

The First Mormon Mission to the Indians

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THE newly organized Church of Christ was less than six months old when its members met in conference at Fayette, N. Y., on September 26, 1830. The youthful prophet, Joseph Smith, Jr., was present to direct the proceedings. While only 62 persons had affiliated with the church, the meetings were permeated with expectation and excitement.¹

Already the Mormons were looking to the occasion when, according to revelation, they would "be gathered in unto one place, upon the face of this land, to prepare their hearts, and be prepared in all things, against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked."² The millennium was at hand, but before its advent, the righteous were to be assembled in Zion, "a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most high God."³ The site for this community had not been designated; revelation stated that "no man knoweth where the city shall be built."⁴ It was understood, nevertheless, that it was to be near the Indian settlements in the West, that is, "on the borders of the Lamanites."⁵

The eyes of the Mormons, like those of communitarians before them, had turned westward. The West, they believed, would provide a haven from persecution and cheap, fertile land for the faithful. To the west were to be found the Indians, peoples of special concern to believers in the *Book of Mormon*. Andrew Jackson's policy of Indian removal was being implemented, and the Indian nations were being transplanted beyond the Missouri border into the region of present-day Kansas and Oklahoma.⁶ The possible locations for Zion thus were limited to the Far West even

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1. Preston Nibley, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Salt Lake City, 1946), p. 111.

2. *Book of Commandments* (Zion [Independence, Mo.], 1833), ch. 29, vs. 9; hereafter cited as *B. of C.*

3. *Ibid.*, ch. 47, vs. 59.

4. *Ibid.*, ch. 30, vs. 8.

5. *Ibid.*, ch. 30, vs. 9. "The first project, the move to Zion in Missouri, was doubtless given part of its impetus and its direction by the belief that the Indians were the Lamanites described in the *Book of Mormon*."—R. Kent Fielding, "Historical Perspectives for a Liberal Mormonism," *Western Humanities Review*, Salt Lake City, v. 14 (Winter, 1960), p. 74.

6. The removal bill had been passed by congress on May 28, 1830.—Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal* (Norman, 1953), p. 21.

before a survey of that country had been undertaken by the Mormons.

At this conference a group of young elders was commissioned to make an exploration of the Western country. Oliver Cowdery, the scribe to whom Smith had dictated most of the *Book of Mormon*, was selected as leader. He was directed by revelation to "go unto the Lamanites" and institute the church among them.⁷ Chosen as his companions were Parley Parker Pratt, Peter Whitmer, and Ziba Peterson.

Their goal lay over a thousand miles away through sparsely settled country, crossed by only a few roads and those little more than deeply rutted wagon tracks. The missionaries would have to walk most of the way carrying packs burdened with food, clothing, and copies of the "Golden Bible." Undaunted, they set out in early October at the height of an Indian summer, resplendent with color. Near Buffalo they spent part of a day with the Catteraugas tribe but had difficulty making themselves understood. Leaving behind two copies of the *Book of Mormon*, they moved toward their next objective, the Western Reserve of northern Ohio. Pratt had chosen this as a stopping-off place; he had been a devotee of Sidney Rigdon, an elder and early founder of the Campbellite movement. Pratt aspired to convert his former instructor to his new-found faith. Having resided in the area, Pratt also had other acquaintances whom he could contact.

In the region around Kirtland, Ohio, the missionaries were received with enthusiasm; the word they preached swept through the population like a prairie wildfire. In a few weeks of intense exhortation, 127 souls, including Rigdon, were baptized, a number larger than the whole of the membership in the East.⁸

Despite their astonishing success, the Mormons felt they could postpone their journey no longer, for winter would soon be upon them. Taking with them one of their latest converts, Frederick G. Williams, a physician whose skills might prove valuable to the Indians, they continued westward, preaching as they went. In Sandusky, in western Ohio, they called upon the Wyandotte Indians and spent several days among them. Already this tribe was making preparations to remove to Indian territory. Departing in friendship, the Mormons continued their journey to Cincinnati, where they preached for several days but without success. They then took passage on a steamboat for St. Louis. When they

7. *B. of C.*, ch. 30, vs. 7.

8. Inez Smith Davis, *The Story of the Church* (4th ed.; Independence, 1948), p. 91.

reached Cairo, Ill., the Mississippi river was thickly choked with ice. Wasting little time debating the situation they set out on foot rather than wait for the river to clear. St. Louis was over two hundred miles away and the remainder of the trip was one long, incessant struggle against the elements. It was to be a winter of rare severity, forever after known among midwestern pioneers as the "Winter of the Deep Snow."⁹

Inclement weather set in unusually early that year. On December 20, the day the party left Cincinnati, a cold rain which intermittently changed to sleet had begun to fall. Soon the earth was saturated, then frozen. The day before Christmas, the precipitation turned to snow which fell in large, soft flakes that covered the earth to a depth of several inches. This first storm was only the prelude to a winter of almost uninterrupted turbulence.

The first white mantle still lay unsullied on the frozen prairies, in a profound hush of nature, when the meteorological opera opened with a crash. . . . A furious gale, bitter cold, a blinding, swirling blur of snow, and leaden, lowering skies, combined to make this storm a thing to paralyse that prairie country. It seems to have continued for days, unabated—a wonder, at first, then a terror, a benumbing horror as it became a menace to life of men and animals.¹⁰

The weather changed again to sleet which formed a crust on top of the snow. A steady northwest wind arose, filling the air with new, flying snow, so blinding and choking that men could barely make headway against it. Then the sun appeared cold and bright, lancing the landscape and dazzling the eyesight.

The rigor of these storms was such that 26 years later Pratt was to recall vividly the last stages of the trek westward.

Passing through St. Louis and St. Charles, we travelled on foot for three hundred miles through vast prairies and through trackless wilds of snow—no beaten road; houses few and far between; and the bleak northwest wind always blowing in our faces with a keenness which would almost take the skin off the face. We travelled for whole days, from morning till night, without a house or fire, wading in snow to the knees at every step, and the cold so intense that the snow did not melt on the south side of the houses, even in the mid-day sun, for nearly six weeks. We carried on our backs our changes of clothing, several books, and corn bread and raw pork. We often ate our frozen bread and pork by the way, when the bread would be so frozen that we could not bite or penetrate any part of it but the outside crust.

9. Eleanor Atkinson, "The Winter of the Deep Snow," *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 1909 (Springfield), pp. 47-62.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 49. "Snow—Snow. Accounts of heavy falls of snow are pouring in from all quarters. It has been snowing here, with little or no intermission, for two weeks. Between St. Louis and the Council Bluffs it was said to be four and five feet deep, before the last fall commenced."—St. Louis (Mo.), *Beacon*, February 3, 1831.

After much fatigue and some suffering we all arrived in Independence, in the County of Jackson, on the extreme western frontiers of Missouri, and of the United States.¹¹

This marks the coming of the first Mormons to the Far West and the prologue to a violent tragedy that would play itself out over the next eight years. That which took place in upper Missouri would do much to shape the future of Mormonism which, in turn, would stamp indelibly its impress upon the history of the American West.

The arrival of the Mormons came as a surprise to the original pioneers. As noted by John C. McCoy, a young surveyor, newspapers were scarce at that time in western Missouri, and "few, if any, of the first settlers had heard of the existence of the sect."¹² The only resident in Jackson county whose place adjoined the state line—near what would become Westport—was Col. Robert Patterson, who in 1825 had been one of the first heads-of-family to move west of the Big Blue river. The Mormons took refuge from the cold at Patterson's house for a few days; then they decided to split up, probably for economic reasons. Whitmer and Peterson set up as tailors in Independence. (Soon they would be visited by a young Kentuckian, Alexander W. Doniphan, who had only recently begun the practice of law in western Missouri. He rode the 30 miles from Lexington to have the tailors make him a new suit.)¹³

In early February the other missionaries crossed into Indian territory. They spent the first evening among the Shawnees and apparently made a favorable impression upon at least one person, Cpt. Anthony Shane, an Ottawa and the official interpreter.¹⁴ But Johnston Lykins was already in the process of establishing a Baptist mission among the Shawnees. The next day the Mormons walked across the ice to the north bank of the Kansas river and followed it to a Delaware village which was located 12 miles from where that stream empties into the Missouri river. The Mormons had reached their westernmost destination.

The Delaware Indians, only a few months earlier, had concluded a journey of their own, one that had begun centuries before and covered distances far greater than those traversed by the Mormons. At the time of first English contact, the Delawares (the Lenni-

11. Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (Salt Lake City, 1950), p. 52.

12. *Kansas City (Mo.) Journal*, January 18, 1885.

13. Interview with Doniphan, *ibid.*, June 12, 1881.

14. Delilah Lykins to Isaac McCoy, July 1, 1831, "Isaac McCoy Letters," manuscript division, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

Lenapi, or "real men" as they called themselves) were in possession of the entire basin of the Delaware river. The other Algonquian tribes—the Shawnee, Ottawa, Kickapoo, Mohegan, etc.—deferred to them as "grandfather" out of respect for the legends that the Delawares occupied the traditional homeland. They were considered to be the source from which the other tribes had sprung. (The Algonquians were to produce some of America's most noted Indians; *i. e.*, Powhatan, Pontiac, and Tecumseh.) In physical appearance the Delawares "were rather tall and well proportioned."¹⁵

Initially, the relations between the Delawares and the colonists were good, particularly with William Penn. However, after 1690 their situation rapidly deteriorated. The Iroquois became a disruptive and dominant influence in the region. By 1720 the Delawares had been forced into such a subordinate position that the Iroquois had labeled them as "women." Their friendship with the whites was rewarded in 1737 by the fraud known as the "Walking Purchase," by which they were tricked into giving up a sizable portion of their homeland. When they protested, the colonists called upon the Iroquois to enforce the treaty.

From around 1720 to 1760 the Delawares drifted west, first into the Wyoming valley of Pennsylvania and then into the Muskingum valley of Ohio, where a number were converted to Christianity by the Moravians, especially by David Zeisberger, the "Apostle of the Delawares." Stung by their past treatment and the advance of the whites, by midcentury the Delawares were ready to come back with a vengeance; they soon lost the sobriquet "women." They were present at the defeat of Braddock, supported the French in the French and Indian War, and were a part of Pontiac's rebellion. During the American Revolution many joined the British and continued hostile until Anthony Wayne brought them to terms at the Treaty of Greenville in 1795.

By 1800 the main body of the Delawares was located in Indiana, where contact with traders and alcohol had so demoralized them that one observer noted that they were "living in a state of extreme degradation."¹⁶ Because of their past experiences they had developed a fear of Christianity, a fear that it was being used to soften up the Indians so that they could be destroyed more readily by the military.¹⁷ It was under these conditions that *Lelawéthika*, the Shawnee Prophet and twin of Tecumseh, appeared among the

15. Charles A. Philhower, "Some Personal Characteristics of the Lenapi Indians," *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, Newark, v. 16 (January, 1931), p. 141.

16. Lawrence Henry Gipson, ed., "The Moravian Indian Mission on White River," *Indiana Historical Collections*, v. 23 (1938), p. 12.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Delawares preaching a message of hope. They fell under his sway and came into collision once again with the whites before and during the War of 1812.

When they arrived in the Delaware village, the Mormons asked for the residence of the leading chief. They were directed to a comfortable, two-room cabin where they were "introduced to an aged and venerable looking man, . . . who was seated on a sofa of furs, skins and blankets, before a fire in the center of his lodge."¹⁸ This was Kik-Tha-We-Nund, or William Anderson, a half-breed who first appears in history as a signer of the Treaty of Greenville.¹⁹ Either because of or in spite of his background, he showed "little disposition to embrace [white men's] manners and customs."²⁰ Moreover, "he was not inclined . . . to Christianity, but sought to make his people adverse to it."²¹

Anderson was described in 1817, when he was living at Anderson-town, Ind., on the White river, as a "plain majestic looking man, sixty or sixty-five years old."²² The Indian agent at Fort Wayne called him "a man of great benevolence and goodness, . . . much beloved by his people."²³ In 1818 Anderson signed the Treaty of St. Mary's and though his people were heartbroken at having to move once more, he led a body of them to southwestern Missouri. There they joined others of the tribe who had received permission from the Spanish to migrate to Missouri as early as 1789. The Delawares settled, some 500 strong, on the James fork of the White river, where they were to find only temporary respite.

On September 24, 1829, Anderson signed a supplement to the Treaty of St. Mary's, in which the Delawares agreed to remove to Indian territory. This treaty had not been ratified by the United States government, nor money appropriated by congress for effecting its provisions to assist the Indians while moving, when the overly eager whites in Missouri began intruding upon the Delawares' lands. The Indians also were being debauched by whiskey. Under such compulsion, the Delawares determined to seek out their new home, and in October, 1830, Anderson led an advance guard into the area that would become Wyandotte county. They were established by mid-November, when an old acquaintance

18. Pratt, *Autobiography*, p. 53.

19. *Walam Olum, or Red Score: The Migration Legend of the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians* (Indianapolis, 1954), p. 215.

20. Louise Barry, compiler, "Kansas Before 1854: A Revised Annals," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, v. 28 (Summer, 1962), p. 189.

21. Gipson, "Moravian Mission," p. 608.

22. Glen Blackburn, et al., eds., "The John Tipton Papers," *Indiana Historical Collections*, v. 24 (1942), p. 438.

23. *Ibid.*

from Indiana days, Isaac McCoy, who was surveying their land for the United States government, noted in his *Journal*:

Passed the new settlement forming by the Delawares on their land. Spent a few minutes with Anderson. . . . He, and his people are much pleased with their new country, as he declared to me. Govt. has not assisted in removal. They, anxious to come set out upon their own resources. All will be here by Spring.²⁴

More of the tribe arrived by December 3, when their new agent wrote that about 400 were settled.²⁵

The problems of a strange, new land and the dislocations of moving were compounded by the lateness of the season. The harshness of the winter worked a hardship upon the Delawares. Their horses were in failing condition in the fall and few would survive till spring. Their agent noted in April, 1831, in a report to his superiors that "a great many of the Indians, are in a suffering condition," and that he had felt compelled to advance them provisions.²⁶ In addition the Delawares were being pressed by the agent to send their children to the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky, a proposal they were resisting.²⁷

Through an interpreter the Mormons informed Anderson of their mission and requested him to convene a council to give them a full hearing. The chief replied that he would think the matter over and let them know his answer the next day. They obtained food and lodging from James Pool, a Virginian employed by the government as gun and blacksmith for the Delawares.

The following morning the missionaries called again upon Anderson. At first he appeared reluctant to gather a council, even refusing. The Mormons persisted, the chief wavered, then relented, and ordered them to desist until he could bring the tribal leaders together. A messenger was dispatched and in an hour there had collected in the lodge approximately 40 men who, after shaking hands with the Mormons, "were seated in silence; and in a grave and dignified manner" awaited the announcement of why they had been called together.²⁸ Cowdery was appointed the speaker.

In his *Autobiography* Pratt gives the whole of Cowdery's speech as though he were copying it.²⁹ It is highly doubtful that the dis-

24. November 21, 1830, "Isaac McCoy's Journal," manuscript division, Kansas State Historical Society.

25. Richard W. Cummins to William Clark, December 3, 1830.—"Records of the United States Superintendency of Indian Affairs," v. 6, Kansas State Historical Society; hereafter cited as "Clark Papers."

26. Cummins to Clark, April 2, 1831.—*Ibid.*

27. Cummins to Clark, January 13, 1831.—*Ibid.*

28. Pratt, *Autobiography*, p. 54.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-56.

course was written out in advance or even recorded at the time. While the exact words are probably lost, there is little reason to question, considering the retentiveness of Pratt's memory, that the essence of the speech was as Pratt recorded it.

Cowdery began by noting that the Mormons had come a long distance to appear before the Delawares. He observed that the Indians had once been numerous but were declining, an obvious fact, readily apparent to all present. Cowdery claimed that the Great Spirit had once spoken to the Indians and that these revelations, as well as their secular history, had been written on plates of gold. During this period the Indians had prospered, but they had become wicked and had begun to kill one another. As a consequence the Spirit had ceased to speak and the Indians had gone into a long decline. The Mormon account of the discovery and translation of the *Book of Mormon* was related. It had been foretold, Cowdery declared, that through this work the red man would be restored to a knowledge of God, that he would cease to fight, and that he would recover his rights and prosperity. At some point in the narration, the Mormons offered to establish schools among the Delawares. As a final gesture, Anderson was given a copy of the *Book of Mormon*. According to Pratt, after consulting with his council, Anderson replied:

"It is now winter, we are new settlers in this place; the snow is deep, our cattle and horses are dying, our wigwams are poor; we have much to do in the spring—to build houses, and fence and make farms; but we will build a council house, and meet together, and you shall read to us and teach us more concerning the Book of our fathers and the will of the Great Spirit."³⁰

The missionaries remained at Pool's for the next few days, continuing their instruction with increasing interest until "nearly the whole tribe began to feel a spirit of inquiry and excitement."³¹

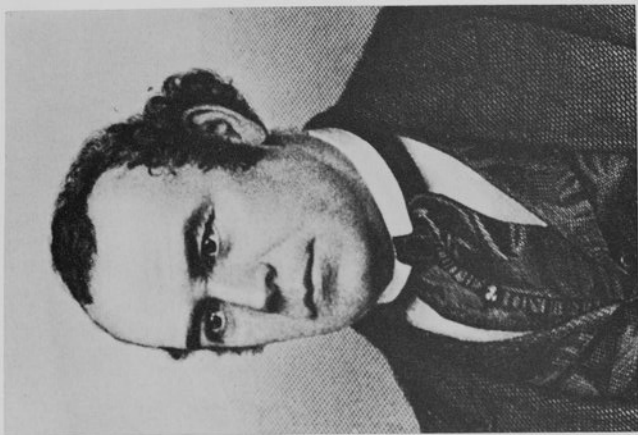
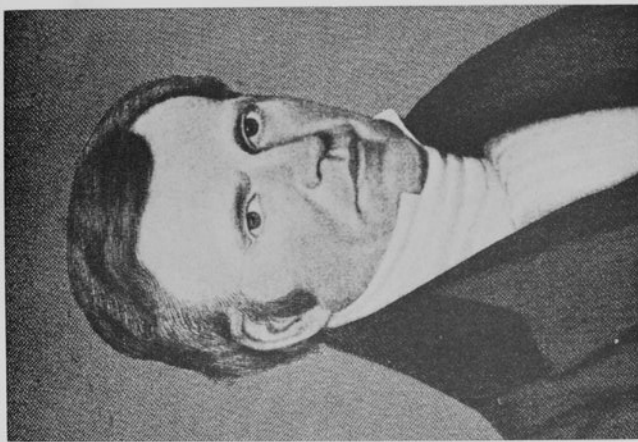
At least one contemporary, John C. McCoy, was to imply years later that the Delawares were indifferent to the missionaries' message,³² but there are few, if any, valid reasons for doubting Pratt's statement about their responsiveness. Certainly, there is little in the Mormon narrative that is inconsistent with the legends and traditions of the Delawares. They had their own sacred books of pictorial symbols engraved on wood.³³ These books told of the Delawares' past, of their wanderings, and, like the *Book of Mormon*, chronicled periods of peace followed by periods of disaster.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

32. See *Kansas City Journal*, April 24, 1881, and January 18, 1885.

33. The authenticity of the *Walam Olum* has been questioned, but, as present, it is generally accepted as being genuine.



Three of the five Mormon missionaries (from left, Oliver Cowdery, Frederick G. Williams, and Parley Parker Pratt) who in 1830-1831 were to "go unto the Lamanites," presumably the Indians on the then Western frontier (the present Kansas City area), and institute the church among them. But the missionaries were ordered out of the Shawnee-Delaware reserves by Indian agent Richard Cummins for failing to have government license. This exploratory trip by the Mormons, however, led to the establishment of the community of Zion in Jackson county, Missouri, a short time later. Photos courtesy the R. L. D. S. church, Independence, Mo.

"Prophets, or gifted persons who could foretell future events, [had] long been recognized among the Delaware . . . and other Algonquian tribes."³⁴ These included the Delaware Prophet who had inspired Pontiac and, of course, Lelawéthika—the brother of Tecumseh. Also among the Delawares were persons who claimed to have seen angels and the tribe believed that God had once shown himself to them from heaven.³⁵

Other factors which might make for their receptiveness would be—like most preliterate peoples—the Indians' love of a good story. What better way to pass the desolate days of winter, while the winds howled outside the lodge, than to attend to a narrative, based on sacred authority, which gave the listener hope for a brighter tomorrow? The Mormon offer to build schools and instruct the children would also have carried weight with them; it would relieve the pressure upon them to send their children to Kentucky. Earlier, they had requested Isaac McCoy to establish such a school.³⁶ Finally, it should be noted that in future years the relationship between the Indians and the Mormons would be less troubled and more friendly than that with most other Western groups. Peter Farb tells of at least one occasion, in the case of the Ghost Dance, when the Mormons had an effect in creating a religious revival among the Indians.³⁷

Seemingly on the brink of another proselyting success, the Mormons were due for a rude shock. Pratt was to contend later that word of the quickening interest of the Delawares reached the frontier settlements, "and stirred up the jealousy and envy of the Indian agents and sectarian missionaries to that degree that we were soon ordered out of the Indian country as disturbers of the peace; and even threatened with the military in case of non-compliance."³⁸ To this day this has remained the Mormon explanation for the eviction of their elders.

The agent to the Shawnees and Delawares, Richard W. Cummins, was a commanding figure with a sour look.³⁹ According to John C. McCoy, Cummins precipitately ordered the Mormons out of his area. They evidently chose to ignore this first order, so the agent "went up in person and gave them the choice of moving instantan on either end of the road—eastward into Missouri or

34. *Walam Olum*, p. 160.

35. Gipson, "Moravian Mission," p. 616.

36. Isaac McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions* (Washington, 1840), p. 59.

37. *Man's Rise to Civilization as Shown by the Indians of North America* (New York, 1968), pp. 280, 281.

38. Pratt, *Autobiography*, p. 57.

39. John C. McCoy in *Kansas City Journal*, January 26, 1879.

westward to the Leavenworth guard house."⁴⁰ The Mormons were allowed only 24 hours to get back into Missouri and were forbidden to recross the line.

Cummins' motives for such stringent action cannot be fully known. He was, of course, a politician filling a political appointment.⁴¹ As such he was subject to pressure from influential elements. Certainly there was an intense fear of sheep-stealing among the zealous shepherds of that day. Other religious organizations such as the Baptists, Methodists, and Quakers were then in the process of establishing missions among the Indians. Their ministers would naturally have resented competition, particularly from an organization as new, as strange, and as aggressive as that of the Mormons.

Another factor, perhaps even contradictory to the above, may be found in the prejudice that existed against missionaries on the part of Indian agents and others along the western border. For instance, John Dunbar noted in a letter that "a strong prejudice prevails in this part of the country against missionaries. . . ." ⁴² And Marston G. Clark, subagent to the Kansas Indians, wrote a letter in 1833 in which he condemned missionaries as a class for "their petitions and applications for privileges and patronage." ⁴³ The reasons for such antipathy are not entirely known, but it is probable that the agents felt the missionaries were threatening their control over the Indians. In the event disputes occurred the missionaries could appeal to Washington.

Yet another factor bearing upon the attitude of Cummins, possibly the principal one, was that the Indian intercourse laws forbade the settlement or residence by whites on Indian lands except by those who held special license from Gen. William Clark, the superintendent of Indian affairs in St. Louis. The Mormons had failed to obtain such a permit, probably through ignorance of the law. Cummins had had considerable trouble with intruders upon Indian lands that fall and winter and was not in a mood to be restrained in his actions towards any persons he considered to be

40. *Ibid.*, January 18, 1885.

41. Cummins was elected to the constitutional convention which wrote Missouri's first constitution in 1820.—Jackson *Missouri Herald*, May 27, 1820. He was also elected to the Missouri legislature in 1822 as the senator from Saline, Cooper, and Cole counties.—St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, September 18, 1822.

42. "Letters Concerning the Presbyterian Mission in the Pawnee Country, Near Bellevue, Neb., 1831-1849." *Kansas Historical Collections*, v. 14 (1918), p. 582. Dunbar was referring specifically to the situation in Clay county in June, 1834.

43. To William Clark, September 1, 1833.—Photostat, "Snyder Collection," library of the University of Missouri at Kansas City.

trespassers.⁴⁴ Fortunately, there has survived a letter from Cummins to Clark in which he explains his actions:

A few days agoe three Men all Strangers to me went among the Indians Shawanees & Delawares, they say for the purpose of preaching to and Instructing them in Religious Matters, they say they are sent by God and must proceed, they have a new Revelation with them, as there Guide in teaching the Indians, which they say was shown to one of their Sects in a Miraculous way, and that an Angel from Heaven appeared to one of their Men and two others of their Sect, and shewed them that the work was from God, and much more &c. I have refused to let them stay or, go among the Indians unless they first obtain permission from you, or some of the officers of the Genl. Government who I am bound to obey. I am informed that they intend to apply to you for permission to go among the Indians, if you refuse, then they will go to the Rocky Mountains, but what they will be with the Indians. The Men act very strange; there came on five to this place, they say, four from the State of New York, and one from Ohio.⁴⁵

The Mormons returned to Independence, where they rejoined Whitmer and Peterson. According to Pratt, "the cold north wind which had blown for several weeks . . . had begun to give place to a milder breeze from the south; and the deep snows were fast settling down, with every prospect of returning spring."⁴⁶ A discussion was held on February 14, and it was decided that one of their number should report to the leaders of the church on their labors and observations. The lot fell to Pratt and he headed East. It was determined also to seek the necessary authorization from General Clark. That same day Cowdery wrote:

As I have been appointed by a society of Christians in the State of New York to superintend the establishing Missions among the Indians I doubt not but I shall have the approbation of your honour and a permit for myself and all who may be recommended to me by that Society to have free intercourse with the several tribes in establishing schools for the instruction of their children and also teaching them the Christian religion without intruding or interfering with any other Mission now established.⁴⁷

The records of the superintendent of Indian affairs preserved at the Kansas State Historical Society do not reveal whether Clark ever replied to the above letter. It is known, however, that he was gone from his post in St. Louis from November 30, 1830, to March 31, 1831, and that business was transacted by John Ruland, sub-agent. It is also known that the Mormons were unable to establish any schools or missions among the Indians prior to their expulsion from Missouri in the winter of 1838-1839. However, a Methodist

44. Cummins to Clark, January 20, 1831.—"Clark Papers," v. 6.

45. February 15, 1831.—*Ibid.*

46. Pratt, *Autobiography*, pp. 57, 58.

47. "Clark Papers," v. 6. After seeing this letter, one comes to understand why the original manuscript of the *Book of Mormon* contained so little punctuation.



Map showing the junction of the Kansas and Missouri rivers and some of the surrounding area, as sketched by Isaac McCoy in 1830.

mission was founded among the Delawares early in 1832. By then Anderson was dead, having succumbed the previous September, probably from smallpox.⁴⁸

After Pratt's departure, the Mormons began preaching among the Missourians but with only slight success. Hopes, however, were not abandoned for the work among the Indians. On May 7 Cowdery wrote to his brethren in Ohio about the bustling activity in Independence due to the preparations for the annual trading expedition to Santa Fe.

I am informed of another tribe of Lamanites lately, who have an abundance of flocks of the best kinds of sheep and cattle, and they manufacture blankets of a superior quality. The tribe is very numerous; they live three hundred miles west of Santa Fe, and are called Navajos.⁴⁹

In the meantime, Pratt had hiked the 300 miles to St. Louis in only nine days. There he took passage on a steamboat for Cincinnati. It was March when he left the latter city and the heavy snow was melting fast. When he set out on foot for Kirtland, the whole country was inundated, a veritable sea of mud and water. After a weary journey, filled with fatigue and illness, he arrived to find the shape of things greatly altered in the few months since his departure. The church in Ohio had increased to over a thousand members, and Smith and many of his followers had moved from New York to the Western Reserve. The church had fled its place of origin and had taken up residence in the "new West." To the Mormons this was but a preliminary pause, a temporary halt before striking out for western Missouri. One of the consequences of the first Mormon mission to the Indians was that it would provide information which would permit Smith in June, 1831, to designate western Missouri as the site for the community of Zion. That summer the Mormons would begin to plant their colonies in Jackson county. The opposition and frustration that the missionaries had encountered on the frontier foreshadowed the future reception of the Mormons on the Western border.

48. Barry, "Kansas Before 1854," p. 189.

49. Nauvoo (Ill.) *Times and Seasons*, February 15, 1844.