



TAMMA DURFEE MINER

Autobiography of Tamma Durfee Miner, written for the LDS Church Relief Society and filed in the Jubilee Box in 1880, and opened in May 1930 by officers of the Utah Stake Relief Society. It was handed to Frances Carter Knight, daughter of Polly Miner Carter. The history was resealed and opened again in 1980. The original document is now in possession of the LDS Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

My father, Edmund Durfee, was born 3 October 1788 in Rhode Island of Irish descent. My mother, Lana Pickle was born 6 June 1788 of Dutch descent, and I think her father and mother were from Holland.

I was born 6 March 1813 in Lennox, Madison County, New York and we lived there until I was about nine years old when we moved to Amboy, Oswego County. Father bought some land, built a house, made a small farm, and worked at his trade that was mostly carpenter and millwright. We lived there until the first of June 1830, when father bought more land which had lots of maple trees. He soon wanted to go West so he sold his sugar bush and farm and started for the State of Ohio. We went through Camden Village to the Canal, down the Canal to Buffalo, across Lake Superior until we landed at Portland. From here we went to Ruggles in Huron County. Father bought land and went to work to make a home, and it was in this next winter in 1831, that we heard about the Mormons and the Gold Bible. The following spring Solomon Hancock came to our town preaching about Joseph Smith and saying that the Lord and Angel Moroni had appeared to Joseph Smith in a vision. We were Methodists and Campbellites and Solomon Hancock was invited to preach in our meeting house. We all went to hear him and were all astonished at his message for it was so much different from what it had been reported. This was about April 1831, and father was baptized about the middle of May and mother and sister, Martha and brother, Edmund were baptized about the first of June by Solomon Hancock. I believed it the first time I heard him preach and tell us the Book of Mormon was true.

I was a Mormon in belief but was not baptized until December 1831 and will tell you the reason why. I was keeping company with a good young man, as I thought, and I was told he had said that he would not have a Mormon wife. So I waited until after I was married. I went to the Mormon meetings and sometimes to the Methodists until 9 August 1831 when I was married to Albert Miner. Afterwards

we got along first rate and we went to meetings sometimes to one place and sometimes to another until December 1831. My father was going on a mission to the State of New York and he baptized me before going on his mission.

Albert's mother, brothers and sisters had a great deal to say about the Mormons (his father having died in 1829) as they did not believe in the Book of Mormon. But he told them: "the more they had to say, the sooner he would be baptized". He waited until the first of February 1832 so they had to cut a hole in the ice to baptize him.

My oldest daughter Polly was born 1 May 1832. My father had left on the first of February to build a place for us to go to; he had taken some of his carpenter tools, seed grain, farming tools and in a company with others started for Jackson County, Missouri. He came back the 20th of May and went on a short-term mission to the States returning in the fall. In May 1833 he sold the farm and all his possessions and we started for Kirtland, Ohio. The Lord had said He would keep a strong hold for five years in Kirtland. We built houses on the farm that we bought and prepared to live.

I was here on the fourth of July when they wanted twenty-four Elders to lay the corner stone to the Kirtland Temple, and they ordained George A. Smith and Don Smith to make the number twenty-four, six at each corner. My husband, Albert Miner, helped to haul stone every Saturday for a long time to build the Temple. My oldest boy, Orson, was born 22 October 1833. The next Spring most of the Elders were called to volunteer to go and redeem Jackson County. Dennis Lake went with the company and when he got back he apostatized and sued Joseph Smith for three months work which was worth \$60.00. Albert told Mr. Lake he would draw cuts to see which should go and which should stay and take care of the families. Brigham Young and a man with him came to our house and asked Mr. Lake for his license but he refused to give it to them.

Brigham Young said: "It made no difference they could publish him and he told Albert Miner that he would receive his blessing". This was in the fall of 1834.

On the fourth day of June 1835, another son, named Moroni was born and Joseph Smith blessed him and said: "He should be as great as Moroni of old and the people would flee unto him and call him blessed". Temple building was still going on; some of the brethren that came from great distances stayed until the next spring. Some stayed with us and received their endowments and were there to the

dedication of the Temple in March 1836. After that a good many began to apostatize and broke up the Kirtland Bank. I had girl born on 18 June 1836. We called her name Silva. A great many things transpired about this time that I haven't time to write and some that I can't remember. Land sold for a large sum of money; speculation was in full swing; and at this time many left the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Another son, Mormon, was born 26 September 1837. In the Spring of this year, father sold his farm and all he possessed and started for Caldwell County, Missouri, where we stayed that summer and fall. Those that left the Mormons grew worse until Joseph and Sidney and Father Smith had to leave in January in the middle of winter. That fall Albert had a very sick spell. The last of January he recovered a little so that he could ride in a sleigh on a bed while I held an umbrella over him. With two little children on my lap we went 80 miles, from Kirtland, Ohio to Huron County, New London, Connecticut, where Albert's folks lived. The four days traveling were pleasant and warm but it turned fearfully cold weather in Connecticut. Albert seemed to feel better here so we stayed until May.

We went back to Kirtland and sold the farm, put some of his means in to help the Saints in the Kirtland Camp and with the balance, Albert Miner, wife, and children started for Far West, Missouri about the middle of June 1838. It was hard to say goodbye to Albert's mother, sisters, and brothers, all farewell for the Gospel's sake. His father died in 1829. We traveled until we ran short of means, and then we stoped and worked until we got enough to go ahead. We visited the Kirtland Camp and then went on to Missouri and got to Dewitt the last of August. The children were all sick, and I had been so sick that I could not walk, but father said we would all get better which we did in a few days, all except Silva who did not recover and died about the first of October 1838.

The mob gathered and killed many at Hauns Mill and drove all the Mormons from Adam Diamon to Farwest; then not being satisfied, the whole state with the Governor at their head gathered by the thousands to drive them from Far West. The mob was after our leaders, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and the Twelve, and all they could get and put them into prison. Some were able to be bailed out; others had to stay and endure the discomforts of prison life. They were even given human flesh to eat but Joseph told them "not to eat it, for the spirit of the Lord told him that it was human". Thus we were plundered, smitten and driven from our homes, our lives were threatened and were ill-treated on every side by our

enemies--enemies to the truths of heaven. They would come one to five hundred right to our houses and nobody around but women and little children, take our men prisoners without any cause whatsoever only because they were Mormons and believed in the truths of the Gospel. They wanted to know if we had any guns or pistols or ammunition or butcher knives and all such things. No one can describe the feelings of the Saints and what they passed through. No tongue can express the depredation--only those that experienced it and was an eye witness when they came to our houses in this kind of way.

The men that were free on bail and had teams helped others to get to the Mississippi River and then went back for their own families. Father's folks had lived there one year. He left in 1837 and we arrived in Missouri the first of September 1838 and lived on what they called "Log Creek" which was six miles from Far West. We were there when they killed David Patten at the time they took a lot of prisoners and when the Saints had to lay down their arms for their enemies.

Albert Miner was one that had to take a load to the Mississippi River so we didn't get away until the first of April 1839. We had witnessed a good many leaving in the cold and dreary winter. We crossed over to Quincy, went up the River to Lima and decided to stay here a short time. But the devil wasn't dead yet. Some of the members would go to Lima and get drunk and come back swearing and tearing enough to frighten men, let alone women and children. I told my husband that I didn't want to live here.

It was here that Matilda was born 12 January 1840 and we stayed about one year. We got along the best that we could; every fall and spring we drove thirty miles to Conference and then on the fourth of July to training. On 7 September 1841 another son, Alma L. was born. The next spring we sold what we had and bought a place four miles east of the Temple in Nauvoo and lived there where we could go to meeting and get back home by night. On 12 June 1843 another boy was born and we named him Don Carlos Smith. We were there in 1844 when Joseph and Hyrum were martyred. I saw them after their deaths when they were brought back to their home. Many thoughts passed through my mind at this time; I remembered the first time I had heard them preach and the many times following that; I remember the time the Prophet Joseph talked for five hours to a congregation and not one of the congregation was tired. This happened in Kirtland before the Temple was built.

After the Nauvoo Temple was completed the mobs became violent again. They threatened us and told us how they would kill and drive the Mormons out. They did kill many and others they drove from Lima. They shot my father Edmund Durfee and killed him instantly on 19 November 1845. He who had never done them any harm in his life but on the contrary had always taught them good principles of truth and uprightness and greatness and morality and industry all the days of his life. But before this they drove them all out of Father Morley's Settlement, even those that were sick. They rolled my brother, Nephi up in a bed and threw it outdoors when he was sick, they went to the oat stack and got two bundles of oats and put a brand of fire in them and threw them on top of the house and said they would be back next morning. Father was trying to move and they came back and shot their guns and ran them all off. They plundered, made fires, burned houses, furniture and clothing looms, yarn, cloth, carpenter tools. Even the iron from the tools they picked up and carted away in barrels. Every wall burned to ashes, and the mob went from house to house driving them out, it made little difference if they were sick or well until every house in the town that a Mormon lived in was burnt.

The men from Nauvoo got their teams and started for Lima. They traveled all night and day to get the families that had been turned out in the cold. My husband took a chill and was very sick for a long time. The mob gathered our crops and when it got dark they built a fire close by the barn and stables. The Mormons thought they meant to burn their houses and ran out to stop the fire. The mob stood back in the timber and when our man got between them and the fire they shot off about a dozen guns--father was the only one killed.

On 5 March 1846 a little girl named Melissa was born and we still remained for a while. The mob was still threatening how they were going to drive the Mormons out. Many had left not knowing where they were going to find a place in the wilderness among the savages and wild beasts over the desert beyond the Rocky Mountains where white men had never lived. In the spring the mob began to gather once a week and threaten to drive out what was left. The first of May we moved town, sold our place for a yoke of oxen and wagon thinking to start on in two or three weeks but the mob gathered every week right on the public square close by our house. We said we would leave as fast as we could get ready and get the teams to take us. There were mostly women and children that were there and we didn't want any more of the men to leave for fear of what might happen.

The mob gathered at last in full strength and reports came that they were camped outside of town about 2,000 of them. One afternoon they started to come into town, cross-lots. There were only fifty of our men to go out to meet them, but they were driven back that night. At 2 a.m. in the morning, by bright moonlight, the Mormons went and fired right into the camp of the mob. Guns and cannons kept up the firing until 2 o'clock that afternoon. Three Mormon men were dead, one named Anderson and his son, both killed by the same cannon ball. Three were slightly wounded. My brother was wounded by a gun between the cords of his heel. Because we had only about 50 men, 10 of them had to be on guard, two on top of the Temple with spy glasses. They went into Law's cornfield and there they had their battle. They were seen to fill three wagons with the wounded and killed. And the next morning a woman stood in the second story of a house and saw the mob put 76 bodies in calico slips with a draw string around the neck and feet before they left for home.

The Mormon women rolled the cannon balls up in their aprons, took them to our boys and they would put them in the cannon and shot them back again when they were hot. It was a fearful time. I could have crossed the river but I would not leave my husband. In about two days we had to surrender and lay down our arms. I saw the mob all dressed in black riding two by two on horse-back and it looked frightful. They rode around the Temple threatening us with every breath.

Our men had to ferry the boat over five times for each family. My husband had to ferry it over ten times, five for my brother that got wounded and five for us. We got over and stayed there two weeks. We slept on the ground waiting for help. There were fourteen of us to one wagon. My baby got sick, but we started anyway and in three days my baby was dead. We buried her the first of October 1846. We traveled on for three days and came to Iowaville and stayed here the winter while Albert worked at hauling and running a ferry boat.

When Melissa died I took sick and never sat up only to have my bed made for nine months. My husband thought of moving to the Bluffs but a good many came back to get work so he cut and put up some hay for his stock and then said he would go back to Ohio to see all of his folks. He started afoot to the Mississippi River all alone, short of money. He went two of three miles when he looked down on the ground and right before him was about \$5 in silver. He continued on and found his folks all well though no one still believed in the Gospel and still opposed him. The ten weeks that he stayed there seemed like an eternity. On 17 May 1847 he came

home; it had been raining, and he was one homesick, tired, wet and just plain sick man.

My oldest girl, Polly, who was only fourteen years old took care of the family of nine and waited on me while I was sick when her father was gone. Albert thought after he had rested from his long trip he would feel better but instead he grew worse. He got so that he would try to work half a day and go to bed the other half. And on 3 January 1848 he suddenly left us which was a hard blow for we thought that he was getting better . . . a better man never lived; he was kind, good-natured, free hearted and industrious. He won many friends and was a genius at going anything he saw someone else do. He was born in the state of New York, 31 March 1809, in Jefferson County, and was the son of Asael Miner and Sylvia Monson.

After his death, Alma and the little boys said; "which way shall we go, we will not know the way". They thought their father was so perfect that he could not do anything wrong and that he knew everything. Polly and Orson were the oldest so they now had to take the lead and go ahead and plan. Albert's folks had offered him everything if he would stay with them and not go with the Mormons, but the Gospel and the truth of the Book of Mormon and the Holy Priesthood was all that he wanted. Polly was a true and faithful girl to me and all the children. Albert had been so very anxious to go to Council Bluffs and keep up with the Church so we all went to work and got things together and the next July 1848 we went there and stayed about two years. It was here that we really had to work hard to get ready for our trek across the plains.

So on 10 June 1850 my five boys and two girls and I started with one hundred wagons across the plains with the ox-cart teams. We had many hard struggles although we got along much better than we had anticipated. And on the first of September we landed in Salt Lake without any home or anyone to even hunt us one and we were very lonesome indeed. We stayed with father and mother Wilcox, when Enos Curtis came along and said he would furnish the children me a home. That was what we needed for it was coming winter. We were married 20 October 1850 and lived on the Jordan River the first winter. We were all sick that winter with irricplis in the throat and my oldest boy died with it on 5 Mar. 1851. It was he that drove the team across the plains for me and he was a wonderful, kind and good natured boy as ever lived.

The next April we moved to Springville, Utah and bought a farm and started to build. We got along just wonderful and on 18 October 1851 a little girl, Clarissa Curtis was born. We lived here for some time--my husband, Enos and his boys and mine all worked together raising wheat and grain and stock which paid our tithing. Another little girl, Belinda, was born on 23 February 1853. The next spring Enos went to Iron County with Brigham Young and Company. When they got back we all made a party for the company on 12 June 1854. One year from that day I had a pair of twin girls named Adelia and Amelia.

The following Spring Enos began complaining of not being very well but kept on working until he just had to give up. After a while he began to take something and thought he was better. But he was soon worse again and lived until the first day of June 1856 when he passed away just like going to sleep without a struggle or a groan. His children were all with him but two, one of his boys was on a Mission to England. The four boys and three girls and I were left to keep house. We still lived in Springville, farmed and raised our wheat and stock and paid our tithing. I raised the little girls except Adelia (one of the twins) who died before her father.

In 1857 I married John White Curtis at April Conference and on 16 Jan. 1858 Mariette was born. I had five boys and four girls by Albert Miner, four girls by Enos Curtis and one girl by John White Curtis. Belinda Curtis died 17 November 1873. I had 58 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren. All 14 children married and had homes of their own. They all are in the Church and pay their tithing and try to live their religion as best as they can. I am very proud of them.

Albert Miner was Joseph Smith's life guard in Kirtland, Ohio. My brother was also but he left the church. In those days there was but a handful in comparison to what there is now. I have passed through all the hardships and drivings and burnings and mobbings and threatenings and have been with the Saints in all their persecutions from Huron County to Kirtland and from Kirtland to Missouri and then back to Illinois.

For want of time I have passed over some things of importance. I hope my children will appreciate these few lines for I do feel highly honored to be numbered with the Latter-Day Saints and I pray that our children will all prove faithful that they may receive a great reward. I hope that this short history of my life may be of use in conclusion I wish to say:"children, live your religion, be preserving (persevering) in well doing, and may God forever bless you and protect you from all harm, is the prayer of your mother who loves you all dearly."

Obituary

"Jan 30, 1885, Tamma Durfee Miner passed this life at the age of 71 years, 10 months, 24 days; leaving 9 children, 75 grandchildren, 17 great grandchildren, besides a vast circle of friends to mourn her loss. She died at the home of her daughter Polly Miner Carter in Provo, who had cared for her

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A YOUNG WIFE'S TERROR

Tamma Durfee Miner's persecution complex was no trick of her imagination. As a young wife and mother she depended heavily upon two men --husband Albert Miner and father Edmund Durfee. Together the families witnessed the Missouri mobbings.

"Enemies came along, 1 to 500, right to our homes and nobody around but women and little children," she recalled. "No one can tell, no one can describe the feelings, only those that experienced it."

They lived peacefully for a time in Illinois until mobs killed Joseph Smith and then, a year later, turned against the Mormon people. In late 1845 said.

Albert ferried his family across the Mississippi River, but they did not catch up with the main body of Saints before he died of illness. Tamma became a widow at age 35 with seven children under age 14. By 1850 she managed to reach Utah without husband or father, "without any home or anyone to hunt enemies attacked Morley's Settlement. They burned down her father's house--"went to the oat stack and got two bundles, put a brand of fire in them, threw them on top of the house." Nightriders "shot off their guns and plundered and burned houses, furniture, the clothing looms, yard cloth, and carpenter tools." Tamma said they "rolled my brother Nephi up in a bed and threw it outdoors when he was sick." A month later, in November, father Edmund and others returned to harvest crops. One midnight they rushed to put out a straw stack fire. Suddenly two whistles were heard and six shots were fired from the darkness. Edmund died from a rifle ball just above the heart.

The next fall, after most other Mormons fled Illinois, Tamma witnessed the final "Battle of Nauvoo." During a cannon fire exchange between what she thought were 50 Mormon men, including her husband Albert, and 2000

mobbers, three Mormons died and three were wounded. Her brother was "shot between the cords of his heel. The Mormon women rolled the cannon balls up in their aprons, took them to our boys and they put them in the cannon and would shoot them back again still hot." It was a fearful time, she said. We were very lonesome indeed." She later remarried, bringing the family peace and prosperity at last.

-William G. Hartley
LDS Church News, September 6, 1980