

BIOGRAPHY OF
REYNOLDS CAHOON

Reynolds Cahoon was a sixth generation American. The known ancestors of Reynolds are as follows: Reynolds, son of William Jr., son of William, son of Ebenezer, son of Joseph, son of William Cahoon. This information is taken from the records kept by Daniel Farrington Cahoon, son of Andrew, son of Reynolds.

Reynolds Cahoon was the son of William Cahoon Jr. and Mehitable Hodge. William Jr. was son of William, whose forefathers came to America from Scotland and settled in Rhode Island and from thence scattered abroad in different parts of the land. Reynolds was born 30 April 1790 at Cambridge, Washington County, New York.

He married 11 December 1810 in New Port, New York, to Thirza Stiles, daughter of Daniel Olds Stiles, son of John Stiles. They were married by the Hon. John Stiles. Reynolds moved to Harpersfield, Ohio, then a new county, and began farming in the year 1811. In the winter of 1812, Reynolds was called up to serve in the army during the War of 1812, but was never to see any action.

Reynolds lived in Harpersfield about 12 years. Five children were born at this place. In 1825 he moved about thirty miles further west near the town of Kirtland and went into the business of tanning leather and making shoes.

Reynolds was a soldier in the War of 1812. His first known American ancestor, William Cahoon of Block Island, Rhode Island, gave his life in 1675 defending the Massachusetts Colonies in the cruel King Philip's War. William Cahoon Jr., father of Reynolds, served in the American Revolution under Captain Slocum in the regiment of Col. Asa Barnes. He enlisted 11 October 1781 at Williamstown, Berkshire County, Massachusetts and marched to Saratoga "by order of General Stark, on alarm."

He was baptized 12 October 1830 and confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints just six months after the organization of the Mormon Church and from that day on his life and the history of that church are inseparable. He was baptized by Parley P. Pratt. He was ordained an elder by Sidney Rigdon and went on a mission. He was ordained a high priest by Lyman Wight. His missionary companion was Samuel Smith, Joseph's brother.

Elder Reynolds Cahoon was ordained a High Priest 13 June 1831, at the fourth General Conference held at Kirtland, Ohio. Reynolds writes in his private journal:

"Several were selected by revelation through President Smith and ordained to the High Priesthood after the Order of God, which is after the Order of Melchizedek, this was the first

occasion in which the priesthood had been revealed and conferred upon Elders in this dispensation. Except as being held by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, although the office is the same in a certain degree, but not in the fullness. On this occasion I was ordained to His Holy Ordinance and called by President Smith."

He used most of his property to finance preaching and to assist others in building and establishing the work of God. He was ordained to go and preach the Gospel to the world and in company with Samuel H. Smith and twenty-four elders, he traveled to Missouri, preaching and baptizing by the way. The revelation pertaining to the calling of Reynolds Cahoon was given 7 June 1831 and is recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 52 verse 30. Church historians tell us that Samuel H. Smith and Reynolds Cahoon were the second missionaries to enter Illinois and the first to enter Kentucky.

He returned to Kirtland in September and in December was ordained a counselor to Bishop Whitney. He was called by revelation, one of the three committeemen, to build a House of the Lord in Kirtland in 1832. He and Hyrum Smith commenced their labors in May by counsel of the Prophet Joseph. They had not a dollar to help them labor, but according to promise they soon had the means to forward the building.

It is significant to the descendants of Reynolds Cahoon to know the high esteem in which he was held by the leaders of the Church, not only because of his faith and obedience but because he devoted his entire life to the work of the Church. He had the fantastically difficult joy of directing the building of the Kirtland Temple and was also chosen, with Hyrum Smith, to act as counselor to Bishop Whitney, the first Bishop at Kirtland. Many were his responsibilities:

- a. To keep the Lord's storehouse and receive funds of the Church to look after the needy and preside over the affairs of the Church.
- b. To keep accounts of property consecrated for public use and administer needs of the Elders.
- c. To furnish every Elder entitled to it, a certificate by which he is entitled to have a right to receive an inheritance in Zion.
- d. To keep account of the labors of every Bishop.
- e. To aid, financially the "Stewards" appointed to look after the literary interests of the Church.

Reynolds and the temple committee were not only appointed to obtain subscriptions for the building of the House of the Lord but was the manager of the store in Kirtland and also raised money and supervised the construction of a school building in Zion. This school was the first in the educational movement of the church. William F. Cahoon, son of Reynolds, attended this school. Parley P. Pratt presided. Hebrew, Greek and Latin were taught.

In 1834, a certain incident which is of special significance to us as a family and also important in the history of the Book of Mormon occurred. It pertains to the christening of an infant son, the seventh child of Reynolds and Thirza Stiles Cahoon. "While residing in Kirtland, Elder Reynolds Cahoon had a son born to him. One day when President Joseph Smith was passing his door he called the Prophet in to bless and name the baby. Joseph did so and gave the boy the name of Mahonri Moriancumer. When he had finished the blessing he laid the child on the bed and turning to Elder Cahoon saying, 'the name I have given your son is the name of the brother of Jared; the Lord has just shown (or revealed) it to me.' William F. Cahoon, was standing near and heard the Prophet make this statement to the father. This was the first time the name of the Brother Of Jared was known in the Church in this dispensation."

In this family and home another event of much importance occurred. It was "the first public marriage" in the Mormon church. Sunday, 17 January 1836, was the marriage of William Farrington Cahoon to Nancy Miranda Gibbs.

The Kirtland temple was dedicated 27 March 1836 and on the day of dedication, an angel appeared, sent as a messenger to accept the dedication. A few days afterward, a solemn assembly was held in accordance with a commandment received, and blessings were given. While these things were being attended to, the beloved disciple, John, was seen in their midst by the Prophet Joseph, Oliver Cowdery and others. Reynolds Cahoon was present as a member of the building committee.

He stayed in Kirtland till the year 1837 and then he practically abandoned property valued at \$5,000. In the autumn of 1837 he was ordained by President Marks as counselor in the Kirtland Stake. In the Spring of 1838, Reynolds, His wife, and family traveled to Missouri. They were compelled to leave behind them everything they possessed. 7 June 1838 Joseph Smith visited with Reynolds and Parley P. Pratt upon their arrival to Far West. On June 28th a conference of Elders and members of the Church was held in the place Elder Cahoon had selected for his residence for the purpose of organizing the Stake, called Adam-ondi-Ahman.

Reynolds represented the Saints in a solemn pledge of peace but Governor Boggs issued an "Order of Extermination" of the Mormons and an armed mob came upon them which resulted in that terrible massacre of Haun's Mill. Reynolds Cahoon and his son William F. tell of the inhumanity and outrages that "shock all nature and defy all description." The Mormons were forced to move out of Missouri to Illinois where they built the city of Nauvoo. It was here the Lord gave the commandment to "build a House unto Me." Reynolds was appointed, in company of Brothers A. Cutler and E. Higbee, to a committee to build the temple in Nauvoo. Reynolds also assisted in building the Mansion House, the residence of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

The persecution of the Saints followed them to Nauvoo and the Prophet's life was in danger. After finding that there was to be no help from the Governor of Illinois, Thomas Ford, Joseph decided to cross the Mississippi River and to away to the West.

One evening Hyrum came out of the Mansion House and gave his hand to Reynolds saying, "A company of men are seeking to kill my brother Joseph and the Lord has warned him to flee to the Rocky Mountains to save his life. Good-by, Brother Cahoon, we shall see you again."

Orrin Porter Rockwell rowed the skiff which carried Joseph, Hyrum and Doctor Richards to the Iowa side of the river. Brother Bernheisel crossed over the river and Reynolds Cahoon also went to visit Joseph to explain to him, as requested, regarding the Governor's letter. Emma sent Rockwell to Joseph, requesting him to entreat Joseph to come back. Reynolds accompanied him with a letter which Emma had written to the same effect. She insisted that Reynolds use every persuasion with Joseph to come back and give himself up.

History records: "When they went over they found Joseph, Hyrum and Willard (Richards) in a room, by themselves, having provisions on the floor ready for packing. Reynolds informed Joseph what the troops intended to do and urged him to give himself up inasmuch as the Governor had pledged his faith and the faith of the State to protect him while he underwent a legal and fair trial. After much persuasion, Joseph decided to return to Nauvoo, saying, 'If my life is of no value to my friends it is of none to myself'...and after studying a few moments Joseph said to Hyrum, 'If you go back, I will go with you, but we shall be butchered'...then after a short pause, Joseph told Cahoon to request Captain Davis to have his boat ready at half-past five to cross them over the river."

Reynolds was in Carthage with Joseph and Hyrum and the record states: "Joseph instructed Cahoon to return to Nauvoo with all haste and fetch a number of documents for the promised trial. Elder Cahoon returned (to Nauvoo) from Carthage for some papers but sent them back with Rockwell. On 27 June 1844 Joseph and Hyrum were assassinated at Carthage Jail."

Just three months after the death of Joseph and Hyrum, Reynolds and several other Latter-day Saint men were "illegally arrested for treason" and forced to go to trial at Carthage. The case was dismissed and Reynolds and his friends were released.

Obedient to the commandment, the Nauvoo Temple was completed and on December 10th and 11th, 1845, Thirza and Reynolds received their endowments and at 7:10 p.m., 16 January 1846, were sealed in Celestial Marriage by President Brigham Young.

morning 30 November 1845 and prayed that the Lord would hear their prayers and deliver them from their enemies until they had accomplished His will in His House. Brigham Young ordered the evacuation of Nauvoo and the month of February, 1848 found the Mormons in full flight across the frozen crust of the Mississippi River headed toward the unknown west.

9 March 1846, the Cahoon family left Nauvoo. They left their home, without a farthing. They had a span of horses, harness, and a carriage, which had been given them in payment for their home in Nauvoo.

During the journey, on March 14th, Reynolds was thrown from his wagon, dislocating his shoulder. William F. and Daniel S. Cahoon, sons of Reynolds, also left with their families. They were members of the Nauvoo Brass Band and traveled with this band, playing numerous concerts throughout the various settlements of the middle west to earn funds to help the great migration.

On May 8, the Cahoon family arrived at Garden Grove, where they met a member of the family, Andrew. He had been carrying mail for the pioneers between Nauvoo and Garden Grove.

Reynolds proved himself to be not only a great architect and builder but a shrewd business man capable of engineering many complex problems.

25 January 1847 Brigham Young organized his company. I. Morley was nominated president with Reynolds Cahoon and John Young as counselors, each as captains of one hundred. Winter Quarters was to be stockaded and guarded to protect the women and children whose husbands were in the army and were not to emigrate until later.

Reynold's son, Andrew was called to serve a mission to the British Isles while they were at Winter Quarters and it was not until after he had served his mission and returned that the Cahoon Company crossed the plains to join the Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah.

They arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in the evening of 23 September 1848, which was about one year later than the first pioneers.

Reynolds Cahoon continued to occupy many important positions in his church and country, ever loyal to his convictions in the truthfulness of the Gospel. He was affectionately called "Father Cahoon" and truly loved by all who knew him. He mingled with his people in all their political, religious and social affairs. In their festivities he was honored on all occasions. He counseled, instructed, led and guided his family, friends and loved ones. He was a speaker at General Conference and at each conference was

Reynolds recieved the highest praise from those who knew him best, especially from Hyrum Smith and the Prophet Joseph Smith while they were alive, so also did President Brigham Young pay tribute to Reynolds at the General Conferences of 1857, 59, and 60.

Reynolds was the first and only private owner of the lots where the Great Salt Lake Theater was built. The location was the corner of First South and State Street. One day Brigham Young came to Reynolds and said, "Brother Cahoon we need your lots, we must build a theater." These were very valuable lots in the heart of Salt Lake City. Reynolds and Thirza had given everything of worldly value they had ever possessed to their church; they had dedicated every moment of their lives for the Gospel's sake. When they left the cities of Kirtland and Nauvoo, their homes and property were left behind and many times they had said, "We have given all to God". " Yes", they reasoned, "These lots can perform a mission for us, and, give or sell, our Church shall have them". 23 April 1860, history tells us, "Reynolds Cahoon conveyed this property to Brigham Young for the purpose of erecting the Salt Lake Theater." For payment he received a number of oxen, a wagon, cows, and merchandise. He also had a debt paid he owed in the tithing office which was several hundred dollars. He was well satisfied with the pay as he thought he got a big price for it.

6 March 1862 the building was dedicated for its formal opening by Daniel H. Wells. 8 March 1862, two dramatic performances initiated the new Playhouse. The famous old Playhouse has since been torn down, the property sold to Mountain States Telephone Company and a metal plaque on the wall of their building marks the spot where the theater once stood.

After the sale of the property, Reynolds and Thirza moved to South Cottonwood, Salt Lake County, Utah. He they lived with their son Andrew, who provided and cared for them until the time of their deaths. He never even had the opportunity of attending a performance in the theater that owed its existence to him, passing away at his residence in South Cottonwoods Ward of dropsy 29 April 1861. He was buried in the Salt Lake City Cemetery along with his wife Thirza.

Reynolds Cahoon married three times. His first wife was Thirza Stiles, his second, Lucina Johnson, his third, Mary Hildrath. The celestial marriages of Thirza, Lucina and Mary to Reynolds are recorded in the Microfilm department of the Utah Genealogical Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. The date is 16 January 1846 and the film is known as "Nauvoo Sealings". These marriages were performed by Brigham Young.