

The Saints and St. Louis, 1831-1857: An Oasis of Tolerance and Security

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Although surrounded by apostates . . . we feel perfectly safe in the midst of an enlightened people, who alike know how to appreciate political liberty and religious freedom.

Conference resolution, 10 Feb. 1845

This city has been an asylum for our people from fifteen to twenty years . . . there is probably no city in the world where the Latter-day Saints are more respected, and where they may sooner obtain an outfit for Utah . . . the hand of the Lord is in these things

St. Louis Luminary, 3 Feb. 1855

During most of the nineteenth century, St. Louis was the hub of trade and culture for the great western waterway system of the upper and lower Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois rivers. Founded by the French in 1764, St. Louis was, by the time the Mormons first visited it, a sixty-seven year old settlement, a nine year old city—a young giant destined to become the “Fourth City” of our country by the end of the century. Throughout the Missouri and Illinois periods of the Church, up to the coming of the railroad to Utah in 1869 and beyond, St. Louis was the most important non-Mormon city in Church history.

It became not only an oasis of tolerance and security for the Mormons, but a self-sufficient city never fully identified or connected with rural Missouri or with near-by Illinois—

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areas it considered backward and inferior. This is one reason why St. Louis never condoned nor participated in the Missouri or Illinois persecution of the Mormons.

St. Louis has played two important roles in Mormon history—as a city of refuge and as an emigrant center. As a large and tolerant city, it gave protection to Mormons in the 1830s when they fled persecution in western Missouri and to the refugees from Illinois mobs in the mid-1840s. The first wave of convert-emigrants from Europe passed through the city in April 1841, and until at least 1855 the main route for thousands of European converts to Nauvoo, Illinois, and later to Utah, was via St. Louis.

In 1949 the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* summed up the Mormon experience in St. Louis very well when it printed, "It was the only town in the Middle West large enough to give the Saints some degree of anonymity, cosmopolitan enough to be tolerant of the new and strange religion and prosperous enough to provide work for newcomers."¹

Although the history of the Church in St. Louis is episodic and the sources scanty,² many interesting and important events took place there. Almost every major Church leader of the period was connected with the Church in St. Louis. There were the prophets and apostles Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor, Parley P. Pratt, Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, Frederick G. Williams, Willard Richards, Charles C. Rich, Franklin D. Richards, Ezra Taft Benson, George A. Smith, Erastus Snow, Abraham O.

¹From a feature story on the St. Louis Stake by Dickson Terry, 2 June 1949.

²Understandably, then, the three short accounts of the Church in St. Louis (S. A. Burgess, "St. Louis in the Early History of the Church," *Journal of History*, 17:37-61 [January 1924]; Louise Linton Salmon, "St. Louis in the Story of the Church," *The Improvement Era*, [November 1954], pp. 788-789, 830-831; and Kate B. Carter, compiler, *The Mormons in St. Louis*, [Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1962]), are sketchy, episodic, and not well documented.

Other than the manuscript history of Missouri Counties and Settlements: 1838-1856, and nine skimpy volumes of St. Louis Branch records in the Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City, there is little else recorded in Salt Lake City or in St. Louis. I found the St. Louis Press especially helpful. Two Mormon newspapers, the *St. Louis Luminary* (for the period November 1854-December 1855) and the *Times and Seasons*; Parley P. Pratt, ed. *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, 6th ed. Salt Lake City, 1966, and Andrew Karl Larson's *Erastus Snow*, (Salt Lake City, 1971), were also of some value. It must be admitted that this present attempt to synthesize and interpret the history of the Church in St. Louis has had to be fleshed out by what I trust is judicious conjecture.

Smoot, Orson Pratt, Jedediah M. Grant, Orson Hyde, Orson Spencer, Amasa Lyman, Moses Thatcher, and other leaders such as Peter Whitmer, Jr., Edward Partridge, W. W. Phelps, A. S. Gilbert, Newel Knight, David Patton, Newel K. Whitney, William Clayton, John M. Bernhisel, and Richard Ballantine. Emma Smith made at least two visits to the city on behalf of Joseph, and Orrin Porter Rockwell was arrested there.

It was also, in the words of a local Saint in 1846, "the first [place] where apostates vomit their venom and explode their spleen"³—a reference to the trend of dissatisfied and excommunicated Mormons to settle in St. Louis, and especially to the anti-Mormon activities of Sidney Rigdon, William Smith, John C. Bennett, and Oliver Olney after their excommunication. In passing it may be noted that Charles B. Thompson (The Baneemytes) lived and published in St. Louis (1847-1848), that Joseph Morris (The Morrisites) lived in St. Louis for at least two years (1851-1852), and that a colony of the Brewsterites (followers of John E. Brewster) settled in St. Louis for a season.⁴

Other interesting and important events connected with the Church in St. Louis include the publication of William Clayton's *Emigrant's Guide*, and the establishing of a Mormon newspaper, *The St. Louis Luminary*, as well as the funerals of William Clayton's father, Thomas, Elder Orson Spencer, and Andrew L. Lamoreaux (one-time president of the French Mission), public solicitations to aid destitute Mormon exiles, the organization of a lyceum, the organization of the first stake outside of Utah, the exhibiting of the Joseph Smith Egyptian mummies and papyri, and the casting of the font of type for the Deseret Alphabet.

The Church in St. Louis grew from a small colony to a large stake which included all or parts of five states—Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, and Kansas Territory. Its early history can conveniently be divided into the following periods: the Colony, 1833-1843; the Branch, 1844-1847; the District, 1847-

³*Millennial Star*, 1 May 1846. See also note 36.

⁴Although convert-emigrants from Europe were routinely warned "to beware of the apostate spirit that reigns in this city," the local Mormons considered St. Louis as an "asylum." *St. Louis Luminary*, 3 February 1855. Martha Brotherton, who claimed that both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young wanted her for a plural wife, went to St. Louis where she published her version of what was wrong in Nauvoo in the *St. Louis Bulletin*, 15 July 1842.

1854; and the Stake, 1854-1857 (discontinued); reestablished, 1958.

THE COLONY, 1833-1843

Less than one year after the organization of the Church on 6 April 1830, the first Mormons passed through St. Louis, in obedience to a commandment (Doctrine and Covenants 28) to take the gospel to the Lamanites on the western frontier. Consequently, in October 1830, four missionaries, Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, Peter Whitmer, Jr., and Ziba Peterson, left Fayette, New York, on foot for western Missouri. They traveled via Kirtland, Ohio, where Frederick G. Williams joined them, to Cincinnati, where they boarded a steamer for St. Louis. Ice at the mouth of the Ohio, however, forced them to walk the remaining 200 miles to St. Louis. Sometime during January 1831, they crossed the Mississippi on a ferry to the foot of present-day Market Street, and headed west, again on foot, via St. Charles to Independence, Missouri. During the short layover in St. Louis and vicinity, they did some preaching and made some friends, if not converts.

Elder Pratt recorded the following about this journey:

We halted for a few days in Illinois, about twenty miles from St. Louis . . . although in the midst of strangers, we were kindly entertained, found many friends, and preached to large congregations in several neighborhoods.

In the beginning of 1831 we renewed our journey; and, passing through St. Louis and St. Charles we traveled on foot for three hundred miles . . . [to] Independence . . . Missouri⁵

The following February Elder Pratt returned east to report to Joseph Smith on the mission. He records the following: "In nine days I arrived at St. Louis . . . I spent a few days with a friend in the country, at the same place we had tarried on the way out: and then took a steamer in St. Louis bound for Cincinnati."⁶

That June, Joseph Smith and others passed through St. Louis enroute to Independence, and were soon followed by the

⁵Pratt, *Autobiography*, p. 52.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 58. Of all Church leaders, Pratt was the one most closely identified with St. Louis. He visited the city often until his death in 1857.

whole Coleville, New York Branch of about sixty members which stayed in St. Louis during 13-18 June before proceeding to Independence on a boat up the Missouri. In 1832 Joseph Smith again passed through enroute to Independence, and Parley Pratt was there several times. In February or March, Pratt and John Murdock held some formal meetings in St. Louis.⁷

By 1833, as a result of missionary activity and Missouri mobs, there was a small group or colony of Mormons in St. Louis. Throughout the rest of the decade, St. Louis received informal visits from missionaries.⁸

In March 1837, Charles C. Rich (the future apostle) was in St. Louis from his home in Independence. While there he wrote to a Miss Sarah D. Pea of Belleville, Illinois, and began courting her by mail. They had never met, but had been highly recommended to each other by missionaries. They were married the following February in Independence.⁹

The Journal of Sarah Pea Rich tells us something of early missionary work in Madison and St. Clair Counties just east of St. Louis in Illinois—an area which then and now was part of the St. Louis Church area. She records that during the summer of 1835 two Mormon Elders came to preach at her father's house nine miles from Belleville. Apparently the Elders were enroute from Missouri to Ohio. Later, on 15 December, Sarah was baptized when the same two Elders returned and succeeded in building up a branch of some seventy members, including Sarah's father, mother, and sister.

In 1838 the St. Louis press began to take some notice of

⁷Murdock's wife had died in 1831 after giving birth to twins. The twins Emma Smith bore on that same day died, and she and Joseph adopted the Murdock twins. One of these twins, Julia, later married a John Middleton, and lived in St. Louis during the early 1870s. See Julia's letter to Emma Smith in the Emma Smith Bidamon Papers in the Huntington Library.

⁸Missionaries had also visited Union, Missouri, which is today part of the St. Louis Stake. See *Evening and Morning Star*, February 1833.

⁹This pretty little story comes from Russell R. Rich, *Those Who Would Be Leaders* (Provo, Utah, 1963), pp. 7-8. Charles got right to the point in his first letter: "I will let you know the reason of my boldness in writing to you. It is because Elder G. M. Hinkle and others have highly recommended you as . . . being worthy of my attention . . . I should be happy to get a good companion . . . and I should be very happy to see you and converse with you on the subject."

Sarah's reaction to this forward approach was, "I was truly struck with wonder and surprise . . . and could not help but think the hand of the Lord had something to do in this matter." Journal of Sarah Pea Rich. See also John Henry Evans, *Charles Coulson Rich* . . . (New York, 1963), pp. 27-43.

the Mormon question.¹⁰ On 8 November the *St. Louis Daily Evening Gazette* briefly reported on troubles in the western part of the state and on 20 December the *Missouri Argus* expressed sympathy for the Mormons and their sufferings. That December when John Morrill, a Mormon state representative from Caldwell County, presented a petition to the state legislature for protection, Henry S. Geyer, of St. Louis, and another member of the legislature, staunchly defended the Mormons and threatened to leave the state if the Mormons were driven out. (A noble, but futile gesture.)¹¹

During the subsequent expulsion of the Mormons from Missouri throughout the winter of 1838-1839, a number of leading newspapers in St. Louis supported the Mormons and condemned Gov. Lilburn W. Boggs. Such efforts did the Mormons of western Missouri no good, but it may be one reason why no Mormons in St. Louis were expelled. Some of the citizens of St. Louis held meetings to raise funds to assist the destitute exiles.¹²

Soon after the removal of the Mormons to Nauvoo, Illinois, the results of the British Mission (opened in 1837) were felt in St. Louis. The first emigrant group passed through

¹⁰I have collected 690 references to the Mormons in the St. Louis press for the period of 1839-1848 alone. Most, however, refer to events in Nauvoo.

¹¹Corrill, important in Church affairs in Missouri, later apostatized and was excommunicated 17 March 1839. That same year in St. Louis he published a booklet entitled, *A Brief History of the Church of Latter-day Saints . . .* in which he gave his reasons for having left the Mormons. Geyer was one of the best lawyers and statesmen Missouri ever had. He was active in state politics from 1818 and served in the U.S. Senate from 1851 to 1857.

Corrill's work was the first in a small corpus of early St. Louis Mormon Imprints. Others which followed are: Elder John Lee, *An Attempt to Prove the Propriety and Utility of Saint's Washing One Another's Feet* (1841); Elder Orson Hyde, *Missouri Persecutions* (1842); James H. Hunt, *A History of the Mormon War . . .* (1844); George T. Davis, *An Authentic Account of the Massacre of Joseph Smith . . .* (1844); James H. Hunt, *Mormonism . . .* (1844), G. W. Westbrook, *The Mormons in Illinois* (1844); Oliver Olney, *Spiritual Wifery at Nauvoo Exposed . . .* (1845); Josiah B. Conyers, *A Brief History of the Leading Cause of the Hancock Mob in . . . 1841 . . .* (1846); Charles B. Thompson, *Baneemy . . .* (1848); William Clayton, *Emigrants' Guide . . .* (1848); and the newspaper, the *St. Louis Luminary* (1854-1855).

Some of these publications are listed in the incomplete *The American Imprints Inventory: No. I A Preliminary Check List of Missouri Imprints: 1808-1850* (Washington, D.C., 1937); others are listed in Dale Morgan's "A Bibliography of the Churches of the Dispensation," *Western Humanities Review*, vol. 7, no. 3 (Summer 1953), pp. 107-181; and Russell R. Rich, *Those Who Would Be Leaders*, mimeographed (Provo, Utah, 1963).

¹²The *Daily Evening Gazette* of 22 January 1839 even suggested that some of the newly arrived German emigrants should go to Caldwell County and buy out the Mormons.

in April 1841. Throughout the Nauvoo period, and up to 1855, the emigrants came up the Mississippi from New Orleans to St. Louis, where it was necessary to change boats to continue on the upper Mississippi to Nauvoo. While most of the converts proceeded to Nauvoo as quickly as possible, some stopped over in St. Louis for a variety of reasons—the main one was to work and recoup their finances. Over the years, so many Mormons worked in St. Louis that in 1855 the *St. Louis Luminary* reported:

St. Louis is a fine, large, and flourishing city, and has furnished employment to many hundreds and thousands of our brethren . . . there are few public buildings of any consideration in this city that our brethren have not taken an active and prominent part in erecting or ornamenting. There are few factories, foundries, or mercantile establishments, but they have taken, or are taking an active part in establishing or sustaining.¹³

Consequently the colony prospered.

The St. Louis press began to take increasing notice of the Mormons and printed many, generally favorable, accounts of them, so much so that on 9 September 1846, the *Quincy Whig* complained that the *St. Louis People's Organ* was a "bitter reviler of the anti-Mormons." In September 1841, for example, the *St. Louis Atlas* printed the following:

THE MORMONS: An intelligent friend, who called upon us this morning, has just returned from a visit to Nauvoo and the Mormons He believes—just as we do—that they have been grossly misunderstood and shamefully libeled . . . the people are very enterprising, industrious, and thrifty. They are at least quite as honest as the rest of us . . . their religion is a peculiar one . . . but it is a faith which they say encourages no vice At this moment, they present the appearance of an enterprising, industrious, sober, and thrifty population—such a population indeed as, in the respects just mentioned, have no rivals east and, we rather guess not even west of the Mississippi.¹⁴

Further evidence of the maturity and fairness of the St. Louis press was the calm way it responded to the Bennett

¹³3 February 1855.

¹⁴Reprinted in the 1 October 1841 issue of the *Times and Seasons*, the official Mormon newspaper in Nauvoo, Illinois. On the preceding 15 May the *Times and Seasons* had reprinted another article from the *St. Louis Pen-nant and Native American*. As the name suggests, this organ was anti-emigrant, and its comments about "this fanatic tribe," and "wretched creatures," which

"exposés" of 1842-1843. John C. Bennett, former mayor of Nauvoo, was excommunicated in May 1842 for immorality. He hurriedly went to St. Louis to publish a book, *The History of the Saints*, and to seek his fame and fortune. Two St. Louis newspapers, however, took a dim view of his efforts. The *St. Louis Gazette*, for example, was entirely opposed to the publication of any book on Nauvoo seduction as "a great deal of money has been made by the sale of documents and papers pretending to give accounts of the *Latter Day Saints*." The *Missouri Reporter* commented, "We confess, however, that we place no great confidence in the statements of Bennett, Rigdon & Co." and was suspicious of why Bennett did not attack the Mormons until after he had been expelled by them.¹⁵ Such openly expressed negative views may be why Bennett had his book published in Boston.

Six months later, in January 1843, Bennett was back in St. Louis giving lectures on "Holy Joeism! Alias Mormonism!" Again the press was calm. Between 19 and 21 of January, he offered three lectures against the Mormons in the Concert Hall and Lyceum Hall. Admission to the first two was 12.5 cents. The third, on polygamy, cost 25 cents and was too indelicate for ladies, so none were admitted. The press restricted its coverage to mere announcements of the lectures and Bennett's paid advertisements.¹⁶

Although barely mentioned by the St. Louis press, the arrest of Orrin Porter Rockwell, sometime bodyguard to Joseph Smith and one of Mormondom's most colorful characters, in St. Louis on 4 March 1843, was an important event. On 6 May 1842 an attempt had been made on the life of ex-Gov. Boggs of Missouri by an unknown would-be assassin. Rock-

"arrived [from England] day before yesterday" should not be taken too seriously.

Throughout October and November 1843 the *People's Daily Organ* printed a series of twenty-three lampoons of Mormon history written in pseudo-Book of Mormon style, the flavor of which may be gained from the following: "And it came to pass, in the second year of the reign of Andrew, whose surname is Jackson, who judged the people of Columbia (for they did have no kings over them) that there rose up in those days many prophets and led much people after them, and among the prophets there arose one Joseph, whose surname was Smith. Now Joseph affirmed that by a revelation from Heaven he was made prophet and leader of a sect to be called Latter-day Saints"

¹⁵Cited in the *Times and Seasons*, 1 August 1842.

¹⁶According to the *People's Organ* of 16 and 19 December 1843, Bennett was back in St. Louis again, this time debating with a Dr. Underhill on the subject of mesmerism.

well was immediately suspected of having been commissioned by Joseph to do the job. For sometime thereafter Rockwell made himself scarce, and apparently went East. Later, during March 1843, he tried to return to Nauvoo. In St. Louis he was quickly recognized by one Elias Parker, who indicated in an affidavit that he was the Rockwell advertised for in the papers. Rockwell was arrested, and put in jail for two days.¹⁷ (The jail was then located on the Southeast corner of Chestnut and Sixth streets.) He was taken to Independence to stand trial, escaped, was caught and returned to prison. When his trial came up, however, there was not enough evidence to convict him, and he was released after having spent nine months in prison.

There was a little flurry of missionary activity on the Illinois side of the river in 1843. In January, two Elders enroute to Kentucky had preached in Madison County. They later reported they had gone to "Highland, Madison County; preached several times and baptized three, where by the help of brother Cooper, a high priest, we organized a branch, consisting of seven members: ordained one priest."¹⁸ During a special Elders' conference in Nauvoo on 6 April, held for the purpose of sending Elders "forth into the vineyard to build up churches," an Elder John Zundall was sent to "Muskootau" (Mascoutah), St. Clair County.¹⁹ At a similar conference in July, Elders G. P. Dykes and Samuel Brown were sent to St. Clair County, and Elder Elisha H. Groves was sent to Madison County.²⁰ Later that year, in December, an Elder Francis M. Edwards, enroute to Tennessee, laid over in Lebanon, St. Clair County, where he baptized eight.²¹

The sources are almost mute, however, regarding the thoughts and activities of the East-side Mormons. In addition to the above quoted journal of Sarah Pea Rich, we do have one letter from a Matilda R. Bailey of Edwardsville, Madison County, Illinois, dated 14 February 1842 and addressed to

¹⁷This is the only incident of a Mormon having difficulties with the law in St. Louis that I have found, and it was caused by Missouri rather than St. Louis officials. See Rockwell's own account in the *Millennial Star*, 22:517-520 and 535-536. See also Harold Schindler, *Orrin Porter Rockwell* (Salt Lake City, 1966), pp. 88-107.

¹⁸*Times and Seasons*, 1 November 1843.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 1 April 1843. (That the April first issue could carry news of a 6 April conference suggests that the issue was late.)

²⁰*Ibid.*, 15 June 1843.

²¹Manuscript history of the Southern States Mission, December 1843.

Emma Smith. A few of her lengthy comments bear repeating. Among other things she reports, "I have been in this State four years without friends and brethren" (Apparently the East-side Mormons were not well acquainted with one another.) Perhaps the most important comment is one regarding Joseph Duncan, the Whig candidate for governor of Illinois in 1842. Duncan, who had already served one term (1836-1838) as governor of Illinois, was no friend of the Mormons. In 1842 he pledged that if elected he would either exterminate the Mormons or drive them from the state. The good people of Illinois did not, however, reelect him. Matilda, who claimed to have worked for Duncan, had the following to say to Emma:

They say that Jo Duncan is up for Governor; if he is elected, I say that mobs and destruction await the saints . . . unless he is a better man than when I worked for him: I washed and ironed for his family, to the amount of six dollars and seventy-five cents, and because we lived in a wretched old house not one cent would he pay me; he gave me the most abusive language that I ever heard a man utter . . . and although they called him governor, he did not appear to me bigger than a skunk, nor of any more importance.²²

THE BRANCH, 1844-1847

Apparently it was during the spring of 1844 that the first formal branch of the Church was organized in St. Louis. We are told something of these events in the biography of Thomas Wrigley:

We for some time felt afraid of the exterminating orders²³ of Governor Boggs, which were still in force, but our numbers began to increase in that city and we took courage and a few met in a private house and organized a branch . . . but it was sometimes hard work having to contend with the prejudice of the people of the world and every apostate that left Nauvoo came here and did their best to bring persecution on us.

²²*Times and Seasons*, 1 June 1842.

²³The so-called "Exterminating Order," 27 October 1838 was an order from Boggs to General Clark and stated in part, "The Mormons must be treated as enemies and must be exterminated or driven from the state, if necessary for the public good." This order is routinely cited from the *History of the Church* 3:175. The ur-text, however, is *Document Containing the Correspondence, Order, &C., in Relation to the Disturbances with the Mormons . . .* (Fayette, Missouri, 1841), p. 61.

A man by the name of Small was appointed to preside over the branch and he turned out to be very small for he soon backed out and left the Church and went after Sydney Rigdon. The next man appointed to preside was a Richard [James] Riley²⁴

In the same year one of the earliest stories appeared in the St. Louis press about local Mormons. On 16 May the *People's Organ* reported, "We understand that a few of the followers of Holy Joe have located themselves on Morgan [now Delmar] St. and hold forth in the school house every now and then." A week later the branch was visited by Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and perhaps 100 other Elders. This sudden influx from Nauvoo was the result of Joseph Smith's decision to campaign for the presidency of the United States. Although he knew he had no chance of winning, it did give him a nation-wide audience for his principles and it also saved him from the awkward necessity of siding with one party or the other in Illinois. As it was, he alienated both.

To stump for him, Joseph called about 350 able-bodied men to spread throughout the country.²⁵ Brigham Young and his group arrived in St. Louis on 22 May. There they called the Church together, and instructed them both religiously and politically. Heber C. Kimball recorded that about 300 were present.²⁶ On the 23rd, the group sailed for Cincinnati and the East.

Instead of being elected Joseph was assassinated 27 June 1844, and the St. Louis press printed many stories condemning this murder. Typical of the attitude of the St. Louis press regarding this event is the following statement from the *St. Louis Evening Gazette* of 1 July: "THE MURDER OF THE PROPHET: It was Murder—Murder of the most deliberate, cold-blooded, atrocious and cowardly description."

The following September the first victims of Illinois lawlessness began coming to St. Louis. On 15 September the *Weekly Reveille* reported that "many Mormons have visited St. Louis during the week for the purchase of provisions. They

²⁴Carter, *Mormons in St. Louis*, p. 497.

²⁵*Times and Seasons*, 15 April 1844. Six of these men—Andrew H. Perkins, John Lowry, William G. Rule, William Corey, O. M. Allen, and William H. Jordan—were dispatched to Missouri.

²⁶Heber C. Kimball Journal, no. 92, May 1844. Both Kimball and Young had passed through the city once before, in July 1842, while enroute east to collect money for building the Temple and the Nauvoo House.

state that there is a general combination of Illinois and Missouri people against them. Provisions on their way to Nauvoo are in every case intercepted and the friendly farmers ill treated. The design is to starve them out of the country."

Sidney Rigdon also came to St. Louis that month—but for a different reason. On 8 September he had been excommunicated for his insistence that he should succeed Joseph Smith. He left almost immediately for Pittsburgh, his former home. The *St. Louis Republican* noted that "Sidney Rigdon had arrived on his way to Pittsburgh, where he would establish a paper. He was still a believer in the doctrine though the Twelve would not allow him to rule."²⁷ Apparently he only laid over between sailings, for on 12 September (aboard the *Mayflower*), he wrote a long letter which was printed on 16 September by the *St. Louis New Era* and the *People's Organ*. He explained his position and why he had left Nauvoo. He also announced that Orson Hyde was in St. Louis, and was going to preach against him that week.

Also during that same September what was perhaps the first Mormon conference ever held in St. Louis took place on the 29th. The new president of the branch at that time was James Riley and the main purpose of the conference was to sustain the Council of the Twelve and not Sidney Rigdon. During this conference, a special committee was appointed "to district the city, so that the priests and teachers may the more conveniently attend to their duty; and that the poor and the sick may be attended to; and that all things may be done in order"²⁸ Concerning the Rigdon question, the trial of Rigdon was read before the congregation, and then Brother Riley addressed the meeting. When the question was put to a vote, all but four voted to sustain the Twelve.

There was a second conference that year, on 10 November. Orson Hyde was present at this time, along with 233 others—"the largest congregation ever assembled in this city to hear an Elder of the Latter-Day Saints preach."²⁹ Among other things, Elder Hyde encouraged the Saints to subscribe to the official Mormon newspaper, the *Times and Seasons*,

²⁷Cited in the *Burlington Hawkeye*, 19 September 1844.

²⁸*Times and Seasons*, 1 November 1844. According to the *St. Louis New Era* of 10 December 1844 they were meeting "opposite the North Market."

²⁹*Ibid.*, 15 November 1844. Someone must have forgotten that at least 300 turned out to hear Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball in 1844.

published in Nauvoo, and called upon all Mormons to unite with the branch. (Apparently not all Saints cared to join the branch, for this admonition was given repeatedly by the authorities.) It is reported that during the conference seventeen members joined with the branch and one convert was baptized.

The branch continued to grow and prosper. In January 1845, Orson Hyde returned and "delivered a lecture on Mormonism and things in general at the headquarters next door to the Liberty Engine House."³⁰ Upon his return to Nauvoo he reported that:

I was highly pleased with the spirit that prevails among the saints in that place. They are united in fellowship—they are one in heart, one in faith, and one in their resolutions to serve and honor the Lord, to uphold the regular authorities of the church, and listen to the counsel and instruction of the Twelve.³¹

Since the branch president left the Church later that year, it is interesting to note what Elder Hyde said of him in January:

The vigilant exertions of Bro. Riley, the presiding Elder, together with all the official members of the church, are truly praiseworthy. They are indefatigable in their labours to gather together all the scattered sheep and bring them back to the fold. They visit the sick and administer to their wants . . . they also remember the building of the Temple . . . There is much interest felt by many in St. Louis for our cause. More or less are being baptized weekly; and the saints number between three and four hundred.³²

The branch had been asked to support the building of the Nauvoo Temple and Elder Riley had solicited help from St. Louisians in general. He prepared a statement or a handout addressed "To the Ladies and Gentlemen of St. Louis. Respected Friends: Your attention is here with invited to the building of the TEMPLE OF GOD, in the city of Nauvoo, Illinois . . . we would ask if there are not good Samaritans in St. Louis that will pour a little of the mammon of unrighteousness to aid us in completing our house of worship?"³³

Another conference was held on 10 February in the Franklin Hall and 403 (329 members, 4 High Priests, 18 Seventies,

³⁰*People's Organ*, 15 January 1845.

³¹*Times and Seasons*, 1 February 1845.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*, 15 January 1845.

25 Elders, 15 Priests, 6 Teachers, and 6 Deacons) were present—nearly double the congregation of the preceding November conference. This conference considered and resolved many things, including the resolve to sustain the Twelve, to help rear and finish the temple, and to patronize the *Times and Seasons* (such things as would hold the group together and strengthen its union with Nauvoo). The conference also resolved that “We view with mingled emotions of grief and surprise, the proceedings of the highest court in the State of Illinois, in taking away the chartered rights of Nauvoo.” They also resolved that “although surrounded by apostates . . . we feel perfectly safe in the midst of an enlightened people, who alike know how to appreciate political liberty and religious freedom; and who have too much respect for the sanctity of constitutional rights, to trample upon the law and the rights of others.”³⁴ This resolution may have been as much a suggestion as a compliment to St. Louis.

The sincere and well-meant resolves, however, were not enough to protect the little branch from the trouble that was brewing in Nauvoo. That fall and winter, the St. Louis Saints were severely tried as a result of the defection of William Smith, brother of Joseph Smith. William had been excommunicated 12 October 1845 in Nauvoo for not supporting the Twelve and claiming the right to succeed his dead brother. As Rigdon and Bennett had done before him after their excommunications, William quickly set out for St. Louis. On 21 October the *Missouri Reporter* said that he was in St. Louis and had been “compelled to flee Nauvoo.” Both the *St. Louis American* of 28 October and the *Peoples’ Organ* of 30 and 31 October reported that William was to lecture in the Mechanics Institute on Third Street on “the corruption of the Twelve in Nauvoo.”

As a direct result of William’s lectures there was a “GRAND FLARE-UP IN THE MORMON CHURCH IN ST. LOUIS.” The *People’s Organ* of November reported that on Wednesday 19 November, at the regular meeting in the Mechanics Institute someone publicly “denied the spiritual right of the Twelve to the patriarchal government and accused the Twelve of robbery, assassination, and adultery.” The chair-

³⁴Ibid., 15 February 1845. Special note was taken of an Elder Williams who represented a branch of six in Belleville.

man tried to stop the proceedings, but was prevented from doing so by many shouts of "Sit down, let him speak, privilege, go on . . . etc." According to the reporter, one of the denunciators was a "Brother Riley." According to Thomas Wrigley's journal Riley "left the city and went to Nauvoo but soon returned, a bitter enemy to the Church. . . ." ³⁵

One who may have attended this meeting wrote a letter three days later in which we have a confirmation of Riley's disaffection and from which we learn that William Smith

contends the church is disorganized, having no head, that the Twelve are not, nor ever were, ordained to be head of the church, that Joseph's priesthood was to be conferred on his posterity to all future generations, and that young Joseph [Joseph Smith, III] is the only legal successor to the presidency of this church . . . intends holding a conference there this week and organizing the church on the old original plan, according to the Doctrine and Covenants, Book of Mormon, and the New Testament . . . two high priests have been disfellowshipped, one seventy, and a number of other officers and members from this branch I suppose will join the Smith party. Amongst them is our late president, H[igh] P[riest] James Riley. ³⁶

About a month later the *Warsaw Signal* of 31 December reported that, "The St. Louis Branch of the Mormon Church, it appears, had revolted and joined the standard of the Patriarch Bill Smith." Those were trying times—the St. Louis branch was torn by factions and the Saints in Nauvoo were preparing to leave Illinois the following spring.

On 9 January 1846, the *St. Louis Organ* commented on the persecution of Mormons in Illinois. After criticizing Governor Ford for having acted unwisely, the paper said, "It is notorious that the great 'Mormon Eaters' of the Upper Missouri were the greatest scamps in the country, and we have very good reason to believe that the same remarks would apply to the tribe who are now persecuting them in Illinois." The *Organ* then quoted the *Peoria Register* to the effect that Joseph and Hyrum had been murdered in "cold blood . . . an act of

³⁵Carter, *Mormons in St. Louis*, p. 497.

³⁶*Millennial Star*, 1 May 1846, letter of James Kay. Kay, an English convert, had apparently left Nauvoo in December 1844 and was then living in St. Louis. The reference to "young Joseph" is noteworthy. Burgess, former historian of the RLDS Church, contends on the basis of Kay's letter that "the name of 'Young Joseph' . . . was first publicly raised in St. Louis. . . ." Burgess, "St. Louis."

atrocities unparalleled in the history of the age," and that the persecutors will "continue to have apologists for their misdeeds, in the shape of some sixpenny journal of the calibre of the *Warsaw Signal*, *Quincy Whig*, &c. &c."

The exodus from Nauvoo commenced in February and continued throughout that year. That July, when Brigham Young was preparing to winter in the Council Bluffs (Iowa) area, he instructed the Church trustees in Nauvoo to determine the number of Saints in St. Louis who wanted to join him. Apparently not many were ready or able to go at that time, for there is no mention of the St. Louis Saints moving to Winter Quarters. (In August Bishop Newel K. Whitney came to St. Louis from Winter Quarters to purchase sixty tons of supplies, and it is possible that some of the Saints from St. Louis returned to the Winter Quarters area with him.)

We do know, however, that many Mormons from Illinois who did not go west with Brigham Young did come to St. Louis—especially during the "Mormon War" in Nauvoo of 10-13 September when mobs drove the remaining Mormons out.³⁷ The *St. Louis Daily Union* of 22 September, for example, reported that "The *New Haven* brought a number of families from Nauvoo to St. Louis. Many Mormons are leaving Nauvoo." On 29 September the same paper said, "The *New Haven* brought down from Keokuk some forty families of Mormons whose purpose it is to settle in this city."³⁸ Many

³⁷One or more of the six cannon used against the Mormons may have come from St. Louis, for the *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican* of 7 September 1846 reported that, "the Anti-Mormons were waiting the arrival of Mr. Wagoner from St. Louis, who was sent there to get a cannon with which to storm Nauvoo." This may have been George C. Waggoner, a member of the Carthage Greys.

³⁸In the *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis*, 3:1567 we read, "In 1845 [sic], after the expulsion from Nauvoo, a considerable number of Mormons came to St. Louis. Among them were Joseph Knowles, William Giddings, Thomas Kent, Matthew Kent, and others. Some of them engaged in digging coal on Rankins's farm, over on the Illinois Bluffs, eight miles from the city. Knowles and Giddings worked with Elder Thomas digging coal on Dry Hill within the limits of the present Forest Park."

In 1851 a Dry Hill Branch of about eight families was organized. Some of the branch records have been preserved—Record of Member and Council Minutes: Dry Hill Branch, St. Louis Stake, 1855-1859—and as skimpy as they are, they are superior to other branch records of that time. The branch seems to have been made up completely of colliers from Great Britain. At one time the branch had fifty-four members, met in a "meeting house," had three dozen chairs, and purchased a five-dollar stove.

Coal was mined in Forest Park (near Steinberg Rink) until at least 1916. Mary Joan Boyer's *The Old Gravois Coal Diggings* (Imperial, Mo.,

of these Saints settled in St. Louis, but others stayed only long enough to get an "outfit" in order to join Brigham Young.

That same September the Church trustees in Nauvoo came to St. Louis to collect funds and goods to relieve the distress of the exiles. In reference to this, the *St. Louis Union* of 5 October printed the following: "MORMON SUFFERERS IN NAUVOO: The public has been apprised that Mr. Heywood is here as a committee to receive contributions of food, clothing, or anything else that the benevolent may choose to send to the sufferers" ³⁹

A week later the *St. Louis Weekly Reveille* published a lengthy announcement from Peter G. Camden, Mayor of St. Louis.

THE MORMON SUFFERERS: In the recent expulsion and flight of the Mormons from Nauvoo and its vicinity, many of the poorest, most friendless and helpless have been left behind How or why these unfortunates are in their present condition, there is no time now to enquire . . . it should suffice that we have the highest authority and encouragement for believing it is always 'more blessed to give than to receive' . . . it is hoped that the people of St. Louis will, on this occasion, maintain their former high character for sympathy and liberality. ⁴⁰

In October Brigham Young sent word to Joseph A. Stratton, who had succeeded Riley as branch president, to send as many men west as possible with the understanding that they could bring their families later. ⁴¹ Again the sources are silent regarding how many, if any, left St. Louis at that time. We do know, however, that in spite of all these difficulties, the well-known Mormon penchant for making the best of things brought about in October the organization of the St. Louis Lyceum, devoted to adult education and the study of the gospel. ⁴²

1952), mentions some Mormons in this occupation, but they seem to have all been of the RLDS persuasion. Matthew Gauntt, an English convert, left Nauvoo during this period and went to St. Louis. Eleven of his letters are in the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis. He makes no reference, however, to the Mormons in that city.

³⁹Probably Joseph Leland Heywood, a former resident of Alton, Illinois.

⁴⁰The success of this appeal is questionable. The *Quincy Whig* of 28 October 1846 gleefully announced that only \$300 in provisions had been raised.

⁴¹Missouri Counties and Settlements, October 1846. Hereafter cited as MCS.

⁴²This venture was not successful. It lasted four months, met twice weekly, and had about seventy members who paid dues of ten cents monthly. Minutes of the St. Louis, Missouri, Lyceum, October 1846-January 1847.

The new year of 1847 started out with a conference on 31 January at which time it was reported that in the St. Louis area there were 1,478 members present.⁴³ Since prior to the exodus from Nauvoo, there had only been about 400 members in St. Louis, many Mormons must have come to St. Louis from Illinois, and most of the 1846 migrants must have decided to remain in St. Louis rather than push on to troubled Nauvoo or distant Winter Quarters.

The branch also got a new president. After President Stratton left for Winter Quarters in February, Nathaniel H. Felt (1816-1887) was called to succeed him. In Winter Quarters Elder Stratton reported two cases of polygamy in St. Louis to President Young. Brigham Young prudently sent back word to St. Louis that the two polygamists should join the main body of Saints as quickly as possible to avoid trouble in St. Louis.⁴⁴

Since there were already more than 1,500 Saints in St. Louis, and other hundreds on the way from Europe, and since President Young had not yet settled his people anywhere, St. Louis was designated as "a gathering place for the driven from Nauvoo and the converted from Europe coming up from New Orleans,"⁴⁵ and the branch organization was expanded to that of a district.

THE DISTRICT, 1847-1854

To enable the local leaders to fulfill their new responsibilities as a "gathering" and outfitting place, the original branch was divided into six branches on 25 March, each with its own presidency,⁴⁶ and became therefore a "conference" or district—the only one in the Church for sometime outside of wherever Brigham Young happened to be, and Felt became the district president. During the rest of that year three new

⁴³St. Louis Branch Records, 1846-1847.

⁴⁴MCS, 6 February 1847. Apparently they did so, for I have never found a reference in the St. Louis press to local polygamy. There may have been at least one more case of polygamy in St. Louis, for on 10 February 1848 a Theodore Curtis (who had been excommunicated for performing the marriage of a man and another man's wife) formally requested a rehearing of his case. MCS, 10 February 1848.

⁴⁵Carter, *Mormons in St. Louis*, p. 445.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 441. A branch was probably organized in each of the six political wards of the city. Since there is no evidence that there was ever more than one hall of worship in the city, these "branches" seem to have been only administrative units. All six apparently met collectively in one building or another.

branches (in Gravois, Dry Hill, and in Alton, Illinois)⁴⁷ were organized, some Saints were shipped to Winter Quarters, hundreds more were received from Europe, and money and teams were sent to help with the forthcoming move from Winter Quarters.⁴⁸

In February of 1848, William Clayton came to St. Louis to oversee the printing of 5,000 copies of the *Latter Day Saint's Emigrant's Guide*, written expressly to aid Mormons in their long trek from Winter Quarters west.⁴⁹

So many hundred emigrants flooded into the city that President Felt took most of the Mound House Hotel for temporary housing, and rented the larger and more suitable Concert Hall on Market Street (between Second and Third Streets, west side) for Sunday services. He divided the Gravois branch into four units, one of which was Welsh, and found himself by September 1849 shepherding from 3,000 to 4,000 members—the largest district in the Church.⁵⁰ (The population of St. Louis was then about 63,000.)

Even throughout the great cholera epidemic and fire of 1849, the district continued to grow. The *Frontier Guardian* reported on 13 June that “great accessions are made to the church in St. Louis in the midst of fire, cholera, and death.” Among those who died that summer was William Clayton’s father, Thomas.

⁴⁷Gravois was an ill-defined rural area southwest of St. Louis. Since Elder Snow once reported that “I visited the Gravois Branch, 6 miles out of town . . . ,” I have concluded that the branch was near present-day Tower Grove Park. Larson, *Erastus Snow*, p. 259. At one time there were about 250 members in this branch. Dry Hill was a coal mining district which also had some 250 members. The Alton Branch reached a peak membership of about 150 in 1850. Research to date has failed to turn up a single reference in the Alton press to the Mormons in that area, even though the Alton press frequently commented on Mormon affairs in Nauvoo.

⁴⁸On 21 April 1848, Orson Hyde wrote to Elder Felt congratulating him on the \$2,000 raised “within the last year by voluntary contributions” Carter, *Mormons in St. Louis*, p. 441. Heber C. Kimball also wrote to Felt from Winter Quarters on 22 April 1848, praising the St. Louis Saints “who have contributed so liberally in their poverty for the public good during the past year” Heber C. Kimball papers, carton 627, Church Historian’s Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

⁴⁹Clayton’s guide, listed in R. F. Perotti and T. N. Luther, *Important First in Missouri Imprints, 1808-1858* (Kansas City, Missouri, 1967), p. 25.

⁵⁰This guesstimate comes from John M. Bernhisel in a letter to his wife from Washington, D.C. dated 10 September 1849. He had passed through St. Louis the preceding August enroute to Washington with a petition from Brigham Young for territorial government. MCS, 10 September 1849. One Eil B. Kelsey reported in the 15 January issue of the *Millennial Star*, that “the branch in St. Lo is numbers about 3,000 Saints, of all ages, *hot, warm, and cold*, with far less proportion of the *cold* than I anticipated.”

During these trying times it was later reported that Elder Felt "was called on constantly by the afflicted people. Hour after hour, without stopping sometimes to eat or sleep, President Felt visited the sick, administering to them, comforting them in their pain, cheering them, advising and guiding them"⁵¹ We learn something of the affairs of the district from John Taylor who spent some time in the city that winter while enroute to a mission in France. He wrote his family:

After a long absence I now sit down to write you. I have been in this city about three weeks Here the Saints have a magnificent hall and a splendid band and do things up in good style On my arrival here . . . the Saints flocked around me like bees; and the greatest trouble I have is that of not being able to fulfill the many engagements that have pressed themselves upon me.⁵²

During January of 1850 Elder Taylor was joined by Elders Erastus Snow, Franklin D. Richards, and Jedediah M. Grant, who helped out with administrative and emigration problems before moving on to various mission fields. In February Elder Taylor conducted a conference at which 1,814 were present.⁵³ His main message was to urge them to go west as soon as possible. One of those who did so was President Felt, who was succeeded by his first counselor, Alexander Robbins.

Emigrants continued to come in. On 17 June the *Frontier Guardian* noted that "During the past three or four days not less than 1,000 emigrants . . . passed through St. Louis on their way to the Great Salt Lake." The St. Louis press took careful note of the arrival of the emigrants and their activities. On 8 May 1851, for example, the *Missouri Republican* carried the following:

Although we have no Mormon Church in St. Louis, and though these people have no other class or permanent possession or permanent interest in our city, yet their numerical strength here is greater than may be imagined. Our city is the greatest recruiting point for Mormon emigrants from England and the Eastern States, and the former especially,

⁵¹Carter, *Mormons in St. Louis*, p. 446.

⁵²B. H. Roberts, *Life of John Taylor*, reprint (Salt Lake City, 1963), pp. 206-209.

⁵³MCS, February 1850.

whose funds generally become exhausted by the time they reach it, generally stop here for several months, and not infrequently remain among us for a year or two pending the resumption of their journey to Salt Lake

There are at this time in St. Louis about three thousand English Mormons, nearly all of whom are masters of some trade, or have acquired experience in some profession, which they follow now. As we said, they have no church, but they attend divine services twice each Sunday at Concert Hall, and they perform their devotional duties with the same regularity, if not in the same style as their brethren in the valley

We hear frequently of Mormon balls and parties,⁵⁴ and Concert Hall was on several occasions filled with persons gathered to witness Mormon theatrical performances. We have witnessed the congregation as it issued from the hall and at religious meetings on Sunday, and certainly we think it does not compare unfavorably with other congregations.

On 28 June the same paper reported that "upwards of 1,000 had arrived at St. Louis since spring, not more than 600 of whom had been able to leave."

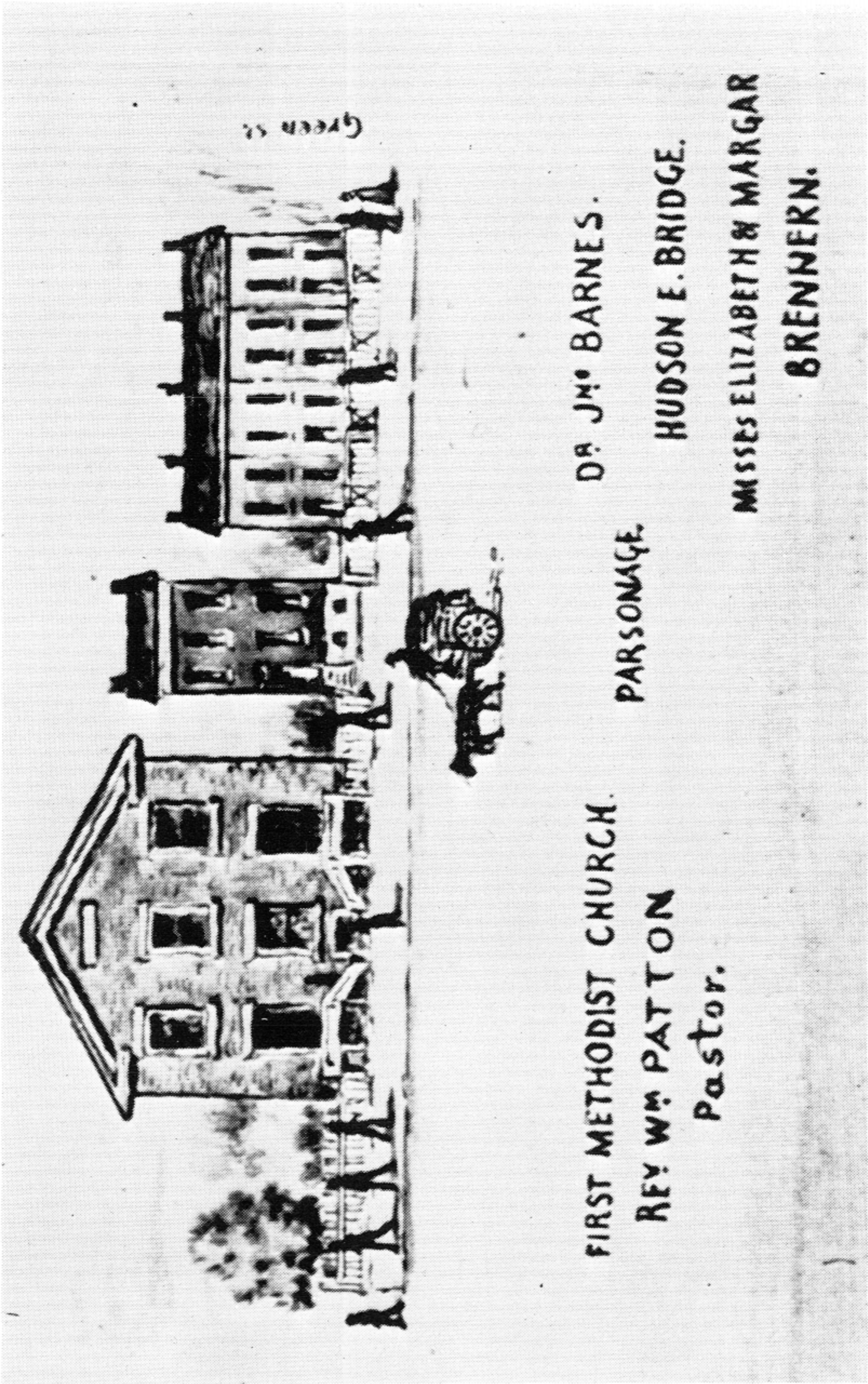
Despite heroic efforts to ship the emigrants west (more than eleven companies left in 1852), the district continued to grow. In October of that year Horace S. Eldridge (1816-1888) was sent from Utah to preside over the district and to act as General Emigration Agent for the Church in St. Louis. Even though during the 1853 and 1854 seasons he purchased about 800 wagons and 4,000 head of cattle⁵⁵ to ship emigrants with, the district flourished.

Finally at the 1854 April Conference the leaders in Salt Lake City designated St. Louis as a place to "which the Latter-day Saints might gather with approbation who were unable to go directly through to Utah"⁵⁶ and appointed Erastus Snow of the Quorum of the Twelve to go to St. Louis and organize a stake, direct emigration, and preside generally over the whole Church in the area. At the same time Milo Andrus (1814-1893) was called to preside over the stake which Elder Snow was to organize.

⁵⁴At one such party, during Christmas time of 1854, 600 Church members gathered in the church. Larson, *Erastus Snow*, p. 262.

⁵⁵Leonard Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1958), p. 105.

⁵⁶Frederick H. Percy, *Route from Liverpool to the Great Salt Lake Valley*, 1962 ed. (Cambridge, 1962), p. 199.



The Old Methodist Church by courtesy Stanley B. Kimball and the Missouri Historical Society

THE STAKE, 1854-1857

Elder Andrus left Salt Lake City more than two months before Elder Snow and on 30 May arrived in St. Louis where he was met by Orson Pratt and Horace S. Eldridge. While waiting for Erastus Snow he kept busy. In one of his letters to the *Deseret News* he reported:

I began to feel after the Saints and found many disaffected and the Holy Spirit came upon me, when I thought of the best plan to save the most: and I counseled them to renew their covenants by rebaptism, and by making new records as the old were imperfect. I also opened the door to those who had been cut off, only forbidding such as were forbidden by all laws this side of the mountains. The result is, the Saints are rejoicing and bear testimony that they have never felt better in their lives; and about twenty-five more have been baptized, some of whom had been cut off

In the month of August last, I received an invitation to go to Illinois about 10 miles from the river. I went and preached and then sent others, and last Sunday (Oct. 15) I went again, and organized a branch, called Centreville Branch . . . consisting of eight members. . . .⁵⁷

On 28 August Elder Snow arrived in St. Louis and boarded with Elder Andrus. A few days later, on 12 September, he wrote to Franklin D. Richards in England that

Brother Andrus had succeeded well in his labors here and on my arrival he was stirring up the Saints to renew their covenants in baptism and nearly all have done so . . . after this month we shall leave Concert Hall and occupy [lease] the Old Methodist Church on Fourth Street⁵⁸ a spacious building with a gallery, which will be under our entire control, including a basement in three rooms, suitable for councils, storage, or rendezvous for our emigrationI propose calling a special General Conference in this place on the first Saturday and Sunday in November⁵⁹

⁵⁷Printed in the *Deseret News*, 4 January 1855. The sources do not tell us much about the number of converts in St. Louis at that time, and one concludes that there were comparatively few. Perhaps the most notable convert was Henry Eyring—the first of that prominent family to come into the Church. From Germany he came to St. Louis in March 1854, became a druggist, was baptized 10 December 1854, and spent four and a half years in the Cherokee Mission before going to Utah. See “The Journal of Henry Eyring,” privately printed, Salt Lake City, 1951.

⁵⁸This chapel, built of brick in 1830, stood where the Missouri Athletic Club is today. It was considered the “Mother of Methodism” in St. Louis. In 1854 the congregation moved to a new building, whereupon the chapel was available to the Mormons. Later, in 1857, the building was razed by a Mr. G. W. Clark, who built a block of five-story buildings on the site.

⁵⁹*Millennial Star*, 28 October 1854. Not only was he concerned with the

On the following 4 November, the most important single event in the history of the Church in St. Louis took place—the organization of the first St. Louis Stake by Elder Snow—the sixteenth stake to be organized in the Church. (According to the *St. Louis Luminary* Orson Spencer was also present). Milo Andrus was sustained as president, with Charles Edwards and George Gardner as counselors; a High Council of twelve men was also organized. The stake consisted of at least fifteen branches in Missouri, Illinois, and Iowa, and 1,320 members attended from the following branches: St. Louis First, 59; St. Louis Second and Third, 164; St. Louis Fourth, 157; St. Louis Fifth, 158; St. Louis Sixth, 250; Gravois, 216; Dry Hill, 45; Bellefontaine, 23;⁶⁰ Alton, Illinois, 102; Centreville, Illinois, 8; Keokuk, Iowa, 35; Bluff City, Iowa, 71; Maquaketa, Iowa, 16; and Fairfield, Iowa, 16.⁶¹

That same month Elder Snow established the *St. Louis Luminary*, a weekly newspaper, to promote “science, religion, general intelligence, and news of the day.” He used a basement room in the chapel for an office, and hired a Mr. Drake of Connecticut (who was friendly towards the Church) as his foreman. The first issue appeared 22 November and for a year, until 18 December 1855, it advocated and defended the Restored Gospel.⁶² It also reprinted much from the *Deseret News*, including public discourses of President Young and

discouraged and backsliding Saints, but with what most visitors to St. Louis in August are concerned with—the heat. On 23 September he reported, “I landed here on the 28th of August. Weather for two weeks after was so oppressive, I could hardly live. Over fifty men are said to have fallen dead from the effects of heat in this city this summer.” *Deseret News*, 21 December 1854.

While in St. Louis, Snow undoubtedly looked up his in-laws. His fourth and last wife, Julia Spencer, had lived in St. Louis during the 1840s, and her father, Matthias, and some brothers and sisters remained in St. Louis after Julia, her mother and younger sister went to Utah in 1850. Snow left for St. Louis ten days after they were married. Larson, *Erastus Snow*, p. 278.

⁶⁰Bellefontaine was platted in 1836 in section 10 of St. Ferdinand Township, which then included the abandoned Ft. Bellefontaine on the Missouri River. This town, fourteen miles north of downtown St. Louis, no longer exists, and the area of the old fort is now a home for boys. Only a few Mormons (between twenty-three and thirty-three during 1854 and 1855) ever lived in this area.

⁶¹*Missouri Republican*, 8 November 1854. The “Autobiography of John Powell,” as cited by Carter, *Mormons in St. Louis*, pp. 476-486, gives many details about the stake. During this period of the first St. Louis Stake, the city grew rapidly—from 77,830 in 1850 to over 162,000 in 1860.

⁶²Larson, *Erastus Snow*, p. 260; *The Luminary* (1854-1855); *The Mormon* ed. in New York City by John Taylor, 1855-1857; and *The Western Standard*, ed. by George Q. Cannon in San Francisco 1856-1857, were all organized at about the same time for the same purpose.

other prominent leaders, and proclamations, correspondence, and messages from the First Presidency. We learn little of the day-by-day activities of the stake from its pages, but it did carry complete accounts of various conferences held in the city that year.

As with the district, the biggest work of the stake was emigration. Indeed the sketchy records of that time reveal little else, and the arrival and departure of emigrants is faithfully chronicled. Many were shipped as far west as possible on the Missouri River, and others overland by wagon and team. So extensive were the Mormon purchases of wagons that they were credited with having helped launch the largest and best known wagon factory in the country.

In 1843 a German emigrant, Louis Espenschied, established his wagon factory at 1815 North Broadway. "It appears to have been the Mormons who gave Espenschied his first considerable business in prairie schooners . . . an account was found . . . dated '1855 May 16, paid \$2000.00 to Louis Espenschied and Co. for wagons. John Wardle and Erastus Snow' "⁶³ There is also some evidence that Brigham Young had ordered wagons from Espenschied in 1846 and 1847. Apparently Espenschied continued to do considerable business with the Mormons, for he advertised continually in the *Luminary*, and held notes on the Utah firm of Hooper and Williams and payment was overdue at one time on nearly nine thousand dollars. Espenschied asked Erastus Snow to straighten this out with Brigham Young—which he did.

In spite of the hundreds who left for Utah, the stake continued to grow. At the April 1855 conference, 1,661 members were present, all but 140 of whom were in the St. Louis area.⁶⁴ The records of the October conference that year show a membership of 2,044 in thirty branches in Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Ohio, and Kansas Territory.⁶⁵ That fall both Andrus and Snow returned to Utah,

⁶³See the Espenschied Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri.

⁶⁴*St. Louis Luminary*, 21 April 1855. A decision was also made to organize the Saints in the St. Charles area into a branch. *Ibid.*, 14 April 1855.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 20 October 1855. The thirty-two branches were as follows: six in St. Louis, 975; Gravois, 243; Dry Hill, 22; Bellefontaine, 33; Platten, Mo., 6; Weston, Mo., 40; Alton, Ill., 123; Calhoun, Ill., 20; Centerville, Ill., 12; Kingston, Ill., 19; Jacksonville, Ill., 12; Sullivan, Ill., 7; Maqueketa, Ill., 11; Bluff City, Iowa, 20; Indian Creek, Iowa, 6; Keokuk, Iowa, 50; Burlington, Iowa, 13; Fairfield, Indiana, 14; Carelton, Indiana, 11; Ft. Riley, Kansas Ter-

and the senior member of the High Council, James Henry Hart (1825-1906) became the next stake president on 6 October and remained so until 1857, after which the stake was allowed to wither away.

There were two important funerals in St. Louis in 1855. Andrew L. Lameraux, returning to Utah after having served as president of the French Mission, died of the "Asiatic Cholera" in St. Louis on 13 June.⁶⁶ After Erastus Snow returned to Utah, Elder Orson Spencer, who bore the title "President of the Church in the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys," was sent to St. Louis. He arrived 7 July, contracted typhoid fever, and died 15 October.⁶⁷ The following spring his remains were shipped to Utah for reburial.

In 1855 the Church encouraged European emigrants to sail to the East Coast. At first they took the railroad to Pittsburgh, then went by boat to St. Louis, but in 1856 they went by rail to Iowa City and proceeded to Utah by handcart. This decision was the beginning of the end of the St. Louis Stake. Thereafter, although the Church kept an emigration agent in St. Louis for several years, most of his work was in connection with Iowa City affairs. For a season, the stake marked time.

One Church-related matter concerning some mummies once owned by Joseph Smith, however, should be pointed out. In 1835 the Church purchased four mummies and some papyri which Joseph Smith said contained ancient writings of Abraham and Joseph. After the death of Joseph Smith, and by 1856, two of these mummies and some of the papyri were being exhibited in St. Louis, in Wyman's Hall—an important museum and concert hall operated by Edward Wyman (then located immediately south of the Old Court House on the south side of Market Street). There they remained until 1863 when Wyman sold his whole collection to a Chicago exhibitor. There is, unfortunately, no known reference to these mummies in St. Louis by a Mormon of that day.⁶⁸

ritory, 20; Mormon Grove, Kansas Territory, 28; Cincinnati, Ohio, 98; and Pomeroy, Ohio, 39.

⁶⁶His obituary was printed in the *Luminary* of 16 June 1855, and his remains were later shipped to Salt Lake City.

⁶⁷His funeral was reported in the *Luminary* 20 October and 10 November 1855.

⁶⁸A good study of this is Walter L. Whipple, "The St. Louis Museum and the Two Egyptian Mummies and Papyri," *BYU Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Autumn 1969), pp. 57-64.

Although St. Louis was no longer an important emigrant center, the needs of the Saints there who would not or could not emigrate had to be tended to, and for this reason, both Andrus and Snow returned to St. Louis during the spring of 1856. Thereafter, the main efforts seemed to have been devoted to strengthening the faith and testimonies of those who remained behind. To this end, Elder Snow instituted the "Reformation," a reform movement which commenced in Utah in mid-1856 and swept throughout the Church in 1856 and 1857 "until every Saint was rededicated to the Kingdom through baptism or purged from membership."⁶⁹

On 7 January 1857, Elder Snow preached in the Fourth Street chapel and himself entered the font (newly installed for that purpose), followed that day by thirty-seven others and later by hundreds of others.⁷⁰ Snow next visited all the wards and branches in the area, preaching, excommunicating, and rebaptizing. In February, Apostles Parley P. Pratt and George A. Smith were sent to St. Louis to help with the Reformation. This was to be Elder Pratt's final assignment. The last incidents related in his *Autobiography* mention that on 1 March he and Elder Snow preached the message of the Reformation three times and on 3 March he refers to his work assisting Elder Snow with the Deseret Alphabet.⁷¹ Soon thereafter he left for Arkansas where he was killed on 13 May.⁷²

The great Reformation proved to have been the last major activity of the organized St. Louis Stake. The threatening "Utah War" of 1857 pretty much killed it. To strengthen the Church's defense against the U.S. Army advancing on Utah, Brigham Young called Erastus Snow and all others who could to leave St. Louis that summer. This, essentially, brought an end of the stake. The razing of the chapel later that year by

⁶⁹Gustive O. Larson, *Outline of Utah and the Mormons*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City, 1965), p. 91.

⁷⁰St. Louis, Record of Members, 1856-1862, 7 January 1857.

⁷¹The Deseret Alphabet was an abortive attempt to simplify the orthography and reading of English for the benefit of thousands of European emigrants pouring into Utah. The effort was commenced October 1853, a font of type was cast in St. Louis, and by 1869 three books had been printed—*The Deseret First and Second Readers*, and the Book of Mormon. The experiment quickly died out.

⁷²Pratt was actually knifed and shot to death by the husband of an abandoned wife whom Pratt had married. See Reva Stanley, *The Archer of Paradise* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1937), pp. 298-308. Part of the time he was in St. Louis he was in hiding. Snow helped him elude officers who were searching for him, and when Pratt left, he was in disguise.

The Four Presidents of the St. Louis Stake



Milo Andrus (1854-1855)



James H. Hart (1855-1857)



Roy W. Oscarson (1958-1969)



Boyd F. Schenk (1969—)

its owner was the symbolic end. Among those who left was James H. Hart, the second president of the stake. Thereafter the sources regarding the Church in St. Louis are even more scanty than for the earlier period.

Apparently Brother Eldridge more or less presided over the Saints in St. Louis until he returned to Utah in 1858. The Dry Hill branch kept records until 14 April 1859, but they are mainly a record of those who emigrated. Erastus Snow passed through St. Louis during November 1860 enroute east on a mission. There is a reference to an Elder Elijah Thomas working here in 1861. From 1862 to 1868 and again from 1870 to 1877, St. Louis was a branch of the Indian Territory Mission. (The branch had 75 members in 1864.) In 1863 Brigham Young sent an agent to St. Louis to buy machinery for a cotton and woolen factory in Utah. In June 1877 a conference was held in the Broadway Hall at 1310 No. Broadway with 42 in attendance. Thereafter there was very little Mormon activity in the area until 1896. (One exception was a concert presented by the Tabernacle Choir 2 September 1893 in the Music Hall of the Exposition Building.)

In 1896 Salt Lake City sent two elders, Melvin J. Ballard (the future apostle) and Ezra Christensen, to renew Church activities in St. Louis. In 1904 Utah had an exhibit in the St. Louis World's Fair. From 1907 to 1916 the reorganized branch rented a store at 4265 Easton Ave. and used it for religious services. On 26 November 1916 Elder James E. Talmage dedicated a chapel which the branch had purchased at 5195 Maple Ave.

STAKE REESTABLISHED, 1958-PRESENT

The next important event was on 4 September 1949 when George Albert Smith, President of the Church, dedicated a new chapel at 4720 Jamieson, the first chapel the Mormons had even built or owned in the area. Nine Years later, on 1 June 1958, the second St. Louis Stake was organized with Roy W. Oscarson as president. This, the 265th stake in the Church, consisted of six congregations (South St. Louis, North St. Louis, Rolla, Alton, Illinois, East St. Louis, Illinois, and Belleville, Illinois), and about 1750 members. Today the stake is made up of over 5,000 members in thirteen congregations.

The fourth president of the St. Louis Stake (since 1969) is Boyd F. Schenk.

St. Louis more than deserves the compliments paid it by the early Mormons who sought security there, and its role in Church history needs to be better understood and appreciated today. In conclusion it should be added that, in addition to the important members of the Church mentioned above, there are at least eighty-seven other prominent men and women listed in Andrew Jenson's *Latter-day Saint Bibliographical Encyclopedia* who were in some way connected with the early church in St. Louis.⁷³

⁷³They are: Henry Arnold, Ellen Martin Barrus, Ann Bawden, Henry Bawden, Sarah Bawden, Henry Beal, William Bricker, Thomas Briggs, Reuben Broadbent, Henry Buckwalter, Joseph Bull, John T. Caine, George Cannon, Martha Telle Cannon, Nathaniel G. Chambers, John H. Clark, Thomas Clayton, Matthias F. Cowley, Charles C. Crump, Ephraim P. Ellison, Nathaniel H. Felt, Thomas Fenton, Edmund Burk Fuller, Lewis Grant, George Goddard, Niels Hansen, Martin H. Harris, James Henry Hart, Amos Howe, Julia Cruse Howe, Riego Hawkins, Henry C. Jackson, William Jennings, Capt. Dan Jones, Andrew L. Lamoreaux, Christopher Layton, Theodore B. Lewis, Joseph S. Lindsay, Feramor Little, Elijah Malin, Samuel Matthews, John D. T. McAllister, Theodore McKean, Thomas McLelland, John McNeil, Joshua Midgley, Alvin M. Monteirh, Isaac B. Nash, Alice W. Needham, James Needham, John Needham, William J. Newman, George Osmond, Samuel R. Parkinson, William C. Parkinson, Richard Pilling, Joseph Pollard, Alexander C. Pyper, Henry Rampton, Mary Parker Richards, Alfred H. Riding, Richard S. Robinson, George Romney, Thomas F. Rouché, David Salisbury, John Sharp, Mary Ann Ford Simmons, Thomas S. Smart, William C. Staines, James Standing, Edwin Stott, Joseph E. Taylor, Thomas S. Terry, George Thomson, John Thornley, Ephraim Tillotson, John Tingey, Edward Tolton, Luther T. Tuttle, David King Udall, Peter M. Wentz, David Williams, Sarah T. Williams, Henry Woolley, Attewall Wooten, and James Woolstenhulme.