

tablished, and by 1990 there were 3,000 members in eighteen branches, and the Book of Mormon was being translated into Haitian.

JAMAICA. The Church sent missionaries to Jamaica in 1841, but they were soon recalled because the prejudice against them made their efforts futile. However, the Church was finally established there in 1970 when several LDS families went to Jamaica to work. Victor Nugent and his family became converts in Jamaica in 1974. Brother Nugent was called as president of the Kingston District when the Jamaica Kingston Mission was organized in 1985. The Church in Jamaica is primarily Jamaican, and it had almost 2,000 members in thirteen branches in 1990.

EDWIN O. HAROLDSSEN

WESTWARD MIGRATION, PLANNING AND PROPHECY

For Brigham Young and his associates, the 1846 exodus from NAUVOO, far from being a disaster imposed by enemies, was foretold and foreordained—a key to understanding LDS history and a necessary prelude for greater things to come. From a later perspective, too, scholars of the Mormon experience have come to see the exodus and COLONIZATION of the Great Basin as the single most important influence in molding the Latter-day Saints into a distinctive people. Popular histories invariably attribute the Saints' exodus from Nauvoo to increasing violence, mob action, and persecution. This view, that the exodus was forced upon a people who had no choice, is simplistic and fails to account for more complex reasons for the exodus or to explain its importance in LDS belief.

From its beginnings and with each successive move, the Church was seemingly drawn toward the West. As early as 1832, LDS publications connected the destiny of the Church with the American Far West. An 1840 letter preserves Joseph SMITH's prophecy about "a place of safety preparing for [the Saints] away towards the Rocky Mountains" (Esplin, p. 90); and throughout the Nauvoo period the Prophet collected information and prepared for a latter-day ZION to be established in the tops of the Rocky Mountains (see Isa. 2:2–3). Several diaries record Joseph Smith's February 1844 instructions to the QUORUM OF THE TWELVE

APOSTLES to lead an expedition to the West to locate a new home for the Saints.

Though the Prophet put the plan on hold and his murder three months later further delayed implementation, Brigham YOUNG and his fellow apostles firmly believed that their responsibility was to lead the Church to the West once the NAUVOO TEMPLE was completed and the Saints had received the ENDOWMENT ordinances therein. Therefore, even had there been no violence against the Church in Illinois, there still would have been an exodus, a western migration, and western colonization.

Though most of the Saints, comfortable in a prosperous Nauvoo and not anxious to leave, knew little about the plans or the prophecy, some outside the Church were aware. In 1845, Illinois Governor Thomas Ford, anxious to solve the "Mormon problem" by having the Saints leave, chided Brigham Young for remaining when Joseph Smith had spoken of going west. Committed though they were to the West, however, Church leaders would not consider departing until the Saints were endowed in the Nauvoo Temple. Not until late summer 1845, with temple construction nearly completed, did they quietly resume preparations for the West.

When violence broke out in September 1845, Brigham Young had already announced that ordinance work would begin in December. He therefore "capitulated" to mob pressures and proclaimed to the Saints and to the world that he and his people would leave for the West the following spring. That announcement bought a peaceful interlude for ordinance work and preparation, while the threat of violence if they did not leave "put the gathering spirit" in the Saints, in Brigham Young's words, encouraging the entire community to depart.

In meetings that fall, Brigham Young and the Twelve explained to the Saints the reasons for the exodus. They presented it as the will of God and as a God-given opportunity—a necessary step toward their destiny. They also saw the exodus as an unfolding of scriptural PROPHECY, including Isaiah's vision of the last days when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isa. 2:2). Orson PRATT pronounced the proposed movement "a direct and literal fulfillment of many prophecies, both ancient and modern" (MS 6 [Dec. 1, 1845]:192). His brother, Parley P. PRATT, agreed

that it was the event that “ancient prophets have long since pointed out” (*T&S* 6 [Nov. 1, 1845]:1011).

Therefore, while the sermons reflected a sense of urgency, their tenor was clearly optimistic. If the Saints were being driven, it was to their destiny. President Young spoke of “a crisis of extraordinary and thrilling interest,” and admonished the Saints to “wake up, wake up” and accept “the present glorious emergency” (*T&S* 6 [Nov. 1, 1845]:1019). Orson Pratt saw the approaching exodus as “long looked for, long prayed for, and long desired.” They were on the threshold, he declared, of “one of the grandest and most glorious events yet witnessed” in the Church (*MS* 6 [Dec. 1, 1845]:191–92).

Numerous extant sermons from Nauvoo also suggested additional reasons for the exodus. A move west would permit greater expansion and continued growth. In the western wilderness the Church could more easily fulfill a divine commitment to take the gospel to the LAMANITES. The mass migration would be a test separating the wheat from the chaff, a purifying furnace bringing greater unity and strength to the Church.

Later, in the Rocky Mountains, pioneer Latter-day Saints came to see the exodus from Nauvoo as a key to who they were and what they could become.

[See also *History of the Church: c. 1844–1877.*]

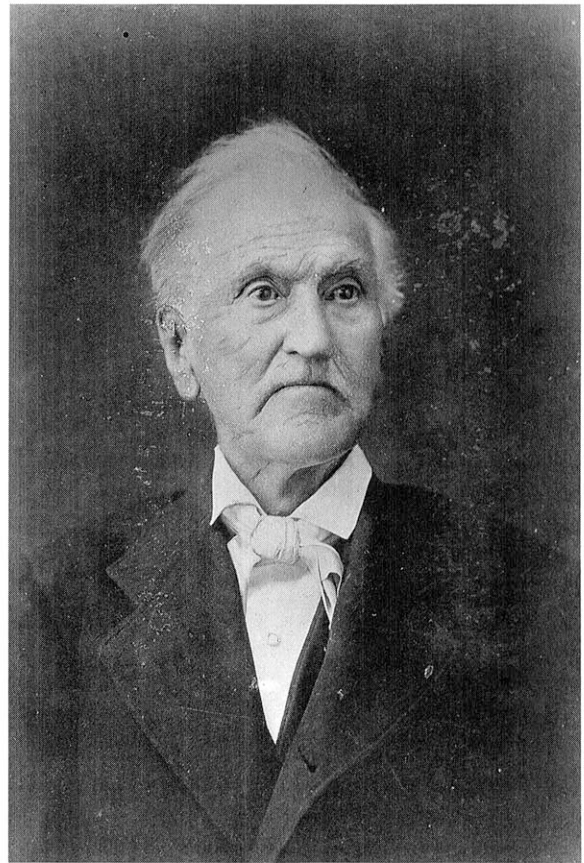
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REED C. DURHAM, JR.

WHITMER, DAVID

David Whitmer (1805–1888) was one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon whose testimony has been printed in all published copies of the book (*see* BOOK OF MORMON WITNESSES). Although Whitmer was excommunicated from the Church in 1838, he never repudiated his testimony



David Whitmer (1805–1888), the most interviewed of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. An individualist who was doggedly unwavering in his testimony of the spiritual manifestations received in June 1829, he was known as an honest, conscientious, and guileless man. Courtesy Library-Archives, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

of the Book of Mormon, reaffirming it thereafter on at least seventy recorded occasions.

David Whitmer was born to Peter Whitmer, Sr., and Mary Musselman Whitmer near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on January 7, 1805. In 1809 the family moved to Fayette, New York, where they worked a large farm. He learned about the Book of Mormon from Oliver COWDERY, who was scribe for Joseph SMITH during the translation. When persecution grew severe in Harmony, Pennsylvania, where the two were working, Whitmer invited Joseph, Oliver, and Joseph’s wife, Emma, to his family’s house in Fayette. The translation of the Book of Mormon was completed there in June 1829.

In the same month, Joseph Smith told David Whitmer that he, along with Cowdery and Martin HARRIS, another supporter of the work, were to be