

LITTLE KNOWN FRIENDS OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

Hyrum L. Andrus
All rights reserved

LEVI W. HANCOCK

Since Levi W. Hancock has been mentioned, let me commence with him. He was born April 7, 1803, in Old Springfield, Hampden County, Massachusetts, but moved with his family when he was two years old to northeastern Ohio, not far from the little town of Kirtland. On November 16, 1830, at the age of 27, Levi Hancock accepted the gospel and was baptized. This was very early in the history of the Church, just seven months after its official organization.

Both true and false spiritual manifestations were prevalent in this early period of Church history. Brother Hancock mentions one clash of powers from this era that I feel is interesting. The day before a conference, called to convene in June, 1831, the Prophet had prophesied that the "man of sin" would be revealed. The Saints went to that conference, not only having this prophecy on their minds, but anticipating also a marvelous endowment of the true spiritual powers of the gospel.

When the conference convened, the Prophet began to talk about the way to discern between true and false spiritual manifestations. He explained that should a person be seized with a sudden, violent convulsion that drew his face or limbs into distorted forms, causing him to utter strange, incoherent sounds, the Saints could rest assured that this was not a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. "By contrast," he said, "when a man speaks by the Spirit of God, he speaks out of the abundance of his heart, and his mind is filled with intelligence. Even should he become excited, it does not cause him to do anything ridiculous or unseemly."

Levi Hancock, giving an eye-witness account of the conference, reported that during the meeting, the Prophet laid his hands upon the head of Lyman Wight and blessed him with the visions of heaven and promised him that by faith he could see the Lord. The Spirit then rested upon Brother Wight until his countenance was a brilliant, transparent white. He testified that he then saw the Son of Man sitting

at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for the Saints. Next Joseph, filled with the visions of heaven, stepped out before the group there assembled and said: "I now see God, and Jesus Christ at his right hand. Let them [i.e., his antagonists] kill me: I should not feel death as I now am."

Following this manifestation, the Prophet ordained Harvey Whitlock to the office of high priest in the Melchizedek Priesthood, the first ordination to that office in this dispensation. As the brethren were completing the ordination, the Adversary manifest his power upon Brother Whitlock who turned as black, the record says, "as Lyman Wight was white."

Reports Brother Hancock: "His fingers were set like claws. He went around the room and showed his hands and tried to speak; his eyes were in the shape of oval O's."

Joseph then arose, and laying his hands upon the head of Brother Whitlock, commanded Satan to leave his victim. But the Adversary had no sooner departed, according to Levi Hancock, than,

At that very instant an old man, said to weigh two hundred and fourteen pounds, sitting in the window, turned a complete somersault in the house and came down with his back across a bench and lay helpless. Joseph told Lyman [Wight] to cast Satan out. He did; the man's name was Lemman Copley ... The evil spirit left him, and as quick as lightning Harvey Greem fell bound and screaming like a panther. Satan was cast out of him, but immediately entered someone else.

In addition to these evil spirits, Brother Hancock witnessed the manifestations of many true gifts of the Spirit in Kirtland. He was a member of Zion's Camp, and was among the sixty-eight in the group attacked by cholera in one dreadful epidemic. Though thirteen died of the disease, Levi Hancock's faith healed him, and his life was spared.

Zion's Camp was a musical group. As they journeyed along, Brother Hancock made a fife from the joint of a sweet elder tree, and Sylvester Smith marched his company to the music of that fife. That fife, George A. Smith later observed, may well be considered the introduction of martial music among the Saints. Later, when many of the brethren were called to form the Mormon Battalion, Brother Hancock was designated as musician of Company E. His journal

includes several of his original poems, some of which were set to music.¹