

It hurts to a point when you got to put up with that; and it hurts even more when you try to talk to these kids, and say, “Why?” You can’t get an answer. A lot of it is coming from home—daddy and mommy. Just like I told you before, the silent majority in this town needs to get louder. The ones who don’t have this animosity need to stand up to the others and just tell them to shut up and live your life—get over it.

So again, it’s not as much anti-Mormon—it’s just the crowd. They just don’t like the change of life. If we could just flip that around.

Q. Well, if it worked with your dad . . .

A. [Laughs] Yeah, he was a lost cause. I never figured he was gonna change. He’d come out of it though.

Paul J. McKoon

Nauvoo, Illinois

Birthday: June 28, 1954

Interview on November 29, 2001, in his home by Andrew Wahlstrom

Debbie Ludwig also present

Q. [Andrew Wahlstrom] When were you born, Paul?

A. [Paul McKoon] June 28. 1954.

Q. How long have you lived here?

A. I have lived in this house for ten years. I have lived in the area all my Life, within a twelve-mile radius.

Q. Where did your ancestors come from?

A. James Gifford came from Pennsylvania. He was a riverboat captain; he worked on steamboats. In his later years he bought what was called Mormon Springs, which is on the river halfway between Nauvoo and Fort Madison. It was an exceptionally good spring, so that was a good stop for people. He had an orchard there. He lived to be about ninety years old.

Many people interviewed him in his later years because he knew Brigham Young and Joseph Smith and had a

few things to say about them on a firsthand basis. It was known that he felt that Joseph Smith was a friendly person and he got along with him, but he didn't care much for Brigham Young, saying that he was a smart aleck.

Joseph and Emma raised a girl named Savila Durfee. Her parents died in Palmyra. She came to Nauvoo with them, and after Joseph was killed. James Gilford married Savila Durfee. Their first three kids died at infancy and are buried with Joseph and Emma in their private lot, the family cemetery. Then they had several kids. One of them was named Lucy, and she had several children. One of her sons, Roy, was my grandfather. That is one tie to the area on my mother's side.

My grandfather on my dad's side came to this area when they built the highway. It went from being a dirt road to a hard road, basically. He was a carpenter, and he was on the crew that built concrete blocks for the bridges. He also farmed, and down on the flats on Main Street (where there is a monument for Hosca Stout) he owned that square city block. Before that, where the visitors' center is, he rented that property, and there used to be a yellow house there. Before they had the yellow house, they lived in the Red Brick Store. That is when my dad was a kid.

In the early fifties the area was a vineyard. At that time most of the flats down there was produce: grapes, strawberries, raspberries. In most households then, the women didn't work but enjoyed the extra income from harvesting the produce on the flats. At one time my grandfather had twenty acres of grapes. He bought the property where the Hosea Stout monument is and put his in-laws in that house. When his father-in-law died, he moved in with the rest of the family.

My father was a farmer. He farmed on a part-time basis and was a carpenter also. He was city marshal for a while. For several years my ties have all been to Nauvoo.

The Grape Festival Pageant started in 1935. It's done every fall. When the pageant started, the major promoter was Lowell Horton, who was the mayor at the time. He must have been a very charismatic individual. He got a lot done. He arranged the donation of the land for the state park here. It must have been the hundredth anniversary of the Mormon trek to Utah, and he organized a Mormon caravan to simulate that.

I enjoy family history. I am kind of the family pack rat. Nobody throws anything away without seeing if I want it first.

Back when I was a kid in Nauvoo, there was a movie theater in town. It had a variety store that had men's clothes. There were two or three grocery stores and a caramel corn shop up on Main Street. There was a shoe repair shop down on the flats. We knew everyone in town, and they would always call us to fix little things. I really enjoyed how things were in this town when I was growing up here.

Q. Is that why you remained here?

A. I loved the way I grew up and enjoy a very close circle of friends.

Q. What occupations have you pursued?

A. I have been a carpenter with my family. I work at the lumberyard in Fort Madison. I have farmed as a weekend hobby, on a part-time basis.

Q. Have you held any civic positions in Hancock County?

A. At church I have been on the council repeatedly. I have been on the parochial school board. I have been involved with the FAA alumni. There used to be a little community activity called Sonora Homcomers, and I was an officer in that. I am the trustee at the fire department, and I have been a Cub Scout leader.

Q- From your knowledge of the history of the area, what groups or individuals stand out as making a significant contribution to the betterment of Nauvoo?

A. I've mentioned Lowell Horton, the mayor from the thirties. All the churches have been involved in our community. The city government has done a lot for the community, and the city fire department is very popular in the community. It is a group that is very well received by all religious groups and political parties. Everyone comes out and supports the department fundraisers and activities.

Every other year on Palm Sunday we have a Passion play program that has really helped our community spiritually. All religions are involved in it; it is a very positive and meaningful program. That has been going on since 1978.

Obviously for physical growth the Mormon Church has been the biggest factor with that—the purchasing they have done since the early sixties. Some things have diminished, and we are becoming more of a bedroom community. I would be more comfortable if there were more industry here.

Q. What is your understanding of what led to the Mormon exodus from Nauvoo in 1846? What conflicts were involved?

A. The Mormons came in, and they were conceived to be a group with extraordinary power. They had a charter that was unique in this state. They were given a right to have a militia, which I believe was the largest militia in the state. There was a lot of apprehension around the community because they were different, which led to suspicion.

Many came to the Mormon Church that I am sure were not reputable characters, who the Church would choose to invite in with open arms. From what I have gotten from reading different books around, there were problems with stealing around the outlying communities. If the thief claimed to be a Mormon, then he or she would be protected. So there were a lot of people with shady characters around that would take advantage of that fact. They would take whatever they wanted, and if they could get back inside the boundaries of the town, basically they were safe.

Since 1962 my folks have lived just a mile from here at the corner of Winchester and Parley. That was adjacent to a farm owned by the Haas family. Since I was a kid of about eight years old, I was over at that farm a lot. We were very close to that family.

There were two brothers. One had a daughter; however, his wife died in childbirth. There were also two sisters, making four people involved of the same generation as my grandfather. The one young daughter was the same age of my father. So this is a different point of view. Their father, William Haas, had bought that farm in 1895. This was a very close, conservative family, and they had heard stories about the Mormons that they have passed on.

Some other people out in the country that I know of have basically gotten into a shooting conflict with some

Mormons. In fact, one of the Mormons died. This is a little bit of a family folklore from these people closer to Quincy. There was friction all the way around on that. I believe that they came in with a very idealistic attitude, and they had a very good work ethic for the most part. But the communal living, in effect, was foreign to what most of them out here were comfortable with, which created suspicion to fuel the fire, and everything just kept snowballing.

There were also the different newspaper editors who had fairly inflammatory articles about the Mormon Church. For editors, Mormonism was the big topic. Mark Twain talked about Mormons. They were either pro-Mormon or they were anti-Mormon. Some of them had said some very harsh words. Whether or not they were founded remains to be seen.

They added a lot of fuel to the fire when they traced an assassination attempt made on the Missouri's governor back to Porter [Rockwell], who was traced to be the right-hand man of Joseph Smith. So, by innuendo, they alluded that Joseph Smith had tried to assassinate the governor of Missouri.

These things were in print, and of course reasonable people should be able to get along. This is an overgeneralization. but I've noticed that people now have more blended personalities. It seems like if you go back two or three generations, the people you talk to had more distinct characteristics. They were more black and white, and as we become more civilized, our individual characteristics become muted shades of gray. We work out differences more today; in that era, the tension grew to the point where there was armed conflict.

When some of the members of the Mormon Church put out a newspaper that was then destroyed after one article because there were some things in that first edition that were not complimentary towards the leadership of the Church, then supposedly the leadership of the Church authorized destroying that paper. That was one of the things Joseph was charged for when he was taken to Carthage.

So you had members in the Church itself that were disenchanted, and there was friction within, and the outlying community picked up on that. It had to be a simmering cauldron. It's hard to imagine or visualize what the whole tension was like in this area at the time. We really don't have that many facts to go by. What you generally see as facts is a slander of bias, depending on who's writing it and what their interpretation was. It would have been a very interesting time.

Q. What do you know about polygamy practiced in Nauvoo?

A. Joseph had a revelation that allowed for the installation of plural wives. I've read that in some cases members left the Church because of the revelation. Emma herself did not agree with the concept. There were some husbands and wives where the wife would have to tearfully depart from her husband because she was in an arrangement with Joseph. It's hard for us to understand the kind of power he must have held over the members of his Church.

That was one of the stories that the *Expositor* put out, dealing with the possible fact that the members of the Church were influencing young female converts in a way that was not appropriate. They were using their influence of being members of the Church and determining plural marriages and they [*Expositor* editors] didn't agree with the pressure being brought upon some of these young female converts coming into the Church. They were raising questions on that. Those are some of the stories that I have heard.

Q. What groups other than the Mormons left a legacy in Nauvoo?

A. German immigrants are probably one of the most contributing factors for our lifestyle today. They came about

the same time as the Icarians. They started most of the wineries you see, and literally there were thousands of barrels of wine produced here.

The Icarians were the biggest group that came in, and they occupied a lot of the buildings. The temple wasn't completely destroyed when the Icarians came, and they tried to salvage the temple, but then a windstorm knocked the temple down, and at that point it wasn't worth saving anymore. So they took the temple stone and built a large communal hall, which was here until around J 965. The Mormons bought the temple square from the Catholics at that time. They used it as a tourist information center for many years and they razed it, but that was built by the Icarians from the temple stone.

Some of the houses and buildings here still have influence from the Icarians. The Icarians came in a big group, and while they were here, other immigrants that also heard about this ghost town and buildings sitting empty [came too]. Many came to it as a vacuum and occupied the empty houses and area. The biggest group that came as individuals were Germans. They're the ones that started the vineyard and breweries.

Q. Tell me more about James Gifford.

A. James Sweet Gifford, born in 1828, lived in Pennsylvania, but, being attracted by the opportunities of the new frontier, made the move to Nauvoo in 1847, about a year after the Mormons departed on their trek west.

Soon after his arrival he was engaged as an engineer on the *Iowa Twins*, the ferry connecting Nauvoo with Montrose on the Iowa side of the river. In the winter he rode pony express between Oquawka and Warsaw and later drove on a stage line serving many towns, including Nauvoo, Warsaw, and Quincy. He served as engineer or commanded many steamboats, including the *General Wade*, *Molly Mohlev*, and the *Mo la Belle*.

James met Savila Durfee in Nauvoo. Savila was born July 28, 1828, at Palmyra, New York. She was orphaned in Palmyra and had been taken into the Joseph Smith Jr. household and raised as a foster daughter. She was with the Smith family during Joseph's travels as he attempted to establish the Mormon Church. Savila was with the Smith family during the terrible days surrounding the martyrdom of Joseph and his brother Hyrum, and lived with the widowed Emma in the Mansion House.

Savila remained with Emma and her natural children while the Mormons went west and continued to operate the Mansion House as a boarding house, which catered to many travelers. It was in the parlor with Emma Smith in attendance that James and Savila were united in marriage. They remained in the Mansion House, and during their years in Nauvoo ten children were born to them. The first surviving daughter grew to reach maturity in the Mansion House. Four of James and Savila's children, including their only two boys, died as infants or before age five and were buried near the graves of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. As late as the 1950s their stone markers were still in place but were removed during renovation of the Smith tombs in later years. James Gilford was never a member of the Church.

The grandfather of Lillian Snyder, another local here, grew up in Nauvoo. When he was a boy, he went swimming down there close to the Mansion House. Emma would always give the boys milk and cookies. Her grandfather knew Emma as a very nice lady.

Q. Tell me about Nauvoo's bleu cheese industry.

A. My dad was the first nonfamily employee that the cheese factory had. My grandfather was helping with the hard road. Blasting on the roads, he broke his arm and was out of work for a while. My dad quit school and drove a

truck for the cheese factory.

Q. What brought about the decline of the wine industry?

A. Most of the labor required couldn't be done by machinery; it had to be done by hand, and after a while labor just wasn't available. The vineyards are old vineyards that require a lot of attention. It is a lot more profitable to do something else, like raising cows. In farming you adapt to something that is going to be the most profitable to you.

Q. What are people's thoughts and feelings about the Mormon Church restoring the homes on the flats and the tourism that it brings?

A. In general, many people enjoyed the money. It's the reason my grandfather sold his square block down there. The Mormon Church came along and told him that they would like to buy his property, but they didn't want it now, and he could stay there for his lifetime, rent free. He sold it to them and bought a house uptown. Probably the most common train of thought amongst the people who have been here for a while was that they were comfortable with the flats being developed because to them that was a separate entity.

The tourism is good for the economy to a degree. The traffic is a bit of a problem. Many of our friends are farmers, and they are frustrated with the traffic caused by tourists. Change is inevitable, and I had strong feelings for the academy. I was an altar boy and served mass there for the sisters. When my dad was a kid, he was also an altar boy. There was an old sister at the academy, Sister Innocence, that my dad had when he was a kid, and I came a lot and was a pet of hers too. She had my father and uncles build a shrine that she took care of. I did some garden work for her and helped her maintain that shrine.

I had horses and would always go up to the academy and see if any of the academy students wanted to pet my horse or go for a ride. If you took a horse up there, all these academy girls would come running out wanting a ride. We had a ball, [laughs]

Q. Have you been to any of the tours offered here?

A. Yes, we have been to the Browning home and the tin shop—two or three of them. In the early stages of the restoration, when it was smaller, they did their own maintenance and construction, and I was involved with some of the early restoration. I mentioned working at the lumberyard in Fort Madison when they tore off the additions and redid the Sarah Granger Kimball home.

Q. What have you thought about the tours given?

A. Well, I am interested in guns, and that is why I visited the Browning home. The tin shop was very interesting too. I'm interested in how things were made, a lot of the crafts like dipping candles and the lifestyle of that era.

Q. It makes me appreciate what I have today.

A. We didn't have any running water until we moved into town. We had electricity, and we always had an outhouse because there was no indoor plumbing.

Q. What was your reaction when you heard they were going to rebuild the Nauvoo Temple?

A. I don't like change, but I can accept it. That represented a major change. In my personal preference I would like to turn the clock back to 1965 when we had the little shops here, before people started to drive to Burlington and Fort Madison and the shops folded up because they were not being supported. I can see Nauvoo getting a traffic light soon.

I understand what the temple means to the Mormons symbolically. I'd rather see the sisters in the St. Mary's Academy and see the residential high school for girls there, the way it use to be. The Academy is an old building, but originally it was state of the art. It is a waste of energy, and the roof gives you problems year-round. I imagine they will tear down the south side fairly soon and may renovate the rest of it. The auditorium is in good condition.

Q. When the temple is finished, how will it affect Nauvoo?

A. Tourism will go up to a degree. I'm sure they will be able to adjust to the influx in people coming in and out. Nauvoo will grow—how much I don't know. Right now in the tri-state area, industry is really hurting. Factories have closed in Fort Madison and Keokuk. So I don't see young families coming into Nauvoo who need a payroll.

Q. What would you like to see happen in Nauvoo's future?

A. I would like to see less attention paid to tourism and more put into light industry. I would like to see the cheese factory expand. I think Nauvoo would be healthier if we had more of a broad-base community and did not rely so heavily on tourism.

Q. [Debbie Ludwig] What is the population here?

A. It has been in the range from 950 to 1,200 for the past forty years. When Niota had the floods back in '93, there were probably ten families that came to the area. It's been fairly stable.

Q. Is there anything else you would like to say?

A. No. If you think of anything else you would like to ask, just give me a call.

James W. Moffitt

Nauvoo, Illinois

Birthday unknown (1930?)

Interview in October 2001 in the

Community of Christ parking lot by Jayson Edwards

Jordan Whiting also present

A. [James Moffitt] I like the Midwest. I've lived, throughout the years, just about all over the country. In fact, I lived in Salt Lake City for a while. And I came back to Nauvoo every time.

Q. [Jayson Edwards] What keeps bringing you back?

A. Oh, I suppose family, friends—I just like the area. Summers are heck, and the winters are hell, [chuckles] There's good people back here.

Q. Where were you originally born?

A. Here in Nauvoo. Just south of town out in the country a little ways.

Q. How long has your family been here?

A. Forever. Actually they predate the Mormons. The Moffitts came from Ireland in 1824 and homesteaded south of town, and the place still stands. It's been in the Moffitt ownership ever since. I'm the fourth generation to own it, and I've sold it to a nephew who lives out there now.

Q. Do they have a lot of farmland out there?