

Tribute to
**John Leavitt, his daughter Cinderilla, and
grandsons Horace Brown and Barney Alfred Brown**
by
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This has been a particularly difficult tribute for me to prepare for two reasons. First, our history is so different from yours. While you were struggling to get to Utah we were settling in Michigan. Our family was the last to join the church, and the last to go to Utah. Until recently I thought that my great, great grandfather was the last of the last to get to Utah. When our family did travel to Utah, we traveled in well-prepared wagons with teams of horses. They were able to help and assist others less-fortunate companies along the way. The contrasts between our experiences and yours are jarring.

The second thing that has made this a difficult task is the lack of primary records and very few secondary. My walking buddy is a lawyer and we have been talking of late how with the same facts you can create so many different explanations. I don't know what was in the heart of John and his family when they left Canada. I just don't know. I can make guess, but I don't really know. So what I will be doing often in this tribute is asking you questions—What do you think they may have been thinking or feeling?

Now I have been doing some wondering about how the different family member in Canada heard of the gospel and who was baptized when. Hazen Aldrich writes to Oliver Cowdery in a letter published in *The Messenger and Advocate*, November 1836, about his missionary success in the Hatley area, reporting 11 baptisms. I took what information I have and looked at where the last births had happened in the different families just prior to when the missionaries came to their area of Canada. My data shows that those families who had family members baptized while in Canada--Wiere's, Betsey's, Rebecca's and Hannah's--those families all had their most recent baby born in Hatley, while those families who had no one baptized in Canada--Nathaniel's, John's, and Jeremiah's--had their most recently baby born in Compton. Perhaps those living 15 miles away from Hatley in Compton had less experience with the missionaries.¹ What impact did this situation have on John and his family?

I do not know what was in John's and Lucy's heart when, joining with John's siblings and their families, they left Canada with their seven children, ages 14 years to 6 month (Josiah, Lucinda, Cinderilla, Orilla, Lyman, John Quincy, and Sarah). Once they arrived in the Kirtland area, they, like Jeremiah II, stayed in the area while the rest of the family moved on. Unlike Jeremiah and his family though, they did not choose baptism at that time. Also, unlike Jeremiah who moved on within a year, they stayed in the area for other 8 years.

Let's take a look at what John's family would be seeing and experiencing in the Kirtland area. When they arrived, the Saints in Missouri had already be driven from Jackson County,

¹ Hazen Aldrich left those converts in the care of a missionary named Winslow Farr. Winslow Farr is the first cousin to William Snow, who later married three Leavitt cousins: Betsey Adams and Lydia Leavitt, who both died at Council Bluffs, and Roxanna Leavitt. Winslow Farr prepared and left for Kirtland in the Spring of 1837, a few months before the Leavitt's left also.

Missouri. The year previous to the Leavitts' arrival in Kirtland, the Saints in Missouri had been asked to leave Clay County, Missouri. What impact did such news have on budding testimonies?

When the Leavitts arrived in Kirtland, the prophet was in hiding from enemies of the Church, and soon from enemies within. Joseph Fielding wrote of what he found in Kirtland when he arrived from Canada about the same time as the Leavitts. "On my arrival at Kirtland I was much cast down and troubled. I found the Saints were far from being all righteous. There was great contention among them."² A month after the Leavitt arrival, a conference is held where one member of the First Presidency, three Apostles and one Presidents of the Seventies are removed from their positions by the vote of the members.³ The Kirtland Safety Society fails during this year of 1837, part of a nation-wide time economic crises. Members within begin calling Joseph Smith fallen prophet. By January 1838, Joseph Smith flees Kirtland for safety in Far West, Missouri. Hazen Aldrich, the missionary that had taught the Leavitts' in Canada becomes one of the active apostates. How do you view the Church in the midst of all this turmoil if you had a budding testimony? Especially when your best advocate for the church, your brother Jeremiah, moves on to Illinois to join the rest of the family.

For some reason, John and family remain in the Kirtland area. They are located first in Chardon, Ohio, about 10 miles outside of Kirtland. Here Phoebe is born a year and a half after arriving in the Kirtland area. Two years later they are in Burton, Ohio, about 8 miles further south, probably farming. This is where John's family is living while your families are in Nauvoo. Three things of importance happen here at Burton.

First, a Cinderella story is stopped short. In 1841, daughter Cinderilla dies at age 14, just as she is arriving at young womanhood. Now I am accustomed to hearing of the deaths of babies, and the elderly. But what kills a young woman of 14? And what sorrows would accompany a death of daughter dying just at the time of blossoming young womanhood? We can only guess at these answers.

Second important event at Burton: Flavilla is born. Later, when Flavilla is grown and living in Utah, she will marry her cousin John Adams, give birth to twins, and die shortly after. Her cousin Marietta Chamberlain will then marry widowed John and raise Flavilla's surviving twin to adulthood.

The third important event is being neighbors to the Brown family. For in the Brown family are two impressive young men: Benjamin Franklin Brown and his brother Philander. What wonderful names for some wonderful people. We will hear more of them later.

In 1845, there occurs the Great Drought in Ohio. Meadows are as dusty as highways. Where do you go to provide for your family? Do you join the rest of your family Nauvoo? Let's see. A year ago was when the Prophet Joseph was killed. Mob violence in the Nauvoo area is increasing all the time. Is that where you want your family? After hearing what happened to the Saints in Missouri at Independence and Far West? But where else is there to go?

Ah, your nephew Nathaniel, Jr. has visited you. From him you have heard first hand of the green, productive lands of Michigan. Maybe you go near to where your brother Nathaniel is buried, and lay claim to that good land? Maybe that's a wiser choice if you care for the safety or your family?

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³ Orson F. Whitney, History of Utah, Vol, 1, p. 138, printed from the Pioneer Heritage Library in the LDS Family History Suite, copyrighted 1996 Infobases, Inc. Provo, Utah.

So John and Lucy relocate in Cambria, Hillsdale County, Michigan. They lay claim to 80 acres and work to pay it off. They do maple sugaring and road construction. They work on the Southern Michigan railroad. They work hard.

Two years after arriving in Cambria, in 1847, the year some of you are entering the Salt Lake Valley, Lucy gives birth to her last child—Thomas, who dies 5 months later. He is buried near the family home. Perhaps some of you know of the sorrows of burying a baby. I can only guess.

But the next year brings some joyful events. Remember those fine, good-looking Brown boys who were neighbors in Ohio. Well, they are also now living in Michigan. On Oct 12, 1848, Lucinda marries Benjamin Franklin Brown, and the next day Orilla married Philander Brown.

Nine months later, the joy is increased when the first grandchild is born—a boy, named Horace Brown. What excitement must have attended the birth. But the joy shortly turns to sorrow, for two weeks later, little Horace dies. This is a sadness that will only intensify over the years, for this will be the only birth of a child that Orilla will have. Fourteen years later, still childless, she will encourage her husband Philander to take a second wife. He will have eleven children within that marriage.

In January of 1852, a momentous event occurs. John received full title for his land. It is now all owned by him. How sad that in one month's time John dies. And a year later, in 1853, Lucinda's second child, Barney Alfred dies at about a year of age.

This would be a unsatisfying story if we stopped here, with these deaths ending the tale. So let's go on to complete this story. Perhaps these deaths, in their tragedy, helped to create hearts more ready for the gospel message. For a year later in 1854, a history about John Quincy reports that for the first time they "heard the gospel of Jesus Christ as preached by Mormon Elders", and "they all believed". Readied hearts and the gospel message preached in power finally met at the same time, and John's family began their efforts to join the Saints.

Apparently, Lucy and her daughters left in 1854 for Winter Quarters, Lucy dying on the way in 1856. By 1860 all were gathered at Winter Quarters to go west except daughter Sarah, who had married her Chamberlain cousin John Adams Chamberlain and remained in Illinois, and Lyman, who for some reason elected to remain behind in Michigan.

The baptisms started in 1856 with Orilla's; John Quincy was baptized in 1856; Lucinda in 1858. On the way to Utah Phoebe was baptized in 1860, and Josiah was baptized a year after arriving in Utah. They chose to locate in Ogden area, where cousin Nathaniel, Jr. was living.

Lyman came to Utah 3 years later than the rest. According to his son James Elbert, Lyman was headed for the California gold field, but stopping to visit family on the way. Family convinced him to stay and in a year's time he was baptized. And for some reason John's daughter Sarah was in Utah in 1867, and while there was baptized in Centerville, Utah, before returning it Illinois. One hundred percent of John's children joined the Church. So this has gotten to be a glad story.

It is said that your success in life is measured by what you accomplish in the home and by how your children turn out. The history about John Quincy contains this statement: "They were definitely an enterprising family and accomplishing almost anything they set out to accomplish." Let's take a look at what John's boys accomplished once they got to Utah.

Between his three sons, you will find they⁴: helped build the first road up Ogden canyon(4), built bridges over Ogden river(4), built roads(6), constructed homes and barns(6), ran

⁴ (4) refers to Josiah Leavitt, (5) to Lyman Leavitt, and (6) to John Quincy Leavitt.

a molasses mill(5) and threshing machine(5), brought other immigrants to Utah(6), taught school(6), ran a store(6), served as color-bearers in the militia(5,6) and as a lieutenant in the Territorial Militia(6), built the railroad between Ogden and Salt Lake(6), served as the Director of the Utah Central Railroad(6) and a Vice-president of Utah Live Stock Company(6).

Civilly, we find among the three brothers: an organizer of Ogden city government(4) a city councilmen(4), a chief detective(4), a county assessor(6), a county clerk(6), a county recorder(6), a justice of the peace(6), constable(6) and a sheriff(5). In the church: a missionary(5), two bishops(4,5), a president of his Quorum of Seventies(6) and of his Quorum of High Priests(6)⁵.

Between the three of them they settled in over 15 places. Four of John's children responded to the call to settle in the Muddy Mission, located where you now find Lake Mead in Nevada. You will find violinists(5,6), a poet(5) and story teller(5).

John's children's certainly contributed in many, many ways to the building up of the West, and served faithfully in the Church they embraced after his death. Certainly such accomplishments are reflections on the home life and upbringing done by their parents. It is from their parents they would learn attitudes about faith in God and service to mankind. What a great tribute their lives are to their parents, John Leavitt and Lucy Rowell. How very successful John and Lucy were in preparing their children for both the Gospel of Jesus Christ and for lives of service to their fellow men. I am very grateful to come from such a wonderful heritage.