

Lumber for the construction of the Temple and the Nauvoo House was cut and rafted down the Mississippi River from the pine forests in Wisconsin. The area around western Illinois had oak, maple and other hardwoods, which were fine for furniture, doors and moldings. However, straight-grained pine was needed for construction lumber. The nearest virgin pine forests were in Wisconsin and the Nauvoo House Association had purchased a lumbering establishment for twelve thousand dollars on the Black River some four hundred miles to the north of Nauvoo.¹³ The Association had a saw mill on site and some lumber was sawed, but much of the cut timber was assembled in rafts and floated down the Mississippi River where it was processed in Nauvoo. Timber was cut in the forest during the winter months when snow was on the ground and the ground was frozen, otherwise, it would have been impossible to skid the logs to the riverbank through the boggy ground.

Bishop George Miller had been in charge of the pinery operation in the winter of 1842- 43 and on Friday May 12th had returned to Nauvoo with a raft of fifty thousand board feet of lumber for the Temple and Nauvoo House. ¹⁴ Now it was late July and time to designate a new group referred to as the Pine Company to go back to the pinery for the next season. The decision was made that Lyman Wight, as an officer in the Nauvoo House Association, would accompany Bishop George Miller, along with several other workers. Not only did the men accept this assignment, the entire family moved too. They were to sail on the riverboat, "*Maid of Iowa*", on August 21st, captained by Dan Jones, the famous Welsh sea captain.

There was a great deal of preparation required. Lyman and Harriet were to take all the children including Orange, who was a grown man approaching twenty, and the girls now young, comely women and the three young boys, nine, six and four years of age. This must have seemed to them a high adventure.

Among the families assigned to the Pine Company that summer was **Phineas Reeves Bird and his wife Millicent, "Polly", Coalman Bird**. The Bird family also included several small children. Polly Bird sought to find a girl that could go with them to help her with the children. Ever helpful, Orange Wight told Sister Bird that he knew such a girl over on the Iowa side by the name of Matilda Carter. She was an orphan, since her mother recently died and her father Gideon Carter had fallen at the battle of Crooked River in 1838. At the request of **Polly Bird**, Orange went over in a skiff, and found Matilda. She agreed to go at once. In spite of this noble gesture, Orange L. Wight had an ulterior motive. He was amorously attracted to Matilda Carter and so thought he had the right one this time.⁶

On board the "*Maid of Iowa*", bound for the Black River in Wisconsin, Orange became acquainted with Sarah Hadfield, the sixteen year old daughter of Samuel and Mary Ann Hadfield, recently arrived converts from England. On the rebound from his busted affair with Flora Woodworth, the fickle Orange started romancing both young women; Sarah Hadfield and Matilda Carter.⁷

The Pine Company consisted of approximately one hundred and fifty people, counting men, women and children. There were about twenty-five different family groups. The company roster is not available, but besides the Wights, **Birds**, Millers and the Hadfields it seems certain that John and Janet Ballantyne and family, including their daughter Jane Margaret, age twenty-five, were part of the original company, Also, Pierce and Sarah Hawley and family including daughter Mary, age twenty-one, and Otis and Sophrenia Hobart and family, with their daughter Mary Ann, age sixteen. This assumption is made because these three daughters; Jane Margaret, Mary and Mary Ann became the plural wives of Lyman Wight within the next twenty months. The exact place and time of marriages is not known. The first of these three wives, Jane Margaret, gave birth to a boy called Amos Wight in 1845 while yet in Wisconsin. The company left Wisconsin in April 1845. She may have possibly been married to Lyman Wight in Nauvoo in the summer of 1844, but this is speculation.

Joseph Smith wrote on July 20, 1843, that he furnished Bishop Miller with \$290.00 for the expedition to the Pinery? The next day, the Millers, the Wights and a large company with their families left on the "*Maid of Iowa*." The distance to the mouth of the Black River in Wisconsin would take four or five days in steamer and then the party would be met and hauled up river to the campsite

near Black River Falls. This leg of the trip of about forty miles would take a couple of days because the keelboats needed to be pulled or poled up the Black River. The lumbering camp and its equipment, on the Black River near the falls, was secured by a small detachment of Saints. These people met Lyman Wight and his crew with keelboats at the mouth of the river where it meets the Mississippi and provided an escort.

The lumbering company had worked this area the year before and made some improvements. One can imagine there were a few rude cabins; a mess tent or eating area; a washing area and maybe latrines. There couldn't have been many amenities or creature comforts. Winters are hard in the Wisconsin Territory and it was now approaching the first of September. The Pine Company had to work hard to ready the camp against the inclement weather that was sure to follow. Nothing is written about the camp, but one's imagination would lead you to believe a need existed for additional housing and since there was so many children, a school would be required. This was an industrious lot, with many skills and nothing in the writings indicate any exceptional hardships that winter of 1843-44.

Wisconsin was still a territory and the land of the Chippewa, Menominee, and Winnebago Indians with whom the Pine Company had friendly interactions. In January, Lyman Wight and Bishop Miller sent Mitchell and Stephen Curtis to Nauvoo to inquire of Joseph Smith to know whether they should preach to the Indians; the Menominees and the Chippewa having requested it. Lyman Wight had given the Indians a barrel of flour and an ox to keep them from starving. He had also gone with them to make a road to Green Bay where the Indian Agent resided. In turn the Chippewa had given Lyman some wampum as a token of peace. Joseph replied that he had no counsel on the subject and that Lyman should do what he thought was best. Whatever Lyman decided would be acceptable to him.

Joseph Smith was preoccupied at this time with other matters. In Nauvoo they were concerned with the coming presidential election. The choices were Martin Van Buren, who had rebuked the Saints appeal and Henry Clay, who had replied to Joseph Smith that "*You had better go to Oregon for redress.*" Neither of these two were acceptable candidates to the Church. A small group of Apostles, including Hyrum Smith and John P. Greene met with Joseph Smith in the Mayor's office on the 29th of January concerning this matter. Willard Richards moved that an independent electoral ticket be formed and Joseph Smith be a candidate for the next presidency. This was unanimously agreed. Joseph accepted this nomination on the provision that he would not electioneer for himself, but all the brethren would go out and stump for him.

On February 6, 1844, as a prelude to Valentine's Day, Lyman Wight performed a triple wedding. Orange Lysander, now twenty years old, married Matilda Carter age seventeen; Anna Christinia Wight, age nineteen, married Spencer Smith, age about twenty-three; and, Rosina Minerva Wight, who had turned sixteen on November 16th, 1843, married John Miller, the twenty year old son of Bishop George and Mary Miller.²³ Marrying three of your children on the same day must surely have been a first in Church history. Lyman was elated that his three children had married faithful members of the Church.'~ The real strength of these unions was the bonding of the families together. The isolation that winter in Wisconsin made all the members of the Pine Company dependent upon one another for their social, physical, and emotional needs. This is in part why they were all so willing to endure the hardships of a trek to Texas together.

Joseph Smith, on February 7th, again met with the group of political advisors and presented a paper entitled "Views of the power and policy of the Government of the United States." This document set forth the issues, which would form the basis for his political campaign. Joseph Smith outlined several interesting issues, among them; reduce Congress by two-thirds; abolish slavery by giving fair market value of the slaves to the owners; Lay claim to Oregon territory and back Texas; organize a national bank; petition State Legislatures to pardon every convict in their penitentiaries, bless the convicts as they go saying to them in the name of the Lord, "*Go thy way and sin no more.*" Murder should be the one crime punishable by incarceration or death. The penitentiaries should be turned

into seminaries of learning and punishment for minor crimes should be public service projects.²⁵ Joseph Smith was progressive in his thinking. Many issues he brought forth still face us today.

February 15th, a committee of five, composed of Lyman Wight, George Miller, Phineas R. Bird, Pierce Hawley and John Young, wrote the First Presidency with a report of operations and recommendations from Black River Falls. They indicated some lazy workers were being dismissed and in spite of them the company would reach their goal of one million board feet by July next. There was a problem however; the Indians had informed them the government was going to stop all further trespassing on Indian Lands on the Wisconsin, Black and Chippewa Rivers. The Menominees were willing to sell additional timber to the Pine Company with the Indian Agents approval. Lyman sent Miller and Daniels with the principal chief of the Menominees to meet with the Indian Agent, a gruff and austere man who denied the request. The prospects for a continuing operation in that area appeared dim in subsequent years. Under these circumstances and their friendliness with the Indians, a number of them on the committee came to the conclusion it might be well for the Pine Company to migrate to the Texas country and take the Indians with them.

On Friday March 8, 1844 Bishop George Miller arrived in Nauvoo and personally delivered the communications to President Joseph Smith.²⁷ At half-past three p.m. on Sunday, Joseph Smith met with Bishop Miller and the Temple Committee in the Nauvoo Mansion to discuss the contents of the letters from Lyman Wight and others of the Pine Company. At that meeting a special council was organized to consider the subject matter contained in the above letters.²⁸ The proposal of the Pine Company was to receive serious consideration.

The western movement of the Saints from Illinois had been under consideration for some time. Lucian Woodworth, Flora's father, was sent on a mission to The Republic of Texas. Texas was not part of the United States at that time. Woodworth received favorable consideration from Sam Houston and the leaders of the new republic. It would be to Texas' advantage to have an influx of people and a Mormon buffer colony between themselves and Mexico. On February 20th President Smith instructed the Twelve Apostles to send out delegations and investigate the locations of California and Oregon and hunt out a good location to where they could move after the Temple was completed. On the 23rd, Joseph Smith again met with the Council of Twelve and broadened the scope of the search saying he wanted an exploration of all the mountain country. It was obvious a move was pending, and well it might because trouble was brewing again. Not only from outside but from within the organization.

On Sunday March 24th, in the Temple, Joseph Smith announced that a conspiracy had been formed to take his life and he named the conspirators as Chancy L. Higbee, son of Elias Higbee, Dr. Robert Foster, Joseph H. Jackson, William and Wilson Law.³¹ William Law was Joseph Smith's second counselor, replacing Brother Hyrum when he was elevated to Patriarch. Remember Wilson Law was made a Major General in the Legion by receiving more votes than Lyman Wight. Wilson Law replaced John C. Bennett back in 1842. Later Francis M. Higbee and Charles Foster were implicated also. This made three sets of brothers, all members of the Church, involved in the conspiracy. They were eventually all cut off from the Church. Now Joseph Smith had enemies within and without the Church. It was time to move.

After the Special Council was formed, Lyman Wight wrote that they, Wight and Miller, were instructed by Joseph to return to Nauvoo with their families and the remainder of the Pine Company to come down river with the lumber when they finished the work.

Jesus Christ never did reveal to any man the precise time that He would come. Go and read the Scriptures, and you cannot find anything that specifies the exact hour He would come; and all that say so are false teachers.

There are some important things concerning the office of the Messiah in the organization of the world, which I will speak of hereafter, May God Almighty bless you and pour out His Spirit upon you, is the prayer-of your unworthy servant. Amen.

The following letter from Lyman Wight and others was read;

—*Letter:—Lyman Wight to the First Presidency—Preaching the Gospel to the Indiana and Proposing to Migrate to Texas..*

Black River Falls, Feb. 15, 1844.

To the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve of the Church of Christ of Latter-day Saints.

DEAR BRETHREN, —Through the goodness and mercy of God, the Eternal Father, and grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we are permitted to write and send by a special messenger a concise account of our lumbering operations, together with the apparent prospects of the introduction and spread of the Gospel among the Chippewa and Menominee Indians, and also the projects of our hearts in regard to future operations in spreading the Gospel south in all the extent of America, and the consequences growing out of the same, all of which we beg leave to submit to your consideration that we may have your concurrence, or such views as shall be in accordance with the mind and will of the Lord, and govern ourselves in accordance therewith.

Since we have been here lumbering, we have had many difficulties to encounter; but the main hindrance to our successful operations was the feeding, clothing, and transporting a great many lazy, idle men, who have not produced anything by their pretended labor, and thus eating up all that the diligent and honest could produce by their unceasing application to labor; and we have not yet got entirely clear of such persons.

But under all these mighty clogs and hindrances, we have been able to accomplish and have in progress, so that we can deliver in Nauvoo about one million feet of lumber by the last of July next, which will be a great deal more than what is necessary to build the Temple and the Nauvoo House. Besides all this, we have made valuable improvements here, —all the result of much labor done under trying circumstances.

We have recently ascertained that the lands from the falls of Black River to its sources are the property of the Menominee Indians, and the general government having urged them to move off the lands in the vicinity of Green Bay to their own lands. The Indians say they will, provided the Government will remove all strange Indians and trespassing white men off their lands; consequently, the agent and superintendent of Indian Affairs are taking such steps as will stop all further trespassing on the Indian lands, on the Wisconsin, Black and Chippewa rivers, under the penalties of the laws relative to the cases.

We sent Brothers Miller and Daniels, in company with the principal chief of the Menominee Indians, overland to the Wisconsin river, to ascertain more about the matter. They saw the agent; found him a gruff, austere man, determined to stop all trespassing on Indian lands. The Indians are willing to sell privileges to individuals for lumbering and cutting timber, as they have hitherto done; but the agent is opposed to it. Thus a difficulty arises between themselves.

Now, as regards the introduction of the Gospel of Christ among the Indians bore, it will require more exertion, to all appearances, to check the enthusiastic ardor of these our red brethren, until the full principles of faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ shall be reasoned into their minds, than to urge them on to receive it. They have great confidence in us.

The country belonging to these northern Indians is a dreary, cold region, and to a great extent, cranberry marshes, pine barrens, and swamps, with a small amount of good lands, scarce of game, and only valuable in mill privileges and facilities for lumbering

purposes.

As to mineral resources, they have not been fully developed. There is no doubt as to the abundance of iron ore, but uncertain as to quality;

Now, under all these circumstances, a few of us here have arrived at this conclusion in our minds (such as can undergo all things.)—that as the Gospel has not been fully opened in all the South and Southwestern States, as also Texas, Mexico, Brazil, &c., together with the West Indian Islands, having produced lumber enough to build the Temple and Nauvoo House, —also having an influence over the Indians, so as to induce them to sell their lands to the United States, and go to a climate southwest, (all according to the policy of the U. S. Government) ,—and having also become convinced that the Church at Nauvoo or in the Eastern States will not build the Nauvoo House according to the commandment, neither the Temple in a reasonable time, and that we have, so far as we have made trials, got means in the south,—we have in our minds to go to the table-lands of Texas, to a point we may find to be the most eligible, there locate, and let it be a place of gathering for all the South (they being incumbered with that unfortunate race of beings, the Negroes); and for us to employ our time and talents in gathering together means to build according to the commandments of our God, and spread the Gospel to the nations according to the will of our Heavenly Father. We, therefore, our beloved brethren, send our worthy Brother Young, with a few of our thoughts, on paper, that you may take the subject-matter under consideration, and return us such instructions as may be according to the mind and Will of the Lord our God. We have thought it best to sell the mills here, if you think it expedient. We feel greatly encouraged to spend and be spent in the cause of Christ, according to the will of our Heavenly Father.

You will, therefore, after due deliberation, send us, by the hands of Brother Young, such instructions as may be the result of your deliberations.

Holding ourselves ready under all circumstances in life to try to do all things whatsoever commanded or instructed to do by those ordained to direct the officers of the Church of Jesus Christ; subscribing ourselves yours truly, while life shall endure.

Lyman Wright,
George Miller,
Phineas R. Bird
Pierce Hawley,
John Young..

Select Committee to write expressly the views of the branch of the Church at Black River Falls.

Joseph Smith P. C.

Brigham Young P. T.

Willard Richards, Clerk.

Also a letter to myself from Lyman Wight and others— -

Letter:—Lyman Wight to President Joseph Smith—Suggesting a South-west Movement for the Church.

BLACK RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN TERRITORY,

February 15th, 1844.

To *Joseph Smith, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and to the Twelve Apostles, greeting:—*

Believing a concert of action in all things in this Church to be highly important, we deem it necessary, under existing circumstances, to make you acquainted with our views, feelings, and temporal and spiritual prospects, as they now exist.

We wrote you last fall a full and complete description of this country as high as the falls on Black River, without exaggeration, giving a slight description of the Pinery.

With the exception of several renegadoes and false brethren, things passed smoothly until some time in the month of January, when we were visited by three different tribes of Lamanites upon the most friendly terms, receiving us as their counselors, both temporal and spiritual.

The names of those tribes are Menomanees, Chippewa, and Winnebagoes. They informed us that all the land above the falls belongs to the Menominee tribe, and that the agents and the governor, the general agent in the northwest of all the Indian affairs, had agreed with them to remove all the lumbermen from Black River, Chippewa, and Lemnaware rivers, by their request; but after a lengthy conversation with them, they felt to treat us as their friends, and not their enemies.

We dispatched two messengers—namely, George Miller and Cyrus Daniels, to go immediately to Wisconsin, where they met with the agent, who gave them to understand we could get the timber, which is already cut, at a reasonable rate, and for any future prospect we will be under the necessity of entering into a contract.

We calculate the present prospect for lumber betwixt this and the last of July next will be from eight to twelve hundred thousand feet, which we deem will be all sufficient to finish the two houses, which will accomplish the mission on which we started to this country.

We, therefore, as a branch and a member of the body of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints chose the following committee—namely, - Lyman Wight, George Miller, Pierce Hawley, **Phineas H. Bird** and John Young to correspond with your reverend council, giving you our views concerning matters and things, and requesting your counsel on the same.

This committee views it inexpedient to purchase standing timber on so rapid and unnavigable a stream for the purpose of making lumber to gain wealth.

The Lamanites owning this land, notwithstanding their great anxiety to receive the Gospel and the Book of Mormon, have a strong desire, if counseled by us so to do, to go south-west, where game is more plentiful as their only resource here for a living is the pitiful annuities and proceed from their pine timber, which timber is the only inducement to the Government to purchase their lands.

This committee is therefore led to take a brief view of the south and western part of North America, together with the Florida, Texas, West India Islands, and the adjacent islands to the Gulf of Mexico, together with the Lamanites bordering on the United Territories from Green Bay to the Mexican Gulf, all crying with one voice, through the medium of their chiefs, Give us an understanding of your doctrine and principles, for we perceive that your ways are equal, and your righteousness far exceeds the righteousness of all the missionaries that we have yet become acquainted with,—that your conduct with one another is like that of ours, and that all your feasts and attendant ceremonies are precisely like ours.

Your servants, the committee, have viewed the Colorado river, with all its beautiful hills and valleys and fertile soil, with deep regret, when viewing the countless thousands of inhabitants on either side thereof, without the knowledge of God or the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and say in their hearts. Would it be expedient to form a mission of those true and full-blooded Ephraimites, who, from principle, and the love of the truth, have borne the most extreme -burdens, fatigue, and hunger, to prosecute the mission, to procure lumber sufficient to build the. two houses, to open then door to all the regions which we have named, which regions have never yet had an opportunity to hear the Gospel and to be made acquainted with the plan of salvation! or shall they continue to suffer the fatigues of hunger, wet and cold, in a rigid, inclement climate, for the pitiful sum that it shall avail them, after undergoing those hazardous perils! or shall they, like Timothy and Titus, with Paul, hazard the perils of the sea and land through the Southern States and West India Islands, and all the Lamanito world, go forth and proclaim to them the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and teach them to build up Zion!

Are there not thousands of the rich planters who would embrace the Gospel, and, if they had a place to plant their slaves, give all the proceeds of their yearly labor, if rightly taught, for building up the kingdom, being directed by the President of the whole Church to make the right application! We answer, Yes. we believe they would.

Your servants, the committee, are of the opinion that a concerted and reciprocity of action between the North and the South would greatly advance the building up-of the kingdom..

The committee is well informed of the Cherokee and the Chocktaw nations who live between the state of Arkansas and the Colorado -river of the Texans, owning large plantations and thousands of slaves, and that they are also very desirous to have an interview with the Elders of this Church, upon the principles of the Book of Mormon. -

This committee is of the opinion that they can choose soldiers for this expedition who are as undeviating in the principles of the doctrine of Christ and the Book of Mormon as the sun in his daily course, and as indefatigable in their exertions in this cause as the earth is in - its daily revolution.

This committee views it as a matter of investigation, whether would the Southerner, with his slaves and abundance of wealth, do better to take them to some slave-holding point, keep them in lively exercise according to his former customs and habits turning -over his yearly proceeds into the - hands of the Trustee-in-Trust forth. whole Church, or to abolish slavery and settle himself in a climate uncongenial to his nature and entirely derogatory to his former occupations in-life!.

After having procured the lumber-for those two houses, the committee a of the opinion that the preaching of the Gospel and raising funds in the south would be a far more speedy way of accomplishing the work than any other that could be introduced at the present-time.

We, your servants, therefore, will wait patiently the result of. your council, and submit ourselves to the same with, &ll, cheerfulness, our only object being to advance the cause and. kingdom of God, stand ready to take hold wherever your wise council may consider it to be of the most advantage.

This committee -view with deep regret the many different teachings this Church has received concerning the distribution of their property, snobs. raising funds for the printing of tracts, evidences of the Book of Mormon, and pamphlets of various descriptions, which we consider has not advanced the cause in the least degree, but has tended directly to sap the foundation of building the houses.

We therefore believe that no person embracing the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - should give any part or parcel of the property without a direct counsel, written or oral, from the First Presidency of the Church.

Whereas the committee having appointed George Miller and Lyman Wight to write the views of the committee, each wrote separate and apart, having laid the same before the committee, the committee resolved that both productions be sent without alterations.

We, the committee, conclude by subscribing ourselves your friends and well-wishers in the Lord, praying a speedy answer from

your worthy council, or the word of the Lord.

Lyman Wight,
George Miller,
Phineas R. Bird
Pierce Hawley,
John Young.

Select Committee to write expressing the views of the Branch of the Church at Black River Falls.
Joseph Smith, Sen., P.C.
Brigham Young, P.T.
Willard Richards, Clerk.

The Brethren went into council on the subject matter of the letters during the evening.
Monday 11. – At the home till nine; then spent the day in council in the lodge room over Henry Miller's house.

Special Council Meeting on Wight and Miller letters.

Present: Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, John Taylor, George A. Smith, William W. Phelps, John M. Bernhisel, Lucien Woodworth, George Miller, Alexander Badlam, Peter Haws, Erastus Snow, Reynolds Cahoon, Amos Fielding, Alpheus Cutler, Levi Richards, Newel K. Whitney, Lorenzo D. Wasson, and William Clayton, whom I organized into a special council, to take into consideration the subject matter contained in the above letters, and also the best policy for this people to adopt to obtain their rights from the nation and insure protection for themselves and children; and to secure a resting place in the mountains, or some uninhabited region, where we can enjoy the liberty of conscience guaranteed to us by the Constitution of our country, rendered doubly sacred by the precious blood of our fathers, and denied to us by the present authorities, who have smuggled themselves into power in the States and Nation.