

*Michael A. Goodman*

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## ELAM LUDDINGTON: FIRST LATTER-DAY SAINT MISSIONARY TO THAILAND

I will keep digging till you all say enough, and then if you see fit to call me home, I shall be truly in heaven and happy in the extreme; or if you say “Spend your days in [this part of the world], it shall be even so; not my will but my Heavenly Fathers be done.”

Elam Luddington<sup>1</sup>

ELAM Luddington, the first Latter-day Saint missionary to Siam (modern Thailand), faced tremendous hardships in his pioneering proselyting work. Almost killed at sea numerous times, stoned twice, poisoned once, and finally mobbed, he left the Thai people after little more than four months. No further formal missionary work was attempted for over one hundred years in the ancient land of Siam. His sacrifice, however, laid the foundation for the future work of bringing the fullness of the gospel to Thailand. His efforts were not in vain. His legacy of faithfulness would be

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followed by other modern-day pioneers who would also show tremendous bravery and faithfulness in the face of forbidding odds.

### PREPARATION TO SERVE

Elam Luddington was born November 23, 1806, in Harwinton, Litchfield County, Connecticut, a little town incorporated in 1737.<sup>2</sup> His parents were Elam Luddington Sr. and Aseneth Munger. Elam Luddington Sr., who was also named after his father, was a farmer, carpenter, and mariner. Elam described his father as “honest, virtuous, industrious, a good husband and a kind father.”<sup>3</sup> Aseneth Luddington died of consumption when Elam was only ten years old. Luddington farmed with his father until he was eighteen years old. At that time, he left his home and moved to New York, where he mainly worked on ships as a cook or in shipyards as a laborer. Luddington took after his father’s love of farming and all things dealing with ships. He once said, “I think a ship, a field of wheat, and a lovely maiden are the three prettiest things in the world.”<sup>4</sup> Luddington became keenly interested in religion and was baptized a Christian in 1824. He attended the same church at the corner of Broom and Norfolk Streets in New York for the next ten years.

Luddington became acquainted with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the winter of 1840. After becoming convinced of the truthfulness of the gospel, he sought an opportunity to meet the Prophet Joseph Smith. He did and was baptized and confirmed by Joseph on May 16, 1840, in Nauvoo, Illinois, and was ordained an elder.<sup>5</sup> On July 20, 1840, Elam received a patriarchal blessing from Joseph Smith Sr. at a blessing meeting held in the patriarch’s home. Luddington’s patriarchal blessing was remarkably prophetic. He had been a member for just over a month, but his blessing referenced his future missionary service, spoke of the difficulties that he would face throughout his life, and promised him divine protection for his faithful service.<sup>6</sup>

Elder Luddington lived and preached in New Orleans for portions of the next three years. He lived in New Orleans mainly during the winter months

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and would come back to Nauvoo in the summer. He recorded, “Three summers I had spent in the city of Joseph being counseled by Brother Joseph and Hyrum.”<sup>7</sup> His descendants noted the close relationship he shared with the Prophet Joseph; the two spent many hours together eating and sleeping under the same roof and working together.<sup>8</sup> Elder Luddington and fellow Church member Eli G. Terrill wrote a letter to Joseph during their first stay in New Orleans, pleading that missionaries be sent to help build up the Church. “Send help to this city before the people perish, for it is a time of great excitement here, send us a Peter, or an apostle to preach unto us Jesus.”<sup>9</sup> In response, Elder Harrison Sagers was sent to New Orleans in March 1841. He ordained Eli G. Terrill an elder, and together the three baptized eight people that spring “with many more who believed.”<sup>10</sup>

Toward the end of Luddington’s first stay in New Orleans, on May 16, 1841, he married a young woman named Mary Eliza Clark. He would return two more times to live and preach in New Orleans and LaFayette. His missionary labors in Louisiana were a good forerunner of the persecutions and difficulty he would face on his mission to Siam: he had rotten eggs thrown at him, the doors and windows of the local Church meeting-house were smashed, and, finally, he was driven out of town.<sup>11</sup> Shortly after the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum in June 1844, Elam was ordained a high priest. A month later, at the October 1844 general conference, he and William Hyde were called by Brigham Young on a brief mission to Quincy, Illinois, to help raise funds for the building of the Nauvoo Temple.<sup>12</sup> Two months later, on January 27, Luddington was called on another mission, this time to Mississippi, to gather funds and laborers also for the building of the Nauvoo Temple.<sup>13</sup>

Again, this mission provided valuable preparation for the hardships and trials of missionary life Elam would experience for the next ten years. As part of this mission, he relates that he “left home without purse or scrip traveled the first day 24 miles blistered feet wet and cold . . . had to travel on foot sometimes barefooted at other times with boots through mud and mire up to our knees. My feet was so sore. Tore up my drawers sewed them on my

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feet, the fourth of last March shall never forget. Traveled all day thundered and lightened and rained in torrents. Wet as could be. Sometimes all under water wading creeks.”<sup>14</sup> Yet Elder Luddington considered his mission a success. He recorded that they gathered between forty to fifty men and over five hundred dollars in gold, silver, and other property for the building of the Nauvoo Temple. At the conclusion of this mission, Elder Luddington and his wife, Mary, received their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple on December 16, 1845, and the couple was sealed on January 17, 1846.<sup>15</sup>

Having served missions almost continually for the first five years of his membership, Luddington was employed almost constantly for the next five years as an officer for different organizations within the Church. The week after he was sealed to his wife, he was appointed by Hosea Stout as a “Sergeant of the Guard” for the Nauvoo Temple and continued in that duty for several months.<sup>16</sup> By the middle of 1846, the Mormon Battalion had been called into service. Luddington began his service in the battalion as a sergeant and was promoted to be a first lieutenant in Company B before the march was over.<sup>17</sup> After his faithful service in the Mormon Battalion, Luddington was asked to serve as a captain of ten for the Saints as they left Nauvoo on July 10, 1847, on their way to Winter Quarters when the Saints were driven from Nauvoo.<sup>18</sup> Finally, at the meeting of the Great Salt Lake City Council on January 11, 1851, Mayor Jedediah M. Grant presided over the meeting at which Luddington was elected to serve as the marshal for Salt Lake City.<sup>19</sup>

By this time Luddington was a seasoned leader who had already served several missions, as well as having served in various leadership capacities among the Saints. As had been the case for the first ten years of his membership, Luddington was not left as a marshal for long. All of his experiences laid the foundation for the greatest adventure of his life. On August 28, 1852, a special two-day conference was called that would change Elam Luddington’s life. This meeting is most famous for being the first meeting at which the doctrine of celestial marriage was preached by Apostle Orson Hyde. However, at this same conference, the First Presidency also called

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108 missionaries to serve throughout the world. Missionaries were called to Africa, Australia, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Norway, Prussia, and Siam.<sup>20</sup> Most of those called were the first missionaries to serve in these countries. The four missionaries called to Siam were Benjamin F. Dewey, Elam Luddington, Levi Savage, and Chauncey W. West. Of the missionaries traveling to India, China, and Siam, Elder Luddington, at age forty-seven, was the oldest.<sup>21</sup>

Elder Luddington's reaction to his call was typical of his past willingness to do whatever the Lord asked of him: "Being unexpectedly called upon at the fall conference of 1852, . . . we all acquiesced by saying Amen, it being an almost unknown part of the world, where but few white men ever tread the soil, so we were all anxious to fill this important mission."<sup>22</sup> Elder Luddington, along with several others, was set apart on October 16, 1852, by Wilford Woodruff. After Elder Luddington had returned from his mission, Wilford Woodruff recalled the "blessing" he had given to Elder Luddington when he set him apart: "In blessing br. Luddinton, I recollect that I was mouth, and I well remember that I could see nothing but seas, waves and storms. The seas appeared to be heaped up and I knew that he was going to see storms and be exposed to troubles and dangers, but there was one thing that we did bless those brethren with, that I rejoice in, and that is that they should return home again."<sup>23</sup>

After arranging their affairs, the missionaries ("almost all of the missionaries were married") took leave of their families on October 21, 1852.<sup>24</sup> Thirty-eight missionaries met together at Peteetneet Creek in Payson, Utah, with Hosea Stout, who had been called to China, acting as captain of the group.<sup>25</sup> The details of their early journey were described in a letter written by Chauncey W. West, one of the four missionaries called to Siam, which was published in the *Deseret News* on August 29, 1855.<sup>26</sup> As the missionaries continued south, they were fed and housed by the Saints in the communities along their route. They left Cedar City on November 8 and arrived in San Bernardino, California, on December 3. From San Bernardino, the missionaries traveled through Los Angeles and

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San Pedro, arriving in San Francisco on January 9, 1853. By this time, they were down to the thirteen missionaries who would be going on to China, India, and Siam.

The next challenge facing the missionaries was to raise funds for their missions. Amos Musser, one of the missionaries bound for India, estimated that it would take just over four thousand dollars to get the missionaries to their destinations.<sup>27</sup> They tried for three weeks to raise the money through nonmembers but were only able to raise \$150. Finally, through the help of two generous members, T. S. Williams, who donated five hundred dollars, and John M. Horner, who donated between five and six thousand dollars, the missionaries were able to begin making arrangements to sail.<sup>28</sup> As the four missionaries bound for Siam tried to find passage, they were informed by an old sea captain that there was no direct sailing route to Siam and that the best way was to sail to Calcutta and then go overland through Burma to Siam.<sup>29</sup> The missionaries set sail on January 29 on the clipper ship *Monsoon*. This proved to be one of the few ocean journeys of the entire mission for Elder Luddington that was not fraught with life-and-death danger. They spent regular time studying the gospel and practicing their “missionary techniques” in preparation for their labors.<sup>30</sup> The missionaries arrived safely at Calcutta, India, on April 26 after a journey of 10,936 miles in eighty-six days.<sup>31</sup>

The missionaries were met at the dock by Henry Frederick McCune, son of Matthew and Sarah McCune. Matthew was one of the first two people baptized into the Church in India and was a major impetus for the Church sending missionaries to India in the first place.<sup>32</sup> The missionaries were led to Matthew McCune’s forty-room “bungalow,” and each man was assigned a separate room and a servant. But as R. Lanier Britsch points out, “Such a comfortable beginning was not a portent of easy times to come.”<sup>33</sup> In fact Chauncey W. West, one of the four missionaries originally called to Siam, pointed out that the missionaries arrived at a time when cholera was raging in Calcutta, with several hundred people dying each day.<sup>34</sup>

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Two important events transpired three days after the missionaries' arrival in Calcutta. First, on April 29 a conference was held at which Nathaniel V. Jones, one of the missionaries who traveled to Calcutta with Elder Luddington, was chosen as the president of the East India Mission as well as the Calcutta Branch.<sup>35</sup> He became responsible for directing the affairs of the missionaries serving in India, China, and Siam. Second, the missionaries met with the American consul, Mr. Hoofnicle, who treated them with great kindness and made numerous inquiries for them. Mr. Hoofnicle informed the Siam-bound missionaries that it would be impossible to travel to Thailand overland because the Second Anglo-Burmese War blocked their route. He also explained that it would not be possible to go by ship until after the fall monsoon season had passed.<sup>36</sup> After making several other inquiries, the missionaries found Mr. Hoofnicle's counsel to be accurate. In consulting with President Jones, it was decided that Elders West and Dewey would labor in Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka) and Elders Savage and Luddington would labor in Burma until the way opened up to travel to Siam. In the end Elder Luddington would be the only missionary to actually make it to Siam. Elders West and Dewey labored only briefly in Ceylon, then worked for an additional six months in Bombay before heading for Hong Kong and then home.<sup>37</sup>

On June 16, 1853, Elder Luddington and Elder Savage boarded the steamer *Fire Queen* for the trip across the Bay of Bengal from Calcutta to Rangoon, Burma.<sup>38</sup> Two hundred miles out to sea, just over a third of the way to Burma, the ship sprung a leak.<sup>39</sup> After spending five full days and nights bailing out water and giving themselves up for lost, they finally made it back to Calcutta. Elder Luddington and Elder Savage were treated with great contempt by the captain and suffered excessively. Elder Luddington prophesied, however, that they would be saved, and so it was.<sup>40</sup> This would be the first of many life-threatening adventures the missionaries would encounter at sea, fulfilling the prophecy Wilford Woodruff had received when he set apart Elder Luddington. Elder Luddington and Elder Savage tried to secure passage on another ship, but every time a captain learned they had

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been on the *Fire Queen* he refused them passage. They finally reboarded the *Fire Queen* on July 30 and arrived safely in Rangoon on August 10. Elder Luddington stated, “We landed in Rangoon, penniless and alone strangers in a foreign land, nothing but war and bloodshed unacquainted with the language, a kingdom of gross darkness.”<sup>41</sup>

Fortunately, Matthew McCune met the two missionaries at the ship and brought them back to his quarters.<sup>42</sup> Brother McCune had been busily engaged in preaching the gospel from the time he was baptized. He had converted eight of his fellow soldiers from England and established a small branch in Rangoon by January 1853. However, he was soon transferred to active duty away from Rangoon, and while he was away the little branch had largely ceased to function.<sup>43</sup> When he met the missionaries in August 1853, he was excited to get their help in reestablishing the branch and teaching more people. It did not take long before Elder Luddington experienced some success. An editorial in the *Millennial Star* dated November 26, 1853, states that a letter had been received from Elder Luddington reporting his first baptism in Burma on August 21.<sup>44</sup> Elder Luddington wrote another letter to Samuel Whitney Richards, the younger brother of Franklin D. Richards and president of the European Mission, reporting that they preached three times a week and were having at least limited success. “A few Sabbaths ago, I preached on the government wharf to a company representing most of the nations and peoples under heaven—Burmese, Bengalese, Malays, Brahmins of different castes, Mussulman, Armenians, Jews, and Gentiles. . . . I believe this service has opened the blind eyes or hearts of some.”<sup>45</sup> He further remarked that “the first principles of truth have taken deep root in the hearts of some. Elder Luddington can plant, and McCune can water, but God alone can give the increase.”<sup>46</sup> Not everyone was receptive to their message. Attempting to sell a copy of the Book of Mormon to a European, Elder Luddington had the following conversation: “‘Sir, would you like to purchase a Mormon book?’ He looked daggers at me, and said, ‘Sir, are you a Mormon?’ ‘Yes, sir,’ said I, ‘I am a Mormon Elder!’ ‘Sir, your religion is like old rotten mutton, it stinks,’ was his reply.”<sup>47</sup>



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On September 10, 1853, Elder Luddington wrote a letter to Jedediah M. Grant, who was then serving as the mayor of Salt Lake City and as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy. Elder Luddington shared the concerns he had for the Karen people of Burma and his desire to get to Siam with President Grant. Elder Luddington's letter gives a flavor of his spirit: "I am as clay in Rangoon I hope ready to be fashioned into whatever vessel the Lord says, I will go at your call or come at your bidding. . . . Though I do not fear death, if God says go, I have covenanted to obey."<sup>48</sup> Shortly after Elder Luddington sent this letter, Elder Savage decided to strike out on his own and sailed to Moulmein, Burma, across the Gulf of Martaban on September 28, 1853. He would work there for most of the next two years before returning home late in the fall of 1855. In the meantime, Elder Luddington continued to work with the Europeans in conjunction with Matthew McCune. They baptized two more men by January 1854, bringing the total baptisms in Rangoon to ten, none of which were Burmese.<sup>49</sup>

By the beginning of 1854, Elder Luddington was determined to make it to his assigned field of labor in Siam. Brother McCune put together a festival as a send-off for him, and Elder Luddington set sail on February 9 on a "native brig" under the command of Mr. H. Homet. On February 15 the brig sprung a leak, and they "lightened her by throwing a portion of her cargo overboard. We labored at the pumps day and night to keep her afloat."<sup>50</sup> They landed on Prince of Wales Island on February 27. Elder Luddington met with the governor of the island, a man named Lewis, and with Captain Dandy, who was in command of the English forces, and sought a place to stay and preach but had no success at first. He finally found lodging, ended up preaching there for five days, "found many warm friends," and then embarked for Singapore on March 3.

Elder Luddington arrived in Singapore on March 6 and wandered till evening looking for lodging. Finally, a Reverend Mr. Keeslerry of the Church of Scotland took him in and lodged him for three weeks. He tried to preach to the reverend but with no success. "He treated me very kindly, but could not bear Mormonism."<sup>51</sup> While in Singapore, Elder Luddington

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called on Governor Butterworth, governor of Singapore and Malacca from 1843 to 1855, and preached to him but was rejected. On March 25, Elder Luddington boarded the barque *Serious*, under the command of Captain James Trail, a native of Batavia. Trail was of Dutch descent, spoke several languages, and had been sailing those waters for over fourteen years.<sup>52</sup> There were sixty people from many nations onboard the *Serious*, including nine American ministers and eight Catholic priests. Elder Luddington said he “preached the first Mormon sermon . . . in the Gulf of Siam” and said that even though “the Lord was with him” and “they paid good attention,” none of the passengers were receptive. In fact, he said, the other preachers contended against him—a harbinger of coming events.

After “a pleasant voyage of thirteen days,” Elder Luddington finally reached Siam, his assigned mission field, on April 6, 1854, over a year and a half after leaving his home in Utah.<sup>53</sup> Three days after his arrival, Elder Luddington taught the first Mormon sermon in Siam at the residence of Captain James Trail and his wife. That night, April 9, 1854, Elder Luddington baptized Captain Trail and his wife at their request. These two would be his only converts while laboring in Siam. The day after the baptisms, Captain Trail was summoned to meet with the king of Siam. While in Singapore, Captain Trail had fired a fifteen-gun salute at the request of some Singaporean merchants. One of the guns had gone off wrong and had severely wounded a Siamese gunner. Captain Trail had cared for the man until he was largely healed and had given him free passage home. However, Governor Butterworth had earlier written to the king of Siam to prevent his officers from firing salutes in the streets of Singapore. As a result, the king confined Captain Trail seventy-one days in a Siamese prison. Elder Luddington was instrumental, along with the captain’s wife, in feeding and meeting the needs of the captain while he was a prisoner.<sup>54</sup>

A few weeks after arriving in Siam, Elder Luddington wrote a letter to President Richards in London, reporting, “I am following my calling at this time in the jungles of Siam, far from a civilized nation and surrounded on the one hand by wild savages, and by wild beasts of prey on the other.”<sup>55</sup>

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Britsch points out that Elder Luddington “obviously exaggerated his circumstances,” since Siam was a nation with a long and proud history.<sup>56</sup> This was not Elder Luddington’s only disparaging remark regarding the Siamese people in his correspondence. A little over a month later, he wrote a letter to Elder George B. Wallace: “I visited one of their festivals a few days ago. I was cautioned to go armed, as they are a set of wild, barbarians, outlaws; they would as soon take your life as to look at you.”<sup>57</sup> Again, his unflattering remarks appear to be an exaggeration; there are many accounts of the graciousness of the Siamese people of that time. However, Elder Luddington was persecuted bitterly the majority of the time he was in Siam, and his opinion was obviously heavily influenced by the abuse he sustained. This abuse was at least partially brought on by the Catholic and Protestant clergy combining to persecute him, and not by the Siamese.<sup>58</sup> Even though Elder Luddington’s discouragement is palpable in his correspondence, his willingness to stay and serve the remainder of his life, as noted earlier, shows the level of dedication and testimony he felt.

Elder Luddington preached at least one sermon every Sunday he was in Siam, usually to an audience of eight to ten Europeans. He made an effort to share the gospel not only with the Europeans but with the Siamese as well. He made some attempt to learn the language, though he was discouraged by the reports from other Christian missionaries. One missionary reported he had tried to learn the language for seven years and still couldn’t preach a sermon in Siamese.<sup>59</sup>

Remarkably, Elder Luddington took it upon himself to preach not only to the Europeans and common Siamese; he even attempted to share the gospel with the highest officials of the kingdom. He reported, “Since I have been here I have visited the minister of Foreign affairs, a native of Siam. I preached nearly one hour to him, through an interpreter. He wanted to know much about the Book of Mormon, and if the Prophet would not come to his country.”<sup>60</sup> Elder Luddington also wrote a letter to King Mongkut (Rama IV). He explained: “I have written a long letter to the king—To his Most Gracious Majesty Phra Bat Somdet Phra Poramenthramaha Mongkut Phra Chom

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Klao Chao Yu Hua, Sovereign of Laos, at his request. He being desirous to know something about gold plates, I gave him a brief synopsis of the same.”<sup>61</sup>

Elder Luddington complained that his letters to the king had to pass through a dragoman (translator) and that “every sentence was misconstrued by the dragoman.” He also sought to personally meet with King Mongkut as well as the second king, Phra Pin Clau Choa You Hua, the brother of King Mongkut. In his letter to President Richards, Elder Luddington said he had just received word that the second king wished to see him. Both King Mongkut and King Pin Clau spoke enough English that if Elder Luddington had been granted an audience, they could have conversed together. Yet there is no evidence that he was ever granted a personal audience with either of them, although he did attend two festivals at the invitation of the king and at which the king was present. At one of the festivals, he reported, “I took my seat on a mat, with my feet towards the king for which I was very much censured, my guide told me the cause of the excitement saying it is very improper to put your feet towards the king.”<sup>62</sup> In ancient Siam, as well as in modern Thailand, it is considered highly impolite to point your feet at another person. It is not surprising that Elder Luddington made such a mistake, since he had no cultural training to assist him in interacting with the Siamese.

While attempting to preach the gospel, Elder Luddington continually encountered persecution. “I was surrounded several times by the natives and twice I was stoned, once I was turned out of the palace and once out of the cathedral and poison was administered to me.”<sup>63</sup> He laid the blame for his persecution mainly at the feet of the other Christian ministers. At the end of a letter Elder Luddington wrote after fleeing Siam, he stated, “I was rejected, and I washed my feet as a testimony against my foes—American missionaries and Europeans.”<sup>64</sup> Ultimately, Elder Luddington felt he had done everything in his power to fulfill his mission in Siam but to no avail. “After making every exertion in my honor to establish a church, I found it entirely useless and left them to enjoy their own religion.”<sup>65</sup> On August 12, 1854, Elder Luddington took passage again with

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Captain James Trail on the barque *Serious*, bound for Singapore. He had spent exactly 129 days in Siam.

After three days, they landed on Turtle Island. By August 21, they landed on the peninsula of Malacca. He went inland six miles, guided by Siamese sailors, to the palace of the “Mohamittan King.”<sup>66</sup> Through an interpreter, Elder Luddington commenced to preach to the king regarding the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth.<sup>67</sup> Though not receptive to the gospel message, the king supplied Elder Luddington and his guides with fruit, water, and wood. On learning that Elder Luddington would like to ride an elephant, the king had one saddled and took six of the guests for an elephant ride back to their ship. Finding the ship stranded on a sandbar, they used the elephant to launch it back into the water. The ship landed in Singapore on September 9, just over six months after it left the same city to go to Siam. Elder Luddington preached regularly for the next two months to the Europeans and half-castes and once again called on Governor Buttersworth. Notably, he didn’t mention being persecuted by the other Christian missionaries here as he did in almost every other place he preached.

By the second week of October, he chanced to meet with Elder William Willes on his way home from Burma. Elder Willes, the second LDS missionary to India, had arrived in Calcutta on Christmas Day 1851 and had served faithfully in India and Burma for the last three years. Of the meeting, Elder Luddington wrote: “Brother Willes spent four days with me, which was like balm to a wounded spirit, or water to a thirsty man. When I was hungry, he took me to the bazaar, and bought a loaf of bread and a bowl of soup with a few vegetables and China fixings. . . . Our parting was like extracting teeth. May the Lord God of Israel bless our worthy brother Willes, and gave him a speedy passage to the bosom of his dear family.”<sup>68</sup> Elder Willes left Singapore on October 14, 1854, on the ship *Gazelle*, bound for Liverpool, England.<sup>69</sup>

After preaching for several more days and after a number of failed attempts to find passage home himself, Elder Luddington secured free passage

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on the brig *Prince Woronzoff*, under the command of Captain Harris, bound for Shanghai.<sup>70</sup> This proved to be a very treacherous journey. In a letter to President Richards from Hong Kong dated December 10, 1854, Elder Luddington related that their ship struck a coral reef or sunken rock several times and began to fill with water at the rate of twenty inches per hour. He worked night and day through sickness and persecution to stay afloat. After thirty-five days out, they were ultimately driven back 760 miles.<sup>71</sup> Their ship finally landed at Hong Kong on December 1. In his letter to President Richards, Elder Luddington summarized his adventures: "This is the third time, in the neighborhood of the continent of Asia, that I have been in perils in sinking vessels on the sea. Have I complained? God forbid, it is all right. I acknowledge the hand of God in all this. Though He slay me, yet will I put my trust in Him."<sup>72</sup>

Elder Luddington tried repeatedly to get passage home, boarding several American ships, but was refused passage. At one point he was offered free passage if he would renounce Mormonism. He replied, "If you will give me your ship loaded with gold and silver enough to sink her [it] would be no affect to me."<sup>73</sup> He finally secured passage on the ship *Steven Baldwin*, but the ship was not leaving until the middle of April. He spent the next four months between Hong Kong and Canton, waiting, praying, attempting to preach, and enduring: "Days seems like weeks and weeks months in Babylon a perfect scenery of confusion."<sup>74</sup> On April 9, Elder Luddington finally boarded the *Steven Baldwin*, bound for San Francisco, and set sail April 17 at noon. His trip home was once again fraught with dangers and difficulty. He experienced a typhoon, a riotous mutiny, a ship fire, a famine, and a physical attack by an evil spirit.<sup>75</sup> After seventy-one days at sea, he arrived in San Francisco on June 27, 1855. He spent several months with the Saints in California before finally arriving home in Utah on October 3, 1855, just a few weeks shy of three years from the day he left. He had traveled over thirty thousand miles, preaching the gospel in India, Burma, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and several other island locations. Elder Luddington gave his mission report at the general conference of the Church

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on October 8, 1855, to which Brigham Young expressed his satisfaction and approbation.<sup>76</sup>

Little else is known of Elam Luddington's life after his return. His descendants have information up to this last mission but nothing beyond that. He is mentioned another half dozen times in different newspaper articles, which indicate he settled in the Sugarhouse area of the Salt Lake Valley. Most of the articles refer to him as an honored guest in gatherings of the Mormon Battalion survivors. He passed away in Salt Lake City March 3, 1893.<sup>77</sup>

Elam Luddington's mission to the Far East in many ways represents his life's ministry. In his *Comprehensive History of the Church*, B. H. Roberts opined that there was "nothing more heroic in our annals than the labors and sufferings of these brethren of the mission to India."<sup>78</sup> When seeking to assess the success of Elder Luddington's mission, the answer could very well differ dramatically based on which criterion is used. As far as the lasting impact he had on the countries and people of India, Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, his mission had very little, if any, lasting impact. He was largely rejected by those to whom he preached, and although he played a role in at least half a dozen expatriate conversions, he recorded no success in convincing the native inhabitants of the truth of the gospel message. However, the impact of his mission on him and on those he would influence for the remainder of his long life was likely profound. He lived for almost forty more years and continued faithful till the end.

R. Lanier Britsch shared the following insight relating to efforts of Joseph Smith, as well as Jesus Christ, that some may deem as failures, at least in the short run: "Time has shown the apparent temporary failure of Joseph Smith to be but the prelude to the glorious growth of the Lord's work. And the Savior's apparent failure at Calvary was in actuality the greatest conquest in all eternity, the conquest over sin and death."<sup>79</sup> Elder Luddington's labors in Siam were but the prelude to the solid foundation the Church enjoys in Thailand today. It has taken similar, though less dramatic, faith and effort from modern missionaries to build on the example of the first LDS missionary to set foot in the kingdom of Siam. He paved the way with fortitude and faith.

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### NOTES

1. Elam Luddington, "Siam," *Deseret News*, November 16, 1854, 132. Throughout this paper, the original grammar of quotations has been maintained, but spelling has been standardized.
2. Details of Elam Luddington's early life come from Elam Luddington, Autobiographical Statement, folios 1 and 4, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.
3. Luddington, Autobiographical Statement, folio 1.
4. Luddington, Autobiographical Statement, folio 1.
5. Elam Luddington, Short Autobiographical History, Church History Library.
6. Copy of patriarchal blessing, in author's possession.
7. Luddington, Short Autobiographical History.
8. Ancestral records kept by Karen Bush, a descendant of Elam Luddington; copy in author's possession.
9. "Summary," *Times and Seasons*, March 1, 1841, 339.
10. Harrison Sager, "News from the South—Disturbances in LaFayette City," *Times and Seasons*, June 15, 1841, 447.
11. For more detail, see Sager, "News from the South," 447.
12. William Hyde, Diary, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.
13. Hyde, Diary.
14. Luddington, Short Autobiographical History.
15. Ancestral records kept by Karen Bush.
16. Hosea Stout, Diary, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library.
17. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1948–57), 3:110–11.
18. Ancestral records kept by Karen Bush.
19. "Valley Journal," *Deseret News*, January 1851, 197.
20. Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1914), 46.
21. R. Lanier Britsch, "The East India Mission of 1851–56: Crossing the Boundaries of Culture, Religion, and Law," *Journal of Mormon History* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 158.



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22. Elam Luddington, Mission Report Siam Mission, letter sent to the *Deseret News*, Church History Library.
23. Wilford Woodruff, "Remarks," *Deseret News*, October 7, 1857, 246.
24. Luddington, Autobiographical Statement, folio 4.
25. R. Lanier Britsch, *From the East: The History of the Latter-day Saints in Asia* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 14–15.
26. Chauncey W. West, "The Indian Mission," *Deseret News*, August 29, 1855, 198.
27. Britsch, *From the East*, 16–17.
28. Britsch, *From the East*, 17. Horner, a former passenger on the ship *Brooklyn* and a faithful Saint and prominent businessman in northern California, noted that by 1854, "Our personal property consisted of steamer *Union* costing eighteen thousand dollars, a flouring mill, costing eighty-five thousand dollars, a stage line, warehouses, farm houses, stables, out-houses, thirty miles of fencing, costing nine hundred dollars per mile, farming tools, and livestock of good quality, and sufficient in number to enable us to plant and harvest our large crops in good season." This provides a glimpse of the amount of wealth he had accumulated by the time he provided means for Luddington and his companions, although he never mentioned it in his life story. See [http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/John\\_Horner.html](http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/John_Horner.html).
29. West, "Indian Mission," 198.
30. Britsch, *From the East*, 17.
31. Luddington, Mission Report.
32. Britsch, "East India Mission of 1851–56," 151–76.
33. Britsch, *From the East*, 18.
34. West, "Indian Mission," 198.
35. R. Lanier Britsch, "The Latter-day Saint Mission to India: 1851–1856," *BYU Studies* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1972): 6.
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37. West, "Indian Mission," 198.
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39. Richard Ballantyne, "Extracts," *Deseret News*, March 2, 1854, 239.
40. Ballantyne, "Extracts," 239.

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41. Luddington, Mission Report.
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43. R. Lanier Britsch, "The Early Missions to Burma and Siam," *New Era*, March 1970, 38.
44. "Editorial," *Millennial Star*, November 1853, 780.
45. Elam Luddington, "The Burma Mission," *Millennial Star*, January 1, 1854, 190.
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47. Luddington, "Burma Mission," 191.
48. Elam Luddington to Jedediah M. Grant, September 10, 1853, Church History Library.
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50. Luddington, Mission Report.
51. Elam Luddington, "The Siam Mission," *Millennial Star*, May 1, 1854, 541.
52. Luddington, "Siam Mission," 540.
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54. Luddington, "Siam Mission," 540.
55. Luddington, "Siam Mission," 540.
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58. Britsch, "East India Mission of 1851–56," 158.
59. Luddington, "Siam," 132.
60. Luddington, "Siam Mission," 540.
61. Luddington, "Siam Mission," 541.
62. Luddington, Mission Report.
63. Luddington, Mission Report.
64. Elam Luddington, "India-China," *Deseret News*, June 20, 1855, 120; see also Matthew 10:14. Elder James E. Talmage further notes that this ordinance should be done "only under unusual circumstances as the spirit directs." Quoted in *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 345.
65. Luddington, Mission Report.

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66. Luddington, Mission Report.
67. Luddington, Mission Report.
68. Luddington, "India-China," 120.
69. Luddington, "India-China," 120.
70. Luddington, Mission Report.
71. Luddington, "India-China," 120.
72. Luddington, "India-China," 120. In his statement, Luddington quotes from Job 13:15. His experience at sea appears to be comparable to Paul's experience (see 2 Corinthians 11:25).
73. Luddington, Mission Report.
74. Luddington, Mission Report.
75. Luddington, Mission Report.
76. "Minutes of General Conference," *Deseret News*, October 10, 1855, 244.
77. Ancestral records kept by Karen Bush.
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79. R. Lanier Britsch, "The Nobility of Failure," devotional address delivered at Brigham Young University, July 29, 1999.



*Louisa Barnes Pratt, who exemplifies the designation missionary wife.*

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