

Author's note: The following paper was published for an academic audience in *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* appearing in the Spring/Summer 2024 issue (Volume 44, Number 1). The *Journal* encourages interest in Latter Day Saint history, especially the history of Community of Christ and other divergent paths of the restoration movement started by Joseph Smith, Jr. Just prior to publication an important source was identified (John Taylor's testimony in the Temple Lot case) which resulted in some revisions to the text that did not make it into the *Journal*. In addition to source citations, the footnotes contain clarifying notes and context.

John A. Taylor (1812–1896): One Man’s Journey Across Three Branches of the Restoration
by David R. Taylor

Introduction

John A. Taylor was an early convert to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, being baptized with others of his family in Monroe County, Missouri, in 1832. Like others in his day, he participated in more than one branch or organization of the Church of Jesus Christ following the death of founder and prophet Joseph Smith, connecting himself first to Lyman Wight, then joining Brigham Young in Utah Territory, and finally affiliating with the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (now Community of Christ). The description RLDS apostle Heman C. Smith gave of those torn between factions certainly applies to Taylor: “Many noble men, confident that the work was of God, were sure that somewhere among the factions the right and truth would be found; hence when disappointed in one faction they would flee to another, only to begin again disappointed, and forced by conviction to seek again.”¹

We have few extant writings from Taylor, yet we can infer from his actions that he was a man of conviction who was not afraid to act in unpopular ways to support his beliefs. In fact, his religious conviction was always stronger than majority opinion, family ties, or the fear of death.

Willing to Hazard His Life

On July 20, 1833, a violent mob stormed the printing office of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Independence, Missouri. They destroyed furniture and property and then threw the printing press out the second story window. Tensions had been mounting for some time, but this blatant attack in broad daylight was surprising and terrifying.² Sally Partridge, the daughter of Bishop Edward Partridge, recalled later that a few of the men came out of the building with their arms full of unbound pages from the unfinished Book of Commandments and threw them into the street.

Moments later, in a well-known incident, two teenaged girls, Mary Elizabeth Rollins and her younger sister Caroline, bravely ran into the street and recovered many of the pages and hid in a nearby cornfield. Less well-known is the involvement of a twenty-year-old farmer from Kentucky who also risked physical harm or death to recover more of the printed pages. His name was John A. Taylor.³

Years later, in a sworn statement, Taylor recalled asking Bishop Partridge if he should attempt to recover some pages that had been placed in a log stable where some of the mob had gathered. Partridge warned that it would likely cost him his life: “I [do] not mind hazarding my life to secure some copies of the [Book

¹ *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*. Vol. 3, pages 195–197, 1844–1872, written and compiled by President Joseph Smith and Apostle Heman C. Smith, of the Reorganized Church, (Lamoni, Iowa: Board of Publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1908).

² *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days, Volume 1 The Standard of Truth* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), 1:177–78.
<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/saints-v1/16-only-a-prelude?lang=eng>

³ In nearly all historical documents, he is referred to simply as John Taylor. However, the death certificate for his son, William Taylor, lists his father’s name as “John A. Taylor.” I have chosen to refer to him as John A. Taylor to easily distinguish him from John Taylor, the apostle.
https://www.familysearch.org/photos/artifacts/186880856?cid=mem_copy

of] Commandments,”⁴ Taylor replied. He then snuck outside the log stable, ran his hand between the cracks, and retrieved a few pages at a time until he had as many as he could carry. A dozen men discovered him at this moment and surrounded him. Without giving any details, Taylor states he feared being stoned to death, but in a miraculous way he was preserved and managed to escape unharmed.⁵

Other violence ensued that day resulting in the destruction of property and physical harm. It is unclear whether the conversation between Taylor and Partridge took place before or after the armed mob dragged Partridge from his home and brutally covered him in hot tar and feathers. What is clear is that the threat of personal harm to Taylor was very real, and he was willing to risk that for a cause he considered sacred.⁶

Whether this experience was the foundation for a lifetime of religious conviction or whether it merely galvanized an existing deep belief in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, one can only guess. In any case, this episode is indicative of a man of deep religious convictions.

Taylor believed Joseph Smith to be a prophet of God and *The Book of Mormon* to be sacred scripture. Taylor would give to his first four sons the names of figures from The Book of Mormon: Alma, Teancum, Joseph Moroni, and John Ammon. Alma, Teancum, Moroni, and Ammon were each bold defenders of the faith in the face of fierce and violent opposition, as was Joseph Smith.

Similarly, in the face of clear danger and persecution, Taylor saved precious documents and demonstrated by his actions that he was willing to live and die for the restored gospel. Throughout his life, this conviction never waned.

Early Life

John A. Taylor was born in 1812 in Warren County, Kentucky, the oldest of fourteen children born to William W. Taylor and Elizabeth Patrick. In spring 1831,⁷ William joined other settlers from Kentucky and Tennessee and moved his family to Monroe County, Missouri, settling near a well-traveled east-west route across the state.⁸

⁴ John Taylor signed statement before historian George A. Smith, April 15, 1858, Church History Library, MS 653. <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/089ad1d3-5fa3-4d3f-96e3-1b32a4035b3d/0/0?lang=eng>

⁵ John Taylor statement

⁶ Edward Partridge papers, 1818-1839, Affidavit, 1839 May 15, Church History Library, MS 892, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/ac19f6b7-dd3a-45db-8bf9-8a5a72dc1f1b/0/0>

⁷ Pleasant Green Taylor’s memoir indicates they moved to Monroe County in spring 1830. However, the date here is probably in error and the year is likely 1831. A baby son, Levi, was born to William and Elizabeth in Kentucky in September 1830.

Levi J. Taylor diaries, 1874–1935; Taylor family record, circa 1880–1917; Church History Library, MS 8330, 27, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/9b0d5f9f-058d-4401-a46f-9d543f572c7f/0/26?lang=eng>

⁸ In 1821 Missouri was admitted to the Union as a slave state under the Missouri Compromise. A large influx of settlers from the Kentucky and Tennessee streamed into areas along the Missouri in the ensuing decades. Monroe County was formed in 1831 and has always been a rural, agricultural county. In 1840—the first U.S. Census following the formation of the county—there were fewer than 10,000 residents in the county. Although William’s family were slaveholders and his wife Elizabeth owned a slave, we have no evidence that they brought any slaves with them from Kentucky to this newly formed slave state.

In September 1830, Joseph Smith sent missionaries to declare the gospel to the “Lamanites.”⁹ Accordingly, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Parley P. Pratt, and Ziba Peterson soon set out from New York toward the American frontier in Independence, Missouri.¹⁰ Along the way, they preached the restored gospel and encountered success in Ohio and Missouri. Significant numbers of people in the region of Kirtland, Ohio—including many who would feature in the future leadership of the church such as Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, John Murdock, Edward Partridge and Lyman Wight—joined the new church as a result of their proselytizing efforts. Williams would join Cowdery and his companions immediately on their missionary journey. Others, like Murdock, would follow later. Other missionaries traveling this road also preached along the way and branches of believers were formed.

As it was, shortly after arriving in Monroe County, the Taylor family met missionaries who were en route to Jackson County, including Hyrum Smith and John Murdock, who stopped and preached in the home of Isaac Allred. A member of the Allred family reported that a few months later, other elders “stopped and preached, and my father’s house was open to them. Finally, George M. Hinkle and others came along, and . . . stopped for a few weeks, in which time they baptized all the Allred families, Ivies, and many others, organizing a large branch known from Kirtland to Jackson County as the ‘Salt River Branch.’”¹¹

John’s younger brother Pleasant Green Taylor, recorded in his memoir that their father, William, was the first person to be baptized a member of the church in Missouri: “The Gospel was brought to him by the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Spring of 1832, and he accepted the Gospel after hearing but one sermon. He being the first to obey the Gospel and the first person baptized into that Church in the State of [Missouri].”¹² John Taylor stated “I joined the church in November 1832, in Monroe County, Missouri.”¹³ Whether or not William was the first, the Taylors were baptized and were members of the congregation of the Salt River Branch by the end of 1832.

Not long after his baptism, twenty-year-old John left Monroe County and traveled to Jackson County, arriving April 10, 1833, where three months later he experienced the previously mentioned mob violence.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the rest of the Taylors lingered in Monroe County and intermarried with others of their new faith. John’s sister Julia Ann Taylor married Isaac Allred in October 1832 and his brother Allen Taylor married Sarah Lovisa Allred in September 1833. Other family members married early converts as well. His sister Mary Ann Taylor married Robert McCord in May 1834. McCord joined the Camp of Israel expedition and died of cholera just a few months later. Lastly, his sister Louisa Bome Taylor married Hosea Stout in Nauvoo in 1840.

⁹ “Revelation, September 1830–B [D&C 28],” in Revelation Book 1, 41, josephsmithpapers.org

¹⁰ “A Mission to the Lamanites,” *Revelations in Context*

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/revelations-in-context/a-mission-to-the-lamanites?lang=eng>

¹¹ Teresa Andersen Burrell, “The Writings of Reddick Newton Allred: A Life of Faith and Obedience” (2014), 8-9.

Also, see typescript of “Biography of Reddick Newton Allred.”

https://www.familysearch.org/photos/artifacts/140585711?cid=mem_copy

¹² Levi J. Taylor diaries includes genealogical information about his family including a memoir by his father, Pleasant Green Taylor, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/9b0d5f9f-058d-4401-a46f-9d543f572c7f/0/26?lang=eng>, emphasis in original

¹³ *Abstract of Evidence, Temple Lot Case*. Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Pub. House and Bindery (1893), 188.

<https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/record/29c58177-7f00-472c-8ac9-9d4d01859734/0?view=summary&lang=eng>

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Following the events in Independence, John moved to Clay County, Missouri, with the majority of the Jackson County saints, marrying Eleanor Burkett in Liberty, Missouri, in April 1834.¹⁵ The rest of John's large family gathered to Clay County, settling between two forks of the Fishing River, in fall 1834.¹⁶ When expelled from Clay County in 1836, they relocated to Caldwell County and then eventually were driven from Missouri altogether in 1839.

John's father, William, died in 1839 near Warsaw, Illinois, from illness relating to exposure and the hardships of crossing Missouri to find refuge in Illinois.¹⁷ Just before his death, William asked his wife and fourteen children to gather around him. He enjoined each of them to "rally around the Priesthood" and "secured a promise from each that they would not marry outside of the Church."¹⁸ The dying wish of his father appears to have been another foundational event in John's life. Nevertheless, John seems to have interpreted "the Priesthood" and "the Church" differently than his brothers, who all affiliated with the church led by Brigham Young throughout the rest of their lives.



Figure 1: This painting, "Rally Around the Priesthood" by Jeffrey H. Craven, depicts the burial of William Taylor by his family in 1839. Used with permission.

Wisconsin Pineries

¹⁵ John is listed among those persons driven from Jackson County, Missouri, by the mob in 1833. Next to John Taylor's name is the notation "cut off Feb. 22/64," almost certainly due to his having been baptized into the Reorganized church September 1863.

"List of members driven from Jackson County, MO," 1864 August 27, by George A. Smith and Thomas Bullock. Information concerning persons driven from Jackson County, Missouri in 1833, 1863–1868; Church History Library, MS 6019, 24, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/7c056a16-5f7d-4655-a3ed-c6dc16169e0b/0/23>

¹⁶ Levi J. Taylor diaries, 27, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/9b0d5f9f-058d-4401-a46f-9d543f572c7f/0/26?lang=eng>

¹⁷ Levi J. Taylor diaries, 27, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/9b0d5f9f-058d-4401-a46f-9d543f572c7f/0/26?lang=eng>

¹⁸ Levi J. Taylor diaries, 30, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/9b0d5f9f-058d-4401-a46f-9d543f572c7f/0/29?lang=eng>

By spring 1842, John and Eleanor were living in Hancock County, Illinois, and had four small children. Lyman Wight, George Miller, and about thirty others had wintered over in Wisconsin cutting lumber for the Nauvoo House and the Nauvoo Temple. That spring, the first lumber from the Wisconsin pineries was floated down the river and arrived in Nauvoo.

John Taylor was among those called to the pineries, probably arriving in 1843.¹⁹ Wisconsin winters were long and brutal; supplies in the settlement often ran out before they could be replenished in the spring. The settlers experienced “the fatigues of hunger, wet and cold, in a rigid inclement climate.”²⁰ Lyman Wight suffered alongside the others, and his leadership qualities were noted by many who labored with him. One member of the lumber camp, Allen Stout, wrote to his brother Hosea back in Nauvoo saying: “Brother Liman [Wight] works like a slave as fat as he is,” and “the law of Black River is he that will not work shall not eat.”²¹ In a subsequent letter, Stout reiterated “we have all things in common according to the law in the book of covenants.”²²

By 1843 Joseph Smith decided to make the lumber camps permanent, and the settlers began to invest more effort in developing the settlement. Nevertheless, Lyman Wight’s sights were already directed elsewhere.

In a February 1844 letter to Joseph Smith and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Wight and a small committee made known their plans to send an expedition from Wisconsin to “southerly lands,”²³ including Texas. The letter included a bold vision of relocating Native Americans from the “dreary cold region” to a “more congenial climate” and establishing a gathering place for Latter-day Saints from the southern United States and even from Central and South America.

Wight’s committee was not shy about expressing disapproval of the actions of the Saints in Nauvoo and their leadership: “Having also become convinced that the Church at Nauvoo or in the Eastern States will not build the Nauvoo House according to the commandment, neither the temple in a reasonable time . . . we have it in our minds to go to the table lands of Texas.” The letter concludes by stating that

¹⁹ Obituary by Heman C. Smith states John spent “two seasons with Lyman Wight and George Miller in obtaining lumber from Wisconsin pineries” (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSNH-Z94B-3?mode=g&cat=496513>, image 619). Heman Smith was born in Zodiac, Texas, and while he had no memory of John A. Taylor from that period, Smith possibly felt an affinity to him based on this connection.

In addition, Taylor is listed among those in the colony by Dennis Rowley in his article, “The Mormon Experience in the Wisconsin Pineries, 1841–1845,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*, Vol. 32, No 1 (Spring/Summer 2012), page(s) 63-78.

²⁰ Council of Fifty record books, 1844–1846; Council of Fifty record number 1, 1844 March–1845 March; Church History Library, MS 30055, 18, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/f1d99aa3-09b2-4d34-9dba-a4607e5ab2f7/0/17?lang=eng>

²¹ Stout, Allen Joseph, 1815–1889. Allen J. Stout letters, Wisconsin, to Hosea Stout, Nauvoo, Illinois; Church History Library, MS 1046, 2 <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/7bc69e67-56d9-4fff-8c95-a2c1d452fa08/0/1?lang=eng>

²² Allen J. Stout letters to Hosea Stout, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/7bc69e67-56d9-4fff-8c95-a2c1d452fa08/0/1?lang=eng>

²³ Joseph Smith collection (supplement), 1833–1844; Letters and petitions; Lyman Wight letter, Black River Falls, Wisconsin, to Joseph Smith, 1844 February 15; Church History Library, MS 150 Supplement, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e8856204-dd12-41e9-8d6f-058d6948faaa/0/0>

they will comply with the instructions of the officers of the Church, but the tone of the letter indicates a willingness make their own plans and go their own way. This letter and one other were dispatched to Nauvoo, where they were read and considered immediately upon receipt on March 10, 1844.²⁴

Following the receipt of these letters, Joseph Smith created the Council of Fifty for the purpose of making plans to leave Nauvoo and gather to a place where they could “establish a theocracy.” The minutes of the Council of Fifty reflect general agreement on this principle with discussion of Texas, Oregon, or California as possible destinations. Present at this historic meeting were several members of the Wisconsin settlement, namely Lucien Woodworth, George Miller, Peter Haws, and Alpheus Cutler. Within a week, Woodworth was given a letter of introduction and authorization to transact business on behalf of the church and dispatched to Texas where he met with President Sam Houston and proposed a Mormon colony in Texas.²⁵

With preliminary approval, Woodworth returned to Nauvoo and reported in a special meeting of the Council of Fifty on May 3, 1844. On that occasion, Lyman Wight was present for the first time and was formally admitted to the Council of Fifty “by unanimous vote.”²⁶ The next order of business was a call by Joseph Smith for “Elder Wight and every other man who could leave, to go into all the states and preach and electioneer for him [Smith] to be president.” This mission resulted in Wight and other members of the Twelve being absent from Nauvoo at the time of the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

This business resolved, the council then heard Woodworth’s detailed report of his business in Texas, with some discussion of how the Latter-day Saints might influence the situation in Texas to their favor. The minutes show Wight and his associates deftly guided the council to grant approval for Wight to take a party and head to Texas, just as they originally proposed.

Upon reassembling that evening, Sidney Rigdon put forth a motion that Lucien Woodworth, Almon Babbit, and George Miller take a mission to Texas, but the motion was not acted upon. Joseph Smith then asked to adjourn until Monday. At the next meeting, Rigdon “moved that Woodworth meet the Texan Congress at their next session,” after which George “Miller proposed that [Lucien] Woodworth select his own associates.” The minutes record that “the Chairman [Joseph Smith Jr.] remarked that it is a standing rule of the council that but one member of the council could go on any one mission.”²⁷ Had this rule been enforced, things might have turned out very differently for Wight, as he and Miller would have been excluded from the mission to Texas.

²⁴ Council of Fifty record books, 3, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/f1d99aa3-09b2-4d34-9dba-a4607e5ab2f7/0/2?lang=eng>

²⁵ Authorization for Lucien Woodworth, 16 March 1844, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/authorization-for-lucien-woodworth-16-march-1844/1>

²⁶ Council of Fifty record books, 1844–1846; Council of Fifty record number 1, 1844 March–1845 March, images 219–222; Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/f1d99aa3-09b2-4d34-9dba-a4607e5ab2f7/0/218?lang=eng> (Council of Fifty Minutes are also available at The Joseph Smith Papers site: <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/council-of-fifty-minutes-march-1844-january-1846-volume-1-10-march-1844-1-march-1845>).

²⁷ Council of Fifty record books, 1844–1846; Council of Fifty record number 1, 1844 March–1845 March, image 234; Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/f1d99aa3-09b2-4d34-9dba-a4607e5ab2f7/0/233?lang=eng>, emphasis in original.

Instead, Woodworth demurred, stating that he would go but opining that better men could be chosen. The council moved on and discussed several other matters. Following a motion to adjourn, George Miller commented that in July, twenty-five able men would come downriver from the pinery and would be destitute; he proposed “that those 25 men . . . proceed to Texas near Natchitoches.”²⁸ Here was an opening for Wight to extract the permission he sought while also showing his devotion to the men he had helped lead. Lyman Wight immediately declared “he should never desert those men who have been tried and proved at the pinery,” and “he would be gratified to have those families now at the pinery go to Texas.”²⁹ Joseph Smith commented that he did not want Wight “to forsake those in the pinery.”³⁰ In the end, “[Brigham] Young moved that the brethren of the pine country be committed to the council of Elders Wight, Woodworth, and Miller.” This motion carried unanimously.

Lyman Wight achieved his aim, although his departure would have to wait until after the electioneering mission. The permission of the council, with Joseph Smith, Jr. as chairman, was significant because Wight considered this to be Joseph Smith’s last command to him. About 1848, Wight published an address to “Latter Day Saints scattered abroad,”³¹ in which he details his activities from February 1844 to April 1848. Wight clearly asserts that his presence in Texas was the result of “a mission given me by the great and grand council . . . and the instructions given me by brother Joseph the last conversation I ever had with him.”³² Later, in 1853, Lyman Wight wrote to his nephew Benjamin Wight living in Utah in response to inquiries about Lyman’s reasons for being in Texas and not coming to Utah: “My mission is particularly identified as given me by Joseph Smith in his life time.”³³

Journey to Texas

The shared hardships experienced in Wisconsin, together with the charismatic leadership of Lyman Wight, forged a close bond among this group of pioneering families. Following the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, many of those who had been in the pineries opted to travel to Texas with Lyman Wight rather than follow Brigham Young in the westward migration to the Rocky Mountains. John Taylor and

²⁸ Council of Fifty record books, 1844-1846; Council of Fifty record number 1, 1844 March–1845 March, image 239; Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/f1d99aa3-09b2-4d34-9dba-a4607e5ab2f7/0/238?lang=eng>

²⁹ Council of Fifty record books, 1844-1846; Council of Fifty record number 1, 1844 March–1845 March, images 240-241; Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/f1d99aa3-09b2-4d34-9dba-a4607e5ab2f7/0/240?lang=eng>

³⁰ Council of Fifty record books, 1844-1846; Council of Fifty record number 1, 1844 March–1845 March, image 241; Church History Library <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/f1d99aa3-09b2-4d34-9dba-a4607e5ab2f7/0/240?lang=eng>

³¹ Wight, Lyman, 1796–1858. An address by way of an abridged account and journal of my life from February 1844 up to April 1848, with an appeal to the Latter Day Saints / by Lyman Wight. [Austin, Texas?]: [publisher not identified], [1848], <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/cf07c371-e14d-48f4-853a-334b1e19a562/0/1?lang=eng> (accessed: January 22, 2024)

³² Wight, Lyman, 1796–1858. An address by way of an abridged account and journal of my life from February 1844 up to April 1848, with an appeal to the Latter Day Saints / by Lyman Wight. [Austin, Texas?]: [publisher not identified], [1848], 6; <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/cf07c371-e14d-48f4-853a-334b1e19a562/0/6?lang=eng> (accessed: January 22, 2024)

³³ Wight, Benjamin, 1813–. Benjamin Wight correspondence , <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/725cd7f6-94f9-4026-b2ab-8d92c4d68699/0/4>

his growing family were among those that joined Wight, despite the fact that his mother, siblings, and their families all traveled west.³⁴

In November 1845, Wight's colony entered Texas and later built a series of mills in various locations. After Wight's followers set up camp and constructed a mill outside Austin in 1846, John Taylor was a member of an exploring party who went in search of a more permanent settlement location. Ultimately, they settled along the Pedernales River, a few miles outside the German town of Fredericksburg.³⁵ They named their town Zodiac.

Taylor may have felt a bond and loyalty to Wight, but his willingness to follow Wight to Texas was really a manifestation of his continued faith in Joseph Smith. Wight surely reported that it was the will of the Council of Fifty that "those families now at the pinery [should] go to Texas." We have no record of the factors that led to Taylor's decision to follow Wight, but the will of the council was probably a key consideration. In fact, Taylor may not have seen the decision to follow Wight as a major crossroads in his life; his family had been called to Wisconsin while the main body of Saints was in Nauvoo, and now his family had been called to Texas while the main body of Saints headed to the Rocky Mountains. Joining the Wight colony was simply a continuation of Taylor's conviction to follow Joseph Smith even after his death.

During his time with Wight Taylor cemented his opinions about key doctrinal points such as succession and the principle of polygamy. These positions would shape his religious life for the remainder of his days. Like many other Wight followers, Taylor supported Joseph Smith III as the rightful leader of the church, and throughout his life Taylor vocally opposed polygamy.

In 1848 Lyman Wight wrote a letter to "Mother [Lucy Mack] Smith," reprinted in the *Melchisedek and Aaronic Herald*. In it, he reported that "in addition to our little company of 150 souls who left Nauvoo, our numbers have increased to 240, made up of numbers in the state of Texas." He spoke glowingly of Joseph III's uncle, William Smith, and went on to say, "To young Joseph we say, it is your privilege to take your father's place."³⁶ Wight's opinions were frequently preached in the colony, and his teachings concerning Brigham Young and the rightful place of Joseph Smith III had a strong influence on his followers. In fact, according to historian Melvin C. Johnson, "By a ratio of nearly six to one, former Wightite polygamists and monogamists alike reunited with the Reorganization led by Joseph Smith III. . . . The colonists' memoirs clearly reveal both their mutual dislike, if not their outright contempt, for Young, and their commitment to Smith's sons."³⁷

On the issue of polygamy, it is not clear what the reasons were for Taylor's opposition. Certainly, polygamy has been a deeply divisive issue in every branch of the Restoration since its introduction by

³⁴ By 1846, two of John's sisters had passed away in Nauvoo, Illinois. One sister, Sarah Dobson, traveled to Pottawattamie County, Iowa, but never went to the Salt Lake Valley. Later, the Dobsons would move to Deloit, Iowa, and unite with the Reorganization.

³⁵ Historical resource materials for Cache Valley, Utah-Idaho, 1955–1956; The Lyman Wight Colony in Texas, 1846–1858, 1897; Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/a99ef278-28d8-4423-aef9-807f7be8bc71/0/12?lang=eng>; other copies exist as well.

³⁶ *Melchisedek and Aaronic Herald* (Covington, Kentucky: Isaac Sheen, 1849–1850), <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/b19444c8-bf1c-4dda-8eb2-b503247f3d3b/0/14>

³⁷ Melvin C. Johnson, *Polygamy on the Pedernales: Lyman Wight's Mormon Villages in Antebellum Texas, 1845 to 1858* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2006), 199.

Joseph Smith Jr. in Nauvoo, Illinois. Smith taught and practiced polygamy secretly in the Nauvoo period, but Taylor never heard of plural marriage from Joseph Smith himself, which may have been key to his opposition. Taylor was present in Nauvoo in 1842 during the John C. Bennett scandal, and Taylor may have had his own interpretation of the carefully worded denials published by leaders of the church.

In fact, Taylor testified in the Temple Lot Case prior to his death about his duty as a member of the teacher's quorum in Nauvoo at that time to report "anybody with more wives than one" to the president of the teacher's quorum, who would, in turn, report them to Hyrum Smith. Taylor continues his testimony by saying emphatically, "during the time that I was a teacher from 1832 to 1844, there was no rule or law of the original church that permitted the practice or principle of polygamy. There was no law, I am sure. At any rate, if there was, I didn't know anything about it, and never heard anything about it."³⁸

However, there is ample evidence that Wight believed it was a divine principle taught by Joseph Smith. Wight taught it and practiced it. Melvin C. Johnson asserts "the Wight colonies were polygamous villages, from Mormon Coulee in Wisconsin (1844) to the final trek in Texas (1858)."³⁹ Johnson lists four polygamous marriages solemnized in Wisconsin and nine or ten others in Texas before 1850.⁴⁰ Some people in neighboring communities were ignorant of the practice, but at one point Wight "issued a pamphlet explaining the principle. . . . Wight's teaching and this publication apparently caused quite a stir among the surrounding population."⁴¹

But not everyone supported or practiced polygamy, and there is evidence that some Wightites questioned or outright "opposed the doctrine."⁴² In a letter in 1849, Wightite Richard Hewitt asked James Strang his opinion on the subject, remarking, "The principle is taught amongst all I have been with."⁴³ On another occasion, Hewitt confessed he couldn't find support for such a practice in modern-day scripture, giving evidence to his opposition, or at least his reluctance. Hewitt has an interesting history regarding the principle of polygamy that cannot be fully recounted here,⁴⁴ but it is potentially relevant that Hewitt's daughter married Stephen Maloney. The Maloneys lived for a time in Tahlequah, Indian Territory, before moving to Weber County, Utah, not far from Taylor. Hewitt, Maloney, and Taylor appear to have shared similar opinions on the question of polygamy.

In the end, we can only speculate about the origins of Taylor's true feelings on the subject, but Wight's position in support of polygamy may have contributed to Taylor's decision to leave the group. Other

³⁸ *Abstract of Evidence, Temple Lot Case*. Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Pub. House and Bindery (1893), 188.

<https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/record/29c58177-7f00-472c-8ac9-9d4d01859734/0?view=summary&lang=eng>

³⁹ Melvin C. Johnson, *Polygamy on the Pedernales: Lyman Wight's Mormon Villages in Antebellum Texas, 1845 to 1858* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2006), 149.

⁴⁰ Melvin C. Johnson, *Polygamy on the Pedernales: Lyman Wight's Mormon Villages in Antebellum Texas, 1845 to 1858* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2006), 152, 154.

⁴¹ Melvin C. Johnson, *Polygamy on the Pedernales: Lyman Wight's Mormon Villages in Antebellum Texas, 1845 to 1858* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2006), 149.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Melvin C. Johnson, *Polygamy on the Pedernales: Lyman Wight's Mormon Villages in Antebellum Texas, 1845 to 1858* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2006), 150.

⁴⁴ *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo, Illinois); 1844 March 15 (Volume 5, No. 6); Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/f61faa83-6323-497c-9e63-3872baf2a88/0/10?lang=eng> John Taylor referenced the original letter in his testimony in the Temple Lot Case. He testified that Richard Hewitt had showed him the letter, read it to him, and that Hewitt said it was in Hyrum Smith's handwriting.

motivations could have been economic concerns, growing disaffection with Wight, or perhaps the draw of extended family had grown sufficiently strong to overpower the will to remain with Wight and his adherents.⁴⁵

In 1850, the mill and much of the village of Zodiac were inundated, and a decision was made for the colony to relocate some fifty miles away along Hamilton Creek in Burnet County. Historical evidence suggests that Taylor took this opportunity to leave the group and eventually move to Utah Territory. Heman C. Smith states in Taylor's obituary that he left the Wight colonies in fall 1850.

Move to Utah

John Taylor slowly made his way to Utah where other family members lived.⁴⁶ He was joined by other former Wightite members in Tahlequah, Indian Territory, during his sojourn there. Determined to head to Utah to rejoin family, he appears to have struck out on his own before his Wightite neighbors, many of whom emigrated to Utah in 1856 as part of the Jacob Croft wagon company.⁴⁷ Taylor's family, on the other hand, was in Weber County, Utah, by March 1855, when their thirteenth child, James Henry, was born in Slaterville.

Taylor farmed in this area on land south of Mill Creek. He was not one of those convinced by the preaching of Joseph Morris in the area in 1860, although this would have been an opportunity for him to reject the leadership of Brigham Young. Instead, Taylor appears to have been a member in good standing until 1863.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *The Saints' Herald*, vol. 43. <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSNH-Z94B-3?mode=g&cat=496513>, image 619

⁴⁶ The 1860 United States Census shows the following extended family members living nearby:

- Allen Taylor (brother) and family in nearby Davis County
- Pleasant Green Taylor (brother) and family in Weber County
- William W. Taylor (brother) and family in Weber County
- Joseph Taylor (brother) and family in Weber County
- Levi Taylor (brother) and family in Davis County
- James Taylor (brother) and wife in Kaysville, Davis County
- Julia Ann Allred (sister) and family in Ogden, Weber County
- Elizabeth Ann Criddle (sister) and family in Kaysville, Davis County
- Nancy Smith (sister) and family living in Farmington, County
- John Samuel Burkett (brother-in-law) and family in Provo, Utah County
- Elizabeth Allan (sister-in-law) and family in Spanish Fork, Utah County

⁴⁷ Taylor's wife gave birth to twins in Tahlequah in April 1852. Later she gave birth to a son in Weber County, Utah, in March 1855.

Church History Biographical Database. Jacob Croft Company.

<https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/chd/list?leaderName=Jacob%20Croft&filterOrganizationUri=%2Forganization%2Fpioneer-company%2Fjacob-croft-company-1856&subtype=pioneer-activity>

⁴⁸ Slaterville branch records indicate thirty-two members were excommunicated from the church after accepting Joseph Morris to be a prophet. <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/876997d8-b905-4243-9aae-12d3f8559dff/0/41?lang=eng>

Although he was now living close to family and other believers of the restored gospel, in his opinion, all was not well in Zion. When the Reorganized church sent apostle Edmund C. Briggs and Alexander McCord as the first missionaries to Utah in 1863, Taylor was one of the first baptized by McCord into the RLDS organization—along with fellow Wightite Stephen Maloney and his family⁴⁹—just weeks after the arrival of the missionaries.⁵⁰ Once again, Taylor demonstrated his convictions by his actions regardless of the potential consequences. Whether or not Taylor had other reasons for his discontent with the Church of Jesus Christ led by Brigham Young, it is clear that polygamy was the primary issue. His daughter, Amanda, later recalled, “Father belonged to the Josephite branch or the Reorganized Branch of the L.D.S. church. He did not approve of polygamy.”⁵¹

A letter from Edmund C. Briggs shared the news of this event: “Bro. McCord returned from his mission to Ogden last evening. He baptized three up there, who were old members in the days of the first Joseph: one was Bro. John Taylor, and one was Steven [Stephen] Maloney, and he reordained them elders, and they promised to do what they could to preach the glad news of the reorganized Church of Christ to all in their vicinity. Sister Taylor with her husband, has always held on to their first love, and opposed the doctrine of Brigham Young with his accursed polygamous system.”⁵²

Henry Orvil Holley discusses this episode in detail in his master’s thesis, “The History and effect of apostasy on a small Mormon community,” (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1966).

⁴⁹ Stephen Maloney married Mary Jane Hewitt, the daughter of Richard Hewitt Jr., in Texas in 1851 shortly after taking leave of Lyman Wight’s group. They were part of the Jacob Croft wagon company that arrived in Utah in 1856.

⁵⁰ Baptism record. Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints collection of records, undated; Early Membership Record; Records; Volume D; Church History Library, MS 30683, 53, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/5da49b21-26e4-4f07-a90d-66bbfe075d16/0/52>

This record also shows he was ordained an elder in April 1843 in Nauvoo, Illinois, by Lyman Wight. He was “re-ordained” an elder in the RLDS Church in October 1863 by Alexander McCord.

Report in the *Herald* that Elder E. Page and Bro. Alexander McCord “labored considerably” last winter and spring. *The True Latter-Day-Saints’ Herald*, vol. 4, no. 8, 123; <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/3a309271-1e0b-49ce-9af9-6972ece11490/0/8>

Steven L. Shields, “The Early Community of Christ Mission to ‘Redeem’ the Church in Utah.” *Journal of Mormon History* Vol. 40: No. 4 (Fall 2014), pages 26-27.

Stephen Maloney family membership record indicates he was baptized in Ogden on September 18, 1863, by Alexander McCord.

Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints collection of records, undated; Early Membership Record; Records; Volume C, 218 Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/aaaa0236-2a6b-4343-8a64-d8396590458e/0/220>

⁵¹ “Recollections of Amanda Rosina Taylor” *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, August 5, 1934. Transcription retrieved from https://www.familysearch.org/photos/artifacts/20828018?cid=mem_copy

⁵² Edmund C. Briggs, “Letter from Utah,” Sept. 28, 1863, Salt Lake City, Utah, *The True Latter-Day-Saints’ Herald*, Oct. 15, 1863, vol. 4, no. 8, 123

At this time, John and Eleanor had seven children at home, spanning ages five to eighteen, and five married children living nearby. The records do not show that any of his children were baptized into the RLDS church.

The RLDS missionaries experienced early success, despite strong opposition by Brigham Young. By spring 1864, they counted nearly two hundred members along the Wasatch Front, including thirty in the North Ogden area where Taylor and Maloney lived.⁵³ Following his baptism, Taylor was excommunicated from the Utah church on February 22, 1864.⁵⁴

Taylor accompanied McCord throughout the season doing missionary work in the area. Reports of RLDS missionary work in Utah were frequently published in *The Saints' Herald*. These give insights into some of the common challenges they faced during this period. "The [Utah] church leaders will do everything to drive him from the Territory," read one report. "They deny these [RLDS] missionaries the privilege of preaching."⁵⁵ It was difficult to gain access to public meeting places where they could preach, so missionaries resorted to meeting in the homes of sympathetic people. Edmund C. Briggs wrote "I have not been able as yet to procure a single hall, or commodious house to hold meetings in, in all this city, or Territory." Those who did allow them to stay or preach at their homes were often cut off from the Utah church and ostracized socially, and their places of business were boycotted.⁵⁶ In 1868, RLDS missionary James W. Gillen wrote, "Whenever a person comes out and obeys the gospel, then their enemies use every effort they are capable of to keep them out of employment, and to ruin them in every possible manner. If they have debts owing to them, they cannot collect them."⁵⁷ On another occasion, Briggs wrote: "My footsteps have been dogged by assassins sent by spiritual leaders who hypocritically profess the name of Jesus."⁵⁸ On occasion, violence and threats were leveled against the "Josephites," but no deaths were ever reported. In all, it was not difficult to understand why as soon as people were baptized,

<https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/3a309271-1e0b-49ce-9af9-6972ece11490/0/10>

⁵³ Richard Lyle Shipley, "Voices of dissent: the history of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Utah, 1863–1900", 27, (Logan, Utah: Utah State University, 1969; Thesis (M.A.) Utah State University, 1969).

⁵⁴ <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/7c056a16-5f7d-4655-a3ed-c6dc16169e0b/0/23>

⁵⁵ *The True Latter-Day-Saints' Herald*, vol. 4, No. 10, 146; Nov. 15, 1863. Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/4017b98e-6bde-4846-b7fb-d37c7765e489/0/1>

⁵⁶ Thomas Squires and John Lewis from Ogden, Utah, are examples of those cut off from the Utah church for allegedly "harboring" Josephites.

The True Latter-Day-Saints' Herald, vol. 5, no. 3, 45-8; Church History Library,

<https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/21224c38-296b-4a9f-958b-3c81ec1eea83/0/12>

⁵⁷ *Saints' Herald*, vol. 10, 177-78

⁵⁸ *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*. Vol. 3, 1844–1872, written and compiled by President Joseph Smith and Apostle Heman C. Smith, of the Reorganized Church (Lamoni, Iowa: Board of Publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1908).

Shipley lists many of the other challenges and opposition faced by these early RLDS missionaries to Utah in his master's thesis.

Richard Lyle Shipley, "Voices of dissent: the history of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Utah, 1863–1900" (Logan, Utah: Utah State University, 1969; Thesis (M.A.) Utah State University, 1969).

they wanted to “get out of this country”⁵⁹ as soon as possible. In 1867, Elder James W. Gillen wrote of yet another outward migration of RLDS converts and remarked, “So you see it is almost impossible to keep them in Utah after they unite with the church, and indeed they cannot remain without great loss.”⁶⁰

Whereas most of the RLDS converts of 1863 left Utah in spring 1864, Taylor remained in the West.⁶¹ Steven Shields, in his history of the early RLDS missionary efforts in Utah, writes that Utah Latter-day Saints who converted to the Reorganization and stayed to preach to friends and relatives “were sometimes the object of the most intense persecution. Their former friends and neighbors now considered them apostates from the faith.”⁶² Taylor and Maloney were among this number in the Ogden area.⁶³ Maloney would stay only for a few years before migrating to the Midwest sometime between 1866 and 1868.⁶⁴

Montana Gold Rush

Perhaps persecutions put Taylor in a precarious economic situation. He moved his family from Slaterville (near Ogden) up the Ogden Valley about fifteen miles to Eden to live near his wife’s father, George Burkett, and his wife, Elizabeth. According to the reminiscence of John’s youngest daughter, Amanda, “Father got the gold fever and wanted to go to California. We moved down and camped near the mouth of Ogden canyon while the family prepared for the trip. Then father decided to go to Montana.”⁶⁵

A strike of gold in Alder Gulch, Dakota Territory (later Montana Territory), in May 1863 led to the creation of mining towns Nevada City and Virginia City. It was to this area that Taylor took his family in summer 1864. His primary occupation was farming and ranching, although it was common for most residents to pan for gold on occasion, and all family members took part in that activity.⁶⁶ Although he went to Montana for economic opportunity, Taylor used his time there to continue to preach the gospel of the Restoration.

⁵⁹ *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*. Vol. 3, 376–77, 1844–1872, written and compiled by President Joseph Smith and Apostle Heman C. Smith, of the Reorganized Church, (Lamoni, Iowa: Board of Publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1908).

⁶⁰ *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*. Vol. 3, 476, 1844–1872, written and compiled by President Joseph Smith and Apostle Heman C. Smith, of the Reorganized Church, (Lamoni, Iowa: Board of Publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1908).

⁶¹ Steven L. Shields, “The Early Community of Christ Mission,” 28.

History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Vol. 3, 1844–1872, written and compiled by President Joseph Smith and Apostle Heman C. Smith, of the Reorganized Church (Lamoni, Iowa: Board of Publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1908).

⁶² Steven L. Shields, “The Early Community of Christ Mission,” 30.

⁶³ Steven L. Shields, “The Early Community of Christ Mission,” 30.

⁶⁴ Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints collection of records, undated; Early Membership Record; Records; Volume C, 218; Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/aaa0236-2a6b-4343-8a64-d8396590458e/0/220>

⁶⁵ “Recollections of Amanda Rosina Taylor,”

https://www.familysearch.org/photos/artifacts/20828018?cid=mem_copy

⁶⁶ “Recollections of Amanda Rosina Taylor,”

https://www.familysearch.org/photos/artifacts/20828018?cid=mem_copy

In an 1869 report in *The Saints' Herald* we see evidence of his continued fervor for the work: "John Taylor, of Nevada City, Montana Territory, writes: 'I think there could be a deal of good accomplished in this Territory in behalf of this work, if we had one or two faithful elders to give themselves to the ministry. I think there is no society in the Territory that could collect so large a congregation as they could, provided they could come.'" ⁶⁷

Amanda records that they made the trip from Montana to Utah many times during the years they lived there. In some cases, they may have stayed in Utah for extended periods. For example, in December 1870, John's father-in-law, George Burkett, was declining in health and wrote from his home in Eden: "John Taylor has been up at times and been very kind in doing some chores and getting wood." ⁶⁸ This simple statement shows a tender relationship between John and George despite coming to opposite conclusions about the rightful successor of Joseph Smith.

In 1873, much of the land had been ruined by sediment that came down the gulch from the hydraulic mines above, so Taylor returned to Utah. Several of his children had married during their time in Montana, and he now returned with only his wife and two youngest children.

Sunset Years

In 1875, Taylor wrote to Joseph Smith III about the conditions of his family and neighbors, lamenting that four of his sons and four of his brothers were in polygamous marriages. In part, the letter read "[I] found my people in a state of confusion. Darkness reigns among them. . . . I have seven sons, they are all alive; four of the seven have gone into polygamy; they wanted me to come back and do my father's work." ⁶⁹ His "father's work" references William Taylor's injunction to his family to "rally around the priesthood." His brothers and sons all thought John had strayed from the "true gospel." However, Taylor went on to say, "I can't be reconciled to go and do as my four polygamist brothers." ⁷⁰

Newly settled in Harrisville (near Ogden), Utah, Taylor again expressed willingness to preach on behalf of the Reorganized church, despite the urging of his immediate family. "If in your judgment you think I can do anything in honor to the cause of Christ, point out the station or post. . . . Some will listen, and many will harden their hearts against the word of God." ⁷¹

John and Eleanor remained in the Ogden area until his death on February 7, 1896. RLDS apostle and historian Heman C. Smith spoke at his funeral in the Harrisville meetinghouse. His obituary appeared in *The Saints' Herald* and included this eulogy "Through nearly sixty-two years [John and Eleanor] had walked hand in hand life's uneven journey. . . . When the first missionaries of the Reorganization came to

⁶⁷ *The True Latter-Day-Saints' Herald*, vol. 16, p. 123, August 15, 1869.

<https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/f9c86cb7-3e9e-42ba-bbb4-41dc1c99fc4d/0/26>

⁶⁸ "George Burket letter, 1870 December 18," George Burket collection, 1835–1870; Church History Library, MS 22654, 2, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/90be21ed-05f5-4c28-aed2-64c43ac02340/0/1>

⁶⁹ *The True Latter-Day-Saints' Herald*, vol. 22, no. 8, 249; Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/d696dfec-909e-43c5-9dce-72bbbff27971/0/26>

⁷⁰ *The True Latter-Day-Saints' Herald*, vol. 22, no. 8, 249; Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/d696dfec-909e-43c5-9dce-72bbbff27971/0/26>

⁷¹ *The True Latter-Day-Saints' Herald*, vol. 22, no. 8, 249; Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/d696dfec-909e-43c5-9dce-72bbbff27971/0/26>

Utah he hailed their message with gladness, and . . . has ever since been unwavering and devoted in his testimony.”⁷²

Taylor’s children seem to have come to their own conclusions about polygamy and about religious affiliation in general. None joined the RLDS Church. His four youngest, having spent their formative years in Montana, did not join any branch of the Restoration, opting instead to affiliate with various Protestant congregations.

Conclusion

As a young man, John A. Taylor was introduced to the fledgling church founded by Joseph Smith, Jr.; he accepted the message of the missionaries and united himself to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This decision defined the course of the rest of his life. Throughout a life full of opposition and trial, he remained true to his conviction that Joseph Smith was called of God as His prophet. Following the death of Joseph Smith, the issue of succession was a crisis not only for the church institution Smith founded but also for thousands of his followers, including Taylor.

Once pricked by the message of the Restoration, Taylor could not be moved from his personal conviction that the work was of God. He demonstrated his convictions by his courageous actions again and again. Following the martyrdom, his quest for truth directed him to join with branches of the restoration led by Lyman Wight, then Brigham Young, and finally Joseph Smith III.

The singular issue for Taylor appears to have been his increasing discomfort with and distaste for the practice of polygamy. The message of the RLDS missionaries resonated with him, and he remained affiliated with the RLDS church for the last three decades of his life. Records show that he was not alone in this position and that hundreds of Utah Saints joined the Reorganization. However, in a very unusual decision, Taylor did not relocate to more comfortable communities of RLDS adherents in Iowa or Illinois.

Although Melvin C. Johnson asserts that John “went to Montana and Canada for ten years on behalf of the RLDS Church,”⁷³ none of the early membership records of these locales list John Taylor in connection with any of the members there. More research is needed to determine the extent of his missionary efforts for the RLDS Church in the West.

Taylor found a way to live at peace with his Brighamite family and neighbors upon his return to Weber County in 1873. “Uncle John,” as he was known, was well respected in his community, despite his reputation as a Josephite. His obituary remarked, “His was an eventful life. Resolute and brave even in the face of appalling danger, and yet devoted to truth and virtue, he maintained his integrity and honor to the end, and went down like a shock of grain fully ripe.”

⁷² *The Saints’ Herald*, vol. 43. <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSNH-Z94B-3?mode=g&cat=496513>, image 619.

⁷³ Melvin C. Johnson, *The Life and Times of John Pierce Hawley: A Mormon Ulysses of the American West*, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2019), page 131.