps or climb that cotton wood tree over there at the end of this forty foot rope and pulling out his watch said, you’ve just got fifteen minutes.” This home was a good two story brick, nicely furnished, with eastern furniture, a barn on the premises counted among the best in the state of Illinois. This property was by an arrangement made with me by my father build with money willed to me when a young boy. I accept these men’s offer of their poney and there and then made my start for Salt Lake City. In riding through a little burg in Iowa I asked three men to place a fair valuation on the pony which they fixed at \$15.00 That is every cent I have ever received for house and what left in it and a nice corner lot.

**Convincing the Ship Captain—[p.6]** In coming from England in 1853 with something over four hundred Saints, on the ship “Golconda” we were becalmed off the “Banks” and to break the monoto-

ny the Captain gave us the use of the "Quarter-deck" for a dance. It was a warm sun shiny day, and we were a very merry party, but in the midst of our merriment a restless, gloomy foreboding influence took strong hold of me so much so that I left the party and went by myself and asked the Lord to tell me what it meant, and if it was not a warning, to take the feeling away, but it increased, after a little season I lifted my hat and said "Father in Heaven, if trouble is imminent, let peace come to me when I state to the captain to take in sail" I had not taken five steps until I knew I was going right. I found the captain sitting by the helmsman and told him "I wanted him him [sic] to excuse a cowardly landlubber and take in some sail" He jumped to his feet and asked "Whose running this ship, him or me." I answered "You're running the ship but I am looking after the people." He got his speaking trumpet, hollered to the mate in the fore-castle "Crack up two more sails g.d.quick" At that time we had over two hundred Saints on the main deck, some singing, some sewing, enjoying themselves the best they could and a large number of us dancers on the quarter deck. There was not wind enough to fill a sail, not a cloud to intimate a storm. When the captain gave the order to the mate I told those around me to get below deck as quick as you can, there's trouble coming. They all started except Mrs. Hannah T. King, strong minded woman, new in the work, not used to preemptory orders. I had to personally press her to move. She was the last one to go and her feet were on the bottom step of the stairs when the first mast fell, just grazing her head. In the meantime I had jumped from the quarter deck and run to the mid ships and ordered every man, woman and child to wait for nothing, but get below in a hurry. In ten minutes every mast was torn out of the ship. We had been struck by a spent hurricane, off from the Islands [p. 7] without any earthly warning. If our people had remained above deck it would have been a terrible scene of suffering. As soon as the excitement was over several of us waited on the captain, told him we had two or three sea captains aboard, several sailors and that with the masts and rigging careening the ship to nearly an angle of forty we were liable to sink at any moment a wind or swell struck us, but with his permission we believed we could save the ship. He turned over the key of the carpenter shop and the whole management to us. The next morning

when I met the captain with tears streaming from his eyes he asked "What does such things mean" "I told him it meant God was gathering Israel in the last days and sent his servants with them to care for them" He said "Mr. Spencer, you can run this ship to New Orleans" And he used to come regularly day by day and ask me "If everything was right, or if I had any suggestion to make." After the captain gave us control we soon cut loose masts, and rigging and we saved enough timber to make "jury masts" and after about seven weeks reached New Orleans.

**Obtaining Funds and Supplies for Utah Emigration**<sup>30</sup>—[p. 8] I went on a mission to England fall, 1860. On account of ill health was released to return spring, 1861. Appointed to take charge of ship load of Saints. In going up the Missouri the President or Business Manager of the Overland Stage route to San Francisco was aboard our boat. Just before we reached Omaha he came to me and complimented me very highly for my kindness to the emigrants in my charge and gave me an invitation so soon as I unloaded my people at Florence to come back to Omaha and be his guest to Salt Lake City, stating that he had a magnificent outfit, fine stage coach, hunting horses, fishing tackle and every paraphernalia for a right royal trip. I thought this a big thing for a Mormon elder and when I had unloaded and housed my Saints I called on Elder Gates, who was presiding to bid him good bye. He said to me "Don't be in a hurry, take a seat, I want to read you a letter" which he did. It was from President Brigham Young, authorizing Brother Gates to stop any returning Elders to be his assistant or councillor, and after reading it said, I choose to stop Elder C. V. Spencer. The Saints I brought over were mostly "Independents" and had paid to the General Office at Liverpool for their outfit to cross the plains and expected to find tents, wagons, covers, etc. at Florence on their arrival, but through some mistake there was nothing to shelter them or feed them and in a few days grave dissatisfaction was shown, some of them going to the lawyers, judges, doctors, etc. to make complaints and it rested very heavy on me and Brother Gates, so much so on him that it made him ill. I used to go up nights on to the highest hill, dressed in a certain way and supplicate for some relief to be opened up. At one of these times it came to me as plain as any voice

“Go to Mr. Creighton, who is building the Overland Telegraph Line and hire all your surplus men and get the pay in advance and with it buy your emigrants their fit-out.” I immediately went to the house, up to Brother Gates’ bedside, but he seemed to think I had zeal without knowledge and asked me if I had gone dazed over the matter. [p.9] I finally persuaded him to let me have Zera Sabin and an outfit to go into Missouri to buy cattle and we would go to Omaha to Creighton and if successful keep on our trip, if not successful, we would come back from Omaha and not much harm done. I found Mr. Creighton in his office and our men were just what he wanted and I made a good bargain, he taking two hundred pounds freight per each hand he hired. At the conclusion of the terms I said “Mr. Creighton, I want their pay in advance” He jumped from the seat, walked up and down the room quite excited and in turning to me said “Have I been doing business with a crazy man.” I answered “Perhaps so, it looks like it, for my partner asked me this morning just about the same question.” He then asked me if I knew what telegraph scrip was worth? I told him No and he said “It was worth twelve cents on the dollar. I could have the wages advanced in scrip at one hundred cents.” I told him “I would see him in a short time again.”

Now at this time there was a man in Omaha almost the facsimile of our John Kay, who had come to me before we got to Omaha and said I’ve fallen in love with you for the patience and kindness you show your poor emigrants and if I can do anything for you while you’re at Florence, call on me. I said to him “Suppose I call you on a mission” He answered “All right” Now just after I left Creighton’s office I met this man and slapping him on the shoulder said “You’re the man I want, I want you to go on a Mormon mission” He said “All right, Spencer, I’ll go.

I then told him that I wanted him to go to Kountze Brothers, Bankers, and get them to cash so many thousand dollars telegraph scrip at par. He took it as a joke, but when I pressed the matter begged of me not to ask of him to do such a fool trick. I told him I had two motives, one was to test his word, the other to learn him there was a power in Mormonism. He accepted the mission and soon came back stating that Kountze Bros. and the force of the bank were in

a roar of laughter and [p.10] Kountze, Sr. said he would like to see the man who proposed such a financial act. I said to him very well. We went at one to the bank. When I entered the banker wanted to know what I meant. I answered “Mr. Gates whom I represent, is agent of the Mormon emigration, he will have some thirty five thousand dollars in English sovereigns and there will be that amount or more in the hands of our emigrants to spend at some point on the river and we supposed that capitalists in Omaha would be anxious to have it spent in their town, that I was not asking any charity for our people, that perhaps no one knew better than he did that a month after the first telegram passed from San Francisco to New York that telegraph scrip would not only be par, but ten per cent above that” I simply asked him to make a good investment and secure our trade for his town, that I was confident I could do this at Nebraska City, and if not successful with him we should move our headquarters to that city within forty eight hours. By this time he had become serious and said “Mr. Spencer, I will have a conference with my brothers” He soon came out and offered to cash the scrip at par if I would pay the difference of exchange between Omaha and St. Louis. I answered No sir, not one cent. Its a clean face value or nothing. We closed the deal. When I got back to Creighton and accepted scrip and told him what I had done, he was dumbfounded, and I was recognized in that town as something of a financier, but I carried my head low, feeling that God could compel results through a humble weak man that would follow the leadings of the Spirit where he could not use an able strong man so well.

I and Brother Sabin started immediately for Missouri for cattle. We found a herd of twelve hundred head of oxen. I purchased four hundred head for cash, four hundred head on credit. As soon as I received the cattle I began to retail and sold many yoke on the road to camp for seventy five dollars. If my memory is right, the purchase price was fifty two dollars. While arranging [p.11] the scrip deal at Omaha a man offered me a lot of wagons that belonged to a Chicago firm who had failed and he was anxious to be rid of these wagons before they were levied on. I think his price was sixty five dollars and I believe my offer was fifty. I gave him an hour to telegraph to Chicago. He brought telegram

to my room and sitting some way from me read "We authorize you to sell for so much" I said to him "I will read the balance of the message with my eyes shut" If you can't get the figure, take the Mormon's offer spot cash. He exclaimed "Those are the very words, I believe you folks are wizards" I got the wagons, sent word to Brother Gates to move them at once to Florence; we were off for the cattle and the disaffection in camp was healed and from that time on success crowned our labor. Every emigrant that was to come by handcarts that was able to work earned wages of Creighton and fared well. Their families came by wagons, comfortable, without one cent extra expense to the church. No handcarts were pulled that year and I don't think any have been pulled since. We left no debts for the church to pay but the morning we were starting for home the sheriff of Omaha served a writ of attachment on our outfit for a debt of Joseph W. Young, three hundred dollars, which we paid.

### Conclusion

What importance should be placed on a two-month portion of a young man's diary? One might argue that it contained nothing new or earthshaking and was not worth the time and effort to identify the writer. Probably nothing, previously unknown, was learned about Nauvoo in his words.

However, each life has a story that needs to be told. The history of Claudius is well known in his later years. The 1845 diary shows developing personality traits that became important to Claudius as an adult. His acceptance of hard work shows in his accounts of hauling wood, timber, hay, and stone. Notice his pride in recording Alpheus Cutler's comment that Claudius always drew big loads. Claudius shows an understanding of spiritual gifts when he asks his father for a blessing to relieve a sick headache. His dependability and maturity stand out when he is sent to Warsaw to purchase bran or when he goes to "Mack Queens Mill" to trade goods and buy corn. Claudius is interested in education and in learning about grammar and history. He attends lectures and discourses on lofty subjects such as the previous existence of man. He exhibits a sense of humor that is depicted in his exchange with the workmen at the sand pit. His sense of adventure surfaces in his admission of going to fencing school. Young Claudius is interested in the affairs of the Church and of the community. He could

converse easily with the men and women who visited at his parents' home.

By printing and digesting Claudius' diary excerpt and reminiscence stories, we add one small portion to one life of the Nauvoo period. That one life can now be added to thousands of other lives—thus enriching our knowledge of early Mormondom.

### Notes

1. The journal went from private possession through two document dealers before being purchased by Utah State University. No more information is known as to who the previous owner was or if there was any relationship between that owner and the Spencer family.

2. Hiram Spencer was born 30 November 30. He was married first to Mary Spencer, who died in 1840 in West Stockbridge, Berkshire, Massachusetts. They were the parents of nine children. He next married Emily Shafter Thompson in 1843.

3. Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, vol. 4, 89-90 (George Q. Cannon & Sons Co., 1892-1904).

4. Orson Spencer was born 14 March 1802. He married Catherine Curtis. After her death, he married five more times.

5. Andrew Jenson, *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (A. Jenson History Company and Deseret News, 1901-36), 337-339.

6. Daniel Spencer Jr. was born 20 July 1794. His first wife, Sophronia Eliza Pomeroy, died in 1832 in West Stockbridge, Massachusetts, leaving one son, Claudius Victor. Among Daniel's five subsequent wives was Emily Shafter Thompson, the widow of his brother, Hiram.

7. Whitney, 87-90.

8. Daniel Spencer Jr., "Diaries 1845-1857," LDS Historical Department, Archives Division.

9. Information on Claudius V. Spencer is taken from his obituary found in *The Deseret Evening News*, Wednesday, 5 January 1910; the Ancestral File, LDS Family History Library; Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1914), 12 January 1854; Kate B. Carter, ed., *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: International Society, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958-1977), vol. 5, p. 11, vol. 6, p. 260, and vol. 12, p. 477; and the diary of his father, Daniel Spencer Jr.

10. Gilbert H. Spencer was born 2 August 1827, in Albany County, New York.
11. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol 5, chap. 17, B. H. Roberts, ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 320-21.
12. Possibly Daniel Babcock Fillmore, who was sent to Wisconsin to obtain lumber for the Nauvoo buildings.
13. Daniel Spencer wrote on Saturday the 25th, "Spent the day principally at home in company with Mr. Sperry."
14. Probably John Taylor.
15. Daniel Spencer wrote on Sunday the 26th, "Attended a Meeting at the Music Hall preaching by Elder Kimbl & president John Smith . . . . [A]ttend[ed] high priest meeting at musonuk hall was informed that the Nauvoo Charter was repealed by the legislature."
16. Chloe Wilson Spencer.
17. Daniel Spencer wrote on Tuesday the 28th, "Went in company with Br Orson[,] Hendrix[,] J. Willie [John Williams] and J. Wilkey to Carthage. Proved moth[er]s Will[.] br Orson as one of the trustees."
18. Sidney Rigdon.
19. Jane Channock Conner was the wife of William James Conner.
20. Daniel Spencer wrote on Friday the 31st, "Mrs. Hendrix & Mrs Conner & D. Hendrix took Supper at our house Mrs. Shumw[ay] attended meeting at Mr. Hustins Spent the Evining at home with Claudius & Gilbert wrote a letter to JM Rees."
21. Probably Charles Shumway.
22. Daniel Spencer wrote on Monday the 3rd, "Claudius & Gilbert went to Warsaw for Bran returned at 6 oclock."
23. Daniel Spencer wrote on Thursday the 6th, "Attended the funeral of Br Whitney full House preaching by B. Young Spoke at lengt on the resurection an the exaltation."
24. Daniel Spencer wrote on Friday the 7th, "Plesent morning Claudius Started up the River for Corn at 7 oclock."
25. Daniel Spencer wrote on Tuesday the 11th, "Weather quite warm Claudius drewed a load wood from Rigons lot delivered it at the Seventys hall . . . . [H]eard of the arrest of a mr Elliott for the murder of J. Smith trial set for tomorrow."
26. Daniel Spencer wrote on Friday the 14th, "Weather Cloudy and rainy Claudis rose early sick lade hands on him before out of bead obtained some releaf."
27. Daniel Spencer wrote on Saturday the 15th, "Gilbert & Self drewd 2 loads from B. Jenkins."
28. "The Mercantile and Mechanical Association . . . was an attempt to muster all forces for group action . . . . The action here enabled the leaders to press into use wagons, teams, or goods as they were needed for the group benefit, either for defense against their enemies or for making the move west," according to Juanita Brooks, ed., *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout 1844-1861*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, Utah State Historical Society, 1964), 18.
29. Claudius Spencer, "Reminiscences," LDS Archives.
30. This account is also found in Carter, ed., *Our Pioneer Heritage*, vol. 5, pp. 27-28.