

The Story of Albert Clements and Aidah Winchell Clements

A true story of love, separation, and redemption

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A Young Family, A Young Religion



Albert Clements was born 19 November, 1801 and Aidah Winchell Clements was born 24 December, 1801. They were married 28 January, 1821 in New York State and were blessed with nine children. As a young family, the Clements' built a home in Fort Ann, New York on Albert's father's, James H. Clements, farm. They lived in New York until 1832, having 5 children in this place - Alvin, born 22nd of November, 1822; Lucy, born 20th of May, 1825; James, born 16th of February, 1827, (and he having died that same year;) Paul, born 18th of August, 1829; and James, born 22nd of January, 1833; this James, being named after his brother, who had died in 1827.

In the 1820's, in Palmyra, New York, the young Mormon prophet Joseph Smith was beginning to establish his new religion, which was formalized in 1830.

Around 1832, Albert returned from a business trip and brought with him a book he had purchased, called the Book of Mormon. He told of a young minister, Sidney Rigdon, a Mormon missionary who was preaching the gospel the way Jesus intended it to be taught. The young family was deeply religious and together they studied the book and embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ as taught by the Mormons. The children were taught the gospel in words and precept.

Within a few years, Albert and Aidah Clements and their young family left their home in New York and joined the body of the Latter Day Saints at Florence, Erie County, Ohio. Their communion with their fellow Saints brought great happiness. Albert was gone much of the time on missions for the church or on business, so Aidah took a primary role in raising the children and teaching them the precepts of her new religion. While in Florence or in nearby Kirtland, Ohio (the building place for the future temple),



another daughter was born - Eliza Ann, born 14 March 1834. Eliza is the author's ancestor.

Zion's Camp

A few months after Eliza's birth, the prophet Joseph Smith asked a group of the Ohio Saints to join a paramilitary expedition to march 900 miles from Ohio to Western Missouri to provide military and substantial relief to the persecuted members of the church there. The Missouri saints had been sent to Missouri to establish Zion, a place of refuge and worship for the new-found religion, but local persecution and troubles hindered their efforts and they had been driven from their homes and lands. In an effort to ensure the saints were treated fairly, to provide protection from the mobs, and to regain their lands, Joseph formed Zion's Camp with the intention of bringing relief to the Missouri Saints.

Both Albert and Aidah joined the Camp and made the long, difficult trip to Missouri. There were 900 men, but Aidah was one of only 11 women in the group. Records do not indicate that their children participated - and it's likely that they were left in the care of the Saints in Ohio - the oldest child, Alvin, being just 12 at the time, and the youngest, Eliza, but a few months.

Zion's Camp was generally considered a failure, with the group seeing many mishaps, discontent, and near mutiny. While it did not achieve its ultimate goal of bringing redress for the Missouri Saints, it did prove and test the beliefs and commitments of those who endured and remained faithful to the Prophet. Much of the church leadership for the next several decades would be comprised primarily of those who endured Zion's Camp.

Persecution in Missouri

We know little of the exact circumstances after their experiences in Zion's Camp, but do know that Albert and Aidah remained in, or soon after returned to, Missouri. Daughter Elizabeth (not to be confused with her older sister Eliza, though most historians do) was born 17 May 1836 in Liberty, Clay County, Missouri. We know the rest of the family was present there around that time.

This was a time of much persecution and trouble. The Saints and the Clements family were driven from Clay County in 1836 and established anew in Far West, Missouri. Here too they experienced increased persecution for their beliefs. In October 1838, Governor Boggs issued an extermination order on the Latter Day Saints - they would be driven from the state of Missouri or killed. And indeed they were. Under threat of death, most Saints abandoned their homes and fled across icy and snowy paths to the nearest Mormon establishment in Illinois. While we do not have details of the Clements' troubles at this time, we do know that a child, Ada Clements, was born 27 January 1839 in Far West. This was after most Saints had abandoned the area. Aidah, and perhaps the family, may have been permitted to stay because she was pregnant. Regardless, they

likely endured much in staying in that place so long. Ada was possibly the last Mormon child born in the area. This was certainly a trying and desperate time for them. Still, the family remained true and faithful to the cause.

Nauvoo, the Prophet's Death, and Separation

After reaching sanctuary in Illinois, a new Mormon community of Nauvoo was established in cleared swampland along the Mississippi River. The Clements' were among the first residents. We know that the family was closely associated with the Prophet Joseph Smith in Nauvoo. Aidah did washing and ironing for the Prophet. Some of the children worked in his home and store. The family likely had a home very near the Prophet's. Some of the children told of seeing the Egyptian mummies from which the Book of Abraham was derived as they were stored in Joseph Smith's attic. Albert held positions of authority in the church. Several of the children were baptized in Nauvoo (Mormon beliefs have children baptized at age 8) and some records indicate that young Ada was baptized there by the prophet's brother Hyrum. Their youngest son, Albert Nephi, was born in Nauvoo, Illinois, on November 15, 1842. They named him after his father and their favorite hero in the Book of Mormon. Aidah and Albert were now 41.

On June 27, 1844 the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were murdered in nearby Carthage. The Clements family (except Albert) almost certainly viewed their bodies as they lay in their caskets in the basement of the Mansion Home in Nauvoo. The oldest daughter Lucy was involved in making their burial clothes.

Albert was away on business at the time of the martyrdom. As he was returning to Nauvoo, he was delayed time and again. It was at this time that he was met by Sidney Rigdon, the man who had converted him to Mormonism. Sidney had been a significant leader in the young Church and was returning to Nauvoo to assume Joseph Smith's role as Prophet and leader. Albert believed his friend Sidney was to be their new leader.

After Sidney made it to Nauvoo, but before Albert made it to town due to a sick horse and broken wagon, there was a meeting of church members to decide who was to lead the now-leaderless church. Sidney spoke for an hour and a half and had no impact on those listening. Nobody present felt he had the authority from God to lead the Church and none voted for him to succeed Joseph Smith as their leader. Following Sidney's rather lackluster speech, Brigham Young, president of the church's Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, stood and boldly declared that the leadership rested with him and the apostles. As he spoke, Brigham Young took the appearance and voice of Joseph Smith - a miraculous witness that he was to be the new leader of the Saints.

Aidah and many or most of the children witnessed this amazing event. It had great effect on them and their beliefs in their church and its future leadership. Having not witnessed it, and still believing his good friend Sidney was to be their leader, Albert, upon returning to Nauvoo, was set on following Sidney, who had proclaimed leadership of the Church and drawn away some members to him. This soon led to a great division in the family.

Sometime in 1844, Albert and Aidah's son Paul was killed by a mob in Nauvoo at age 15. The exact date and circumstances are unknown.

Sometime before 1846, pressure forced the Saints to abandon Nauvoo. Albert would not accept Brigham Young as their leader and Aidah and the family was forced to choose between staying with him or following their beliefs. Aidah begged her husband to join them, but she could not deny her beliefs and desire to remain with the Saints. With financial support, Albert "bade them goodbye in great sorrow." His family stayed steadfast in their beliefs and moved to Winter Quarters, Iowa with the Saints. Aidah promised Albert that "she would never cease to love him, and would always pray for him to see the truth and follow them to the Rocky Mountains." Albert established in a different part of Iowa, alone.

The heartbreaking loneliness for their father caused many tears and aching hearts and Aidah, while still not doubting her choice, grieved herself to illness on many occasions. She received many blessings from the hands of the leaders, encouraging her to carry on, and these blessings are recorded in her daughter Lucy's personal record book. Aidah was instructed to be prayerful and humble in all things and she instilled these instructions into the lives of her children.

On to Utah

While the rest of the family stayed in Winter Quarters for 5 years before taking the trek to Utah, 13 year old Eliza (the author's ancestor) was one of the first Mormon pioneers to cross the plains, arriving in September 1847, less than two months after Brigham Young's initial arrival in the Salt Lake Valley.

The rest of the family followed in 1852, encountering much hardship on the plains. Daughter Elizabeth, age 16, walked much of the way, but Indians visited their camp and asked to trade her to them for ponies, etc. as they saw she was full of life and very helpful. It was not taken seriously, but they were answered that she was worth ponies, blankets, and many more things and then they went away. The Indians returned the next day with all the mentioned items to make the trade. They were, of course, refused. This made them angry and later they tried to steal her. Thus it was necessary that she ride in the wagon the rest of the journey. Aidah's granddaughter, Martha Ann Hale, daughter of Lucy Hale, was abducted by Indians on the plains and after a great search and much effort was returned to her family after 5 months of captivity. She was five years old at the time.

Sisters Eliza and Elizabeth both married the same man, Levi Newell Kendall, in Utah and had a total of 23 children to him. This has caused much confusion among historians. The Clement children have long, interesting, and amazing histories and legacies and countless descendants alive today, but we will focus on the remaining story of Albert and Aidah.

Aidah Clements came across the plains with the Captain Warren Snow Company in 1852. Albert Nephi Clements, the youngest son that was born to Albert and Aidah in Nauvoo, was only 10 years old and became the teamster for his mother's ox team. They arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, October 9, 1852. The story that follows was from their son, Albert Nephi's history.

Albert Nephi mentions that during all the poverty and struggles of the early pioneers through which Aidah had passed, she never lost faith in the innate goodness and integrity of her husband's heart; nor did she neglect to mention him in prayer, asking that his heart might be touched with the testimony of the divine mission of Joseph Smith as a true Prophet of God, whose life, like the Savior's, had been sacrificed for the truth's sake. If only this could happen, she knew he would be turned from the folly of being misguided by his apostate leaders, and through repentance, be forgiven of his sins.

One day, quite a shock came to Aidah. An Elder who had been commissioned to look after some matters in the affairs of the Church had just returned from a trip East. He called on Aidah and said he had run across her husband while passing through Iowa. Albert, he said, appeared to be in good health and was prospering in a worldly way. The Elder informed her that Albert had employed and paid him to accompany him to some lawyer who had made up a bill of divorcement, which needed only Aidah's signature to make it a legal document, dissolving the marriage bond between them. The plea which Albert had used in the case was 'desertion'.

Aidah only needed to sign her name to it in the presence of witnesses to have her marriage dissolved. Only a brief time she wavered, while she considered the question. She decided it would be as well. Even though she loved her husband, she decided their marriage was for this life only. It had to do with nothing in the eternity beyond. So the affair was settled and Aidah Clements was a divorced wife. The Elder sent the document to Albert.

A Son's Prophecy

In 1863, Albert Nephi was now 21 and he drove an ox team back across the plains as a church teamster to assist in bringing a company of Saints to Utah. He found time to visit his father, who was greatly surprised and overjoyed to behold his youngest son. His father would be delighted to have him remain with him and share and inherit his worldly possessions. His father, Albert, had prospered in acquiring means and was well off as far as worldly riches go. He had also married a good and pleasant woman who kept a neat and comfortable house. The home was in Iowa and his father had joined a branch of what was then known as the Josephite Church.

Had Albert Nephi been disposed to remain there with his father, what a life of ease and pleasure he might have found. Instead of passing his days and years laboring for the living and attending to duties required of him as a member of the church, he could have had great wealth and comfort. But all those alluring prospects held no temptation for the honest hearted boy. He was glad to see his father and spend a short time with him. He

bore a humble sincere affirmation to him, and his wife, that he knew, by the testimony from the Lord, that Brigham Young was indeed the Prophet and lawful, heaven-appointed successor of Joseph Smith. He then told them that he wanted to hasten back home to Zion and be with his loved ones. This he did.

When Albert Nephi reached home and his mother, he reported that he had seen his father and that his father had married a good woman. She said she was pleased to hear that and then said, "The man is not without a woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord."

The next year, 1864, the Clements moved from Utah into Idaho, and settled at Stockton, a branch of Oxford. In 1865, Albert Nephi married what he said was "the finest girl in the world for him." Soon after, he said his mother was persuaded that she might do more good in the world as a comfort to others and by being helped herself over some hard places in life, so she married a man named James Steers. After a few years, Mr. Steers died. More years passed, and again, for the sake of helping and being helped, Aidah married a Mr. Wilber. He also died after a time. No children were born of either of these marriages, nor had Aidah consented with either for a church marriage in the Endowment House, which was being used temporarily, while the LDS temples were being built.

Albert Nephi went East a second time in 1868 to assist in bringing emigrants to the Valleys. This time he drove a horse team. Again, he visited his father, and with him attended one of his church meetings. On returning home, the father asked his son how he enjoyed the service. Albert Nephi promptly replied, "It was as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." He then bore a strong testimony of the gospel to his father. He said, "The day will come when you shall see the light and when that time does come, father, and with your religion goes everything else and you haven't anything, remember you can come have a home with me. Just send me word. Here is a purse I wish to give you as a token, and I pray that it ever be full."

In the years that followed, nothing was heard from his father. Albert Nephi was in a new part of the country, Idaho, working steadily, making a livelihood for his young and increasing family. During this period, his father's wife had died and all of his means slipped away from him. His mother, Albert's former wife, twice widowed was now alone, living some distance from her son, Albert Nephi.

Mail came into the town of Corinth twice a week. One Friday morning, the mail brought Albert Nephi a letter from his father, telling him that his prophecy had been fulfilled, that he was left desolate, and had not sufficient means to come to him; but that he had seen his mistake and wished to come to his people. In the afternoon, the mail went out and with it a letter from Albert Nephi, telling his father that on the following Monday, he would go out on the mail and send him money for his fare. At that time, he only had fifty cents in the house, but the money must come - he knew it would. How he prayed and schemed.

Sunday morning came and as yet, nothing had been brought to the mind of Albert Nephi to show him how he was to obtain the money which he must have. As he sat in the front room of his home, his heart was lifted in prayer. Immediately a stranger horseman rode up to his gate. Without waiting for him to dismount, Albert Nephi hastened to him and passed the time of day. The following conversation then ensued:

Stranger: "Do you know of anyone with a yoke of oxen for sale?"

Albert Nephi: "Oh yes, I have two of them."

Stranger: "Where are they?"

Albert Nephi: "In the pasture, shall I drive them here, or will you go there?"

Stranger: "I will jog on down with you."

All the while, from Albert Nephi's soul, the prayer was being offered up: "O Father in Heaven, put it into his heart to buy them. For the promise to my father I must keep."

When the oxen were rounded up, two fine yoke, the stranger elected one pair and paid Albert Nephi \$100 for them. The next morning Albert Nephi was off to Corinth, and borrowing \$100 more, forwarded \$200 to his father. He then made arrangements with Brother David Eccles to meet his father when he should arrive in Corinth, and give him every attention, in case he, Albert Nephi, could not be there himself.

Albert Nephi had confided his little scheme to his wife, and she prepared a room for his mother and persuaded her to come and spend a week or two with them... unconscious of the fact that her "first love", the father of her children was soon coming to them. When Albert Sr. arrived, Brother Eccles met him and set him up in the best hotel in town, the charges Brother Eccles paid. When Albert Nephi got the word, he drove over to receive his father. When father and son met, there was in the hotel a scene of great rejoicing, although no dry eyes were met by those beholding it. It was said it was a reminder of the memorable meeting of Jacob and Joseph in Egypt. As soon as they were able to speak, the father drew a purse from his pocket and said as he handed it to Albert Nephi, "Do you remember this my son? It is yours with all it contains and I am now in your keeping." His fair was \$180 and \$20 remained in the purse.

A Reunion After Many Years

Albert and Aidah knew nothing of the meeting planned by Albert Nephi and his wife, until it took place in their home. Notwithstanding the long separation (over 25 years) and the changes brought to both, there was nothing between them that could not be readily forgiven; a complete and sincere reconciliation immediately followed. Albert was humbly penitent for the mistaken course he had pursued. His former wife and their children, and also the Church authorities, were all rejoicing to forgive and receive him back into the fold of Christ.

Albert Clements and Aidah Winchell did their courting all over again, and after awhile, when they were ready, Albert Nephi fixed up his wagon, hitched up his team, and drove them to the Endowment House in Salt lake City. There, on 21 October 1872, they received blessings and promises reserved for the pure in heart who are obedient to the

laws of God. Albert Nephi had the unique privilege of witnessing the marriage of his own mother and father... their true marriage, uniting them for time and eternity.

Before leaving the sacred building, Aidah referred to their former marriage long ago in Fort Ann, New York. They reminisced on how happy they were then and that this marriage was more complete. Albert said: "This glorious triumph over which we gratefully rejoice today, I humbly and fervently acknowledge is very largely due to your undeviating Faith and Prayers and Faithfulness."

Albert and Aidah spent the next nine and a half years of their life together. The 1880 census shows them living in Hooper, Utah. Albert Clements died 20th of April, 1883 in Springville, Utah. Aidah followed, dying in Oxford, Idaho, in 1890 at the age of 88. Having lived a full life, she truly realized the blessing promised her in her patriarchal blessing at the hands of John Smith (Joseph's Uncle) or possible Joseph Smith, Sr. (the Prophet's father) in Nauvoo: *Sister Ada I lay my hands upon thy head in the name of Jesus of Nazareth & place upon you a father's blessing; thou hast seen much trouble in thy days and sorrows have seemed to multiply upon thy head, the Lord bless thee inasmuch as thou art humble & deliver thee out of all thy troubles & those who have caused trouble shall be rewarded according to their works, thou art a daughter of Jacob & an heir to all the blessings which were sealed upon the children of Joseph, the Lord will regard thy condition & lift thee up & exalt thee in due time & as for thy companion inasmuch as he is rebellious & neglects his duty, thou shall not loose thy blessing & his shall be given to another, thou shall be blest in thy family inasmuch as they are poor they shall be made rich, inasmuch as they are humble they shall be exalted & they shall be blest with a multiplicity of blessings & become very numerous & thy name shall not be forgotten by the saints, thy years shall be according to thy faith, even to enjoy every good thing & through endurance in faith to the end thou shall inherit eternal life, amen.*