

NOTES AND COMMENTS

EXPULSION OF A POOR, DELUDED AND MISERABLE SET OF VILLAINS: A CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNT

Copies of a unique collection of letters, recently discovered, have been sent to Dialogue by Dr. and Mrs. J. Laurence Manwaring of Warrenton, Virginia. The correspondence was authored by members of the William Bradford family, originally Virginians, who moved to Missouri about 1830. The letters give interesting insights into the personal circumstances of at least a few of the anonymous "old settlers" who, contrary to the broader stereotype, were clearly upper middle class Americans, with meaningful national contacts. The letters also provide an instructive, if startlingly unfavorable, summary of contemporary hearsay on the early Mormons. Relevant excerpts of the more extensive correspondence are published below with a brief background note on the family.

THE BRADFORDS OF FAUQUIER COUNTY, Virginia, traced their Virginia roots to John Bradford (c1690–c1750). The family was apparently well-to-do, and John's son Daniel (1723–1800) is described as having large land holdings in Virginia and Kentucky. Daniel's oldest son, John, moved to Kentucky, where he began the *Kentucky Gazette* in 1787. Later he was a member of the Kentucky legislature, trustee of the town of Lexington, and chairman of the Board of Trustees of Transylvania University. John's sons, in turn, founded newspapers in Tennessee and Louisiana.

Unlike his older brother John, William Bradford (1751–c1825) remained his entire life in Fauquier County, Virginia. He married the daughter of a distinguished line of Virginians, and they had eight children—the principals in the extant family

correspondence. Little is known of William, except that he was sufficiently wealthy to will slaves to five of his children and land to at least three. Several years before William's death, his oldest son estimated his own personal worth at \$50,000, in those days a very considerable sum.

"Major" Thomas Grayson Bradford, "Esquire," was William Bradford's oldest son and the recipient of the letters excerpted below. Born in 1784, he traveled as a young man to Tennessee with his brother Theodorick to join his cousins in the newspaper business. There, in 1808, he married the daughter of a prosperous slave-holding family with landholdings in Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri. In 1813 Thomas bought a small newspaper, the *Nashville Clarion*, which he published until 1820 when he suffered both the death of his wife and major financial reverses in a national banking crisis. He returned to Fauquier County, Virginia, where he remarried in 1822. Altogether, he fathered seven children, only two of whom lived to adulthood.

In Virginia, Thomas Bradford briefly resumed his newspaper career, publishing for a time the *Virginia Gazette*. By the early 1830s he was working in Washington, D.C., with the "Pension Office." Later in the decade he became one of eight "Clerks" in the Office of the Secretary of the Treasury. To judge from the correspondence, he was the effective head of the Virginia-Missouri branch of the family, and clearly had the greatest financial assets and most influential political contacts. In addition to his Virginia lands, he owned or held patents on several tracts of military or bounty land in and around Carrollton County, Missouri. He was regularly asked to use his influence to obtain appointments to local Federal positions. That Thomas Bradford still felt some financial pressures, however, is suggested by his efforts to document and recover loans and other obligations from several family members. The family also felt the necessity, in the 1830s, to sell some of the land that had been in their possession for generations.

Thomas Bradford's landholdings in Missouri were a source of several problems, exacerbated by his disinclination to visit Missouri. Among other problems his brother, Frederick—an unmistakable villain in the family correspondence—had resided "temporarily" on a choice tract for many years and refused to move or pay back rent. Thomas Bradford's son, William G., who had studied law, was dispatched to Missouri in the mid-1830s to resolve the legal difficulties involved. His efforts ended in 1835, with his death at the home of his uncle in Carrollton at the age of 24.

Arthur Issachar Henry Bradford, in whose home William G. died, was another of Thomas's brothers and author of two of the extracts included below. He was one of the youngest of the Bradford brothers and had also lived in Tennessee for a time. He returned to Virginia where he married in 1825. By the early 1830s he had moved to Carrollton, Missouri, for reasons that are not clear. There, amid the Mormon difficulties of 1838, his wife died also, of "congestive fever."

Edward Allen Lampkin, another of the correspondents, was brother-in-law to both Thomas and Arthur Bradford, having married their sister Rowena. Additionally, Arthur's wife Elizabeth was Edward's sister. He apparently went to Missouri shortly after William G.'s death in 1835—and shortly after the death of

his *own wife* and child as well—in an attempt to settle the Bradford estate. His letters, most of which are not included below, are largely a record of his efforts to this end. The final outcome of the family struggle with brother Frederick, a tobacco and hemp farmer who had already contended successfully with an Indian uprising in 1829, is not known.

The final correspondent was William Barbee, an indirectly related family friend (his mother-in-law was Thomas Bradford's cousin). Barbee moved to Missouri several years earlier than the others, apparently from Tennessee (although Barbee family members were also in Virginia), and eventually became a justice of the peace. In 1837 he wrote that he was "assessor for this [Carroll] County" and that he intended to stay in the area "to attend stock raising & farming." His primary motive for writing to Thomas Bradford was to induce him to speculate further in Missouri lands.

The family "history" of the Mormons (with original punctuation and spelling):

Arthur to Thomas Bradford, Carrollton, Missouri, August 13, 1838

The crops in this state are very fine and the farmer must from the present prospect reap a rich harvest—There is a considerable stir in this and the adjoining counties at this time in regard to a sect who call themselves Mormons there are several families of them who have contrary to the expressed wish of the citizens of this county settled in it—The Counties of Davies and Caldwell are almost entirely settled by them they are a poor deluded and miserable set of beings. Mr. Freeman and family are all well as also Mr. E. A. Lampkin and family Frances is going to school, she learns very fast . . .

Edward Lampkin to Thomas Bradford, Carrollton, September 8, 1838

Elizabeth Bradford has got well or nearly so, she was confined to her bed about ten days with the fever, Frances has also got well, she had chills & fever for 3 or 4 days There is still a good deal of excitement with the people of Carrol & Davis Counties, and the Mormons of Caldwell Cty. there are strong apprehensions also of hostilities by the Indians from the cherokees having built a large council house and inviting all the other tribes, and holding secret consultations, it is generally thought that we shall have war with the Mormons & Indians both, meetings have been held in adopting measures upon the Mormon subject

Edward Lampkin to Thomas Bradford, Carrollton, September 23, 1838

Since my last communication to you stating the death of some of my acquaintances, I have witnessed its fatal agonies in a near relation, Sister Elizabeth, after recovering from a severe attack of congestive fever, took a relapse and after nearly two weeks severe illness expired upon the 20th of this month about 3 o'clock A.M. I was with her nearly every day during her illness, she expressed a willingness to die and said she felt like going to Heaven, and requested me a short time before her death to write to you and Caroline and inform you of the particulars of her sickness & death & tell you to try to meet her in heaven, I trust she is better off than when she was with us, exposed to the troubles that this life is always subject to. There has been a great deal of sickness & a number of deaths

throughout the state, as far as I have heard from, Mr. Freemans family are well at present, several of his family having just recovered from severe illness, Mr. Bowles youngest child died a short time since he is very sick at this time himself with the fever Arthur is complaining a little though not much the matter with him I think. myself and family are in tolerable health except Asbury & Caroline who have very sore eyes which has been quite distressing to them though they are something better than they have been, it seems to be a disease that the people of this country are much more subject to than they are in via. as I have seen more people affected with them this fall than I ever saw before. There has been much confusion with the people of this county and several of the adjoining counties in consequence of the difficulties between the Mormons & the other citizens. I am in hopes they have subsided for a while at least, I expected about a week ago, that before this time they would had a severe battle but there has been a treaty of peace in in some degree effected, some of the citizens of Carroll have become so much alarmed as to sell their farms at less than half that they could have got for them one year ago, and a great many others intend leaving the county, emigrants will be deterred from settling here in a great measure this season which will reduce the price of lands, and other things in proportion, corn may be bought at this time at 75 cts p barrel

Edward Lampkin to Thomas Bradford, Carrollton, October 14, 1838

The tax title on the N.W. qr 20-53-22 is owned by Wm M. Kirkpatrick he lives only 6 or 8 miles from here & I think I can redeem it in a few days from this time, though it is with much difficulty that any business can be attended to in our county on account of the confusion with the mormons, there are 2 or 300 mormons at Dewitt, they have the whole town to themselves, the town is about 15 miles east of here on the Mo. River & nearly all the men of our county have been called out against them, & have been stationed within about a mile of Dewitt for about 8 days, the militia have been called out to suppress the mob, but I believe they intend helping to kill them, they have taken a few shots & the report seems to be established that about 5 mormons have been killed, one of our men has been wounded by the mormons & another by our own men through mistake, the City of Carroll is ruined for some years to come agreeable to my judgment & that of many others. I wish you to attend to a small matter for me that is, to see Philips Ficklin (Fiskland?), I sold him my corn when I left va . . .

Arthur to Thomas Bradford, Carrollton, November 13, 1838

I feel some anxiety to hear how my dear old mother is, but to judge from your last letter to me I have thought she was ere this time numbered among the dead I have had a hard time of it for three or four months, my own affliction, and that of my poor Elizabeths, with her loss, blended with the difficulties which we have had to encounter with those poor deluded creatures the Mormons has almost run me crazy. I have until recently been disposed to pity all (except the leaders) in them I never had any confidence. the mob which raised in this County some weeks since and drove those who had settled in a little place called Dewit—I did not at first approve of, but I finally believed they were right and I joined in with them. I am convinced history does not afford a deeper laid scheme of vallainy than that which has just developed itself in regard to the course persued by that

sect—their acts of villainy had become so notorious in the Counties bordering on Caldwell that the Governor of the State thought proper to call into service some three or four thousand of the militia of the State and punish if possible the ringleaders and drive the balance from the State, according to order the troops from this County took up the line of march for the Headquarters of the Army on this day two weeks ago, we proceeded on to Richmond the place appointed to rendezvous, but on our arrival there, we found, that Genrls Lucas, Parks, Acheson and Donaphan had taken up the line of march for Far West — About two hours before we reached Far West most of the leaders had given themselves up and the town had capitulated — The leaders who have been taken are Joseph Smith & brother, Lyman Wight — Sydney Rigdon — Robeson, who married a miss Rigdon — Parley Pratt — Doct Everard and Col Hinkle — Rigdon, Robeson, Everard & Hinkle are men of Talents and no doubt worked the wise or in other words laid the schemes for the others to go by. Smith has nothing about him that indicates a man of intellect. he is one-whose manners would please the vulgar. They had succeeded in making proselytes from most of the States of the Union I found a mong them some Virginias, a good many foreigners had crept in also, — The Cite of Far West is the most beautiful I ever saw and it was laid out on a magnificent scale I would judge it contained a bout four hundred famil[ies], The leaders whom I have mentioned with fifty of their followers are at Richmond awaiting their trial — my opinion is they will all be executed — I am keeping house but it is very lonesome — I have not determined as yet what I shall turn my attention to after this year I may sell out and go to Texas, my mind is quite unsettled If my poor old mother lives until Spring I will try and come in to see her — You will please present my respects to all and accept the same yourself Your brother A.I.H. Bradford

P.S. We have had an unusually cold time for the last ten days Snow has fallen from 12 to 16 inches on two occasions and for the last 24 hours rain almost incessant and wind [?] from the [?] I suffered very much on my way home from Far West —

William Barbee to Thomas Bradford, Carroll County, Missouri, April 22, 1839

I presume you are anxious to hear how the Mormons are getting along from information from the upper Counties they have nearly all gone and are getting off as fast as possible there were 5 prisoners who have been confined in Clay County Jail got a removal of their trial to Boone County and one day last week about 12 miles north of this the sheriff who had charge of them suffered them all to escape (no doubt in tentionally) among the prisoners were Joe Smith the propet and his brother With the military chief they were charged with murder arson & treason I presume the official accounts of these people wil[l] now be published and I have no doubt they are a[s] infamous as those of Murrell [?] we are now clear of them and will continue so under the name of Mormons I understand they intend petitioning the genl government for a grant of lands in Iowa or Wisconsin On politics our state is safe although the federal party are not disheartened by defeat Write as soon as you conveniently can as I wish to obtain land for my children in this neighborhood the 2 oldest being married
I am yours very respectfully

Thus, for the Bradford correspondents, the Mormon episode was a very brief, if intense, problem—and one that was secondary to more important concerns of health and economics. The sequel is well known to Mormons. Very little is known about the Bradfords. Arthur, after his wife died, married a young woman who could “spin, weave, cut out and make garments of all sorts and is a pretty nice housekeeper” whose father was “said to be wealthy.” He was also able to report in January, 1840, from a neighboring county, that corn was selling for \$1.50 to \$2.00 per barrel. William Barbee continued to reside in Missouri for many years. During the Civil War he was caught up in a cross fire in Clay County, but according to the county history was saved by a militia officer who recognized his Masonic sign of distress. The others seem not to have left much of a trace.

These letters were brought to Dr. Manwaring’s attention by a patient, Caroline J. Olinger, a descendant of Thomas Grayson Bradford’s only surviving child, Caroline. The biographical sketch was prepared from information collected from family records by Madeline Manwaring and Lester Bush. Much information was also found in Mrs. Philip Wallace Hiden, *The Bradford Family of Fauquier County, Virginia*, *Tyler’s Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine* October, 1945, 27:114–139.

