The Frontier Guardian: a study of conflicting loyalties, 1849-1852

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The Frontier Guardian:
A study of conflicting loyalties, 1849 - 1852

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Journalism and Mass Communication

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
1986

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Author's note: Sections from the Frontier Guardian have been copied as they appeared in the paper. Spelling and grammatical errors have been retained in order to preserve the original flavor and integrity of the Guardian.
I. Newsprint From Sea to Shining Sea

"The newspaper became as necessary as the rifle and the axe in the westward movement."¹

During the middle of the 19th century, America was a nation growing toward an identity uniquely its own. It was a nation evolving into regions of economic, political and social diversity. It was a nation of pioneers crossing a continent with belongings strapped to covered wagons knowing only that the land beyond the Alleghenies, the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Rockies, and the Sierras held geographic barriers to challenge, not stop, the flow of migration to the Pacific.

The nation matured as the stream of emigrants traveled overland toward the setting sun. The migrations of men and women began with those hoping to reach Oregon and secure the land from the British in the 1840s. Gold diggers followed later in the decade with a dream of prosperity as men sold farms and left families to trek overland to California. Westward emigrants were motivated by desires for cheap land, homesteading, a quest for gold and relief from religious or social oppression.² These settlers carried with them both their social institutions and their dreams of a brighter future. They also carried
with them the printing press, which gave birth to frontier newspapers that chronicled the westward movement and connected the east and west.

The enterprising spirit that moved the pioneer to cross an unknown and inhospitable continent proved invaluable. There were trails to blaze, roads to build, a country to settle and fortunes to be made in the west and it didn't take long for an enterpreneurial spirit to evolve. Gold was not the only pot at the end of the rainbow; fortunes could be made by providing goods and services to fellow travelers.

During the early years of westward expansion, ignorance and confusion characterized the overall public perception of the west and the possibility of crossing the continent to reach the Pacific. The myth of the "Great American Desert" was a commonly accepted fear that colored the area west of the Mississippi as a desolate wasteland devoid of vegetation and certainly impossible to traverse. There was virtually no geographic information or first-hand experience to indicate otherwise.

The mass movement of settlers across the frontier created an enormous need for information to assist in the geographic quest and to unite the nation politically and economically. The rugged flat-bed press made the overland trip with enterprising men who realized the necessity of providing a voice on the vast frontier. In addition to offering an often meager income to the editor, newspapers in the mid-nineteenth century helped stake out townsites, provided a community
voice and became the self-appointed guardians of social, spiritual and cultural growth.\textsuperscript{5} Newspapers served as the most basic reading matter of frontier Americans, with the possible exception of the Bible.\textsuperscript{6}

Early frontier newspapers contained a potpourri of reading material that resembled more of an on-going encyclopedia for the common man than a news source. During the early years of the westward movement, newspaper coverage was romantic and hyperbolic with little attempt to provide concrete information for use by the settler.\textsuperscript{7} Local news circulated most commonly by word of mouth, although frontier editors often touted the importance of the paper in providing community information.\textsuperscript{8}

The frontier was sparsely populated and very much connected by myths, rumors and stories. These traditions were best passed on orally, from neighbor to neighbor, leaving the frontier editor with tough competition in delivering anything resembling news. By the time the editor got wind of a local event it was probably history. This, however, was a minor impediment to an editor. Frontier editors generally considered it their duty to ramble a bit about items of local interest. These comments often appeared in columns which read more like a personal letter than a news story.

The country editor gathered news from many sources, often relying on voluntary submissions from subscribers to supply news items.\textsuperscript{9} In many cases, these contributors were paid for their efforts with a free
subscription or copies of the paper. 10

Other newspapers, often weeks or months old, brought from the east by west-bound travelers were a staple source of national and international news. Stories were borrowed directly from other papers with the only stipulation being an unwritten code of honor in identifying the source. Often the country editor took an opportunity to comment on a borrowed story offering opinion rather than additional facts.

During the 1840s, the emigrant procuring information from the frontier press was greeted with an avalanche of often conflicting stories regarding westward travel. The accuracy of the information presented in the press was contingent upon the editor's opinion regarding the need for the acquisition of Oregon, upon his tendency to publish reports and letters favoring and/or opposing overland travel and on the editor's access to other newspapers and journals. 11

News items in the frontier press were written in a curious mixture of fact and opinion. Most country weeklies were politically partisan. The state and national accounts appearing in the frontier press were often sprinkled with the observations of the country editor. 12

Many times only the most readily observable and most easily understood happenings were included in the frontier press. Commonly, religious, social and cultural activities appeared in the paper if the editor happened to attend. Agricultural or commercial items often
merited only passing attention as lists of prices, comments on the weather, or the opening of a new business concern. Political news commonly focused on the town meeting.

Often, the first task of an editor in a new frontier community was to set the wheels in motion for the town to thrive to the extent that it could support a newspaper. "Like the musket, the newspaper became a weapon and a tool, to conquer the forest and to build new communities." Editors gave prominence to physical descriptions of the community and to its positive commercial potential. These "boosters" served as both public relations strategists and advertisers seeking to lure settlers from all over the country.

The country editor was, perhaps, the frontier's first propagandist, appealing to the settler's aspirations for prosperity with images of land fertile beyond imagination and available to every man with the stamina to develop it. Boosterism, for all its grand intentions, often focused more on the dreams of the community they hoped to build than on stark reality. Frontier editors sometimes "represented things that had not yet gone through the formality of taking place." Horace Greeley recognized this when he observed that, "it took only three log houses to make a city in Kansas, but they began calling it a city as soon as they had staked out the lots." In a sense, the booster press optimistically embraced the notion that dreams will come true, by mixing visions and prophecies with negotiable reality.
The frontier editor further promoted American democracy and patriotism by impressing upon his readers the importance of settling the continent from coast to coast to secure the nation from foreign powers. This belief in the greatness of America came to be known as "manifest destiny", a term coined by New York City magazine editor John L. O'Sullivan in 1845 when he wrote that "it is our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions." No where was the concept of manifest destiny more enthusiastically endorsed than in the frontier press -- so much so, in fact, that it came to be known as the "great American disease." 

In a country with few inhabitants per square mile, the frontier newspaper was indispensable in announcing the arrival of commercial enterprises by advertising both the goods available in the community and the skills of the areas' new inhabitants. The newspaper provided entertainment and education by filling its pages with anecdotes, stories and literature when nothing resembling news could be found. A worn and tattered newspaper was a common addition to backwoods commonrooms and local gathering places, with someone willing to read aloud offering assistance to those who were illiterate. As remote corners of the continent were settled, hundreds of newspapers were born and hundreds failed when the lofty visions of the frontier newspapermen fell short of reality.
The settlement of the frontier occurred not merely as one westward thrust but rather as a long sweeping process of exploration and discovery, exploitation of the land and resources, and ultimately settlement. The region east of the Mississippi was the first settled and provided the base, the supply stations, and financial support necessary to encourage the push west.

Iowa and Missouri were especially important to the westward movement because key migration trails traversed these two territories. Of the three major jump-off spots for those heading overland to Oregon or California, two were in Missouri (St. Joseph and Independence), and the other was in Iowa. Kanesville, later named Council Bluffs, became one of the busiest outfitting posts on the frontier.

Iowa's newspapers were no different from other territorial publications during the 1840s and 1850s. They sprang up first in key commercial areas. The Mississippi River was an important avenue for early trappers, traders, Indians, and settlers. It was not surprising that the first newspaper was established in the lead-mining area of Dubuque in 1836. The Dubuque Visitor was followed by the establishment of newspapers downriver at Burlington, Davenport, Fort Madison, and Muscatine.

Printing presses pushed inland with early settlers in 1840 to the territorial capital of Iowa City, where at least three were started in the hope that the community would become the permanent center of the
Iowa territory.

After an initial flurry of expansion between 1836 and 1841, the number of newspapers advanced but little in the territory for the next five years. Only one new paper was established west of the Mississippi at Keosauqua, where the Republican began publication in 1843.

Two events helped reactivate the growth of population and the establishment of newspapers in the territory in the late 1840s. First, Iowa became a state in 1846. Second, emigrants were moving across the plains, including the Mormons who, in 1846, began their trek from Nauvoo, Illinois, toward a new home in the west.

Violence and religious oppression had sent the group of Mormons, led by Brigham Young and a vibrant Mormon elder named Orson Hyde, across the Iowa plains. They reached the Missouri River in June and built a temporary settlement to accommodate the Mormon emigrants to follow. The group originally settled on the west bank of the Missouri in "Winter Quarters" but were forced to move back to the Iowa side when conflicts arose with the Omaha Indians.

The Mormons intended to stay along the Missouri only long enough to rest and collect the members still traveling from the east. But the war against Mexico took 500 Mormon recruits, leaving the remaining emigrants waiting for enough stamina and man power to continue the trip.
By 1848, the western Iowa settlement was a reasonably cohesive community with settlers farming the land along the river. The town adopted the name Kanesville in honor of Thomas Kane, a Gentile from Philadelphia who was sympathetic to the Mormons.

Brigham Young and 4000 emigrants left Kanesville in the spring of 1848 to travel west in search of an area where the group would be free to practice its religion. Orson Hyde remained in Kanesville as the spiritual and community leader of the Mormons.

On February 7, 1849, Orson Hyde published the first issue of the Frontier Guardian with these words in the prospectus. "Being located on the extreme frontier, the Guardian will be able to give the earliest reliable information from our settlement in California, and in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake." Clearly, editor Hyde intended for the paper to be the official beacon for the Mormons, but citizen Hyde understood well the power of the printed word in uniting and promoting a community.

The Frontier Guardian was not only a Mormon newspaper, but a booster paper, Whig paper, and the avenue through which Kanesville became one of the primary outfitting towns of the frontier. These competing forces form the basis of this study of a newspaper which would have been noteworthy if only because of its Mormon origins. But the Frontier Guardian and Orson Hyde took on larger significance because of Kanesville's location as the jump-off point for an army of
gold-seekers and those determined to follow the advice of another famous editor who advised "Go west, young man, go west." Hyde and his paper are also noteworthy because Hyde got caught between two of the most compelling forces in the lives of frontier editors. On the one hand, Hyde felt a certain obligation to join the throngs moving west, but the other hand held the influence, and determination necessary to boost the community of Kanesville to greatness. This thesis traces these influences from Hyde's arrival in 1848 until his reluctant departure for Utah in 1852. It is a study of a newspaper, a man, and the many forces brought to life by the westward movement that changed forever an area on the Missouri banks called Kanesville.
Notes to Chapter One


4 Unruh, p. 30.


7 Unruh, p. 57.

8 Russo, p. 2.

9 Russo, p. 15.

10 Russo, p. 15.

11 Unruh, p. 61.

12 Russo, p. 21.


14 Boorstin, p. 124.


16 Boorstin, p. 125.

17 Unruh, p. 92.
18 Boorstin, p. 127.
19 Boorstin, p. 128.
21 Boorstin, p. 128.
22 Unruh, p. 92.
24 Boorstin, p. 126.
25 Clark, p. 366.
26 Clark, p. 366.
27 Parish, p. 33
28 Parish, p. 35
II. The *Frontier Guardian*: Beacon and Booster

"Of all the chroniclers of the Old West, the journalists enjoyed the greatest professional advantages. They had an ever-ready platform from which to deliver what they saw, heard or thought, and an eager audience to absorb their every word."¹

As Orson Hyde waited for the ink to dry on the February 7, 1849 issue of the *Frontier Guardian*, it is likely that he smiled. This was the first issue of the paper that would propel editor Hyde into the limelight as a voice on the frontier.

The four page paper was about 14 and a half inches wide with 6 columns of dense, hand-set type. Held at arm's length the paper appeared solid grey without benefit of even a well-placed headline to break the copy. The banner was an unadorned, sans serif type face which suggested both a no-nonsense editorial style and a limited selection of the lead cast letters used in typesetting.² Kanesville residents and settlers in the outlying Pottawatamie county area paid a two dollar subscription fee for the semi-monthly news sheet, with those unable to pay cash invited to barter corn, wheat, wood or produce.³ Every other Wednesday, the *Frontier Guardian* was printed and distributed to the predominantly Mormon community.

A letter from Orson Hyde to readers of the *Frontier Guardian* expressed the spirit with which Hyde undertook his editorial
responsibilities and the role he felt a newspaper would play in
in the frontier community of Kanesville:

The press is a powerful engine, for good or for evil, and
calculated to make a deep and lasting impression upon the
community where it is. The actions of both old and young, male and
female, to a great extent, are directed and controlled by this
agent that speaks with a thousand tongues. A wise head, a mind
that knows not fear, and that will not be fettered, and a heart
stored with "good will to man" should be the fundamental
qualifications of him who is destined through the press, to give
tone and color to public sentiment. 4

It is doubtful that Hyde realized the truth of his prophecy and
pronouncements when he explained that, "the matter that flows from our
pen will lodge in the columns of our sheet to meet the eyes of
thousands, friend and foe. It will be regarded, and justly too, as a
simile of our own heart." 5 Hyde and the Frontier Guardian were indeed
destined to influence thousands of Mormons seeking God and thousands
of Gentiles seeking fame and fortune. Some were friend, some were
foe, but regardless of allegiance, all had a tool in the Guardian for
providing information or fueling debate. In addition, Hyde intended
to retain a prominent place in the paper for his religion, and
considered the Guardian an important instrument for educating the
isolated youth in the Kanesville area: 6

Being situated upon the extreme borders of civilization, in a
wilderness country, where the means and facilities for improvement
in science and learning are not so available as in many other
sections, it will give us great satisfaction to aid, by all
laudable means in our power, in an enterprise so important as that
of the education of our youth. 7
Religion was a driving force in Hyde's life. It had helped him rise from poverty to a position of influence and power. Born January 8, 1805 in Oxford, Connecticut, he was left an orphan at age eight and sent to live with a farm family. Hyde left the farm at age 18 with his few possessions in a knapsack and walked over 600 miles to Ohio to work in the woolen mills for fifty cents a day hoping to save enough to finance his education.

Hyde was born a Methodist, later became a Campbellite pastor, and finally a Mormon convert baptized by founder Joseph Smith in 1831. His leadership ability, and perhaps early signs of salesmanship, enabled Hyde to shine as a preacher and traveling Mormon missionary.

In the early 1830s, Hyde spent his time traveling on foot throughout Massachusetts, Maine and Rhode Island preaching the Mormon faith and working to win converts. At one point, Hyde was asked to carry instructions to church followers in Missouri. Hyde made the trek on foot, walking forty miles a day and traversing many rivers to reach his destination.

Hyde crossed the Atlantic in 1837 to win converts in England. Several years later, inspired by what he described as a vision of the Lord that came to him one evening "like clouds of light," Hyde traveled to the Holy Land. Ultimately, Hyde returned to Nauvoo, Illinois just in time to join the Mormon journey across Iowa to Winter
Quarters. 11

After moving with the Mormons from Winter Quarters to Kanesville, Hyde built a "commodious" log cabin on Indian Creek. He was respected and admired for his sound leadership and joyous spirit. Hyde wrote poetry, much of which appeared in the Guardian under pseudonyms, he danced at the community's New Year's party, and took a young wife. 12

Hyde was a big man with rugged features. A heavy brow highlighted large, sharp eyes and a wide, straight nose. He wore his salt and pepper grey hair short. A neatly trimmed beard accented his firm, set jawline. Deep laugh lines were etched on his face, reminding those intimidated by his stature that a smile, or at least a knowing grin, lay dormant, waiting for an opportunity to erupt. 13

Hyde's spirit and his acceptance in the community of Kanesville exhibited itself many times. For example, during the 1850 Fourth of July celebration Hyde donned a "Rough and Ready" hat and waved it before the crowd as he prepared to bid farewell prior to leaving on a trip to Salt Lake. The Guardian described Hyde's farewell as, "a short but pathetic address, which drew tears from the eyes of the stoutest heart; the scene is one which the pen cannot describe, it was like parting with a mother, a brother or a sister." 14

Hyde was local color and the Guardian was the palette he used to portray the bountiful, green Missouri River settlement to those with an inclination to settle or outfit in Kanesville. Messages in the
Guardian urged emigrants from the east and from abroad to partake in the agricultural riches.

Among those who knew him best were the Guardian's two other employees. His assistant editor was Daniel Mackintosh, who was hired in November 1849. Mackintosh's skills were tested several times during the life of the Guardian as he assumed sole editorial responsibility when Hyde was absent. Hyde's other employee was John Gooch, the printer and type-setter, who soon earned Hyde's praise. Hyde wrote in June 1850, "Mr. Gooch, whose long, bony fingers can pick up type as fast as a chicken can pick up corn...." Gooch was unusual in that he apparently was not afflicted by the wanderlust which kept so many typesetters and printers on the move in the west. Gooch's stability prompted Hyde to ask, "is it not a miracle that a printer has remained in one county a whole year!" 15

Mackintosh took over editorial responsibility of the Guardian when Hyde was on one of several trips to Salt Lake. Mackintosh was capable, never failing to get the paper out on time, but somewhat reticent to take a firm stand on issues that arose. In fact, Mackintosh apologized for not being as verbally skilled or as qualified to offer an opinion as Hyde. He also apologized for a lack of editorial matter with Hyde out of town, as if the wheels of Kanesville drew to a screeching halt when the colorful editor was gone. 16 Modest or simply overshadowed by Hyde, it is hard
to tell, but Mackintosh was as insecure about his abilities as editor
Hyde was confident.

Hyde was a powerful man in the small community of Kanesville. He
was the Mormon's spiritual and religious leader, one of the original
twelve apostles of the church and the person designated by Brigham
Young to remain in Iowa to guide the remaining emigrants to their
newly founded home in Salt Lake. This mission was Hyde's guiding
force as a loyal member of the church.17

Hyde's span of influence extended to the secular affairs of the
community as well. There was little distinction between the issues of
the church and the political, social and economic issues of
Kanesville. The church and community, in a sense provided the same
sort of refuge for the Mormons. Kanesville was a place where the
church could grow without interference from Gentiles and since Iowa
was only beginning to organize a government, the Mormons were
generally free to plot their own political course.

The Frontier Guardian was a Mormon paper in the sense that the
affairs of the church were positioned prominently in the paper and
were generally tied to other concerns that the paper covered. A
typical issue of the Guardian contained a front page filled with
church matters, discussions of a theological nature, and an epistle
from church leaders in Salt Lake. Generally, the epistle lauded the
progress made in settling Salt Lake and urged the Kanesville group to
follow as quickly as possible.

Orson Hyde was shrewd enough to realize early on that in order to survive, the Guardian had to be considered a financial investment and had to be treated as any other business. Hyde needed subscribers, who existed as an attentive Mormon audience, and he needed advertisers, who were a little tougher to come by in a newly settled community.

Kanesville, a community fortuitously situated on the Missouri River, was the gateway to the route north of the Platte River which would ultimately become the Mormon trail. During the years of massive westward migration, Kanesville's location proved to be essential in both ensuring the survival of the paper and in promoting the growth of the community as one of the primary outfitting towns on the frontier.18

The first year of publication for the Guardian was strictly hand to mouth as Hyde struggled to gain subscribers and entice advertisers. In 1849, the paper was approximately one-eighth advertising with much of it local. Advertising rates were set at a modest $1.00 charge for an ad of sixteen lines or less. Each additional insertion of the ad cost the advertiser fifty cents.19 Marriage announcements were printed for fifty cents. With only one-eighth of the pages devoted to advertising, Hyde could expect to make under $25 per issue from advertising revenue. It seems likely that Gooch, Mackintosh and Hyde
were somewhat less than wealthy. Indeed, retaining and paying a staff of two on a budget based mainly on promises was a tremendous accomplishment. By 1850 the paper had one-fourth of its four pages devoted to advertising. Many of the advertisements were targeted at the emigrant -- the gold miner and the settler, with numerous ads from communities such as St. Joseph and Independence, Missouri, towns competing for the outfitting trade. Ads appeared from as far away as St. Louis.

A walk down the streets of Kanesville took the emigrant past the Kanesville Boot and Shoe Manufactory where flour, wheat, corn, bacon or lard could be exchanged for shoes. Just south of the "sign of the large black boot and shoe" was C. Voorhis and Co. Dry Goods, Grocery and Hardware, which stocked everything from candy to axes. Needham and Ferguson, also a full range mercantile competed with Voorhis for advertising space in the Guardian and for emigrant trade.

Sarpy, Martin and Gingry advertised the "old original Mormon crossing" at Kanesville to be the closest and healthiest route to Salt Lake and California. Their wordy ad stated that it had been "proven without question" that the northern route crossing at Kanesville was the best. Less traveled and free from disease, the advertisers pointed out that the Kanesville route also provided superb ferry service.

J.E. Johnson, owner of the "Emporium of the West" appeared to have
been swept up in the excitement of the gold rush as his ad in the *Guardian* read, "More Gold Discovered! Tremendous Excitement! A New Variety Store." 23

Most of the advertising in the *Frontier Guardian* was designed with the California emigrant in mind. Ads promised, "another chance for the gold hunter", and called themselves, "ensigns of the west", "emporium of the west forever," or other enthusiastic pronouncements of their spectacular advantages. 24

The *Guardian* lauded the Kanesville area as possessing "the richest soil in the state" and claimed that "several good judges, who have lately visited this section of country, have pronounced it the paradise of this state, for fertility and luxuriance". 25 If Kanesville had any disadvantages they were never mentioned in the *Guardian*. Kanesville appeared through its pages as an agrarian and outfitting utopia:

The climate here is very healthy also, as a general thing the atmosphere is clear and cool, and very bracing to the human system; these, with many other advantages too numerous to mention, we think cannot fail to be duly appreciated by any and every person who are on the move, in pursuit of a home in the west. Come and see then, all of you may judge for yourselves, whether we are advancing the truth or not. 26

Journal writing emigrants often did not share the *Guardian*
's rose-colored vision of Kanesville. One writer found the town to be a
...very dirty, unhealthy place, and withal a very dear place to make
an outfit for the plains, not withstanding the assertions of holders
of property and merchants there to the contrary. They assure
emigrants that their wisest plan is to take their money there to
purchase their outfit; but I hope few will believe them, for there
is not much competition they get prices the very reverse of their
consciences.27

Other overland chroniclers described 1849 Kanesville as "a scrubby
town of 80 to 100 log cabins," situated "three miles from the river in
a deep hollow." The town consisted of "one tavern, one church and two
groseries" and a collection of "very small" houses. In 1850, a writer
suggested Kanesville had 350 log houses strung four or five miles along
the bluffs.28

It is not surprising that the Guardian painted such a technicolor
picture of what was probably a black and white town. Editor Hyde was
Kanesville's primary civic, economic, religious and social architect.
Given the amount of nurturing energy Hyde devoted to Kanesville, it is
fair to assume that Hyde viewed the town with little objectivity.

Local news in the Guardian was largely church-related with
information on Kanesville merchants and farmers interspersed.
National news included congressional reports and items clipped from
east coast newspapers that made their way across the prairie with
emigrants. International news was carried with little editorial
comment and seems to have been inserted mainly as filler.

Letters were an important source of information on overland travel.
The Guardian printed many, often conflicting, reports from west bound
travelers. Letters that lauded the advantages of Kanesville as an outfitting town or that pointed out the advantages of the north Platte River route were published with regularity. Hyde generally took this opportunity to reinforce the community's finer qualities.

The pages of the Frontier Guardian were filled with fact, opinion and fancy. Many times one was indistinguishable from the other. The Frontier Guardian was the most accessible source of entertainment for the early Kanesville resident. It seems likely that a young, frontier community, populated primarily by emigrants who fled their homes with only the belongings they could carry in wagons had minimal access to literature and books. The Guardian printed tall tales, poetry and occasionally works by contemporary writers. Many of these stories were both entertaining and moralistic in tone.

Under a column titled "Miscellany", Hyde included a potpourri of entertaining and sometimes educational reading matter. Usually poetry led the column, often written by authors cloaking their identities with pseudonyms such as Amicus or Picciola, or identifying themselves only with initials. Most of it was structured, metered verse and was often topical; painting idyllic pictures of the people or country. There was a certain amount of moralizing and philosophizing among the Guardian poets. And, oddly enough, many anonymous verses were about printing. Orson Hyde was known to be a poet; however, if these verses were the product of his pen, he
preferred that no one know.

Of the short tales that found their way to the "Miscellany" column, romance was a common theme. Interestingly enough, these were almost always written from a man's point of view and very often took a somewhat cynical view of the whole affair. "Fallacies of the Ladies" was written "by a gentleman who unfortunately knows them only too well." This gentleman was apparently none too pleased with the women in this life when he suggested women falsely believe, "that they are our equals. That we can't tell their age, and when they refuse to tell that, we imagine them younger than they really are. That being caressed for half an hour, and then asked for money is agreeable."29

"An amateur" penned a somewhat humorous story about "The First Kiss" and "a bachelor" wrote a story called "Love in a Stage Coach" which described one of the little-known hardships that a frontier Romeo had to overcome:

There is no place like a stage coach for making love. It comes natural! You do it, egad, in a sort of easy, don't-care-for-anything style, that you can't for the life of you assume in any other place. What between sitting on the same seat to talk more conveniently, and putting your arm around her waist to keep her from jolting off, you soon get to be wonderfully cozy, and, ten to one, if you don't catch yourself squeezing her hand, or varying the entertainments in some other way, before you're aware of it.30

In many instances, the stories in this section had historical themes. "Napoleon's Dream", "The Prussian Girl: A Tale of Silesia", and "Joan of Arc" were all rather loose historical looks at characters
far removed from an isolated frontier town.  

Everyday problems and common concerns cropped up from time to time, sometimes appearing as satiric comments. For example, "Shakespeare, Jr." penned a piece call "Hamlet Jr.'s Soliloquy". A sampling from this somewhat less-than-classic verse makes a statement on a rather unappealing habit:

To chew, or not to chew? That's the question; -  
Whether 'tis nobler in the man to suffer  
The filthy spittle of tobacco chewers;  
Or, to take up arms against this foul habit,  
And by exposing, shame them. To chew, to smoke  
Aye more, to snuff. Let us say we'll end  
This filthy practice, and cleanse our stinking breathe...  
To chew, to smoke, to snuff; perchance to spit.  
Aye there's the rub.  
For the gob of spit, what evils come.

These stories helped break the monotony of the lives of the early settlers in Kanesville. The selection of stories was diverse and entertaining and added a dimension of escape to days filled with cultivating fields, building homes, and providing the labor necessary to outfit a wagon train. Although the Frontier Guardian was predominately grey with heavy columns of type, these tales made the pages come alive with ideas, foreign places and people.

Orson Hyde brought his own brand of color to the pages. His sometimes pugnacious style made for lively reading particularly when Hyde himself was challenged. As Hyde's influence increased, so too
did his enemies. Hyde was not one to crawl in the corner and hide from a good fight. In response to challenges of his authority, a brief item in the Guardian explained his feelings on the matter:

We know of some men who seem to think that d__d old Hyde has too much influence and power; and that he carries too high a hand. Now you should not envy the old fellow, for he has labored hard to earn all the influence he has; and what makes it better still is, he never stole, spunged or borrowed a particle of influence from you, so you have suffered no loss."\(^{33}\)

Claims that Hyde was single-handedly usurping the rights of his brethren and ultimately taking over Kanesville became heated when a correspondent of a St. Louis paper stated that Hyde exercised as much authority as any foreign despot. Hyde, he said, "is the fountain of all law, and does things pretty much as he pleases."\(^{34}\)

The Frontier Guardian denied the accusations on Hyde's behalf and in response presented a glowing tribute to the controversial editor:

Why did you not say that Orson Hyde was a slave and servant to all - why did you not say that he labored day and night to support himself that he might not bring a tax upon any one for that purpose - why did you not say that his upright course of life had won the confidence and esteem of his friends, and secured their good will, upon a principle which foreign despots too seldom avail themselves of?\(^{35}\)

It is not clear who was the author of the tribute. It may have been Mackintosh or it may have been Hyde. Hyde often referred to himself in the third person within his editorials. This stylistic approach may have been a means of presenting Hyde's view as having been endorsed by the vast majority. It also may have been the style of the
Publishing a newspaper on the frontier was not a simple undertaking. The scarcity of supplies, ink and paper, and the difficulty in shipping them to the remote countryside, were major impediments to a rural publisher. In addition, the editor faced an on-going problem collecting subscription and advertising fees from the often impoverished settler. Numerous country publishers advertised their willingness to accept payment in produce such as corn, potatoes and flour, or in services.

Hyde stopped just short of coercion in attracting Guardian subscribers. As far as he was concerned, copies of the paper were essential provisions to an overland expedition. Hyde suggested that the contents may be powerful enough to ward off savage Indians, or to lead the reader directly to a rich vein of gold. Those who didn't bother to take the Guardian with them were asking for trouble. Hyde warned, "gold hunters, just think of this idea once, and then leave for those enchanted regions without a regular file of Mormon papers if you dare risk it. We tell you the Mormons found the gold there, and now don't call us superstitious if we ask you to supply yourselves with plenty of our papers as an essential part of your outfit."

Throughout the Frontier Guardian's publication, hardly an issue slipped by without pleas by Hyde to subscribers. Hyde did not necessarily promote the Guardian as much as he promoted the importance
of the printed word in ensuring freedom of speech and freedom from oppression. ³⁸ Hyde promised to provide the reader truth based on a platform of independence. ³⁹

Hyde viewed the Guardian as a vehicle through which to inform the public -- Gentile and Mormon-- of the movements and policies within the church. He suggested that if everyone subscribed, he wouldn't have to answer so many letters. ⁴⁰

When all intellectual, political and spiritual appeals were exhausted, Hyde turned to heartfelt, personal pleas, reminding citizens that his role as a preacher was hardly lucrative, netting him less than forty dollars in donations in four years. Certainly, those who shared the benefit of his editorial and religious toils could find it in their heart and wallet to subscribe to the Guardian so that Hyde might support himself. ⁴¹

Newspaper delivery was an additional nightmare for the frontier publisher. Even if the paper came off the press on time, it didn't make much difference if there was no practical means of ensuring circulation. Through a temporary order issued by the Postmaster General in the 1840s, free delivery through the mail was allowed up to 30 miles from the paper's origin. Later, the Post Office Act of 1851, restricted free delivery to within the county in which the paper was published. This allowed publishers to reach out into rural areas for subscribers, but it also assumed that the mail would actually be
delivered. In the 1840s, mail delivery depended upon the weather, the roads, and the temperament of the carrier and his horse. Many newspapers had agents living in the surrounding area who were responsible for delivering papers and collecting subscriptions. Agents were generally paid with a free subscription to the paper.

In 1850, the Guardian had an agent traveling throughout the southern states, and an agent traveling between Kanesville and St. Joseph. Assorted others were as far east as New York, and one representative distributed the Guardian in southern Texas. The attrition rate for agents was high, as a result it is likely that the Guardian's distribution was somewhat inconsistent.

The Guardian managed to find its way east in the hands of agents. With the growing allure of the westward movement, the paper found itself an outfitting staple among the tide of emigrants heading toward the Pacific. The Guardian was a connection to homes left behind and a guide to the possibilities ahead. The Guardian was a map for those "seeking the elephant."
Notes to Chapter Two


5. Guardian, February 7, 1849.


9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.


15. Guardian, February 6, 1850.


18. Unruh, pp. 68, 72.

20 Guardian, February 6, 1850.
21 Guardian, March 20, 1850.
22 Guardian, March 20, 1850.
23 Guardian, March 20, 1850.
24 Guardian, March 20, 1850.
25 Guardian, October 17, 1851.
26 Guardian, October 17, 1851.
28 Clark, pp. 124-125.
29 Guardian, June 13, 1851.
30 Guardian, February 20, 1850.
31 Guardian, July 25, 1851.
32 Guardian, April 18, 1851.
33 Guardian, January 9, 1850.
34 Guardian, June 12, 1850.
35 Guardian, June 12, 1850.
36 Boorstin, p. 130.
37 Guardian, May 2, 1849.
38 Guardian, January 9, 1850.
39 Guardian, January 8, 1851.
40 Guardian, July 11, 1851.
41 Guardian, January 9, 1852.
43 Guardian, May 1, 1850.
III. The Frontier Guardian Seeks the Elephant

"If 'Uncle Sam' should gain some territory in the Moon, we believe that the Yankees would contrive some plan to emigrate to it, and hold it by actual possession."

Mammoths and mastodons, predecessors of the elephant, flourished along the Platte River Valley during the Ice Age. To the westbound emigrant "the elephant" existed on the plains in the folklore of the Gold Rush era. The diaries of westbound emigrants during this period are filled with references to "seeking the elephant," an imaginary beast of fearsome dimensions. "Seeking the elephant" became a euphemism for the trip to California and symbolized the great American adventure, the unknown challenges awaiting on the plains and in the mountains, and the enormous barriers to be overcome in the quest for California gold.

For those "seeking the elephant" along the trail west, the Frontier Guardian became a trail guide, a catalog, a news and information source. If the elephant was the greatest show in the west, Kanesville was the busiest circus on the Missouri, and the Frontier Guardian was both billboard and barker for the whole three ring affair. Hyde and the Guardian set out to make Kanesville an outfitting town second to none, catering to settlers with families, gold seeking adventurers, and Mormon emigrants.
Hyde filled the pages of the *Guardian* with glowing descriptions of the area and became an undisputed, one-man chamber of commerce through his reports of Kanesville's advantages as an outfitting post. Hyde boasted that the location of Kanesville was 200 miles closer to Fort Laramie than the rival outfitting town of Independence, Missouri.  

The Mormons in Kanesville had God and gold on their side. In 1849, the country was alive with excitement and dreams of boundless prosperity with the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in California. The westward movement was in full swing. Communities strategically located on the main thoroughfares had a seemingly endless source of new income from the pockets of the traveling miners.

Even in the early years of emigration, Hyde understood the business potential presented by "thousands and tens of thousands" of gold seekers requiring provisions to make the overland journey:

> We have no hesitancy in assuring our readers that every article needed in the Gold Mines, from a crowbar to a baconed porker, can all be had here at equally as low rates as can be purchased on the Mississippi.... It is our candid opinion that he can purchase his goods and entire outfit in the little town of Kanesville at a better rate than he can purchase them in St. Louis or in any of the Eastern cities, considering the trouble, expense of transportation and risk.

Ironically enough, the *Guardian* also used its chief competitor for the outfitting trade to its advantage:

> Should it happen that everything that the most fastidious caterer would require, could not be had at this place; why just run down to St. Josephs in Missouri where they have everything.
Kanesville faced lively competition from St. Joseph and Independence, Missouri. The *Saint Joseph Gazette* urged emigrants to beware of the inflated prices for produce in Kanesville. This prompted a swift, sharp editorial reply in the *Frontier Guardian* explaining that the late season of 1850 had slowed the harvest. Those accusing the Mormons of extortion were urged to pack up their flour, corn, oats and bacon, and ship it to Kanesville to reduce the price of produce.

Each emigration season the *Frontier Guardian* urged merchants to advertise and price their wares low enough to encourage commerce:

> The season of emigration will soon open, and outfitting for the mountains and "gold regions" will soon commence. Our businessmen in all parts of the country would do well to advertise their business and prices, and if possible put them so low as to induce new comers to postpone their purchases till they arrive at the Bluffs. A nimble sixpence is better than a slow shilling and we would gladly encourage the home trade, if we can do it without doing injustice to the new comer and emigrant.

By encouraging commerce in Kanesville, the *Guardian* capitalized on the industrious nature of the Mormon settlers. With an ever increasing influx of emigrants, the Kanesville natives intended to present a shining example of the merits of hard work. The *Guardian* at times assumed the role of social conscience, warning any who were so inclined that "loungers" were frowned upon:

> May the *Guardian* ever continue to encourage industry and economy - to suppress vice and promote virtue - to exalt the honest and industrious, - and to scourge and abase the vicious, the idle, and such as are too short of good and redeeming qualities!
Hyde and the Guardian paid close attention to the types of people going west. These emigrations had, in fact, changed complexion from the early 1840s, when most were families headed to Oregon to settle and farm new lands. Those "seeking the elephant" in California were a different lot, primarily bachelors and absentee husbands.

The forty-niners comprised a large percentage of all overlanders during the 1840s through the 1850s. Most of these men came with no intention of settling the land, rather they came to plunder and return to homes and families left behind, having lined their pockets with gold.

Estimates on the number of overland emigrants suggests that nearly twelve thousand emigrants bound for Oregon crossed the plains between 1840 and 1848. Another twenty thousand made the trip by the end of 1852. Less than three thousand emigrants made the rugged trip to California between 1840 and 1848, but with the discovery of gold, close to one hundred and twenty thousand prospectors headed toward the Pacific between 1849 and 1852. Mormon overlanders heading for Utah numbered close to twenty thousand by 1852.

Although there were competing routes west, Hyde and the Guardian did their best to promote the route that would benefit them most -- the Platte River trail. Thousands of Mormons and Gentiles followed this shallow, broad river which runs over 1,000 miles. The banks on either side became the primary trail for emigrants enroute to Oregon,
Mormons bound for Utah stuck primarily to the north side. This allowed them sufficient elbow room to avoid mingling with Gentile gold seekers. This route also logically began in Kanesville.

The *Guardian* promoted the north Platte route enthusiastically with numerous published accounts from emigrants testifying that the north side was thick with vegetation, and safer passage through Indian territory. The paper further argued that the north route shaved several hundred miles off the trip and was free of cholera and sickness. "Pass along this extreme northern route, and but few graves will be found along the line, but the graves on the more southern routes are not few nor far between."

The spring emigration season began as soon as the grass on the plains was sufficient to sustain cattle and teams. Emigrants were encouraged to leave from Kanesville as early as possible in the spring. For the most part, the Platte River route was dry, level and barren of heavy timber that would impede wagon passage. Under optimum conditions, with the weather and the traveler's stamina cooperating, a covered wagon might make as much as forty miles per day. The average, however, was fifteen or twenty hard-earned miles, which meant the emigrant could expect a four and a half month trip to California.

In order to outfit and prepare for the journey, travelers began arriving in Kanesville in March. An early start allowed overlanders
to beat the crowds that would be competing for the scanty grass and scarce water on the plains. Those slow to pull an outfit together allowed the crest of the emigration wave to roll ahead. People milling about in outfitting communities laid bets on the magic departure date. When the word got out, through rumor or through the newspaper, everyone tried to take off at once, causing traffic jams at the ferries and on the trail.

The Frontier Guardian offered outfitting information to the emigrant in the form of advice on provisions and livestock. Emigrants were advised to take two good oxen and one to three yoke of cows per wagon. Oxen could best withstand the difficult trail conditions and were strong enough to pull prairie schooners. The average wagon could accommodate 1850 lbs. of freight and three people. Provisions of 125 lbs. of "bread stuffs" per person and 25 lbs. of bacon and sugar were recommended.

Overlanders requiring more thorough information could pick up Clayton's "Emigrant's Guide to Salt Lake and California" at the Guardian office:

This guide takes the emigrant by the hand at Kanesville, Iowa, and safely conducts him over the Missouri, River, and gently leads him out westward on the North Side of the Platte river.

Organization was key for the west bound emigrant. Most groups organized under company banners in Kanesville with charters establishing quasi-military leadership. Rules were established before
the wagons hit the trails, prohibiting such things as gambling, drinking, and trade with Indians. With few exceptions, the grim trail conditions put severe strain on even the most well-planned organizations. Many wagon trains disbanded when infighting broke out. 23

The Guardian provided regular coverage of the various groups and companies which were organizing in Kanesville. Readers learned, for example, that the Des Moines Company No. 1, was organized in military fashion, electing a captain, a lieutenant, and a sargent of the guard to see to emigrant safety. The wagon master was in charge of outfitting this, the first ox train to leave Kanesville in 1850. This group of fifty-six men agreed to act on "strictly temperance principles." 24

Hyde reported that the Northern Illinois Union Company, had strict rules prohibiting the "use of ardent spirits" except as medicine, and gambling. The first day of the week would be observed as a day of rest, which, Hyde added, was right. "Prosperity," Hyde stated, "is bound to perch on the banner of those who carry correct morals with them to the land of gold!" 25

The Pioneer Company was California bound, led by a group of officers that Hyde felt exhibited "traits worthy of praise" during their stay in Kanesville. He wished them well and hoped they would always "retain the character of gentlemen." 26
Hyde was doubtless also pleased to report that the Waukegon Banner Company's constitution prohibited gambling, the use of profane language, and "all grossly immoral practices." The members also agreed to be respectful and wholesome.27

The Grand Mustang Company No.1 was merely "full of hope and zeal to get in possession of a liberal quantity of the shining treasure" awaiting in the mines of California. Whether they intended to behave themselves enroute was not a matter worth printing in the Guardian.28

These charters and constitutions were drawn up in good faith while the groups outfitted and organized in Kanesville. It is easy to imagine that the excitement of the unknown adventure awaiting beyond the Missouri, and the promise of mining a fortune in gold nuggets, provided an element of unity to groups of men previously strangers to one another. It is likely however, that the novelty wore off as the rigors of bumping along over wagon-rutted trails with scanty provisions and fifty to seventy hot, tired, sweaty men took their toll. Decorum and all promises of polite behavior probably were thrown right out the wagon.

Letters to the Frontier Guardian often expressed a sense of optimistic determination and wonder at the "continual string of wagons" stretched as far as the eye could see, moving peacefully across the plains. Many of these same letters also expressed a certain apprehension when news spread of fatalities as a result of
disputes among the members of a nearby wagon train. 29

Many of these would-be miners backed out before even dipping their toes in the Missouri River. It is possible that the expense of pulling together an outfit was prohibitive, but all too often a humble life savings was lost to gambling before the first wagon wheel was purchased. Those gold seekers who backed out or lost their shirts often sold any belongings they had for a pittance. 30

A good portion of those who "jumped off" in Kanesville never made it to their destination. Some succumbed to cholera, some died in skirmishes with Indians or at the hands of riled fellow emigrants. But thousands became "turnarounds" or "go backs." Among those who listened to the reports of disillusionment concerning life in the California gold region and suffering along the trail, many had the good sense to turn their wagons around and head east. 31

In May 1849, Hyde commented on the many would-be miners with cold feet who, in a flash of common sense, realized an overland journey to California wasn't all it was cracked up to be. He encouraged those who were re-evaluating their decision to back out before they found themselves unguarded in the middle of the plains. Hyde warned, "you must then hang together or be scalped separate." 32

One can only imagine the disappointment of an unsuccessful overland attempt. The Guardian printed news from Fort Kearney on the numbers of wagons that passed through. In May of 1849, a report indicated well
over four thousand wagons had passed through that season. High water on the Platte, however, was causing many companies to give up and sell wagons and supplies. These "turnarounds" cut their losses by unloading wagons worth $125 for around $10. The 1850 season was just as discouraging as a late season made it nearly impossible to keep stock alive.

So Kanesville became an outfitting town supplying the hopeful with wagons, oxen and flour for the long trek over plains and mountains, and Kanesville became a harbor for the disappointed, supplying comfort and a safe place to rest for those with second thoughts.

Orson Hyde wrestled, through the pages of the Guardian, with the influx of Gentiles, many less than honorable, into the community. Hyde did such a persuasive job of bragging about the advantages of Kanesville as a place to outfit a gold seeking expedition, that the hopeful and the greedy traveled to the Missouri banks by the thousands. The prosperity brought about through active trade and commerce with emigrating Gentiles was a threat to the Mormon hope for a tranquil place to worship. This mixed-blessing attitude manifested itself over the years as the Guardian struggled to present an image of Kanesville as a lively, prospering outfitting community as well as a Mormon refuge where crime, depravity and vice would not be tolerated.

Hyde tackled the questionable integrity of those tempted to drink, gamble or otherwise fall from God's good grace in an often petulant
tone resembling a sermon more than an editorial. For example:

The citizens of this place should guard against all such specimens of depravity, weakness and folly, and let them gloriously alone, to eat each other up, like so many Kilkenny cats, then their friends and patrons may pocket the leavings. 35

Commerce and trade with those seeking their fortunes in the gold mines of California was vital to the economic survival of Kanesville. But, be that as it may, Hyde could seldom resist pointing out the scourge and godlessness of man overcome with greed. Many times the Guardian expressed a sort of schizophrenic view of gold seeking, pointing out the advantages of Kanesville as an outfitting community for those already determined to tempt fate and God.

The emigration season of 1849 was Kanesville's first experience as an outfitting town. When the last train left in June, Hyde marveled at the majestic site of wagons crossing the plains, taking with them "the Yankee with his machinery, the southern with his colored attendant - the Englishman with all kinds of mechanic's tools - the farmer, the merchant, the doctor, the minister, and almost everything necessary for a settlement in a new country." 36 Early the following season, Hyde pronounced the California emigrant, "a fine lot of men, hale and robust." 37

The Kanesville Mormons were unprepared for the encroaching sea of worldliness washing over their community. Steamboats from St. Louis brought would-be emigrants, wanton women, whiskey and cholera. 38
Kanesville became a hamlet overrun with "gold-crazy men" and river gamblers who had left the Mississippi in favor of the booming gambling trade on the Missouri banks.  

The Frontier Guardian found itself following the exploits of the "unprincipled characters" who spent their nights stealing livestock and produce and spent their days selling this stolen property at street auctions. Rubbing elbows with Gentile emigrants was taxing the patience of even the most stalwart community booster in 1850. The weather had been unusually dry and cold. There was not enough grass to support the number of overlanders hoping to cross the plains. Drought delayed departures from Kanesville and threatened to increase the risk of running into snow in the California mountains.

In spite of obvious frustration with the Gentile loungers in Kanesville and in spite Hyde's moral apprehension concerning the quest for gold generally, Hyde continued to promote Kanesville as a full-service outfitting town. Those folks foolhardy and godless enough to seek worldly riches and forsake those found in the human heart went with Hyde's best wishes. After all, who could complain when the pages of the Frontier Guardian were one quarter filled with advertising by 1850 and all ten of Kanesville's larger stores sold out virtually all of their merchandise during the emigration season.

The Frontier Guardian printed often conflicting messages concerning
the wisdom of venturing to the gold fields. Sometimes the pages were filled with fear and recriminations directed toward those chasing the golden rainbow and sometimes tempting the reader with just enough information to wonder how big the pot at rainbow's end might be. For example, "chunks of gold in California grow bigger and more of them every day. In fact, we dreamed of turning out one lump the other night that weighed 250 lbs."  

Typically, the news from the gold regions reached Hyde through letters from those who had made the overland journey and found an abundant supply of gold but "a great deal of distress among all the diggers, for want of the common necessaries of life." An article taken from the New Orleans Times described the "men loaded with gold," appearing "like haggard vagabonds, clothed in filthy and tattered garments," and the conditions, "everything, and particularly articles of food and raiment, were at most unheard of prices, for gold was so plenty and in the possession of everyone, that it seemed to have lost its value."  

The Frontier Guardian reported many incidents of violence and lawlessness in the California mining region. Hyde worried that because of the vast numbers of persons going to California, pestilence, famine and war were certain to erupt. Hyde asked, "who will keep order among the miners? None, unless they can be paid for it as much as they can make by digging gold; and what company or
government will pay that price to soldiers?" Hyde believed that by neglecting agricultural pursuits, the miners would be "famishing for a little bread while wading in gold dust." He worried that stealing, fighting, drinking, shooting, "blackeyes and bloody noses will be more common than bread." 45

A letter, taken from the *New York Journal of Commerce* from a doctor in the California gold region, mentioned that murder was common and that the lack of organized government and law had left the area unprotected. He warned that the "wise-acres" in Washington had better do something or separation from the Union would occur. 46

The cries for government intervention in California were mainly requests for a means of establishing some semblance of order among the miners. The "wise-acres" in Washington, in an apparent attempt to squelch concerns of lawless uprisings, appropriated $50,000 to purchase Colt repeating rifles to furnish arms to California bound emigrants. Surprisingly, editor Hyde made no comment in the *Frontier Guardian* concerning the wisdom of quieting hot tempers with loaded guns. 47

Throughout 1849, articles and letters in the *Guardian* presented a gloomy picture of conditions in the mines. One letter tells of the nearly two thousand persons living in tents or crude log huts, many dying of exposure before an ounce of gold was discovered, "but such is the excitement and rage for gold that they undergo the most unheard of
hardships." The author claimed that even the most exaggerated reports on the richness of the mines were true, and that one miner dug $12,000 worth of gold dust in six days.48

Gold fever touched the calm Kanesville community when in the fall of 1849 settlers thought they had discovered gold in the bluffs overlooking the Missouri. The Frontier Guardian noted that the ore turned out to be zinc and copper and suggested people spend their energy digging for potatoes.49

Tongue-in-cheek commentaries on gold digging also showed up from time to time in the Guardian. For example, a King's College Professor wrote his own version of a "Gold Seeker's Manual":

What class ought to start out for the Diggins - Persons who have nothing to lose except their lives; and it would be as well they should start without those, if it were possible, as they are not unlikely to lose them in California.

Things you should not take with you to the Diggins - A love of comforts, a taste for civilization, an appetite, a conscience, and a respect for other people's throats, and a value of your own...

What will be the ultimate effect of the Discovery of the Diggins - To raise prices, to ruin fools, to demoralize a new country first, and settle it afterwards.50

An unknown author penned a piece titled "Advice to Ladies Whose Husbands are Digging Gold in California" which offered cynical pointers on how a frontier lady-in-waiting might spend her time. The author suggested a woman's "most reasonable occupation" should be
planning new dresses, "dashing equipages" and fine parties. When the first invoice of gold arrived, the writer cautioned women not to worry about savings banks, stocks "or stupidity of that sort. Of course you wouldn't think of such a thing." Rather, he advised women to read fashionable novels, to get a French teacher and dance master, and to get acquainted with fashionable young men. "They are great scamps it is true, but then they may be of service to you, and the end justifies the means." And finally, the author pointed out that if her husband's luck as a gold digger did not pan out, "...you will have spent some happy moments, and at worst you can go back to your sewing."51

As a religious leader, Orson Hyde was troubled by the greed inherent in such an overtly materialistic endeavor as gold digging. The Frontier Guardian was his sounding board and lectern. Hyde took many opportunities through his editorials to suggest that if "the true God of heaven" had been "sought with half the zeal and perseverance" as gold, the world would be united in one, big, heaven-bound family.52 Gold, Hyde feared, was disastrous to the morality of society.53

The church elders in Salt Lake shared Hyde's reservation regarding gold-seeking. Brigham Young had a difficult time curbing the enthusiasm of followers tempted to forsake the church in favor of the golden promise of California. Young warned the faithful to stay put or their leave would be permanent.54 This message was passed on to
the Kanesville Mormons through epistles in the *Guardian*.

In a sense, Kanesville was coming of age. The optimistic dreams of building an outfitting community were being realized, but not without cost. The Mormons stood face to face with the boundless greed of the gold-hungry. Perhaps even more difficult were the lessons in tolerance yet to be learned as the Mormons found themselves on both the giving and receiving end of prejudice.
Notes to Chapter Three

1 Guardian, May 16, 1851.


3 Unruh, p. 73.

4 Guardian, March 21, 1849.

5 Guardian, February 21, 1849.


7 Guardian, May 15, 1850.

8 Guardian, February 7, 1849.

9 Guardian, June 26, 1850.

10 Mattes, p. 62.

11 Unruh, p. 7.

12 Unruh, pp. 119 - 120.

13 Unruh, pp. 119 - 120.

14 Unruh, pp. 119 - 120.

15 Mattes, p. 6.

16 Mattes, p. 9.

17 Guardian, January 23, 1850.

18 Guardian, January 9, 1850.

19 Mattes, p. 9.

20 Mattes, p. 52.
21 Guardian, June 26, 1850.
22 Guardian, February 7, 1851.
23 Mattes, p. 35.
24 Guardian, May 1, 1850.
25 Guardian, May 1, 1850.
26 Guardian, May 1, 1850.
27 Guardian, May 1, 1850.
28 Guardian, May 1, 1850.
29 Guardian, July 11, 1849.
30 Guardian, May 16, 1849.
31 Mattes, p. 100.
32 Guardian, May 16, 1849.
33 Guardian, July 11, 1849.
34 Guardian, May 15, 1850.
36 Guardian, July 25, 1849.
37 Guardian, April 3, 1850.
38 Joseph S. Hyde, Orson Hyde: One of the First Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1933.
39 Hyde.
40 Guardian, May 1, 1850.
41 Mattes, p. 53.
42 Guardian, October 2, 1850.
43 Guardian, February 21, 1849.
44 Guardian, March 7, 1849.
45 Guardian, February 7, 1849.
46 Guardian, March 21, 1849.
47 Guardian, April 18, 1849.
48 Guardian, May 16, 1849.
49 Guardian, February 21, 1849.
51 Guardian, May 15, 1850.
52 Guardian, February 7, 1849.
53 Guardian, March 6, 1850.
54 Clark, p. 543.
IV. Three Colors of Prejudice: White, Black and Red

"Let the rock be but once split, and the demon of confusion and bloodshed will run universally."¹

As editor, Orson Hyde was often at his best when the issues around him were volatile and potentially threatening to the peaceful Kanesville climate or to the future of Mormon settlement in the west. Perhaps no issue inflamed him more than the prejudice which had not been left among the Mormon keepsakes in Nauvoo. Ultimately, prejudice touched the Mormons, the Indians and the black slaves with all three issues challenging Mormon ideology.

Before the wagons of Mormon emigrants had even reached the Missouri river bank, the military personnel stationed at Fort Leavenworth knew of the Mormon exodus across Iowa through the "Mormon-stories" circulating throughout the territory. The stories were sensational and subject to the influences of exaggeration and ignorance. The Mormons were regarded on the plains with the same sort of curiosity and misunderstanding as the native American.

One story told of Mormons dressed in flowing crimson robes teaching a "Jewish pow-wow" to Sauk and Fox medicine men. Another version had the Mormons draped in buffalo robes baptizing the Ioway Indians. An elder with a flowing white beard, able to communicate with the Indians
through a "gift of tongues," spent his time distributing ammunition and whiskey to the belligerent Sioux, according to one rumor.²

Columns of fulminations had appeared in the press about the Mormon practice of polygamy -- an institution adopted by founder Joseph Smith after he had received a "divine revelation" perceived to be God's solution to an awkward glut of women converts. The Gentile population found the practice morally repugnant and the issue tended to consolidate public opinion against the Mormons.³

In 1851, Hyde found himself in a rather heated scrap over the polygamy issue with "Br. Holly", editor of the Savannah Sentinel. Holly admonished Hyde for comments in the Guardian supporting the Mormon doctrine which claimed that Abraham, David, Solomon, and possibly Christ, were polygamists. Hyde defended this theological interpretation, as well as the moral integrity of the Mormons:

Though we have written as we have, if there can be one case found in the State of Iowa where a Mormon is living in adultery, fornication or licentiousness, then put the law in force against the offender. If any Mormon practices licentiousness, considering himself at liberty to do so, by reason of anything that we have written, then let him wither like a dried reed.⁴

Holly responded quickly in the Guardian, calling Hyde's explanation a "curious compound of philosophy and nonsense, legal lore and the merest twattle, assumed piety and startling blasphemy." Holly continued to boast about having uncovered the Mormon practice of polygamy:
Emanating from so respectable a source it will arrest the attention of the country and command its utter astonishment! An attentive reader of the *Guardian* for near three years, we have never noticed so barefaced an exposition of Mormonism as applied to domestic relations; and we claim the credit for having at last "smoked it out."

What must be the extent of that corruption, which could have induced so virtuous a man as Orson Hyde - we do not accuse him of libertinism - to prostitute his pen and his precept in its defence?5

Hyde finally terminated the argument with a retort to Holly's comments. Hyde maintained he neither supported or defended the practice of polygamy:

> We have no warfare with Abraham, David, Solomon or Brigham; or with the rulers of our land on account of their having many women, or none at all. The only question with us is - have they taught us good things? Are they inspired from on high? Have they enacted just and equal laws? These are questions between us and them. Their own individual acts are between themselves and their God.6

But polygamy was not always the issue precipitating hard feelings. Because the Mormons traveled and lived in cohesive groups, they often bought large tracts of land in the same area and ultimately sought (or so it was charged) monopolistic domination of land and property. And because they often patronized fellow Mormon merchants, they were seen as practicing a kind of unfair trade and commerce. In short, the Mormons were viewed as a threat to Gentile livelihood.7

Hyde was well aware that religious attacks by distraught editors often masked concern regarding Mormon influence in local politics. The Mormons often voted as a block, with selections reached by prior
agreement. This constituted a major political threat in any area where Mormons were allowed to put down roots. As Orson Hyde and his band established themselves in Kanesville, their political awareness increased and their influence was strongly felt. By 1850, the Mormons were a growing force in Iowa politics. 8

This can be attested to by the opposition generated against Hyde and his followers. A year earlier, in 1849, a bill was drafted in the Iowa Senate to "disorganize" Pottawatamie County thereby leaving the Kanesville Mormons without rights as citizens. They would not be able to own land, or vote. This controversial proposal lit a fuse throughout Iowa which was sufficient to fuel the erudite wrath of Orson Hyde as well as the petty prejudices of a number of frontier bigots. 9

A letter reprinted in the Guardian from James Sloan to the Iowa Senate in support of Mormon rights, stated that they "belong to the Caucassion race and possess the common characteristics of intelligent beings brought up under the republican institutions of the government of the U. S." Sloan further stated that the Mormons held no creed or doctrine to disqualify them as citizens. 10 Ultimately, Pottawatamie remained an organized county and the Mormons retained their rights as citizens, although those rights were challenged more than once during their tenure in Kanesville.

There was a continuing assertion in the political arena as well as in the press that the Mormons held a subversive intent against the U. S.
government. Hyde reacted to this accusation in the Guardian by certifying "before God and man - that we never took an oath, neither have we ever brought under any covenant against the Government of the United States."¹¹

Many times anti-Mormon sentiment reached a level of high drama. For example, an unsigned letter in another paper accused the Mormons of plotting to murder an outspoken anti-Mormon, Thomas Sharp. Hyde called the story "unqualifiedly false", but explained that "if we ever should set out on any such mission, we would not return without accomplishing it. But we need not fear; we do not like him well enough to perform such a service for him."¹²

In the same issue of the Frontier Guardian, a story headed "More Mormon Villanies" explained that Sharp received a letter warning him of the murder scheme and stating that Orson Hyde offered $500 to a hit man to kill Sharp. The plot thickened further as the story suggested Almon W. Babbitt, then U.S. Mail Agent and himself a Mormon, supplied Hyde with information on anti-Mormon targets. This connection is interesting in that Hyde and Babbitt were to become intense rivals.¹³

An anti-Mormon Guardian reader posed a question to editor Hyde inquiring that if Mr. Sharp were such a bad person, "why do you not cast the devil out of him and make him a good man, as your creed invests you with miraculous power to do?" In typically swift, sharp fashion, Hyde replied, "it would be a great pity to exercise such power upon
Mr. Sharp as to cast the Devil out of him; for there would be nothing left but his shirt and nose.  

In 1851, anti-Mormon prejudice incited a roaring feud between Hyde and the Saint Joseph Gazette, when the editor of the Gazette supported claims made by Thomas J. Sutherland that the Mormons sought to monopolize trade and to dominate Indian land. Hyde dismissed Sutherland as a "roving debauchee" who had whipped his wife and abandoned her. In the colorful style of a riled writer, Hyde suggested that Sutherland, a vanquished Canadian, had suffered the loss of "the contents of every organ of the head" except combativeness and self-esteem. Hyde said, "he was regarded as being half knave, a quarter-crazy, one eight gass, and the balance mule."

Hyde challenged the editor of the Gazette to furnish the name of the "Kanesville Informant" responsible for fueling the fires of anti-Mormon sentiment. This informant, said Hyde, would be treated like any other outlaw.

Later in 1851, Hyde took on the Saint Louis Intelligencer after it ran a less than flattering story about the Mormons which purported to contain extracts from a letter by a gentleman enroute to California. Hyde called the story a "slanderous production of disappointed ambition." He claimed that this anti-Mormon venom had been spread by a disgruntled general. Hyde issued a warning to the Saint Louis paper:
The editor of that paper, is well aware that endorsing too freely BAD PAPER, has brought men from the highest ranks and stations in life; to bankruptcy and disrepute. Furthermore, who knows but that the very Agent (the press) employed by him to crush the influence, and character of an industrious and innocent people, may become in time as a flaming sword against himself, guarding every way, but the road that leads to infamy and disgrace?16

Hyde's outspoken defense of Mormonism did not necessarily extend to two other groups who were suffering, not because of their religious beliefs, but because of their color. They were the black slaves and the American Indians. Each group presented a moral or philosophical dilemma to Hyde. Because of his own experience, the editor supported the underdog and generally was sympathetic to the plight of minorities. But Hyde also saw the political, economic and social issues which could be aligned against his religious tolerance.

The slavery question was the most far-reaching threat to the fragile fiber of unity that was being perilously stretched with the expanding frontier. For, if Manifest Destiny were to become a reality, the nation had to be united.

For Hyde, the fate of the slaves was less important than preservation of the union. And yet, the question posed more than one dilemma for the editor. On the one hand, endorsing slavery would endear the Mormons to southerners, who had not been as enthusiastic as northerners in following the teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. On the other hand, if the Mormons denounced slavery as morally wrong, the issue of polygamy was bound to be dredged up -- and this
was much too delicate an issue for Hyde to chance reigniting.

Hyde could not personally endorse the concept of keeping human beings in slavery. Thus, although at heart Hyde was opposed to slavery and perhaps would have liked to grandstand a bit in the Guardian, he did not use the paper as a forum for abolition. His own attitudes were illustrated in 1849 when he offered this advice to Kanesville residents if they happened to come across a mulatto slave who reportedly had run away from his owner in Savannah, Missouri:

Do not harbor or secret him, more than to feed him if he is hungry. When this is done, let him go his way. Let no Mormon secret him from his pursuers, neither be officious to procure his arrest. Keep yourselves entirely free and unspotted from so dark a subject. Suffer not yourselves to be partisans, in any form, to this vexatious question. 17

Hyde's desire to keep the slavery issue at arm's length was apparently endorsed by the Mormon church. In December 1850, for example, the editor commented:

The church on this point, assumes not the responsibility to direct. The laws of the land recognize slavery - we do not wish to oppose the laws of the country. If there is sin in selling a slave, let the individual who sells him, bear that sin, and not the church. 18

Although Hyde was anxious not to embroil himself or Kanesville residents in the slavery question, there was no escaping the issue farther west. Brigham Young and his elders had to take a stand on slavery as it concerned their application to have Deseret admitted to
the Union as a state. At the time, Deseret included the immense area of land in Upper California, east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and west of the Rocky Mountains, acquired in the Mexican War. California had already cast its lot with the free states. But to the east, the fate of the Kansas and Nebraska territories which bordered Deseret was still to be decided.

When the constitution of Deseret was drafted on March 4, 1849, Mormon leaders came down against slavery -- at least in their proposed state. Not surprisingly, the slavery question became an issue in Washington when Congress was asked to admit Deseret to the Union as a state in 1850. The Guardian kept a keen eye on Washington during this debate. It was with some irritation that editor Hyde noted:

Congress has now been eight months in session, and expended a great portion of their time 'gasing' about slavery, abolition, Wilmot's Proviso and other useless harangues, and not until late have they accomplished much of anything. 19

Hyde feared for the rift that the slavery issue had caused in the Union. The Guardian printed several articles that spoke to the issue. One story related by a Washington correspondent described a dream of Georgia Congressman John C. Calhoun. Calhoun apparently dreamed he saw George Washington who asked whether the Congressman would sign a document dissolving the Union. Calhoun said "yes" if the slavery issue weren't resolved. George Washington left Calhoun with a black mark on his right hand -- the mark by which Benedict Arnold was known
in the next world. 20

An article excerpted from the March 14, 1850 Burlington Hawk-Eye titled "The Union - What is it Worth?" was printed on the front page of the Guardian:

Until we are assured that the Union can no longer possibly be preserved, the man who advocates or favors a disruption of a people which must be one or nothing, is both a traitor and a fool. A traitor, because he would destroy the state - a fool, because, by so doing, he must inevitably destroy himself in the end.

Better for us; had we never been bound together, than now to attempt to live asunder. There is no hatred like that of those that have once been friends. No nations are such inveterate enemies as those that were at one time subject to the same law and the same government.21

In August of 1850, the nation mourned the loss of President Zachery Taylor, who the Guardian tributed with having made a life's study of trying to unite the nation. Editor Hyde was anguished by the division between north and south and worried that the Lord was using this rift to destroy the nation. Hyde felt that the death of "great men" such as Zachery Taylor:

...betoken that something is to be done either for the promotion of the Union as it now exists or to spread division and confusion throughout the land; we think the latter will be the case as the clouds begin to lower over the nation's head they look gloomy and frightful in the extreme....22

Whereas Hyde's attitude toward the slavery question remained constant, the same cannot be said about his view toward the Indians, especially those native Americans who lived on the other side of the
Missouri River. During his two years in Kanesville, Hyde's intolerance toward the Indians became as strong as the prejudice that had led the Mormons to settle in Indian territory in the first place.

In 1849, Mormon settlers had found refuge along the banks of the Missouri on lands previously occupied by a peaceful nation of Pottawatamie Indians. The Pottawatamie and the Mormons overlapped just long enough for the Indians to watch as prairie schooners carrying Mormon emigrants eased down the bluffs.

The Pottawatamie were preparing to move to land along the Kansas River. They were being shuffled about by a government in which they had no voice. Their home along the Missouri would be occupied by a tribe of white religious refugees whose theology and social organization had set them adrift on the plains. Both the native Americans and the Mormons knew what it was to be persecuted for having lifestyles and religions that differed from the Gentile power brokers of the mid-1800s.

Mormon empathy toward the Indians was cultivated by the situational similarity of homelessness, as well as a deeper theological belief on the part of the Mormons. The American Indian was regarded by the Book of Mormon as having descended from the lost tribes of Israel. As a result, church followers viewed them with a certain sentimentality, at least until efforts to maintain peaceful coexistence, on the trail or in frontier communities, failed.
Mormon sympathy toward the Indians was tested consistently, particularly as the Omaha Indians, occupying territory on the west side of the Missouri, became increasingly belligerent. The Frontier Guardian and editor Hyde struggled as sympathy and empathy turned to exasperation.

The Frontier Guardian carried many reports of Indian depredations over the years, most of these concerning horses stolen by Omaha Indians who crossed the river at night to stroll through town. The Indians argued that the horses were retained as indemnity for having allowed the Mormons to live at Winter Quarters.

The accounts in the Guardian of interactions between the emigrant and the Indian varied considerably. Hyde was willing to carry articles that contained positive information even if it lay buried beneath slanted views of the Indian's "savage" lifestyle. For example, an article by a settler who had accompanied the Omahas on a buffalo hunting trip described the Indians as "weak, degraded, idle and vicious -- slaves to appetite, passion, fear and want -- a willing prey to the whiskey seller" and added that they were content in their ignorance:

They show no desire to gain a knowledge of the true God, and to secure the blessing of Christianity. They are hard hearted, cruel and blood-thirsty, and look upon the practice of revenge as the highest virtue. Such is the present moral character of the Omaha nation.

Yet, in spite of the author's contempt for the Omaha's paganism he goes on
to tell of the many kindnesses shown him by the Indians. Much of the Indian and emigrant interaction was beneficial, particularly in the early years of emigration. Overlanders relied heavily on the Indian's knowledge of the frontier during the early 1840s. Emigrants were escorted across dangerous rivers by Indian guides who bartered their services for articles of clothing or ammunition. Many emigrants negotiated with the Indians to carry letters back to frontier settlements. Those letters had a remarkably good rate of delivery.

Even so, Hyde continually warned settlers to resist the temptation to trade with the Indians or to entice the Omahas to trade in Kanesville. In the Guardian he warned, "whenever they do come, there is almost invariably something stolen; and none have spirit enough to clear them out unless bro. Hyde will personally lead them out." Basically, he felt that the Indians wouldn't bother those who kept to themselves. Hyde theorized that "the poor Indian, whose untutored mind, sees God in clouds and hears him in the wind, has a nature susceptible of the finest feeling of humanity and a heart open to kindness when kindly treated." But he warned that the red skins were revengeful "to the last degree when injured or oppressed."

Hyde's somewhat solicitous attitude changed by June 1850 as the Omahas continued to swipe livestock. Hyde began calling for the formation of a vigilante company armed with "good hickorys or
something stronger" to keep the Indians at bay. Citizens who had lost livestock were urged to appeal to the government to establish military posts on the west side of the Missouri. In the fall of 1850, the Omahas set fire to the prairie west of Kanesville, with the apparent goal of destroying the town. High wind spread the fire rapidly as stacks of hay, wheat, cornfields and fences burned. The wind shifted in time to keep the flames from spreading through town. In reporting the near disaster, Hyde noted with contempt that several Omahas spent the evening in town "committing degradations" -- a phrase Hyde used to describe everything from drunk and disorderly conduct to grand larceny.

With an increase in property damages attributed to the Indians, the tone of Hyde's editorial comments became increasingly harsh. Hyde wanted military intervention and repayment of the estimated $15,000 damages incurred by the Mormons at the hands of the Omaha.

Strong words rich with emotion appeared in the pages of the Guardian as editor Hyde screamed for government intervention:

The hundreds of head of cattle, many horses, mules, etc. that have been killed and stolen by these "Red Skins," on this frontier, is enough to awaken an indignation on this side sufficiently strong to shoot every Indian that steps upon this bank, and even to organize a company, and go over and wipe out their villages, and them too if they can be found.

It is unlikely that Hyde ultimately would have encouraged murdering the Omaha. However, he continued to call for the government to
reimburse the settlers for losses of property and livestock. Hyde suggested this money be confiscated from the annuities of the Indians.36

The incidents of Indian depredations continued throughout 1850 and were reported in the Guardian with little sympathy remaining for the neighboring Omaha. In the summer of 1851 a council was held with the Indians at Kanesville. Several hundred people were present as well as a cannon borrowed from Fort Leavenworth which, according to the Guardian, "made the chiefs quail". The cannon was used to demonstrate what the Indians could expect in return for any future hostile acts directed toward emigrants or settlers:

We know, from reliable authority, that they did design evil against the emigrants; but when they saw our determination to chastise them if they did interfere with the trains, they changed their intentions and denied them.... All things went off amicably nicer after the fire of three guns. We told the Indians, if they interrupted the emigrants, all the powder and lead we gave them, would be in that big gun, and in smaller arms.37

By 1851, Hyde appeared to have had more than enough of Indian mischief and settler sympathy toward them. In an editorial, he blasted both saying, "the curse of the Almighty shall rest upon the house or individual that encourages them to stay on this side of the river. It is well known that these red skins are the worst thieves in the world, and he who tolerates them about his house or place of business, in our estimation, does it to share of their spoils. A man will not keep a hawk except to catch birds with it."38
Hyde and the *Guardian* were not the only ones irritated with the Omaha. Indian agent Barrow asked that fifty Kanesville men assist him in exhibiting a show of force after Omaha Indian chief Young Elk drew a gun and threatened to kill Barrow. Barrow had apparently threatened to "iron" the Omahas for their repeated assaults on white settlers. Some thirty Indians loaded their guns as Chief Young Elk said Barrow would have to iron them all. Hyde recounted the story in the *Guardian* calling Young Elk "depraved, wicked and a notorious thief."39

In 1851, Hyde reported that a treaty had been signed at Fort Laramie between several tribes of Indians and the government. The *Guardian* noted that treaties were of little use against the fleet and nimble footed Indian:

> Treaties are very good; but powder and lead are the only effectual treaties that can secure the white man and his property from the rapacity of that people. Feed the wolf with the best of fresh meat and be very kind to him, and you may almost hope to tame him and change his nature but when he gets hungry, he cares not what you have done for him; he will kill the first unprotected animal that he can overpower. Just so with the Indian. It is hard to change his nature and disposition.40

Inevitably, the expanding western frontier of the white overlander cast an ominous shadow in its wake:
Moving across the land just ahead of our frontier was the American Indian frontier. It too was the edge of occupation, but it was not the edge of expansion. It was a retreating frontier and represented an inverted movement - a tragedy in the life of a race. In essence the two borderlines were antitheses. Whatever there was of growth or glamour or victory in the advance of the one was matched by loss and humiliation and defeat in the withdrawal of the other.41

Indian and emigrant conflicts were exacerbated as the white man's wagons rolled ceaselessly across Indian territory. Tribes along the overland route experienced tremendous loss as white hunters stalked buffalo and other prairies game, as woodlands became timber for cabins and wagons, and as cattle overgrazed the often sparse grass.42

The Guardian published many accounts from emigrants who had been "tythed" by Indians. This amounted to demanding tolls for river passage or tribute in the form of blankets, provisions, livestock, whiskey, or ammunitions for safe passage through Indian territory by frontier tribes who were quick to learn the value of the white man's money.

The Indians proved to be shrewd bargainers even though their business ethics often left something to be desired. For example, the Guardian reported that a troop of Oregon emigrants lost around 120 head of cattle when Pawnee Indians started a late night stampede. The Indians showed up in the emigrants' camp the following morning offering their services to round up the cattle. The emigrants paid the Pawness $20 in money and provisions for their assistance.43
Although most of the Guardian's comments on Indian affairs dealt with local problems between the Omaha tribe and Kanesville settlers, there were accounts of often fatal interaction along the more western overland trail. One letter told of an entire company of California emigrants, including women and children, who were murdered by Indians.44 Many skirmishes with the Indians were reported to have made the overland trek longer and more difficult as a result of loss of lives and provisions on the trail.45

And so editor Hyde and the Guardian found themselves defending the Mormon faith and coming to terms with shattered illusions regarding the nature of their Indian brethren. These painful issues often erupted in tandem with a personal and political feud between Orson Hyde and Almon W. Babbitt. Through the eyes of the Guardian we are presented with one man's view, admittedly biased. But the underlying conflict between these two powerful men reveals a great deal about the Church, the politics, and the influence of rivalry.
Notes to Chapter Four

1 Guardian, May 1, 1850.

2 Guardian, August 7, 1850; August 21, 1850; September 4, 1850; September 18, 1850, "The Mormons" by Thomas Kane.

3 Clark, p. 531.

4 Guardian, December 26, 1851.

5 Guardian, January 23, 1852.


7 Clark, p. 531.

8 Clark, p. 532.

9 Guardian, April 4, 1849.

10 Guardian, April 4, 1849.

11 Guardian, January 23, 1850.

12 Guardian, January 23, 1850.

13 Guardian, January 23, 1850.

14 Guardian, February 6, 1850.

15 Guardian, June 27, 1851.

16 Guardian, September 5, 1851.

17 Guardian, October 17, 1849.

18 Guardian, December 11, 1850.

19 Guardian, April 3, 1850.

20 Guardian, April 3, 1850.

21 Guardian, April 17, 1850.

22 Guardian, August 7, 1850.
23 Clark, p. 541.
24 Guardian, February 6, 1850.
26 Unruh, p. 156.
27 Unruh, p. 157.
28 Unruh, p. 158.
29 Guardian, May 15, 1850.
30 Guardian, May 15, 1850.
31 Guardian, June 12, 1850.
32 Guardian, June 26, 1850.
33 Guardian, October 30, 1850.
34 Guardian, February 21, 1851.
35 Guardian, February 21, 1851.
36 Guardian, February 21, 1851.
37 Guardian, June 27, 1851.
38 Guardian, August 8, 1851.
39 Guardian, October 17, 1851.
40 Guardian, November 14, 1851.
41 Parish, p. 43.
42 Unruh, p. 169.
43 Guardian, July 25, 1851.
44 Guardian, May 2, 1851.
45 Guardian, October 17, 1851.
V. Politics and Babbitt's Bugle

"If what little influence we may possess be the fruit of our own toil, labor and perseverance, it is ours."\(^1\)

In early 1849, the first issue of the Frontier Guardian contained a letter from editor Hyde that pronounced, among other things, that "with political questions it is not our present design to interfere to any great extent." The prospectus of the Guardian endorsed that sentiment, but wavered a bit by stating:

The Guardian is not intended to enter the field of political strife and contention; still, it will reserve the right and privilege of recommending such men to the suffrages of the people as the Editor may think will prove true and faithful guardians of the National peace and honor.\(^2\)

Perhaps Hyde did not intend to meddle in questions of politics. But he did gradually align himself and his Kanesville followers with the Whig party and against both the Democrats and Locofocos in the late 1840s.\(^3\) Indeed, Hyde's editorial support for the Whigs gave rise to a rumor, in 1849, that the national Whig committee had given Hyde a bribe of $1,000 to ensure the Mormon vote in a state election.\(^4\)

The chief exponent of this rumor -- and perhaps also its source -- was fellow Mormon Almon W. Babbitt. Although no physical description of him appears to have survived, Babbitt has been portrayed as a Mormon elder of strong personality and combative instincts. He was also a
supporter and leader in Democratic party politics. Babbitt had been selected to represent the Utah Mormons in Congress in their quest to get the territory of Deseret approved as a state. In short, Babbitt was a powerful man of considerable political influence, who also happened to surface in Kanesville on several occasions to ruffle the feathers of Orson Hyde and the Guardian.

The alleged bribe was only one of a series of political scuffles that produced an enduring tug-of-war between Hyde and arch-rival Babbitt. Hyde denied the bribery charges vigorously. The Guardian, he argued in April 1849, had only been used to inform readers as to where they could vote. Then Hyde launched his own counterattack. Babbitt, he declared, "is the only man on earth that ever offered us a bribe." Hyde related to Guardian readers how Babbitt, in July 1848, had promised Hyde in Burlington that "he would ensure us a press and type, as good as we desired," if Hyde would support the election of General Lewis Cass, who was running for President as a Democrat against Zachary Taylor, the Whig nominee.

The bribery rumor apparently persisted because Hyde felt obliged to return to the charge, this time in a letter which was printed in the Missouri Republican in February 1849. Hyde insisted that he had never shown Babbitt a bribery payment from the Whigs. At the same time, Hyde warned readers against being seduced by the Democratic line which Babbitt espoused. The Mormons, Hyde said, were "threatened with
extermination and death, if we presume to express our minds at the ballot box in a free country, under the influence of Democratic rule."

Fearing for the safety of Mormon voters in Democratic Missouri, Hyde pleaded:

> If vengeance has to be taken, let these good people escape; for rather than see again, men, women and children suffer, as I have seen them suffer, I would say, let me be the only object of vengeance.⁶

Hyde's counterattack apparently was successful. Sometime in May, Babbitt declared in a letter to a Kanesville resident, that the whole bribery story was a cruel fabrication. With this, Hyde seemed satisfied for the time being and commented in a Guardian editorial on his relationship with Babbitt:

> There were several tributary sources of difficulty between us, arising in a great measure, out of a misunderstanding of each other's position, and the consequences were, a pretty brisk and spirited fire at each other. We have concluded to drop and settle the matter, and be friends so far as the church is concerned. Yet we confess that we have not made a Whig of him; and we think that he will do us the justice to say that he has not made a very deep democratic impression upon us.⁷

Hyde and Babbitt had agreed to disagree, but this initial crossfire was only temporarily quieted.

It was not long after this initial truce that Hyde found further reason to fault Babbitt. This time the criticism focussed on Babbitt's dealings as the Mormon spokesman in Washington representing the Utah group. Brigham Young and other church elders wanted the Union to admit Deseret -- a territory which covered 227,500 square
miles and included all of Utah and Arizona, as well as parts of Idaho, Wyoming, New Mexico and California. Hyde had made several trips to Salt Lake to confer with church elders about the delicate political challenge of promoting the admission of Deseret. After all, Deseret was a unique entity -- a political hierarchy under the domination of the Mormon church. Many Gentiles were hostile toward the proposition, seeing this as an attempt by the Mormons to gain a strong political foothold in national politics. Thus, to Hyde and others, it would take a man of extraordinary skill to win support in Washington for the Deseret proposal.

Unfortunately, in Hyde's opinion, Babbitt had been selected in 1850 to represent the Mormons in Washington. The Guardian lamented that such a hot-tempered and stubborn man had been entrusted with a task calling for endless diplomacy. The issue was complicated by a raging dispute with California over the western boundary of Deseret.

The Guardian covered the Deseret issue closely, printing letters both for and against admission. An article taken from James Gordon Bennett's New York Herald in 1850, suggested that Deseret should be admitted because the Mormons had a head start in politics and an abundance of common sense.

Pro-admission letters were also prominently displayed in the Guardian. In April of 1850, for example, Hyde printed a letter which warmly endorsed Deseret, though the writer feared its sparse
population might cause Washington to agree only to territorial status. Undaunted, the writer described how the Deseret constitution should include a proviso prohibiting the sale of liquor. The author maintained that the state of Deseret would be a proud example of moral grandeur, and that "by presenting this new principle and carrying it out successfully, you will acquire for yourself a world wide reknown; good men of all parties, and of all denominations will sustain you in it."

Meanwhile, Hyde was keeping a close eye on the activities of arch-rival Babbitt. Not without a note of glee did the Guardian report that Babbitt was having little luck in Washington. To Hyde's credit, he did explain that the problems were, in part, caused by rumors circulating in the capital that the Mormons had taken an oath of hostility against the U.S. government. Doubtless, Hyde believed that Babbitt was remiss for not being able to dissipate these stories.

While Congress was debating the fate of Deseret, Babbitt set off on an "electioneering tour" in 1850 which culminated in his arrival in Kanesville in August. Hyde was more than a little angered by the appearance of his nemesis. First, he insisted that Babbitt belonged in Washington where the Deseret question required his constant attention. The Guardian suggested that Babbitt would return to Washington too late to accomplish anything. Hyde was also angry that Babbitt wanted to meddle in Iowa politics. In a pointed
editorial, Hyde asked why Babbitt was wasting his time in Kanesville trying to block a Whig ticket. The *Guardian* accused Babbitt of spending $500 "lavishly" pushing a Locofoco ticket in his effort to thwart the Whigs.\(^{12}\)

Babbitt again came to blows with the *Guardian* over the state election to fill a vacancy in the Iowa House of Representatives. The *Guardian* endorsed Whig candidate Daniel F. Miller, while Babbitt had come to Kanesville to campaign for a local Democrat named Thompson. An angry exchange developed when Babbitt printed a circular in St. Louis endorsing his candidate and admonishing Hyde for refusing to print Babbitt's comments in the *Guardian*. Editor Hyde maintained that Babbitt simply missed the publication deadline. Babbitt claimed he was censored. Hyde ultimately printed Babbitt's remarks with a lengthy editorial chastising Babbitt. "We have," he wrote, "no good opinion of Mr. Babbitt's political veracity or his course, for his effort has been against the people of this county."\(^{13}\)

The *Guardian* elaborated on the means by which Babbitt acquired votes for his candidate:
He had a cask of brandy tapped in one place, and in another that he paid the bill for all that was drank, which ran freely during the whole of election day; and about the close of the day he thinking they had not been surfeited enough with liquor he began to break open the Champagne and wine bottles, and his 'friends' began to crowd upon him rather heavily for the wine, he then began to pitch it into the street, by the box, a dozen bottles in each; and after so profusely using his liquor he obtained by 16 votes, making an expense of 31 dollars per vote, to him or his party; we are inclined to believe that it must be some portion of the Locofoco corruption fund.

Babbitt's trek to Kanesville cost him more than the expense of liquor. While he was thundering about Pottawatamie County trying to drum up support for his candidate, the U. S. House or Representatives voted that it would be "inexpedient' to admit Babbitt as a delegate from Deseret. Why, the Guardian asked,

... did Mr. Babbitt forsake the interests of the people of Deseret at Washington to spend $500 dollars to try to prevent men from voting the Whig ticket, according to his own acknowledgement in a public speech? It looks to our vision that he could not have considered the interests of the people of Deseret very sacred to leave them in the hour of trial.

A disgruntled and disenfranchised Almon Babbitt charged that his rejection by the House was the work of the Whigs. The Guardian cited an article in the Keokuk Register explaining that Babbitt "grossly misinterprets the matter" because the majority of votes ousting Babbitt from the House came from members of his own Democratic party.

Bantering about the election and Babbitt's integrity continued for some time in the Guardian with neither Babbitt or Hyde willing to back down. Babbitt disliked Hyde's methods of conducting the Guardian, and
in 1850, he founded an opposition paper called the Weekly Western Bugle.

It was customary at that time for newspapers to carry some kind of motto below the main headline. Babbitt received his inspiration from the lines of a William Cullen Bryant poem, "The Battle Field":

> Truth crushed to earth shall rise again, -
> The eternal years of God are hers;
> But error, wounded, writhes with pain,
> And dies among her worshippers.16

Little else can be said about the Weekly Western Bugle because copies of the early issues appear to have vanished. The Bugle endured, however, as Kanesville became Council Bluffs.

Not only were Orson Hyde and Almon Babbitt political rivals, but now they were editors competing for the ear of the citizens of Kanesville. The Guardian was, by this time, firmly established, and there seems to have been no loss of advertising to the new competitor.

For Babbitt, however, ownership of a newspaper would allow him to compete with Hyde politically, economically and socially. As a result, relations between the pair -- never cordial -- hit new lows and involved matters of personal loyalty. Orson Hyde had many close friends and supporters, particularly John Gooch, who as printer of the Guardian, generally viewed Babbitt through Hyde's eyes. At a public supper, Gooch rose and offered a toast, which apparently angered Almon Babbitt. In a letter to the Guardian, Gooch maintained that his remarks were misconstrued and he explained the situation:
What I said was in substance as follows: That I would like to honor those who deserve honor, but there was one present, who, from what I knew of him, I could not honor on this occasion; and hoped that the officers of Utah would conduct themselves in such a manner as would induce the citizens of Pottawatomie and Salt Lake, to bestow upon them greater honor than they were receiving at the present time.17

This somewhat cryptic barb was apparently directed at Babbitt who, Gooch said, "raised a plate to throw at me, and would have done so, had not some lady interfered." Gooch then offered a toast which got him in even more trouble:

Orson Hyde, the protector of those who do right; the firm supporter of truth, and female virtue; and the denouncer of those who endeavor to build themselves up, by creating division among the Saints.

After the toast was given, a deadly silence prevailed, and perceiving that my presence annoyed some present, I retired.18

The Weekly Western Bugle is not mentioned in the Frontier Guardian, indicating, perhaps, editor Hyde's confidence that the upstart paper posed no threat. It is possible, too, that the Bugle is ignored so as not to endorse or encourage its survival. In either case, the Guardian continued to follow Babbitt, in manner befitting the gossip columns of today.

In the spring of 1851, Babbitt and a company of 150 wagons were trapped by high water enroute to Salt Lake. The Guardian admitted that this was a "perilous situation" and then wondered if Babbitt and the group
...must not feel a little embarrassed in their present situation, not being accustomed to the hairbreadth escapes, - the multiplied inconvenience and vexations, incidental to a life across the plains at this season of the year. We feel sorry for their wives and little ones, and also for themselves, and would be glad to have the opportunity of rendering them assistance... but it being the very time that every nerve, bone and sinew of our body are called into action, and all the force that we can muster beside, to get matters regulated here, and the emigration to the Valley off in time. We have not a leisure moment to spare. 19

A later issue of the Guardian reported that Babbitt and his company had reached their destination, but not without loss. Three persons drowned, the Guardian reported, and

Mr. Babbitt had the greater part of his paper damaged by water getting into his wagon beds. Our readers will recollect that this is the paper he brought to Kanesville, to start in opposition to us, to vindicate his character; which he considered was in no small way tarnished. 20

Hyde then noted that their predicament may have been foreshadowed and that "men possessing certain feelings and principles would not prosper in their journey over the plains."

Eventually, the Guardian and editor Hyde concerned themselves less and less with the exploits of Babbitt. The Mormon settlers in Kanesville were preparing to move lock, stock and barrel to Utah. Ironically, the Guardian would remain in Kanesville but would eventually be swallowed up by Babbitt's Bugle.
Notes to Chapter Five

1 Guardian, November 14, 1851.

2 Guardian, February 7, 1849.

3 Wayne Andrews, editor, Concise Dictionary of American History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962) p. 566. The Loco Foco party was a radical faction of the Democratic party which came into existence in 1835. From 1835 to 1860, the term was applied to the National Democratic party by its opponents. It is probably in the latter context that Hyde used the term.


5 Guardian, April 18, 1849.


7 Guardian, May 30, 1849.

8 Clark, p. 542.

9 Guardian, February 20, 1850

10 Guardian, April 3, 1850.

11 Guardian, August 21, 1850.

12 Guardian, August 21, 1850.

13 Guardian, September 18, 1850.

14 Guardian, September 18, 1850.

15 Guardian, August 21, 1850.

17 Guardian, May 16, 1851.
18 Guardian, May 16, 1851.
20 Guardian, June 13, 1851.
VI. Packing Up the Press

"Westward the Star of Empire wends its way."¹

Over the course of its short lifetime the Frontier Guardian evolved into a paper with a dualistic editorial purpose which created conflicts when Hyde had to balance church doctrine with commercial concerns. Hyde was a loyal and dedicated church elder committed to recruiting converts and leading the Kanesville followers. However, Hyde's economic, social and political connection to Kanesville fostered a growing reluctance on his part to pull up stakes and guide the remaining Mormons to Utah. Hyde continued to encourage those able, to move on to Salt Lake, but personally he seems inclined to postpone and perhaps even ignore the inevitable until Brigham Young inquired quite pointedly in a letter to Hyde, "When are you coming on? What are you waiting on?"²

With Hyde's increasing reluctance to move there was a growing sense of urgency on the part of the church elders in Salt Lake to round up the Mormon emigrants straggling behind and unite all in the Valley settlement.³ The distance between Kanesville and Salt Lake was great enough that given enough time and autonomy, Hyde and company might settle in permanently.
As the Kanesville Mormons prepared to move lock, stock and barrel to Salt Lake in 1852, Hyde spent his energy boosting and promoting the Pottawatamie County real estate. The Mormons had spent enormous energy building the community and cultivating the land. They would be leaving an established outfitting town. In order to finance an overland trek to Salt Lake, the city of Kanesville and the farms surrounding it must be sold. Editor Hyde donned the hat of real estate broker and set about the business of selling the county, calling the area an incredible investment for all wishing to increase their wealth.

In November of 1851, the Guardian printed an article titled "Pottawatamie County for Sale," which pointed out that the "valuable claims and improvements of that portion of this County owned and occupied by the Mormon population are for sale."

The Guardian further emphasized:

Remember that Kanesville is a valuable point. It is and is destined to be the outfitting post on the western Frontier for Oregon, Salt Lake, and California emigrants. The soil is productive, and a home market for everything that can be produced from soil.4

The article explained that the Mormons were preparing to make a general move in the spring, thus the time was ripe for speculation and investment. In his best booster language, Hyde exclaimed, that Kanesville was
the best point for producing in all the west, and the best market on the Frontier. Now is the time for purchasers: Strike while the iron is hot and secure a fortune while you can.  

The Mormon settlers who called Kanesville home, would leave a legacy in their wake in the form of a thriving community nestled on the banks of the Missouri. As their departure drew near, the citizens embarked on one last community improvement campaign. In late 1851, a petition was drawn up and sent to Congress requesting a grant of land one mile square that included the community of Kanesville. Residents proposed that the area then be sold to claimants at $1.25 per acre. The proceeds would then be used for street improvements and bridge construction.  

The Guardian elaborated on this proposal explaining that although the Mormons would be leaving Kanesville in the spring, all were happy to see steps taken to ensure the community's survival. As Hyde put it:

Nature's hand has given Pottawatamie a geographical location that affords her not only the natural sources of wealth, but the superior advantages of trade and commerce. We are glad to see our citizens awake upon this subject, - taking measures to secure their permanence to Kanesville and to improve the place in a manner worthy of the inducements which nature and surrounding circumstances held out.  

Leaving Kanesville was doubtless a difficult task for Orson Hyde. He would be leaving a home and a community beholden to him for its growth. But more importantly, Hyde would be leaving his beloved
newspaper, the *Frontier Guardian*.

In an 1850 issue of the *Guardian*, an editorial described the component parts of an editor as

...the constitution of a horse, obstinancy of a mule, independence of a wood sawyer, pertinacity of a dun, endurance of a starving anaconda, impudence of a beggar, and entire resignation to the most confounded of all earthly tread-mills; and he must be a moving target for every body to shoot at, and is expected to know everything, and to assist "busybodies" to pry into the business of their neighbors. If he does not come up to this description he cannot be thought a good editor.  

Indeed, Orson Hyde had acquired most of these traits as *Guardian* editor. Hyde was obstinate, independent, impudent, and happily resigned to the earthly tread-mill of frontier editor. He had proven to be a fleet-footed moving target, having survived repeated assaults from all corners of the frontier: from prejudiced Gentiles; from disenfranchised Mormon politicians; and from fellow editors. Hyde survived in style and, on almost every occasion, he reserved for himself the right to the final word.

Thus, it was in all likelihood a difficult task to turn the *Frontier Guardian* over to a new editor and publisher when in 1852 the paper was sold to Jacob Dawson, a Gentile attorney. Hyde lamented that Dawson was not a Mormon, but he commented that the new editor appeared to be "liberal-minded."  

Dawson would publish the new *Frontier Guardian and Iowa Sentinel* weekly starting March 1852. In his final "Valedictory" column, Hyde
waxed poetic on turning over his frontier newspaper:

Having therefore seen friend Dawson fully installed in office, seated upon the tripod, and wielding the goose-quill scepter, we feel like making our bow and withdrawing from the Sanctum, bequeathing our mantle and best wishes upon our worthy successor, after having managed and conducted the Guardian three years and one month. But this office, having enlisted our deepest interests and good will, cannot fail to command our respect and attention while we remain in the country; and when nothing of more interest can be found to fill the columns of the paper, we may scribble a little now and then for the Guardian and Sentinel, to benefit, arrange, and order our emigration, and other matters that may be interesting.10

Even though Hyde found it difficult to close the chapter on his tenure as western Iowa's only frontier editor, he had a deep understanding of the impact his words had in chronicling events that he felt would be "more fully appreciated at a future day". Hyde exclaimed, "time is rapidly hurrying us onward to the verge of mortality - to the ocean of eternity!"11

Orson Hyde also appreciated the role he and the Guardian had played in building a community, encouraging commerce and inspiring his followers. He wrote:

Like the elements of animal life that are ever in motion, an Editor's pen often moves individuals, and sometimes whole communities. They are occasionally moved by a pleasing and gratifying influence, and then again excited to resentment and indignation by sayings adverse to what they consider their interests or reputation. Action and re-action are the great principles that constitute the ebbing and flowing of the tide of nature in every department.12

The role of journalism on the frontier was perhaps as individual as the frontier newspaper itself. A news sheet in a young, outfitting
town such as Kanesville, at various times served as promoter shouting
the attributes of the community to all with an inclination to settle
or plunder the vast west. Certainly, the Guardian earned its place
among the great booster papers on the Missouri River. For without the
Frontier Guardian, Kanesville in all probability would have faded into
obscurity as a temporary Mormon encampment.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine the political turns
that Kanesville might have taken without the influence of the Frontier
Guardian. Editor Hyde's endorsement of Whig candidates was in
conflict with the Democratic leanings of the Utah Mormons. This issue
established Hyde as a strong, opinionated and free-thinking leader and
created a strong Whig voting block in western Iowa.

The Guardian also is noteworthy for the slice of history chronicled
on its pages. Through the eyes of Editor Hyde, the reader is allowed
a glimpse into the world of the mid-1800s through the focus of Whig
politics, Mormon theology and Hyde's unique observations, frustrations
and dreams. The vision is intensely personal and, unlike the
newspapers of today, seldom objective.
Notes for Chapter Six

1  Guardian, June 13, 1851.
2  Nonpareil, July 24, 1932.
3  Guardian, January 23, 1850.
4  Guardian, November 14, 1851.
5  Guardian, November 14, 1851.
6  Guardian, December 12, 1851.
7  Guardian, December 12, 1851.
8  Guardian, November 13, 1850.
9  Guardian, February 20, 1850.
10 Guardian, February 20, 1850.
11 Guardian, February 20, 1850.
12 Guardian, February 20, 1850.
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