

Ezra Taft Benson, 1811-1869

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EZRA TAFT BENSON AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I

I, Ezra T. Benson, was born on the 22nd of February, 1811, in Mendon, Worcester County, Massachusetts, being the first son of John and Chloe Benson. My father was born in the same town. My mother was the daughter of Eastman and Hannah Taft, of the county and state aforesaid.

My father's children were, Charlotte, Taft, Abby Ann, myself, Hannah and John M. (who died in August 1829, being seven years old), George Taft Benson, my youngest brother, was born in 1825, after which my mother had a severe illness which terminated in quick consumption, and she died in about six weeks.

My parents were religiously inclined and always revered the Deity, yet never belonged to any religious society. They were firm believers in the Bible, and taught their children so to do, and strictly to observe the Sabbath. They sustained a good moral character, and were much respected among their friends.

My father was a farmer, and a very industrious man; he always provided comfortably for the wants of his family.

In 1817, he moved his family to the town of Uxbridge. I remained with him till I was sixteen years old and labored on his farm; being located in a thinly settled neighborhood, a long distance from any school; my parents were able to give me but a very limited education. My sister, Abby Ann, was married in 1826 to Calvin Rawson. In the following year they moved to the center of town and hired a hotel, and I engaged with them as an assistant and remained there for three years; during that time my grandfather died suddenly in the field while at work. At the age of nineteen my grandmother requested me to come and take charge of her farm which I did.

At the age of twenty, I married Pamela, the eldest daughter of Jonathan H. and Lucina Andrus, of Northbridge, Worcester Co., Massachusetts.

In the Spring of 1831, my grandmother died and her estate which was willed to her by my grandfather, Eastman Taft, fell to me and my brothers and sisters.

On the 26th of September my wife gave birth to a fine boy, which we named Ezra T., he died on the 14th of October, 1832.

In 1832, I moved from the farm and bought out my brother-in-law, Calvin Rawson, and kept the hotel about two years, during which I made a handsome sum of money.

About the year 1835, I removed my family to Holland, Massachusetts, and entered into partnership with my wife's eldest brother, Orrin C. Andrus, and hired a cotton factory of Eldridge G. Fuller. There being soon after a sudden rise in cotton, in consequence of a failure in the cotton crops in the Southern States, and market price of manufactured goods being much reduced, and not having capital to enable me to keep my goods till they rose, I was compelled to send them into the market and make forced sale to enable me to meet my payments, and thus lost a great deal of money; my dealing with dishonest men added considerably to my losses; I consequently gave up that business as soon as practicable and took a hotel in the same town. I was also appointed postmaster of Holland, and by this means made money again. Here my daughter, Chloe, was born; she died with the croup at seven months old.

Having a desire to visit the western country, in the spring of 1836 we started, and stopped at Philadelphia, and whilst boarding at the United States Hotel we made an acquaintance with a gentleman and his lady from new Jersey, who spoke very discouragingly of our going west and advised me to go with him to the town of Salem and he would assist me to go into business. I concluded to go with him. He introduced me to a firm by the name of Stoughon and Hilden, and I engaged in their employ, for one year in buying furs and wool, and selling merchandise; but I still felt inclined to go West, notwithstanding the people offered me their aid to start in business, and proffered to loan me any amount of money I would name.

In the spring of 1837, I started again for the Western States and continued my journey till I arrived at St. Louis, where I became acquainted with Mr. Trowbridge, who kindly let me have a few hundred dollars worth of goods, as I had concluded to go up the Illinois River, and on my way up the river, not knowing where I should land, I made an acquaintance with Aaron Tyler, my father's cousin, who formerly came from Mendon, Massachusetts, then living in Griggsville, Illinois. He generously invited us to his house till we could have time to look about the country. I remained with him about two weeks, took my goods and traveled through the country. We remained in that place during the summer boarding with Mr. Crawford.

In July, 1837, my wife gave birth to a son whom we named Charles Augustus; in the fall I moved to Lexington, Illinois; my wife to the East went and spent the winter among our friends. Soon after she left I took the chills and fever, and felt the need of a wife to nurse me, although I was nursed carefully. Early in the spring of 1838, my wife returned, having spent a very agreeable time with her friends. I sold all my goods and wound up my business and moved down to the Illinois River, about two miles from Lexington to the mouth of the Little Blue, where myself and Mr. Isaac Hill laid out a town and called it Pike; we sold some town lots, and I built a small house and put a warehouse upon the bank of the river, I cut cord wood and sold it to the steam boats. Here I remained till the commencement of the winter 1839. It being very sickly I wished to go to a healthier place with my family I was led to go and search out a home near Quincy, Illinois. Previous to

this I was acquainted with Mr. Fry was requested that my wife would come and make her home with his family and keep school; to which I consented.

I spent the most of the winter 1838, in Quincy and here I became acquainted with the Latter-day Saints. The first Elder I heard preach was Sylvester B. Stoddard who was preaching ten miles from Quincy in a small house and that only a few minutes, and truly, from report, I thought the Mormons were a very peculiar people; yet, by conversation, I found them very agreeable, their spirits amalgamated with mine.

During this winter, 1838, I boarded with Thomas Gordon, who was driven out of Missouri and the kindness of his wife I shall never forget. She was an amiable woman and a good saint. I next heard Elder Erastus Snow preach in the Quincy court house, on the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth in fulfillment of Daniel's vision. I did not fully understand his remarks, and the house being crowded I did not stay till meeting was over. I rented a piece of land from Dr. Ells for five years, one mile from Quincy. In the spring of 1840, I built a house upon it, fenced the two acres of land with close pailing and planted it with apple, peach, plum and cherry trees and some locust for ornament. As soon as my house was ready, I moved my family there. Soon after, there was considerable excitement among the Latter-day Saints, going to the town of Commerce, after their expulsion from Missouri; seeing their moves which were peculiar to other people and having had dealings with them, wherein they had treated me very kindly as a neighbor, my heart was drawn out in sympathy towards them. I called in a house where father Emund Bosley and George D. Grant lived. The former preached Mormonism to me, about half an hour, and after I left his house I was informed he prophesied that I should become a Saint.

In the month of July, 1840, I learned that Sidney Rigdon was going to discuss with Dr. Nelson upon the principles of Mormonism. They met in a Baptist meeting house and being solicited by Elder Beechias Dustin to go, and hearing that the Prophet Joseph Smith was to be there, I went. The house was crowded, but Sidney Rigdon did not come. His place was supplied by Dr. Ells, they debated about two hours, the Prophet was present. This was the first time I saw him. All the arguments that Dr. Nelson used was denounced without proof, epithets of false prophets, etc., and while he was trying to make the people believe that Joseph was the false prophet spoken of in the scriptures, Bro. Joseph looked up and smiled very pleasantly, and I thought, too much so, to be the character Nelson said he was; the meeting was adjourned to meet in a grove east of Quincy. The Prophet appointed John Cairns to continue the debate; they met according to appointment. Dr. Nelson commenced by ridiculing to a great extent the gifts of the gospel, especially the gift of tongues, and inquired how he could know whether the people spoke by the power of God not, and said, he could speak in tongues and commenced uttering a ridiculous gibberish, and enquired if the people could tell him in what tongues he spoke, whether French, German, etc. Elder [John] Cairns rose and showed that such characters as Nelson were to arise as foretold by Peter, in his first Epistle, third chapter and third verse. Knowing this first that there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts and saying where is the promise of his coming. And thus did he prove from scripture to my satisfaction, that Dr. Nelson was one

of the characters through whom the truth should be evil spoken of. Dr. Nelson made another attempt to ridicule the Mormons, and their doctrines, at which time he had a fit, and had it not been for his friends, he would have fallen on the platform.

II. I Join the Church

From this debate I became convinced that the Latter-day Saints were believers and observers of the truths of the Bible, while Dr. Nelson was not, nor those who joined him in opposing the Saints. I returned home much pleased that the Saints had come off victorious, although not expecting at that time ever to become one myself; yet the principal topic with my family and neighbors were the principles I had heard. After this, myself and wife commenced attending the Mormon meetings at Quincy, and one day when returning home from a meeting, my wife took down the Bible and turned to first Corinthians, twelfth chapter, where Paul says, "God had placed in the Church apostles, prophets," etc., and she said such men were in the Church anciently and she did not see why such should not be so now, and she firmly believed Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, which remarks produced in me a peculiar sensation, as I perceived she was convinced of the truth of the doctrines, and the word went forth that we were believers in Mormonism.

Our sectarian neighbors commenced visiting us, endeavoring to persuade us from our belief, and among the number were Joseph L. Heywood and a Unitarian minister, the latter earnestly requested us to join his church, as he said he would freely accept me. I asked him if he would baptize me for the remission of sins; he said he would, if I wished, or I might become a member without, according to my option; I thought this was getting salvation too easy. After paying us several visits, he requested us to come to his chapel the following Sunday as many respectable people were going to join; among the number was Mr. Heywood. Being strongly solicited, I told him I would come to his meeting, but I did not promise to join, and after he left, the more I thought of his church the stronger became my objections, but according to promise, I went to his meeting. Mr. Heywood and a number of others went forward and were sprinkled over a basin of water and he continued calling out for volunteers to come forward. After he had sprinkled his new members he administered the sacrament, and although I had refused to become one of his members (and at the same time was not a member of any church; neither had been) he offered me the sacrament, which I refused as I felt his course was a mockery before God. It was reported that two of the Twelve Apostles would preach in Quincy; Orson Hyde and John E. Page. Accordingly, I went to hear them. Elder O. Hyde preached, in the morning, a rich discourse upon the gathering of the Jews and rebuilding of Jerusalem, and called upon Elder John E. Page to pray and I never heard the like before. They took up a collection to assist them on their mission and I threw in half a dollar, being all I had. This was the first time that I had ever helped any missionary.

At the close of the meeting my wife, with tears in her eyes, inquired if I had helped these men, I told her I had. She replied that was right, and said, if she had money she would help them for they were deserving of it. In the afternoon we met with the Saints again to hear Elder John E. Page; he preached upon the gathering of the house of Israel, which

was very interesting to me. He spoke so loud that he broke up a Presbyterian meeting close by and upon coming out of their meeting he called upon the college bred ministers to show him where the Lord led the ten tribes, but none came forward. Soon after this, my wife made up her mind to be baptized; I was not decided and wished her to wait a week, believing I would then be prepared to go with her. I felt I had improved in one respect and I could in others, and on Sunday the 19th of July, we went to the meeting in the afternoon, and offered ourselves for baptism. During the meeting Sylvester B. Stoddard raised a quarrel over the communion table with Daniel Stanton, the president of the branch. My wife inquired what I thought of that. I answered that I thought it did not alter the truth of the work. At the close of the meeting we repaired to the Mississippi River and were baptized therein by Elder Daniel Stanton in the presence of about three hundred people and the cry was among the crowd, "the Mormons have got them."

I attended the October conference at Nauvoo, Illinois, and put up with Edwin Woolley and heard for the first time, the Prophet Joseph Smith, preach upon baptism for the dead. During conference, I was counselled to go forward to be ordained to the office of an elder. I did so and was ordained by Elisha Groves and he promised me many great blessings. Bro. Hyrum Smith blessed me and when written it was filled three pages and a half of foolscap, and my wife also was blessed. After this we spent another day in conference and returned home rejoicing in the principles of the gospel. Soon after this my wife was taken ill; I reflected upon my calling and perceived it was my prerogative to administer to her; I laid my hands upon her head and rebuked the disease and it left her instantaneously.

Late in the fall of 1840, President Hyrum Smith and Almon W. Babbit came on a visit to Quincy by the instruction of Joseph Smith. Hearing that Hyrum Smith was coming, I laid wait for him and invited him to my house. He remained with us about three hours and read and explained to us some of the prophecies. The next day Bro. Hyrum called the saints together and preached to them and organized the stake by appointing Daniel Stanton, president, and Father Moses Jones, who was about seventy years old, his first counsellor; he also ordained me a High Priest and appointed me his second counselor, and remarked to the Saints, "You may think a little strange of my appointment, but Bro. Jones is an old man and experienced in the Church, and Bro. Benson, is young and wants to learn." During the winter I took much satisfaction in meeting with the Saints and magnified my calling as well as I could, yet I felt my weakness much, and the need of the spirit of God to guide me. We attended to family prayer daily, and I also felt the need of praying in secret and often used to do so. One evening, as the moon shone bright, I retired near a grove to pray. There was about one foot of snow upon the ground with a crust which was about half an inch thick. I knelt down on my hay stack and commenced calling on the Lord, and heard a sound as though some one was walking on the frozen snow. I got upon my feet and looked in the direction of the sound, but saw no one, nor yet any signs of any one. The noise was repeated three times, yet I saw no one; I became satisfied it was an opposing power to keep me from praying, and I said, "Mr. Devil, you may break snow crust, but I will pray," and when I had so determined, I heard nothing more.

About the first of March, 1841, the spirit of gathering rested upon me and I told the brethren I thought of moving to Nauvoo, Illinois. They thought I had better remain where I was a little longer, but I was not satisfied and started to Nauvoo to get counsel from Bro. Joseph Smith. I did so and he told me to come if I wanted. It was all right and I should be blessed. While I was absent my wife had given birth to twin boys, being premature; they did not live more than a few hours. I sold out my nursery, settled my affairs, paid tithing and by the first of April, was on my way to Nauvoo, and arrived in time to attend the April conference and to see the cornerstones of the [Nauvoo] temple laid. I stayed with Vinson Knight, a bishop, during conference. I then inquired what I should do with my goods. He said, let them remain on the wagon. I asked him if they would be safe. He assured me they would and that he would be responsible for every thing that was taken. Accordingly, I left them there during conference and nothing was touched, which was contrary to my expectations from the reports I had heard.

After conference I put up with Mr. Alfred Randall on the hill. I bought a city lot from Hiram Kimball, fenced, plowed and planted it, and built a log cabin upon it, and about the first of June moved into it, and felt happy and very thankful that I had again a place I could call my own. It was noised abroad that the Twelve were on their way home from England. I was very anxious to see them. When they came, I was living near Elder Heber C. Kimball's with whom I soon became intimately acquainted. I laid my circumstances before him and told him I was ready for a mission if he wished to send me. He told me it was not time for me to go, but I should soon have the privilege.

III. Mission to the Eastern States

In the winter of 1841 my father died of quick consumption; previous to his death, I had written to him, informing him that I had joined the Latter-day Saints, and that I found a pearl of great price. In answer he wrote me a very kind and affectionate letter and said, "Ezra, you say you have the pearl of great price; if so, stick to it."

The remainder of this year, and till June, 1842, I labored on the temple and took various jobs of work for the support of my family, I strictly paid my tithing and attended to all of my duties. Early this spring my wife gave birth to a daughter whose name is Pamela Emma. June, 1842, under the counsel and direction of Pres. Heber C. Kimball, I started on a mission to the Eastern states, the land of my nativity, without purse or scrip. About thirty miles east of Nauvoo, I appointed a meeting for the first time and preached as well as I could the first principles of the gospel. The next meeting I held was in Chambersburgh, Illinois, near the Illinois River. I obtained the school house and gave notice to the people that I would preach there in the afternoon. The house was filled and many stood outside at the windows, and I preached one hour and a half and felt as though my feet were about six inches from the floor, for when I stepped I could not feel it; many said at the close of the meeting that they had never heard such a discourse in their lives and I really began to think I was a preacher. The people requested me to tarry with them longer, but as my appointment was out I thought it necessary to continue my journey.

Accordingly, the next day, I started for the town of Milton, Norfolk County, Massachusetts, and obtained the use of the school house and appointed a meeting; had a small congregation and made an attempt to preach, but not having my trust in the Lord as much as I should, it proved the driest discourse I ever heard; and had there been a back door I think I should have been missing; but just as I was closing, Bro. Harlow Redfield came into the meeting and I called on him to speak which he did, and being quite a preacher the meeting passed off very well, so that the congregation was satisfied. I had a number of acquaintances, and met with a man who owed me a little money, which with some few presents, made me up a purse of a few dollars. I took steamer on the river Illinois and started for Pittsburgh, by way of St. Louis. While going up the Ohio River, I preached twice on the steamboat and the Lord greatly blessed me. There was a great deal of opposition manifested and there were also many who were friendly to me and the cause of truth. Some threatened to throw me overboard, but there was a gentleman on board from Kentucky, who told the mobocrats if they began that they would have to commence with him first, and this put a check upon their evil intention; and as we proceeded up the river about ninety miles above Cincinnati, the shaft broke and some of the passengers laid it to my charge, and said if I had not been there it would not have happened. There soon came along another boat; I got aboard and proceeded to Pittsburgh. I called to see Elder John E. Page, who was presiding there. I perceived I had lost my license. Elder Page said he would give me one, and when he produced it, it was quite different to the original. I asked him the reason for the difference. He replied, he had his own way of doing business. He enquired how I traveled on the boat. I told him I came deck passage. He said he had done so, but shouldn't do so any more, for he had labored faithfully eight years, and he considered the Church owed him a living, and he should travel after this in cabins and eat warm meals.

I proceeded to Philadelphia and spent the Sabbath with the Saints and the 4th of July, and enjoyed myself, very much, I visited my relatives in Mendon, Massachusetts, hoping they would embrace the gospel. I obtained the use of the meeting house and preached three or four Sabbaths, but truly I found in the language of Jesus that a prophet was not without honor save in his own country and among his own kin. There were some few who believed, but had not courage to embrace the gospel. My uncle, Jared Benson, was very much opposed to his son, Jared, but my Aunt Sally was quite favorable, and wished me to understand that she had never opposed me, nor my religion, and we parted with the best of feelings. My uncle told me he respected me, as his nephew, and could agree with me in anything but my religion which he could not bear to hear named. I went to Uxbridge and preached in the school house, which I attended when young, and had a good congregation. I next went to the center of the town and endeavored to obtain a meeting house to preach in but was refused. I obtained a hall in a hotel, and gave my appointment, and being a very aristocratic place there were but few who came to hear except the rabble and a parcel of boys who came to annoy and make fun and deride. I only held one meeting, as it appeared my labors were not wanted. My most intimate acquaintances would not come to hear me, and they acknowledged their disgust at my having become a Mormon and follower of Joseph Smith, and they condemned me without hearing or knowing what I believed. At one time I got my brother in a notion of going to Nauvoo, Ill., with me, but being young among his friends, they told him if he got among the

Mormons they would kill him. This discouraged him and he gave up going. All my sisters and wife's friends treated me very kindly, but did not feel to receive the truth.

I went to the town of Milford, Mass., to visit Adin Billow a universalist minister, I was formerly acquainted with, and a man I used to like to hear preach. He had given up his position as a traveling minister, and had made a settlement in that town, and had collected around him his particular friends and formed a kind of community. He received me very kindly and called a meeting for me. I preached twice to this flock; he invited me to make his house my home as long as I wished to stay. I remained with him nearly a week, and when leaving I bore my testimony to him of the truth of Mormonism and told him that Joseph Smith was a prophet. I also told him that neither he nor any other man could preside over any body of people, and keep sin and iniquity from among them, unless they were clothed with the priesthood of God; this gentleman was very much beloved by all my relatives, who thought when our friends died that they could not be buried, unless he came and preached the funeral sermon. I then went to Northbridge, Massachusetts, where there was a small branch of the Church, and put up with Sister White. I preached a few times in her house. I was then directed to go to Millbury, Massachusetts, and commenced preaching the gospel to the people. I stayed with widow Allen a few weeks, while I remained there. I heard the Dr. Willard Richards was at Northbridge, Massachusetts, to which place I returned; he enquired how I was getting along. I told him very slowly and that I had not baptized any one. He told me to go ahead and not be discouraged, for I should commence to baptize.

I received from my father's estate a few hundred dollars, and I paid Bro. Richards my tithing and took a share in the Nauvoo house.

I returned to Millbury, Mass., and soon baptized sixteen persons. I then tried to introduce the gospel into Charlton, Massachusetts, where I preached several times, and was blessed very much with the Spirit of God. One evening, as I was preaching upon the power that attended the apostles upon the day of Pentecost, the same good spirit rested upon me to the astonishment of all present, and at the close of the meeting a number of the people came to me with tears in their eyes and said if ever a man spoke by the power of God, I did; yet only one out of the number came forward for baptism. The news spread through town that many were believing Mormonism and the next meeting I held the Devil marshalled his host against me, and at the close of the meeting they blew out the lights, caught hold of me and tried to get out of doors, but did not succeed; their object being to tar and feather me and ride me on a rail. They spit tobacco juice upon me and left the cuds in my bosom and at last one of the principal of the mob said to the others, "You shall not abuse him any more," and at that time a gentleman handed me into his buggy, took me to his house and kept me all night, and said he would defend me at the peril of his own life. I tarried with him a few days and visited the few who were believers in that place, and enquired if they would stand by me; but I found they were intimidated by the persecution, and did not feel to step forward and obey the gospel, nor stand up for the rights of it against wicked and adulterous people, so I left and traveled through Thompson, Hartford, New Haven and Old Windsor, in Connecticut, also visited

Westfield, Springfield, Ludlow and many other towns where I preached and warned the people.

. . . Early in the Spring of 1843, I was called to Boston to attend a conference with the Saints, soon after which I went to the city of Lowell to preside over that branch, and I remained there and in the region around till fall and was greatly blessed and baptized quite a number.

Early in the fall, 1843, Brothers Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball and number of the Twelve came to Boston and held a conference, and I was released from my labors and counselled to go home to my family, which was good news. I traveled by way of Ludlow, Massachusetts, the place where my wife's father lived, procured the use of a hall to preach in, after which I took my wife's sister Adeline, over to Westfield, where there was a small branch and spent the Sabbath with them. There were a few who came forward for baptism, and Adeline was among the number, which caused my heart to rejoice. And in a few days, she and quite a number of the Saints with myself were on the way for Nauvoo. We went by way of Buffalo across the lakes to Chicago, and had a very pleasant and speedy trip.

On arriving home, I found that my children and wife had been very sick with the measles. I also found that in my absence many great and glorious principles had been taught the Saints by the Prophets Joseph and Hyrum, and one among the number was celestial marriage. I was a little tried in my feelings, not understanding the principle, I went down to Bro. Hyrum Smith's house with my wife and her sister, Adeline, to obtain her blessing, and Bro. Hyrum Smith taught me the principle, and said it was my privilege to have my wife sealed to me, which was done.

During this fall, I built a brick house and finished it during the winter, which made my family very comfortable. I attended meetings and worked upon the [Nauvoo] temple and in the Spring of 1844, a large number of missionaries were called upon by the conference to go into all parts of the United States to present the Prophet Joseph Smith as a candidate for the office of president of the United States, John Pack and I were appointed to go to the state of New Jersey.

About the first of May we started and commenced our important labors, travelling through the different towns and cities, preaching the gospel and presenting Bro. Joseph before the people as being the most suitable man for president. Delegates were appointed throughout the state of New Jersey in different districts to meet in Trenton in August to hold a convention and I had made calculations to be on the ground according to appointment, and make a speech to the delegates, and all who might be present, and to attend to all other business necessary in a convention of that kind that nothing should be neglected on my part for I had the promise from the Prophet before I started that I should be blessed and his last words were, taking me by the hand, "You are blessed and shall be blessed abundantly, go in peace and return in safety."

But, oh, how soon the change; for no sooner had we commenced our labors and made our arrangements than the news came out that our Prophet was martyred in Carthage Jail, when we found our mission was at the end. The question arose by Bro. Pack, "Who will now lead the Church?" I told him I did not know, but I knew who would lead me and that would be the Twelve Apostles. Our next business was to get home to our families and I was without means. I appointed several meetings throughout Jersey and took up collections among the Gentiles and some few Saints and soon procured means sufficient to take us home. I was very thankful to reach home once more, notwithstanding it was a time of great distress and grief on account of Joseph Smith's death.

September 26, 1844, my wife bore a son, which lived half an hour.

I found Sidney Rigdon contending for the right to lead the Church and in a few days the Twelve Apostles arrived, and when Bro. Brigham Young rose before the people and spoke, it was very easy to see who possessed the mantle of Joseph Smith. Truly, as Jesus said, my sheep hear my voice, but a stranger they will not follow, for many said when they heard Brigham talk, truly it was not Brigham, but the voice of Joseph.

At the fall conference Brother Brigham called me to be a member of the High Council in the place of one who had apostatized. The remainder of this year I attended regularly meetings of the High Council and many cases were brought before us and a number were cut off the Church, and truly it was a time of great excitement.

About December first, I was called to go east with Brother Parley P. Pratt and Pelatiah Brown on a mission. During the remainder of the winter and the following spring, I presided over the Boston conference and was also an agent to collect tithing. Quite a number were added to the Church and many were cut off for apostasy; there was much excitement. We had excellent meetings during my stay and I enjoyed much of the spirit of God; many that were sick were healed under my hands and the gifts and blessings were made manifest among the faithful Saints. Elder Parley P. Pratt visited me and gave me much good instruction, which aided me in my labors. About the first part of May I was counseled to gather up all the Saints to Nauvoo that could go from Boston conference and the regions around, which I most willingly did, having a desire to see my home; we reached Nauvoo about the first of June all well and in good spirits.

The remainder of the summer and fall I worked on the [Nauvoo] temple and stood guard at night; also worked at many places by the day to procure provisions for my family. When the Twelve commenced to give endowments in the temple, which was about the tenth of December 1845, I was called and my wives, Pamela and Adeline, to go into the temple of the Lord to receive our endowments, which privilege we were very grateful to our Heavenly Father for, after which Bro. Brigham Young requested me to labor in the temple to assist in giving endowments to others, and I remained there till within three or four days of our ceasing to give endowments and of our leaving for the wilderness. Bro. Brigham requested me and my family to go with him. I had no property, but a good brick house and a lot which I could not sell. I asked Bro. Brigham what I should do to get away, not having a team nor any means to purchase one. He said, "Go out in the streets

and inquire of every brother you meet till you pick up one." I accordingly went in search of one. I called on Bro. Jared Porter who had one horse. He said I could have that. I borrowed a wagon from Brother Chidester and a horse and harness from another person. Bro. Stephen Farnsworth gave me cloth for a wagon cover, Bro. Hezekiah Peck sent his son and team to my help. I traded off my wife's shawl and other things with a man for about two hundred pounds of flour. I gathered about eight hundred pounds of flour and a few bushels of Indian cornmeal, also twelve pounds of sugar and a few pounds of coffee and tea, and a little bedding and clothing, which was about the amount of luggage we had to carry in the two wagons, the horses being weak and poor prevented us taking much luggage. About the ninth of February [1846] I started with my two wives and two children in the dead of winter, leaving my pleasant home and fireside. I left my furniture standing in the house, such as chairs, tables, bedsteads and clock. When we left, Bro. Porters' family took possession of the house and the things which were in it. We crossed the Mississippi River, leaving our beautiful city and [Nauvoo] temple, not knowing where we should go.

. . . We travelled to Sugar Creek seven miles, where Bro. Brigham and the Twelve and the High Council and a host of others had collected together to organize themselves into companies. While we were camped a very severe snow storm came, followed by very cold weather for several days.

Brother Samuel Bent was appointed captain of a company and he requested me to travel with him, he being president of the High Council of Nauvoo, wished his quorum to travel with him.

After the cold weather abated a little the different camps took up their line of march through rain, sleet and mud; the nights were cold and frosty. We arrived at Richardson's Point about the 15th of March. At this point, my wife, Pamela, gave birth to a daughter, about eleven o'clock on the 19th of March it rained hard; we had nothing but a tent to cover her and had to raise her bed on brush to keep her from the water. Here the camps remained for several days in consequence of incessant rains which softened the land and made it difficult to travel, as the wheels of our wagons would sink at times to the hub. We named our child Isabella.

The road being so bad I went to Bro. Brigham and told him I could not proceed further on account of the heaviness of my load and weakness of my teams, I told him I was willing to tarry there till I could get on further, to which he replied, that I must not stop, but to go with him and the camp. He asked, what I had for loading, I replied six hundred pounds of flour and a few bushels of meal, etc. He said, "Bring your flour and meal to my camp, and I will lighten you up; I accordingly complied and to my surprise he requested John D. Lee to weigh it out and divide it among the camps, leaving about fifty pounds of flour and a half bushel of meal to support myself and family going into a wilderness country. When we started, I found my wagons rolled comfortably along, while many of the companies' wagons would sink to their axletrees in the mud, and I would say to them, "Go to Bro. Brigham, and he will lighten your loads."

Nothing particular happened to us between that point and Garden Grove, except incessant rains, which caused us to wade through much mud. When I reached Garden Grove, I had to send back my team to help those I got it from. Bro. S. Bents was appointed to be the President of this place and David S. Fullmen and myself his counselors. At this point, my wife, Adeline, gave birth to a son and we called his name George Taft. This was a great place for rattlesnakes. Either an ox or a horse came up almost every night with a swelled head, etc. I became very much dissatisfied with this place, and it seemed as though I could not tarry there under any consideration. Brother Brigham Young told me if I could get a team to go on, I might do so, providing I could find a man to take my place, which Bro. Aaron Johnson agreed to do. Bro. Phippen let me have a yoke of very large cattle and a wagon with the promise that I should pay him in a future day. I took the team and was ready to start by the time the rest were, and I truly felt as though this was the happiest day I had seen, to think that the Lord under such circumstances should provide me with such a team in a wilderness country. The roads having dried a little, we traveled much easier than before. We went to Mount Pisgah, another settlement, over which Father William Huntington was appointed president and Charles C. Rich and myself his counselors; this was the first place where I felt willing in my heart to stay at, since I left Nauvoo. Brother Brigham Young and the camps moved on and continued their journey till they reached Council Bluffs near the Missouri River. I remained at Mount Pisgah with my brethren breaking prairie, sowing corn and vegetables, and making fences for two or three weeks, during which myself and family had scarcely any bread to eat, for one fortnight we had nothing but a little parched meal and buttermilk, but in all this I enjoyed myself much, as also my family, for never at any time did I hear a murmur from their lips. About the first of July my brethren wished me to go in search of the camps which I heartily responded to. I borrowed a horse from Sister Rockwell and started and rode two days and a half. I had no tavern to call at, consequently I had to lie on the ground when night overtook me, and made my saddle my pillow, and nothing but the canopy of heaven to cover me. Not being acquainted with camp life, I took no blanket with me. I found the brethren comfortably encamped at Council Bluffs and I stayed over one day with them and attended to what business I sent to do and receive such counsel from Bro. Brigham as he had to give me respecting our settlement.

When I returned the brethren were pleased to hear of the prosperity of the camps. In about two weeks from this, Bro. Parley P. Pratt came down from the Bluffs with a line from President Brigham Young, directed to me, stating I was appointed one of the Twelve Apostles to take the crown of John E. Page, and if I accepted of this office, I was to repair immediately to Council Bluffs and prepare to go to the Rocky Mountains. A brother offered to take my family to the Bluffs with his own team, and not owning a horse at this time, I went to see Bro. Ross to buy one. He said he had none to sell, but said if I was called to be one of the Twelve Apostles he would give me one, and he turned out to be his best riding horse, and the next morning Elder Parley P. Pratt and I started for the Bluffs, and when we arrived within a few miles of the camps we met Presidents Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards, accompanied by several brethren on their way to Mount Pisgah. I returned with them. When about half way I met my family. We stopped and took dinner with them, I left them well and in good spirits and proceeded on to Mount Pisgah. After Bro. Brigham had accomplished his business, I

returned with him and his brethren to Council Bluffs. After the battalion started I was called to Bro. Orson Pratt's camp or tent, about a mile from the ferry on the Missouri River, on the east side, Bro. Brigham and the rest of the Twelve laid their hands upon my head Bro. Brigham was mouth, and I was ordained one of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and many great and glorious things did he pronounce and seal upon my head. He said I should yet have "the strength of Sampson."