



Brother Jesse

Sister Phoebe

Brother John & Sister-in-law Adaline

**Sister-in-law Elvira
(wife of Brother James)**



Brother William

Brother Thomas

Aunt Sally and Uncle William



Uncle David and Aunt Sally



Elizabeth and Nuel D. Belnap

Special tribute is made to Nuel for his tireless efforts in the research of original records.



Chapter 6 GILBERT FINDS

HIMSELF

There was nothing glossy or overdone about beloved Gilbert Belnap, our convert ancestor and the son of Rosel Belnap and Jane Richmond. In his time he was many things. From farmer to wheelwright, blacksmith, wagon maker, sheriff, county attorney, assayer, tax collector — in fact he held almost every civic responsibility in Ogden or Weber County during the course of his lifetime in Utah. On more than two occasions he was a soldier. He was a missionary and served as Hooper's first bishop.

There is nothing pretentious about the manner in which he recalls many of the adventuresome tales of his life as he moved from Canada to the Western Reserve area of Ohio, joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, moved westward with them to Nauvoo, crossed the plains, and was instrumental in settling the West. He relates these stories simply as he had so many times before in the unconfining presence of those he loved. He documents them accurately in his journals. He vividly relives many colorful memories at each stage throughout his life.

Gilbert Belnap was life itself to those who knew him. The story of Gilbert Belnap is the story of an uncommon common man. In many ways his life represented the epitome of all whose roots go deep into the story of the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ and its movement to the great West. He was a true pioneer, born only a score of years after the turn of the 19th century. His life was involved in all of the variety of experiences incident to the taming of each frontier as the United States moved westward in its march across the continent. Born into a large family, he was father of a large family — Friend, counselor, and truly a brother to every person in his community — Beloved of his children and teller of tales to their perpetual delight. Gilbert Belnap never found time to grow old. Happy dispositioned, engaged and involved in every religious and civic enterprise in his area. Gilbert Belnap left a big piece of his heart in every one who ever crossed his path.

The denizens of the big cities might think his life parochial and circumscribed, yet to all who knew him the boundaries of his world were as broad as the horizon and as distant as the stars. We commend Gilbert Belnap's story to all who like to see life in microcosm in not only the development of the great New World movement, but in the heart of Mormon country.

The central core of this book is the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the encompassment of Gilbert Belnap into that great Latter-day movement.

As Gilbert tells his own story through his personal journal, his correspondence with his family, and friends; his specific testimony on detailed points, the offices which he held, the things which have been said about him — we see very clearly through the window of history into the actual mechanism of the Restoration in process.

Although we have been left with a legacy of victory and peace, Gilbert's story, as it intertwines with the Restoration of the Gospel, begins with scenes of raw pathos. The stresses and trials that formulated the personality and life style of Gilbert Belnap were identical with those stresses and trials which shaped the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith and brought about a change within the life of each of those men as the Gospel of Jesus Christ came into their lives in its fully restored state. It has subsequently changed the lives of millions of others who have allowed it to encompass them. It has changed the lives of all of the posterity of Gilbert Belnap, as we see ever and continuing new phases of the Restoration program roll forth until we fulfill our destiny as those who have preceded us have fulfilled theirs with honor.

Let us look back for a moment to the early 1800's, when Gilbert was born, and the time of his early childhood. Picture a young man fulfilling a destiny in a different locality from where Gilbert was born. Let us look just across Lake Erie in the new state of Ohio. Picture a young man, barely 25, who is left for dead in the streets of Hiram, Ohio, his body spread with hot tar and stuck with feathers. He crawls home to a gentle wife who scrapes clean his skin and salves his wounds and the next day he is preaching duties before both his astonished disciples and his disguised pursuers.

Picture Gilbert, left an orphan, "indentured" to someone who creates an environment as cruel and harsh as the stories told by Charles Dickens in England of the comparable period.

Picture a Missouri settlement, its streets ashout with the dreadful oaths and threats of a mob of ruffians who rip the roof from a house, strew goods from a commissary about in the dirt road, trample the type from a printing press into the ground, and dump stacks of printed pages into the street. "So much for their dam revelations!" one of the vandals exclaimed, giving a pile a shove. A 14 year old girl overhears the men, waits for them to go and then gathers a bundle of the precious papers into her arms and runs for the safety of a nearby cornfield.

Picture, also, Gilbert Belnap in his early teens, with his younger brother Thomas, struggling around the shores of Lake Ontario and Erie in an attempt to find their relatives in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Picture these children in a hostile world. Did it make them bitter? Did it leave permanent and irreparable scars? No, Gilbert was merely being prepared for hardships of an intensity that would test his mettle in the fiery furnace of adversity. It was to prepare him to come forth as a fine, high quality of steel which was tempered with an excellence that would endure for eternity and leave a similar legacy and potential blessing to all of his posterity.

Envision two brothers and a small group of loyal followers being held for months in a cold jail, awaiting a trial that never comes, their only recourse to justice and freedom is an escape permitted by their guards lest their maltreatment should prove an embarrassment to the State. While the brothers are still in prison, the courageous wife of one writes, "I believe all our afflictions will work together for our good."

Picture, finally, an Illinois town, its streets lined with people as if for a parade, but silent, a pall hanging low over this scene. Occasionally a woman's noiseless weeping gives way to the keening of mourning. A wagon comes into view with its cargo of two black coffins. Joseph is dead and so is Hyrum, his brother. Marching behind them, solemn and despondent, is Gilbert Belnap who had been with them just two hours before their martyrdom and was sent home by Joseph. Gilbert was reminded of the words of the Prophet that he (Gilbert) would give rise to great posterity. His life must be preserved. For his safety he was sent home from Carthage Jail.

Brigham Young, a missionary and an apostle laboring in far off New York hears the news. To him it is a time of inexpressible mourning. An event he cannot bear to think about. But bringing his sorrows under control of necessity, he travels back to Nauvoo to assume, with the rest of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the leadership of a distraught people.

The prelude to these persecutions to the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was the pronouncement by Joseph Smith, a New York farm boy, that he had seen and talked with God, and had been instructed by holy angels in the matters of true faith and in the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In 1830 publication of his inspired translation of the Book of Mormon (an ancient scripture which he had received from a resurrected prophet, Moroni) multiplied not only the number of people who became converted to the Gospel thus restored, but also of the number of those who scoffed and persecuted the converts, even driving them from their homes. Still in his 20's, the young prophet led his people to Ohio, then to Missouri, then to a bend in the Mississippi River in Illinois where they founded, in 1839, their "City Beautiful", Nauvoo. It was here that the seeds of the "New Zion" were germinated, seeds that would be planted in the eventual Zion of the Great Basin of the American west.

Gilbert Belnap's destiny was to intertwine itself with the final scenes of the great drama that took place in Nauvoo. He was to see the "Mantle" of the Prophet Joseph Smith descend upon Brigham Young and was to aid in the transition of the fourth uprooting of the great Restored movement as it proceeded westward.

Following the assassination of the Prophet and his brother, the persecutions continued as the fearful Illinois frontiersmen began to realize their hopes were thwarted, that the Mormons, without Joseph Smith did not simply disintegrate and disappear into the landscape. Nauvoo, now grown in numbers to become the largest city in the State, threatened the political status quo. Representatives from surrounding counties met in anti-Mormon meetings to issue ultimatums to the Hancock County Mormons. Brigham Young, answering for the Church, responded with proposals for settlement. Eventually it became apparent that the only safe route for the Saints lay west. Rejected by Gentile civilization, they would perhaps live at peace with the almost virgin wilderness.

The negotiated departure was set for the Spring of 1846 when the grasses would be greening along the way. Homes and lands in Nauvoo were put up for sale. It was not unusual for a child to accost a stranger to the town with the persistent offer, "Would you like to buy a farm, sir? Cheap?" Barns and shops throughout the city were converted to the manufacture of wagons in preparation for the coming trek. In the air were the words "Great Salt Lake" and even more strange and exotic, "California", a term which at that time meant anything west of the Rockies.

By mid winter anxiety had kindled distrust in the minds of Nauvoo's enemies — they would wait no longer. The Mormons must leave now. On February 4, 1846, the first wagons were ferried across the Mississippi and the first sections of the train that would wind across Iowa in the coming months began to stretch out along the trail toward the Missouri River, with campsites being built along the way.

Gilbert Belnap, with his new bride, Adeline, seated behind him on the Prophet Joseph's Nauvoo Legion horse, "Old Tom," held tightly as Gilbert led the horse as it jumped from ice floe to ice floe, they crossed the Mississippi until they found themselves on the Iowa banks of that great river and began their movement westward with the Saints.

The Saints began to establish the discipline that would be necessary for their great migration. They grouped in Nauvoo, they regrouped at the Chariton River. They learned to experience the cautions and the follies that could mean survival or annihilation. Of the first groups crossing Iowa that late winter and early spring much is written. There are sobering accounts of "birthings" in rude shelters; incredible accounts of the providential fall of quail into a camp of hungry travelers; and cheering accounts of Captain Pitt's brass band playing in the camps for the entertainment of the Saints who were in nearby settlements for cash money. There are also accounts of the many deaths that resulted from cholera, scurvy, childbirth, and sheer physical weakness. Gilbert Belnap was to experience all of these things in his trek across the plains with his young wife, and soon-to-be mother of two children born while enroute across the plains, one of whom was to be buried while they were in transit.

Iowa proved to be the schoolmaster that would instruct the people and their leaders in preparation for the longer trek across the wide plains and high mountains the following summer. For the stragglers, the late immigrants, and the destitute, conditions were even worse. Thomas Bullock, who remained all summer long in Nauvoo recorded his impressions of the aftermath of the Battle of Nauvoo in September of 1846. Looters desecrated the temple "ringing the bell, shouting and hallooing some inquiring, 'Who is the keeper of the Lord's house now?' ". However sick or ill prepared the remaining faithful were, they were pressed on their way by mob rule. Moving among the settlements around Nauvoo, Bullock tried to gather stragglers, organize them, and bring them up to the camps in Iowa. Rain, hunger, poor equipment, and the "ague" (probably the chills and fever from malaria) plagued them as they inched their poorly covered wagons from camp to camp along the trail west. Gilbert Belnap fulfilled many roles. While in Iowa and after encampment in Winter Quarters, Nebraska going back time after time to reclaim those who were straggling behind in Missouri and Illinois. Typical of their story is the following journal quotation: "The rain poured through my wagon cover and the carpet was a complete pool. Although in a raging fever, I had to ladle the water out with a basin while my wife sat up catching water with a wash bowl and dishes. All the beds, bedding, and clothing got thoroughly drenched. There were several other storms during the evening and the night which kept us miserable in our wet beds, not having one dry thread on." Gilbert was to experience a plague of inflammatory disease that was to leave him temporarily blind for a period of time as he attempted to fulfill his obligations in gathering Saints from the surrounding states.

The tight order which Brigham Young was preaching to the forward parties had not reached those at the end of the train. However hard the captain of the

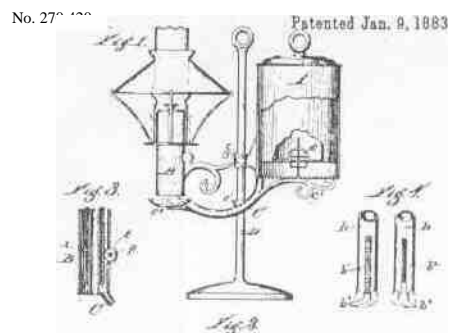
company might labor, human frailties often thwarted their efforts. A typical account is recorded as follows: "The captain called all up before daylight for an early start, but in consequence of the dilatory habits of the brethren could not effect it. At a quarter to eleven the oxen belonging to Bishop Knight were not found and all the preaching and talking of the captain profiteth nothing — the brethren will not go, but would rather stand with their hands in their pockets and let all the oxen stand idle waiting to be hitched up. The delightful weather is allowed to pass unused."

By the time the stragglers were crossing the Mississippi the forward parties had already reached the Missouri and the tent and log cabin town of Winter Quarters (now Florence, Nebraska) was well under way. The lessons of the earlier camp making had been taught and order and discipline prevailed. Thomas Kane, Gentile peacemaker between the Mormons and their eastern critics, wrote of the order and industry that the Saints were learning on this first part of the mass trek. He describes the building of the camps in Iowa: "It was a comfort to notice the readiness with which they had turned their hands to woodcraft; some of them, though I believe these had generally been bread carpenters, wheelwrights, or more particularly boat builders, quite outdoing the most notable voyagers in the use of the axe. One of these would fell a tree, strip off its bark, cut and split up the trunk in piles of plank, scantling, or shingles; make posts and pins and pales — entreat his toil from first to last with more sportive flourish than the schoolboy whittling his shingle."

Gilbert Belnap's early training, while working as an apprentice in a wagon-maker's shop, was certainly to be a blessing to the Saints as he spent three years in Winter Quarters, helping to prepare for the many wagon trains that were to cross the 1400 miles to the Great Salt Lake Valley. His wife Adeline was to become similarly entwined with responsibilities. Thomas Kane also noted about the women that they were learning their frontier skills: "Their art availed them in their changing affairs. With almost their entire culinary material limited to the milk of their cows, some store of meal or flour, and a very few condiments, they brought their thousand and one recipes into play with a success that outdid for their families the miracle of the Hebrew widow's cruse (cruise)."

It was not a full contingent of pioneers that built Winter Quarters. Three months earlier, 500 of the ablest of their number had left for Mount Pisgah camp with Captain James Alien to form the Mormon Battalion to march along a southern route to California in defense of the United States claims against Mexico. The move was one of expediency for the Saints. So nearly indigent were they during that summer of 1846 that Brigham Young had instructed James Little, his emissary in Washington, to appeal for federal aid in moving the people west. Negotiations resulted in the government offering to exchange money — \$42 per man, paid in advance — for volunteers and to provide the men food and transportation to California. The troops were mustered in June and arrived in San Diego, California seven months and

T. W. GRAYDON.
LAMP.



2,000 weary miles later, having seen no combat. The war with Mexico was over. Demobilized, they returned to meet their families, the vanguard entering the Great Basin with the pioneer company and Brigham Young.

For the main body of Saints, the rest of the summer of 1846 was filled with preparations for the winter and for the long trek which they knew would begin in the spring for those most ready. The camps across Iowa were breathing spaces:

Garden Grove, Kaneshville, Mount Pisgah, and Winter Quarters grew with arriving Saints who were gathering for their march to the New Zion.

Brigham Young called for volunteers for the first vanguard. Gilbert Belnap eagerly thrust himself forward in the crowd to volunteer. He and his close friend and relative, Andrew Gibbons, both simultaneously made an appeal to Brigham Young. Brigham Young indicated to them that they both should not go, they both had young wives and families and it wouldn't be right to leave their families behind unprotected. They drew lots and Andrew Gibbons succeeded in going with the first series of companies and Gilbert Belnap obediently, but perhaps with enthusiasm dampened, remained behind for three years.

The journey from Winter Quarters to the Great Basin and the mountain guarded interiors is an oft told tale. The journals of the early brethren are plentiful with many recorded and day-by-day events, not only of the 1847 migrations, but the continuous movements that lasted until the coming of the railroad in 1869. The details in Gilbert's journal are equally precious as those of many of the early brethren and sisters such as William Clayton, Wilford Woodruff, and Eliza R. Snow. In the records of the exodus are recounted numerous episodes that stand as great stories in their own right. There is the account of the Revolving Perpetual Immigration Fund through which those who had already arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, although nearly destitute themselves, gave liberally of their means to provide transportation to "Zion" to those who were financially unable to make the journey on their own, however intense their desires to do so. And there were tens of thousands of such converts in Great Britain alone. There is the narrative of the handcart immigrants, most of whom reached the valley safely, but some of whom met with disaster. There is the story of the success of irrigation beginning with the first potato crop watered from City Creek which gave poignant confirmation of the hope that with the help of God and by the sweat of man's brow the desert could be made to blossom. There was the expansion by colonization beyond the Salt Lake Valley that began almost before the dust from the first wagon trains had settled on the untrodden sagebrush.

The first companies were barely settled between City Creek and the Jordan River when Brigham Young turned the exploration of the Saints outward, west around the Oquirrh Mountains, north to the Weber where the mountain man, Miles Goodyear, made his hermitage and where Gilbert's destiny was to be found for the ensuing years of his life as he established himself as the first sheriff in Weber County, was to hold innumerable political offices in both city and county government, and to form and shape that locality for our time. He was to leave his ecclesiastical mark on the county by serving as bishop in Hooper, Utah, up close to the time of his passing.

From the very first, the forts and settlements that sprang up were models of order, of planning, of discipline. They were not allowed to develop haphazardly, but streets and lots were carefully platted and property was systematically as signed.

Floyd where it stayed peacefully for a few years, finally leaving when the Civil War broke out in the east. In the meantime, the Saints, upwards of 30,000 of them, came back, restored their homes to use, and proceeded with the work of settlement, agriculture, industry, and commerce.

In the decade that followed a stronger economy developed due to the official policies for self sufficiency on the one hand and the coming of the transcontinental railroad on the other. From the strong trunk that had been solidly planted on the Wasatch Front, branches reached out in all directions until by the end of the 19th century at least 500 communities founded by Mormons were spread throughout the west. These settlements were to include many settled by the children of Gilbert Belnap, Adeline, and Henrietta. They were to include our antecedents who were the 15 living offspring of our great Pioneer patriarch and matriarchs. Our family's settlements extended south to Moab and the four-corners area, to the little Colorado region of Arizona, and eventually into Mexico; to the north they reached to Cache Valley, Bear Lake regions, and many parts of Idaho and into Alberta, Canada, but with the century's close, the time of gathering was ending. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would no longer need to collect its deterrents for their mutual protection; its missionaries, which have included hundreds of descendents of Gilbert Belnap and his wives, could now encourage their converts to stay where they were and to build a worldwide Zion — not a temporal one of fields and factories, but a spiritual one of faith and testimony. The pioneers had left their legacy of strength and growth. They had met their physical challenges by building cities of iron. Now it rests with the 20th century descendents of Gilbert Belnap, Adeline and Henrietta, to begin with those cities built of iron and to eventually leave in their places cities built of gold.

It has been the decision of your compiler to let Gilbert, Adeline, and Henrietta tell their own story, as much as possible, by direct quotation from their journals, letters, accounts, statements of their children. We have the woven story of their life which sojourns through the period of time that covers almost the first century of the history of the Restoration.

We can see the conflicts of early childhood, of youth, and a hostile personality pattern of a young adulthood developing within the life of Gilbert Belnap. We can see that aggressive and hostile nature tamed by the healing influence of the Christ through the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. As it changed the life of Gilbert Belnap, so it has and is capable of changing the lives of each and every one of us. There is much to be gained by all of us to feel and sense the "transitional process" that took place over the years and mellowed our patriarch into one of truly great character.

The lessons of history become most valuable when they become most intimate, as we look through the window of history, literally into the inner soul of man.

The scriptures point clearly to the high purpose of man's existence. Ancient prophets were explicit on this matter, as is revealed by records made available to us through the modern prophet, Joseph Smith. That prophet having learned the drama and purpose of it all from the ancient records as well as from heavenly visitations, continued to receive through direct revelation further light and truth respecting man's great potential. Through him God has abundantly confirmed that man is the supreme creation, made in the image and similitude of God and his son, Jesus Christ; that man is the offspring of God; that for man, and man

alone, was the earth created, organized, planted, and made ready for human habitation; and that having within him the seeds of Godhood and thus being a God in embryo, man has unlimited potential for progress and attainment.

We hope you have perceived in the evolution of this Belnap book the story of our lineage in Israel finding its identity in a cooperative program with God, a program which is capable of leading all of us to eternal life. Our family story is the story of Israel, having lost its way in ages past and now being lead and finding its way in this latter day.

The family has always been moved to find freedom, liberty, and peace for themselves, and their posterity. We can see in the lives of each this struggle, but not so clearly as in the life of Gilbert Belnap. The miracle wrought by the Gospel of Jesus Christ on him as an individual, and hence on ourselves as we see ourselves through him, could possibly be the greatest contribution of this book. Also, we can see a whole people and culture work out this change. The life of our ancestry hence becomes a model with both positive and negative signposts. The heritage is not always one of good example, but it points the way nonetheless, and that is a great gift which we must return to them by our present works.

SECTION I

(It was twenty-one days before Gilbert Belnap's eleventh birthday when tragedy struck his home. His father Rosel was killed while riding a horse in a race. Three months and one day later his mother died. By the laws of the country Gilbert, as an orphan, was bound out as an apprentice.)

Gilbert Belnap's Journal

(Original record in the L.D.S. Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah rev. 1950, p. 7)

Fort Limhi, Oregon Monday,
December 15, 1856

Private Journal of Gilbert Belnap, who was the son of Rosel and Jane Belnap. Born Port Hope, New Castle District, Upper Canada, December 22, 1821, being the third son of my Father and the younger of five children. Three sons were born after me, making eight children in all.

Both my parents died just about the time I turned eleven years of age, leaving me with little education. Though I had been apprenticed to William C. More who

