

Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy [1816-1902]

“Memory would fail to write a full account of my life’s history as it has been made up of hardships, poverty and persecutions ever since I embraced the gospel in the year 1834. I cannot give exact dates, so my history will be imperfect on that account, as I failed to keep a journal and depend on my memory. But in writing up this short history of my life, many incidents occur to my mind which would be worthy of note, but I never expect it to be published, therefore, I merely detail the outlines of my travels and persecutions for the gospel’s sake (in connection with my husband until the time of his death) for the benefit of my posterity after me, which I think they will read with interest when I am gone, for I am now in my eightieth year and cannot expect to stay much longer on this side of the veil.

I was born on the 14th of May, 1816 in Henderson, Jefferson Country, state of New York. My parents were church-going people, my mother a Baptist, my father, Aaron Alexander, was a Universalist. He died when I was four years old. He left my mother a nice little farm and comfortable home, but misfortunes overtook her and she lost all. She kept her children together as long as she could. There were four of us, two girls and two boys. She kept the youngest with her. The rest of us were put out to live. It fell to my lot to go to my grandfather’s on mother’s side to live. His name was Francis Jones. . . .

I had a good home and good care. . . I had a religious turn of mind and in my childhood I read the Bible and went and prayed with all the sincerity in the world, for I wanted to be a Christian and be happy like they were. But I never joined them. . . .A few years later when I was 15, my mother came to see me and to visit her parents, brothers and sister. She lengthened her stay to one year. . . I had lived ten years with my grandparents. . . I wanted to go home with my mother. She consented to let me go. . . After the close of school in the spring, I hired out doing housework, for I think one dollar a week, to Abram Tracy. His wife was mother’s cousin. When it came time to open school again, I had an offer to teach, but declined. I thought I was too young to take such a position, so I worked on.

At length, Mr. Tracy’s brother, Moses, came into the neighborhood and come to see his brother. Finally, his visits became more frequent, until I formed an acquaintance with him. He became my escort when I went out. It finally went farther. I found him to be a young man of good habits and a working man. I accepted his offer of marriage, and we were married on the 15th of July, 1832. [16 years of age] My husband took me home to his father’s to live until he could make us a home.

Everything was bright before us. As yet we had not tasted the bitter. Those were happy days. That summer we began to hear rumbles about a gold Bible that a gold-digger had dug up. Reports came fast and thick. It made quite an excitement. The newspapers were full of the vilest slander about Joseph Smith, the finder of those golden records. Time passed on in this way for a while. At last there came some traveling preachers styling themselves Mormon missionaries. Of course, prejudice was against them. However, they succeeded in getting a place to hold meetings. I heard of it. It was two miles from where I lived, but out of curiosity I determined to go and see and hear what those horrid creatures looked like and had to say, for I hardly expected they were human from what I had heard. So I got two other women to go with me and repaired to the place appointed.

The house was filled, waiting to see this wonderful man. My astonishment was better felt than described when he appeared tall and stately with piercing back eyes filled with the spirit of God. He gave out a hymn and song, a few joining him. Then he prayed and such a prayer! He was full to the brim. All eyes were upon him and you could have heard a pin drop. It seemed as though his influence put all prejudice under his feet. He took the text from the bible, but I have forgotten it. However, I well remember his powerful sermon on the first principles of the gospel as taught by the Savior and his apostles. Oh, how plain and beautiful and easy to understand.

I believed with my whole soul and I could see that I had been preserved from uniting with other creeds and was waiting to hear, and told the folks that for the first time I had heard the true gospel preached by David Patten who had been chosen as an apostle, ordained and set apart to teach the pure doctrine of our Savior. They laughed at me and cried, 'Delusion, false prophets,' and so on. But the seed had taken root and I would talk with my husband and was very anxious that he should hear and investigate. . . . At last Parley P. Pratt came into the neighborhood. . . . my husband went and his eyes began to be opened. He began reading the Bible. He took his time to investigate. By this time other elders came. . . . we still did not join. Our first son was born on the 25th of November, 1833. . . . In the spring of 1834, the 10th of May, my husband and myself were baptized with Elder Thomas Dulcher officiating. We were confirmed at the water's edge. . . .

Many instances came under my observation of the marvelous blessings and gifts of the gospel. The work spread and the honest were baptized and the spirit of gathering to the places appointed was great. Kirtland, Ohio, was the first gathering place. There the prophet, Joseph Smith, dwelt with his family and there the Lord had commanded a house to be built to his name. .

We began to feel that we wanted to gather with the Saints. . . . We began preparations for our journey. We had a fine span of horses and a new wagon and decided to go by land. It was about 400 miles. . . . For the first time we saw Prophet

Joseph and heard him preach. There was no work to be had so my husband went to work on the temple. . . . In October of that year, I had another son. We wanted him to have a big name out of the book of Mormon, so we called him Lachoneus Moroni, after two great men. He was a beautiful child. . . .

In the spring following, the temple was finished and dedicated. . . . and they were two of the happiest days of my life. The fitting hymn that was composed for the occasion was “The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning.” It was verily true that the heavenly influence rested down upon that house, and the people were glorious and long to be remembered. Heavenly beings appeared to many. . . . I felt that it was heaven on earth, and I said, “shall we always enjoy such blessings? “No, this is to prepare us that we shall have strength to endure, for we have the opposing element to contend with and shall be made perfect through suffering.”. . . .

A good many of the Saints had moved to Missouri, Jackson County, another of the gathering places, had bought lands built houses, and were getting quite comfortable and beginning to prosper. Satan then began to stir up the hearts of the people, and they commenced their hostilities, destroying the property and gathering in mobs. They at last made them leave the country. The Saints suffered untold hardships, but could get no redress. The people of Clay County took them in for a season. . . .

We began preparations to move again. . . . When spring came, my husband procured 40 acres of land three miles from Far West, for that was the name given to the city. . . We built a cabin on our farm and moved into it the next season in order to be near my husband’s work. . . . But the third year the Missourians saw how the Saints were prospering and they could not rest. They commenced on the outskirts where the Saints had settled on the stream and began to plunder and turn their horses into the brethren’s fields, to go into the houses and insult women and children and abuse them, and to take the brethren prisoners into their camps, until, at last, the brethren could stand it no longer. . . .

In the spring following we made another move north. The Saints had located a place to settle still farther up the river called Commerce. It was a very sickly place, but the only one we had to go to. When we got up there, low and behold! There was Brother Joseph in the midst of the Saints. . . . my fourth son was born here. . . . We lived in t his house about two years and then sold the place to Brother Wilford Woodruff. . . .

The work on the temple was progressing, elders were being sent out to the nations to preach the gospel, emigrants from different parts flocked in, and everything prospered. About this time the Relief Society was organized with Emma Smith, president, with two counselors and Eliza R. Snow, secretary. This was for the

relief of the poor and for every noble purpose that came within woman's sphere of action. I united with this society. . . . Sometimes Emma would bring the Prophet in to give instructions.

The clouds had begun to gather. It was not all sunshine now in Nauvoo. The opposing element was at work. . . . We had a chance to sell our home and better our conditions. . . . we sold our home for \$225. Then my husband went up on the hill near the temple and bought a small lot and built another house with three rooms and a basement and with a brick fireplace and an old-fashioned brick oven by the side of it. This was a beautiful location, fronting east was the public square and to the south just one lot and a street separated us from the temple. Here we hoped would be our permanent home. My husband did his own carpenter work and also helped to work on the temple. Out of the bedroom window I could see the masons at work and could hear the click of their hammers and hear their sailor songs as they pulled the rock in place with pulleys. It was grand to see. Notwithstanding, trouble was brewing and work on the temple was being pushed ahead.

One day I looked over toward the temple and saw a large crowd gathered with some two or three women present, so I thought I would [go] over. I put on my bonnet and shawl and made my way over. Brother Joseph was there and seemed busily engaged over something. Finally, he looked up and saw us women. He said for the brothers to stand back and let the sisters come up. So they gave way, and we went up. In the huge chief cornerstone was cut out a square about a foot around and about as deep lined with zinc, and in it Brother Joseph had placed a Bible, a Book of Mormon, hymn book, and other Church works along with silver money that had been coined in that year. Then a lid was cemented down and the temple was reared on the top of this. It made me think of the prophets in ancient days hiding up their records to come forth in some future generations. At any rate, it was for some wise purpose, but I never heard any explanation on it. The building progressed rapidly, and I was present when the capstone was laid and heard the last ring of the trowel. The Saints turned out en masse. The address on that occasion was pathetic and grand, bring delivered by Brigham Young.

The story of how Joseph and his brother Hyrum came to their deaths has oft been told. . .

Brigham Young was the man chosen and sustained by unanimous vote to be the mouthpiece of God to the Saints. I can testify that the mantle of Joseph fell upon Brigham that day, as that of Elijah did fall upon Elisha, for it seemed that his voice, his gestures, and all were Joseph. It seemed that we had him again with us. He was sustained by the voice of the people to be the prophet, seer, and revelator. . . . soon after this, my youngest child was taken sick and died in two weeks. . . .

Well, the temple was so far completed that fall that the Lord accepted it at the

hands of the Saints. . . . The saints began to receive their blessings. Therein we had our endowments in that house.

The evil one saw that the Saints were getting power from on high. Of course, he raged and stirred up the feeling of enmity against us, and the people again determined to drive us from our homes. So during the winter months, preparations were made and some had already left their comfortable homes and crossed the river on the ice to go into the wilderness beyond civilization, we know not where, only as the hand of the Lord shall lead us. O liberty! Thou precious boon that our fathers shed their blood to gain, whither hast thou fled? but the hand of the Lord is over us, and so we shall find a resting place.

On the 15th of March, 1845, my sixth son was born. . . .

About the last of May, previous to our departure from Nauvoo, I was aroused from my slumbers one night, hearing such heavenly music as I had never heard before. Everything was so still and quiet when it burst upon my ear that I could not imagine where it came from. I got up and looked out of the window. The moon shone bright as I looked over at the temple from whence the sound came. There on the roof of the building heavenly bands of music had congregated and were playing most beautifully. The music was exquisite! And we had to leave all this; the temple, our homes, and the pleasant surroundings and bid farewell. It was to your tent, O Israel.

At another time fire caught in the roof of the Temple. How it caught, I never knew, but for a while it seemed that the house would be destroyed. Me, women and children came out and formed a bucket brigade. The wells were drained and finally they went with wagons and barrels to the river for water and at last succeeded in putting out the flames. The damage was considerable. It seemed that if the evil powers could not harass the people one way, they would do it in another. . . .

In all our married life or ever since we had joined the Church of Latter-day Saints, it had been one continual scene of persecution, traveling from one place to another to find a resting place from our enemies. In the midst of suffering and poverty, the longest we ever stayed in one place was in Nauvoo, where we remained about three years.

But now the time had come for us to take up the line and march, this time far away to West

My husband died in 1858. He was true and faithful to the end and gained his salvation and will stand as a savior upon Mount Zion. . . . When I think of how I was sustained through all that I passed through, I marvel, for I was never a strong woman. I feel to acknowledge the hand of the Lord in it all and that I am alive today to tell the tale. . . . I have lived to see six temples reared in this Church to the name of

the Most High. . . .

As I am now near the end of this short sketch of scenes and incident of my life, I will say that I am now in my 80th year. I have lived to see six generations from my grandmother that brought me up from childhood to womanhood down to my great-grandchildren. I had eleven children and eight-two grandchildren of who fifteen are dead, and thirty great-grandchildren of whom eight are dead. There are five of my own children who have passed away. Those that remain are married and have large families.. .

I say how happy we will be when the books are opened, and we have a good record of the deeds done to the flesh. For out of the books we are to be judged. I say it will be a time of great rejoicing if the sentence is, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant Enter into the joys of the Lord." Is this not worth living for? Are not the riches of eternal life more than all the world beside? It stands us in hand to make good use of our time and the talents God has given us and to make the best possible use of them, or we shall be called to an account. We cannot shun it. What is all the pomp and splendor that the wealth of this world can give compared to the riches of a never-ending eternity? Then why do we squander away the precious time that the Lord has given us to prepare for this great future when we are changed from mortality to immortality, which will ever endure and to which there is no end. O, my soul, awake to a realization of what is required at your hands to prepare you for the great day when all must stand before the bar of God to be judged. Oh, how terrible the sentence. "Depart, I never knew you." Then let us be wise and shape our lives according to the laws of God and obey them, for this is what we are here for, to work out our salvation.