

The Early History of Iowa (pt. 17)

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THE EARLY HISTORY OF IOWA.

BY CHARLES NEGUS.

(Continued from page 485.)

THE MORMONS — THE FIRST SETTLEMENT OF THE WESTERN SLOPE OF IOWA.

On the fifth of June, 1846, the Pottawattamie Indians, who occupied the western slope of Iowa, sold their lands to the United States. Up to that time but little was known of the western part of the state.

The Sacs and Foxes, by the provisions of the treaty of 1842, had the right to the possession of the lands, they had sold, which lay west of Red Rock, till the first of May, 1846, and the Pottawattamies, in their sale, reserved the right to occupy the country on the western slope for a period of two years. But by a train of circumstances, not anticipated, these lands were taken possession of by the whites, and settlements made some time before the Indians left the ceded territory.

The Mormons, a religious sect, who had built up a town at Nauvoo in Illinois, numbering about twenty thousand persons, on account of some difficulties which they had had, were under the necessity of leaving that place and to seek a new location for building up the "Church of Latter Day Saints." After these troubles in Illinois, many of this religious denomination crossed over the Mississippi into Iowa, and started west. As the Mormons had quite a prominent part in the settlement of the western part of the state, it may not be uninteresting to go back and take a brief view of their history previous to this time.

The origin of the Mormon religion bears date about the year 1830; and originated with a family by the name of Smith, who at that time lived in Ontario county, New York. The family was represented as being unprincipled, idle, ignorant, and superstitious, believing in ghosts, witches, fortune-telling, &c. They first attracted attention by having what they called a "peep stone," which, when placed in a hat,

Joseph Smith, Jr., who may be said to have been the founder of the Mormon religion, by putting his face into the hat so as to exclude the light, professed to be able to see anything he wished. In this way he told where lost property could be found, and also, where there were hidden treasures.

While thus employed with his "peep stone" he discovered the plate on which was engraved the Mormon bible.

These plates were represented as being about eight inches square, made of a yellowish metal, about the thickness of sheet tin, and fastened together in book form by three rings passing through the back. These plates were said to have been covered with divers wonderful characters, unlike anything of modern date, which were beyond human power to interpret.

But young Smith, by the aid of divine inspiration, assisted by two or three others, succeeded in interpreting the plates, and produced the Mormon bible.

When Smith had got his new bible published, he zealously labored to sell his book and make proselytes.

He fell in with Sidney Rigdon, a minister of the Campbellite church, an eloquent and able debator, who resided in Kirkland, Ohio. Rigdon became a convert and entered into all the schemes which had been originated by Smith; and by the aid of Rigdon, and others, Smith soon had quite a band of followers.

It was resolved to make Kirkland their head quarters, and all of the Smith family moved to that place, and laid their plans for building a large city, and commenced to erect a temple. But young Joseph Smith came to the conclusion that this was not a suitable place, and Independence, in Jackson county, Missouri, was selected, and a city was laid out at this point, which was called Zion. In a period of about two years there settled in Jackson county, about twelve hundred Mormons. They had a printing office, a mercantile establishment, which they called the "Lord's store-house," and several mechanical shops established in Independence. And while the

town was made their head-quarters, Mormon settlements were made all over the county.

One Edward Partridge was appointed bishop over the new colony, and controlled and exercised authority over the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Mormons at that place, but in all his acts was obedient to the revelations of Smith.

The Missourians were not well pleased with their new neighbors, and soon serious difficulties began to arise.

The citizens of Jackson county became alarmed at the growing power of this sect, and came to the conclusion to rid themselves of this fanatical people. On the 20th of July, 1833, the Missourians, some four or five hundred in number, held a meeting at Independence, at which they prepared an address to the public, setting forth their grievances, and passed resolutions "that no Mormons shall in future move into and settle in the county."

"That these now here, who shall give a definite pledge of their intention, within a reasonable time, to remove out of the county, shall be allowed to remain, unmolested, until they shall have sufficient time to sell their property and close their business without any sacrifice."

By this resolution the editor of their paper was required to, forthwith, close his office and discontinue his business, and the Mormon leaders were required to use their influence to prevent any further immigration of their brethren to the county. The resolutions also required that all the shops in the place should be closed, and the owners to speedily wind up their business, and leave the county.

The meeting then appointed a committee to wait on the Mormon leaders and inform them of the proceedings of the meeting, and that it was their unwavering determination to carry their resolutions into effect.

The meeting now adjourned to give the committee an opportunity to have a conference with the Mormons, and having performed their duty, in about two hours the meeting again convened to hear the report. The committee reported that they had waited upon the bishop, the editor, the "keep-

er of the Lord's store-house," and others, who declined an immediate answer, but wished for time for consideration, and to consult with their brethren in Ohio.

On the reception of this report, it was unanimously resolved to raze the printing office to the ground, and the meeting immediately repaired to the spot and accomplished the work.

They then adjourned for three days, when a much larger meeting was convened, and another committee appointed to wait on the Mormon leaders.

This committee reported, that they had made an amicable agreement with the Mormons, and had also assured the editor of their paper, whenever he was ready to leave the county they would indemnify him for all his losses.

The substance of this amicable arrangement was, that the Mormons should immediately leave the county, and use all their influence to dissuade others from coming there, and the Missourians were not to disturb them while closing up their business.

This quieted the Missourians for the time, but the Mormons made no preparations for moving, and applied to the governor of the state for protection. To this the governor replied, that it was not his province to act in their behalf, until they had resorted to the laws, and ascertained that they could not be enforced.

The Mormons commenced civil suits for the loss of their property; from which the Missourians came to the conclusion that the Mormons did not intend to live up to their part of the stipulations, and early in the fall the Missourians again began to commit depredations. Some forty or fifty of them fell upon a small settlement in the out-skirts of the county, whipped some of the men, scared the women and children from their homes, and unroofed their houses. They next made an attack upon the "Lord's store-house" and the dwelling of its keeper, and for several days there were men, on both sides, constantly under arms, and two of the citizens and one Mormon were killed. As soon as these difficulties had

happened, messengers were sent to Kirkland, Ohio, greatly magnifying the outrages which had been committed. On receiving this information, the prophet (Joseph Smith, Jr.,) immediately set himself to work to give them relief, and issued a general proclamation to all the churches, calling on them for aid. In the meantime the Mormons in Missouri, undertook to get redress from the courts, and to inflict the penalties of the law on the rioters, and the governor called out the militia of an adjoining county to protect the witnesses in their attendance at court. But it seems that no grand or petit jury could be got, without getting some persons on it who had been implicated in the outrages, and redress for the Mormons from this source proved a failure.

There was a force collected at Kirkland, which started on the first of May, 1834, well equipped with the implements of war, for the relief of their brethern in Missouri; and as they proceeded on their way, others joined them; so that when they got into Missouri they numbered two hundred and twenty men, under the immediate command of the prophet. But before they got to the head-quarters of their brethren in that state, they were met by two gentlemen, as a committee from the Missourians, for the purpose of inquiring into the object of this military display. Smith and his followers, were warned of the results, which would necessarily follow, if they proceeded in their hostile undertakings. They were told, that not only the citizens of Jackson county, but those of other counties, would combine, and the result would be the entire slaughter of all the Mormons. It seems, Smith thought discretion the better part of valor, abandoned the enterprise, and disbanded his army. The Missourians, while the Mormons were marching into their state, had not been idle spectators; for the citizens of Jackson county raised a force equal to that of Smith's, and were ready for action.

But in order to adjust these difficulties they appointed a committee to visit the Mormons for the purpose of effecting a settlement. They proposed to the Mormons, that they would have their property appraised, and they would buy at the

appraised value all their lands in Jackson county, on conditions that they would leave the county; or they would sell their lands to them and leave the county themselves. After much negotiation the Mormons concluded to abandon Jackson, and take up their residence in Caldwell county, then unorganized.

In this county this people took up their abode, laid out a new town, which they called "Far-West," and enjoyed quiet for the most part of the time, and were prosperous till the fall of 1838. By this time they had become quite numerous, and were in possession of much real estate in the western part of Missouri. But they could not live in peace with their neighbors, depredations were constantly being committed upon each other, and feelings of revenge were carried to such an extent, that they got up, on a small scale, a civil war, and several persons were killed. The executive authority was called into requisition, and his excellency, Lilburn W. Boggs, then governor of Missouri, called out the militia to quell the disturbances. General John B. Clark, was appointed commander of the militia, about four thousand five hundred in number, with instructions from the governor, if he should consider it necessary to the permanent establishment of peace in the state, "to exterminate the Mormons, or drive them beyond the boundary lines of the state."

When this force was brought against the Mormons, they gave up the contest, grounded their arms, and submitted to the decisions of the executive authority.

Many of the leading men were held as prisoners, on charge of treason, while the others were required to immediately abandon their property and leave the state. This severe course, on the part of Governor Boggs, greatly exasperated the Mormons, and particularly the prophet, against him.

Forcing the Mormons, at this time of the year, to immediately abandon their homes, caused a great sacrifice of property, and much suffering, particularly among the women and children. But it did not seem to check their prosperity, for the course pursued by the Missourians was regarded as a

persecution, which elicited much sympathy in their behalf, and caused aid and countenance to be given them, which would not have been, had they been treated less rigorously.

They crossed over the Mississippi into Illinois, where they found those who treated them kindly and relieved their wants.

At the time of their greatest need they met with Dr. Isaac Galland, who owned large quantities of land in Illinois, also, an interest in the half-breed's tract in Iowa, who took an interest in their behalf, and sold them lands on reasonable terms; and took their lands in Missouri, in part payment.

The Mormons mostly settled on the east shore of the Mississippi, in Illinois, where they laid out a town, on a large scale, which they called Nauvoo. Here they made their head-quarters, though many of their numbers settled in the surrounding country, and some on the opposite side of the river, in Iowa. Here, for a while, they were very prosperous, their numbers rapidly increased, and they had a fair prospect of soon building up a large city.

But they had not been there long before they again had trouble. For Governor Boggs, while sitting in his office, near a back window, was shot at by some unknown person, with a gun loaded with buck-shot. Nine of the buck-shot penetrated his person about the head, and he was much injured, though the wounds did not prove fatal. This act was charged upon one O. P. Rockwell, as being done at the instance of Joseph Smith, the prophet, and the governor made a requisition on the governor of Illinois for Smith.

As soon as he was arrested, Smith got out a writ of *habeas corpus*; and was discharged on the grounds, that he had not been into Missouri, and could not be taken into that state for trial, for a crime which had not been committed within the limits of that state.

The failing to get Smith, greatly exasperated the Missourians, and they anxiously waited for an opportunity to wreak their vengeance upon him.

The citizens of Illinois, in the vicinity of Nauvoo, became much dissatisfied with their new neighbors; and great com

plaints were made of injuries committed on them by the Mormons, and the Mormons, in turn, complained of like injuries against them.

Matters went on in this way till there arose a difficulty among themselves, when the demon of discord commenced to stir up envy, jealousy, and strife with a boundless ambition.

A man by the name of John C. Bennett, came among the Mormons, after they settled in Illinois, professed to be strongly in their faith, and being a man of superior talents, soon rose to high honor in the church. But his prosperity made him reckless, and the authorities of the church called him to an account for his misdemeanors, deprived him of his honors, and turned him out of the church. Bennett now became desperate, denounced the Mormon religion and exerted himself, to the utmost of his ability, to wreak his vengeance upon the prophet and his followers. In the meantime several others, who had stood high in the church, among whom were William and Wilson Long, "were cut off from membership." The latter did not, like Bennett, condemn the Mormon religion, but denounced Joseph as a false prophet.

They procured a printing office for the purpose of establishing a paper at Nauvoo, and on the 7th of June, 1844, issued the first number of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, in which was a severe personal attack against the prophet, and some of the most active and influential members of the church.

At this time Nauvoo had been incorporated as a city, and claimed to have about twenty thousand in population. On the issuing of this paper, the city authorities were called together by Smith, then the mayor of the city, who had by their charter the authority "to declare what shall be a nuisance, and to prevent and remove the same." Under this authority "the city council of Nauvoo, declared the establishment and *Expositor* a nuisance, and the city Marshal at the head of the police, took the press, material, and paper, into the street and burned them." This summary proceeding created a tremendous excitement, which spread with the rapidity of a fierce conflagration in a tornado, until the whole surrounding

country was in one flaming blaze of passion, and fresh fuel continued to be added to the flames, by a portion of the press giving spread to the most exaggerated rumors about the doings of the Mormon leaders. All those who had had difficulties with the Mormons, either in Missouri or elsewhere, were now active, and using the destruction of the printing office as a pretence, sought to retaliate upon them *en masse*, for all the injuries they had received from any of the denomination.

Public meetings were held, and propositions made to raise forces to chastise the Mormons.

The Mormons were not idle spectators of these movements, and prepared themselves for defence, and the city council passed an ordinance, "that if any officer, or officers, should attempt to arrest any person engaged in the destruction of the *Expositor* press, and take him out of Nauvoo for trial, he should be imprisoned."

Writs were issued on a charge of riot, for those engaged in destroying the *Expositor* office, from Carthage, the county seat of the county; and the officer undertook to arrest them, and bring them to that place for trial, but failed. In the meantime, Joseph Smith, as mayor of the city, issued his proclamation, vindicating the action of the council, and assuring Governor Ford, that they were willing to submit to a fair trial before any court in the state; if they could be protected from mob violence.

The excitement was so great, and such were the warlike demonstrations, that Governor Ford thought the exigencies of the occasion required more than ordinary exertions to keep the peace, and for this purpose he called out a large body of militia. The governor sent a message to Smith, if those engaged in the destruction of the printing office, would submit to the civil authorities, that they would be protected against mob violence; with this assurance they all consented. And the governor sent a company of dragoons, with the officer, to Nauvoo, and the rioters, eighteen in number, were brought to Carthage and lodged in jail, till the necessary preparations could be made for trial. Among those arrested were Joseph

Smith and his brother, Hiram. After these arrests were made the excitement abated, and the public feeling was so far quieted, that Governor Ford thought prudent to disband a portion of his forces, and only retained two companies to protect the jail, and one to escort him to Nauvoo, to have an interview with the citizens.

On the 27th of June, 1844, while the governor was absent, at Nauvoo, a body of about two hundred men, dressed in disguise, like Indians, made an attack upon the jail, overpowered the guard, broke into the room, where the two Smiths and the editor of the *Nauvoo Neighbor* were confined, instantly killed the two Smiths, and severely wounded the editor.

The killing of the two Smiths seemed to satisfy the enemies of the Mormons for a while, and their city became quiet.

The business at Nauvoo revived, and they went to work with renewed energy to finish their temple, that had been commenced, which was the largest and most costly building, of the kind, at that time, in the west.

But the difficulties of the Mormons did not cease with the death of the Smiths. Their enemies soon commenced renewed persecutions against them, and their troubles were such, that they were compelled to leave Illinois, as they had been, Missouri.

Their leaders resolved to move west, beyond the settlement, where they would not be in contact with those differing with them in religious faith.

In the fall of 1845, they commenced to dispose of their property, and made arrangements to leave, and during the winter many moved over the river and stopped in Iowa, wherever they could find shelter and protection. And early in the spring nearly all of the Mormons left Nauvoo; some planted a colony in Wisconsin, others, growing cold in the faith, scattered through country. But a large number started west, without any fixed point for their destination, though California, then belonging to the Mexican government, had attracted their attentions. There were over a thousand collected to-

gether in one company, and as a pioneer corps, in the spring of 1846, commenced their journey west, to explore the country, and open up a tract for others to follow.

By the treaty of 1842 with the Sac and Fox Indians, the western boundary of the white settlements, at that time, was about on a line with the present western boundary of Appanoose and Monroe counties, beyond this boundary it was one vast wilderness; no thoroughfare, except Indian trails, and no white man had been there, except occasionally a traveler, government troops, and Indian traders.

The Mormons had a party, whose business it was to go in advance of the main company, to explore the route, and make fords and bridges, by which the streams could be crossed. They came up the DesMoines valley, till they reached the western part of Van Buren county, they then took their course through the northern part of Davis and Appanoose counties. When they got near the western part of Appanoose county their company divided, a party taking the highlands on each side of the Chariton river, but their trains came together again in Clark county. As soon as they got into the Indian country; selecting the most eligible spots, they commenced establishing colonies, at such distances from each other as would be likely to afford comfort and facilitate the travel of those who might follow in their trail after them.

Several families stopped at Garden Grove, in the north-east part of Decatur county; another party made a location in Lucas county, at a place which was known as Chariton point, about a mile and a half south of the present town of Chariton. Some four or five families stopped at a point called Lost Camp, about six miles south of Osceola, at the point where the two trains came together. From this point their course was on the highlands, dividing the water courses, bearing a little north, till they reached the eastern part of Union county, where they established another colony, which they called Pisgah. From this point they took a northwestern course through the prairie, on the dividing ridges, till they reach a point a little north and west of the center of Adair

county, then they bore south, passing by what was known, in early days, as Sargent's Grove, in Adair county, and Campbell's Grove, in Cass county. At these points, houses at which the weary traveler could stop, were built. Their course went through the southern part of Cass county, and there was quite a large settlement made at a point called Indian Town, on the east Nishnabotany. They took this circuitous route to get a level road, and avoid the crossing of numerous small water courses. When they reached the Missouri bottom lands, they made a halt; their party scattered, and they went to work to raise provisions, and prepare for winter.

A party of about thirty pitched their tents on the Missouri river bottom, on the east side of Key creek, about four miles north of the south county line of Mills county, and the same season they built up quite a village of log cabins, which they called Rushville. Another large party crossed over the Missouri and made a settlement on the west side of the river, about ten miles above Omaha, which was known by the name of Winter Quarters. Another settlement was made nearly opposite this, on the east side of the river. And many individuals located themselves in different parts of the country; built cabins, and opened up farms. But their main settlement was on and about a little stream called Indian creek, which was first called Miller's Hollow (now Council Bluffs); so called from the fact that Henry Miller, a prominent man among the Mormons, first built a cabin there and opened a store, but the Mormons subsequently "called it Kanessville, in honor of the celebrated Dr. Kane, the great Artic explorer."

About the time of the Mormons starting west, the war between Mexico and the United States commenced.

Congress immediately passed a law authorizing the enlistment of soldiers for one year, and it was thought advisable, on the part of the United States, to send a force from the Missouri river across the mountains to California. This expedition was entrusted to General Kearny, and there not being, in the west, troops enough of the regular army to answer the wants of the government, it became necessary to raise volunteers for one year, under the act of congress.

Captain James Allen, who had had command of the troops, stationed in Iowa, opened a recruiting office on the Missouri river, and the Mormons having assembled in large numbers on the Missouri, and being anxious to explore the western country, and now having an opportunity to do so, under pay from the United States, a large number of them enlisted for one year, while the balance remained on the Missouri, till they heard from those who went to explore the country.

The opening up a thoroughfare across the western plains attracted the attention of many persons, and in the spring of 1847, quite a large emigration from Iowa went across the mountains to Oregon. The acquiring from Mexico a large tract of country, and the discovery of the gold mines in California, in 1848, created a great excitement in the states, and there was an immense emigration across the mountains in the spring of 1849; most of which passed through Iowa.

In the spring of 1849, the Mormons, getting reports from their pioneers, most of those who had the means to emigrate, started west for Salt Lake, to establish a colony, where they could enjoy their religious sentiments undisturbed by their enemies. Yet, a large number remained, most of whom engaged in cultivating the soil, some in trade; and they built up quite a village at Kanessville. This point was the great business mart of the Mormons, and became the principal crossing point of the Missouri, for the emigration across the mountains, and where emigrants laid in their supplies. Many of the Mormons, who had made their way to this point, had not the means to pursue their journey farther, and had to stop here till they could procure the necessary outfit.

For several years this part of the state was occupied almost entirely by Mormons, who at that time held a prominent position in the affairs of Iowa, particularly in political matters.

But the business at this point became of such importance, on account of the overland emigration, that in 1850, several business men, not of the Mormon faith, settled here and opened stores. And the Mormons gradually leaving for the west, and others supplying their places, this religious sect soon ceased to attract attention in Iowa.

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