

NAUVOO: MORE THAN A MEMORY

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The Restoration continues setting things in their places anew. Do you remember the feeling when President Hinckley announced that the Nauvoo Temple would be rebuilt? How is it that our hearts are tied to Nauvoo? These reasons are not necessarily true in a literal sense, but they have poignancy in our lore: We have not yet regained equilibrium after the martyrdom at Carthage. The ruined city and temple symbolize Zion snatched from off our fingertips. Nauvoo is the jumping-off point for the trek into the desert, geographically and spiritually. We have nothing at Independence, Far West, and Adam-ondi-Ahman—Nauvoo has remained tangible: those brick houses and now a temple where a temple once stood. The name “Nauvoo,” since it is not current in our language, bespeaks something longed for but unutterable.

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One way of thinking about temporal/spiritual duality is to juxtapose the Lord’s account of history with ours. The problem, of course, is that we do not have His history. We get an occasional inkling of the divine track, but mostly we follow the prophets by faith. When we are no longer seeing darkly through a glass, we may recognize in the dedication of the rebuilt Nauvoo temple a grand historical event, whose reverberations like ripples in a pool swell in many directions. As one stone upon another finally makes a temple, perhaps the Nauvoo temple itself is a keystone in the kingdom, already making possible for us an additional element of peace.

Nauvoo is caught in our consciousness at the intersection of eternal and ephemeral; it was the city of saints and lasted only as a day. In reconsidering stories from my family history, I find ancestors living out their lives in Peel and Liverpool, Halifax, Haworth, Randers, and Glasgow—not in Nauvoo. All these places have stories, but Nauvoo has only a fragment because its story didn’t have time to happen. Most of my ancestors missed the Nauvoo period, it was so short.

Many bypassed Nauvoo; a few traveled through(at most. For Ann, Nauvoo was the destination but unattained, while George got only a glimpse. For Mary Alice and Charles the exodus to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake would last longer than the sojourn in the city. Their stories are retold below, illustrating conversion as it overtook them, suggesting their protracted pilgrimage both within themselves and in their communities. For them Nauvoo was the hub of the wheel: from varied directions they came in to the center, and then they went out again.

My father liked to relate how his great-grandmother, Mary Alice Cannon Lambert, taught him of the Prophet Joseph. She lived until 1920, when my

father was already a big fourteen-year-old. He recounted the story reverently, because Grandmother Lambert was a pioneer woman, but more especially because she knew the Prophet in Nauvoo, she knew him to have a prophetic gift, and we knew it too.

Grandmother Lambert's ancestor, sea captain George Cannon, died in a mutiny on his ship, which ruined the family's fortune. His daughter Leonora, in consequence of a dream, emigrated from the Isle of Man to Canada in 1832, where she married a young Methodist named John Taylor. Parley P. Pratt undertook a mission to upper Canada early in 1836, and near Lake Ontario a stranger handed him a letter of introduction to John Taylor. He called on the Taylors upon arriving in Toronto, and they were baptized in May of that year. The Taylors moved to Ohio, where John was ordained an apostle and in 1839 left on a mission to England carrying an introduction from Leonora Taylor to her brother George Cannon, son of the unfortunate captain.

The junior George was sixteen at the time of his father's death at sea. He became a joiner (cabinet and furniture maker), and in 1825 married a woman of his island, Ann Quayle. The Cannon family had been decreasing in numbers for some generations, which was a concern to George. Before the marriage, Ann agreed that if she did not bear sons to carry on the family name, she would release George from his marital vow. Events did not require her to relinquish the marriage, but she would show her devotion to the family in such a way as each of her children would never forget.

The Cannons were living in Liverpool, with three thriving sons and expecting a third daughter, when John Taylor arrived on January 11, 1840. He called during the day when George was away at work; he did not announce his errand but only exchanged family news with Ann and her eldest, a third George, whose thirteenth birthday was that day. John asked for an appointment in the evening, when the father would be home, and walked away. Ann remarked to her son, "George, there goes a man of God. He is come to bring salvation to your father's house."

John stayed in Liverpool only overnight on this occasion. He called on the Cannons in the evening, sang for them some of the songs of Zion, and testified of the Prophet Joseph and the *Book of Mormon*, leaving a copy with them. Ann accepted the testimony, but George felt that he should investigate more carefully. Awaiting John's return, he read the *Book of Mormon* with increasing interest. Finally, he judged: "an evil-minded man could not have written it, a good man would not have written it to deceive—it must be of God." He and Ann were baptized one month after John's first visit. He wrote to his sister Leonora, "I bless the Lord that I ever saw your husband's face."

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In June of that year Parley visited the Cannon family in company with John. After breakfast, Parley said, "Elder Taylor, have you preached the Gospel to these children? Some of them want to be baptized now. Don't you?" He was looking directly at the second child, eleven-year-old Mary Alice, who replied, "Yes, sir." During the previous four months she and her brother George had talked with each other and their parents about baptism and had prayed about it. They and their eight-year-old sister Ann were baptized a few days later.

Yearning to go back home, a lamentation for what is lost, is an archetypal feeling. It urged Englishmen and Scots, Manxmen and Danes out of tradition, setting their hands on a rod of iron, their shoulders out from under an iron yoke. How can home lie away across the sea from the old sod? The light of Nauvoo shone round the world and drew them with bright hope. They had known the bondage of tradition; they knew their children need not bear it, for they were children of promise.

The Cannon family sailed from Liverpool aboard the *Sidney* on September 3, 1842. Until then George was busy organizing emigration for other converts and helping pay the passage for some. But Ann's anxiety grew unbearable; she feared that if they did not depart that year she would not be alive to undertake the voyage. If she died before the departure, George might not have the heart to go. Her passion was that their children should join the saints in Nauvoo; she told her husband of a premonition that she should not live to see it.

She passed away on Friday morning, October 28, and that afternoon at five o'clock was buried at Latitude 24.37 North, Longitude 69.50 West. George wrote:

We are tried in a more tender part, and were it not for our helpless children's sake I should like to repose under the peaceful blue waters with her who shared my every joy and sorrow. Heavenly Father keep me from repining! But seeing other people enjoying the society of those they love, my heart sickens and I long to be at rest with my dear wife.

The bereaved family transferred at New Orleans to the steamboat *Alexander Scott*, bound to St. Louis. It was too late in the season to churn on to Nauvoo. They completed their pilgrimage in April of 1843 on the first trip of the season by the *Maid of Iowa*, a steamboat owned by the Church. The travelers on the ship were met by a large crowd at the landing, including Joseph, whom the Cannons recognized though they had seen no likeness of him. The son George attested that they knew Joseph at first sight, not by size or apparel or any distinguishing mark, but by something which singled him out no matter how closely pressed on all sides by the accompanying throng. Joseph had learned of the Cannon

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family from John Taylor. He knew of their faithfulness in Liverpool, and during their winter in St. Louis he had heard of Ann's death at sea. He met them with a handclasp and words of sympathy and blessing. Mary Alice was halfway into her fifteenth year.

In Nauvoo the widowed father built a house across the street from the Taylors, with a shop in the yard. In addition to his specialty of cabinets and furniture, he undertook all forms of carpentry, including building houses from the ground up. David M. Evans, who worked in the same shop with George in Liverpool and also crossed on the *Sidney*, said of George, "He was altogether the most deft and cunning worker in wood I ever saw." Later, in Utah, his sister Leonora took pleasure in exhibiting pieces of furniture made by him. After the martyrdom, George fashioned the two coffins and took plaster casts of Joseph and Hyrum's faces.

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How do you approach Carthage? Is it a museum, a shrine, a physical representation of a spiritual reality, a monument to the awful, the impossible, the inevitable? None of the surroundings today are authentic, and it did not provide a scene for Legacy. But there is that window above the well. Is Carthage a reminder that Joseph was only a man? Yet the finger of God was upon him. Hyrum's love and loyalty transcended all else. John and Willard held nothing back. Were the fatal shots heard in Mexico City and Marseilles, in Singapore and San Francisco? Or did they die away in the neighboring grove? Carthage froze in its moment, and Nauvoo languished.

George Cannon the Immigrant returned to St. Louis in August of 1844 to find work. The martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum had so affected Nauvoo that he did not hope for remunerative employment there. On August 19 he suffered sunstroke and died. His grave has not been identified.

Awaiting their father, the orphans in Nauvoo received only a report of his death. Young George and his second sister, Ann, had early on been adopted into the Taylor household. The oldest daughter, Mary Alice, was not yet sixteen, but had charge of Angus, aged ten, David, aged six, and little Leonora, almost four years old. Fortunately for all, Mary Alice was desired in marriage by a good man. Charles Lambert had arrived in Nauvoo in the spring of 1844, come to help build the temple.

At the time of Mary Alice's birth in 1829, Charles was already an apprentice boy in Yorkshire, dressing stones to be sent by barge to London. He was a deft worker and while still in his teens traveled all about England, readily finding work cutting and carving stone wherever he went. In his twenties he was a contractor and builder on railroads. In these early years he prayed much, signed up as a teetotaler, and taught in a Methodist Sunday school. In his own words, he "fasted and prayed for the gifts and blessings and the faith once delivered to the Saints."

In July of 1843, approaching his twenty-seventh birthday, he received a letter from a former work mate, William Watson, saying that “the Lord had again restored the Gospel and that [William] had been baptized.” Charles wrote immediately to know where to find those who could baptize, and received knowledge of a branch in Louth, Lincolnshire, forty miles away. He “soon up and went there, it being Saturday the Market day.”

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There were about eight members in Louth, but no elder, so Charles rented a room and waited. Elder Henry Curedon arrived, and was invited by Charles to share the room. Not being acquainted, they said their prayers to themselves and fell asleep. Next morning Charles told Henry that he wished to be baptized at 7 o'clock. Henry objected that he hadn't preached to Charles yet, and Charles rejoined that if Henry “had got the authority [he] wished to be baptized.” After some talk and prayer, Henry baptized Charles and ordained him a Priest.

He undertook to preach, but soon came under persecution, even from his disapproving family. He traveled to Liverpool and sailed on the barque Fanny of Boston, January 13, 1844, making his way to Nauvoo by way of New Orleans. The day after arriving in Nauvoo, Charles was interviewed by the Prophet Joseph and William Clayton, and then reported to Reynolds Cahoon at the temple site. Dressed as a contractor, not as a worker, he was taken as “a crank and enthusiast.” Finally Brother Cahoon said he could work, but they had nothing to give him. Charles writes:

I replied sharply, “I have not come here to work for pay; I have come to help build that house,” pointing to the Temple. Then they laughed. At this time I had not one penny and an entire stranger. I went to work, but how I lived for three weeks I cannot tell.

The first day at work he hung his top hat on a peg and put on a workman's cap; the top hat was shredded by stones thrown by those who took him for a crank. Following those initial three weeks, Charles was allowed to draw a rations allowance.

Charles never missed Joseph's weekly meetings, stating that he appreciated the instruction. He writes:

I think it was on or about the 6th of May, 1844, the Prophet Joseph came up to the Temple, and clasping his arms around me and lifting me off my feet, then said, “The Lord bless thee, and I bless thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” It went through my whole system like fire. Then he turned to those around and said, “The Lord bless the whole of you, and peace be unto you.”

Charles saw the burning of the *Expositor* and was present at a meeting where an Indian delegation called on the Prophet. He reports attending the Prophet's last sermon from the Mansion House, seeing Joseph draw

his sword and saying that it “should not be sheathed again until vengeance was taken on the wicked.”

Charles was summoned to the bed of the dying William Blood, who also had crossed on the barque *Fanny*. William had him promise to be a counselor to his family, and to get Hyrum to seal William to his wife before he should die. Charles writes, “I went and saw Brother Hyrum. He promised as soon as he got back from Carthage he would attend to it.” Hyrum did not return from Carthage, but Charles saw that the sealing was accomplished.

I had read accounts of the martyrdom at Carthage, the details growing sharp in my mind. On a gray afternoon when I visited the jail, I examined the hole in the door made by a ball that struck Hyrum on the left side of his nose. The report is that he braced himself against the door to hold it against furious mobbers forcing the other side. I leaned against the door to simulate his posture, hoping it was not presumptuous to want to stand where he stood. Hyrum was several inches taller than me, but placing my nose over the bullet hole still required that I crouch low. My imagined scenario, shaped a bit by a heroic ideal, departed from me then and there, replaced by a scene of real men in a desperate spot.

One evening in the autumn of 1844, Charles met a young girl “with a nice sun bonnet on.” He looked on and “became interested that one is to be my wife.” The girl, the orphaned Mary Alice Cannon, returned to her employment as a cook on a farm in Iowa, leaving Charles to spend the longest three weeks he ever lived. She came back to Nauvoo, had a dream that Charles was to be her husband, and they were married on November 28. She made the condition that she would not be separated from her little sister, Leonora. Charles not only agreed, but had himself appointed legal guardian of young Angus and David as well. Later the couple received temple ordinances and were sealed by her Uncle Taylor.

After acquiring a family Charles often went without breakfast, leaving his portion for them. One day while working on the temple he fainted of malnutrition. He worked two years in all, receiving the rations allowance and one fifty-cent piece for his labors. His diary mentions carving on the oxen for the baptismal font, shaping limestone capitols, and quarrying and working a capstone. As an ensign in the Nauvoo Legion, he helped guard the city by night. He accepted a mission call to the Lamanites, but then was told to remain and continue working on the temple.

It was during the days of urgency to finish the temple that Charles covenanted “with Brother William Player that [he] would stick to the Temple pay or no pay, until finished and did.” One day he came home to find Mary Alice weeping at the door. She said she could stand anything but this—“to hear the children crying for bread and she had none to

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give them.” Charles asked, “Why don’t you go and ask the Lord to send you some?” They went together to their room and prayed. An hour later Lucious Scovill came to ask Charles to carve a grave stone. There was no rush to complete the work, but he gave Charles four bushels of wheat that day.

The Twelve had left Nauvoo when Charles helped fire cannons in a skirmish with mobbers. Of the last night of the fight, during the dark days of September, 1846, he reports:

I got some small chains, fastening a ball at each end and one in the middle, and it being dark, secreted them on elevated ground up Mullholland Street where we had a good chance to rake the enemy. We had the two pieces and let them go, taking the mob fires for a mark.... The mob said afterwards to me that we tore their wagon covers and tents to pieces. The next morning they sent in a flag of truce.

At this time the population of Nauvoo was only some hundreds, mostly elderly and infirm, women and children. Charles counted seventy-four combatants remaining for the fight after about fifty ran to seek shelter in the temple. The mobbers later insisted that they had seen thousands. The upshot of the battle was that the residents agreed to vacate Nauvoo in three days’ time.

After the manner of fire, Charles and Mary Alice learned that the light was principally within. Ann lay wrapped in the sea and George the Immigrant in an unmarked Missouri grave. The Prophet died, but a new generation saw his mantle upon Brother Brigham, whom they followed west. If their Temple was in ashes, their hearts remained ablaze. Perhaps Ann’s presentiments for her children included a distinction between Zion without and Zion within. She wanted their Zion more than she wanted to live. Charles and Mary Alice were in some ways a typical family of their time, as much thrown together by circumstances as drawn by inclination. They enjoyed telling that they married first and did their courting later. Gathered to Zion, they nevertheless learned to take the world as they found it, yet the inner ideal never dimmed. In their family and in their hearts, they achieved the parents’ wish.

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Charles was known to the mob for his part in the military action. On the river bank he was taken by about fourteen of them. He recounts, “I asked the Lord what I should do, when this was presented to me: ‘Be passive. You are in the hands of the Lord.’” Charles says he felt no alarm as a big man with some liquor in him led him into the water to a nice depth, overseen by the others with cocked guns. There the man said, “I baptize you by orders of the authorities of the Temple,” cursed, and held Charles under the water until his breath was gone. Charles was thus “baptized”

several times, then let go with the warning that if he was found on that side of the river again “death was [his] doom.”

Next morning, on the west bank of the Mississippi, Charles was told of a yoke of three year-old steers back in Nauvoo he could have for fetching them. He had no team, so he went for the steers. In the river he found a 40-foot length of rope caught in some willows. He located the cattle and got them to the river. They broke the rope twice and then ran into the water. His comment is, “This cooled them off. I had not much trouble with them afterwards.” On the trek westward, he declined to carry a whip or prod “lest he might sometime be tempted to use it.” Charles and Mary Alice did not get to Utah until 1849, with the Allen Taylor company.

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He returned to the east side of the Mississippi several times to help evacuate the sick and destitute. During one of his absences a second mob accosted Mary Alice and the children and ransacked their wagon. All firearms had already been surrendered, but the looters broke open a trunk and found a sword and a bowie knife. These they brandished before the children and the eighteen-year-old wife, threatening to cut off their heads. Then they rode off profaning.

Today Nauvoo is peaceful. You can pick up your small souvenir brick with Old Nauvoo stamped on it. At the blacksmith shop Elder Christensen will let you pump the bellows as he fashions for the little girls “prairie diamonds,” finger rings of horseshoe nails. Around the corner at the bakery, Sister Christensen is handing out cookies fresh from the oven. Downtown in the gift shop are newly cut fragments of original temple stone, stamped with ink outlines of the Temple, little fossils showing on the uncut sides. Catfish is on the menu at the diner, and not much tastier than catfish anywhere else. Ole Man River rolls round the horseshoe bend, streaked yellow in the sun. There are no ice floes, and no tracks in the mud of the western bank.

Across the Mississippi, the Lambert family were among those hungry souls who fed on tame quail. On a trip from Missouri back to Winter Quarters, their wagon broke through ice on the Missouri River and sank to the bottom. Charles was not with the company at the moment, and Mary Alice and the children “viewed the catastrophe with benumbed dismay.” A day later the wagon was pulled from the river, and most of its contents salvaged. Shortly after getting underway toward Utah in 1849, the young mother fell under the wagon and was run over. She was taken up for dead, but revived and continued the journey the next day.

Her older brother, George, had gone to Utah with the Taylor family in 1847. The Lamberts arrived in Salt Lake City the day after George departed for a mission in California, from where he would go on to the Sandwich Islands. Her separation from George would be almost eight

years. He had arranged a building lot for the Lamberts in Salt Lake and made adobes for their house. George had not been given a middle name, but adopted the initial of his mother's maiden name, Quayle.

He, Mary Alice, and the other four children of George and Ann retained all their lives a burning sense of purpose to establish the work set forth by Joseph. This they attributed to their parents, who sacrificed themselves to set their children in a new land, free from old tradition and encircled by people of the covenant. They always remembered their Mother's determination to have them baptized and gathered with the saints, and the untiring Christian kindness of their Father.

By the time they reached Salt Lake, the Lamberts had two sons of their own, with twelve more children to follow. These included a girl named Leonora, who would marry Isaac McAllister Waddell on September 20, 1878. My Grandfather, David Lambert Waddell, was born to them on June 29, 1879. When Dave grew up, he left Salt Lake City with his bride and four younger brothers to settle in Teton Valley, where my father, David Keith, came into the world on August 18, 1906. Mary Alice Cannon Lambert, by now an elderly widow, visited the Wyoming farmstead, dandled him in her lap, and told him stories of Nauvoo and her testimony of Joseph the Prophet. When I was little, it was hard to picture my father a child on his great-gran's lap, but the story she told him of Nauvoo never seemed other than authentic.

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Taking part in the dedication of the reconstructed Nauvoo temple at five o'clock on June 22, 2002, I again visualized the Prophet and the Patriarch and some of my family, and felt a step closer to them, closer to home. The Lord is true and faithful; His prophecies and promises shall all be fulfilled. This is witnessed by Joseph and the Saints. It is the mute echo in Nauvoo's quiet streets and silent byways. It is the unvoiced urging of hearts turned Homeward. Hope can be, because promises are fulfilled. President Hinckley said at the Sunday session of the dedication that he hoped he had kept his part of the promise. If old Nauvoo was only an interval, in the reconstructed temple time has brought Nauvoo round again. What may await in this new era? Faith in God is faith in the Promise; the promise of a temple in Nauvoo is now full. Things will not be what they have been. ☺

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