

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF HARVEY HARRIS CLUFF (1836-1846)

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On the suggestion of my wife, Emily Greening Till Cluff, I am persuaded to undertake and at this date, commence writing my autobiography. I am now past seventy-two years of age. I can only devote a limited amount of time to the accomplishment of the work, as the duration of life is uncertain, especially after a person has passed three score and ten years. I have no assurance as to how many more years, through the grace of God, I may be permitted to live on this beautiful earth. I have already written the history of my father and mother including biographical sketches of his daughter and sons with their wives making a volume of over 400 pages. I shall not give in this autobiography, the full sketch of my life as published in the Cluff family journal, but I propose to enlarge upon it, as I have had an eventful life. Twenty-five years of missionary labors and traveling over one hundred thousand miles by land and sea. I do not, however, contemplate recording every detail, but I shall select incidents and data as I am able to do, and make my autobiography as interesting as possible to my descendants and all who may chance to read it.

As my life has been mainly spent in the service of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as a missionary, in the presidency of a stake of Zion, and Bishop of a ward, much of the matter of this biography will run parallel with church affairs seasoned with gems of faith and results thereof as manifested to me through the grace of God the Eternal Father.

I, Harvey Harris Cluff, was born January 9th, 1836, in the town of Kirtland, Geauga County, stake of Ohio, United States of America. David Cluff, Senior and Elizabeth Hall are my parents of whom I am proud and I shall consider it eminently proper to give expression of eulogies of their characters whenever opportunity presents itself during the progress of this writing. We trace back the genealogical chain of descent from my father David to John Clough who came from London, England in the ship Elizabeth in 1635 when twenty-two years of age. There is, however, an account of a Clough who came to England with William the Conqueror. While we feel certain that John descended from that Clough we have not been able to make up to this date, any satisfactory family connection.

Records in the several states in which the Cloughs pioneered give evidence of respectable citizenship of the Clough families. Many of the progenitors of Father David Cluff occupied prominent positions in civil and military affairs. In Colonial times we furnish soldiers and officers who aid in the struggles for independents.

Father himself served in the army during the war of 1812 and when the hostilities ceased and the army disbanded Father went to Canada where he married Elizabeth Hall and shortly thereafter he returned to his native state and with his wife settled there until they started West. Father being a ship carpenter by trade found employment at the Dover ship yards. About this time considerable excitement prevailed in religious sects throughout the eastern states concerning the "New Bible" brought forth by the Prophet Joseph Smith called the Book of Mormon. The claim went forth throughout all the land, that this young man, only about fifteen years of age, had been visited by God and His son Jesus Christ and by angels and had obtained from the Hill Cumorah gold plates which gave an account of the ancient inhabitants of America and contained the fullness of the gospel as given to that people. As father had become deeply interested in accounts published by explorers of antiques showing that a civilized people once inhabited America, he naturally became imbued with the hope that the new

record, would give him the information that he was seeking after.

Father was led to go to Kirtland, Ohio, where the prophet was and see and talk with him. He seemed to have a great desire to hear from the prophets direct a statement of the wonderful visions, and condescensions of heavenly beings. During his journey from new Hampshire he chanced to meet Martin Harris, a convert to the new faith on a canal boat from whom he gained much information which only intensified his anxiety to see the prophet. The meeting with the prophet of God and listening to the inspiring voice of that great man became the greatest epoch in the life of David Cluff. His whole soul was illuminated and he partook of the fruit of the tree of life. His soul was lifted from the dogmas of man made religions and he had a glimpse of the joys within the veil. The study of the antiques of America now developed into satisfactory knowledge. The Book of Mormon and the prophets/statements, dispersed all doubts and poured in flood of knowledge and information that satisfied this student of antiques and built up a faith that never wavered.

The interest and faith in the gospel culminated in moving the family to Kirtland. Father at once enlisted in the cause and became an earnest worker on the Kirtland temple. During the residence of the family in Kirtland, father took a mission to the Eastern states and Canada.

The spirit of persecution never ceased from the day the prophet obtained the plates from the angel Moroni; but the forces augmented in numbers and wickedness until the Saints were forced to abandon their homes and temple. Jackson County, Missouri seemed to be the next gathering place and thither the people bent their way. Our family gathered up what few household goods they possessed and started off for Jackson County. On the family arriving at Springfield, Illinois all but two were prostrate with the chills and fever. The detention of the family at Springfield resulted in an escape of the family from being in the Missouri persecution and driving from Jackson County.

When the family left Springfield it was for Nauvoo where a few converts were gathered. It was in the year 1840 when the family reached that beautiful place. A few families had proceeded us scarcely enough to designate it a town, but families sufficient to prove it an unhealthy district; for many there had already experienced the chills and fever. These afflictions could be endured by the settlers better than the persecutions through which they had recently passed through. I myself can call to mind the ordeal through which I passed, with the chills and fever. The destruction of home, fields of grain, and other property coupled with the ill treatment from fiend, in human shape, did not seem to discourage the Latter-day Saints in their industrial ambition.

Soon Nauvoo grew, with magic rapidity, from a few rude homes to a magnificent city. The influx of members of the Church indicated the Nauvoo was destined to be the populous city of the state. Houses increased in number, farms were opened up and prairie lands east of the city converted into prosperous fields of golden grain. What seemed to give a wonderful effect in thus promoting the rapid growth of the _____, was the Nauvoo Temple which was rising in prominence, lifting its white walls above the city.

Traffic on the "Father of Waters" the mighty Mississippi, increased. Exploration parties and tourists up and down the river admiring the grandeur of the scenery and magnificence of the temple and city. We were on the borders of civilization quite in a wilderness country and the saints by the improvements they were making indicated that no more persecution would be inflicted upon them and that henceforth Americanism would be Americanism in theory and practice; the constitution stand

as a mighty standard of freedom and liberty irrespective of color or creed and that life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness was now assured.

Dark clouds of trouble hung over the city like a pall and burst forth in all its fury at the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. Not since the crucifixion of our Lord has a whole people been stricken down in such grief as that of the people of Nauvoo. I shall never, no never, eradicate from my mind the crushed feeling that fell upon me. I was very young at the time but the visits of the prophet to my father's home and the attention which he gave to the children and a little incident which occurred at a meeting in a bowery near the temple while he was preaching, all endeared him to me. The incident alluded to above happened in a bowery built near the Nauvoo temple, in which to hold public meetings. At a Sabbath meeting in this bowery, the date of which I do not remember, myself and several boy playmates, were sitting on the rude steps which led up to the rostrum on which the Prophet Joseph Smith stood, discoursing with such power as to attract the attention of even boys. Policemen came and were driving us away; when the Prophet forbade them, saying, "Let the boys alone, they will hear something that they will never forget."

Now I highly prize the remembrance of that remark and although the prophet frequently visited my father's home and I had heard him preach before, no remark of his had ever impressed me so forcibly. I do not remember that anything attracted us boys to the steps of the stand only the powerful manner in which "Brother Joseph" was speaking. I am quite sure that we were peaceful, for by the remarks which he made it is inferred that we were attentively listening to him and not disturbing him in his discourse.

Father built a comfortable home directly north of the temple and a cabinet shop near the temple where he and Calvin Reed manufactured furniture.

The dark clouds of persecution which hung over the saints in Kirtland and Missouri and burst with fury by mob violence, now, seemingly, had forever disappeared from the horizon. No dream, or vision or revelation had pictured to the Saints the terrible ordeal that awaited them. Peace seemed to garnish the heavens. Thrift hung upon every tree and redemption was, seemingly, assured. However when persecution did open its artillery upon the citizens of Nauvoo the climax was soon reached. The prophet and patriarch were martyred and the Saints driven across the Mississippi River into the wilderness of the territory of Iowa. The martyrdom of these men of God cast a gloom over the people so intense at the time, that those whose children then still remember with bowed silvered locks the terrible feelings which they experienced at the time. No cyclone or dark cloud of persecution inflicted upon the Saints in the past seemed so black and fatal. Forced into the wilderness among savages, was supposed by the enemy, to prove the final destruction of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

From the camp of the exiles looking back across the great Mississippi River, Nauvoo seemed a specter city suspended in the sky; with its temple towering above all else. We may feebly imagine the sadness of those who had been endowed within the walls of that sacred edifice, when they gazed from Montrose back to that spot, from whence they had been ruthlessly driven. The martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith in cause and effect marks a chapter in the history of the world paralleled only in the crucifixion of the Savior. The cause which the Prophet Joseph represented was the same gospel which was introduced by the elder brother--the Redeemer. The persecution which followed the King of the Jews by his countrymen, was very like the persecution inflicted upon the Prophet Joseph Smith

by his countrymen. Christ came as the great Redeemer of mankind, a sacrifice for the atonement of the original sin. Joseph Smith came as a restorer of the gospel under Christ, and his blood had to be shed in order to seal the divinity of his mission and make it as valid as the mission of Jesus Christ. Joseph, therefore, walked in Christ's footsteps and bore the cross to the sacrifice of his own blood. Christ's mission was to all the world. The world was fully represented at his crucifixion. There were the Jews, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Arabs, Syrians, Rabbis, Priests, Sadducees, and Scribes all crying crucify him. The Prophet Joseph Smith's mission was to all the world. The world was fully represented at his martyrdom if not directly the world acquiesced in the deed. There were the Americans, English, Scotch, Welch, Irish, French, Germans, Spanish, Scandinavians, clergymen, ministers, Rev. divines, doctors, lawyers and judges all saying kill him martyr him. The parallelism cannot be refuted. It stands as an unperishable pillar which reaches to the throne of God. It is upon this eternal truth, that I have made my calling and election sure. And why should I not? Can there be a safer and more divine foundation on which to build? My destiny, therefore, for the future, is upon this rock, where I have been building for all my life. I look back to my youthful days and regard the incident at the rostrum steps as, the first impression of divinity that has led up to my present faith and standpoint of hope for the future.

"Know then that every soul is free, To choose his life and what he'll be For this eternal truth is given That God will force no man to heaven."

In the fullest sense of the principle of freedom and liberty have I chosen this divine path to walk in imbued with an assurance of a great reward in the celestial glory.

The foregoing coordinate principle connected with the mission of Christ the Redeemer and Joseph Smith the Restorer in parallelism, furnishes a firm foundation upon which and through which I affix my hope of reward in the mansions of glory. I unhesitatingly affirm my belief in the divine mission of the Redeemer of the world and the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith. As a fundamental principle leading up one's future, suppose every moment of life should spell out some word and these words when formed into sentences embody in itself whatever vehement desires lead up to higher plains of intelligence power and influence, always remembering that life is not mean, but grand. Every youth should contemplate upon the character he wishes to form and diligently maintain through life and then work to that end. No intelligent person in youth or old age should merely drift along. Look the world squarely in the face, listen and learn and not pass along, in life, indifferently, for there are grand lessons before you every minute. Don't let it be said of you that life has been a failure. The royal path of life has been marked out for you by Jesus Christ himself. He that walketh therein, builds upon the foundation that withstands the winds and floods.

"The busy world shoves angrily aside The man who stands with arms akimbo set Until occasion tells him what to do And he who waits to have his task marked out Shall die and leave his errand unfulfilled."

As we move along in youthful life and experience we cannot always determine the sort of character we are molding or forming but the fruits or results, are manifest and we discover when the lenses of our vision are enlarged, and age comes upon that environment has had much to do in the development of the man. Manliness, fully developed, is not attained all at once. I glance back along the stages of my life to the incident which I have already related wherein the policemen attempted to eject me and some other boys of my age, from the rostrum step leading up to where the Prophet Joseph Smith

stood preaching and there I find the seed of religious thought and faith began to generate and it has entwined itself around my heart and formed a shield of protection through all subsequent experiences and trials.

They, the exiles, launch their destiny towards the west imbued with a faith such as actuated the children of Israel during their experience and journey in the wilderness. The providence of God was not slow in coming to the relief of the exiles in a very similar way to the manna fed to ancient Israel.

The sudden flight of thousands of people into a wilderness country rendered it impossible to gather provision more than sufficient to do for a few days. In these trying times the Lord sent millions of quails in their camps which could be caught without any special efforts. These very palatable birds seemed to comprehend their mission of salvation to afflicted Israel.

Oh, lovely Nauvoo I love you All thy scenes I love so well Friends, connection, city, country I am forced to bid you all farewell Can I, oh can I say all is well?

Mount Pisgah, located some distance in the interior of an Iowa wilderness was selected by father as a temporary resting place, where by opening a farm preparation could be made to pursue further journey west.

During the first or until crop could be raised the eldest boys of the family russeled out in distant parts of the country settled and obtained employment by which provisions were procured. Small streams of water which flowed through that section of Iowa did not contain fish, nor were the native fruits abundant, or wild game plentiful. Several kinds of nuts were obtained; the gathering of which in the fall of the year was more of amusement than a task; and additional pleasure came during winter months when the family gathered at the flowing wood fire to eat popcorn and crack nuts. Those were exhilarating times for young people, long to be remembered. Of wild game we may mention the turkey, prairie chicken and quails.

The most important natural resource, which came in possession of the family was a valuable maple sugar plantation; which was located about 15 miles from Pisgah Settlement. Every spring we visited this plantation which yielded remunerative returns in our own make of maple sugar. I was permitted, young as I was, to go with father on one of his trips to the plantation before we took our departure for the Rocky Mountains.