

# Jesse Wentworth Crosby Documents

## Colorado River Expedition<sup>1</sup>

In April last, Elder Henry W. Miller of Millersburg and St. George, accompanied by Jacob Hamblin and J. W. Crosby, made an exploration down a portion of the Colorado river which had not previously been explored, and the following account of their trip, furnished by Elder Miller, will be found exceedingly interesting:

On Wednesday, the 10th of April, we started from St. George, there being in the company President E. Snow, Jesse W. Crosby, Jacob Hamblin, James Andrus, Ira Hatch, David Cameron and H. W. Miller. We traveled from St. George nearly due south, until we passed the divide between the Virgin and the Colorado, and down the Grand Wash about forty miles, to its mouth, striking the Colorado at the point where one party of the brethren who went to visit the Moqis, crossed the river. A good road could be made without much difficulty, from St. George to the mouth of the Grand Wash, a distance estimated at 78 miles. The country over which it would pass is not sandy, most of the road would be a hard and firm one, with plenty of grass and water along it.

At the Colorado, President Snow, James Andrus, Ira Hatch and David Cameron left for St. Thomas. They parted company from us on Monday the 15th, about noon, we agreeing to meet them in St. Thomas by 1 p. m. Wednesday We then launched a skiff, 16 feet long, which we had brought with us from St. George,

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<sup>1</sup> Deseret News, 3 July 1867, 209

Brother Hamblin acting as steersman, while Brother Crosby and myself did the rowing. Near the mouth of the Grand Wash are rapids, but a mile and a half higher, to which we pulled upstream, there is still water which can be easily entered.

It was on this still water that the brethren crossed when going to the Moquis villages. They took their boat seven miles up the river after they had crossed, and sunk it, and recrossed at the point where they had left it. Jacob Hamblin, who was one of us on this occasion, was their pilot at that time.

We now headed downstream, the river at this point running south-west. We had no way of measuring exactly the distance we made; but judge that our rate of traveling was about five miles an hour on the average during the time we were running. We were on an unexplored part of the Colorado, and every sense had to be actively exercised, for from the nature of the banks, or walls, as they might be very correctly termed, on either side, there were places where it would have been impossible to escape from the river had an accident occurred. The width of the Colorado, where we explored it, varies from not less than five rods in some parts to about forty rods in others; but about forty rods is the general width.

For about a mile below the mouth of the Grand Wash, the northwest bank of the river is low, while the opposite one is composed of high rocks. A little below this the water is hemmed in for a distance of nearly 30 miles, with high, black rock, there being only occasionally a very small bottom, of loose, sandy soil on one side or the other, none of these bottoms exceeding over forty acres; and it seemed impossible to bring a road to the river any place in the thirty miles.

Having crossed several rapids below the point where we landed our skiff, we reached the Grand Rapids, whose roar is heard for over a mile before reaching them, where the river narrows to about five rods, with the bank on one side shelving, and on the other rising from 100 to 200 feet of perpendicular rock. At this point the fall is from six to eight feet in twenty rods. Here we had to let the skiff

down the rapids with lariats, taking advantage of large rocks laying out of the water on the side where the bank was lowest. This seems to be the head of navigation on the Colorado. The frequency of eddies and whirlpools necessitated constant rowing to keep the head of our skiff downstream.

The nature of the scenery through which we passed was well calculated to awaken thought, and excite admiration, but there was little attractiveness in it for purposes of utility. Black and bald were the rocks that rose grimly from the bed of the river, and the few acres of bottom land which were seen at rare intervals were gravelly and poor looking.

About thirty miles from the mouth of the Grand Wash, and some fifteen above the mouth of the Virgen, we came to where the river washed against a black rock, on the northwest side, standing some 150 feet perpendicular above the river, and on the top of that stood in imposing grandeur a huge pile of sandstone, some 500 feet high, and about forty rods, or nearly an eighth of a mile square. This we named Tower Rock, and here we stopped for the night. It was the most majestic rock I ever saw, and reared itself proudly aloft as if it had successfully battled with the storms of centuries, its crest untrodden by the foot of man; for there seemed no earthly means by which its top could be reached.

About 6 o'clock next morning we moved on, and after running a few miles, passing over several rapids, the river assumed a less dangerous appearance, and the country on the north side was covered with low, gravelly hills. These hills continue down to the mouth of the Virgen, which we estimated to be about forty-five miles from the mouth of the Grand Wash. The Virgen empties into the Colorado a slow, sluggish stream, full of sandbars and shallow water. We tried to run up it with the skiff, but could not succeed. It spreads out for a considerable width like the Platte, and like it appears to be studded with little islands, shoals and sandbars. On the south side of the Virgen the country seemed an open hilly desert, as far as the eye

could reach, not hemmed in by black hills. For eight miles from its mouth these hills continue low on the north side, with no open country on the opposite.

After passing that distance we came to what is called Boulder Canyon, so named from large boulders in the river, which have fallen into it from the southeast side. But there is sufficient channel at this point, independent of these to admit of navigation. We then entered upon the most gloomily grand part of the river that we saw on the trip. A deep gorge seemingly cut in the solid rock, from 1,200 to 1,500 feet deep, with the whole mass of waters compressed in a channel about ten rods wide, formed the bed of the river, and the great black walls rose up perpendicular, as it were, into the heavens, shutting us in almost from light and hope, and filling us with a sensation akin to awe, as our frail skiff was carried down the silent stream, for the water moved slowly and silently along in its gloomy channel. Away up above us a thin streak of light could be seen, looking like a rift in a mountaintop, while it appeared as if we were passing through a tunnel at its base. This continued for about twelve miles; but for the latter half of the way the rocks were not quite so high, though still black, gloomy and perpendicular. This canyon has to be passed through to have its wild sublimity realized.

On emerging from the canyon briefly described, and a mile and a half ahead of us, we saw the town of Callville, where we landed soon after, feeling thankful that we had made our trip in safety. We calculated the distance run to be about 65 miles, 45 miles of which, from the mouth of the Grand Wash to the mouth of the Virgen, it is presumed a white man has never passed down before. On Wednesday, the 17th, we arrived at St. Thomas according to appointment, and joined the rest of the company with whom we had left St. George.

## Jesse and the Prophet Joseph Smith

In 1974, Hyrum L. and Helen Mae Andrus published a book titled, *They Knew the Prophet*.<sup>2</sup> This fascinating book contains extracts from journals and reminiscences relating to the Prophet Joseph Smith as recorded by ninety-eight early members of the Church who knew him.

Jesse Wentworth Crosby is one of the individuals included in this book. His recollections of the Prophet were recorded by Martha Cox and Lee C. LaFayette in notebooks now in the possession of the Historical Department of the Church.<sup>3</sup> This material is valuable because Jesse records very little about Joseph Smith in any of his writings. For example, Joseph Smith is only mentioned seven times in Jesse's History.

We know that Jesse was acquainted with Joseph Smith. In his History Jesse does tell us that his Nauvoo home was near Joseph's home in the south-west corner of the city.

I procured a lot and commenced to build a house for myself, mother and sister, who had journeyed with me, a short distance back from the Mississippi and near the residence of Joseph Smith.<sup>4</sup>

And, when returning to Utah in 1853 Jesse stopped in Nauvoo to visit with Emma Smith. Jesse's observations concerning Joseph's widow demonstrate familiarity with the Smith family.

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<sup>2</sup> Hyrum L. Andrus and Helen Mae Andrus (comp.) *They Knew the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 143-145.

<sup>4</sup> Jesse Wentworth Crosby, "The History and Journal of Jesse W. Crosby." Brigham Young University Library, Provo Utah (typescript of the original), 8.

While in Illinois stopped two night[s] at the Mansion House at Nauvoo, conversed with Emma Smith, while she cooked our supper. Found her mind soured against the Saints. The house seemed desolate; the furniture defaced; the west wall of the Temple alone remains, and the place is wonderfully changed.<sup>5</sup>

Most of Jesse's references to Joseph are as part of the backdrop of Church history. None of them are personal experiences. For example:

After my arrival in Nauvoo sometime in June [1843], there was a general excitement raised in consequence of an attempt to take Joseph Smith and others to Missouri. He happened at the time to be on Rock River 100 miles from home. The attempt was fruitless, for Joseph returned in triumph to Nauvoo, and was met in the Prairie by a great many of the inhabitants who went out on horses and carriages—a great company—with colors flying, and music playing to “Welcome the Prophet.” The scene was animating in the extreme!<sup>6</sup>

The material in the Andrus' book is unique from the perspective of Jesse's history. In these recollections Jesse remembers the physical strength of Joseph Smith and how the Prophet frequently helped around the home, setting fires, clearing brush and chopping wood. Nevertheless Jesse's recollections must be used with caution. Near the end of the material quoted in the book we read the following:

One day when the Prophet carried to my house a sack of flour he had borrowed, my wife remarked that he had returned more than he had received. He answered that it should be so; that anything borrowed should be returned always with interest to the lender: “Thus,” he said, “the borrower, if he be honest, is a slave to the lender” . . .

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 12.

Sister Crosby was a very hardworking woman, taking much more responsibility in her home than most women. Thinking to give the Prophet some light on home management, I said to him, “Brother Joseph, my wife does much more hard work than does your wife.”

Brother Joseph replied by telling me that if a man cannot learn in this life to appreciate a wife and do his duty by her, in properly taking care of her, he need not expect to be given one in the hereafter..

His words shut my mouth as tight as a clam I took them as terrible reproof. After that I tried to do better by the good wife I had and tried to lighten her labors.<sup>7</sup>

Clearly either Jesse’s memory was failing at the time these recollections were recorded or perhaps he was misunderstood. This story cannot be authentic since Jesse and Hannah were not married until November of 1845, seventeen months after Joseph’s death.

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<sup>7</sup> Andrus, They Knew the Prophet, 145.

## Obituaries

### **Jesse W. Crosby Passes Away At Panguitch. His Demise was Hastened by Being Lost on the Desert for Several Days.<sup>8</sup>**

Word has been received of the death of Jesse W. Crosby Sen., which occurred at Panguitch, Garfield County, on Sunday, June 11. The deceased was seventy-two years of age and was a highly respected citizen. He was a native of Erie County, New York,<sup>9</sup> and joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when he was quite a young man. He is numbered among Utah's pioneers, having arrived in the valley of the Great Salt Lake September 24, 1847, and engaged in pioneer work in the northern part of the Territory for many years.

Elder Crosby was one of the original settlers and property holders in the Seventh Ward of this city.<sup>10</sup> In 1860,<sup>11</sup> he was called on a mission to St. George, to help settle Southern Utah, and responded. For the past seven or eight years<sup>12</sup> he has resided on the Muddy, in Lincoln County, Nevada.

In the latter part of May, Elder Crosby, accompanied by a seven-year-old son,<sup>13</sup> started from the Muddy for the little settlement of Tropic, near Panguitch,

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<sup>8</sup> Deseret Evening News (22 June 1893), 1

<sup>9</sup> He was born in Nova Scotia and raised in Chautauqua County, New York.

<sup>10</sup> The Seventeenth Ward.

<sup>11</sup> 1861.

<sup>12</sup> Jesse actually resided in Overton, Nevada for ten years.

<sup>13</sup> Lawrence Nephi Crosby.



where he thought of making his home. He thought he knew the way well in that part of the country where he was travelling, he got lost on the desert, and with his little boy wandered about for three or four days. He at last came across the grade for the Union Pacific track, and by that means found his way to Desert Springs, from where he came on to Panguitch. Two of his sons reside at the latter place, Samuel and Jesse W., Jr., the latter being the president of the Panguitch Stake of Zion; one son, Joseph, lives in this city, and another, George, in Springerville, Arizona; others of the family reside at St. George, and on the Muddy.<sup>14</sup>

On his arrival at Panguitch, the veteran appeared to be well, except that he was somewhat exhausted from his experiences on the arduous journey he had accomplished. He stopped at the house of his son, Jesse W. Jr., to rest, intending to continue his journey on to Tropic, where he thought that the climate, being less sultry than in Lincoln County, would make the place more suitable for a residence than where he had been living. After a night's rest he went to the house of his son Samuel, and there complained of a pain in his head and a feeling of paralysis in his tongue. In a few hours he became seriously ill and next morning was completely stricken down by paralysis being speechless and unable to move any portion of his body except the left arm. In this condition he remained for eleven days, until released by death. His funeral took place on the 14th. Word was sent to his family of what had occurred, but with the exception of those living in the immediate vicinity, was not received in time for them to attend the funeral.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Notice that his plural marriages go unmentioned. With Jesse's death coming only three years after the manifesto, the official Church paper is obviously being careful to not draw attention to a practice that was such a volatile issue for so long.

<sup>15</sup> Only the Panguitch members of the family were able to attend the funeral. Sam was convinced that his father had been allowed to reach Panguitch so that he could have a decent burial. See page 98.

**ST. GEORGE.  
DEATH OF MRS. JESE W. CROSBY  
Veteran and Pioneer of 80 Closes  
Eventful Career.<sup>16</sup>**

Special Correspondence. . . .

VETERAN OF NAUVOO CALLED.

Hannah Elida Crosby died at her home in St. George, Utah, May 2. The funeral was held in the tabernacle the following day.

The speakers, David H. Cannon, Jas G. Bleak and D. H. Morris dwelt upon her nobility of character as manifested in her life and labors. Among the beautiful musical features was a solo by Mrs. W. R. Pike, "Face to Face." Deceased was born in New Brunswick, march 4, 1820, and moved to Maine when an infant with her parents. She embraced the gospel in Salem, Mass. being the only one in a large family to receive the truth. She was married to Jesse W. Crosby in Nauvoo, Ill. and with her husband entered the Great Salt Lake valley in August, 1847.<sup>17</sup>

She is the mother of nine children four of whom survive her. She has been a faithful temple worker for over 30 years, and president of the ward relief society for a number of years.

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<sup>16</sup> Deseret Evening News (14 May 1907), 3

<sup>17</sup> 24 September 1847.