
Peter Haws

1796–1860

D&C 124:62, 70

Peter was a farmer, miller, and businessman in Upper Canada before entering baptismal waters. He left his successful enterprises to gather with the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio. In 1839 Peter served an honorable mission with Erastus Snow to Illinois. After completing the mission, he settled his family in Nauvoo, Illinois, and established a steam-driven sawmill. Peter “converted [some of] his funds to feeding the poor, bringing in meat and flour, &c.”¹

On January 19, 1841, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation instructing Peter to oversee construction of the Nauvoo House as “a delightful habitation for man, *and* a resting-place for the weary traveler, that he may contemplate the glory of Zion” (D&C 124:60; emphasis added). Peter served as one of the trustees of the construction project. On October 2, 1841, as the southeast cornerstone was being put in place, according to Ebenezer Robinson, the Prophet Joseph said,

“Wait, brethren, I have a document I wish to put in that stone,” and started for his house, which was only a few rods away, across Main Street. I went with him to the house, and also one or two other brethren. He got a manuscript copy of the Book of Mormon, and brought it into the room where we were standing, and said: “I will examine to see if it is all here,” and as he did so I stood near him, at his left side, and saw distinctly the writing, as he turned up the pages until he hastily went through the book and satisfied himself that it was all there. ... It was

¹ History, 1838–1856, volume F-1 [1 May 1844–8 August 1844], 79. Joseph Smith Papers.

written on foolscap paper. ... He took the manuscript and deposited it in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House.²

Construction on the Nauvoo House moved forward at a fairly constant pace, with Peter taking a very active role, such as calling for “twenty-five hands to go with him to the Pine country to get lumber for the Nauvoo House.”³ He also served a mission to Indiana, Mississippi, and Alabama to secure funds for construction. “When he returned [to Nauvoo], he found his family must have starved, if they had not borrowed money to get food.”⁴ In spite of his family situation, Peter did not falter in giving faithful service as a trustee of the Nauvoo House, as an alternate high councilman, or as a member of the Council of Fifty.

It was not until he joined the exodus from Nauvoo to the Territory of Iowa that Peter began to falter and speak against Church leaders. He was excommunicated in Council Bluffs for speaking against Brigham Young and for selling whiskey to the Native Americans.

Peter never affiliated with the Church after his excommunication. By 1854 he was farming near the Humboldt River in Lovelock Valley, Nevada. A year later, he had moved on to Northern California. Peter died on February 1, 1860, in Placerville, California, at age sixty-four.

² Ebenezer Robinson quote, in Dean C. Jessee, “The Original Book of Mormon Manuscript,” *BYU Studies* 10, no. 3 (Spring 1970), 264.

³ Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:369.

⁴ History, 1838–1856, volume F-1 [1 May 1844–8 August 1844], 80.