
“A Gathering Place for the Scandinavian People”: Conversion, Retention, and Gathering in Norway, Illinois (1842–1849)

Keith A. Erekson & Lloyd D. Newell

In the early years of Mormonism, the doctrine of gathering to a central place was prevalent and persuasive. However, not all members of the Church migrated to the center place. Some smaller, more-isolated settlements were established and faced challenges unique to their size—yet common to the Church. The Norwegian settlement in La Salle County near the Fox River, later named Norway, Illinois (located approximately two hundred miles north and east of Nauvoo) provides an illuminating example of the early efforts to convert, retain, and watch over those outside the gathering place.¹ The history of this vibrant community reveals that there *were* congregations of faithful Saints outside of Nauvoo who stayed together for nearly a decade and that the brethren were concerned for their welfare.² Early Church leaders proselytized and strengthened members in this isolated branch so that a strong group could later gather to Zion.³

Early Settlement

In 1834, the “Norwegian Daniel Boone” Cleng Peerson led six Norwegian families from their settlement in Kendall County, New York, to La Salle County, Illinois.⁴ The group settled near the junction of the Fox and Illinois Rivers, about nine miles northeast of the county seat of Ottawa. The fertile farmland, combined with the construction of the Illinois-

KEITH A. EREKSON received his B.S. in Sociology from BYU in 2000 and is currently an M.A. candidate in American History at BYU.

LLOYD D. NEWELL is an Assistant Professor of Church History and Doctrine at BYU. He received his Ph.D in Family Sciences from BYU and is voice of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir’s weekly international broadcast, Music and the Spoken Word.



Michigan Canal (1836–48), presented the prospect of healthy economic development.⁵ More Norwegian immigrants arrived in 1836 and 1837.⁶ The Panic of 1837 brought hard times, and for a time the countryside was terror-

ized by roving bandits who stole horses and committed murder. Work on the canal was suspended for a time, but by 1841–42, the financial condition of the settlement was beginning to improve.⁷ By 1843, there were approximately six hundred people in the Fox River Settlement, the majority of whom spoke English. There were good homes, schools, a Lutheran chapel, and much more than subsistence farming.⁸ In 1842, retired Secretary of the Navy, James Kirke Paulding, painted this picture:

In the midst of a “sea of the prairie” lies a “little straggling village, encompassed by luxuriant fields of wheat and corn, showing forth the rich rewards of industry operating in a fertile soil. The buildings and other appendages indicated not only comfort but competency, and I could not avoid being struck with the singularity of a community from the remote regions of Northern Europe planting itself in this secluded spot in the very bosom of the New World.⁹

The rivers teemed with fish (including trout, catfish, and gar-fish), and the vast prairies held many species of grouse, so while the Norwegian settlers worked hard, they also found time for recreation. One settler recalled that “when the weather was unfavorable for work, we used to amuse ourselves in many different ways. Fishing and hunting were among our favorite sports because at that time both fish and game were plentiful.”¹⁰

“He Will Teach Us of His Ways, and We Will Walk in His Paths”

It was under these favorable conditions in March 1842 that a missionary by the name of George P. Dykes visited the Norwegian settlement. Dykes was an elder in the Mormon Church and was a “very intelligent man.”¹¹ He began to preach about a new prophet and an extraordinary new book that contained a record of the ancient inhabitants of the Americas. His words aroused opposition, and “many of [the] most intelligent men, including the minister came to his meetings and opposed him, but none were successful in argument against him, or the doctrine he was advocating.”¹² As a result of his fervent preaching, in the latter part of April, the first five Norwegian converts to the Church were baptized. Returning one month later, Dykes organized the La Salle Branch of the Church. He ordained Gudman Haugas an elder, describing him as “a man of strong mind, and well skilled in the scriptures; he can preach in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, having an understanding of the languages.”¹³ Such a convert could make a great contribution to the still young and growing congregation.

Dykes left the Fox River settlement and returned to Nauvoo, only to find the city “deluged with falsehood, from the pen of J. C. Bennett.” Fearing for the souls of his new converts, Dykes “immediately returned to La Salle, but the people there, looked upon [Bennett] as a wicked designing man; his

lies continued but a short time.”¹⁴ In August, Dykes traveled around Illinois on special assignment to correct Bennett’s doctrine. He again visited La Salle County, “spent two weeks, and baptized seven.” He “found the church there, in good spirits and in the enjoyment of the spiritual gifts.” The branch numbered “fifty-eight, in good standing,” and Elder Ole Heier was chosen to preside over them. Elder Heier, as Dykes put it, “is well worthy the office.”¹⁵



Canute Peterson
 Courtesy of LDS Historical Dept., Archives

Many who would become stalwart Saints, such as Canute Peterson and Ellen Saunders, were baptized during the summer of 1842.¹⁶ The excited converts “used to hold [their] meetings in the homes of the Saints wherever it was the most convenient.”¹⁷ While meeting in the home of Brother Dahl, Ellen Saunders experienced the first manifestation of spiritual gifts among them—by speaking in tongues.¹⁸ The converts were a spiritual people, and “they enjoyed the spiritual gifts, such as prophesying, healing, speaking in tongues, in a very remarkable degree.”¹⁹ Dykes reported his labors to the Church in Nauvoo with enthusiasm, relating that he had baptized Ole Heier, “a

winning personality and gifted speaker,” the school teacher Jørgen Pedersen, and Endre Dahl and Gudman Haugas, both of whom were pioneers at Fox River, as well as among the first immigrants from Norway.²⁰

Mormonism spread quickly among the Norwegians, and in May 1843, Elder Dykes predicted with excitement that “the time is not far distant when the saying of Micah 4:2 will be fulfilled.”²¹ That prophecy, a favorite among members at the time, reads, “And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for

the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” From the earliest days, the Church was strengthened by such faithful converts who knew the scriptures and understood the significance of gathering and establishing Zion—even in its outlying stakes.

Under the Watch of the Priesthood

As the Church continued to grow among the Norwegians, the Saints received visits from several of the brethren and missionaries.²² On 17 May 1844, an important conference was held among the Norwegian Saints when Apostles Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith arrived in Ottawa, La Salle County.²³ Woodruff mentioned in his journal that it was the practice of the brethren to spend their summers strengthening those who lived away from Nauvoo.²⁴ George A. Smith stayed in Ottawa and presented a lecture “upon the subject of General Smith’s views of the government,” but Wilford Woodruff “continued on to the La Salle Branch of about 50 members from Norway,” where he held a meeting and spent the night with Gudman Haugas.²⁵

On Saturday, 18 May, Elders Woodruff and Smith presided at a conference held in nearby Newark, Kendall County. First, representation of the eight attending branches was called for, and Ole Heier reported for the La Salle Branch the presence of forty-six members and two elders. It was the largest branch represented at the conference, which had 133 members and ten elders in attendance.²⁶ Then, four elders, a priest, and a teacher were ordained unto their new offices under the hands of Elders W. Woodruff, G. A. Smith, and Ezra Thayer; and instructions were given according to their priesthood duties.²⁷

On Sunday morning, Wilford Woodruff addressed the assembly, instructing the elders to be careful to preach the first principles of the gospel and doctrine of Christ, and not spend their time in warring with the opinions of other men; showed the importance of revelation, and the necessity of a prophet of God as the head of the Church on earth, being as necessary in order to exist, and advance in knowledge, as for a natural body to possess a head in order to live. He considered we were enjoying the society of as good a prophet in this day as any people ever enjoyed in any age of the world, and believed all good men would think so if they were fully acquainted with him & his principles.²⁸

Elder George A. Smith then addressed the assembled Saints and “bore testimony to the truth of the fulness of the gospel; counselled the Elders to be humble, and not get head and shoulders above their brethren, lest they fall, like the tallest trees of the forest, that are first swept down by the raging storm.”²⁹ His remarks were “well received by the congregation,” and after-

wards the sacrament was administered and many of the members gave their testimony of the truthfulness of the work.³⁰

It was a glorious day for the Norwegian Saints. Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal that the “conference was dismissed amid the best of feelings, . . . good order prevailed, . . . [and] attention kindness and civility was manifest by all who were present.”³¹ The next day, Elder Woodruff sent a letter reporting the minutes of the conference to John Taylor, who published them in the *Times and Seasons* on 1 June 1844.

The Establishment of Norway, Illinois

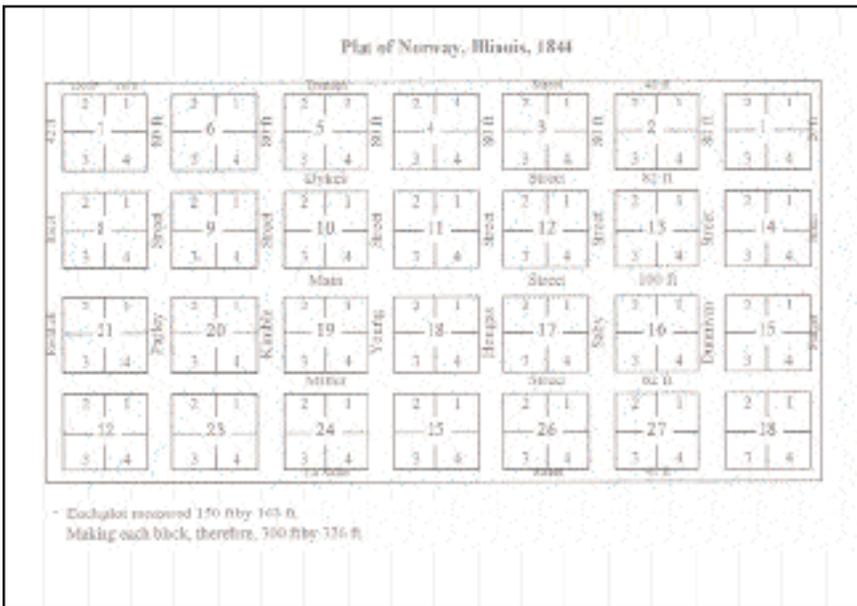
Only one month after this conference, Joseph and Hyrum Smith were martyred, and though the Saints sorrowed, they did not lose their faith.³² After the martyrdom, Brigham Young and the Twelve recognized the need to strengthen the members of the scattered branches. Following the policies Joseph Smith had previously set forth, they appointed a high priest to preside over each congressional district in the United States and a bishop to preside in each larger branch.³³ George P. Dykes, the faithful missionary who first introduced the Norwegian settlement to the Church, was assigned to preside in La Salle County.

Later that month, Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, Heber C. Kimball, and Lorenzo D. Young visited the Norwegian settlement. Following a conference at Ottawa, Illinois, they visited the Fox River Branch on 23 October, “taught the principles of the Gospel to them,” and appointed George P. Dykes to preside and Reuben Miller, a resident of Ottawa, as bishop.³⁴

The brethren purchased a hundred acres of land from Gudman Haugas and Jacob Anderson, nine miles northeast of Ottawa, laid out a city dedicated to the Lord, and called it Norway.³⁵ This area was an important place for the Norwegians because it had been on this same area that they had held their earlier meetings. The first branch had been organized here, and “here also were the first manifestation of the Spirit in the gifts of prophecy, healing the sick, speaking in tongues, and the interpretation to these people.”³⁶ Several of the streets were named after the presiding brethren, including Brigham Young, Parley Pratt, Heber C. Kimball, George P. Dykes, and Reuben Miller. And two others were named after Norwegians Gudman Haugas and Henry Sabey.

Ten acres were set aside for a temple “upon a high and very beautiful spot,”³⁷ and sites were selected for a “tithing house,” a meetinghouse or tabernacle, and other public buildings.³⁸ President Young declared that “this place would be a gathering place for the Scandinavian People, and that they would build the temple on the site selected, also that in the Temple they would have the privilege of giving and receiving the Endowment in their

own language.”³⁹ The Norwegian Saints “rejoiced exceedingly because of these great promises made by the brethren to them and their people.”⁴⁰



Enduring a Season of Confusion and Apostasy

Despite the joys of gospel fellowship and the instruction and support of inspired leaders, the Norwegian Saints met with bitter opposition, particularly from local Lutheran leaders. A prominent local pastor named J. W. C. Deitrichson was enraged that the various sects and schisms were destroying Lutheran unity. He was distressed that by 1845, nearly 150 Norwegians in the western settlements—some eighty in the Fox River colony alone—had accepted the Mormon faith. In the spring of 1845, he called a meeting, belittling the Mormon elders who had preached to his Norwegians from an ox-drawn wagon.⁴¹ He wrote:

The situation here surely demonstrates what happens to the poor emigrant in religious matters, when no aid comes from the fatherland. The confusion here is terrible. Our dear countrymen, baptized and confirmed in the faith of our fathers, are here divided into seven or eight different sects. About eighty of them belong to the Mormon sect. Others are Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, and followers of Elling Eielsen, etc.⁴²

In March 1845, Reuben Miller was called by the Twelve to relocate in Nauvoo. In October, while on business in Ottawa, Miller was appointed by

Brigham Young to lead a company to go west the following spring. After making arrangements in Nauvoo, he returned to the Fox River region to encourage the Saints to accompany him. His message, coupled with the “many exciting rumors . . . concerning the unpleasant conditions existing in Nauvoo [and] that the saints would leave that city and go westward to the Rocky Mountains,”⁴³ created an anxiety among the Norwegian Saints to receive their endowments before the event of such an exodus. A small group left La Salle county in mid January 1846 and traveled by wagon to Nauvoo. There, they witnessed “preparations for the great exodus going on both night and day,” and they had “the great pleasure” of receiving their endowments.⁴⁴ On the morning of 27 January 1846, several of the Norwegian brethren were ordained to the Quorum of Seventy by Joseph Young and Jedediah M. Grant.⁴⁵ That afternoon, in fulfillment of their expectation, they received their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple.⁴⁶

After their brief but uplifting visit, the group returned home. En route, they “were grossly insulted by mobs in Hancock Co. between Nauvoo and La Harp, but . . . returned home alright.”⁴⁷ Upon their return, they found the settlement thrown into confusion by the persuasive claims of the quick-tongued apostate James J. Strang. Strang proclaimed himself successor to the Prophet and opposed the removal of the Saints to the West.⁴⁸ Strang had been baptized into the Church while visiting in Ottawa, early in 1844, and he returned to proselyte the Fox River region from December 1845 to January 1846. He had countered Miller’s previous solicitations by meeting with “about one hundred brethren and sisters, mostly Norwegians . . . [who] seemed to receive his testimony and be convinced by his arguments.”⁴⁹

On 12 January 1846, Strang and Miller faced off, and Miller was unable to withstand Strang’s argument. Confused, yet leaning in Strang’s direction, Miller went to Nauvoo, and on 30 January 1846, approached Brigham Young about the subject. Brigham Young recorded the encounter in his diary:

I had some conversation with Reuben Miller of Ottawa, he being considerably bewildered by Strang’s new fangled revelation—rendered him almost devoid of reason although apparently honest in what he was doing, and said the word of the Lord would be decidedly satisfactory to him—whereupon I said, Thus saith the Lord unto Reuben Miller through Brigham Young—that Strang is a wicked and corrupt man and that his revelations are as false as he is—therefore turn away from his folly—and never let it be said of Reuben Miller that he was ever led away and entangled by such nonsense. Thus saying, I left him, my time being too precious to be spent in hearing and even talking about such trash.⁵⁰

In spite of the firm rebuke, Miller continued to believe Strang and lectured publicly in Nauvoo for the new cause. In February 1846, he published

a pamphlet defending Strang and soon rose to trusted leadership positions within the sect.⁵¹

Long-time stalwarts such as Ole Heier, Gudmund Haugas, and Endre Dahl were also won over. Strang boasted that he had brought “some three hundred brethren and sisters back to the true order of the Church . . . saving them from that most hopeless undertaking the Emigration to the western wilds.”⁵² Strang held a conference in April 1846 and claimed that a “score of high priests and elders” from among the Norwegian converts numbered themselves among his ranks.⁵³ Haugas was ordained an apostle at this conference, and Miller was called as a stake president.⁵⁴ Like some other apostates, before and since Strang, he was able to persuade many to his cause. However, Strang’s influence soon dissipated.⁵⁵ Six months later, in June 1846, Reuben Miller became disillusioned with Strang.⁵⁶ He resigned his position and began to preach against him. He published another pamphlet decrying Strang in September and was rebaptized into the Church of Jesus Christ on 19 October 1846. Norwegians Heier, Haugas, and Dahl also returned to the Church.⁵⁷

The Call to Zion and a Pledge to Support the Twelve

Meanwhile, Brigham Young led the first group of Saints west. Shortly after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, he turned his attention back to the Saints left behind, and he had not forgotten the Fox River Saints. In December 1847, he sent George W. Bratten from Council Bluffs to visit the Norwegian settlement. Recounts Bratten, “I arrived at Norway Jan. 10, 1848 and on the 12th had a large and very attentive congregation in a school house.” He received “eight dollars and some cents” and a pledge from nineteen members that they “would support the Twelve and go to the west.” During this visit, Henry Sabey was appointed president of the La Salle Branch.⁵⁸

At this time, former Bishop Reuben Miller was living in Wisconsin. He had kept in contact with the Twelve but had not ventured west, hoping that he might try to undo the wrongs he had committed. Finally, in September 1848, he began the journey west, stopping in La Salle County on the way.⁵⁹ He arrived in Kanesville, Iowa, on 15 October 1848, and six days later, Miller addressed the conference and made public acknowledgment of his error. Then, Oliver Cowdery, escorted by his friend Orson Hyde, walked into the meeting, and he, too, made public reconciliation. Miller recorded Cowdery’s testimony in his journal in great detail.⁶⁰

On 16 November 1848, Miller wrote a letter to Henry Sabey, and it was later observed that “no letter of the Apostle Paul to his converts is more ecstatic.”⁶¹ Perhaps his experiences with his own return, as well as his wit-

nessing the reconciliation of Oliver Cowdery, had something to do with his zeal.⁶² After relating his travels and safe arrival in Council Bluffs, Miller described the favorable conditions in Kanesville and the good reports he had heard about Utah. He stated emphatically that he had “come home,” having “never felt more at home in all [his] life.” Miller used an eloquent metaphor about the Mormon ship sailing with the Master on board, affirming that His servants are at the helm, sailing for a “haven of eternal repose.” Miller pleaded with Sabey to get on board “or down goes your Birthright Like Esau of old.”

Will you and my friends come. Will you come. If god would bless me with the trump of the arch angle and with the voice of Jehovah. I should, or would sound the real importance to every heart. And arouse you from your midnight slumbers in Spiritual darkness. And awake you too a message from Jehovah. Upon which hangs your salvation. The Salvation of your dead. And the blessings of generations now unborn, together with all the power, glory and dominions, of the whole earth. May god inspire your hearts with his holy Spirit, that you may be able to see, And gather home speedily, that you may execute his righteous purposes upon the earth, and live a name to be perpetuated in the house of Israel throughout all the generations of man and through all eternity, which may god grant for Jesus Sake Amen.

He reported the return of Oliver Cowdery and added “this people are united, and are a good, great, and mighty people.”⁶³ The message from Miller was eloquent and emphatic: Come west, and build the kingdom.

Gathering to Zion

As soon as the season permitted a response to Miller’s plea and the pledge to support the Twelve, the remaining faithful Norwegian converts embarked for Zion.⁶⁴ Six months later, on 18 April 1849, twenty-two Norwegians left Fox River in six wagons, three of which belonged to Henry Sabey.⁶⁵ The group was composed of the Sabey family, Canute Peterson, Shure Olson and family, and Mother Dahl and her family.⁶⁶ Among these Saints, influential Gudman Haugas was noticeably absent. Shortly after the party left La Salle County, a deadly cholera epidemic struck, killing many people, including Haugas.⁶⁷

The party traveled to Kanesville, on the east bank of the Missouri River, where they joined Apostle Ezra T. Benson’s company. The next day, the group traveled to the upper crossing of the Missouri River, where they met up with George A. Smith, Brother Richards, Thomas E. Ricks, Christian Hayer, and Daniel Spencer. The combined party started for the Salt Lake Valley on 4 July 1849, with roughly four hundred people transported by 120 wagons. The journey was an adventure, full of excitement, perils, and weariness.

ness. The Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley 155 days later, to make their new home.⁶⁸

Many of the Norwegian Saints settled in the Mill Creek area where Reuben Miller, who had preceded them in the Salt Lake valley, made his home and served as bishop for thirty years.⁶⁹ As they gathered, now with the main body of Saints, most remained faithful. Canute Peterson settled in Lehi, Utah, in 1850. After serving a mission to Norway (1853–57), he was called in 1867 to settle in Sanpete County where he served as bishop in Ephraim.⁷⁰ The grandson of Endre Dahl sat in Utah's constitutional convention; and Shure Olson, a cabinet maker, helped build the organ in the Tabernacle.⁷¹ Henry Sabey originally settled on the corner of South Temple and Third West in Salt Lake City. He relocated to Mill Creek in the late 1850s and remained faithful in his ward assignments.⁷² United by the seeds of testimony they first sowed in a small community along the Fox River named for their homeland, this ardent band of emigrants assimilated into the fellowship of the Saints.⁷³ In the Salt Lake Valley and surrounding regions, they remained stalwart Latter-day Saints, where, for generations, these Norwegian converts and their descendants have been the beneficiaries of their conversion, retention, and gathering.

Notes

1. For locations of other settlements, see Donald Q. Cannon, "Hancock County, Illinois"; Stanley B. Kimball, "Eastern Iowa"; and Kenneth W. Godfrey, "Illinois," in S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson, eds., *Historical Atlas of Mormonism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 56, 58, 60. See also Kenneth W. Godfrey, "Those Other Illinois Mormons: Latter-day Saints Who Did Not Reside in Nauvoo," *Mormon Heritage Magazine*, 1, no. 5 (December 1994): 36–41; and Donald Q. Cannon, "Spokes on the Wheel," *Early Latter-day Saint Settlements in Hancock County, Illinois*, *Ensign* 16, no. 2 (February 1986): 62–68.

2. The settlement at Norway, Illinois, is treated briefly by William Mulder in *Homeward to Zion: The Mormon Migration from Scandinavia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951), 7–17; and Gerald Haslam, *Clash of Cultures: The Norwegian Experience with Mormonism, 1842–1920* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 123–46. Both authors mention the Norway settlement only as a prelude to the extensive missionary work and immigration from Scandinavia that took place beginning in the 1850s.

3. William Mulder argues that the concept of gathering was the most influential doctrine in the early days of the Church in "Mormonism's 'Gathering': A Doctrine with a Difference," *Church History*, 23, no. 3 (September 1954): 248–64.

4. The heads of family were Cleng Peerson, Endre Dahl, Jacob Anderson Slogvig, Gudman Haugas, Nels Thompson, and Thorstein Olson Bjaadland. For more on the initial 1825 immigration and settlement in New York, see J. Hart Rosdail, *The Sloopers: Their Ancestry and Posterity* (Broadview, Illinois: Photopress, Inc., 1961).

5. An 1828 law provided for construction of the canal that would unite the Illinois River with Lake Michigan. Ground was broken simultaneously in La Salle County and

in Chicago on 4 July 1836. After the recovery from the Panic of 1837, the state legislature passed an act on 21 February 1843 to complete the canal. In 1845, work was resumed, and the canal was finally completed in 1848. For more information on the history of La Salle County, see Elmer Baldwin, *History of La Salle County, Illinois* (Chicago: Rand, McNally and Company, 1877); and Michael Cyprian O'Byrne, *History of La Salle County, Illinois* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1924).

6. For specific numbers and ship loads, see Henry J. Cadbury, "Four Immigrant Shiploads of 1836 and 1837," *Norwegian-American Studies and Records*, 2 (1927): 21.

7. Contemporary sociological research indicates that personal conversion is correlated with poorer economic circumstances, such as the Panic of 1837 would have fostered. See James T. Duke, Barry L. Johnson, and James B. Duke, "Rates of Religious Conversion: A Macrosociological Study" in Monty L. Lynn and David O. Moberg, eds., *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Jai Press, Inc., 1993), 89–121. Furthermore, Rodney Stark has argued that new religious movements also prosper in areas where there is a weak dominant religion, accompanied by an open religious market. See Rodney Stark, "The Basis of Mormon Success: A Theoretical Application," in James T. Duke, ed., *Latter-day Saint Social Life: Social Research on the LDS Church and Its Members* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1998), 60–62.

8. See Carlton C. Qualey, "The Fox River Norwegian Settlement," *Journal of Illinois State Historical Society*, 27 (1934–35): 150–51.

9. As cited in Mentor L. Williams, "A Tour of Illinois in 1842," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 42 (1949): 305. In February 1842, Paulding and former President Martin Van Buren went on a five-month, seven-thousand-mile journey throughout the frontier of Illinois.

10. Canute Peterson, "A Story of the Life of Canute Peterson (1824–1902)," type-script, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, 11; see also 18. Excerpts are published in *The Instructor* 81, no. 3 (March 1946): 122–25; and no. 4 (April 1946): 172–81.

11. *Ibid.*, 12. Dykes (1814–88) was born in St. Clair County, Illinois. He was ordained a seventy in May 1839 and traveled extensively throughout Illinois, Tennessee, and the Midwestern states. Later, he marched with the Mormon Battalion from Fort Leavenworth to California in 1846–47. He served a mission to Great Britain in 1849, and in June 1850, he accompanied Erastus Snow to Denmark. He also labored in Germany. See Andrew Jenson, *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971), 2:762.

12. Peterson, "Life of Canute Peterson," 12.

13. *Times and Seasons*, 4 (15 May 1843): 195.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.* Dykes was not alone in his ministry. An Elder Levitt was also baptizing in the region during the summer months. See Peterson, "Life of Canute Peterson," 12.

16. Eighteen-year-old Knud (Canute) Peterson from Hardanger, Norway, immigrated in 1837. Before his death, he dictated his reminiscences to his daughter Carrie. This record, though subject to the limitations of reminiscence accounts, serves as an excellent primary document of the settlement. Aagaata Sondra Ystendatter (Ellen Saunders) was an immigrant of 1837 from Telemarken. Both she and her sister later married Heber C. Kimball. She was one of the three women in the first pioneer company that reached the Salt Lake Valley on 24 July 1847. See Peterson, "Life of Canute Peterson," 12.

17. *Ibid.*, 13.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*, 12.

20. George P. Dykes to Joseph Smith, 18 May 1843, in *Journal History of the Church*

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

21. Ibid.

22. On 10 April 1843, Charles C. Rich was sent to Ottawa to build up the Church. See Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 5:347–48. At a special conference of the Church held on 3 and 5 July 1843, Rich and Harvey Green were called on a mission to La Salle and DeCalb Counties “to preach the gospel and disabuse the public mind with regard to [Joseph Smith’s recent] arrest.” Ibid., 5:484. At this time, many elders were sent on missions to the various counties of Illinois. See *Times and Seasons*, 4 (1 June 1843): 240. George P. Dykes again visited the settlement in early spring of 1844. See *ibid.*, 5:583–84.

23. Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith were accompanied by Jedediah M. Grant, Ezra Thayer, and Thayer’s son. See Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1838–1898*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983), 2:394.

24. On 9 May 1844, Woodruff wrote, “I arose in the morning and arranged some domestic affairs and was again under the necessity of parting with my family for the purpose of spending another summer on a mission through the United States to attend the general conferences. It has been my lot to travel in the vineyard every summer with one exception for the last ten years of my life.” Ibid., 2:394.

25. Ibid., 397; see also *Times and Seasons*, 5 (1 June 1844): 557.

26. The other branches present were the Newark Branch (35 members, 1 elder, 1 teacher), Ottawa branch (16 members, 2 elders), Bureau Branch (15 members, 3 elders), Pleasant Grove Branch, McHenry County (10 members, 2 elders), Indian Creek Branch (5 members), Big Vermillion Branch (4 members), French Creek Grove Branch (2 members); see *Times and Seasons*, 5 (1 June 1844): 557.

27. See *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal* (18 May 1844), 2:398. Canute Peterson, Levi Lightfoot, Severt Olson, and Oder Jacobson were ordained elders, Henry Sabey was ordained a priest, and Ole Johnson was ordained a teacher.

28. *Times and Seasons*, 5 (1 June 1844): 558.

29. Ibid., spelling in the original.

30. *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal* (18 May 1844), 2:398–99.

31. Ibid., 399.

32. As far as can be documented, only Endre Dahl of the Fox River Settlement met the Prophet. See William Mulder, “Norwegian Forerunners among the Early Mormons” *Norwegian-American Studies and Records*, 19:48–49.

33. The administrative committee for the American continent was composed of Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Willard Richards, who would become the First Presidency three years later. Wilford Woodruff was sent to England to preside over all of Europe. See James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 216–17.

34. *Journal History*, 23 October 1844. Reuben Miller (1811–82) was born in Pennsylvania. When he migrated to Illinois, he became a millwright and then a substantial farmer in Ottawa. He was a respected member of the community, and he joined the Church in 1843 while in his early forties. See Jensen, *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia*, 3:337. Miller gives a brief autobiography of his experience in the Church in his pamphlet, *James J. Strang: Weighed in the Balance of Truth, and Found Wanting* (Burlington, Wisconsin Territory, September 1846), 1.

35. Peterson, “Life of Canute Peterson,” 14.

36. Ibid., 15.

37. Ibid., 14.

38. *Journal History*, 23 October 1844.
39. Peterson, "Life of Canute Peterson," 14.
40. *Ibid.* 14–15.
41. Mulder, "Norwegian Forerunners among the Early Mormons" *Norwegian-American Studies and Records*, 19:50.
42. As cited in Carlton C. Qualey, "The Fox River Norwegian Settlement," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 27 (1934–35): 152.
43. Peterson, "Life of Canute Peterson," 16.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Those ordained to the Seventy included Henry Saby, Jonas Sabey, Maddy Madison, Lars Olson, Swen Jacobs, and Ever Afterdahl. See "Nauvoo Washings and Anointings, 1845–1846," LDS Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, US/CAN Film #183372, 325.
46. Others who received their endowments under the date of 27 January 1846 included Canute Peterson, Andrew and Hannah Dahl, Shure Olson, Ola Johnson, and Yence Jacobs. See *ibid.*, 325–26. Reuben Miller received his endowments on 15 December 1845, George P. Dykes on 6 February 1846, and Gudmund Haugas on 7 February 1846. See "Nauvoo Endowments, 1845–1846," LDS Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, US/CAN Film # 183371, 37, 18, 28.
47. Peterson, "Life of Canute Peterson," 16.
48. Strang contended that Joseph Smith had written a letter declaring him as successor and that this letter had been validated by the visit of an angel. Furthermore, the angel revealed to him the location of ancient plates, and with the Urim and Thummim, he translated a message stating that the "forerunner" (Joseph Smith) would be killed, but the translator of the records (Strang) would be a "mighty prophet."
49. "Chronicles of Voree," 31 January 1846, 53, copy located in the Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah. Strang documented his labors as well as the progress of his church in this monthly record.
50. As cited by S. Dilworth Young, "An Experiment in Feeling," Brigham Young University, *Speeches of the Year* (Provo, Utah: Extension Publications), 11.
51. Miller's pamphlet was entitled *A Defence of the Claims of James J. Strang to the Authority Now Usurped by the Twelve; and Shewing Him to be the True Successor of Joseph Smith, as First President of the High Priesthood*. In April, he participated as a high councilman in the Strangite April Conference when the Twelve were excommunicated by Strang. There he was sustained as a president of the stake at Voree and frequently served as a clerk at organizational meetings. See also Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Reuben Miller, Recorder of Oliver Cowdery's Reaffirmations," *BYU Studies* 8, no. 3 (1968): 282–83.
52. "Chronicles of Voree," 31 January 1846, 57.
53. See *ibid.*, 17–18 April 1846.
54. Strang reorganized the First Presidency at this conference, naming himself as president and John C. Bennett and George J. Adams as counselors.
55. Several notable members of the Church were also enticed by Strang's doctrine, including William Marks, former Nauvoo stake president, and former Apostles William Smith (brother of the Prophet), John E. Page, and William E. McLellin. For more on Strang's influence during the period of the Mormon exodus from Illinois, see Richard E. Bennett, *We'll Find the Place* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1997), 12–20.
56. Originally, Strang claimed that the angel who visited him did not perform any ordinations. Miller expected such an event to occur, for Strang was only an elder. Miller held his peace, but when he heard Strang claim that the angel did ordain him, he accused Strang of changing his story.

57. Miller's pamphlet was entitled *James J. Strang, Weighed in the Balance of Truth, and Found Wanting. His Claims as First President of the Melshisedek Priesthood Refuted*. In the publication, he challenged Strang's letter, visitation, and witness of the plates and charged him with inventing the falsehoods. In February 1847, he published a second, highly documented, refutation of Strang. This pamphlet, entitled *Truth Shall Prevail: a Short Reply to an Article Published in the Voree Herald, by J. C. Bennett; and the Willful Falsehoods of J. J. Strang, Published in the First Number of Zion's Reville*, maintained that Strang had switched stories and emphasized the necessity of laying on of hands. See also Anderson, "Reuben Miller, Recorder of Oliver Cowdery's Reaffirmations," 284–85.

58. "The following names were given as those who would support the Twelve and go to the West: Henry Saba, Magaen Saba, Ira Saba, Peter Saba, Wilbur Saba, Canute Petersen, Andrew Doll [Dahl], Hannah Doll, Andrew Doll, jun., Swen Jacobs, Sophis Jacobs, Iden Jacobs, Levi Lightfoot, Maddy Madison, Goodman Hougas, Sandria Sanders, Jacob Andron, Z Baxter, Samuel Bell." George W. Bratten to Brigham Young, 26 February 1848, in *Journal History*.

59. In his journal, Miller specifically mentions stopping with Brother Litefoot, Brother Dunavan, and his friends on the west side of the Fox River. See Reuben Miller, *Journal* (1848–49), LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

60. Richard L. Anderson has argued that "no one in his audience that October had better motivation and capacity to record Cowdery's reaffirmations than Reuben Miller." See Anderson, "Reuben Miller, Recorder of Oliver Cowdery's Reaffirmations," 277, 293.

61. *Ibid.*, 292.

62. Miller makes no mention of the letter in his journal. After the previously mentioned account, there follows a ledger of transactions; and then the next entry is dated 29 May 1849, saying that he started for Salt Lake. Miller, *Journal*.

63. Letter from Reuben Miller to Henry Sabey, 16 November 1848, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah. Spelling and emphasis as in original.

64. Gerald Haslam has estimated that there were approximately 150 Norwegian converts in Fox River and other settlements and has identified sixty-two of them by name. Haslam, *Clash of Cultures*, 123. Of these, he estimates that about 10 percent joined the RLDS Church. Only twenty-two went west, and these were considered exceptions. See Arlow W. Andersen, *The Norwegian-Americans* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975), 118.

65. Peterson, "Life of Canute Peterson," 19; and *Genealogical Journal* 9, no. 3 (September 1980): 128.

66. Her husband, Andre Dahl, had gone to Utah the year before, and her son, Christian, had gone with the pioneers in 1847. See Peterson, "Life of Canute Peterson," 19.

67. "Asiatic cholera was one of the swiftest of action of all known contagious diseases, completing its work of destruction in the human body in from one to three days after the first appearance of its symptoms, almost invariably with a fatal termination, and seldom a recovery." It has been estimated that only 7 percent of those who contracted the disease survived. "Early medical works and other accounts unite in stating that its characteristic symptoms were first extreme and greatly offensive purging, soon followed by vomiting and severe muscular cramping, rapidly terminating in a complete physical collapse, which very few of its victims ever survived." The outbreak seems to have begun at New Orleans, Louisiana, about December 1848. From there, it soon came up the Mississippi River, spreading into the frontier settlements. The disease generally followed the course of rivers and lakes—not because the disease is inherently related to water, but because waterways were the primary means of transportation for the people at that time.

"Prevailing in a time when medical science had not yet learned how to combat its ravages, it is little wonder that its visitations created panic and terror in the various communities it attacked." See Milo Custer, "Asiatic Cholera," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 23, no. 1 (1930–31): 114–16.

68. Their arrival is recorded in great detail in *Journal History*, 27 October 1849, wherein the journal of the camp clerk, William Appleby, is given in full. Three letters from Ezra T. Benson and George A. Smith describing the journey are published in the *Millennial Star* 11, no. 22 (15 November 1849): 345–50. George A. Smith's commentary on the journey is recorded in *The Contributor* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Company): 4, no. 6 (March 1883): 201.

69. Miller became a prominent farmer, businessman, civic leader, and bishop of the Mill Creek Ward in Salt Lake City, a position he held until his death in 1882. His family was well known and capable. See Jenson, *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia*, 3:337.

70. Canute Peterson also served as president of the Norway Mission (1871–73). He later presided over the Sanpete Stake and was ordained to the office of patriarch. See Jenson, *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:363.

71. See Mulder, "Norwegian Forerunners among the Early Mormons," 557.

72. See Keith A. Erekson, "Lessons from the Life of Henry Sabey," *Selections from the BYU Religious Education 2000 Student Symposium*, to be published in 2000.

73. Torben Krontoft has observed that the first problem faced by immigrants was difficulty with a strange language. The immigrants adapted to clothing habits more rapidly and eating habits more slowly. Perhaps half of American agriculture was new to the immigrants—including differences in crops and in use of oxen, new machinery, prairie fires, and grasshoppers. See Torben Krontoft, "Factors in Assimilation: A Comparative Study," *Norwegian-American Studies and Records*, 26:184–205. However, Helge Seljaas has asserted that Latter-day Saint Norwegian immigrants assimilated faster than others. He attributes this to the Church's encouragement of assimilation and unity. All members were encouraged to use "the language in which it pleased the Almighty to manifest His will in this last dispensation." *Utah Posten*, 24 December 1873. Norwegian was spoken even from the pulpit in general conference in October 1856, when Heber C. Kimball requested the returned missionary Canute Peterson to bear his testimony in Norwegian. Helge Seljaas, "Norwegians in 'Zion' Teach Themselves English," *Norwegian-American Studies and Records*, 26:220–8.