

Anne O. Leavitt

**Readers' Theater**  
***To Fulfill the Purposes of God***  
**The Leavitt Legacy**

(As the congregation finishes singing *America, The Beautiful*, the organ continues to play softly, under readers.)

**NARRATOR:**

Events of human history, seeming insignificant, unfold to manifest the grand design of God. As we look back upon almost four centuries of Leavitt family history, it becomes clear that this family has been an integral thread in the fabric of Divine design, both in the establishment of the nation, and in the building up of the Lord's church.

As people directed by powers higher than themselves, Leavitt family members became participants in the settling of this land, which was destined to become **“a land choice above all other lands,”**<sup>1</sup> in which the purposes of God could roll forth. Some would fight for freedom, some would give their lives **in seeking to bring forth Zion.**<sup>2</sup>

(Music Off.)

God reveals his purposes through prophets. 600 years before the coming of Christ, a young Jerusalem-born prophet, called Nephi, foresaw the establishment of this nation,

**NEPHI:**

I am Nephi, descendant of Joseph, yea even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob who was sold into Egypt, and who was preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he might preserve his father, Jacob and all his household from perishing with famine. And they were also led out of the land of Egypt, by that same God who had preserved them. (1 Nephi 5:14-15.)

[My father's family, also was preserved by the tender mercies of God, being led to this land, which is a land of promise, yea a land choice above all other lands.

Upon my record will I write the things which I have seen.

“And it came to pass that I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon many multitudes of Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity upon the many waters.

(1 Nephi 13:13. Book of Mormon p 24.)

**NARRATOR:**

There were multitudes of gentiles on the European continent in 1628, and many kinds of captivity; social, physical and spiritual,. Young John Levitt, one of the multitude, chafed against his particular kind of captivity.

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<sup>1</sup> See Book of Mormon prophecies through Nephi, , (2 Nephi 1:5, 3:2,10:19) Jared, (Ether 2:7, 9:20, 10:28, 13:2.)

<sup>2</sup> See 1 Nephi 13:37.

**JOHN LEVETT:**

My name is John Levett. My village, in the heart of Yorkshire, was a pretty place. But I was apprenticed to a tailor in the village, and something there was that **wrought upon my spirit**. I felt a craving to be free. I wasn't much suited to the cutting and the stitching and three years loomed long before my master would set me at liberty.

I craved the adventuresome life of my Uncle Christopher. Now there was life! My uncle, Christopher Levett was the captain of his ship ! Again and again he sailed **upon the many waters** to a new and open land.

Oh how I begged that I could go along. I was a big lad. I could be some help to him. But there was the danger that I could be discovered. Finally, he agreed. But no one was to know that I was on the ship, until we had sailed beyond the point of ever turning back.

It was a strange place, this new country, harsh and unpredictable. Savages roamed the land; the terrain not yet friendly to the cart or to the plow. But shortly, I obtained a property and began to make my way in this new land.

**NEPHI:**

“ And I [Nephi] beheld the Spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the Gentiles and they did prosper and obtain the land for their inheritance;

. . . and it came to pass that I Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them..” (1 Nephi 13:15,16 Book of Mormon p24.)

**NARRATOR:**

The power of the Lord was with John Levett as he arrived in 1628, among the first who came to colonize this new land. He was a young man, faithful, aware that he had been brought safely, through the tender mercies of the Lord. Though he had to relinquish his first property to the master tailor, to satisfy his broken indenture, John soon regained his footing and moved forward. He met and married a girl named Mary and began again in Hingham Massachusetts, In witness of their faith, they gave their children Biblical names: Hannah, John and Jeremiah, Samuel and Elizabeth. John became a deacon in the Church. They **began to prosper in the land, and to obtain land for their inheritance.**

**JOHN LEVETT:**

Then my Mary died. Our five little ones took it hard. For a time it seemed as though there wasn't any purpose for us in this bleak life now. Then came a gift from God to us. Miss Sarah Gilman became my wife. She came into our home, and life again held promise. More children came...eight of them. Israel, Moses, Josiah, and Nehemiah , Sarah, Mary, Hannah and Abigail.

**NARRATOR:**

The John Leavitt/Sarah Gilman union would produce constitutional leaders and revolutionary

participants. They began to take an active part in the expansion and development of New England. Some of the sons explored the frontiers and helped to colonize the land. Others would become prominent landowners and town figures.

In 1681, John and Sarah's son, Moses, married Dorothy Dudley, the granddaughter of Thomas Dudley, second governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The union of Moses Leavitt and Dorothy Dudley produced thirteen children and fortified the line in the spirit of pioneering and leadership. The other children married well and began to burgeon into large families.

#### **NATHANIEL LEAVITT:**

My name is Nathaniel. My grandfather, Moses Leavitt, my grandmother, Dorothy Dudley, and earlier generations of my fathers had worked to establish this land. They cleared away the trees and built their houses from the logs. They plowed the cleared spaces and planted crops. They labored to make a home from wild country, all the while loyal to our mother England.

I myself fought for the crown against the French in 1755. With my father and others of our kin we marched with General Braddock into the ambush at Fort Duquesne. Only the courage of a young general, General George Washington, saved the few of us who did survive.<sup>3</sup> Still we were loyal to the crown.

We began to bear oppression from England; the Intolerable Acts. The Quartering Act, the Stamp Act, the Sugar Act, the Boston Massacre and the Tea Act. We felt the tightening grip of British rule. Our kinsmen and our friends gathered often from Exeter to Hingham, to debate and to discuss. **Revolution began to conceive in our minds and in our hearts.**

#### **FIFE AND DRUM MUSIC BEGINS HERE, UNDER SPEAKER.**

Finally, it was clear. Liberty would require independence. In January, 1775, the Second Provincial Congress met in Exeter, New Hampshire. War with Britain was imminent. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of April when the affair at Lexington and Concord was known...the bells were rung, drums beat to arms and by the middle of the forenoon one hundred and eight men left for battle. My father Joseph, my brothers, my sons and I, marched from Exeter. Fifteen of us by the name of Leavitt marched from Exeter that day, and others of our kinsmen joined at Hingham.

#### **MUSIC ENDS.**

#### **NEPHI:**

“And I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters and upon the land also to battle against them. And I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle.” (1 Nephi

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<sup>3</sup> The account of the ambush at Fort Duquesne under Gen. Braddock from World Book Encyclopedia, and the family history account of Washington's rescue of Nathaniel's group with a few troops, match so perfectly that it is an assumption I feel safe in making. ( World Book Encyclopedia 1977 and Emily Leavitt Noyes book on Moses Leavitt.

13:17-18. Book of Mormon p 25.)

**NARRATOR:**

Scores of “gentiles” named Leavitt and scores of their kinsmen named Dudley and Gilman, Wadleigh and Sanborn, served in the Revolutionary War. They were officers and enlisted men. Fathers and sons, uncles and cousins, fought side by side in the revolutionary cause. They fought, not knowing that they were the fulfillment of prophesy.

**NEPHI:**

“And I Nephi beheld that the Gentiles who had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God, out of the hands of all other nations.” (1 Nephi 13:19 Book of Mormon p 25.)

**JEREMIAH LEAVITT I:**

I am Jeremiah Leavitt. I was sixteen years old when the war began. I was twenty three when it ended. By the time the battles were over, we knew **we had been delivered by the power of God, out of the hands of all other nations.** The war had taken a terrible toll. We now needed the power of God to help us face the aftermath.

All families had suffered. The land had been ravaged and Exeter, no longer offered bright economic promise. Shipbuilding and the lumber industry were no more. The center of the government had moved to Concord.

For me the hardships were softened by Sarah. I was twenty four when I married Sarah Shannon, she was 18; an Irish girl with red hair and lovely deep eyes. We made our home in New Hampshire. Chester, for a time, then we moved to Grantham, where our first three sons were born, Weare, Nathaniel, and Josiah.

Opportunities beckoned me toward the northern Border. There was land there to be had for the taking. Land with rich, dark soil, ready to be cleared and planted. We sold our place in Grantham, and prepared ourselves to make a new life, where a civilization was only beginning to form.

**NARRATOR:**

It was a decision that would have far-reaching effects upon the rest of time. It would separate this branch of the Leavitt family from their illustrious heritage. They would become a **“branch broken off”** from the main tree. Little did Jeremiah and Sarah Shannon Leavitt realize in the year 1800, as they drove their wagons northward, that it would be many generations before their posterity would **reconnect** with the family they left behind. They were, without knowing it, creating a climate for a whole new heritage that would bear the imprint of the Leavitt family.

Those of the main tree remained in New England. They continued to be leaders in the birth of the nation. Some were signers of the Constitution, some were noted soldiers in the War of 1812, they continued to prosper and contribute as they remained **in the land of their inheritance.**

**SARAH SHANNON:**

By the time we were ready to make the move to Lower Canada, we had seven children. Little John was only 2 years old. I held him in my arms for most of the journey. Jeremiah drove the first wagon and I sat alongside him as we wound our way along the rutted road. In some places there was hardly a trail through the forests. Our Weare was fifteen, a good boy, big enough to drive the second wagon. Little Jeremiah was four and Sarah three. They rode along with Weare. Nathaniel was 10, Josiah was 8 and Lydia, 6, sometimes they rode, but often they ran along with the other children in the company. It was a long journey. Every day, as we traveled through the forests, I realized more clearly, how far we would be separated from our families and friends.

Settlements were springing up everywhere in Richelieu County, Quebec. We had taken some land near Hatley, where farms were forming and cabins taking shape. We began the task of clearing our land and building a home. Jeremiah was glad for the help of our sons. Weare and Nathaniel and Josiah soon learned to wield an axe, and even the little ones helped with peeling the bark from the poles. I worked at planting a garden and caring for them all.

It was pleasant there that summer. We lived in the wagons placed at the edge of a little wood, until the cabin was finished. It was ready just in time, because on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September Rebecca was born and we were finally snug and settled inside. She was the first of three little girls, who came one after another. Rebecca in 1801, Betsy in November 1804, and little Hannah, was born on the day after Christmas in 1805.

Life seemed good and full of promise. But our happiness was not to last. Very early in the new year Jeremiah suddenly took sick. We tried everything we knew to do. But he only grew weaker until he died, “ in the 46<sup>th</sup> year of his age, in full assurance of a glorious resurrection.”<sup>4</sup>

#### **NARRATOR:**

There was no turning back for Sarah Shannon Leavitt Her ten children became both her lonely stewardship and her greatest resource. From newborn Hannah to 21 year old Weare, each filled a part of the void, and they grew and prospered as a family.

#### **JEREMIAH LEAVITT II:**

I am Jeremiah, son of Jeremiah. I am proud to bear my father’s name.. I was ten when he died. We missed our father. But the older children helped the younger ones and all of us helped our mother, in whom our security centered. Our family began to expand. Weare married Abigail Cowles. Nathaniel married Deborah Delano. Lydia and Sarah and John all found spouses in the home of our nearest neighbors, the Thomas Rowell family. Rebecca married Franklin Chamberlain. James Adams took our Betsy as his wife. When little Hannah was 19, she married Horace Fish. All of these families had shared with our family in the pioneering of the frontier. But as for me, I looked a little further than our neighborhood. Just over the border into Vermont, I found Sarah.

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<sup>4</sup> This date and the phrase come from Jeremiah II’s short autobiography contained in the minutes of the 16<sup>th</sup> Quorum of Seventies, Nauvoo, Illinois, 1844-1860 CHO #87556, p.111

My Sarah descended from an old Pilgrim family. She was the 12<sup>th</sup> of the 14 children of Priscilla Tompson and Lemuel Sturtevant. They were strict parents and had taught their children every principle of honor and truth as they understood it themselves. It was an hospitable home, filled with books and much conversation. Sarah learned early to read the Bible for herself, and, oh she did learn to think for herself !

She was a lovely girl, with dark hair and flashing, deep set, eyes. But it was her remarkable mind and her indomitable spirit that first took hold of me. I was 21 and she was 18 when we were married at her father's house in Barton, Vermont. I took Sarah home to Hatley, to a world from quite different from the one she had known. A world which she set about, immediately, to change.

**SARAH STURTEVANT:<sup>5</sup>**

When I was 18 years old the Lord sent me a good husband. We were married at my father's house, March 6, 1817, in the town of Barton, County of Orleans, State of Vermont. The next June we moved to Canada, fifteen miles from the Vermont line, into a very wicked place. They would swear and drink and play cards on Sunday and steal and do any wicked act their master the Devil would lead them to. This was very different from what I was brought up to. My father would never suffer any profane language in his house.

**NARRATOR:**

The world of Hatley Canada, wicked as Sarah found it, was much like other frontier settlements. It was rough and wild, and perhaps because of its very wickedness, Hatley was frequently visited by various denominations of preachers, each preaching a different doctrine of salvation, bringing to the outposts, the religious confusion that already dominated the more civilized world of the young United States.

That aspect of life in the developing nation had also been revealed to the young Nephi. Immediately after the he had been shown the development of the nation, the revolutionary battles and the triumph of liberty, he had seen the confusion that would afflict the people.

He learned that the myriad preachers of religion would not be able to agree on points of doctrine, because many plain and most precious things had been removed from the Bible they had brought with them, as they came forth out of captivity.<sup>6</sup>

Even though they were free to worship, confusion over how to worship and which of all the doctrines preached were true, created an atmosphere of contention among them.

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<sup>5</sup> All of Sarah Sturtevant's words are taken from her journal. They are not always used in this presentation in the same order as they appear in the journal, but they are always direct quotes, except where given in brackets.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Nephi 13: verse 20 to end of chapter contains Nephi's remarkable vision of the religious confusion that would exist, more than 2000 years later, in the newly established America.

The young Nephi had received the promise that there would be a restoration of the precious doctrines that had been removed. And that it would come in the newly established land, they had battled to make free.

**NEPHI:**

“Neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in that awful state of blindness, which thou beholdest they are in, because of the plain and most precious part of the Gospel of the Lamb, which has been kept back. . . wherefore, . . . after the Gentiles do stumble exceedingly, because of the plain and precious part of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back. . . I will be merciful unto the gentiles, in that day, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them in mine own power, much of my gospel which shall be plain and precious, saith the Lamb” (1 Nephi 13: 32, 34)

**NARRATOR:**

Sarah had ideas of her own.. She watched the diversity of doctrines with sad understanding that light was missing, hungering for a restoration of truth. Then, in the spring of 1820, she began to experience remarkable glimpses, in answer to her prayers.

**Music softly under:** *Sweet Hour of Prayer*

**SARAH STURTEVANT:**

From my childhood I was seriously impressed. . . I had the privilege of reading the Bible for myself and it was very evident to me that all preachers came short of preaching the doctrine that the Apostle Paul had preached. I believed the words of the Savior that said, “Ask and you shall receive.” I prayed much and my prayers were sometimes answered immediately; this was before I had any pretensions of having any religion.

[One night, as I prepared for bed, a remarkable revelation was opened to my mind.] It was the same year and the same season of the year, and I don’t know but what it was the same day that the Lord brought the glad news of salvation to Joseph Smith. It must have been a stirring time among the Heavenly Host. . . the windows of heaven having so long been closed against all communications with the earth, being suddenly thrown open.

I did not believe in any church on earth, but [now] looked forward to a time when the knowledge of God would cover the earth. . . I lived very watchful and prayerful, never neglecting my prayers, for I felt that I was entitled to no blessing, unless I asked for them and I think so yet.

**NARRATOR:**

Sarah and Jeremiah, as well as the others of Mother Sarah Shannon’s extended families were scattered throughout the townships of the area. Every family was growing large in numbers. Sarah and Jeremiah had four children by 1825. Jeremiah worked on his own productive farm, growing crops of Indian corn, wheat, rye and oats, barley buckwheat and potatoes, turnips, peas, beans and grass hay for stock. When his own work allowed he cleared land for others with his

oxen team at \$10 to \$15 an acre. The children attended school three months in the summer and three months in the winter, learning reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic.

They had formed their own congenial society of friends and extended family. The family of Thomas B Rowell Sr. lived next door. Their days were filled with labor, their evenings included parties and fun, shared with neighbors and friends. The spirit of religious revival still swirled about them, and faith and religion was uppermost in their conversations.

By 1837 Jeremiah and Sarah had 8 children, the youngest, Thomas Rowell, was three years old. The Leavitt family had, by now, been building their lives in Quebec Canada, for 35 years. Their farms and homes were well established. But overarching change was just ahead.

**SARAH STURTEVANT:**

I had a place that I went every day for secret prayers. It seemed to me [as I prayed] that a cloud rested upon my head and I felt that if the cloud would break, there would be a message for me, or some new light. I did not know that it concerned anyone but myself. But then one day, Hannah, one of my husband's sisters, came in and after spending a short time in the house, asked me if I would take a walk with her.

She had heard the gospel preached by a Mormon and believed it and had been baptized. She commenced and related the whole of Joseph's vision and what the Angel Moroni had said, the mission he had called him to. It came to my mind in a moment that this was the message that was behind that cloud for me, and not for me only, but for the whole world, and I considered it of more importance than anything I had ever heard before, for it brought back the ancient order of things and laid a foundation that could be built upon that was permanent; a foundation made by Him that laid the foundation of the earth, even the Almighty God. . . . I read the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and all the writings I could get from the Latter-day Saints. It was the Book of Doctrine and Covenants that confirmed my faith in the work. I knew that no man, nor set of men, could make such a book or would dare try from any wisdom that man possessed. I knew it was the work of God and a revelation from heaven and received it as such. I sought with my whole heart a knowledge of the truth, and obtained a knowledge that never has nor never will leave me."

**NARRATOR:**

What happened next demands a deep and ponderous thought. Remembering that it had been 37 years, since the Leavitt family had established themselves in lower Canada; they had, by now, with the work of their hands, created large and functioning farms, built homes and barns, planted orchards and fields. They were part of their communities, their economic future finally secure. There were no missionaries to preach to them. Night after night they gathered to read the "Mormon" books they had. Jeremiah wrote:

"We had joined the Freewill Baptists and remained with them until we saw the Book of Mormon and Covenants and believed them without any preaching."



Mother Sarah Shannon, her family now numbering more than fifty, embraced this new light, as did most of her amazing posterity. Recently-widowed Lydia stayed behind with her brother, Josiah, who was unmarried. Sarah and William Rowell with their family, stayed on at their farm in Hatley. We know of no record that these three ever saw the family again. But the remaining children, with their families, prepared to leave Canada.

**SARAH STURTEVANT:**

The next thing was to gather with the saints. I was pondering over in my heart how it was possible to fix for such a journey, with what means we could muster. We had a good farm but could not get much for it. But the voice of the Spirit said, "Come out of Babylon, O my people, that ye be not partakers of her plagues." From the time this voice spake so loud and clear and plain to my understanding, I knew that the way would be opened for us to gather with the saints. For the Lord never gives a commandment to man, but he gives him a chance to obey. From this time we set out in earnest and was ready to start with the rest of the company on July 20<sup>th</sup>. [That day, 48 of us in seven wagons turned our faces toward Kirtland, Ohio, and left our homes and farms forever.] Our company was made up of Mother Leavitt and her family.

We had a prosperous journey of 800 miles to Kirtland Ohio. We had no chance to be baptised and join the Church until we got there.... We stayed at Kirtland about a week, (it being so crowded we had to find a place on the eastern edge of town to camp.) We had the privilege of hearing Joseph preach in [the Kirtland Temple]. We went into the upper rooms, saw the Egyptian mummies, the writing that was said to have been written in Abraham's day, and lots more wonders that were explained to us.

But our money was all spent, we could go no further. We had to look for a place that we could sustain ourselves for the present, while the rest of our company went on to Twelve Mile Grove in Illinois.

**NARRATOR:**

While Jeremiah II and Sarah stopped to replenish their dwindling fortunes, Nathaniel made a detour along Lake Michigan, promising to meet up again at a place called White Pigeon. The other five families continued the trek toward Illinois. Illness and misfortune struck Nathaniel. By the time he arrived at White Pigeon he very ill and very soon died. His disheartened second wife returned to Canada, with her own children, leaving three older children in the care of merciful strangers. When Jeremiah and Sarah reached the place, the bedraggled orphans were destitute, and grateful to join Jeremiah's family, which swelled their number 11 children and 2 parents. Frank and Rebecca Chamberlain, with Mother Sarah Shannon, Horace and Hannah Fish, James and Betsy Adams. Weare and Phoebe Leavitt and John and Lucy Leavitt, had long since continued the 500 miles to Twelve Mile Grove, Illinois, arriving three months from the day they began their journey.

There, the families took up free land for farms and began again to clear and plow. But despite the rich soil and the plentiful timber, it was a sickly place, filled with diseases and fevers . By the end of

a year, when Sarah and Jeremiah arrived at Twelve Mile Grove, Mother Sarah Shannon had died, Weare and two of his sons had died, and the members of the company were all in need of comfort and encouragement.

The arrival of the families of Jeremiah and Sarah brought an infusion of faith to the faltering families. Together they struggled to harvest crops and make a living. They battled against illness and sustained each other in devotion to their new religion, though they never, since the week in Kirtland, had lived where there was a branch of the Church.

The gathering to Nauvoo had begun in earnest. The saints in Missouri, driven from their homes by mobs of persecutors, were assembling in this new city on the banks of the Mississippi. Converts from the eastern states were flocking in and chartered ships were bringing hundreds of newly joined saints from England to Nauvoo.

#### **SARAH STURTEVANT:**

....finally we concluded we would go to Nauvoo, as lots of our friends were going. We had never lived where there was a branch of the Church, but we got together every week and had prayer meetings and the Lord was with us and poured out His spirit upon us. . . We depended upon no leader but the Lord. . . and we had all the gifts and blessings promised in the Gospel, and love and unity prevailed.

But I will go on with my history....We all had to work hard for a living, but with the blessings of God and our exertions we soon began to get a good living. [We got a farm] by the Big Mound, seven miles from the city. . . But oh, the sorrow and trouble that was just at our doors !

**(BEGIN HERE A SOLO VOICE SINGING: *A POOR WAYFARING MAN OF GRIEF*. After a verse or two, let organ continue under reader)**

We knew they had Joseph in prison and had threatened to take his life, but . . . his enemies always did that, and we did not believe they could have power to murder him. . . But with powder and balls they shot him in Carthage Jail.

**Music ends here.**

When the news came, the whole city of Nauvoo was thunderstruck; such mourning and lamentation was seldom ever heard on earth. There was many, myself among them, that would gladly have died if his life could have been spared by doing so. I never had spoken to the man in my life, but I had seen him and heard him preach, and I know that he was a prophet of God, sent here by the Almighty to set up his kingdom, no more to be thrown down...and now how was that great and important work to be accomplished ?

**DUDLEY LEAVITT:**

My name is Dudley Leavitt.<sup>7</sup> I was fourteen years old when Joseph and Hyrum were murdered. Our family went into Nauvoo, after dark that night. We were there when their bodies were brought into the city. Our family all stood quietly in front of the house of Uncle Horace Fish, as the wagons passed by. There was a deep and sorrowful silence. When morning came, we went to the Mansion House and visited the room where their bodies lay. Hundreds came. It was a time of awful solemnity.

Our hearts were wrung with the most profound anguish. I could never erase the memory from my mind.

As I stood before their bodies and looked upon the calm majesty of their faces, I knew of a surety that here was a prophet of the living God..

The mobs believed that the death of the prophet would bring an end to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Saints. The “Mormons” would now be no more, they believed. For a few days it was quiet, but we felt like sheep without a shepherd. Elder Parley P. Pratt came back to Nauvoo and he us that we should pursue our daily duties and wait for the Twelve to return. We were to continue the work on the Temple. Though our hearts were heavy, the people labored with passion to complete the House of The Lord.

One by one, over the next five weeks the Twelve began to return. On August 8<sup>th</sup>, when they were all home in Nauvoo, we came together. It was to be decided who would lead the Church. I sat near the back with my friends and my cousins, and listened to the Brethren speak. Brother Brigham Young began to speak. He told us that we could not fill the office of prophet, seer and revelator. God must do this.

Suddenly, instead of Brother Brigham, it was the Prophet Joseph speaking !

It looked and seemed as if it were Joseph! Many saw the same thing. It was only a few moments, but when it had passed, we knew that the mantle had fallen upon Brother Brigham. There was now a new prophet !

**NARRATOR:**

With new leadership came new direction and hope for the saints. There also came renewed and intensified persecution. Marauding mobs roamed the area, burning and looting. . From their higher-ground farm at The Mound, the Leavitt families could see the fires by night, of barns and homes burning. Guards were posted in every direction, day and night. The 1845 legislature of Nauvoo, revoked the city charter, to deliberately deprive the saints of any right to legal protection

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<sup>7</sup> The words spoken by Dudley are taken from accounts of Sarah S., Sallie Adams, Juanita Brooks and Bill Leavitt. Dudley did actually experience all these things, and though he did not write, he recounted them verbally to the end of his life.

of government. They renamed their city The City of Joseph and continued the work, building the temple to their God.

In the fall and winter of 1845 they concentrated their efforts on finishing the interior rooms of the Temple. They met for a General Conference in the Temple in October and Elder Parley P. Pratt spoke words intended to encourage the saints, in the light of their growing understanding that they would soon be driven from this place. It had begun to be very plain that despite their unyielding effort to complete the Temple, they would not long enjoy the sacred fruit of their great sacrifice. Elder Pratt told them:

**PARLEY P. PRATT:**

“...The people of God always were intended to make sacrifices...and if we are required to make sacrifices...this [temple] will stand as something worthy of the people of God ...a monument to our industry and virtue... [But] the Lord has another purpose to bring about and fulfill. We know that the great work of God must all the while be on the increase and grow greater...the people must enlarge in numbers and extend their borders; they cannot always live in one city, nor in one county; they cannot always wear the yoke...The Lord designs to lead us to a wider field of action, where there will be room for the saints to grow and increase, and where there will be no one to say we crowd them, and where we can enjoy the pure principles of liberty and equal rights.

One small nursery may produce many thousands of fruit trees, while they are small. But as they expand towards maturity, they must needs be transplanted, in order to have room to grow and produce the natural fruit...In short this people are fast approaching that point which the ancient prophets have long since pointed out as the destiny of the saints in the last day.”

**NARRATOR:**

The mobbing and political persecutions intensified. The saints began to build wagons. It became clear they would have to leave, if they were to save their lives.

On December 10, 1845, while guards stood watch, the saints began the first session in the newly dedicated Nauvoo Temple. Around the clock, in the following weeks, the sacred work of sealing families to each other and to God proceeded. Every family and every individual, eager to make their solemn covenants, were filled with anxiety that they not be driven from the place before they had received their promised blessings. William, Lydia and Sallie Snow came on January 11, along with James and Betsy Adams. Hannah and Horace Fish came on January 21, Sarah and Jeremiah, on February 2.

On February 4, 1846, with the angry threats of mobs, ringing in their ears, they hurriedly loaded their wagons. The Leavitt family, with thousands of their fellow saints, turned their faces westward, toward tribulations and trials, in search of new life !

People flocked to Nauvoo from all parts of the country, eager to take advantage of the forced expulsion of the people who had built Nauvoo the Beautiful. They came from everywhere to lay

claim upon the farms and homes of the Saints, for next to nothing. Horace and Hannah were driven from their home, and allowed no time to sell it. Jeremiah and Sarah received a pair of wild steers for their farm and an old bed quilt for the forty thousand bricks that stood ready to build their house.

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, shortly after the saints had vacated the temple, lightning struck the tower. By the next day the sacred edifice, was occupied by a marauding mob, who desecrated the holy place with profane oaths and revelry, while they systematically defaced and defiled the beauty.<sup>8</sup> While the saints, strengthened by the promises received there, made their tortuous way across the Mississippi.

#### **LYDIA LEAVITT SNOW:**

My name is Lydia Leavitt Snow. We were driven from our homes in the worst of winter weather and forced to make a camp on the banks of the Mississippi River. There were cold winds that night and heavy, driving snow. Our only shelter was the wagon box. Though I held little Levi William close to me, and covered him the best I could, he could not survive the exposure and the cold of the night. He was only six months old, and beautiful. We made a crude coffin and buried my baby, beside the grave of Grandfather Snow, on the West bank of the river".<sup>9</sup> We left them there. We never came back.

#### **NARRATOR:**

The mobs would not wait for the saints to prepare, and they fled with few provisions and scanty clothing; ill-equipped to face the intense cold. Soon the number of exiles had grown to more than five thousand, shivering behind the meager shelter of wagon covers and tents, huddled in the winter-stripped groves.<sup>10</sup>

For two weeks the Leavitt waited there, until their livestock could be ferried across; then they embarked on their arduous trek <sup>11</sup> It was early March of 1846. Through boggy sloughs, through mud and mire, they walked beside their oxen, inexorably westward, until Nauvoo was 150 miles behind them. They came at last to the prairie place called Mount Pisgah.

Their provisions and their money gone, the company paused here to plow and plant and repair their wagons, in preparation for the westward journey. Jeremiah determined that he would return to Bonaparte, Iowa, to earn some money and buy provisions so that they could go a little further. His parting from Sarah was filled with tender admonition and stirring premonition. When two weeks had passed, Sarah became very ill, and one by one the whole company fell ill, until 300 had died from the mysterious malady. The children watched over their mother, and all of them watched and waited for the return of their father.

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<sup>8</sup>From details witnessed by Col Kane, recorded in BH Roberts Comprehensive History of the Church. Vol 3, Chapter 70, pp 19-22.

<sup>9</sup> From the Journal of William Snow, Lydia's husband.

<sup>10</sup> William E. Berrett

<sup>11</sup> By this time it is early March, 1846

**SARAH STURTEVANT:**

With the greatest anxiety we watched day and night for Jeremiah to return...until just before daylight [one awful morning,] there came a man with a letter containing the news of his death. It would be impossible for anyone to imagine my feelings...It had never entered my heart that he could die. When the news came that he was dead, my feelings were too intense to weep. My situation rushed upon my mind with such force that all I could do was to cry to the Lord to sustain me under such an untold trial.

**Solo Baritone begins to sing *Come Let Us Anew*, softly, as Sarah continues.**

My husband died the 4<sup>th</sup> of August, 1846 at Bonaparte, Iowa....he sang Come, let us anew, our journey pursue, Roll round with year and never stand still, till the Master appears. He sang that hymn as long as he had strength. . . He died without a struggle. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors and their works do follow them.

**Solo continues to end, or at end of first verse, choir could finish it.****NARRATOR:**

The clan, separated by circumstance, now made their way westward with varying degrees of difficulty. Horace and Hannah Fish, were stranded with their family, on the west bank of the Mississippi, still hoping to sell their house for enough to buy a team to pull their wagon. James and Betsey Adams and William and Lydia Snow had proceeded to Council Bluffs, where illness and finally death took both Betsey and Lydia, before they could begin the trek over the Rocky Mountains. Jeremiah III and sixteen year old Dudley buried their father at Bonaparte, then drove his team back to Pisgah where with Lemuel and Weir they made ready to carry their ailing mother and the younger children onward to the next encampment.

At Council Bluffs, Sarah's sons built a makeshift shelter out of hay, until they could make her better quarters. Since they could have no fire in a hay camp, they suffered terribly from cold. Hundreds died from scurvy and other ailments. Some perished from starvation. At times there were not enough who were well to bury their dead.

Those who survived the plagues of sickness and cold were destitute of clothing and provisions. Especially impoverished, Wear's widow, Phoebe Cowles Leavitt, with their three little children, went on ahead, in the care of merciful relatives, arriving in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake, in October 1847. The other families remained at Council Point for the next three years, little by little accumulating the things they would need for the last lap of their journey. Finally, by spring of 1850 most of the Leavitt related families, were ready to move onward toward Zion.

**HANNAH LEAVITT FISH:**

I am Hannah Fish, the youngest of father Jeremiah and Mother Sarah Shannon's children. I was first to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Sometimes I wondered if my parents were watching from

the heavens, as we struggled to endure all that was required of us. If they were watching they knew that those of us who lived, never faltered in our faith.

On May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1850, we left Council Point for the mountain valley of the Great Salt Lake.<sup>12</sup> For a few days our progress was quite slow. Nearly all the cattle were wild and unbroken and it required time and patience to get them in place. As the company stretched out across the broad prairie, we must have presented a picturesque appearance. Barefooted children here and there, wending their way along the line of march. Women with sunbonnets ...walked... through the hot dust and over the parched plains. Men with their long whips, strode beside the toiling oxen, as they dragged their heavy loads toward the setting sun. A variety of characters brought up the rear, with the loose stock, as varied as their drivers. All were hastening west, as fast as they could, over the boundless prairies.

**NARRATOR:**

Over the endless plains, and through the mountain passes, they made their weary way, day after difficult day. Miraculously, the company escaped the plagues of cholera that decimated other trains. During their three-month trek, they had one death and one birth, so they arrived with the same number that began. For the children, the journey was filled with endless adventure, but it was also seemed endlessly long. Nine year old Priscilla, the youngest child of Jeremiah and Sarah Sturtevant Leavitt, remembers the last day of August, 1850, the day they arrived in the valley of the Great Salt Lake.<sup>13</sup>

**PRISCILLA LEAVITT:**

It was a bright and clear morning. Excitement filled the whole camp.. Today we would be in Zion! Three long months we had been on the road. We left on the third of June, and now it was the last day of August.

At first, the valley below was covered with mist, but as we watched, it melted in the sunlight. There lay the glistening lake. We could see brown squares of freshly plowed earth, and green and yellow fields. We could see city squares, etched in black and green. Real houses dotted the landscape, with gardens and young cottonwood trees for borders.

Mother wiped her eyes and moved her lips in a prayer of thanksgiving. Tears streamed down her face. Mary and some other girls stood sober and quiet. It was Dudley's birthday, and he stood quiet too, alongside Tom.

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<sup>12</sup> This account, in the voice of Hannah, is excerpted from the extensive journals of her son, Joseph Fish. The journals are a treasure and were published in a book The Life and Times of Joseph Fish. Edited by John H. Krenkel. Interstate Publishers, Danville Illinois, 1970. Library of Congress 70-110886.

<sup>13</sup> The arrival account, here in the voice of Priscilla, is adapted from On The Ragged Edge, Juanita Brooks, 1973 p.33. And in Dudley Leavitt, Pioneer to Southern Utah, Juanita Brooks, 1942, pp 18-19.

But Betsy and I climbed on the wagon wheel, to get a better view. We waved our bonnets and shouted, "Hurrah for Zion! Hurrah for Zion!"

We were home at last; no more drivings or burnings or mobbings. No more trouble. Now we could settle down and make a home and be happy, and free from fear of any enemies.

**NARRATOR:**

The journey had taken them more than thirteen years. They must have felt like the children of Israel, about to enter the promised land. But their final settling down did not come immediately. Each time they believed they were settled, with a cabin built, and a farm established, another call from the prophet would come, to uproot again and aid in building up some other part of the expanding colony.

Their prophet might have said to them, as the Lord had said to Joshua: **“Be strong and of good courage, for unto this people I will divide this land for an inheritance .”**<sup>14</sup>

They were strong and of good courage. They simply girded up their loins, strengthened by their faith in God, they began again to build with their own hands, dwellings in the desert, **that had become the land of their inheritance.** By the time they had, really settled down, Leavitt families had helped to pioneer almost every corner of the western territory, until their family ties stretched from Canada to California, further into Mexico, and all places in between.

**CHOIR BEGINS TO SING VERY SOFTLY, *COME COME YE SAINTS.* As narrator finishes, the choir sings one more verse and then director brings in congregation.**

...helping to fulfill the purposes of God, wherever they were placed.

Today, we rejoice with all our hearts, as our gathering becomes, in the deepest sense, a re-union, with the other descendants of John Levett, Israel, and Nehemiah, of Samuel and Josiah, indeed, all the branches of the main tree.

Let us pray that we will be ever aware of the obligations that attend such heritage, and mindful of the ways we can honor noble forebears, in the collective conduct of our lives.

Close

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<sup>14</sup>Joshua 1:6