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History Of Louisa Barnes Pratt

S. George Ellsworth

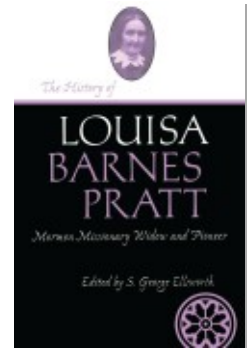
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CHAPTER FOUR

From Ripley, New York, to Nauvoo, Illinois

Memoirs, October 1838 to Fall 1841

[Selling Out at Ripley, October 1838]

From that time I had never a doubt. My soul was full of peace and joy. My brother made an agreement with our parents, a sister and brother, that when he had disposed of his property in Chatauque Co. N.Y. he would return to Canada, sell the Homestead, and assist in moving them with us to the centre stake of Zion in Jackson Co., Missouri. Thither did our warmest aspirations tend. The brethren returned; sold the farm and stock, and made preparations to start on the long journey, a thousand miles to travel in cold winter weather. My brother with his horse and carriage set out for Canada. The rest of us took up our journey for the "Far West". We parted with the full expectation that when we met again our father and mother, youngest brother and sister would all be with us. On the 25th of Nov. 1838, we bid farewell to our friends in Ripley.¹ Some were very kind, others were cool and reserved, greatly inclined to censure us, because we had embraced a new faith.

I can never forget the reflections which revolved in my mind as I passed through the town, and cast a lingering look towards the old house of worship, and the burial grounds where the remains of my dear sister lay interred. There were the little white stones I had caused to be placed to her memory, with this inscription: "Farewell dear sister, my sad heart still bleeds with anguish for thy loss, yet gladdens with the blessed hope of meeting thee again at the great resurrection morn."² I strained my eyes to catch the last glimpse, thinking of the great uncertainty that I should ever behold it again. To me, it seemed cruel to go and leave her grave alone. Not a relative to draw nigh and drop a tear on the sods that covered her. The weather was intensely cold. Although we were clothed in the best

possible manner to guard against the cold, we felt it most severely. Sometimes when we called to warm ourselves at a hotel, a second daughter [Frances] would be so benumbed with cold as to be almost speechless.³

[Pleasant Garden, Indiana, January 1839 to Fall 1841]

For five hundred miles mud was not seen on our wagon wheels, then came a January thaw. The most intolerable travelling that can be imagined. At this time we were detained in Indiana, Pleasant Garden. There we found a Mormon family. We felt quite at home with them. While waiting for the roads to become passable, intelligence came to us that we could not be permitted to enter the State of Missouri. The Saints were driven out enmass, by a ruthless mob; the State authorities taking no notice of it. Counsel was sent to all such as were en route for that state, to stop on their way, and seek an assylam; till such times as the church would, by the mercy of God, again be established. This was a terrible disappointment! I felt as I suppose our first parents did, when driven from Paradise. My anticipations had been raised to the highest strain, in view of going to the gathering place of the Saints; a spot of earth designated by the Lord.

There was now no alternative, we must be reconciled. We conversed about what the ancient saints were called to suffer, and the quiry arose, "why should we think to escape persecution, who have dared to believe the same gospel? even in prophets and apostles."

Mr. Pratt seemed much discouraged when he heard the Prophet was imprisoned. He soon decided to go to Vincennes, Ind. and purchase land; which he did, 260 acres at government price. Then indeed we were no better off for a home. It was covered with heavy timber; immense rock maple trees. He then concluded to purchase a hundred acres more with a small improvement, several log buildings. We moved on to it right in the thick woods. West of us lived a family of Kentuckians, a half mile away; east was a neighbor a mile and a half distant. This was a lonely situation. The national road ran twenty rods from the house. In the rainy seasons [the road] was almost impassable.

The village of Pleasant Garden was four miles distant, where my sister and family were located. Mr. Crosby was a cabinet maker; went into business with reasonable success.⁴ The citizens seemed pleased with us, but apparently were afraid of our religion.

The church by this time had purchased a town on the Miss. called Commerce. They changed the name to Nauvoo. The Elders soon commenced to travel abroad to preach the gospel. Called on us in Indiana, urged us to go up to the church, which I greatly desired to do, but Mr. P. was much attached to the farm; often remarked that he would ask no

better fortune than to finish his days there, were it not for the religion he had embraced. It was a situation wholly uncongenial to me. I had little or no society. I had sacrificed a pleasant home and agreeable companions, for the sake of going to live with the saints. I had been stopt on the way, and here I was alone in the woods. I often retired to the thick shades to weep, and brood over my sorrows. The winters were long and severe; we had unfinished rooms and smoky chimneys. The third winter our children were sick with conjestive fever.

The sickness of our children was a severe affliction for me, situated as I was so far from my sister and from neighbors. Our oldest daughter was very low, requiring attention through the night. Such was the intensity of the cold that ten minutes was as long as I could stand by her bed at one time without being in danger of freezing. I made it a subject of devout prayer that the severity of the atmosphere might be modified. When at last the blessing came, and the mild breezes began to blow, I walked abroad with a more thankful heart than had ever throbbled in my bosom before. So raging was the child's fever she did not feel the cold at all. Six weeks at one time passed and I saw not the face of a female friend. I afterwards told my neighbors I would witness against them in the judgement day for neglecting me in my afflictions. They acknowledged the justice of my complaints. Afterwards were very attentive.

For eighteen days the child's fever never abated. I called to mind my sorrows in the state of N. York, when my poor sister wasted away before my eyes, and how I prayed (O, how fervently,) that such an affliction might never again fall to my lot. I came now to claim the answer to my prayer, and entreated the Lord to spare my daughter's life! I laid hold on faith, and soon had cause to rejoice and praise God that my children were all in a state of convalescence, and soon recovered. In the spring of 1840 my fourth daughter was born, previous to the rage of the conjestive fever which carried away hundreds from the shores of time. About this time a Mormon Elder came that way, called on my brother-in-law to get his carriage wheel repaired. Mr. C. invited him to stop and preach. The people assembled, and a deep interest was manifested. The second or third day when he would have pursued his journey, going to the shop for his wagon wheel, behold it had been taken away, whither he knew not. This put an end to his going on his journey, so he continued preaching, till a great excitement was created.

The region of country came out to hear the new preacher, whose name was Almon Babbit. He was reputed a profound reasoner; and judging from the attention paid to his preaching, we were hoping half the population would be baptized. Six persons only had applied, a small branch organized, when Elder B. expressed his intention to pursue his journey. We expostulated, reasoning from appearances that many more

would be added to the church. He replied "no, there will be no more additions at this time." He further added, "I inquired of the Lord concerning my labors here, and he showed me in a dream, six persons who would embrace the gospel." He left us and went on his way, and after a few months two more were added. They were baptized by Orson Hyde in the adjoining county. Meetings were held regularly in Pleasant Garden, and sometimes at our residence on "Croys Creek," as the place was called. We felt joyful in meeting together, a little band, twelve in number. We were strong in the Lord, and testified boldly to our friendly neighbors, that the priesthood and gifts of the gospel were again restored to men on earth.

We had great pleasure in entertaining the travelling elders. Lonely as our condition was we felt it a high privilege to have the servants of God coming right from the body of the Church, call upon us, sing psalms, and pray, tell us of the faith and zeal among the saints, filling our hearts with praise and thanksgiving. I began to be very desirous to go to the church. Mr. Pratt, hoping to make me more contented to remain there until he could sell our farm for its full value, sold a piece of land and bought a house and lot in Pleasant Garden, that I might live near my sister. Also a carriage, having a gentle animal I could drive myself. I could drive to the farm when Mr. P. was there at his work, at the close of the week give him a ride home. Those who did not know the inward workings of my mind, complimented my pleasant surroundings.

[On to Nauvoo, Fall 1841]

In vain did I strive to be contented. My heart was set on going to the church. I prayed earnestly that the Lord would open the way. After much deliberation Mr. P. concluded to rent the farm, and also the village property and take up the line of march for Nauvoo. Long and severe was the struggle. We had two teams and young cattle to drive, there was no company going, no one to help. The time appointed to start arrived, still no one engaged to assist. I prayed with all the fervor of my soul. Just as I was about to give up in despair Elder Gurley rode up to the door on horseback, returning from a mission east, bound for Nauvoo. The first words I said to him were, "Brother Gurley, we are all ready to start for Illinois, but there is no one found to go with us. Will you wait, and help us on the journey?" "Yes," he replied, "I am the very man to assist you, cheer up your hearts, all is right, I have come in good time." I felt that a load of a thousand pounds was removed from my shoulders, and as much more from my heart.

I soon found brother G. knew what it was to move. He commenced at once to pack the goods, a business he seemed perfectly familiar with.

We had a gentle animal (which I could drive myself,) and a Barouche [a four-wheeled carriage], with two spring seats convenient for myself and my four children. Mr. Pratt had a yoke of Durham cattle, equal to two yoke of common oxen, which he drove, and carried an immense load of goods. Elder Gurley drove the cows and young stock. I never felt in finer spirits, although I left my sister behind, for I knew she would soon join us. We had a prosperous journey of 270 miles. Many pleasant calls I had on the way. Being able to drive much faster than the ox team could travel, I could gain time to make calls, which I did, at the most respectable looking places, where we were often treated with the greatest hospitality, fruit generously given us to take on our way.

There was a circumstance transpired while I lived in Pleasant Garden, Ind., which I had forgotten to mention among the reminiscences of that place. I will now refer to it. One beautiful summer morning, the sun was shining with unusual splendor, not a cloud to obscure the horizon was observed by myself. I proposed to my sister that we would take a carriage ride to the next village, ten miles distant. We could drive the horse ourselves. The weather being very warm we dressed in white muslin. Besides myself and sister, my four little girls were appareled for the ride. We drove on merrily, a few miles, when we discovered a small cloud arising. We quickened our speed thinking to make the place ere a storm would overtake us. Loud thunders roared. The storm was well nigh upon us. I drove up to a house, thinking to alight and go in, but to our astonishment the horse refused to stop. He persisted in going ahead.

Accordingly we drove on a half mile further, halted at a gate. The people came out to help us in. The horse made no resistance, seemed very willing to be tied. We were throughly drenched. The storm was terrible. When the hurricane subsided we started for home. Trees had fallen in every direction. Precisely on that spot where the horse had shown such a determined will, there lay an immense tree, turned up from the roots. Had the horse been left there he would have been killed, and the carriage broken to atoms. We pondered upon the event as we rode along having to pursue a Zig-zag course to avoid the trees which had fallen across the road. We concluded after thinking deeply upon the ways of Providence, that it was a premonition of the horse, that he might escape death, and save the carriage to take us to the promised land.

But to return to our journey. We had very little money to pay our expenses. Elder Gurley gave me two dollars, which a woman stole from my satchel while left in her care a few moments. I said, "She shall see the time when she will need money and cannot obtain it."

My husband reproved me for stopping at such a filthy looking place, hoped I would learn a lesson from it, and remember, said he, "that the appearance of such miserable poverty is a token of dishonesty." We sold

articles we had to spare to get feed for our teams. Soon we were overtaken by a company of Saints from the State of N. York going to Nauvoo. Glad and thankful were we to see them for though entire strangers their interests were blended with ours, which made us friends at once. It was agreed that I should travel on with them (as they all had horse teams,) as far as Springfield Illinois, where I was to wait till the ox team came up with the goods. Elder Gurley went on with the stock, I with the carriage and the children, in the company.

We arrived in Springfield in a day's drive, forty miles, where we found brethren who showed us every kindness in their power. Sister H. Bishop waited on me as she would an own sister. I never met a more benevolent woman. She went out with me to visit the members of the church in that branch and I felt that I had communion with saints in very deed. The company passed on, leaving a boy with us to help us on the remaining journey. Mr. Pratt soon came up, and we pursued our way, with the blessings of the kind hearted brethren showered upon our heads. We were obliged to camp out one night, and my babe was sick. Our tent would not shed rain. That night a terrible thunder storm arose. In a short time our bedding was drenched through. A long and tedious night was that to me. I was in great fear about my sick child. The morning came with no signs of fair weather. We journeyed on with wet bedding till we came to the house of a Good Samaritan. The kind hostess made a large fire and dried our bedding and all our wet clothes, assisted in nursing the sick child, and refused pay.

I made her a present of maple sugar, with which she was much pleased, and in my heart I prayed the Lord to bless her. In Beardstown we found an old acquaintance, a young woman we had known in the State of N. York. She was married and settled in the place. She received us with great cordiality, caused a good supper to be set before us, which we faint and weary heartily enjoyed. With buoyant spirits, I travelled on till we began to near the place of destination. It was Saturday. I revolved in my mind the pleasure I should have driving into the city that night, and the following day attending divine worship, with the saints, seeing the prophet Joseph, and hearing from his lips the words of eternal life. How sadly was I disappointed. We fell in company with a German who lived five miles out of Nauvoo, in the dead woods. He conversed with Mr. P., encouraged him to stop in his settlement, being a better place to keep stock. He was at once persuaded, and to my utter astonishment required me to turn off the main road, with the horse I was driving, and follow his team to the German's residence.

I made my objections all in vain. With a heavy heart I turned the carriage out of the good road, into a rough uneven one, and followed the loaded wagon. A mile brought us to a small log house in the midst of

heavy timber. Instead of opening a gate we had to climb a high fence to enter the dooryard. I was dumb with disappointment. I kept silence even from good words. There were nine children in the family, the parents, or rather seven of us, making eighteen in all, to lodge in one room. I laid my beds on the floor with the others, pondering in secret what I would do on the coming day. I felt a strong will, not easily to be shaken. Early did I arise carried my beds to the wagon, and made preparations to continue my journey; intending to make the town in time for meeting.

This same family had made their exit from Missouri in the time of the great persecution of the saints, thought themselves happy in finding that sequestered spot away from the confusion and strife. I had often wished I could have gone to the centre Stake of Zion, even to have shared the fate of those who went, but when I listened to their tales of horror, it made my blood almost chill in my veins, and I felt to thank the Lord that events were ordered so as to prevent our going there. But to return to the manner in which I succeeded in getting to Nauvoo that day. While the men went out to gather the stock and yoke the oxen, I packed the wagon. When that was done I walked with the children to find their father and the cattle. We came up to the men talking very deliberately together. [They] had suffered the stock to stray off into the thick timbers, where it would be difficult to find them. I retired a little way off, sat down upon a rock, and gave vent to my full heart in a shower of tears. I felt my spirit rise up in rebellion against such irregular management. In a few moments I recovered my resolution, and rushed in to the dense forest to assist in searching for the cattle. To my great joy they were soon found and we were soon started on our way. We reached Nauvoo while the people were convened in a grove for publick worship.⁵ I called at Pres't B. Young's whom I had seen in Indiana. Sister Y. though a stranger, spoke kind and encouraging words to me, and I felt my burdens lightening. We drove up to the grove just as the meeting closed; and those who had known us and shared our hospitality in Indiana, came to the carriage, and accosted us in the most cordial manner, invited us to their homes, congratulating us on our arrival in the City of the Saints.⁶