

Edward Milo Webb
17 August 1815 - 31 July 1852
by Elaine Johnson

Milo was the fifth son of James and Hannah Griswold Webb. He was born in Hanover, Chautauqua, New York. His parents had carved a farm out of the heavy forest. Milo was fifteen when Mormons began moving into the small town of Kirtland, Ohio, fifty miles west. Missionaries came to the family in 1834. Milo was baptized 26 August 1834, just after his nineteenth birthday.

He moved with his parents to Kirtland. The temple was being built and was completed early in 1836. Milo attended the day Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery as mentioned in Section 110 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Milo belonged to the Kirtland Safety Society and Anti-Trust Company. Milo's name appears on a list containing the ordained Ministers of the Gospel for the church whose licenses had been recorded in the License Records the preceding quarter, published June 3, 1836, at Kirtland, Ohio.

The Webbs moved to Missouri in 1838 and settled in Adam-ondi-Ahman. When mob violence became extreme those living at Adam-ondi-Ahman and other small communities were forced to evacuate to Far West. From there they were driven into Illinois. Milo and his brother Lorenzo saw a beautiful girl dancing on a tree stump at a gathering and thought she was a lovely dancer. Both courted her but she chose Milo. He married Caroline Amelia Owens in December 1839 in a ceremony conducted by Joseph Smith. Lorenzo died the same month. They lived first in Payson, then moved to Nauvoo where they were members of the Nauvoo First Ward. Others in the ward were Sidney Rigdon, King Follet, Orson Pratt and Eliza R. Snow. Their first three children were born in Nauvoo. Milo served as a missionary in Michigan during these years.

To the Editor of the 'Times & Seasons'.
Nauvoo, April 17th, 1843.

Dear Sir, Believing that a knowledge of the spread of truth will be interesting to you, as well as the numerous readers of your valuable periodical, I thought I would give you a short history of my labors and success the last six months.

I left Nauvoo Oct. 3, in company with Elder H. B. Owens. We traveled preaching by the way, shaping our course for the state of Michigan. We preached five times and baptized one in Kendall county Ill.; from thence we came to the village of Niles, state of Michigan. Here we separated taking different directions for Albion, Calhoun county, where there is a small branch of the church."

I labored in Niles and the regions round about for two weeks to crowded congregations. Much prejudice gave way, and many appeared to receive the word with gladness. I then left for Albion where I labored three weeks. I then started back intending to go to Niles, but came as far as Comstock (a small town four miles east of Kalamazoo, the shire town of Kalamazoo co.,) where I learned that

the notorious J.C. Bennett was lecturing in Kalamazoo. Some of the citizens of Comstock went to him and told him that a Mormon preacher was in Comstock. Oh, says he, he is one of Joe Smith's "destroying angels" my life is not safe here, he has got five hundred out to kill me. And in his hurry to get away from the "destroying angel," he forgot to pay his tavern bill, and the poor Presbyterians for lighting and warming their house, as might be expected. They called him a notorious rascal and knave, not only for this circumstance, but from his own statements which were of such a nature that none could believe them but such as had an uncommon degree of credulity. The next day (being Sabbath) I preached in Comstock. They requested me to preach again, I did so. By this time I had invitations to preach in several places. I continued laboring in that section of country till March 7th, and baptized 24, and organized them into a branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which we called the Kalamazoo branch. The work is but just begun in that place. I left scores believing, and I never saw such calls for preaching as there is in all the western part of Michigan. I had more invitations than I could possibly fill, although the Priests used their utmost endeavors to stop the progress of the work yet it rolled forward with a steady pace being propelled by the mighty hand of the Great God, and the truth found its way home to the hearts of the honest, some of whom walked forward in obedience to its divine requirements.

I regret that circumstances were such that I had to leave so soon. I hope that some faithful elder will call on them, and continue the work. They will find the brethren hospitable and kind. Should the twelve remember them while on their mission to the east, they can enquire for Ezekiel Lee, or Lemuel Willard, Esq. or Jesse Earl, Comstock, Kalamazoo co. Mich.

I will now close by subscribing myself your friend and brother in the new and ever-lasting covenant.

E.M. Webb

He was known as a convincing speaker and splendid singer. His son Edward Milo Jr. testified that on one occasion Milo had conducted a meeting where the members of the congregation were of different nationalities but all understood everything said in their own language. An account from Milo's service in Michigan was recorded by Joseph Smith in the *History of the Church*:

April 17, 1843 Elder E.M. Webb writes that he has been laboring with success in several counties in Michigan. When he came to Comstock in Kalamazoo County, Dr. J.C. Bennet was lecturing in Kalamazoo, the shire town, and was told that there was a Mormon Elder in the neighborhood. Bennett said: "That is one of Joe Smith's destroying angels who has come to kill me." And he left town in such a haste that he forgot to pay his tavern bill, also, the poor Presbyterian for lighting and warming the house for him. Elder Webb commenced preaching there, baptized twenty-four people and organized a branch.

On the twenty-third of April Milo was commissioned into the Illinois State Militia and the next day he was given the rank of captain of the 2nd Company. His brothers Chauncy and Pardon were Lieutenants in the same company. The next winter he was sent back to Michigan. Milo's name appears in the minutes of a conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, held at Comstock, Kalamazoo, Michigan the 8th 9th and 10th of December 1843. Milo and his brother Pardon were listed among the Elders present. Milo was chosen as president of the conference. He also represented the Kalamazoo branch of forty members. Milo spoke the second day about the gospel.

Milo's journal is quoted in the "Journal History of the Church", "There has been a considerable number baptized of late in this section of the country. There appears to be a considerable inquiry manifested in the minds of many concerning this work. The Saints are generally strong in the faith, looking forward to the fulfilling of the promises of the coming of the Lord. Although the cruel hand of persecution has been heavily laid upon the church, its progress is still onward, for truth is might and will prevail. The chastisement we have received is like a sieve; for while it sifts out the bran the flour is still preserved. The honest-in-heart is not to be shaken by persecution. It serves to strengthen their faith in God and shows their dependence upon Him."

To the Editor of the 'Times and Seasons'.
Comstock, Kalamazoo. Mich.,
February. 17, 1844.

SIR: -- I take this opportunity to inform you of the prosperity of the Redeemer's cause in this section of country. Last winter, (December 19) I commenced preaching in this place; my congregations were large and attentive; I continued preaching and baptizing till March 6th, when I organized a branch of 25 members. On the 7th, I started for Nauvoo, at which place I arrived on the 14th of April. At the special conference, held in July, I was appointed in company with my brother P. Webb, to visit Will and Grundy counties, Ill. On the 19th, we started on our mission; labored about two weeks in Will, then continued our journey for this place, and arrived here September 5th; found the saints strong in the faith, and their numbers increased to 34, since which time 14 have been added. I have lately been out in Barry county, and delivered seven lectures, Prejudice gave way, and several manifested their determination to obey the gospel; whom I expect to baptize when I return. The work is in a prosperous condition through this whole section of country; we have much opposition from the priests and others, but truth is invariably triumphant. About a month since, elder Waldron baptized a Universalist preacher, by the name of Spafford, in Van Buren county. He has since commenced preaching the fulness of the everlasting gospel.

Elders Gamet and Loveland are preaching in Calhoun county, and I understand have baptized several.

I will now close by subscribing myself with high considerations of respect,
your friend, &c.

E.M. WEBB.

June first and second, 1844, Milo was chosen as clerk at a conference held in Kalamazoo. Principle speakers included Elder George A. Smith. In December of the year Milo spoke at a conference and stressed the necessity of sending tithes to Nauvoo for the completion of the Temple. Those attending the conference formally resolved to do so. He was also a speaker at two other conferences in Michigan.

From the minutes of a conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints, held in Comstock, Kalamazoo county, Michigan, December 8th, and 9th, 1844: "after singing Elder E. M. Webb delivered a discourse on the necessity of obeying the word of God given in this last dispensation, wherein he laid before the saints the importance of tithing themselves and sending their donations to Nauvoo at the earliest convenience for the building of the temple. He was followed by Elder Savage on the same subject." Later the same day, "The meeting was then called to order by the chairman, after singing the throne of grace was implored by Elder E. M. Webb. Elder D. Savage addressed the meeting on the subject of baptism and confirmation; he was followed by Elder E. M. Webb on the same subject." He represented the Grand Prairie branch and seven members in Barry county.

The following resolutions were then offered by Elder E. M. Webb:

Resolved, that we will sustain the "Twelve" and all the authorities of the church, and abide by their counsel as far as in us lies.

Resolved, that we will tithe ourselves according to our several abilities to aid in building the temple at Nauvoo.

Resolved, that a treasurer be appointed having a recommend from this conference whose duty shall be to travel through the conference to receive tithings, consecrations, and donations, and collect all the means possible and forward the same at his earliest convenience to Nauvoo to the 'trustees in trust.'

Resolved, that Elder Crandall Dunn be appointed said treasurer.

Resolved, that Brother Thomas Forsyth be ordained a priest, and he was then ordained under the hands of Elders Webb and Savage.

Resolved, that the minutes of this conference be sent to Nauvoo with a request that they be published in the Times and Seasons.

Resolved, that this conference adjourn sine die.

Crandall Dunn, Chairman."

Stephen C. Willard, Clerk.¹

¹*Times and Seasons*, Vol.5, Pg.579 580

Milo was in Michigan at the time Joseph and Hyrum Smith were martyred 27 June 1844. He wrote a poem in their honor.

I came to the spot where the two martyrs lay
And passively stood by their tomb,
And in a soft whisper I heard someone say:
“How sweetly they sleep here alone.”
The tempest may rave and the loud thunders roar
And billowing storms may arise;
Yet calm and serene and at rest are their souls
The tears are all wiped from their eyes.

Only a small number among the Saints were aware of the revelation the Prophet received about polygamy prior to his death. Rumors, speculation and false reports traveled well in advance of the truth. Milo had spent much of the preceding few years away from Nauvoo and had apparently not been informed when he wrote the following letter in rebuttal to Sidney Rigdon's apostate charges.

MORMONISM UNVEILED

Dear Sir: To condemn unheard, any man or set of men or their principles, on the strength of popular rumor, or the testimony of enemies, would be gross injustice. An impartial investigation should always precede condemnation. The Latter-day Saints are charged by their enemies, with the blackest crimes. Treason, murder, theft, polygamy, and adultery, are among the many crimes laid to their charge. -- The press reiterates and gives publicity to these charges. Under these circumstances, it is but right, that they should be heard in their defense. I shall, therefore, in this communication, briefly examine and refute a few of the charges, for it would need a legion of writers to answer (all) the lies told about us.

Most of the stories against the Mormons have been propagated by apostates and traitors, (who have generally been cut off from the church for their crimes.) They publish their lies, and straightway they are believed, and hawked about as awful disclosures, and received by community with trembling and holy horror. Sidney Rigdon, I see by the papers, has made an exposition of Mormonism, charging Joseph Smith and the Mormons with polygamy, &c. it does not require a very sagacious mind to fathom Mr. Rigdon's motive for so doing. Soon after the murder of the Smiths, he declared in a public address in Nauvoo that Joseph Smith died approved of God -- that the Latter-day Saints were a blessed people, &c. His tone is now changed, and why? Because he sought to be presiding elder, and on account of his corruption, was rejected. On the 10th of September, last, he was tried before the church and excommunicated as a schismatic. If he knew such enormities to exist among the Mormons, why did he call them a blessed people, and endeavor to place himself at the head of their church? Mr. Rigdon's spiritual wife system was never known till it was hatched by John C. Bennett who was cut off from the church for seduction.

As to the charge of polygamy, I will quote from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, which is the subscribed faith of the church and is strictly enforced. Article Marriage, sec. 91, par. 4, says, "Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication and polygamy, we declare that we believe that one man should have BUT ONE WIFE, and one woman but one husband except in case of death when either is at liberty to marry again. " Sec. 13, par. 7. Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart and shall cleave unto her and NONE ELSE." In ancient days the church was troubled with traitors, and always will be till God cleanses the earth, and restores the government of his Son. Paul says he was in (perils among false brethren); again he says, "know this that, in (the last days perilous times shall come), for men shall be TRAITORS, FALSE ACCUSERS, INCONTINENT, fierce despiser of those that are good." No wonder then that apostates rage, or that the fulness of truth revealed again should bring a storm of persecution.

The charge that the Mormons have disregarded the laws of Illinois, in electing officers under their charter, when the same had been repealed, is thus explained in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*: "The time for our election as pointed out by law, occurred just about or before the time that the report of the repeal reached us. It was not thought advisable, however, to omit our election upon a mere rumor, but to proceed and elect our officers, and in the event that the rumor proved true, to yield, whatever might be our opinion as to the legal right to repeal an act with perpetual succession."

There is nothing in Mormonism that teaches vice and immorality; but it requires man to have faith in God, to repent of and forsake sin to be baptized for the remission of the same, then receive the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Spirit, according to the ancient pattern, to live virtuous and holy lives, to believe in and seek to enjoy all the gifts and blessings enjoyed by the children of the Most High in days of old. It forbids every species of crime, and its influence is to make men better. Yet its followers have been persecuted, murdered and driven from their possessions; and its slanderers are unceasing in endeavoring to bring down still greater calamities upon them. Defenseless prisoners have been massacred in cold blood while under the plighted faith of their country, while our murderers and those who have plundered, robbed and driven us, still go unpunished and can boast of their heroic deeds through the length and breadth of the land. For instance, Thomas C. Sharp, editor of the Warsaw Signal, is now indicted for the murder of the Smiths, yet he stands at the head of a weekly paper from whence issues most of the vile trash about Mormon outrages, &c., Jacob C. Davis, also, a Senator, stands indicted for the same murder, and is only kept from the demands of justice, by mob violence: yet, when a requisition was made for him by the Sheriff of Hancock county, the Senate refused to give him up for fear they would not have strength enough to repeal the Nauvoo charter. (O tempora! O mores!) a MURDERER making laws for a free and enlightened people. Is it just that the Mormons should receive such treatment? O! ye Americans, the glory of

freedom has departed the rich boon transmitted to us by our fathers has gone from us, if such things are to be tolerated with impunity. Our fathers fought for the liberties of which we are deprived. But says one, how are you deprived of them? We have paid hundreds of thousands of dollars into the treasury of the United States for lands which we are not allowed to possess; our chartered rights have been taken from us; fifteen thousand of our people are now exiles in Illinois and dare not return to their lands in Missouri, for the penalty is death. O, ye Americans you boast of liberty! of religious freedom! of protection of life and property! Gracefully your proud flag floats in the breeze of every clime saying, to the menials of other lands, "I overshadow a land which is an asylum for the oppressed of all nations," yet your own citizens, (the poor Mormons,) are robbed, mobbed, and plundered with impunity. Your prairies have drunk our blood: your dungeons have heard our groans -- your gloomy prisons have witnessed the cold blooded assassination of their leaders. O tell it not to the tyrants of oriental lands: let not the crowned heads of Europe know of the oppression which has been wrought in a free republic, lest they scoff at you in derision and say you boast of liberty, yet you cannot protect your own citizens.

Mr. Editor, it does seem to me that the press and all lovers of their country, should speak in tones of thunder in condemnation of the oppression, persecution and abuse the Mormons have received, instead of giving publicity to the statements of such renegadoes, and such a lawless banditti, as all acquainted with the facts, must know our traducers to be; for if such things are suffered now, and do not receive their merited rebuke, and punishment, because the sufferers are unpopular, and be marked out to receive the vengeance of their traducers and then farewell to American freedom.

Yours, &c., E. M. WEBB.²

Both Milo and his brother spoke at a conference held the first weekend of June 1845 in Florence, St. Joseph county, Michigan. Milo was ordained a Seventy 26 October 1845. Milo and his brothers operated the Webb Blacksmith Shop where they built wagons for those preparing to leave Nauvoo. Milo was also a carpenter and builder, though it must have been rare for all five to be working at one time. They were as busy in the mission field as in the shop. "There was a wagon shop across the street a little to the west of our house, run by some men by the name of Webb. I used to go there to see them work at the wagons and watch them paint. One of the men's name was 'Pardon', and I used to think, 'What a funny name.'"³ Milo was endowed in the Nauvoo temple 5 January 1846 and sealed to his wife 21 January 1846. "4 February 1846 . . . first wave of emigrants left Nauvoo. Mississippi choked with ice flows, bitter wind blew at corner of Parley and Granger Streets. Webb's Wagon and Blacksmith Shop was noisy beehive . . .

² From the *Kalamazoo (Mich.) Gazette*

³ *Mosiah Hancock Autobiography*, typescript, BYU-S, Pg.1

toiled far into the night hammering red-hot iron into wheels.”⁴ “It was some sixty or more feet in length and was built of stone, adjoining Pardon Webb's home on the east. There were two forges, both cinder and charcoal burning, equipped with bellows, where nails, wheels and horseshoes were forged and there was an adjoining wagon shop where the wagon boxes were built. . . The shop was large enough and there was plenty of business to keep them all employed.”⁵

They left Nauvoo that spring and helped establish Winter Quarters, Nebraska. It was abandoned in 1848. Milo had a chance to work in Missouri. He needed the work to finance the trek across the plains so he took his family to Linden in Clay county. Two of his children were born there.

By 1852 Milo was ready to take his family to Utah. They set out with the last company to leave Council Bluffs. The 16th company under Captain Uriah Curtis was assaulted with a cholera epidemic. A 'young lady' who had the disease sent for Milo asking him to administer to her. The girl recovered but Milo became ill and died the same night, just a couple of weeks short of his thirty-seventh birthday. One seventeen year old in the company who had no father, husband or brother to give her a blessing was Hannah Austin Wilder whose grand daughter Mary Dye would marry Milo's grandson and namesake. Milo's wife wrote, “He died in full faith of the gospel.” He was buried in a coffin fashioned from a wooden box strapped to the back of their wagon.

The following afternoon the Curtis company was passed by the Henry Miller company. Isaac Carling, of the Miller company, recorded the circumstances in his daily diary of the journey. I have cross referenced this diary, William Clayton's *Emigrant's Guide*, and a modern atlas to determine the location of Milo's grave. It is fewer than a dozen miles west of the current town of North Platt, in Lincoln county Nebraska, along the north side of the north fork of the Platte river, on or near Buffalo Bill's Wild West Ranch and Rodeo Arena. Milo's last son was born in the Salt Lake Valley seven and a half months later. When he grew up he married Isaac Carling's daughter.

⁴ *The Mormon Trek West*, Joseph E. Brown

⁵ Caroline Amelia Owens Webb, from an interview