

Sanctuary on the Mississippi!

St. Louis as a Way Station for Mormon Emigration



BY THOMAS L. FARMER AND FRED E. WOODS



A Mormon artist, Frederick Piercy, chronicled his journey to Utah in beautiful drawings and sketches. Piercy made this view of St. Louis in 1853 on his way to Utah. (Image: History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints)

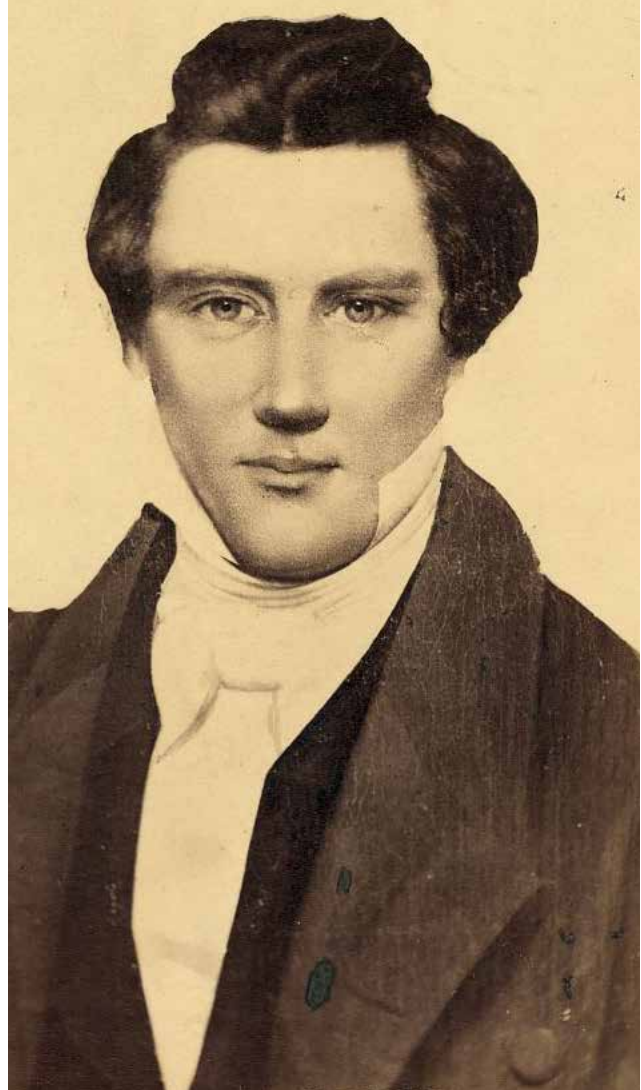
When people study Mormon interactions with the State of Missouri, they often encounter only negative information—the expulsion of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) from the Independence area and Missouri governor Lilburn Boggs’ 1838 “extermination” order that forced thousands of Mormons to flee from northwest Missouri to Illinois for safety. But there is another aspect of the story, one that is documented on a commemorative marker on the side of the Missouri Athletic Club in downtown St. Louis.¹ It is a story that includes a welcoming attitude toward Mormon emigrants and a safe haven for the thousands who used St. Louis as a way station on the trail to Utah. A few of the Mormon emigrant families who resided in nineteenth-century St. Louis included the Udalls, Romneys, Marriotts, and others whose descendants later played significant roles in the history of the United States.

St. Louis was first introduced to Mormons in 1831 when church leaders passed through the city on their way to Jackson County in western Missouri. Upon arrival, church founder and president Joseph Smith, Jr., received a revelation that Independence, Missouri, was to be the center place of Zion, a Latter-day Saint gathering place, a “New Jerusalem.” Members of the church from the eastern states migrated west to populate the new community.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was a brand-new faith at the time. Smith organized the church on April 6, 1830, in upstate New York. It was based on a vision Smith had of God the Father and his son, Jesus Christ. Smith reported that an angel named Moroni later appeared to him on numerous occasions, eventually leading Smith to a place near Palmyra, New York, called the Hill Cumorah. There, Smith said he



Commemorative marker on the side of the Missouri Athletic Club in downtown St. Louis, placed by Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville historian and Mormon Trail scholar Stanley B. Kimball in 1975. (Image: National Park Service, Gateway Arch National Park)



Joseph Smith, Jr., prophet and organizer of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (Image: National Park Service, Gateway Arch National Park)

unearthed a set of golden plates that he later translated into what became known as the *Book of Mormon*, which he considered to be a companion scripture to the Bible. Smith was a charismatic figure, and the church grew and flourished, acquiring many converts, who in turn were encouraged to become missionaries.

The common Missourians felt threatened by the rise of the church and its transplantation to their state, however. Not only were most Mormons from the northeastern U.S. and opposed to slavery, but also they had a different form of worship, tended to be clannish, and represented a formidable voting bloc. In 1833, the local population forced the Mormons out of Jackson County by mob action. The Mormon refugees eventually settled in the new counties of

Caldwell and Davies, designated for their use by the Missouri legislature in December 1836. After a short truce, friction between the old-time Missourians and



C.C.A. Cristensen, *Saints Driven from Jackson County, Missouri, 1833*, part of the Mormon Panarama, 1878. (Image, Brigham Young University Museum of Art)

Mormons heated up once more, culminating with the so-called Missouri Mormon war. Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs called out the state militia and issued an extermination order on October 27, 1838, declaring: “The Mormons must be treated as enemies and *must be exterminated* or driven from the state, if necessary for the public good.”²

The St. Louis community was opposed to this action and defended the Mormons in the press in 1838. During this period of persecution, church members sought employment and protection in St. Louis. Moreover, John Corrill, a member of the Missouri legislature, brought a petition to state officials from the Saints requesting security for the Mormons. Henry S. Geyer of St. Louis, one of the few representatives who spoke in favor of the Saints, “staunchly defended the Mormons and claimed he would leave the state if the exterminating order issued by Governor Boggs was carried out. After much controversy and angry disputation in the Legislative Hall at Jefferson City, Missouri, only a minority spoke in favor of the Saints, but among these were all the members from St. Louis.”³

During the winter of 1838–1839 Saints driven from western Missouri were forced to cross the Mississippi, congregating in Quincy, Illinois. In a meeting on March 9, 1839, it was decided “that all the Saints in St. Louis, or such of them as the committee may think proper, be called upon to assist them.”⁴ Not only did the St. Louis members offer support, but the St. Louis press also expressed sympathy for the suffering emigrants. Although Governor Boggs’ order was enforced in northwest Missouri, no Latter-day Saints were expelled from St. Louis, and St. Louis citizens held several fundraising

meetings to aid the Mormon exiles in their dire condition.⁵

To provide a more permanent haven for the exiles, a failed speculative community, Commerce, Illinois, was purchased and renamed Nauvoo, meaning “beautiful” in Hebrew. Within seven short years of its founding, Nauvoo topped Chicago in population as it grew to be the largest city in Illinois.⁶ Mormon missionaries were successful in the British



Daguerreotype of the Mormon Temple in Nauvoo, Illinois, c. 1846, taken after the Mormon exodus. (Image: History Library, *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*)

Isles, and by 1840 a massive immigration of British converts began arriving in Nauvoo by way of ships sailing from Liverpool to New Orleans, and then by steamboat up the Mississippi. These converts often stopped briefly in St. Louis. The Latter-day Saints periodical *Times and Seasons*, published at Nauvoo, stated of St. Louisans: “We have often heard reflections cast upon St. Louis . . . many of our best brethren have gone there, according to counsel, to obtain employment. They have in all times of trouble been ready to stand by us, and to lend a helping hand, both personal and pecuniary.”⁷

A St. Louis branch⁸ of the church was organized to minister to a growing St. Louis Mormon population of about 400.⁹ Meanwhile, persecution of church members continued in Illinois as it had in northwestern Missouri. Smith and his brother Hyrum were arrested and charged with the destruction of the Nauvoo anti-Mormon newspaper called *The Expositor*. On June 27, 1844, they were killed at the Carthage, Illinois, jail while being held with a guarantee of safety from Illinois governor Thomas

Ford.¹⁰ After Joseph Smith's death, Brigham Young, president of the council of twelve apostles, was sustained as the church's new leader in August 1844.

Residents of Illinois who thought the Mormon problem was solved with the death of Smith were surprised when the church continued to grow. Tensions grew, and the Mormon leadership decided that the church would move west, outside the then boundaries of the United States to northern Mexico—an area that is now the State of Utah. The Mormons planned on abandoning their city in the spring of 1846, but after hearing rumors



Brigham Young, key architect of the western migration of the Latter-day Saints in the mid-19th century. (Image: *Missouri History Museum*)

that the federal army was headed to Nauvoo to stop a rumored counterfeiting operation, the city's evacuation began in earnest on February 4, 1846. This event was the beginning of the Mormon exodus/expulsion. By this time Nauvoo had a population of approximately 12,000. By the fall of 1846, Nauvoo was a ghost town, with approximately 5,500 Mormons scattered across the Iowa territory, 4,000 in Winter Quarters, Nebraska (just north of present-day Omaha), and approximately 1,700 in St. Louis.

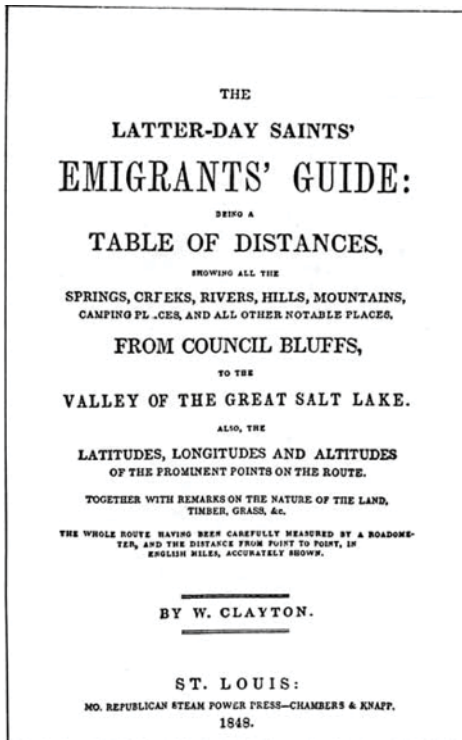
The "Saint Louis Branch Historical Record" for 1846–1847 offers the best account of the events in St. Louis during the Nauvoo exodus. On May 10, 1846, Joseph A. Stratton took charge of the St. Louis branch of the church.¹¹ He rented the Mechanics Institute where hundreds of Saints assembled. Church member James Palmer recalled: "On the sabbaths we assembled in public worship, and partook of our sacraments, while our numbers were continually increasing as of our Scattered poor came along, from time to time, till at length we could boast of a branch of the church containing 800 members."¹² President

Stratton remarked on the "many families of the Saints [who] were hurrying to St. Louis for refuge from the storm of persecution raging in and around Nauvoo and who present a deplorable appearance, having had to flee with their lives and sacrificing all their comfort and throwing themselves on the mercy and compassion of a Benevolent Public. . . ." ¹³

St. Louis now emerged as city of refuge on the trail to Utah, a haven where Mormons could practice their religion without persecution. On April 5, 1847, a "pioneer company" of 143 men, three women, and two children, led by Brigham Young, set out for the West. Young decided against using the Oregon Trail, instead breaking a new road on the north side of the Platte River. By July 24, 1847, Young had led the advance company into the valley of the Great Salt Lake and decided that this was the place to begin his Mormon colony in the West. In 1848 Young led 1,200 more emigrants west, and by 1852 Mormon colonies had spread in a 300-mile radius from the Great Salt Lake, including more than 20,000 inhabitants. A planned Mormon state, called "Deseret," was to include parts or all of modern-day Utah, Idaho, Arizona, Nevada, and California.

The Mormon colonies grew so quickly because they were supplemented by thousands of converts from Europe. In 1849, the Perpetual Emigrating Fund was established to help these often-impoorished people on their journey.¹⁴ Agents secured passage on ships for Mormon emigrants organized in companies. Heading the companies were missionaries who had lived in Utah and already traveled the Mormon Trail at least once in each direction. A Mormon emigration agent met the inbound European vessels in New Orleans and then arranged for a secure passage to St. Louis. Finally, emigration companies were organized in St. Louis to travel the Missouri River to the overland trail head.

Church leaders chose St. Louis as the most logical "safety valve" city for emigrants from Europe. Emigrants who ran out of funds (and there were thousands) could easily obtain work in growing St. Louis until they could earn the money necessary to buy the wagons and other outfitting supplies needed for the journey west to Utah. For many years after the initial Mormon trek, the exodus of the Saints evolved into a highly organized mass migration with St. Louis as one of its most crucial hubs. The Mormon Trail passed through St. Louis and by steamboat up the Missouri River to various overland trail heads, which shifted from year to year. This altered route was influenced after the 1852 *Saluda* steamboat disaster at Lexington, Missouri, which claimed the lives of about two dozen Saints and



Above—Title page of *The Latter-day Saints' Emigrants' Guide*, printed in St. Louis, 1848. (Image: History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

injured others.¹⁵ In later years the trail head changed to Westport (1854) and Atchison (1855), but St. Louis remained a vital part of the Mormon journey to Utah until the threat of yellow fever and cholera along the Mississippi forced another change. Due to direction from Brigham Young, by 1856 the Saints began to use the eastern ports of Boston, Philadelphia, or New York,¹⁶ from which they rode the rails to Iowa City, the newly designated trail head for Mormon handcart and wagon companies. Handcarts were used up until 1860. With the coming of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869 and its proximity to Salt Lake City, transportation by handcart and wagon was eliminated.

During the heyday of the Mormon exodus from 1848–1856, an essential tool in navigating one's way westward was a guidebook, and the Mormons produced one of the very best in St. Louis. William Clayton wrote *The Latter Day Saints' Emigrants' Guide* and had five thousand copies printed by the *Missouri Republican Press* in St. Louis in 1848. The guide was extremely

Below—Map showing the route of the initial Mormon migration from Nauvoo to the Great Salt Lake in 1846–47, and of the emigrants who passed through St. Louis and along the Missouri River between 1846 and 1855. (Image: National Park Service)



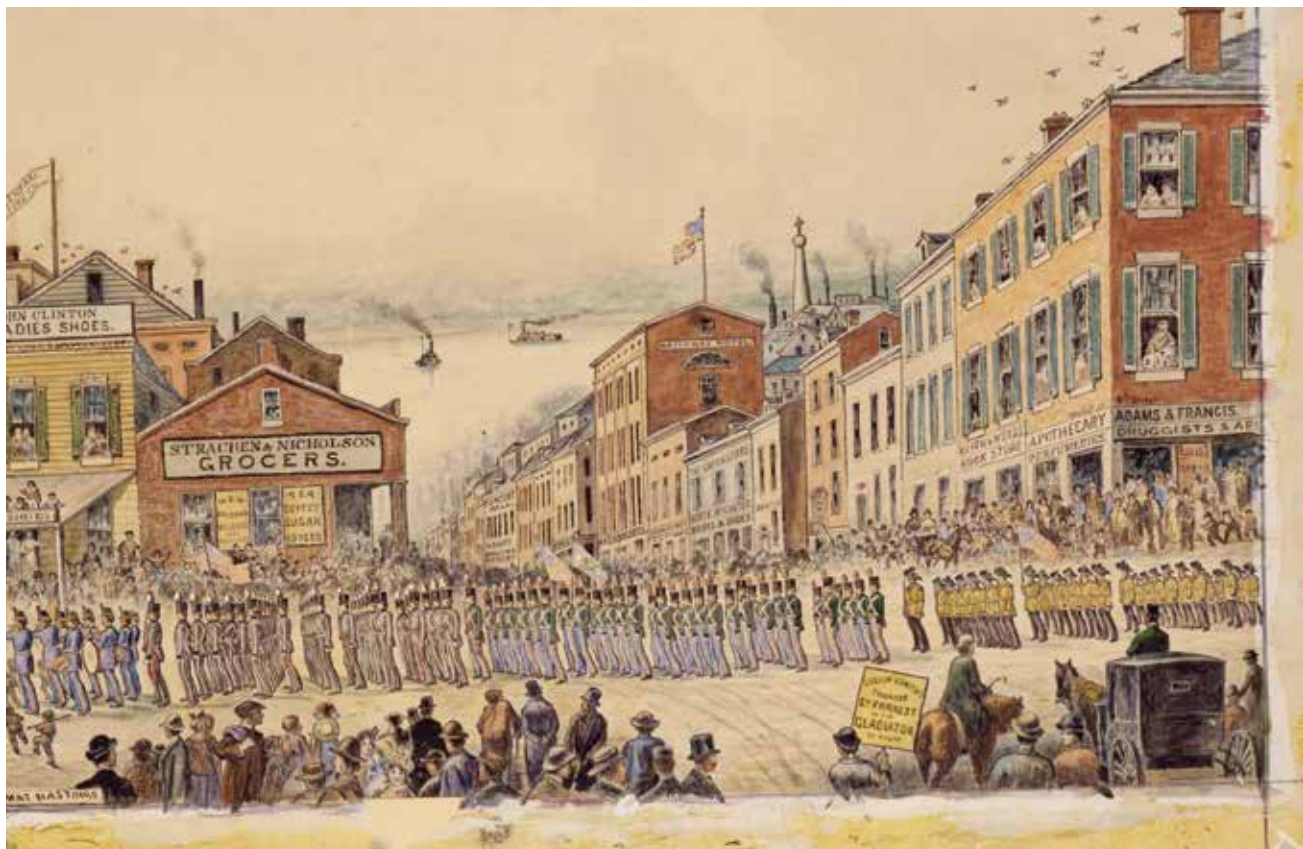
accurate because its distances were charted from actual odometer readings taken during the journey. Guidebooks told the immigrants what supplies they needed to bring in order to survive the months-long journey with few chances to resupply, what types of draft animals to buy, the locations of the best places to camp, and where dangerous places or routes existed. Clayton's guide was so popular that non-Mormon immigrants also began to use it, and other publishers plagiarized it.

Although the 1838 Missouri Mormon extermination order was not repealed until 1976, Mormons felt safe in St. Louis during the mid-nineteenth century. First, they were not planning on permanent residency; second, they were not a threat to the city's political powers; third, they were skilled workers; and finally, the general population was large, and the Mormons were dispersed throughout the metropolis. Approximately 22,000 Mormons passed through St. Louis between 1847 and 1855 on their way to Utah. For some, the stay in the city was only as long as necessary to transfer to another

steamboat heading up river to the Mormon overland trail head on the banks of the Missouri. However, others were forced to remain in St. Louis for months or even years, and a church organization was created to assist with both temporal and spiritual needs. The church procured housing in various sections of the city. Employment was found to enable the emigrants to earn the money they needed to pay for the overland journey to Utah. Local lay leaders were assigned to care for each church member staying in the city. Several meeting halls were rented over the course of a decade, including the Mechanics' Hall (between First and Biddle), the Concert Hall (at 56 Market, on the northern side of the Old Cathedral block), and finally the former Methodist Chapel (at 4th and Washington) in the autumn of 1854.¹⁷

Nathaniel Felt, a wealthy tailor from Salem, Massachusetts, coordinated church operations in St. Louis during the late 1840s. Felt planned to journey West with his family but "was stricken with fever and ague (malaria) on the frozen banks of the Missouri [Mississippi] River and unable to proceed."¹⁸ In his

St. Louis in 1843 by Mat Hastings. The view is from the courtyard of the Old Courthouse near 4th and Market streets, looking down Market to the river. Concert Hall can be seen midway between the National Hotel and the river on Market. Today, the KMOV Building stands where the National Hotel is depicted in the image; the steeple of the Old Cathedral can be seen to the right of the American flag, topped by an orb and a cross. (Image: Missouri History Museum)





This view of St. Louis was made by John Caspar Wild in 1840 from the roof of the Planter's House Hotel at Fourth and Chestnut streets. The building at the center of this cropped image is Concert Hall, where the Mormons met from 1851–1854. (Image: Missouri History Museum)

weakened condition, Felt was counseled to postpone his journey and brought his wife and two sons to St. Louis.¹⁹ On March 17, 1847 at a church council meeting at the Lyceum Hall, Felt facilitated the expansion of the St. Louis Branch to become the St. Louis Conference, with six church ecclesiastical units called wards.²⁰ A letter written on July 4, 1847, by John and Ellen Parker to their relative Samuel



The old Methodist Church, at 4th and Washington streets, was rented by the Mormons from November 1854 to June 1857. Erastus Snow lived at this site during this period, and the *St. Louis Luminary* was also printed here, 1854–1855. Today this is the site of the Missouri Athletic Club. (Image: Missouri History Museum)

Richards in Scotland demonstrated the plight of St. Louis Mormons, which Felt hoped to alleviate: “. . . the saints in this place is getting along as well as can be expected some keeps caring for the camp every few weeks and the majority of the saints would be glad to go if the [they] had the means.”²¹



Nathaniel Felt was the church president in St. Louis from 1846–1850. Felt facilitated the expansion of the St. Louis Branch to become the St. Louis Conference, with six church ecclesiastical units called wards. He also tended to the suffering during the cholera epidemic of 1849. (Image: Aaron West)

One of the committee's first steps was to secure lodging for the high volume of British immigrants passing through St. Louis. Minutes from a meeting held on May 3, 1849, indicated that many of the brethren “urged the propriety of procuring some place, as a rendezvous for the saints emigrating from Europe so that the Poor might have some place to put up at until they would be enabled to get Houses.”²²

At the same time, an even greater crisis arose in the form of cholera. One of the worst outbreaks in U.S. history spread through the St. Louis region in the spring of 1849. Causes and cures were unknown, and death was swift. A person could be healthy and eating breakfast in the morning and dead by evening. No one was immune to the ravages of the disease. John Martin, a passing Mormon immigrant, was an eyewitness to the devastating epidemic. Offered a job at the city hospital, he was responsible for transporting cholera victims in need of medical treatment as well as burying those who died. He described his circumstances in this way:

As I had got so far towards the gathering place of the Saints I was very desirous to get the remainder of the way. Yet I accepted the offer to run one of the city hospital vans and stayed until the cholera had died out. The death rate was very great for three months. Three of us were kept

busy running light wagons and we took two loads a day each and four dead bodies on each wagon at a time. As we took only such people known as paupers, this compared with the others filling more respected graves would make the numbers somewhat alarming.²³

In a church district high council meeting held on June 14, 1849, Nathaniel Felt prayed that the cholera epidemic might be arrested among the Saints in St. Louis. President Felt asked the branch presidents of the six wards to provide reports, which indicated the “assistants were faithfully discharging their duty, administering to the sick and comforting the hearts of the saints.”²⁴ President Felt counseled the Saints “to exercise faith in administering to the sick, and to comfort the afflicted &c.”²⁴ Former Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson recorded that during this period, Felt “was constantly called for by the afflicted people, and responded by visiting, administering [*sic*] to and comforting them, scarcely taking time to eat or sleep.”²⁵ Furthermore, a Felt family historian provided this vivid picture:

Every morning the “dead wagon” made its round, accompanied by the awful cry “bring out your dead.” Accompanying these wagons were immunes who would enter, take the corpses, sometimes without any preparation, to the vehicles, and then on to the cemetery where, due to the heavy death toll, the corpses were buried in trenches, hundreds at a time. Occasions like that required all the devotion, strength and love the Conference President possessed. He was called on constantly by the afflicted people. Hour after hour, without stopping sometimes to eat or sleep, President Felt visited the sick, administering to them, comforting them in their pain.²⁶

Notwithstanding his continual contact with this dreaded disease, Felt’s life was spared from the epidemic. By the end of the year, the cholera outbreak finally ceased, though it had taken 4,500 lives in St. Louis out of 63,000 city residents, about seven percent of the population.²⁷

One Mormon emigrant who was affected by the 1849 cholera epidemic was Temperance Westwood. She was born on August 19, 1839, in Worstershire, England, and after she and her family heard Mormon missionaries preach, they were all baptized into the church. The Westwoods sailed from Liverpool, England, to New Orleans and then on to St. Louis. Upon their arrival on April 28, 1849, the cholera epidemic was raging throughout the region. On May

1, 1849, Temperance’s mother, Ann, gave birth to her last child. On May 3 her father died; on May 4, her new infant sister followed; two days later her mother passed away. In the end, all that was left of the Westwood family were seven orphans.

Some of the children were adopted and others found employment. Temperance’s older sister, Mercy, who was sixteen, found work as a cook for the Roswell Field family. In the early summer of 1850, eleven-year-old Temperance went to visit her sister at the Field house on South Broadway, and Mercy mentioned to Mrs. Field that her sister needed a place to stay. Mrs. Field replied, “I want you to stay here and take care of Eugene, who is getting to be a big boy.” (Eugene was nine to ten months old at this time.) With that, Temperance was given complete charge of little Eugene. In 1853, Temperance decided it was time to join the Saints in the West, and she and her brother immigrated to Utah. At about the same time, Eugene’s father, Roswell Field, began working on the Dred Scott case. In 1891, while living in Farmington, Utah, Temperance read the poems of a famous author named Eugene Field who lived in Chicago. She wrote to him and asked if by any chance he was the child she had taken care of in St. Louis, and he replied that he was. Many letters were exchanged between the two until Eugene died on November 4, 1895, at the age of 45.²⁸

Leaving for Salt Lake City from St. Louis after his formal release as the president of the St. Louis Conference, Nathaniel Felt gave his farewell address to the St. Louis church members on April 20, 1850: “He much regretted leaving so many with whom he had been associated for the last three years. Yet he hoped it would not be long before he met them all in the Valley. . . . there are some of the best. Some of the purest here in Saint Louis. Those that would shine in the Kingdom of God.”²⁹

In the spring of 1851, the *Missouri Republican* included an article about the Mormons in St. Louis:

Although we have no Mormon Church in St. Louis, and though these people have no other class or permanent possession or permanent interest in our city, yet their numerical strength here is greater than may be imagined. Our city is the greatest recruiting point for Mormon emigrants from England and the Eastern States, and the former especially, whose funds generally become exhausted by the time they reach it, generally stop here several months, and not infrequently remain among us for a year or two pending a resumption of their journey to Salt Lake. . . .³⁰

In the spring of 1852, William Gibson was appointed as the new St. Louis Conference President and by June 1 established a local Perpetual Emigrating Fund that specifically catered to the members in St. Louis and helped them to move west.³¹

Gibson recorded in his journal some of the duties required by his position:

Fall [1852] I received a letter from SW Richards in Liverpool saying that there would be a large Emigration next spring & he would need from 300 to 500 waggons & he desired me [to] look around & find out where they could be got best & cheapest[.] [T]he waggons before this had mostly come from Cincinnati so I wrote there to find out their prices now & having got that I went around to all the wagon makers in St. Louis & round about it[.] I found that the Cheapest best & most reliable waggons were made by Mr. Espenschied of St. Louis[;] they cost about ten dollars less each wagon than those from Cincinnati & to judge from those we had received from there were much superior wagons[.]³²

By April 1854, Brigham Young and other church leaders in Salt Lake City had designated St. Louis as a location where the “Saints might gather with approbation who were unable to go directly through to Utah.” Young chose Apostle Erastus Snow to journey to St. Louis, organize a stake,³³ preside over the region, and oversee general emigration matters in Iowa and Missouri. Prior to his arrival, Snow formulated plans to establish a Latter-day Saint periodical, which he called the *St. Louis Luminary*.³⁴ After setting up an office in the basement of a chapel at the corner of Washington Avenue and 4th Street, Elder Snow launched his publication on November 22, 1854. In an article appearing in the first issue under the heading “Our Paper,” Snow explained, “The world has been too long stocked with falsehoods, slander[,] misrepresentations about Mormonism and the people of Utah.” Further, “As there is another side to the question: they ask, may not that side be more favorable? We reply, it is, and the LUMINARY will be devoted to the exposition of the favorable side of Mormonism.”³⁵ In addition to his desire that the *Luminary* act as “a channel through which [Latter-day Saint] principles might be made known,” Elder Snow also intended the paper to be used as an emigration guide of sorts for the many scattered Saints, offering news from Salt Lake City, support, and instruction.³⁶

On February 3, 1855, an article entitled “The City of St. Louis: Its Advantages and Disadvantages in Reference to Both Saints and Sinners,” Snow editorialized: “The *St. Louis Luminary* was published from November 22, 1854, to December 15, 1855. It ceased publication due to the death of the newly designated editor, Orson Spencer, in the fall of 1855, when church leaders decided to consolidate the Mormon periodicals being published in New York and Washington, D.C.”³⁷

On November 4, 1854, Elder Snow organized the St. Louis Stake, the sixteenth in the church and one of two stakes outside the boundary of the Utah territory.³⁹ The church site for the stake was at 4th and Washington in the newly remodeled former Methodist Church. Church services in this building were conducted in English, French, German, and Danish. No matter what country the church members were from, St. Louis Saints adopted them into an existing church community. In the same church building was the residence and office for Elder



The Field House, 634 South Broadway, once part of a row of identical Greek Revival townhouses. The house is open today as a historic site commemorating “the children’s poet” Eugene Field, his father Roswell Field, a key attorney for Dred Scott in his famous freedom suit, and the importance of the row house in St. Louis architecture. (Image: Eugene Field House Museum)

Erastus Snow, and in the basement was the printing press for the *St. Louis Luminary*. Elder Snow was the ecclesiastical leader and general emigration agent for Missouri and Iowa. St. Louis Stake presidents included Milos Andrus, who served for only one year before he led an emigrant company of sixty-three wagons to Salt Lake, arriving in the fall of 1855, and James Hart, who led the stake until he and a large number of Mormons left for the Salt Lake Valley on June 11, 1857, due to the pending “Utah War” being discussed in the local press.

In June 1857, with emigrants being diverted to eastern U.S. ports due to cholera, the St. Louis Stake was disbanded. There were still St. Louis Mormon congregations meeting in members’ homes, but the message to those remaining in the city was to emigrate west as soon as possible. Just prior to the start of the Civil War, Mormon apostles were sent from Utah to call any remaining Saints in cities in the midwest and east to flee to the top of the mountains for safety. The few Mormons who remained were those who were too poor to move west or lukewarm in the faith. During the Civil War years, the St. Louis Branch had a membership of about 150 members.

Approximately 22,000 of the 70,000 early Mormon pioneers came west to Utah through St. Louis between 1846 and 1857. Historian Stanley Kimball stated that “throughout the Missouri and Illinois periods of the Church, up to the coming of the railroad to Utah in 1869 and beyond, St. Louis was the most important non-Mormon city in Church history.”⁴⁰ Though largely forgotten, save for the plaque at the Missouri Athletic Club, the remarkable story of the Mormon experience in St. Louis adds another layer to the city’s rich cultural history.



Erastus Snow was assigned to St. Louis by Brigham Young to organize the St. Louis Stake in November 1854. He also founded a newspaper in the city, the *St. Louis Luminary*, to defend the church and to report church news in Utah and the Midwest. (Image: History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)



For a little over a year, from 1854 to 1855, the *St. Louis Luminary* reported the news to the Mormon community in St. Louis. (Image: Missouri History Museum)



One of the most famous images of the Mormon migration was created by C.C.A. Christensen in 1900. It depicts a handcart company crossing a stream. Most Mormons traveled to Utah in covered wagons just like those used by Oregon and California migrants. But between 1856 and 1860 approximately 3,000 Mormons, or about 4.3 percent of the total Mormon migration, pulled handcarts to their destination. Due to lack of church funds for wagons and draft animals, Brigham Young devised a plan to use single-axle handcarts that enabled one or two people to haul up to 500 pounds per cart. This inexpensive option allowed many poor European converts to travel to Utah. (Image: Museum of Church History and Art, *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*)

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The plaque reads as follows: “Site of First Mormon Meeting Place in St. Louis—On this site from 1854 to 1857 stood the building used as the first Mormon Church in the St. Louis area.—Beginning in 1831 and the difficult days of persecution that followed, St. Louis provided an oasis of tolerance and security and was an economic and cultural metropolis offering religious freedom and employment to thousands of local Mormons and convert-immigrants en route to western Missouri, Illinois and later Utah. This marker is erected in appreciation of the continuing kindness St. Louis has extended to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Mormons. Mormon Pioneer Trail Foundation, 1975.” Concerning the meaning of the word “exterminate” in the early nineteenth century, historian Alexander L. Baugh wrote:
- Contrary to popular belief by many Latter-day Saints and even some Mormon historians, the governor’s Extermination Order was not meant to give authorization to the state militia or its citizens to openly kill or eradicate the Latter-day Saint population. Although Boggs did not like the Mormons, he was not a butcher and did not condone the unnecessary taking of human life. In a report issued to the Missouri House of Representatives Boggs himself stated the order and call-up of troops was issued “to prevent the effusion of blood.” Significantly, the first definition of the word *exterminate* as defined in Webster’s 1828 dictionary reads, “to drive from within the limits or borders.” Given this definition, the order should probably be interpreted to read that “the Mormons must be exterminated [*or in other words*] driven from the State . . . for the public peace.” Thus, Governor Boggs was calling for the removal of the Mormons by the militia, not their death sentence.
- See Baugh, ““The Mormons Must Be Treated As Enemies,”” in Susan Easton Black and Andrew C. Skinner, eds., *Joseph: Exploring the Life and Ministry of the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2005), 292–93.
- ² Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1964) 3:175.
- ³ Stanley B. Kimball, “The Saints and St. Louis, 1831–1857: An Oasis of Tolerance and Security,” *Brigham Young University Studies Quarterly* 13 (Spring 1975), 494. In a footnote on this page, Kimball explains that continual coverage of the Latter-day Saints occupied the attention of the St. Louis press for the next decade, noting that he had collected 690 articles “for the period of 1839–48 alone.”
- ⁴ *Journal History*, March 9, 1839, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
- ⁵ Kimball, “The Saints and St. Louis,” 494. See also Kate B. Carter, *Our Pioneer Heritage* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1959) 5:439, on citizens holding meetings to gather assistance for the Saints.
- ⁶ A synthesis of non-census data indicates that the population of Nauvoo grew from a hundred in 1839 to about four thousand in 1842, then shot to about twelve thousand by 1844. These numbers are based on the best available demographic information and should replace the older assumed or previously estimated population figures for Nauvoo. Susan Easton Black, “How Large Was the Population of Nauvoo?” *Brigham Young University Studies Quarterly* 35, 1995.
- ⁷ “Encouraging,” *Times and Seasons* 6 (February 15, 1845), 810.
- ⁸ Branches are the smallest LDS ecclesiastical units, which generally have less than one hundred church members in a geographic region.
- ⁹ *Journal History*, June 19, 1844, Church History Library. During this turbulent period of persecution, the St. Louis Saints sent weapons and ammunition to Nauvoo for defense. See Carter, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 5; *Journal History*, January 15, 1845, Church History Library.
- ¹⁰ The *St. Louis Evening Gazette* characterized “these homicides as nothing else than murder in cold blood . . . so atrocious and so unjustifiable as to leave the blackest stain on all its perpetrators—their aiders, abettors, and defenders.” *Journal History*, July 10, 1844, Church History Library.
- ¹¹ Saint Louis Branch Historical Record, 1846–47 (May 10, 1846), Church History Library.
- ¹² James Palmer Reminiscences, 90, microfilm of holograph, Church History Library.
- ¹³ Saint Louis Branch Historical Record, 1846–47 (September 21, 1846), Church History Library.
- ¹⁴ According to Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard Cowan, eds., *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2004), the Perpetual Emigrating Fund (PEF) for the *general* Church “was officially launched in the Fall of 1849 . . . to assist the poor in gathering west. The PEF derived its name from the fact that after the immigrants settled in the Great Basin, they were expected to pay back the fund, thus making it perpetual.” Further, “The program was successful in providing some financial assistance for nearly half of the 100,000 Saints who emigrated during its existence” (910).
- ¹⁵ The 1853 emigration season was unique in that for the first and last time, Keokuk, Iowa, was designated as a Mormon emigration frontier outfitting point. This change in route was made due to the *Saluda* tragedy. Keokuk was used only for a year, since the extra three hundred miles of wagon travel across Iowa made the change in route rather unappealing. For more information, see William G. Hartley and Fred E. Woods, *Explosion of the Steamboat “Saluda”* (Riverton, Utah: Millennial Press, 2002) and William G. Hartley and Fred E. Woods, “Explosion of the Steamboat *Saluda*: Tragedy and Compassion at Lexington, Missouri, in 1852,”

- Missouri Historical Review* 99 (July 2005): 281–305.
- ¹⁶ On August 2, 1854, Brigham Young issued the following letter to Elder Franklin D. Richards, the LDS British Mission president who oversaw Mormon emigration from Liverpool: “You are aware of the sickness liable to assail our unacclimated brethren on the Mississippi river, hence I wish you to ship no more to New Orleans, but ship to Philadelphia, Boston and New York, giving preference in the order named.” Brigham Young to Franklin D. Richards, August 2, 1854, *Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star* 16 (October 23, 1854), 684.
- ¹⁷ The St. Louis Branch Historical Record details the hall rentals and costs during this period. A May 23, 1853, entry in SLR 1852–1856 notes that “Jefferson Hall was tendered at the rent of \$18 per month allowing six Sunday [sic] evenings ‘free’ if required and 4 ordinary nights through the year at \$5 per night.” Apparently, the Saints were paying \$325 per year to use the Concert Hall, and in May of 1853 they requested “a reduction of the rent of the Concert Hall, to 300\$ per yr.,” yet Mr. Xuapi, the owner, refused this proposition and instead demanded that they pay an additional “25\$ per yr making the rent 350\$”—a great fee for the Saints in St. Louis at this time. In September 1853, the members temporarily moved from Jefferson Hall into “the large room over Alexanders livery stables in Chestnut St.” See SLR 1852–1856 (September 2, 1853), 110. Later, on September 5, 1854, during a Priesthood meeting held at “the mound market room,” the subject of using a vacant Methodist chapel “instead of the concert Hall” was addressed and “met with universal approval.” Moreover, a September 15, 1854, entry mentions that “it would cost about \$100.00 to put it [the chapel] in repair, but much would be saved by the voluntary acts of the brethren; several volunteered to render aid, in the shape of carpentry, glazing whitening &c.” See *St. Louis Record*, 1852–56 (September 5, 1854), 170, and *St. Louis Record*, 1852–56 (September 15, 1854), 174, Church History Library.
- ¹⁸ “Elder N. H. Felt,” *Deseret News* (February 1887), 44.
- ¹⁹ Orson Ferguson Whitney, *History of Utah* (Salt Lake City: G.Q. Cannon, 1892–1898) 4:549.
- ²⁰ The ward divisions were the six existing city political wards whose boundaries were drawn by community leaders. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed., revised and enlarged (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 177, explains that by 1842 the Latter-day Saints began to use the word “ward” for an ecclesiastical unit or a geographical subdivision, which was probably based on the use of the term in various American cities to designate a political precinct. This term is still used by the LDS Church to refer to ecclesiastical units that usually consist of several hundred church members. “Minutes of St. Louis Branch Feb. 14, 1847 to March 7, 1848,” March 17, 1847, Church History Library.
- ²¹ John and Ellen Parker to Samuel W. Richards, July 4, 1847, Samuel W. Richards Papers, Church History Library.
- ²² Record of the Saint Louis Branch, 1847–50 (May 3 and June 2, 1849), Church History Library.
- ²³ Autobiography of John Martin, Church History Library, 32.
- ²⁴ Record of the Saint Louis Branch 1847–1850 (July 7, 1849), Church History Library.
- ²⁵ Andrew Jenson, *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson Publishing Company, 1887) 2:382.
- ²⁶ “Nathaniel Felt,” in Carter, *Our Pioneer Heritage* 5:445–46.
- ²⁷ Charles van Ravenswaay, “Years of Turmoil, Years of Growth: St. Louis in the 1850s,” *Missouri Bulletin* 23, part I (July 1967): 303.
- ²⁸ Temperance Westwood Moon contributed her story to the *Relief Society Magazine* 14 (March 1927): 130–33. Other sources include *The History of Temperance Westwood Moon* by Helen Potter Severson, a granddaughter, which the author received from one of Temperance’s descendants, Louise Thibaud, from Valley Center, Kansas, and Richard Wesley Westwood, by Richard E. Westwood, a personal family history obtained by the author.
- ²⁹ Eli B. Kelsey, “Letter to the editor,” [November 29, 1849], *Millennial Star* (January 15 1850), 27. At this time, President Felt’s office was located at no. 16 3rd Street in St. Louis. See *Journal History*, January 26, 1850, Church History Library. Record of the Saint Louis Branch, 1847–1850 (April 20, 1850), Church History Library. Nathaniel Felt, his wife, and two sons left St. Louis together and joined the Edward Woolley Company at Council Bluffs on June 25, 1850, to cross the plains. Nathaniel served as a chaplain and was frequently called on to preach. Although cholera infected many emigrants as they crossed the plains, the only person who died from this illness in the entire company was Felt’s teamster. Felt’s company arrived in Salt Lake City on October 6, 1850.
- ³⁰ “Mormons in St. Louis,” *Missouri Republican* (May 8, 1851), 3.
- ³¹ *St. Louis Record*, 1852–1856 (June 1, 1852), 8, Church History Library.
- ³² Journals of William Gibson, Fall 1852, 108; Spring 1853, 112. Louis Espenschied was a German immigrant who opened up his St. Louis wagon factory at age twenty-two in 1843. His grandson, Lloyd Espenschied, in “Louis Espenschied and Family,” *Missouri Historical Bulletin* 18 (January 1962): 91–92, noted, “Strangely enough, it appears to have been a religious sect that gave Louis his first considerable business in ‘prairie schooners.’ When the Mormons sallied forth westward from Nauvoo in 1846, bound across the vast plains toward the Great Salt Lake, they were desperately in need of wagons. They themselves built most of them, it seems, but they were obliged to call upon others.” Further, the eldest grandchild of Espenschied wrote, “Grandfather had made wagons for the Mormons when they left Illinois, and had made a special box on the back to hold fruit trees ready to plant.” An 1855 letter written

by John Wardle and Elder Erastus Snow to Espenschied noted, “Paid \$2,000.00 to Louis Espenschied and Co., for Wagons.” Letters between President Brigham Young and Louis Espenscheid revealed that Young and Espenschied were in correspondence with each other as late as 1859. See outgoing letter from Young to Espenschied dated, June 1, 1857, and incoming letter from Espenschied to Young, dated August 29, 1859, Church History Library.

³³ Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 89–90, explain that the term “stake” began to be used by the LDS Church as early as 1832 in Kirtland, Ohio, to refer to a basic ecclesiastical unit of the church. The term is still used by the LDS church to refer to an ecclesiastical unit or geographic region where members of several wards reside (each ward usually consisting of several hundred church members) which make up a stake where usually several thousand church members live.

³⁴ Andrew Karl Larson, *Erastus Snow: The Life of a Missionary and Pioneer for the Early Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1971), 257–58.

³⁵ “The City of St. Louis: Its Advantages and Disadvantages in Reference to Both Saints and Sinners,” *St. Louis Luminary* (February 3, 1855): 42.

³⁶ “Our Paper,” *St. Louis Luminary* (November 22, 1854), 2. Richard D. McClellan, “Polemical Periodicals,” edited by Garr, Cannon, and Cowa, *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*.

³⁷ *The Seer* was edited by Orson Pratt and published from 1853–1854 in both Washington, D.C., and Liverpool, England. It was followed by the *St. Louis Luminary* (November 1854–December 1855), established by Erastus Snow; the *Mormon*, founded by John Taylor in New York City in February 1855; and the *Western Standard* of San Francisco, edited by George Q. Cannon, beginning in February 1856.

³⁸ The other stake outside the Utah Territory was the San Bernardino Stake in California, organized on July 6, 1851.

³⁹ Kimball, “The Saints and St. Louis,” 489.