APOSTLE IN EXILE: JOSEPH F. SMITH'S
THIRD MISSION TO HAWAII, 1885-1887
by Russell T. Clement

Introduction

Joseph F. Smith was only five when father Hyrum and uncle Joseph were killed at Carthage jail. After four more years of hardships and persecution, including the sufferings at Winter Quarters, the family migrated to Utah in 1848. Led by his legendary mother Mary Fielding, 10-year-old Joseph drove an ox team to the Salt Lake Valley. His mother died four years later. An orphan at age 15, Joseph was sent on his first mission to Hawaii.

The stirring account of Joseph F. Smith's first mission is one of the best-known missionary experiences in the Church. As a teenage missionary he developed a lifelong love affair with the Islands. Joseph served two other missions here and made numerous visits until the last year of his life. For 64 years, from 1854 to 1918, he was a key figure in the development of Mormonism in Hawaii.

During his long association with the Church in Hawaii, Joseph was personally involved in many of its most important historical events. On his first mission he helped lay the groundwork on Maui, Hawaii, Molokai, and Lanai. Adept at learning Hawaiian, Joseph also gained an enduring love for the native Saints. In 1864, at age 26, he returned to help reclaim the Church from Walter Murray Gibson. Along with William Cluff and Alma Smith, Joseph rallied the spirits of the members, baptized new converts, and selected the site for a new Church plantation at Laie.

By the time of his third mission in 1885 - the focus of this paper - Joseph was 46 years old. He had been an apostle and a counselor in the First Presidency for nearly 20 years. An exile from the federal government's harassment of polygamists, he served for two-and-a-half years in Hawaii. After becoming the Sixth President of the Church in 1901, Joseph visited Hawaii on four more occasions. In May, 1915, he selected the temple site in Laie. In light of his lengthy and involved association with Hawaii, it is altogether fitting to name the most important building on campus after him.

Background and Arrival in Hawaii

On January 3, 1885, President John Taylor and his two counselors, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith, along with several apostles, left Salt Lake City to visit the southern settlements. The party traveled south by train to Mexico, then to Arizona, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. At San Francisco
The presiding elder in Hawaii was Edward Partridge, whom Joseph had known during his first mission 30 years before. Upon arrival, Enoch Farr had a little fun at the Mission President's expense. While the rest of the party waited outside, Enoch told President Partridge that "several strangers" had come for a visit. In Partridge's words, "It nearly made my wife Sarah sick, as there was nothing in the house for them to eat. ...I was considerably put out about it."2 Imagine their surprise when the "strangers" turned out to be President and Sister Smith! Shortly after the arrival of President Smith, the Partridges were released to return home. Enoch Farr was made the new Mission President.

Exile in Hawaii: February 9, 1885 to July 1, 1887

Joseph F. Smith's stay in Hawaii was a time of unsettled joy. What prevented it from being one of the most idyllic periods of his life was the separation from most of family and from his associates in the leadership of the Church. He was constantly preoccupied with problems at home. At one meeting in Laie he reportedly said to the elders that "he would a thousand times rather suffer going to the penitentiary than be here, only that duty required him to remain as it was considered advisable by his brethren of the priesthood to come."3

The major benefits of his exile were his spiritual leadership and administrative
experience. He regularly taught the missionaries and counseled with President Farr concerning Church affairs. He encouraged better record keeping and stricter attention to statistical matters. He frequently spoke in Sunday meetings and conference sessions, although whenever strangers were in town Joseph stayed home rather than risk exposure.

While he continued to exercise priesthood authority and supervise aspects of the plantation, Joseph was free to pursue personal interests in ways he had seldom before been able to do. After a few months he became involved in the recovery and publication of the important Spaulding manuscript—the story of which was researched and presented last year by Lance Chase.

Although worried about the plight of his families and friends on the mainland, Joseph took time to enjoy the natural beauty of Laie. In his journal on March 16, 1885, he wrote the following poetical description:

Took a short walk with Julina & baby on the hill overlooking the rice lois and valley of Laie. The picture was beautiful. The mountains rising high up in the west and south bathed in fleecy clouds, and in the falling shadows of the early evening formed a dark background studded here and there by the star-like glimmering of the lighted cottages of the natives, which sparkled like golden spangles on a robe of velvet; and in the north and east the sea, illumined by the reflections of the mellow rays of twilight, appeared like a vast mirror, limited only by the distant horizon, set in a flame of floss-like clouds and standing on the base of coral reefs along the shoreline ruffled in the gauzy frills of the foaming surf.

In August, 1885, Joseph visited early missionary sites on several of the islands. Not surprisingly, Maui was first on his list. Accompanied by several elders and native brethren, Joseph retraced his journeys of 30 years before. On Maui he visited the site where George Q. Cannon baptized the first converts and the places he had lived and labored. He also visited the Hawaiian woman Kuaana, who had once nursed him back to health, as well as his old missionary companion—"the old veteran" J. Pake. The party also climbed Haleakala. Joseph wrote a lengthy description of the journey which was published back home in The Contributor. Joseph's life in exile settled into familiar routines. He interspersed counseling, speaking, and writing assignments with physical labor at the plantation. A letter to Orson F. Whitney in January, 1886 included these observations about the plantation, as well as a note on the weather:

All is well with us out in this quiet, peaceful land. We are now engaged working our cane into sugar. It is a hard, tedious labor, but a profitable business when
thoroughly well conducted. We work to a great disadvantage, financially, on account of dividing the interest in aid of the colony, i.e. Instead of hiring the cheapest labor, and running the plantation for all it will make, we hire the members of the Church and devote the profits largely in their interest. . . . The thermometer this morning stood at 64°. . . . you should have seen our people shivering around all blue with cold!6

In Laie, President Smith is credited with an inspiring prophecy that has become an important tradition among Hawaiian Saints. Although it was recorded years after the event, Lannie Britsch and others believe that the ideas expressed were indeed Joseph F. Smith's. The prophecy grew out of the problems of the time. The Saints were discouraged about the plantation and brought their complaints to President Smith. After listening for a while he arose and said:

My brothers and sisters, do not leave this land, for this place has been chosen by the Lord as a gathering place for the Saints of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Hawaii nei. Do not complain because of the many trials which come to you, because of the barrenness of the land, the lack of water, the scarcity of foods to which you are accustomed, and the poverty as well. Be patient, for the day is coming when this land will become a most beautiful land. Water shall spring forth in abundance, and upon the barren land you now see, the Saints will build homes, taro will be planted, and there will be plenty to eat and drink. Many trees will be planted and this place will become verdant, the fragrance of flowers will fill the air, and trees which are now seen growing on the mountains will be moved by the Saints and will grow in this place near the sea, and because of the great beauty of the land, inland birds will come here and sing their songs.

And upon this place the glory of the Lord will rest, to bless the Saints who believe in Him and His commandments. And there are some in this house who will live to see all these things fulfilled, which I have spoken from the Lord.

Therefore, do not waiver, work with patience, continue on, stand firm, keep the commandments and also the laws of the gathering, and you will receive greater blessings, both spiritual and temporal, than you now enjoy or have enjoyed in the past. May the Lord be with us all.7

Besides work on the plantation, Joseph often accompanied Albert Davis on mail runs into Honolulu. He was also involved with forays into the mountains for oranges, bananas, guavas, limes and mangoes. "Sea baths" at Hukilau were another popular activity, and a must on Saturdays. Joseph's wife Julina made Joseph and the other missionaries bathing suits using two basic patterns
- button-down tie. Obviously proud of her handiwork, one day in February, 1886 she remarked "we chrisen [sic] our new bathing suits this afternoon."

There was also time for social activities, dances and fun. On April Fools' Day, 1886, Julina recorded the following practical joke in her journal:

When we sat down to breakfast this morning, after prayer . . . we discovered that the mush plates contained very dark colored dish cloths with a little wormed corn meal and water spread over them, and the following note lying on Bro. Farr's plate.

"We do not want to act unwise
We know that jokes are against the rule
But if you will forgive us once
We'd like to say its April fool.

"The Cooks"

"But the worst of the joke," according to Julina, "was there was no breakfast behind it." "The Cooks" were Elder Matthew Noall and his wife Libbie. Even though it was a Fast Day, a breakfast of oyster stew was immediately prepared.8

On April 21, 1886, Julina gave birth to her eighth child and fourth son, Elias Wesley. Joseph delivered the baby. Elias Wesley Smith served three missions in Hawaii. His first was from 1907 to 1910. In later years Elias served twice as Mission President, from 1919 to 1922 and from 1947 to 1950. He died in 1970.

Julina's fourteen-year-old Donnette arrived in the Islands in late October, 1886 to help with the baby and two-year-old Ina. Donnette came with her aunt Melissa, Albert Davis' wife. At about this time Joseph became seriously ill. What started as a cold developed into chills, a severe cough, and finally bronchitis. Joseph lost considerable weight before full recovery.

On March 16, 1887, Julina, Donnette, and the two babies returned to the mainland with Albert Davis and his wife. Joseph wrote the following poignant account of their departure in his journal:

The steamer cut loose at 12 p.m. and at exactly 12:15 she commenced her course out of the harbor; and I took the last look at the receding forms of my loved and loving ones until God in his mercy shall permit us to meet again. When the ship passed the line of sight, I hastened to the Brake with Bro. E. W. Davis, and we drove up past Aaiicroailimu, where I left Edwin to return the Brake, while I climbed Puuiona to look again at the speeding steamer Australia with her precious sacred treasures until lost behind Diamond Head. When once alone, my soul burst forth in tears and I wept their fountains dry and felt all the pangs and grief of parting with my heart's best treasures on earth.9
An unforeseen event abruptly ended Joseph F. Smith's exile in Hawaii. Advised the last of June that President Taylor was seriously ill, Joseph made immediate plans to leave for the mainland. On June 30, 1887, he purchased a small trunk, "packed up for off," and then attended a mass meeting at the armory in Honolulu where about 3,000 angry Hawaiians had gathered. After the meeting a corps of militia called the Honolulu Rifles took control of the city, placing guards over the government and other buildings. Ironically, one of the buildings placed under guard was the residence of Joseph's old enemy, Walter Murray Gibson. To add to the drama, Gibson was arrested the next day, just before Joseph departed on the Mariposa.

Joseph F. Smith arrived in Utah on July 18, 1887. He immediately met with Presidents Taylor and Cannon. It was the first time since January, 1885 that the First Presidency had been together. President Taylor was desperately ill and died one week later. Following his death, and the reorganization of the Church under Wilford Woodruff, Joseph continued as Second Counselor in the First Presidency.
ENDNOTES


2Edward Partridge, Jr., Journal, Brigham Young University entry for February 10, 1885.

3As recorded by Frederick Beesley, Journal, Historical Department of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, entry for November 15, 1885.

4See, for examples, Julina L. Smith, Journal, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, entries for May 9, 1886 and July 4, 1886.

5As quoted in Gibbons, p. 142.

6Joseph F. Smith letter to Orson F. Whitney, January 18, 1886, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.


8Julina L. Smith, Journal, entry for April 1, 1886.

9As quoted in Gibbons, p. 153.