

Epilogue: On the Mormon Underground

The Edmunds Act of 1882 unleashed posses of federal marshals on Utah Territory. These men were armed with subpoenas for both husbands and wives and with full cooperation from federal territorial law, which chose to prosecute as practicing “unlawful cohabitation” any individual whose marital behavior was suspect, whether they could prove that a marriage had been performed or not.¹ The persecutions removed husbands and fathers from their families, which in an agrarian society invariably meant severe economic hardship for those women and children. The children largely grew up without their fathers’ presence and with anxiety-ridden working mothers. Many families relocated to Mexico or Canada or to other sites within Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and Idaho.

Charles Ora Card’s marriages, his Church, and his community leadership positions made him a marked man. On June 28, 1885, Charles and Zina fled from their home in the middle of the night, traveling several miles to find safety. Several times they hid in a “secret room in the temple.”² They were fortunate to be together. Although no daily record exists to clarify who was hiding exactly where or when, Charles and Zina were both targets. Zina reported that “Marshall Exum [who had early captured Card only to have him escape] was making threats to everyone, and says if it takes 40 years he will get you.”³ Whenever it seemed that Zina, too, might be called to testify, she disappeared into the underground, sometimes with Charles and their son, Joseph Young Card, and sometimes alone. Lavinia Rigby went to Idaho to be with her family, and Sarah Jane Painter remained in Logan.

Leaving Utah seemed to be Card’s best option. At first it was decided that Charles and Lavinia would go together into Mexico. Moses Thatcher and Erastus Snow were headed to Mexico and Card

was persuaded to go with them. However, early in September 1886 Card met with the President of the Church, John Taylor. Knowing it would be a long time before Card could appear again publically in Utah, Card asked Taylor for permission to leave. His wagon was already packed. He would not return to Logan, except to visit, until 1903. The letters that follow reflect the communication between Card and President Taylor; Card would be going to explore the northern territories for settlement.



Logan Temple, 2002
Courtesy: Donald G. Godfrey

¹ For the effects of antipolygamy prosecution, see Charles Ora Card’s Letters to Zina Card, n.d., LDS Church Archives, MS 4780, Box 11, fd. 6. Also, Charles Ora Card Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

² D. Godfrey 1997, 118–21.

³ Zina Young Williams Card, Letter to Charles Ora Card, CA, 1886–1887, Box 1 Fd. 11. Zina Card Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

6. O. Card
Logan
Aug 19/86

Logan Aug 15 1886

Pres. John Taylor
Salt Lake City

Dear Brother

Much desiring your advice in relation to myself and others I pen you on this occasion. It appears I have become a very desirable object by Federal officials and spleen, so much so that on the 26th of last month I was arrested by Sebastian E. W. Exum and Ben. Gann, the latter a gambling and lecherous apostate who proved to be my Judas. After being a prisoner 3 ³/₄ hours I escaped. I had avoided them for about 8 months. I have traveled and held meetings every sabbath that health and weather would permit but gave out but few appointments except privately. Now they watch me so closely I have retired for the present to the mountains where I am writing this.

Transcription appears on page 570.

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They have their spotters and detectives at work watching my houses as well as streets and roads. As I was arrested on a commissioners warrant I have thought it wise to keep my wives away from home to avoid their getting an indictment against me and have been so advised by attorneys. As I am watched very closely and cannot appear safely before the public, have you any other ^{field} for me? I desire to not desert my field here, or to leave it in any capacity without your approval.

However, it has been suggested by several of my brethren to go south into the new settlements of ^{our} Mexico. If I go there I could take or have follow me a part of my family and start a new home that my time may not be a blank.

I will here state there are several brethren here preparing to go to Mexico and many others that need to go some where or they will in all probability soon be suffering imprisonment. A few are prepared to go on missions, such I have recommended.

Transcription appears on page 570.

as fast as they develop to apostle
F. D. Richards, — I find today that
my second counselor, ^{(from English) necessarily} is absent and Bro.
Purcell cannot in wisdom appear publicly
and in our absence would like to know
whose duty it is to preside. I have learned
that in Salt Lake State it is placed upon
the senior High Councilor present.
In this state from its organization ~~with~~
with Bro. Cassin Thatcher as its president the
Residency of the High Priests quorum
have presided in the absence ^{of the State}
Residency. Now I do not mention this because
we desire something new inaugurated here,
but to be placed on a proper basis.
I have not ~~not~~ been aware that the High
council held any presiding authority further
than other High Priests and there has ~~been~~
a question arisen here as to the succession
of the State authority.

Transcription appears on page 570.

I will here state I learn that eight of the High Council and all of the Presidency of the High Priests Quorum are in a precarious condition owing to their marital condition, ^{or relations} although nearly all are following their daily avocations. If the presidency or presiding authority falls upon the High Council it will soon devolve upon those of the junior members both in years and ordination, however they are good substantial young men. As there has been some controversy over this matter already and so many of the brethren in these positions are liable to be sought after by our enemies, would it not be wise and proper to appoint some suitable person to act that is free from the present darts of the foe. I believe it would avoid a frequent change. Awaiting your suggestions and with wishes of welfare and safety for yourself and those that accompany you I remain your Brother in the Gospel.

W. W. Wood

Transcription appears on page 570.

Card's Move to Canada⁴

August 15, 1886—Dear Brother [Taylor] ... Much desiring your advice in relation to myself and others I pen you on this occasion. It appears I have become a very derable [desirable] by the Federal officials ... so much so that on the 26th of last month I was arrested by debuties E.W. Exum and Ben Garr. The latter a gambling and lecherous apostate who proved to be my Judas. After being a prisoner 3¾ hours I escaped. I had avoided them for about 8 months. Have traveled and held meetings every Sabbath that health and weather would permit, but gave out but few appointments except privately.

Now they watch me so closely I have retired for the present to the mountains where I am writing this. They have their spotters and detectives at work watching my houses as well as streets and roads. As I was arrested on a commissioner's warrant I have thought it wise to keep my wives away from home to avoid their getting an indictment against me and have been so advised by attorneys. As I am watched very closely and cannot appear safely before the public have you any other field for me? I desire tonot desert my field here, or to leave it in any capacity without your approval.

However, it has been suggested by several of my brethren to go south into the new settlements of ours in Mexico. I could take or have follow me a part of my family and start a new home that my time may not be a blank....

I remain your Brother in the Gospel. C.O. Card.

August 19, 1886—Dear Brother: We were greatly pleased to hear of your escape from the hands of your enemies. We heard the horse ran away with you; but this is better than to have your enemies run away with you [a humorous reference to the publicity the escape generated—apparently the horse was a small one and Card looked rather large on it].

You sai that several of the brethren are contemplating moving to form a new settlement or settlements. Some time since we were written to by Elder Lorenzo Snow respecting a country just over the line from Washington Territory, which several of the brethren spoke highly of and which he asked counsel about having settled by our people.... We have had correspondence with other brethren since on the

subject and have thought that that country would furnish a good refuge for many of our people against whom indictments are found or who are sought for by our enemies.

Upon reading your letter we were impressed to say to you, that we thought, if it suited you, this would be a good place for you to take one of your wives to and make a settlement there. Still we would like you to be perfectly free so that you may do that which will be in accordance with your own feelings and as the spirit may move upon you.... [Letter continues in response to Card's question about local Church governance with leadership in hiding].

With kind regards, your Brother, John Taylor

The Transition to a Canadian Colony and Back Home to Logan

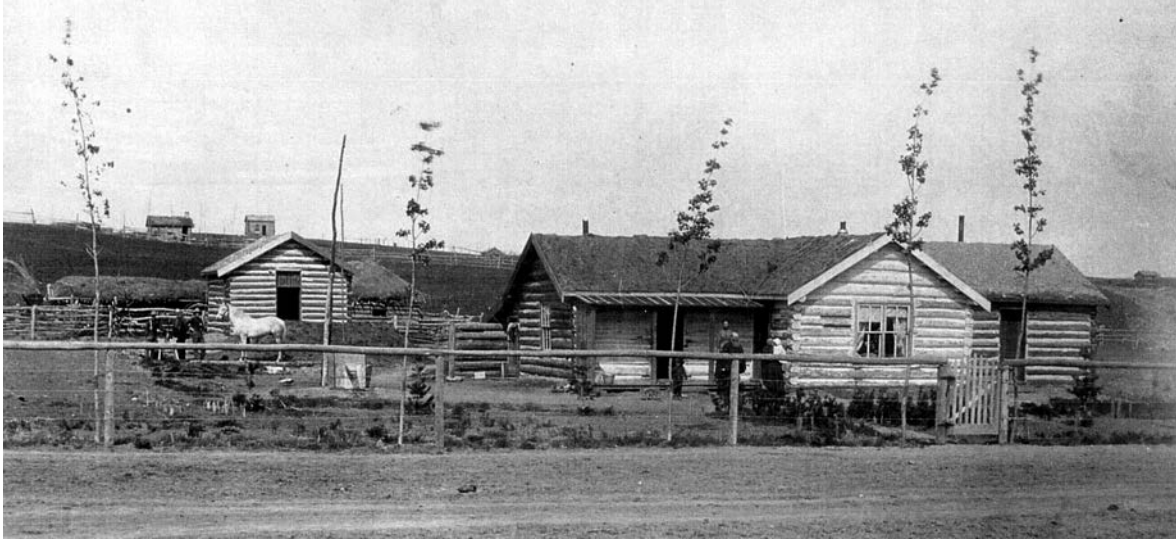
John Taylor surprised Card by asking that he go north, not south, to explore the British Territory. It was summer 1886. Meetings and correspondence would continue through the fall as Card left on his first exploratory trip through Idaho, Washington, British Columbia, and Alberta. In spring 1887, less than a year later, "41 souls, 12 heads of families, with their wives and children," left for north by wagon train. Charles went ahead to find a specific location. Zina and her two children drove their wagon, a herd of cows, and a few horses.

For the next fifteen years Card was on the road. He created settlements in the province of Alberta—Card's Town, today Cardston, being the most notable. He visited his families as best he could. He received the divorce from his first wife, who left Utah. As persecution eased over the years, Card traveled more freely.

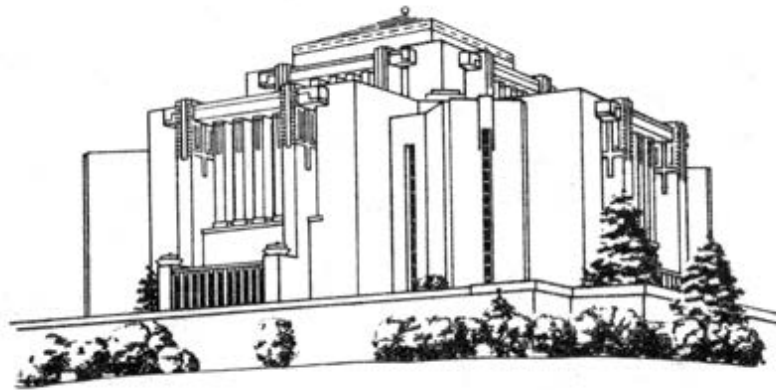
Card's health began to deteriorate in 1902–03. He and Zina returned to their beloved Logan in August 1903. His strength prevented the rigorous activity of the previous Utah and Canada years. He attended the temple occasionally. He was ordained a patriarch and spent much of the remainder of his life giving patriarchal blessings. The pace was slower, and his vitality steadily declined. He made his final Logan home with Lavinia, who cared for him until he passed away on September 9, 1906.

⁴The letters quoted between Charles Ora Card and John Taylor are in the Church Archives, CR1:180, and the Charles

Ora Card Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.



Charles Ora Card's home in Cardston
Courtesy: Marilyn Ockey-Pitcher



Alberta Temple, Cardston. Dedicated 1923, Charles Ora Card's wives Sarah Jane Painter, Zina Presindia Young, and Lavinia Clark Rigby attended the dedication together.
Courtesy: Donald G. Godfrey



Charles Ora Card's funeral flowers
Courtesy: Jo Ann Sloan Rogers