

The World of Joseph Fielding: Chapter 21

Joseph and Hannah Fielding, with Rachel and Ellen, Sail to the United States

Joseph received a few donations from Church members to assist him in taking his family to America in September of 1841, but it was his brother-in-law George Greenwood who made the trip possible. “If my Wife’s Brother had not assisted me, I could not have got to Liverpool.”

They traveled by train to the port, Joseph mentioning that they made the trip in one day. Joseph carried sixty dollars in gold pieces, sent by faithful new members of the Church whose desire was to assist in the building of the temple in Nauvoo.¹

Joseph was now forty-four years old; his wife Hannah, thirty-three. Rachel was two and Ellen just seven months old. He wrote, “We took leave of our Friends, in hopes to see them again in Zion.” On the evening of Thursday, September 16th, the family boarded the ship *Tyrian*, which flew under a U.S. flag. Also emigrating was Joseph Fielding’s good friend William Mitchell, who had been an early convert in Liverpool. He was emigrating with his wife and a teenage son who was also named William.

Several passengers recorded that their chests and boxes were sent ahead to the ship by train. Joseph’s luggage was handled in this manner, and the day after arriving in Liverpool, Joseph loaded his family’s luggage on board.

Richard Bentley, who was not LDS, chose to emigrate with the help of his brother-in-law John Sanders, Joseph’s missionary associate in Carlisle earlier in the year. After consulting with his friends, and speaking to a ship captain who had been to America several times, Richard felt like America would be a place where he might have a better chance at a good life. Brother Sanders’s wife Margaret and son Thomas were also emigrating.

A week before his departure from Leeds, seventy miles northeast, Richard shipped his chest by train to Liverpool with directions for it to be loaded onto the *Tyrian*. When he arrived on the morning of Monday 21st, the day of the ship’s departure, the chest was not on board. Richard made his way to the train yard but found no one to help him. At noon he sneaked into the yard and searched, finally locating his chest. Richard hired a carter and the two of them loaded the chest on the cart behind the horse and then raced to the dock.

On the one hand, Richard feared arrest from a possible constable on his tail. On the other hand, he desperately did not want to miss boarding the ship. They reached the dock exactly at 1, only to see the ship moving along the River Mersey. The carter threw the chest on board and Richard sprang onto the deck after it. The record of his emigration took two pages, but Richard’s description of getting his chest on board consumed the entire first page. He kept the chest with him for the rest of his life, taking it across the plains and then to St. George, where he died in 1906.

Amos Fielding and Elder Parley P. Pratt spent the weekend with the saints on board the *Tyrian*, ensuring that they were settled in, and preaching to them. Most of the emigrants attended Church in downtown Liverpool on Sunday with the members there.

Joseph Fielding wrote that Elder Pratt spoke “on the Subject of Zion, etc.” He added, “His Discourse was full of Light, as also all his talks are.”² A friend took Joseph and his family back to the ship in his coach:

The Ship was dark, there being no Light allowed in the Deck, so we had to find our Way to Bed and put the Children to Bed in the Dark; but I felt glad to find myself on the Way to Zion. Before lying us down, I called upon the Lord.

Monday afternoon, as the *Tyrian* moved along the docks and out into the Irish Sea, the passengers sang³ the hymn *Can I Leave You? Yes, My Native Land*, written by Samuel Francis Smith which was included in the hymnal which had been published earlier in the year.

Yes, my native land, I love thee,
All thy scenes I love them well,
Friends, connexions, happy country!
Can I bid you all farewell?
Can I leave thee—
Far in distant lands to dwell?

Holy scenes of joy and gladness,
Every fond emotion swell.
Can I banish heartfelt sadness,
While I bid my home farewell?

Bear me on, thou restless ocean:
Let the winds my canvas swell.
Heaves my heart with warm emotion,
While I go far hence to dwell.
Glad I bid thee,
Native land, farewell.

The next morning the saints assembled on deck and sang⁴ *How Firm A Foundation*, of which the fourth stanza is:

When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not thee o'erflow,
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee, and sanctify to thee,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

The Voyage of the *Tyrian* to New Orleans

Two weeks after boarding the ship, Joseph wrote a summary of their journey to that point.⁵

On Tuesday morning our beloved Brethren took their Leave of us, while the Company sang several Farewell Hymns, and about 10 A. M. we set Sail with a fine Wind, and in a few Hours lost Sight of our old native Land. I being Appointed to superintend the Company, with Elder John Sanders to assist me, called a Council and chose several of the Brethren to unite with us in the Management of the Company. . . [but before too long] some began to be sick, and this increased for several Days as the Wind blew strong. In short, the Sickness grew severe and heavy. The Captain was kind to us, and sent his Men to empty our Vessels, etc., and to see that our Boxes were fast, but by Sunday, the Weather became so fine that we met on Deck in the Morning, and I read a Portion of the Word of God, and Prayed, etc., and in the Afternoon we took the Sacrament. I would have had the Brethren speak, but they left it to me, and I spoke as I was led, to suit the Occasion, and in the Eve we had prayer in different Parts of the Ship, and we felt that we had done as was pleasing to the Lord.

The next Day, September 27th, the Wind began to blow till it became a Storm, and at Night the Hatches were put down. Only one was open, and early on Tuesday Morn the Sea broke over and came into the Steerage. The Ship rolled to and fro very much, and the people went from Side to Side on our Floor. This alarmed some of the Saints. Some thought it was all up with us. One Brother ran on Deck, thinking the Ship was going to be wrecked, and thought he would get into the Long Boat. Our Situation appeared gloomy, but in fact there was no Danger, yet I kneeled up in my Berth and prayed that the Lord would be merciful to us and preserve us, and cause the Wind to abate, and my Prayer was in some Measure answered.

When we rose in the Morning there was nothing seriously wrong. The Water which had rolled to and fro in the Ship had found its way out, I suppose into the Hold, through the Scuttle Hole. Some of our Boxes and Tins etc. had broken lose and were rolling about. My Shoes and other things were lost, but I found them under the Berth. The wind blew hard all the next Day, properly a storm, but on Wednesday, we had become pretty steady, and in the Eve I called the Company together as well as I could, and spoke to them about 3/4 of an Hour on the importance of making a proper use of their time, for I saw that some of them were vain a trifling. . . . I also saw some who were selfish and covetous. I told them this was no celestial Spirit, and they must strive to get rid of it. I also exhorted them to be careful of their Food, as we knew not how long we might be on the Water.

The Captain and Mates have been very kind and Friendly. They often came down to see how we got on and to see that our Boxes, etc. were fast, and would send down the Sailors to empty our Pots, etc., when we were too sick to help ourselves. In fact, they have so far treated us with great Kindness, and we have had Peace in our Company.

In a few days after we sailed, our Number was increased by Sis. Littlewood giving Birth to a fine Daughter about three o'clock on Friday Morning, the 24th. She and her Child are doing well.⁶

We have had some Calm, which was a comfort to us in our Sickness. On Sunday, the 3rd of October, the Weather was too rough to be on Deck, and we met in two separate Places of the Ship [for meetings]. Bro. Sanders led one and I led the other and spoke on the Subject of Zion and the Gathering, and Afternoon we took the Sacrament, carrying it round to the Saints at their Berths. The Evening was wet, and we could not enjoy any Meeting particularly, but we had Prayer and Singing.”

On October 6th, Joseph wrote:

Today the Wind is blowing about as it did on Sunday Even, and has been ever since, taking us from 7 to 9 Knots for Hours about our right Course. Monday Night was very wet, and the Water came in upon our Beds, but we got them dry again by taking them on Deck. We have seen many and spoken to several Ships since we came out. One was near running Foul of us, but we have had no Accident as yet. The Lord has been kind to us and there has been so little discord that is not worth recording, only 2 or 3 Words about the Fire or the Cooking. Many are relieved from their Sickness, etc. by Faith and Prayer, and administering of Oil in the Name of the Lord.

Three days later, Joseph wrote:

We have generally had good Sailing in one Course. The Sails have scarcely been changed as to their Course since last Sunday till yesterday when the yards were squared. We have often sailed 9, 10, or 11 Knots per Hour. . . .

On Sunday October 13th Joseph wrote a short entry in his journal:

This was a fine Day. The morning was rather too hot, but as the Sun got round to the Head of the Ship, the Sails shaded us from the Sun. We met on the Deck at ½ past 10 to worship God. Elder Sanders spoke a While, and Elder Mitchell.

Richard Bentley wrote,

Elder Joseph Fielding was the president of the company of Saints on board the ship. He was a kind, good man and treated me kindly. He called on me to assist in giving out the daily rations to the Saints, in fact, few of them knew that I did not belong to the church.

A month after their departure, Elder Pratt wrote Joseph Smith from Manchester, saying, in part:

On the 20 of Sept, the Ship *Tyrian* sailed from Liverpool for New Orleans, under a

charter of the Latter-day saints; She had upwards of two hundred on board, with Elder Joseph Fielding at their head. By chartering, we saved the company at least 500 or 600 dollars. . . .The splendid New Ship *Chaos*, 1200 tons Burthen, will sail on the 5th November, under our charter. She will have from one to two hundred Saints on board, with Patriarch Peter Melling at their head.

Elder Pratt continued:

The Saints in this country are generally Rejoicing, and filled with the testimony of Jesus. Great zeal is manifested by the officers in general, of which there is probably more than one thousand. We are increasing in Numbers and in Gifts and blessings. New Branches of the Church are rising in many places, and great additions made to the old ones. Manchester and vicinity has poured forth a stream of emigration for the last 18 months, and still we numbered on at our Conference , two weeks ago, near sixteen hundred members, in between one and two hundred officers; all these within one hour's journey of Manchester.⁷

Joseph Fielding's Trip from New Orleans to Nauvoo

The *Tyrian* docked at the large port in New Orleans on the 9th of November, after seven weeks on the Atlantic. The passengers collected their luggage and then loaded it onto a steamboat which would carry them up the Mississippi River and through St. Louis. Joseph wrote,

I landed in New Orleans early in November, 1841 at the head of about 200 Saints, having had Peace and a good Passage, but at this place I had a Fall from a Bridge, or Wharf, near 10 Feet on to hard Ground, which broke one or two of my Ribs and hurt my Knees very much. I had just been to Charter a Steam Boat, and was returning to the Ship. This Fall was the severest hurt I had ever sustained. I felt determined to make but little of it, but I was long before I could rise from my Bed of myself. . . the Master of the Boat was very kind, letting me occupy one of the State Rooms for myself and Family.⁸

A few months later, in a letter to the British Saints,⁹ Joseph described his trip up the Mississippi River:

It is common there to see trees loaded with oranges, which are very cheap. The people are partly white and partly coloured. We took one of the best steam boats (the *General Pratt*), and for 11s. English each, and luggage, sailed to St. Louis, 800 or 1000 miles. . . There are many slave settlements; these often reminded us of the factory lords in England, in their mansions surrounded with cottages occupied by the poor oppressed labourer: it is much the same with the slaves and their masters, but the slaves pay no rent. We saw, also, many fields of cotton, and many of sugar cane. One of our boat's crew was shot, while getting some cane, by the owner, while the boat was taking in wood, but it did not prove fatal. A girl of our company, eleven years of age, while playing, fell overboard and could

not be saved: this was the only death we had. It is a truly interesting scene to pass up this river; we often thought of the crowded population of England, who cannot get a foot of land in all their lifetime, and here we travel many hundred miles and see little but forests and no one to occupy it, and the best of land.

They reached Warsaw, eighteen miles south of Nauvoo, in eight days, but the steamboat couldn't go farther because the Mississippi River was too low.¹⁰ Joseph wrote that the people in Warsaw were:

. . . poor, faithless Saints, something like Spiders' Webs set to catch flies. . . .The Council of our Brethren of the 12, Brother Willard Richards and others, [desired] that some of us should stop at Warsaw, thinking at that time of forming a Branch there. . . but . . . that Place was given up on account of the unfriendly disposition of the People there. . . .They came to us with fain words as our best Friends, but their Council was that of Enemies, but did not prevail to stay any of our Company except two. Most of them had been to Nauvoo, but had not Faith enough to live there. . .¹¹

Richard Bentley also wrote that they were met in Warsaw by Apostle Willard Richards, who encouraged them to settle there and build a city. Heavy snow fell that night, and the next day John Sanders headed on by foot to Nauvoo. Three days later a team sent by John arrived to take Richard, his sister Margaret and his son Thomas on to Nauvoo.¹²

Joseph wrote that just after they arrived in Warsaw, "the Weather broke, and the Winter set in with a Snow Storm." Lorenzo Young, Brigham Young's younger brother, lived in Warsaw. He took in Joseph and his family for a few days, Joseph writing that "he and his Wife were very kind to us." After three days of rest Brother Young took them to Nauvoo in a sleigh. Joseph wrote:

The Day was very cold as we rode over the Prairie. We were compelled at times to get out and walk to warm ourselves, but it was with great Pain that I got off and on the Sleigh on account of my hurt. . . Some of our Company came on [also], feeling anxious to see this Place and the Prophet.

Although injured, Joseph Fielding could not resist making observations about his new home.

When we came within two miles of our Journey's End, we began to see the Effects of that Industry for which the Saints are so remarkable. Fences of Rails & of Pickets, Houses and gardens on the Edge of the Prairie, such as we had not before seen. 'This,' said Bro. Y., 'is Nauvoo,' but we had two Miles to go yet, so extensive was this Settlement of the Saints become in so short a time!



Passengers from the Tyrian traveled 830 miles from New Orleans to Warsaw where the river was too low to take them farther.

We soon passed the sacred Place, and saw the Foundation of the Temple. The Arches of the Vault Windows were not all finished. The Sight of this though by the Light of the Moon only gave me peculiar feelings. The Idea that it was done at the special Command of the Almighty was a new thing in this Age. It seemed to fill the mind with Solemnity, and to give a sacredness to the whole Place. How many Houses of God, as they were called, have I seen in building, but there is none in the whole World except the one in Kirtland and this one that was built at the Command of God. This Thought at once leads the Mind back through the long Darkness which has covered the Earth since the Days of the Apostles, wherein God has not spoken to Men either by Visions or by Dreams, only by Urim or by Prophets, the Seers and Prophets have been covered, and to the Promises of God that he would renew the Covenant, gather Israel, and establish his Kingdom on the Earth, no more to be destroyed.¹³

In his letter to the British Saints, Joseph Fielding wrote:

I can truly say that the place, in general, exceeds my expectations; in short, one would hardly believe it possible that a town of such extent, could have been built in so short a time, especially by a people generally poor – there are many log, many frame, and many brick houses.

Joseph Fielding Arrives in Nauvoo and Reunites with His Sisters

We soon reached the House of my Sister, now Widow Thompson. Her husband, R. B. Thompson, had departed this Life in August of that year. In expectation of my coming, he had prepared a House for me, but had not finished it, and instead of finding in him a Friend on my arrival, I found a Widow that stood in need of a Friend. I was still so unwell as not to be able to cut the smallest Stick, and Business was then dull but little to do, and I with my Family found myself in but poor Circumstances, not having had Money sufficient to bring me here.

As soon as I could, I began to busy myself in doing little things for my Sister, and when the River had Frozen, I got an Ax and went onto the Island to cut Wood, for I could not live in Idleness, but it was as much as I could well do to cross the River and return. With Pain and Weariness I cut 3 or 4 Cords.

However, before he could return to move it across the river, the wood was taken by another.

Joseph and his family concluded the eventful year of 1841 by living with his sister Mercy and her young daughter Mary Jane. It is probable that Joseph honored his two sisters by giving them a copy of the British edition of the Book of Mormon. Perhaps Joseph returned from England with copies for Hyrum Smith, his brother-in-law, and maybe even the prophet, although it's likely they had already received copies from the returning apostles several months earlier.

Joseph and Hannah would have also met, for the first time, their nephew and two nieces, the children of Mercy and Mary. Mary Jane, Mercy's daughter, was three years old. Mary had given birth to a daughter named Martha Ann in the early spring, who joined her brother Joseph Fielding Smith, who was also three.

Joseph Smith recorded a meeting on November 28th, a Sunday. His scribe wrote:

[Spent] the day in the council with the Twelve Apostles at the house of President Young, conversing with them upon a variety of subjects. Brother Joseph Fielding was present, having been absent about four years on a mission to England. I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.¹⁴

During the winter, Richard Bentley was baptized by Joseph Fielding, who cut the ice to get into the Mississippi. Joseph and John Sanders then confirmed Richard at the water's edge.¹⁵

Orson Hyde Dedicates Jerusalem for Israel's Return

A few weeks after the *Tyrian* arrived in the United States, Elder Hyde wrote from the Egyptian port in Alexandria.¹⁶ Orson had traveled through very difficult circumstances, as various factions from the areas where he traveled were in conflict. He faced periods without any food and ate snails to stay alive. Finding decapitated bodies in the streets became a common occurrence for him. His companion was an American Protestant minister who died of typhoid fever while they were in Jerusalem. Elder Hyde told Joseph Smith that early in the morning of Sunday, October 24th, he left Jerusalem as soon as the gates were opened, crossed the Kedron Brook and walked up the Mount of Olives, offering a dedicatory prayer.



This painting by Clark Kelly Price depicts Orson Hyde dedicating Jerusalem for the return of the Jews.

Let the land become abundantly fruitful when possessed by its rightful heirs; let it again flow with plenty to feed the returning prodigals who come home with a spirit of grace and supplication. . . Let that nation or that people who shall take an active part in behalf of Abraham's children, and in the raising up of Jerusalem, find favor in Thy sight. . . I now ask Thee in the name of Jesus to remember Zion, with all her Stakes, and with all her assemblies. She has been grievously afflicted and smitten. . . Do Thou arise in the majesty of Thy strength, and make bare Thine arm in behalf of Thy people. . . . Pour the spirit of light and knowledge, grace and wisdom, into the hearts of her Prophets. . . Let light and knowledge march forth through the empire of darkness, and may the honest in heart flow to their standard, and join in the march to go forth to meet the Bridegroom.

After his prayer, Orson gathered stones and left them in a large mound as a witness.¹⁷ He then crossed over to the temple mount and erected another altar.

Elder Hyde wrote:

I have found many Jews who listened with intense interest. The idea of the Jews being restored to Palestine is gaining ground in Europe almost every day. . . .My mission has been quite as prosperous as I could expect.



A monument stands in what is now known as the Orson Hyde Memorial Gardens on the Mount of Olives.

Orson then explained to Joseph Smith that he was giving his letter to a British gentleman who, upon his return to England, would post the letter to America. Orson told the prophet that he would return to Germany, and he asked for information on his family after directing where he could receive mail.



A French woodcut from the 1850s, made after the Nauvoo Temple was burned, depicts baptisms for the dead in the original temple font.

Nauvoo Temple Font Dedicated

By December 1841 the font in the Nauvoo Temple was dedicated so baptisms for the dead could take place there. In a letter from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to the Saints, Joseph Smith wrote:

One of those privileges which is particularly attracting the notice of the Saints at the present moment, is baptism for the dead, in the font which is so far completed as to be dedicated, and several have already attended to this ordinance by which the sick have been made whole, and the prisoner set free.¹⁸

Chapter 21 Endnotes Pages 337-345:

1. Joseph Fielding Papers, Letter from Parley P. Pratt dated 24 October 1841 to Joseph Smith. “The Lord enabled us to send about sixty dollars in Gold by Elder Fielding; this was mostly subscribed by two or three individuals. We shall probably send as much more by the Ship Chaos, in care of Peter Melling.” Joseph did write, on page 126, “We left the Dock and anchored in the River, accompanied by Elder Pratt and Wife and Elder A. Fielding who remained with us through the Night, settling up their Accounts with the Saints who mostly made Presents to Elders Pratt and Fielding of 2..6 each, and this chiefly they have sent by me for the Building of the Temple in Nauvoo.” Also, this was mentioned in the Biography of Hannah Greenwood Fielding, DUP.

2. Joseph Fielding Diary, page 126.

3. Millennial Star, Volume 2, page 94. "The ship Tyrian sailed with 207 passengers on the morning of the 21st Sep. On going out of dock . . . many hundreds crowded round to witness a ship load of the sons and daughters of Zion depart from their native shore for the promised land. They moved slowly out into the river, singing: 'Lovely native land, farewell! / Glad I leave thee, glad I leave thee, Far in distant lands to dwell.'"
4. Millennial Star, Volume 2, page 94. "Next morning they weighed anchor about 10 o'clock, and hoisted sail before a fair wind, moving away under the flag of Liberty . . . The emigrants were all on deck, and in good spirits; and as our little boat came off with three hearty cheers, they were singing the favorite hymn – 'How firm a foundation . . . the last lines which we heard, as their voices were lost in the distance, were as follows, 'When through the deep waters I call thee to go, The rivers of sorrow shall not thee o'erflow.' Hats and handkerchiefs were still waving in view as a last token of farewell.
5. Joseph wrote his account of the voyage on October 1st, explaining, "In the Ship Tyrian on the Atlantic Ocean. Since my last Date I have had no time or no Disposition to sit down to write." Pages, 125 - 127.
6. This child was named Elizabeth Tyrene Littlewood and lived to be almost 90. She served as a Relief Society president and was known throughout her life as a woman of great faith. Her biography is found on her page in Family Tree [KWJT-LWD].
7. Joseph Fielding Papers, Letter from Parley P. Pratt dated 24 October 1841 to Joseph Smith.
8. Joseph Fielding Diary, Volume 5, Page 1, (page 128 of the transcription). The date of this entry is Nauvoo, December, 1843, and Joseph began this volume by writing, "It is now over two years since I came to this Place, and since I wrote any by way of Journal." He mentioned being "thronged" in providing for his Family.
9. Millennial Star, 1 August 1842, pages 77-80. Joseph explained that he had been asked by many of his British friends to write to them, but as much of the commerce in Nauvoo happened with barter, coming up with the cash to mail a letter was difficult. As a result, he sent this letter to Parley P. Pratt and asked him to publish it for all to see.
10. Joseph Fielding Diary, page 128.
11. Joseph Fielding Diary, page 128.
12. Mormon Immigration Index.
13. Joseph Fielding Diary, pages 128-129.
14. History of the Church, Volume IV, page 461.
15. Mormon Immigration Index.
16. History of the Church pages 454-459. "Elder Hyde wrote from Alexandria, the port at the mouth of the Nile delta flowing from Egypt on the 22nd of November, 1841."
17. This followed a Biblical pattern set in Joshua 22:24. The KJV translated the name of the altar the Children of Israel built as Ed, but other translations give the name of the altar as "A witness Between Us that the Lord is God," which was surely what Elder Hyde had in mind.
18. History of the Church, Volume IV, page 473.