

SARAH STUDEVANT LEAVITT

(From Her Journal 1875)

The wife of Jeremiah Leavitt, and mother of my grandfather Thomas Rowell Leavitt.

"I was born in the town of Lime, County of Grafton, New Hampshire, and am now seventy-six years old. My father was Lemuel Studevants and my mother Priscilla Tompson. My parents were very strict with their children, being descendents of the old Pilgrims. They taught them every principle of truth and honor as they understood it themselves. They taught them to pray and to read the Bible for themselves. My father had many good books that treated on the principles of man's salvation, and many stories that were interesting, and I took great pleasure in reading them. He was Dean of the Presbyterian Church. For years his house was open to all denominations, so his children had the privilege of hearing the interesting religious conversations. But as I had the privilege of reading the Bible for myself, I found that none of them understood the Bible as I did. I knew no other way to understand it only as I read it. The Apostle said, "Though we are angels from heaven and preach any other gospel than that which we preach, let him be accursed". And it was very evident to my understanding that they all came short of preaching the doctrine that Paul preached, but I was confident we should have faith. From childhood I was seriously impressed, and desired very much to be saved from the awful hell I had heard so much about. I believed in the words of the Savior that said, "Ask and you shall receive."

"I prayed much and my prayers were sometimes answered immediately. This was before I made any pretensions of having any religion. When I was eighteen years old, the Lord sent me a good husband. We were married at my father's house the 6th of March, 1817, in the town of Barton, County of Orleans, State of Vermont. The next June we moved to Canada, fifteen miles from the Vermont line. I had joined the Baptist Church because I wanted to be baptized by immersion. I had been sprinkled when an infant, but as I said before, I did not believe in any church on earth, but was looking forward to a time when the knowledge of God would cover the earth. I lived very watchful and prayerful, never neglecting my prayers. I felt I was entitled to no blessings unless I asked for them".

"We took a free will Baptist paper that I thought always told the truth, but there were a number of columns in this paper concerning a new sect. It had a prophet that pretended he talked with God. They had built a thing called a meeting house on the shores of the lake. In this Joe would go talk, he said, with the Lord. If I were to go on and tell all the lies in that paper, it would be too much for me. If you have ever read The Arabian Knights tales, you might guess what importance they were for I compare them to nothing else. No person of common sense would believe a word of it, and yet they wrote it for truth, thinking that would hinder "Mormonism" from spreading, but in this the Devil overshot himself, for they were too fantastic for anyone to believe. I had a place that I went every day for secret prayers. It seemed like a cloud was resting down over my head. If that cloud would break through there was an angel that had a message for me, or some new light. If the cloud would break, there would be something new and strange revealed. I did not know that it concerned anyone but myself. Soon after this, there was one of my husband's sisters came in, and after spending a short time in the house, she asked me to take a walk with her. She had heard the gospel preached by a Mormon, and believed it, and had been baptized. She commenced and related the whole of Joseph's vision, and what the Angel Moroni had said the mission he had called him to. It came to my mind in a moment that this was the message that was behind that cloud for me, and not for me only, but for the whole world. I considered it of more importance than anything I

had ever heard before, for it brought back the ancient order of things, and laid a foundation that could be built upon that was permanent, a foundation made by Him that laid the foundation of the earth, even The Almighty God, and he has commanded his people to build up the Kingdom of God upon the foundation he has laid, and notwithstanding the heathen raged and Satan mustered all his forces against the work, it has gone onward and upward for more than forty years, and will continue until the work is finished".

"I read the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and all the writings I could get from the Latter-Day Saints. It was the book of Doctrine and Covenants that confirmed my faith in the work. I knew that no man, nor set of men could make such a book, or would dare try from wisdom that man possessed. I knew it was the Word of God, and a revelation from heaven, and received it as such. I sought with my whole heart a knowledge of the truth, and obtained a knowledge that never has, nor ever will leave me".

"The next thing was to gather with the Saints. We had a good farm, but could not get much for it, but I knew the way would open up for us. From this time we set out in earnest and was ready to start with the rest of the company leaving the 20th of July, 1835. The company was made up of the Leavitt family, mother Sarah Shannon Leavitt and her children, consisting of twenty-three souls. Franklin Chamberlain, her oldest son-in-law took the lead. He did not belong to the church, but his wife did. We had a prosperous journey of eight hundred miles to Kirtland, Ohio. I had no chance to be baptized and join the church until I got there. In Kirtland we had the privilege of hearing Joseph preach. We saw the Egyptian Mummies, the writing that was said to be written in Abraham's day, Jacob's ladder being pictured on it, and lots more wonders that I cannot write here, and that were explained to us". (unquote)

After months of hardships, the Leavitt family had made enough money to move to Nauvoo where they bought a place three miles from the city, and Sarah Studevant's husband, Jeremiah Leavitt, built a house. There was some land ploughed which he sowed to wheat - they had to work very hard for a living. Provisions were scarce and high in price, and most of the Saints were poor.

Quote from diary: " Oh, the sorrow and trouble that was just at our doors. We knew they had Joseph in prison and threatened to take his life, but that was nothing new nor strange, for his enemies always did that, but we did not believe they could have power to murder him, and he was above the law. The law could have no power over him, but powder and balls could, so they shot him in Carthage Jail. When the news came, the whole city of Nauvoo was thunder-struck; such mourning and lamentation was seldom heard on earth. There were many, myself among them, that would gladly have died if his life could have been spared by doing so. I never had spoken to the man in my life, but I had seen him and heard him preach, and knew that he was a Prophet of God sent here by the Almighty to set up his kingdom no more to be thrown down, and now how was that great and mighty work to be accomplished? Brigham Young was the man clothed with all the power and authority of Joseph. My husband said that he had the same spirit, the same voice, and if he had not known Joseph was dead, he would actually have thought it was Joseph".