

**An Essex County Man's
Silver Cord**



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Salem, Massachusetts
Mormon Historic Sites Foundation
Nathaniel H. Felt Family Association
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Nathaniel Henry Felt's eventful life started some place in the middle of time, because he too was the partaker of blessings and endowments from the past, and his life added nobly to the same ancestral pool whence we all partake. Moreover, his useful legacy has led many back to his beloved Salem, Massachusetts; for there is no place like it on earth.

Nathaniel's first cousin wrote to the citizens of Salem stating, "Each year, . . . relative to events of our native or adopted home, has borne away its number of our inhabitants, and we no longer meet them in the walks of life. But a kind of Providence still continues to preserve 'the silver cord' of our temporal being, and the sympathies which afford us pleasure in communion with scenes of the past and present."² Nathaniel Felt may have departed from Salem in 1845, but it was never for very long and he always found a way to go back there.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Salem, Massachusetts was America's sixth largest city and the richest per capita.³ This treasure city had obtained a large portion of its wealth through maritime merchants who arranged for ships to ply the seas and obtain a portion of the wealth of the Far East. "Then with sugar from the West Indies, there were figs, raisins and almonds from the

¹ Most of this article was published in Fred E. Woods, "Nathaniel H. Felt: An Essex County Man," *Regional Studies In Latter-day Saint Church History The New England*, eds. Donald Q. Cannon, Arnold K. Garr and Bruce A. Van Orden, (Religious Studies Center: Brigham Young University, 2004), 219-236.

² Joseph B. Felt, *Annals of Salem* (Salem: W. & S. B. Ives, 1849), iii.

³ *Salem: Maritime Salem in the Age of Sail* produced by the National Park Service, Division of Publications for Salem Maritime National Historic Site, Handbook 126. In cooperation with the Peabody Museum and the Essex Institute, Salem, MA. (US. Department of the Interior: Washington D. C., 1987), 17.

Mediterranean; ivory and gum-copal from Zanzibar; ginger from India; teas and silks from China; cotton from Bombay, pepper from Sumatra, and from Arabia sacks of coffee."⁴ This level of economic success attracted infamous pirates, including Captains Kidd, Blackbeard, Bellamy and Quelch, who made their marks on the region to add a sense of intrigue and legend to Boston's lively North Shore."⁵

The greater Felt Family was heavily invested in the area economy because they became sea captains, shipmates, sailors and shoremen. These ancestral mariners of Nathaniel would have needed to be on constant watch for marauders, enemies of England, and pirates. In August 1759 Nathaniel's grandfather, David Felt, was captured by a French shallop⁶ in the Gut of Canso (Nova Scotia). His ship was taken with its expensive cargo.⁷ However, David was a successful shoreman, and his four sons who reached adulthood followed him to the sea. Uncle John, as Nathaniel Henry would have known him, also met obstacles. In *Felt's Annals of Salem* under the date May 25,

⁴ Francis Winwar, *Puritan City, The Story of Salem* (New York: National Travel Club, 1938), 137.

⁵ *The New England Pirate Museum* downloaded from <http://www.piratemuseum.com/pirate.htm> on 15 August 2004. "Notorious pirate captains, such as; Kidd, Blackbeard, Bellamy and Quelch, roamed the waters off Boston's North Shore, known as the Gold Coast, while so-called witches were being hanged at Salem. Like many of today's New Englanders, pirates spent their winters in the tropics and their summers here. Most 17th and 18th-century pirates were, in fact, New Englanders and New Yorkers, with gold and silver from Central America and merchandise from Europe. Many buried their ill-gotten treasures off shore on the islands that dot our coast, and much of it is still there, just waiting to be dug up."

⁶ Shallop: a two-masted ship usually working in shallow waters – Merriam-Webster Online downloaded from <http://www.m-w.com> on 15 September 2004

⁷ John E. Morris, *Felt Genealogy* (Hartford, Conn.: Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1893), 85.

1799, we read, “News that the ketch⁸ *Brothers*, Capt. John Felt, on his passage to Havana, was lost on a reef with a valuable Cargo. Having saved a considerable sum of gold, and the wreckers threatening to take it from him, Capt. Felt prepared his men for resistance, and thus kept it from their grasp.”⁹

During Uncle John’s short life he achieved some commercial success, but on a trying journey from India in 1802 he died on Martha’s Vineyard at age 38 leaving little property to his family.¹⁰

Uncle John’s son Joseph B. Felt, against great odds, attended and graduated from Dartmouth College at Hanover, New Hampshire in 1813. Dr. Joseph B. Felt later became a pastor, a renowned antiquarian, and a scholar. However, in May 1813, while he was a struggling young student preparing to graduate, he was tragically disabled by a cold that settled in one of his eyes. It baffled the doctors of the day.¹¹ In that very same year in a town nearby, another younger resident of Lebanon, New Hampshire by the name of Joseph Smith, Jr. was stricken by a similarly baffling affliction.

⁸ A ketch is a sailing craft similar to a sloop with an additional mizzenmast behind the main mast. This holds a small triangular sail. The ketch is often confused with a yawl, but the ketch has the mizzen mast forward of the rudder post, whereas the mizzen on a yawl is aft of the rudder post. The ketch is popular among long distance cruisers, because the additional sail allows for a better balance. It also allows sailing on mizzen and jib, only without introducing excessive lee helm. – Wikipedia, *The Free Encyclopedia*; downloaded from www.en.wikipedia.org on 15 September 2004

⁹ John E. Morris, *Felt Genealogy* (Hartford, Conn.: Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1893), 144.

¹⁰ Hon. J. B. F. Osgood, *New-England Historical and Genealogical Register and Antiquarian Journal* (January 1870), vol. XXIV, no. 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Joseph Smith Jr

Joseph Smith Jr. and all of his siblings contracted typhoid fever. Over a period of months each of the seven Smith children infected and reinfected one another. Joseph’s sister Sophronia, the most seriously stricken, was attended by a physician for eighty-nine straight days and kept under constant medication. On the ninetieth day, the doctor believed she would surely die, and so informed her grieving parents. Lucy and Joseph Smith Sr. pled with God to spare their child. “In this moment of distraction,” Lucy recorded, “my husband and myself clasped our hands, fell upon our knees by the bedside, and poured out our grief to God in prayer and supplication, beseeching him to spare our child yet a little longer.” Lucy took the limp body of Sophronia into her arms and commenced to pace the floor, holding her as she would an infant. “You are certainly crazy. Your child is dead,” remarked someone in the room, but the mother continued to pace. At length Sophronia began to sob and then started breathing quietly and freely.¹²

Young Joseph’s condition, by contrast, seemed rather mild and only lasted about two weeks. The aftermath, however, proved more serious. It started with severe pain in his shoulder that caused him to scream involuntarily. The doctor, misdiagnosing it as a common sprain, treated it with “bone liniment.” After two weeks of excruciating pain the doctor looked more closely to find the presence of a “fever sore.” When the doctor lanced the sore, a full quart of liquid discharged from it. No sooner had the pain left his shoulder than it “shot like lightning” into his leg. Almost immediately the leg began to swell, and it too became exceedingly painful.¹³

¹² Francis M. Gibbons, *Joseph Smith, Martyr, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977), 21.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Mission to Salem

In 1836, Joseph Smith returned to his boyhood hospice with a few of his companions (Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith and Oliver Cowdery) who had been lured to this Beverly Hills of the East by reports of a Brother Burgess, who had claimed that a large sum of money was hidden in a house in Salem. Burgess informed Joseph that he was the only one who knew of this treasure, located in a certain Salem cellar.¹⁷

At this time Church leaders were vulnerable to propositions to obtain money because of the heavy debt incurred by the building of the Kirtland Temple and also the expense of Zion's Camp. The Prophet Joseph and his associates therefore decided to travel to Salem in hopes of relieving the Church of these debts by procuring the hidden treasure of which Burgess whispered.

However, when they arrived in Salem, Joseph received a revelation (6 August 1836) that informed him that the treasure hunt for hidden money was folly (D&C 111:1). However, the Lord did open Joseph's eyes to the spiritual treasures yet unmined in the city. He informed the Prophet, "I have much treasure in this city for you, for the benefit of Zion, and many people in this city, whom I will gather out in due time for the benefit of Zion, through your instrumentality" (D&C 111:2).

Joseph was further instructed by the same revelation to "inquire diligently concerning the more ancient inhabitants and founders of this city: for there are more treasures than one for you in this city" An Old Testament prophet by the name of Malachi prophesied, "Behold, I will

Today we know this condition by the name osteomyelitis, an acute or chronic bone infection that cuts off the blood supply to bones. In children the infections will most often settle in the long bones, just as in Joseph's case. Doctors of his day could not agree on the best course, but a consensus formed that his badly infected lower leg must be amputated. Joseph appealed to his mother strongly that his leg not be amputated. Thus, in a consultation at their home, his parents convinced Dr. Stone (the attending physician) and other Dartmouth doctors to try again by cutting away only the infected bone to see if the remaining healthy parts would heal. After consulting a short time with each other, the doctors agreed to make the attempt.¹⁴

"Holes were bored into the bone on either side of the infected part; then, using pincers or forceps, the doctors tore away the diseased bone piece by piece."¹⁵ The doctors and the patient were miraculously able to complete the brutal operation without the use of anesthesia or even spirits to numb the pain; Joseph opting instead to be held in his father's arms. The brave young lad was thereafter sent to his Uncle Jesse's house in Salem, Massachusetts. His mother and father felt the sea air and change of scene would provide a needed tonic. Lucy reported that "in this he was not disappointed."¹⁶ While in Salem, Joseph would have heard what boys at age nine want to know. He certainly would have been exposed to great tales of sea monsters, ghost ships and pirates.

¹⁴ Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, The Prophet and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool, England: Samuel W. Richards, 1853), chapter 16, 63.

¹⁵ Francis M. Gibbons, *Joseph Smith, Martyr, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977), 22.

¹⁶ Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 66.

¹⁷ HC 2:465-66. For more information on this journey to Salem see Richard Lloyd Anderson, *BYU Studies*, vol. 24, no. 4, 499-506. There is a difference of opinion as to who this Brother Burgess is. Don Cannon, "Joseph Smith in Salem (D&C 111)," Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson, eds. *Studies in Scriptures* (Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985), 437, maintains that this is Jonathan Burgess, while Dean Jessee maintains it is William Burgess.

send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse (Malachi 4:5-6).” This verse is of special interest to the Latter-day Saint community both when Nathaniel H. Felt joined the new church in 1843 and also today, because it underpins and supports their well known family history programs and beliefs. With reference to Joseph’s 1836 visit to Salem, most historians have focused mainly on the missionary work that eventually took place in and around Salem as the fulfillment of the revelation. However, the genealogical gold and silver that continues to be extracted from Salem’s vast histories and archives may well turn out to be the most significant treasure of all.

During the month of August 1836, Joseph Smith and company lingered a while in Salem to preach from house to house and also to meet with Brigham Young and Lyman E. Johnson while these two were in town.¹⁸ He visited the East India Marine Society in August 1836. The Peabody Essex Museum has preserved his signature from the actual guest registry book that he signed. Exactly what day the party left Salem is not known, but Joseph Smith said that they returned to Kirtland, Ohio in September¹⁹. It took them twelve days to go from Kirtland, Ohio to Salem on the trip east, and perhaps the return trip was a little faster.

Missionary Work Begins

Five years later, (1841), the revelation regarding Salem began to be fulfilled when Erastus Snow and Benjamin Winchester received the assignment for missionaries to go there. This appointment came from two

¹⁸ Elden Jay Watson, compiler, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1801 - 1844*, (Salt Lake City: 1968), 14.

¹⁹ *The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star*, Volume 15, 821-822.

members of the First Presidency (Hyrum Smith and William Law), who issued the assignment at a conference in Philadelphia where Snow and Winchester had been laboring as missionaries. Smith gave Snow a copy of the revelation with the charge to fulfill it.²⁰

Joseph Smith probably coordinated the assignment beforehand because he told Brigham Young and others about it in Nauvoo, Illinois only six days earlier.²¹ Brigham Young wrote, “The Prophet met in council with elders Kimball, Pratt, Taylor, G. A. Smith and myself and appointed a special conference for the 16th instant, and directed us to send missionaries to New Orleans, Charleston, SC; Salem, Mass.; Baltimore, Md.; and Washington, D.”²² Six days later, Joseph Smith issued the now famous directive for the Twelve Apostles²³ to take their place along side the First Presidency²⁴ in managing the affairs of the Church in distant lands.²⁵ Other admonitions, revelations and directives followed in the next two and a half years to position Brigham Young as Joseph Smith’s successor, and the succession drama played out substantially about the time Brigham Young was visiting Salem in the summer of 1844.

²⁰ 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), 67.

²¹ Under normal conditions six days was not quite long enough for a traveler to reach Philadelphia, PA from Nauvoo, IL at the time.

²² Elden Jay Watson, compiler, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1801 - 1844*, (Salt Lake City: 1968), 106.

²³ Twelve Apostles: a body of twelve men who lead The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on a seniority basis, but who are subject to the First Presidency.

²⁴ First Presidency: a body of three men, including the prophet, who are chosen by seniority and lead The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 107.

The following year, Elder Snow received his assignment to go to Salem. He wrote to Hyrum Smith and William Law indicating that the call had been initially “repugnant to my feelings,” for he was concerned with not being able to meet the temporal needs of his family. However, Snow added in his letter, “I prayed that God would open the way before me; and [he] did it opening the hearts of my friends. And they voluntarily opened their purses when they heard my intreties [sic].”²⁶

Snow’s autobiography reveals more of the details of this mission: “In the summer of 1841, Elder Winchester and I received instructions from the First Presidency to go to Massachusettes [sic] and open up the gospel in Salem, Boston, and that region of the country. We went together and hired the Masonic Hall in Salem and commenced preaching, but Elder Winchester very soon returned to Philadelphia, leaving me to occupy the field alone.”²⁷ In October, a Mr. A. G. Comings²⁸ published in a “religious periodical” what Snow regarded as falsehoods which led to a heated public debate in the Masonic Hall.²⁹

Notwithstanding his solitude and challengers, Snow was successful in his labors and was later joined in his

²⁶ Letter of Erastus Snow to Hyrum Smith and William Law, LDS Church Archives, quoted in Ken W. Godfrey, “More Treasures Than One: Section 111,” 197 in *Hearken O Ye People*, Sperry Symposium, 1984.

²⁷ “Autobiography of Erastus Snow,” LDS Church Archives, quoted in David J. Whittaker, “East of Nauvoo: Benjamin Winchester and the Early Mormon Church,” *Journal of Mormon History* 21:2 (Fall 1995):49.

²⁸ Research today reveals a tantalizing link to a Mr. A. G. Comings and “The Evangelist” periodical with a series of articles about the “Mormon Bible.” in 1841; Ernie Stefanik, *Walter Scott's Contributions to The Evangelist (1832-1842)*, downloaded from <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/wscott/re/WSITE.HTM#TE9> on 17 July 2004.

²⁹ Andrew Jensen, *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: 1887), 1:103.

efforts by Elder E. P. Maginn.³⁰ “Maginn, an Englishman, is said to have been a lively, fascinating speaker with a wide knowledge of the Bible which he continually quoted. He was ready at any time to meet any clergyman or layman in a religious controversy. Elder Maginn, partly by his message and partly by his own magnetic personality, attracted people from far and near.”³¹

Most success was rooted in Snow’s preaching at the Masonic Hall and in the distribution of a pamphlet titled “An address to the citizens of Salem and vicinity.”³² By 5

³⁰ On 14 November 1841, Snow recorded, “On the 14 Elder E. P. Magin came to Salem & assisted me.” See *Journals of Erastus Snow*, Book 3 (June 1841 - February 1847), LDS Church Archives. Two years later the *Journal History*, 9 September 1843, notes that Elders Hanks and Rogers had been sent to Salem to labor as missionaries. These missionaries were Noah Rogers and Knowlton F. Hanks, on their way to preach the gospel to the islands of the sea. Thus they probably labored in Salem a very short time. They left Nauvoo in June 1843, along with Addison Pratt and Benjamin F. Grouard, to open a mission in Tahiti. Hanks died at sea on his journey to this field of labor. See James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd edition, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 166.

³¹ George Abbot Morison and Etta M. Smith, *History of Peterborough New Hampshire* (Rindge, NH: 1954), 187.

³² 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), 69, notes that “He never failed to preach three times each Sunday at the Masonic Hall and in private dwellings during the week.” A copy of the pamphlet he and Winchester wrote was published in the *Times and Seasons*. [vol. 3, p. 574] Concerning this pamphlet, David J. Whittaker, “Early Mormon Pamphleteering,” PhD dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1982, states, “There were 2500 copies made of this first printing, which was dated Salem, Massachusettes, 9 September 1841. A second printing was made within the week by Freeman Nickerson and dated, Boston, Massachusettes, 13 September 1841. Winchester may have provided Nickerson with a copy of this *Address* as he was returning to Pennsylvania through Boston. Winchester noted in his letter to Joseph Smith on 18 September that he was enclosing a copy of the *Address* with the letter. It was probably this copy that was used for the third printing, which was published in two parts in the *Times and Seasons* 2 (15 October 1841):574-76 and *Ibid.*, 33 (15 November 1841):578-84.

March 1842, he had organized the first Salem Branch with a membership of fifty-three Saints whom he had gathered from Marblehead, Lynn and Salem.³³ On 22 March 1842, Elder Maginn wrote, “I am on a visit to assist Elder Erastus Snow in his successful and extended field of labor, in this branch [Salem], sixty-five have been obedient to the faith of the gospel, and hundreds of others almost persuaded.”³⁴

Three months later the *Salem Register*, in an article titled “The Mormons in Salem,” stated, “Mormonism is advancing with a perfect rush in this city, just at present Meetings have been holden now very frequently for several days past, and crowds flock, to listen to the strange doctrines of the ‘Latter-day Saints.’ How many new converts they make, we have not learned.”³⁵

Before leaving the Salem region for a season (departing 9 March 1843), Snow had mined 120 converts, thus leaving behind new prospectors seeking jewels for the Lord.³⁶ One such jewel consequently discovered was a Salem tailor named Nathaniel Henry Felt, who proved to be a sapphire of a Saint. Felt’s influence illuminated not only Salem but every location in which he dwelt.

Early Life of Nathaniel Henry Felt

Nathaniel Henry Felt was born 6 February 1816 at Salem, Essex County, Mass. to Nathaniel Felt and Hanna Reeves, the second son born with this same first name to

³³ Godfrey, 199; Larson, 70-71.

³⁴ Compiled by Church Historian’s Office, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Journal History* (Salt Lake City: about 1900), 22 March 1842.

³⁵ “The Mormons in Salem,” *The Salem Register*, 2 June 1842. I express gratitude to Donald Q. Cannon for bringing this article to my attention.

³⁶ Godfrey, 199. Larson, 74, notes that Nauvoo letters influenced Snow’s desire to begin his return to that location on 9 March 1843. Godfrey, 199, further notes that Snow arrived in Nauvoo, 11 April 1843. Larson, 79, points out that Snow remained only a month in Nauvoo, then began his journey back to Salem on 11 May 1843.

Nathaniel Sr. and Hannah, whose firstborn son by this name had died at sea when only nineteen years old.³⁷ Nathaniel Senior (like Nathaniel Henry) was born in Salem but was not the first Felt to have his nativity in this early American city. In 1628, at age twenty-seven, George Felt (sixth great grandfather of Nathaniel) emigrated from England to Naumkeag (Salem) with Captain Endicott, seven years before Joseph Smith Jr.’s first ancestor (Robert Smith) came to this region.³⁸ Nathaniel Sr. spent much of his life as a merchant trader in the West Indies. Like Joseph Smith, Jr., he had also been dealt a heavy financial blow through unfortunate business affairs, which resulted in the loss of his home. His untimely death in 1823 brought great difficulties upon his wife, who was left with severe financial circumstances, coupled with the additional responsibility of raising a large family of twelve children, of whom Nathaniel Henry, age seven, was the youngest.³⁹

Concerning Nathaniel’s youth and adolescence, Orson F. Whitney wrote the following:

³⁷ According to John E. Morris, compiler of *The Felt Record: A record of the descendants of George Felt of Casco Bay*, (Hartford, Conn. Press of the case, Lockwood & Brainward Company, 1893), 145, this son was born 27 October 1795 and died 14 March 1815.

³⁸ Laura Jo Dunkley DeMordaunt, “Ancestors and Descendants of George Felt who settled Salem, Massachusetts in 1628 with the Puritans,” in “A Brief Lineal History of Joseph Henry Felt,” compiled by Helen Bitner Wilcox, May 2001. Morris, *The Felt Record*, 9, adds that George Felt came to America in 1628 with John Endicott (later the first governor of Massachusetts) and gathered to Salem with a small group in September of that year. DeMordaunt indicates that Felt moved to Charlestown in 1629 and just four years later was instrumental in organizing a new change in government for Charlestown, along with thirty-two other Charlestown inhabitants.

³⁹ Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons Co., 1904), 4:548. Felt family records compiled by Jonathon C. Felt (a Felt family genealogist) reveal that Nathaniel Felt died at age fifty-two of “intemperance,” 14 October 1823.

Nathaniel was employed as an errand boy for a draper and tailor's establishment before and after school hours. He dedicated himself to his schooling and desired a college education but his poor family circumstances necessitated his abandoning his hopes and dreams. At fifteen years of age and just prior to entering high school he was apprenticed to a tailor in the town of Lynn just five miles away from Salem. A few years later his brother helped him to buy an establishment in Salem and discovered that he could profit quite well through the African and China trade.⁴⁰

Salem Kinsmen

Without the advantages of a father at home after age seven, Nathaniel must have benefited from needed training in his young life from numerous cousins and kinsmen. Senator Nathaniel Silsbee, at age fifty-three, was elected United States Senator in 1826 after navigating his way through many exemplary trials of both mind and spirit, similar to what young Nathaniel Henry would be destined to repeat.⁴¹ Both Nathaniels lost their fathers and both wanted a college education but were denied that privilege due to their families' pecuniary difficulties. Nathaniel Silsbee and Nathaniel Henry Felt descend from the same II great-grandfather whose daughter married Jonathan Felt, Nathaniel Henry's great-grandfather. Jonathan was a fisherman and farmer in Salem's "North Fields."⁴² The fact

⁴⁰ Ibid. Caroline Howard King, *When I Lived In Salem 1822-1866*, (Brattleboro, Vermont: Stephen Daye Press, 1937) is a good source for studying the period of Nathaniel's early adult life in Salem. The *Salem Directory and City Directory* (Salem, MA. :Henry Whipple, 1842), 32, indicates that Felt was living at 10 Liberty Street and that his tailor business was at 217 Essex. On page 15 of the *Salem Directory*: "Nathaniel H. Felt, Draper and Tailor, No. 217 Esses Street, corner of Market Court, Salem."

⁴¹ Caroline Howard King, *When I Lived in Salem 1822-1866* (Brattleboro, Vermont: Stephen Daye Press, 1937), 53.

⁴² John E. Morris, *Felt Genealogy* (Hartford, Conn.: Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1893), 58.

that Jonathan's five prosperous sons were also fishermen and shoremen added to the family's influence in North Salem. One of the five sons was David Felt, Nathaniel's grandfather. David's older brother was the storied Captain John Felt, who through great courage and pluck at the opening of the Revolutionary War managed to avert the war's first shot fired in anger.

"Captain Felt was a tall, muscular, well-made man, and endowed with courage of his convictions, one who in an emergency proves to be the right man in the right place. This was well shown at the time of the British invasion of Salem by Col. Leslie, Feb 26, 1775" – *Felt Genealogy* by Morris.⁴³ Col. Leslie's orders at the time were to seize munitions and a dozen or more cannon stored in North Salem for use by its citizens to defend themselves against British aggression. Col Leslie landed his forces in a secluded spot along Marblehead Neck on Sunday when the town would least suspect their presence. The troops secretly moved with haste toward their goal, but the news of their coming spread quickly through Salem's tight-knit community. When John Felt heard the news he sensed immediately Leslie's mission and rode his own horse to intercept the column. John intended to grapple personally with the Colonel at the right moment. Upon arriving at the bridge, Col. Leslie's forces discovered that the draw had been raised. Leslie demanded that it be lowered immediately, and he remonstrated with the people for insulting his soldiers and obstructing the King's highway. "This is not the King's highway," was the reply, "it is a private way belonging to the proprietors of the North Fields, and no King or country has any control over it."⁴⁴

"The people on the north side of the bridge had climbed upon the top of the upraised leaf by help of the

⁴³ Ibid., 79.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 79.

chains, and there sat astride like so many hens at roost.” The defiance of so many ordinary Americans infuriated the privileged and befuddled Leslie, causing him to curse; one account says he “stamped and swore, ordering the bridge to be immediately lowered.” When the inhabitants on the other side wanted to know why he wanted to cross, his answer was that he had orders to cross and he would do it at the cost of his life and his mens’ lives. To advance under the circumstances was impossible without the consent of Salem’s militia, but to retreat would have been a disgrace. Leslie retreated to the wharf to collect his wits; then, turning to an officer near him, he said, “You must face about this division, and fire upon those people.” Let us remember, John Felt was already shadowing every move of Leslie, who said, “Fire! You have no right to fire without further orders; if you do fire you will all be dead men.” “Where are they who can hinder me?” asked Col. Leslie. “There,” said Felt pointing to the people, “is a multitude, every man of whom is prepared to die in this strife.” John Felt’s words thrilled and bolstered the crowd at the very moment needed. But the Felts were not done in this drama. As the British troops looked around to find another way to cross the river, they spied small boats owned by the Felt brothers. John’s nephew Jonathan sprang to work scuttling the boats, an action that caused another fracas and battle of wills. Eventually, Leslie’s detachment was allowed to cross the bridge long enough to turn around and march back without their intended capture of the cannons.⁴⁵ The story of Leslie’s Retreat is well known to this day in Salem, and Nathaniel Henry Felt would have also felt a swell of pride in knowing of such great ancestors and patriots in his family.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 79-81.

Military Service

Nathaniel Henry Felt served his country as a young adult by joining the Divisionary Corps of Independent Cadets.⁴⁶ To be a Cadet meant he was a Democrat, because in those days the competing militias in Salem were split along partisan divisions. The Mechanics Light Infantry were all Whigs, but the Cadets with their smart red uniforms had “right of parade.” It must have thrilled the family when Democratic President Andrew Jackson came to town in 1833, and the Cadets were the lucky ones to escort his entourage through the streets.⁴⁷

Husband and Father

Through Nathaniel’s mother’s family and his musical interests he met Miss Eliza Ann Preston, and they were wed on 3 October 1839. Both came out of good Puritan stock, and both shared a dreadful tale about an ancestor. Nathaniel and Eliza were after all second cousins, and both descended directly from Bridget Bishop, who was the first of nineteen men and women executed for witchcraft 1692-93. Caroline Howard King, who was about the same age as Eliza, wrote, “I suppose that in these later times strangers are taken to see the witch pins, or the house in which Hawthorne was born, but the witches had not become the fashion then, indeed we still spoke of them with bated breath, for we were not yet far enough away from those terrible times to be quite out of their shadow; and Hawthorne was not a celebrity, but was still mooning about the streets of Salem, a strange and picturesque figure, with gloomy brow and repellent manners.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons Co., 1904), 4:548.

⁴⁷ Caroline Howard King, *When I Lived In Salem 1822-1866*, (Brattleboro, Vermont: Stephen Daye Press, 1937), 31-32.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 32.

Nathaniel and his brother John Gillingham Felt worked diligently together in order to achieve their goals as merchants. John was a proprietor of a successful paint store and helped his younger brother establish the new tailor shop, which also did draperies. It can be assumed that the Felt enterprises dealing with goods from their African and Chinese trade may also have been housed together at some point. By 1844, Nathaniel's business at 217 Essex Street⁴⁹ employed upwards of 20 men and women.

In about 1840 (see footnotes)⁵⁰ Nathaniel moved his young family from a small house near St. Peters' Church⁵¹ to a stately new red brick house built by the prominent developer Mr. John Kinsman⁵² at 10 Liberty Street. This location, convenient to his office, afforded him some status for his growing reputation and influence, notwithstanding his seemingly inexperienced age, 24.

Brigham Young and Vilate

Nathaniel's young family was divided over the issue of religion, so he declined membership in any of the

⁴⁹ Salem Directory, 1842: Phillips Library, Salem, MA, listed alphabetically

⁵⁰ Journal of Joseph Henry Felt, 15 April 1866, quoted in Helen Bitner Wilcox, comp. "A Brief Lineal History of Joseph Henry Felt," N.p. 10; The 1840 date for Nathaniel's move to 10 Liberty Street is based on the following assumptions: 1) The house built by Kinsman was completed in 1840, 2) Joseph Henry Felt was born in 1840, 3) JHF states in his journal, "Helped put out a fire which almost took out the place of my birth," 4) There are burn marks from a fire about 1866 on the back of the house that can be seen today. More scholarship will be conducted to determine precise facts in the next version of this biography.

⁵¹ Journal of Joseph Henry Felt, 1886, quoted in Helen Bitner Wilcox, comp. "A Brief Lineal History of Joseph Henry Felt," N.p. 36.

⁵² The Peabody Essex Museum, in an architectural review of the house located at #10 Liberty Street before 2001, found Mr. Kinsman's name as the original builder and first owner of the home. Kinsman was a prominent Salem area developer. Nathaniel Henry Felt's possession of the property is to date based solely on the 1842 Salem Directory house at the Phillips Library in Salem.

organizations. However, after a careful investigation of Mormonism, Felt was baptized 17 September 1843⁵³ when he probably became acquainted with Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, George A. Smith and Augusta Adams Cobb. Elders Young, Smith and Kimball were at the time in the East soliciting funds for the building of a great Mormon Temple at Nauvoo, Illinois. Mrs. Cobb was an energetic and longtime (eleven years earlier) convert from Boston who grew up in the neighboring town of Beverly. Mormon elders had been preaching around Boston and Beverly from as early as 1832, when Samuel Smith and Orson Hyde first arrived in both towns.⁵⁴ Brigham Young was also in the region regularly.

Before coming to Salem on 1 June 1843, both Brigham Young and his daughter Vilate shared their usual birthdays (Brigham was forty-two and Vilate thirteen). Vilate had an older sister named Elizabeth who had earlier

⁵³ Susan Easton Black *Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints 1830-1848*, 50 vols. (Provo, Utah, Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989): 16:130, indicates that Nathaniel Henry Felt was baptized in Salem on 17 September 1843. Although it is not known who performed the baptism, it is reasonable to suppose that it could have been Erastus Snow. Larson, 79, 86, points out that during the month Snow had been in Nauvoo visiting with the Prophet (having been summoned there while still serving a mission in the East), having received permission from Joseph to gather his family and return to Nauvoo. Larson, 80, also notes that after "settling the churches in order" in such places as Salem, Boston, Lowell, Peterborough, Northbridge and New Bedford, he departed with his family from Boston on 22 September 1843. It is certainly plausible that Snow performed the baptismal ordinance. Furthermore, while in St. Louis in 1850, Nathaniel requested that Snow give a name and a blessing to his infant daughter, Margaret Eliza Preston Felt (see the Erastus Snow Journal for the date of 7 January 1850). The Manuscript History of Brigham Young compiled by Watson suggests Young could easily have been in Salem on the 17th of Sep. He was in the area, and mentioned he went to Salem. BY makes more sense to Jonathan Felt than does Erastus Snow as the baptizer (see Manuscript History of Brigham Young between dates 9 Sep 1843 and 20 Sep 1843).

⁵⁴ Howard H. Barron, *Orson Hyde* (Bountiful, UT: Horizon Publishers, 1977), 30

that year married and moved away from home. Elizabeth and Vilate were the offspring of Miriam Works Young, who died tragically when Vilate was only three. By 1843 Vilate was left in an awkward position of not seeing her father very much due to his heavy church responsibilities, along with the stress of losing her sister, and the accompanying challenge of becoming a young woman in a home that belonged to her step-mother.

By all known sources, it is assumed that Mary Ann Young (Brigham's second wife) got along fine with Vilate, but she was justifiably worried that the teenager was not getting properly trained. Mary Ann said, "Besides, we are now going to have to buy clothes becoming a young woman. She will be fourteen next June 1." The Young family records that the couple talked it over, and Brigham especially wanted Vilate to have some advantages. He wanted her to write well and to be able to clothe her thoughts in the proper English of the day. Desiring that she play a musical instrument, he suggested she learn the "pianner." Mary Ann agreed, but she could see no way for Vilate to learn these things in Nauvoo. The decision was probably made by them to wait and think about it for a while, because it is assumed that in June 1843 Brigham did not yet know Nathaniel H. Felt's family.⁵⁵

Perhaps when Brigham met Nathaniel in Salem later that year he began to see a way for Vilate to be educated properly in Salem's excellent schools for young women. Perhaps Nathaniel and Eliza's musical interests and prosperity made their home an obvious choice. Only a few days after the Felts were baptized in Salem, Young and company went back to Nauvoo in October 1843 to deliver the sacred temple funds to their prophet.

⁵⁵ S. Dilworth Young, "*Here is Brigham...Brigham Young...the years to 1844*" (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 339, 341.

Brigham returned to Nauvoo, Illinois on 22 October 1843 with Heber C. Kimball, Mrs. Augusta Adams Cobb and G.A. Smith. Very soon thereafter Mary Ann and Brigham Young made the decision to contact their new friends in Salem to ask the Felts whether or not their daughter Vilate would be welcome at their home. Brigham received an answer to the affirmative, and thus the stage was set for Mrs. Cobb to return to Salem with Vilate in the spring of 1844. Also in that season, Felt was assigned to preside as president of the Salem Branch,⁵⁶ and it was during this period that Felt became acquainted with several other Church leaders, including Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt and Erastus Snow, who frequently visited his home in Salem.

The Presidential Campaign of 1844

The political climate in Nauvoo by 1844 was dangerously charged. The reasons are many, and this pamphlet cannot begin to list them adequately, but we should focus on a few highlights. Joseph Smith, Jr. was a genius organizationally and highly successful with those who enjoyed full fellowship in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Since he was a prophet to his followers, military general in the local militia and Mayor of the great Mormon city his critics found many ways to censure and discredit his efforts. Moreover, Joseph was passionate and relentless in his defense of the oppressed and poor; his own followers having been frequent victims of mob violence and governmental abuses especially in Missouri. Joseph's style was to constantly pursue and try anything at his disposal to correct matters including a petition to the United States Congress to make Nauvoo a federal military district. In autumn 1843 he wrote to several presidential candidates to

⁵⁶ Whitney, *History of Utah* 4:548 states, "In the winter of 1843-44 he [Felt] was appointed president of the Salem branch."

learn their views and to solicit their help in redressing the so-called Missouri depredations. In this effort he was disappointed since only Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun replied; neither one of them answering his questions to his satisfaction nor offering assistance. Feeling there was no other way to protect his people, he started his own campaign for the nation's highest office, and he organized it in a most unusual way.⁵⁷

Joseph was, above all, a prophet and spiritual leader, and his presidential efforts reflected it. By the Spring of 1844, he had dispatched most of the leading men of Nauvoo out into various parts of the United States for the purpose of promulgating his candidacy and to “use all honorable means” to secure his election. Thirty-seven special conferences were planned throughout the country with the final one to be held in Washington, D.C. In every respect his representatives doubled as official church representatives since they were all members of it in good standing.⁵⁸ He armed them with the unique document, *General Smith's Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States* (Nauvoo, Illinois: John Taylor, 1844). “Born in a land of liberty, and breathing an air uncorrupted with the sirocco of barbarous climes, I ever feel a double anxiety for the happiness of all men, both in time and in eternity. My cogitations like Daniel's, have for a long time troubled me when I viewed the condition of men throughout the world, and more especially in this boasted realm, where the Declaration of Independence ‘holds these truths to be self evident; that all men are created equal: that they are endowed by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,’ but at the same time, some two or three millions

⁵⁷ Francis M. Gibbons, *Joseph Smith, Martyr, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977), 313-316

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 317

of people are held as slaves for life, because the spirit in them is covered with a darker skin than ours.”

Joseph was against slavery and all forms of oppression. He promoted the “four main pillars of prosperity, viz: agriculture, manufactures, navigation, and commerce.” He wanted a strong national banking system because the lack of hard money caused suffering among the poor. A strong economy would reduce the need for taxation and provide a way for everyone to have more. He believed in the basic goodness of his fellow men stating, “The southern people are hospitable and noble: they will help to rid so free a country of every vestige of slavery, when ever they are assured of an equivalent for their property.”

His style as president was to be one of a fierce patriot and gentle persuader. “In the United States the people are the government; and their united voice is the only sovereign that should rule; the only power that should be obeyed; and the only gentlemen that should be honored; at home and abroad; on the land and on the sea: Wherefore, were I the president of the United States, by the voice of a virtuous people, I would honor the old paths of the venerated fathers of freedom: I would walk in the tracks of the illustrious patriots, who carried the ark of the government upon their shoulders with an eye single to the glory of the people and when that people petitioned to abolish slavery in the slave states, I would use all honorable means to have their prayers granted.” Joseph Smith felt we had already experienced partisan presidents of their respective parties long enough, and in 1844 it was time for a *President of the United States of America!*

Joseph's candidacy served both his political and ecclesiastical purposes, since the eastern press gave his candidacy great coverage. As his campaign workers promoted his views, listeners heard a heavy dose of church doctrines as well. It was for this purpose we find Brigham

Young again in and around Salem late in June 1844. Nathaniel Henry Felt's own political aspirations and interests would have made him a likely and willing candidate to help with the many tasks and responsibilities of a presidential campaign. Brigham Young combined his responsibilities of church apostle and campaigner holding conferences and meetings for both purposes. On 18 June 1844 he wrote "I went to Salem and saw my daughter Vilate."

In Nauvoo, Joseph Smith's enemies were rising on every side. His old Missouri enemies were relentless in attempting to subvert his power that kept him from getting captured, because their aim was to kill him. Finally both his enemies within Nauvoo and those from Missouri conspired together successfully. At a few minutes past 5:00 pm on 27 June 1844 in Carthage, Illinois Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were brutally murdered at the hands of 100 militiamen assigned to protect them by the governor of that state.

The tragic loss of Joseph Smith the Prophet is incalculable to mankind but the members of the church he organized lost the most. On that day Brigham Young wrote, "Spent the day in Boston with Brother Woodruff, who accompanied me to the railway station as I was about to take cars for Salem. In the evening while sitting in the depot waiting, I felt a heavy depression of spirit and so melancholy I could not converse with any degree of pleasure...I could not assign any reasons for my peculiar feelings."

On 1 July 1844 Brigham and his colleagues conducted meetings in Boston for the nomination of General Joseph Smith for President of the United States, and appointed delegates for their convention that was to be

held in Baltimore.⁵⁹ By 6 July, Brigham and other church leaders were in Salem conducting a 3-day church-related conference with Nathaniel H. Felt as their clerk.⁶⁰ On 9 July Brigham wrote, "I heard to-day, for the first time, the rumors concerning the death of Joseph and Hyrum."⁶¹

Since he didn't say specifically he was in Salem when the rumors were heard, we must consult another source which states, "Brigham Young, Orson Pratt and Heber C. Kimball, who were frequent and welcome visitors at his [N.H. Felt's] home, and left it the morning that word was received of the martyrdom of the Prophet and the Patriarch, Joseph and Hyrum Smith."⁶² It is assumed since rumors of Joseph Smith's demise were frequent distractions that Brigham Young was willing to wait for further confirmation.

On 16 July he recorded, "While at Brother Bement's house in Peterborough' [NH], I heard a letter read which brother Livingston had received from Mr. Joseph Powers, of Nauvoo, giving particulars of the murder of Joseph and Hyrum." Also on that day Brigham Young wrote the following, "received a letter from brother Woodruff confirming the news of the death of the Prophets."⁶³ Young and others left for their Nauvoo homes as soon as they could.

⁵⁹ S. Dilworth Young, "*Here is Brigham...Brigham Young...the years to 1844*" (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 351.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4:548.

⁶³ S. Dilworth Young, "*Here is Brigham...Brigham Young...the years to 1844*" (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 352.

President Brigham Young

The following is a letter from Brigham Young to his daughter and Nathaniel H. Felt⁶⁴

Miss Vilate Young
to the care of N. H. Felt
Salem, Mass.
(postmarked 15 Aug 1844, Nauvoo, Illinois)

August 11th, 1844

My Dear Daughter Vilate:

I am in good health and so is all the family. I will give you a sketch of my journey home. We left Boston on Wednesday morning at 7 o.c. a.m. the 24th day of July. The next evening at about 9 o.c. we were in Buffalo; had the privilege of going to bed. The next morning at 10. o.c. a.m., took the Steam Boat Buffalo for Detroit; arrived there the next evening. Staid [sic] over night. Started the next morning on the propeller Steam Boat Hurealus for Chicago; arrived there Thursday evening about 9 p.m. the first day of August. The next morning at 7 o.c. took stage for Galena; arrived there Sunday morning about 10 a.m. which made 50 hours going 164 miles. We staid in Galena till Monday evening 6 o.c. then took the steam Boat St. Croyx for Nauvoo. All this time we were not known.

There was a Brother came to us in Galena and told us that Brother Samuel Smith was dead; he died with Bilious fever. We found many of our friends coming down the river; they were very glad to see us. We came with perfect safety; arrived home on Tuesday evening just at dusk. Our families and the Brethren were overjoyed to see us come

⁶⁴ Elden Jay Watson, "*Manuscript History of Brigham Young*" (Salt Lake City: 1968), Appendix

home for they were like children without a father, and they felt so you may be sure.

All things are now reviving up again. The Brethren prayed with all faith for us to return. I cannot say much about the families of Brs. J. and H. Smith, for I have not had time to call on them yet. I have been in Council almost all the time since I arrived here. But this much I can say: the spirit of Joseph is here though we cannot enjoy his person.

Through the great anxiety of the Church there was a Conference held last Thursday. The power of the Priesthood was explained and the order thereof on which the whole Church lifted up their voices and hands for the Twelve to move forward and organize the Church and lead it as Joseph lead it. Which is our indisposible [sic] duty to do. We shall organize the Church as soon as possible.

The Brethren do well to think the Lord is still merciful to us as a people. The temple is going with greater rapidity then ever before. The Brethren are very anxious to have it finished so they can receive their endowment. I have not seen your Aunt Fanny yet as she is in Quincy with Br. Greene's daughter. She has moved into her new room I have built for her and will return, I suppose, soon.

As my coming east again, this fall is uncertain, but I rather think I shall go from this place to spend the winter, and shall come and see you as soon as I can. I want you to be steady to your school and practice on the piano. Get all you can while you have opportunity.

The children want to see you very much. Little Luna talks about Vilate. You must be a good girl and pray for me and the rest of us that we may live long on the earth to do good. Take the counsel of Br. and Sister Felt, and see Sister Cobb as often as you can and hearken to their instruction. I believe she is a good woman and would not counsel you wrong for the world knowingly.

A word to Br. Felt. I am happy to say to you that all things are going pretty well here at present. I think the mob are satisfied now they have killed Joseph and Hyrum. You will see our communication in the Times & Seasons concerning the Churches abroad. I shall visit you again in that country as soon as I can conveniently. I should have written before but wanted to wait till I could give some instruction concerning the Church in this place.

It has been a time of mourning (since) the day that Joseph and Hyrum were brought from Carthage to Nauvoo. It was judged by many both in and out of the Church that there was more than 5 barrels of tears shed. I cannot bear to think anything about it.

The Twelve will govern all the Church affairs. We have appointed the two oldest Bishops in the Church for trustees who will take charge of all temporal affairs while we attend to the spiritual affairs. We shall organize all the churches throughout the world as soon as possible, with other things, with Presidents, Bishops, Patriarchs, yearly and quarterly conferences.

I would say to such as want to come up to come, especially such as have capital. The temple is going ahead faster than ever. We shall push it with all our might. The crops are fine in this country; wheat 40 cents per bushel. The river keeps up very high. Yet I must say farewell. You may read this to whom you please.

Brigham Young

(Added along the border of the letter)

Our expenses from Boston to Nauvoo was 44 dollars and 40 cents a head.

All the family join in sending love to Vilate and Sister Cobb. Give my best respects to all the Brethren. This is the 15th of the Month and all is peace at present. — B.Y.

Nauvoo Period

Having sold his tailor and drapery business, at a loss, to a Mr. Henry Derby, Nathaniel and his family left Salem for Nauvoo and arrived there on 5 June 1845.⁶⁵ In the “City Beautiful”, Felt received a patriarchal blessing under the hands of Patriarch John Smith on 30 June 1845, which provided additional purpose and direction for his life. Among other things, Nathaniel was told in the blessing, “The eye of the Lord has been upon thee from everlasting, and he has designed thee to do a great work in rolling forth his kingdom, in gathering Israel and establishing Zion in the last days.”⁶⁶

While in Nauvoo he again entered into the tailoring business and continued his Church work, laboring as one of the presidents of the 29th Quorum of the Seventies. A ledger kept by Felt in Nauvoo indicates that Felt made clothing for prominent Church leaders and their families. Cost of time and materials is carefully recorded. For example, the following report is recorded in Felt’s ledger for a business transaction made with Brigham Young on 17 November 1845:⁶⁷

To [For] Making F. Coat & Pants	7.50
Trimmings	1.53
Alpacca 112- Turill Cotton 12	1.25
Making a coat & cape	6.00
Making over coat	6.50

⁶⁵ Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4:548.

⁶⁶ The author has a copy of this blessing, kindly given to him by Spencer Felt, a great-grandson and the heir of Nathaniel Henry Felt. According to family research compiled by Jonathon C. Felt, Nathaniel received a second patriarchal blessing on 18 July 1845 under the hands of William Smith.

⁶⁷ This ledger, kept by Nathaniel Henry Felt while he was a tailor in Nauvoo, is in the possession of Spencer P. Felt, Jr. The author expresses his gratitude to Spencer in allowing him to examine it.

8 ½ yards Binding 100 – 8 8k silk 48 – Twist -8	1.56
Padding 30 = 1 ½ yds B Linen 45 Cuff facings - 12	.87
1 yd cambric 15 = Pockets 25 Buttons 50	.90
Cutting Over Coat fr boy	.37
[total]	\$26.49

On this same date there are similar notations for charges made to John Taylor, who would later succeed Young as Church president. The following month, the ledger also indicates that both Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards had frocks and pants made, as well as other materials.⁶⁸

Felt also had other opportunities to provide for the inhabitants of Nauvoo during this period when the Nauvoo Temple was being completed. His furniture finally arrived from Salem, via New Orleans. Orson F. Whitney, one Utah historian, noted, “Some of his furniture, such as carpets, tables, chairs, sofa and mirrors, were used to furnish the sacred house preparatory to the performance of ordinances therein.”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Several other names of Church members are also recorded in this ledger: Amasa Lyman, George Grant, Hosea Cushing, G. [George] L. Riser, L [Lucius] Scovil, Elias Smith, Wm Taylor, Wm H Kimball, L P Richards, Pardon Webb, Andrew Baston, Orson Hyde, Armstrong, Erastus Snow, Joseph Caine, Lawrence, A. W. Babbit, G. Edmonds, Jos. W. Coolidge, Edward Tuttle, Hodgman, Becham, M. Field, R K Whitney, Jos. L. Heywood, Richard Ballantyne and J E Johnson. Ledger notations are hidden underneath various pages of this ledger, which is covered over with early newspapers, such as the LDS periodicals, *The Mormon* and the *Deseret Evening News* as well as the *Salem Gazette* and *New York Herald*, which were apparently gathered and glued by Felt or a family member prior to his death in 1887.

⁶⁹ Whitney, *History of Utah* 4:548.

Soon after the completion of the Nauvoo Temple, the Saints began their exodus from Nauvoo.⁷⁰ Nathaniel had planned to journey west with his family, but “he was stricken with fever and ague on the frozen banks of the Missouri [Mississippi] and unable to proceed.”⁷¹ Whitney notes that this sickness was caused by Felt over-exerting himself in his efforts to help his fellow Saints across the Mississippi during the period of the Nauvoo exile. In this weakened condition he was counseled to postpone his journey west, and he later took his wife and two sons to St. Louis.⁷² But before his Nauvoo departure, he along with several hundred poor Saints would have to face a threatening mob during the “Battle of Nauvoo” in September 1846.

He was assigned to serve in Captain Gates’ company to defend the temple.⁷³ The company had just gotten onto a small ferry-boat which had pushed off a few rods when a platoon of the mob arrived on the east bank and called for the ferry man to return to shore, threatening to shoot if he did not. While they were returning to shore Nathaniel witnessed the mob manhandling a young man as he begged not to be taken into the water because he was sick. As they mocked and swore at him, two of them took him into the river, mockingly raised an arm, and claimed to baptize him in the name of Joe Smith, the Mormons, and the Nauvoo Temple.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ The first group left on 4 February 1846, and various companies followed until the fall of 1846. For more information on the Nauvoo exodus, see Fred E. Woods, *Gathering to Nauvoo* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2002), 119-47.

⁷¹ “Elder N. H. Felt,” *Deseret News* vol. 36 (February 1887):44.

⁷² Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4:549.

⁷³ JH 10 September 1846, 3.

⁷⁴ JH 30 September 1846, 7.

St. Louis Period

Finally escaping the Nauvoo persecutions, Nathaniel gathered his family to St. Louis. Here, Nathaniel was again called to be a leader, as he had been in Salem. On 8 February 1847, Felt was called to preside over the St. Louis Conference.⁷⁵ The 1847-1850 “Record of the St. Louis Branch” indicates that on 14 February 1847, Felt was “Unanimously Chosen President.”⁷⁶ Just five weeks later, he “laid before the council the necessity of having the city laid out in Wards six in number.”⁷⁷ For the next three years, Nathaniel functioned in this capacity, although he was not released from his position as president of the 29th Quorum of Seventy.

Church leaders, not forgetting that Felt was in St. Louis, corresponded with him regularly. For example, in the fall of 1847, President Brigham Young counseled Felt by letter to “forward the emigrating saints to Winter Quarters.”⁷⁸ On 7 February 1848, Young, again writing to Felt from Winter Quarters (Omaha, NE), gave detailed instruction to “cooperate with the firm of Beach & Eddy, St. Louis, who intend shipping a large quantity of goods, groceries, etc., to this point in the spring, for which purpose they will have to charter boats, on which the Saints can secure passages cheaper and as convenient as on any others.”⁷⁹ The following day, President Young wrote a letter of introduction for William Clayton which stimulated

⁷⁵ JH 8 February 1847. See also JH 4 April 1847 in which Felt is again told to “tarry and preside over the church there” (meaning St. Louis).

⁷⁶ “Record of the Saint Louis Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints from the 14th day of February 1847 To the 21st of April 1850,” (14 February 1847), 1, by John T. Caine, Clerk of the St. Louis Branch, LDS Church Archives.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ JH 25 November 1847, 1.

⁷⁹ JH 7 February 1848, 2.

Nathaniel’s involvement in assisting Clayton in the publication of his *Emigrant Guide*, which would have a profound impact not only on Latter-day Saints, but many westbound emigrants in general.⁸⁰ The following month, Brigham Young wrote to Felt in St. Louis: “we feel to bless you in the name of the Lord and say, go on and prosper and never be weary in well doing.”⁸¹ On 12 April 1848, Elder Orson Hyde of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles again wrote to Nathaniel and among other things recorded, “The Council highly approve of your wisdom and firmness in managing the affairs of the Church under all circumstances.”⁸² Felt kept the Church authorities informed of incidents in St. Louis as well as events occurring on the banks of the Mississippi. Among other things, Felt reported that on 16 November 1848, a mob had torched the Nauvoo Temple.⁸³ During these St. Louis years, President Felt also assisted many Mormon migrants, who included Nauvoo exiles as well as LDS European immigrants and Eastern emigrants who were trying to make their way West to Utah.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ JH 8 Feb 1848, 1, notes, “Brigham Young wrote Brother William Clayton letter of introduction to Elder Nathaniel H. Felt, and others at St. Louis, Missouri. Bro. Clayton being about to start for that city to publish his L.D.S. Emigrant Guide.” A letter from Nathaniel in St. Louis to Brigham Young, 7 March 1848, Brigham Young Correspondence, LDS Church Archives, indicates that Clayton had made arrangements to have 5,000 copies of the Emigrant Guide sold. See also JH 28 March 1848.

⁸¹ JH 14 March 1848, 3.

⁸² Letter by Orson Hyde from Kaneshville Pottawattamie Co., Iowa to Nathaniel H. Felt, 12 April 1848, LDS Church Archives. See also JH 12 April 1848, 1.

⁸³ JH 16 November 1848, 2.

⁸⁴ See Stanley B. Kimball, “The Saints and St. Louis, 1831-1857: An Oasis of Tolerance and Security,” *BYU Studies*, 13:4 (Summer 1973), 507. Kimball later notes (p.509) that Felt was replaced in 1850 by his first counselor, Alexander Robbins.

In a St. Louis council meeting in 1849, President Felt spoke concerning the gathering and urged the Saints there to gather in other Mormon settlements westward because there were too many in St. Louis. He desired that Church leaders spread this message that all might gather, even if only to Council Bluffs. Just two months later he urged the Saints who had temporarily gathered to St. Louis to go to the Bluffs or as far as they could.⁸⁵ Just two months later he urged the Saints who had temporarily gathered to St. Louis to “go to the Valley go to the Bluff Go; Go; as far as you can.”⁸⁶ Felt was also influential in helping missionaries who passed through St. Louis to their various fields of labor. For example, Elder Eli B. Kelsey, on his way to England with Elder George P. Dykes, passed through St. Louis in 1849. In an article to the editor of the *Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star*, Kelsey reported warmly, “We spent one week in St. Louis. Brother Felt . . . treated us with great kindness, and [has] given us means sufficient to bear our expenses to New York. . . . I can confidently say to all the emigrating Saints, who are *compelled* to stop in St. Louis for want of means to proceed further, that if they will hearken to the counsel of Brother Felt and his counselors, it will be well with them.”⁸⁷

Andrew Jenson wrote, “Upon Nathaniel H. Felt devolved almost entirely the duty of advising these immigrants, purchasing outfits and supplies for them, and chartering the necessary steamboat to take them to Kanesville. It was always a matter of congratulation with him that no accident occurred and no scourge of sickness

⁸⁵ Record of the St. Louis Branch, 15 December 1849, 149.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 16 Feb. 1850, 178.

⁸⁷ Eli B. Kelsey, “Letter to the editor,” [29 November 1849], *The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star*, 12 (15 January 1850):27. At this time, President Felt’s office was located at no. 16 Third Street in St. Louis. See JH 26 January 1850.

prevailed on any of the vessels thus engaged by him.”⁸⁸ Jenson further notes that during the period of the great cholera epidemic in St. Louis [1849], President Felt “was constantly called for by the afflicted people, and responded by visiting, administering to and comforting them, scarcely taking time to eat or sleep.”⁸⁹ Not only was Felt’s life spared from the epidemic, but when the great St. Louis fire broke out in the spring of 1849,⁹⁰ Felt’s frame home was miraculously spared as flames came right up to his dwelling but did not destroy it, though a brick building which lay just opposite it was destroyed.⁹¹ In his patriarchal blessing given four years earlier, Felt had been promised that God had “given his Angels charge over thee to preserve thee in all times of danger.”⁹²

The following year, when Nathaniel Felt completed his priesthood assignment in St. Louis and left in the spring for Utah, the St. Louis Saints rallied to help support him and his family in their journey. Hezekiah Mitchell, a passing Mormon emigrant, even contributed to help him to get to Zion. On 14 April 1850, he recorded in his journal, “Gave half a dollar to President Felt’s subscription to help him to the valley.”⁹³ In a St. Louis Church council meeting held 20

⁸⁸ Andrew Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 2:381.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 382. In the ledger kept by Felt while laboring as a tailor in Nauvoo, he extracted three pages of information regarding this deadly disease and a detailed account of how to best treat the disease from a letter printed in the *St. Louis Republican* by a Dr. W. B. Herrek of Chicago. This ledger is in the possession of Spencer P. Felt, Jr.

⁹⁰ James Neal Primm, *Lion of the Valley: St. Louis, Missouri, 1764-1980* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1998, 3rd ed.), 167–68 points out that this fire which broke out on Thursday night 17 May 1849 caused more than six million dollars worth of property damage.

⁹¹ Andrew Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 2:382.

⁹² As noted previously, Felt obtained his patriarchal blessing under the hands of Patriarch John Smith on 30 June 1845.

⁹³ Journal of Hezekiah Mitchell, 14 April 1850, LDS Church Archives.

April 1850, Felt spoke to the council of Church leaders for the last time as president, announcing he was going to resign as President and go to the Salt Lake Valley. “He much regretted leaving so many with whom he had been associated for the last three years. Yet he hoped it would not be long before he met them all in the Valley. . . . Elder Felt then nominated Bro. Alexander Robbins to act as his successor [sic] as President.”⁹⁴

Nathaniel, his wife and two sons left St. Louis together and joined the Edward Woolley Company at Council Bluffs on 25 June 1850 to cross the Plains. Nathaniel served as a chaplain and was frequently called on to preach. Although cholera was smiting emigrants as they crossed the plains, the only person who died of cholera in this entire company was Felt’s teamster. The company arrived in Great Salt Lake City on 6 October 1850.⁹⁵

Early Salt Lake City Years

The Felt family lived its first winter in Salt Lake City in wagons and tents on upper Main Street, opposite Heber C. Kimball’s home. They constructed a two-room adobe house the following spring.⁹⁶ By this time, Felt had already been appointed by President Brigham Young as one of four aldermen of Great Salt Lake City.⁹⁷ By August of 1851, the

⁹⁴ Record of the St. Louis Branch, 20 April 1850, 199-200.

⁹⁵ JH 4 July 1850. The reference to the teamster dying from cholera was pointed out to me by Melvin L. Bashore, senior librarian at the LDS Church Library (Salt Lake City), who has compiled a database that reveals all known references to emigrant accounts from each company who crossed the Plains between 1847-1868.

⁹⁶ Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4:549. According to family research gathered by Felt genealogist Jonathon C. Felt, Heber C. Kimball made arrangements for Nathaniel’s family to dwell on his land.

⁹⁷ This appointment took place under the first charter incorporating the city on 9 January 1851. See JH 9 January 1851. Nathaniel had stewardship over one of four Municipal Wards. His ward, the 3rd Ward, was “bounded on the

first Legislature of the Territory of Utah was created, and Felt was elected to serve in the House of Representatives.⁹⁸ Throughout this period of his life, Felt was in the public eye; such involvement included participation in holiday events. For example, he offered the opening prayers for the Pioneer Day celebration (24 July 1851), as well as a prayer of thanksgiving for the Christmas festivities of this year.⁹⁹

During the fall general conference of 1851, Brigham Young announced the appointment of Nathaniel to the new office of a traveling bishop, created to assist the Presiding Bishop. “President Young said, there would be Travelling [sic] Bishops, to visit the Bishops in their respective wards, to see if they do their duty. . . . Nathaniel H. Felt was nominated as one of the Travelling [sic] Presiding Bishops, under Bishop Edward Hunter.” This assignment also included “gathering tithing, and causing it to be forwarded to the general office - in keeping correct accounts.”¹⁰⁰ The following spring (7 April 1852), Felt was sustained as Assistant Presiding Bishop and labored in this calling for eighteen months.¹⁰¹ Just five days later (12 April 1852), he

east by East Temple Street, south of South Temple Street, west by west bank of Jordan, north by the northern limits.”

⁹⁸ Andrew Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 2:382. Herein, Jenson also notes, “Both in the Territorial and City governments, he served on many important committees, receiving dignitaries from the East [including] arranging for memorial services for President Lincoln funeral.”

⁹⁹ JH 24 July 1851, 1; JH 25 December 1851, 1.

¹⁰⁰ JH 8 September 1851, 1; 22 September 1851, 6. See also Wilford Woodruff’s Journal for the date of 8 September 1851 *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1984), 4:65. His ability to use phonography (shorthand) would have certainly aided him in keeping accurate records of his visits with various bishops and in receiving donations. See JH 1 January 1852, wherein this additional skill is noted.

¹⁰¹ JH 7 April 1852. See also the Journal of Wilford Woodruff for this date. According to Felt family records compiled by Jonathon C. Felt, Nathaniel served in this calling until October 1853, when he was released.

was appointed as one of two chaplains in the Nauvoo Legion.¹⁰² Two months later, Felt was appointed to a committee of five to make plans for the Fourth of July celebration in Utah.¹⁰³ LDS migrants were told to visit with Bishop Felt, because he was at this time in the public works office.¹⁰⁴

In the spring of 1853, Felt was sustained as a member of the high council for the Salt Lake City Stake.¹⁰⁵ The next year, Nathaniel entered the order of plural marriage, being sealed to Sarah Strange on 17 March 1854. Less than two years later he married Mary Louisa Pile.¹⁰⁶

New York Church Assignment and Return to Salt Lake City

During this same period, Felt would have additional Church assignments, which included assisting John Taylor in New York with the LDS periodical *The Mormon*, and aiding immigrants who landed at Castle Garden. Apparently Felt kept President Brigham Young aware of various emigration situations. For example, Felt told Young about the first LDS converts who had disembarked in

¹⁰² JH 12 April 1852, 1.

¹⁰³ JH 19 June 1852, 1. Two years later, Nathaniel is listed as an aid for the Pioneer Day order of procession. See JH 24 July 1854, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in JH 18 September 1852, from an article titled “The Emigrating Saints,” *Deseret News* 2 October 1852.

¹⁰⁵ JH 7 April 1853, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4:550. According to Paul E. Felt, “I Remember When, Personal History of Paul E. Felt,” (L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library), Pile arrived from Europe on the vessel *Gondola*, disembarking at New York in 18 March 1854. However, the *Gondola* disembarked at New Orleans while Felt was in Salt Lake City. Apparently this information was passed down incorrectly.

Philadelphia.¹⁰⁷ Emigration service rendered by these brethren may also be evidenced by one Mormon immigrant who crossed the Atlantic on the *Thornton* in 1856: “At sun down we landed at the Castle Gardens, a large building appropriated for emigrants, where we were visited by Elder Felt who kindly welcomed us.”¹⁰⁸ James G. Willie, who was on this same voyage, recorded, “on our arrival at Castle Gardens, New York, we received a hearty welcome from President John Taylor and Elder Felt.”¹⁰⁹ During their emigrations labors, the New York brethren still made time for fun. Felt and several of his companions enjoyed an excursion to Toms River, New Jersey.¹¹⁰

By the fall of 1856, Felt had completed this assignment and returned to Salt Lake City. On his return, he was successful at obtaining a government contract to provide Camp Floyd troops with supplies. He was also involved with David R. Allen in establishing grain and produce stores in Ephraim, Nephi and Salt Lake City.¹¹¹ Just one week before the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln to the office of President of the United States, Nathaniel was elected to the board of directors for the Deseret Agricultural and Manufacturing Society.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Letter written by Nathaniel H. Felt from New York to Brigham Young on 28 April 1855. See Brigham Young Correspondence, LDS Church Archives.

¹⁰⁸ Journal of William Woodard, 14 June 1856, quoted in Marilyn Austin Smith, “Faithful stewards--the life of James Gray Willie and Elizabeth Ann Pettit,” 95, LDS Church Library, Salt Lake City.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 95.

¹¹⁰ JH 14 July 1855, 7.

¹¹¹ Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4:550.

¹¹² See JH 25 February 1861. On 4 March 1861, Wilford Woodruff notes that Felt was elected to the board of directors of the D A & M Society. See Scott G. Kenney, ed. *Wilford Woodruff Journals*, 9 vols. (Midvale, UT: Signature Books) 5:557.

Missions to Great Britain and Salem Region

During the years 1865-67 he was a missionary in Great Britain and spent a portion of his time working in the office where the *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* was published. He also served in the London District as a leader.¹¹³ While on his mission in November of 1865, he responded to an article titled "An Essex County Man," published by the *Salem Gazette*, 30 August 1865, under the caption "Mormonism Defended." Among other things, he straightened out erroneous information about himself and defended the Church, including the doctrine of polygamy. He concluded his letter by stating, "I remain an Essex County Man."¹¹⁴ During the period of November 1869 to May 1870, Felt labored as a New England States missionary, mostly in his native state of Massachusetts.¹¹⁵

On 4 December 1869, *The Salem Observer* announced:

"Elder N. H. Felt, formerly of Salem now of Salt Lake City, and a leading spirit in the 'Church of Latter day Saints,' is in Salem on a visit to his many old friends. The Elder is a preacher and a missionary and has indicated his willingness to do a little Mormon missionary work here if the people want to hear him. Mr. Felt went to Utah in 1846, [1845] and we have no doubt he has an interesting story to tell about his adventures."¹¹⁶

A week later, the *Observer* noted under the heading "Special Notices" a brief advertisement titled "Mormonism," which stated, "Elder N. H. Felt of Salt Lake City, will discourse upon the views and doctrines of the

¹¹³ Andrew Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 2:383.

¹¹⁴ See "Mormonism Defended," *Salem Gazette*, 22 December 1865, 1.

¹¹⁵ Andrew Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 2:383.

¹¹⁶ Quoted from the *Deseret Evening News*, 20 December 1869 in JH, 20 December 1869. 2.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints at Hubon Hall, Washington street, To-morrow. Nov. 12 commencing at 10 o'clock, A. M., 2 1-2, and 7 o'clock P.M."¹¹⁷ While he was in New England, on 20 Feb. 1870, several of the Brethren were gathered at the home of Elias Smith in Salt Lake City to discuss the family history of Joseph Smith Jr. Wilford Woodruff wrote in his journal for this date, "N. H. Felt had searched the Ancient Records of the Smith family & sent an account of some wills & other Accounts of the family of Joseph Smith to G A Smith & they were read over during the evening with much interest."¹¹⁸ This seems to indicate that Nathaniel was gathering not only the treasures by way of converts, but also of the Joseph Smith family genealogy.

Latter Utah Years

For many of his latter Utah years, he served on the Salt Lake Stake high council and was anxiously engaged in Church as well as state affairs, but in 1873 he was struck with a severe illness.¹¹⁹ A few years before this he is listed in the 1869 Salt Lake City Directory as a cashier for Jennings and Company while living in the Seventeenth Ward between East Temple and 100 North. One year after his illness struck (1874), he is listed at the same home address, but without any type of employment.¹²⁰ The following year (19 June 1875), Nathaniel's first wife (Eliza Ann Preston) died. A tender view of his life is portrayed by his firstborn son, Joseph Henry Felt, who wrote an excerpt in his journal of the family gathering at his mother's burial place, on the one-

¹¹⁷ "Mormonism" *The Salem Observer*, 11 December 1869.

¹¹⁸ *Wilford Woodruff Journals*, 6:529 for the date of 20 February 1870.

¹¹⁹ Andrew Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 2:383.

¹²⁰ *The Salt Lake City Directory and Business Guide, for 1869*, E. L. Sloan, ed., (Salt Lake City: E. L. Sloan & Co. 1869), 105. *Salt Lake City Directory*, Edward L. Sloan, ed., (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Herald Publishing Co. 1874), 215.

year anniversary of her death. Felt wrote that his father had requested the family to meet at the burial place of his mother to commemorate her death the previous year. After making several remarks about her goodness, and urging the family to be united, he asked that the family gather each year at her burial site. Joseph concludes, “We then pulled the weeds from the grave and placed roses and other flowers upon it.”¹²¹

Although Felt continued to encourage his family, he never fully recovered from this illness. Notwithstanding the trial of poor health, he continued to serve as a home missionary and also contributed articles to the press.¹²² On 15 January 1887, Felt was struck with partial paralysis, which ultimately led to his death.¹²³ He died twelve days later (27 January 1887), leaving a posterity of eight sons, five daughters and sixteen grandchildren.¹²⁴ Felt’s patriarchal blessing noted, “Thou shalt have a numerous posterity, they shall grow up and be very healthy, they shall continue to increase so they cannot be numbered.”¹²⁵ Now the family tree of Nathaniel Henry Felt numbers in the thousands, and many descendants have been favorably influenced by this noble servant and patriarch.

Epilogue

In the 3 February 2001 issue of *Church News*, staff writer Shaun Stahle wrote that the location of the “stately

¹²¹ Journal of Joseph Henry Felt, 18 June 1876, quoted in Helen Bitner Wilcox, comp. “A Brief Lineal History of Joseph Henry Felt,” N.p., 18.

¹²² Andrew Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 2:383.

¹²³ “Old Salt Lakers. Nathaniel H. Felt,” *Deseret News*, 2 June 1900. See also his obituary in “Elder N. H. Felt,” *Deseret Evening News* 20:57 (29 January 1887), 3.

¹²⁴ Andrew Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 2:383.

¹²⁵ Blessing given to Nathaniel Henry Felt on 30 June 1845 by Patriarch John Smith.

three-story” Nathaniel H. Felt Salem home had been positively identified and that it was on the property of the Peabody Essex Museum. Since that time, local Salem resident Debbie Benvie (former multi-regional director for the LDS Church public affairs), the Nathaniel H. Felt Family Association and Mormon Historic Sites Foundation are spearheading plans to develop a museum and city family history center at the Nathaniel H. Felt home site in Salem. They are now working in cooperation with Peabody Essex Museum officials, city dignitaries and local LDS Church leaders to honor the life of Nathaniel, who remained throughout his life “an Essex County man.”

On 16 October 2004, a plaque was placed upon the home of Nathaniel H. Felt which states the following:

HOME OF NATHANIEL H. FELT

This house, formerly located at 10 Liberty Street, was once the home of Mormon pioneer and local church leader NATHANIEL HENRY FELT (1816-1887).

Born and raised in Salem, Nathaniel and his brother John ran a tailoring business at 217 Essex Street. In 1839, he married Eliza Ann Preston, also of Salem. In 1843, they joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and along with 120 new converts, began a small branch of the Church in Salem. Because of Nathaniel’s position as branch president, this house became an important Mormon meeting place.

In the late spring of 1844, Brigham Young sent his fourteen-year-old daughter Vilate to live with the Felt family while she attended school in Salem. Later that summer, Brigham Young visited Salem several times while campaigning for Joseph Smith (LDS Church founder), a U.S. presidential candidate. It was on one of these visits to

the area that Brigham Young and local Church members first heard news of Smith's murder at Carthage, Illinois, on June 27, 1844.

One year later, Nathaniel Felt, his family, and Vilate Young left from this house to embark on the arduous journey west, eventually settling in what would become Salt Lake City, Utah. There, Nathaniel became a highly respected member of the community, with a public career that included service as Salt Lake City alderman and Utah Territorial representative.

Plaque donated by the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation and the Nathaniel H. Felt Family Association

Dr. Fred E. Woods - Author

Fred E. Woods grew up in Southern California. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Utah. He has been a professional educator for twenty-three years, including five years at Ricks College (now BYU-Idaho) and he is currently a professor of Church History & Doctrine at Brigham Young University. His area of expertise is Mormon migration in the 19th century.

In 1999 Fred was the Wilkinson Research Fellow at the Mariner's Museum (Newport News, VA), and in 2000 he was a research fellow at the Mercantile Library in St. Louis. In 2001 Fred was a research/teaching fellow at the Mercantile Library and for the Pierre LaCledé Honors College at the University of Missouri - St. Louis and this past year he was a visiting professor at Brigham Young University-Hawaii. In 2002, BYU (Religious Education) awarded him the Richard L. Anderson award for outstanding research. He has authored several books on the topic of Mormon migration and many articles. Currently Fred lives in Provo, Utah with his wife JoAnna and their children.

Jonathan Clark Felt – Contributor

Jonathan C. Felt was born to Dr. Roger Boyer Felt, son of Thomas Benjamin Felt, who was born at Manti, Utah to Nathaniel Henry Felt Jr. His mother is the former Miss Lois Geraldine Clark of Santaquin, Utah and he was raised in Layton, Utah. Jonathan was fascinated by the life and contributions of Nathaniel H. Felt (his great-great grandfather) since he was only nine years of age. Later he realized that little of what Nathaniel Henry Felt accomplished was organized and chronicled into one comprehensive work and he desired to pull it together for the benefit of his family and others. At age nineteen, Jonathan served an LDS mission to Sendai, Japan which provided a rich cultural experience; afterwards he attended

school at the University of Utah where he pursued a degree in the school of business.

Jonathan chose to pursue the vocation of information technology (IT) which has been his craft since 1987. That course has taken him on many tracks, the most prominent one being employee benefits. From 1995 until 1999 he served as Chief Technology Officer for Xybernet, Inc. Subsequently he was honored to help launch BeneTrac.com, where he performed the duties of general manager and vice president. In the year 2001 terrorists struck the U.S. economy in such a way to force him to retool his skills and begin a new life as a self-employed business owner. However, that has afforded him the opportunity to work diligently and passionately toward his lifelong goal of honoring the memory and life of Nathaniel Henry Felt his great-great-grandfather. Currently Jonathan lives in Centerville, Utah with his wife Melody Glover Felt and six of their seven children still at home. Their oldest son Nathaniel lives in San Diego.