

**ADAM-ONDI-AHMAN**

A Missouri Contribution to the World  
famed spots of Earth

BY ROLLIN J. BRITTON

"The Zephyr's asleep on the blue grass,  
The dusk minnows creep in the stream;  
I am thrilled with a wild, weird, fancy,  
And go back to the past in my dream."

The true story of Grand River Valley as it crosses Daviess county, Missouri, is as wondrous as any dream. This valley was no part of the short-grass country that rolled away from the Missouri river out into the burning plains of the far West, but was a part of the long-grass country that encompassed the tributaries of the Missouri from the North and stretched away to become lost in the great prairies of Iowa.

The first white men to enter this valley were hunters and trappers who worked their way up Grand river in 1826 to find the country occupied by very sparse but friendly groups of Indians, mostly Sacs, Foxes and Pottawattamies, allied tribes of Algonquin stock that came originally from the St. Lawrence basin and the region of the Great Lakes. These Indians came of warrior stock that had become decimated and impoverished through participation in the French and Indian wars and in having made the serious mistake of fighting under the British flag in our war of 1812. No Indian troubles ever occurred in Grand River Valley.

In January, 1830, John Splawn and his son Mayberry erected the first cabin within the region that was later to become Daviess county. This first home was erected near the northwest corner of the present town site of Gallatin, but the Splawns very shortly moved to what was to become known as Splawn's Ridge, three miles east of the present site of Gallatin and near what was to become the town of Mill Port. During the months of January and February, John Tarwater

and Stephen Roberts brought their families to cabin homes on Honey creek, but in March the two children of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Roberts died and this bereaved couple returned to the state from whence they came.

In April of 1830 Daniel Devaul and others came. Later the same year came Benedict Weldon, James Weldon and Humphrey Best. The first physician to reach the Grand River Country came that same year in the person of Dr. William P. Thompson, who settled outside of what was to become Daviess county and gave his name to Thompson's fork of Grand river.

In the fall of 1831 the Black Hawk War broke out in Illinois. The Grand River Valley pioneers for the most part sought safety at Missouri River points till scouts ranged the country and reported that there were no hostile Indians in Western Iowa nor in Grand River Valley. The Black Hawk War was speedily ended in Illinois and peace was never broken in Missouri.

In the fall of 1831 Robert P. Peniston, Sr., brought his family, his slaves and belongings from Kentucky. The family remained for the winter in lower Ray county, while the eldest son, William P. Peniston, accompanied by three slaves, Jacob, Henry and the wife of the latter, pushed on to the Grand River Country and builded cabins for the family on Splawn's Ridge, where the family was reunited in the spring of 1832. Theodore Peniston joined the group at Splawn's Ridge at the same time. Milford Donaho, a good all-around mechanic, who had been a scout during the Black Hawk scare, brought his family and settled near Auberry Grove.

#### MILL PORT AND GALLATIN

The great need of the pioneers for a mill where their corn could be ground into meal became so apparent that Robert P. Peniston, Sr., the then most prosperous man on Grand river, employed Milford Donaho to erect a horse mill on the Peniston land. The mill was built of logs and timbers scored and hewed by Donaho aided by the slave Jacob Peniston; the latter was a famous axman. The burs for the mill were made by Donaho from boulders found on the prairie

and were fashioned with tools Donaho made in his blacksmith shop.

The mill proved a very great success and it was the center of the milling industry on Grand river for perhaps fifteen years. Settlers came because of the mill, and a town site was surveyed and platted and Mill Port thus became the first town in that part of Grand River Valley and was getting along famously when Daviess county was organized in 1836.

Settlers came as far as forty miles to deal with John A. Williams, grocer; Milford Donaho, blacksmith; Jacobs and Lomax, merchants; Worthington and McKinney, merchants; Morin and Compton, merchants; and Jesse Adamson, grocer.

Mill Port was on the east side of Grand river, at what is known as the Peniston Ford. The fact that it was on the east side of the river was not advantageous, the most of its trade came from the opposite side. In 1837 the town of Gallatin was platted just three miles west of Mill Port and was made the county seat of Daviess county, which gave the new town such an ascendancy that Mill Port soon faded away and in time became a lost town.

#### ADAM-ONDI-AHMAN

While Gallatin was becoming a town in 1837 Lyman Wight came to Daviess county and settled upon Grand river where in 1837 he founded a town three and one-half miles north of Gallatin on the west half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) of the southwest quarter ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ) of Section Thirty (30), Township Sixty (60), Range Twenty-seven (27). This man, Lyman Wight, as a young man lived in the city of New York, from which city he enlisted for service in the war of 1812, later he drifted westward and at Warrensville, Ohio, on November 14, 1830, he was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints by Elder Parley P. Pratt. He was then ordained an Elder on November 20, 1830, and at the June conference following was ordained a high priest and shortly entered upon the ministry at Independence, Missouri, where trouble sought him out as a bright and shining light and kept after him so persistently that in 1839 he petitioned a department at Washington for redress in the following words:

The petition of Lyman Wight most humbly showeth that petitioner removed from the State of Ohio to the State of Missouri in the year 1832 (1831), where I hoped to live in peace, but after toiling and undergoing all the hardships of a new Country for two years and suffering many privations of the comforts of life, I was assailed by a lawless mob, and was driven from my house in Jackson County to Clay County; my crops and all other property I possessed were taken from me, except a small part of household furniture. I stayed in Clay County for upwards of two years, when I was again assailed by a mob, who said I must deny my sentiments of religion or move from that County, but rather than deny my religion or be put to death, I disposed of my property at low rate, and removed my family to Davis (Davies) County, located myself on Grand River, made an improvement, gained to myself a pre-emption right on which a small town was laid off; it was then worth to me at least ten thousand dollars. But some time in the month of September last I was ordered to leave my possessions again, and this by a mob which was got up by Sashel Wood (a Presbyterian Preacher) and Doctor Craven (who have since entered my lands) without any other consideration than to get me chained up in prison and drive my family from the State without food and raiment to make them comfortable; they kept me in prison six months, until they succeeded in driving every man, woman and child (who professed the same religion that I did) out of the State, except those whom they murdered in the State, although they have never been able to substantiate the first accusation against me, yet my sufferings for seven years have been more severe than tongue can tell, or pen can write.

Lyman Wight had little to do with the naming of the town thus located upon his land, which town was to become historic in the annals of his faith. The religious organization in which Lyman Wight had membership, commonly known as the Mormon Church, located its administration headquarters in Caldwell county, Missouri, in 1837, at the town it founded and named Far West. At this town of Far West, Joseph Smith, Jr., the prophet, declared a revelation on April 26, 1838, which revelation fixed the name of the Church and directed the prophet to do certain things that resulted in making history for Lyman Wight's town. That revelation was as follows:

Revelation given at Far West, April 26, 1838, making known the Will of God concerning the building up of this Place, and of The Lord's House, etc:

Verily thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant, Joseph Smith, Jr., and also my servant Sidney Rigdon, and also my servant Hyrum Smith, and your counselors who are and shall be appointed hereafter; and also

unto you my servant, Edward Partridge, and his Counselors, and also unto my faithful servants who are of the High Council of my Church in Zion (for thus it shall be called), and unto all the Elders and people of my Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, scattered abroad in all the World; for this shall my Church be called in the last days even the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Verily I say unto you all, Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the Nations, and that the gathering together upon the land of Zion and upon her stakes may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storms and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth. Let this City, Far West, be a holy and consecrated land unto me, and it shall be called most holy, for the ground upon which thou standeth is holy; therefore I command you to build an house unto me, for gathering together of my saints, that they may worship me; and let there be a beginning of this work, and a foundation, and a preparatory work, this following summer, and let the beginning be made on the 4th day of July next and from that time forth let my people labor diligently to build an house unto my name, and in one year from this day let them recommence laying the foundation of my house; thus let them from that time forth labor diligently until it shall be finished from the corner stone thereof unto the top thereof, until there shall not anything remain that is not finished.

Verily I say unto you, let not my servant, Joseph, neither my servant Sidney, neither my servant Hyrum, get in debt any more for the building of an house unto my name; but let a house be built unto my name according to the pattern which I will show unto them. And if my people build it not according to the pattern which I will show unto their Presidency I will not accept it at their hands; but if my people do build it according to the pattern which I shall show unto their Presidency, even my servant Joseph and his Counselors, then I will accept it at the hands of my people. And again verily I say unto you. It is my will that the city of Far West should be built up speedily by the gathering of my saints, and also that other places should be appointed for stakes in the regions around about, as they shall be manifest unto my servant Joseph from time to time; for behold I will be with him, and I will sanctify him before the people, for unto him have I given the keys of this kingdom and ministry, even so, Amen." (Millennial Star, Vol. 16, Page 147-148).

Pursuant to this revelation, the prophet proceeded to the appointment of other places for stakes in the region round about. His exploring trip northward from Far West is told in his diary as follows:

Friday, May 18, 1838, I left Far West in Company with Sidney Rigdon, T. B. Marsh, D. W. Patten, Bishop Partridge, E. Higbee, S. Carter, Alanson Riples and many others for the purpose of visiting the North Country, and laying off a stake of Zion, making locations, and laying claims to facilitate the gathering of the Saints, and for the benefit of the poor, in

upbuilding the Church of God. We traveled to the mouth of Honey Creek which is a tributary of Grand River, where we camped for the night. We passed a beautiful Country of land, a majority of which is prairie (Untimbered land), and thickly covered with grass and weeds, among which is plenty of game; such as deer, turkey, hen, elk, etc. We discovered a large black wolf, and my dog gave him chase, but he outran us.

We have nothing to fear in camping out, except the rattlesnakes which is natural to this Country, though not very numerous. We turned our horses loose and let them feed on the prairie.

Saturday 19th this morning we struck our tents and formed a line of march, crossing Grand River at the mouth of Honey Creek and Nelson's Ferry. Grand River is a large, beautiful, deep, and rapid stream during the high waters of spring, and will undoubtedly admit of steamboat navigation and other water craft; and at the mouth of Honey Creek are a splendid harbor and good landing. We pursued our course up the river, mostly in the timber, about eighteen miles, when we arrived at Colonel Lyman Wight's, who lives at the foot of Tower Hill (a name I gave it in consequence of the remains of an old Nephite Alter or tower), where we camped for the Sabbath.

In the afternoon, I went up the river about half a mile to Wight's Ferry, accompanied by President Rigdon and my clerk, George W. Robinson, for the purpose of selecting and laying claim to a City plat near said ferry in Daviess County, Township 60, Ranges 27 and 28, and Sections 25, 26, 31, and 30, which the brethren called Spring Hill; *but by the mouth of the Lord it was named Adam-Ondi-Ahman, because said he, it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel the Prophet.*

We must therefore turn to the 7th Chapter of Daniel to learn of the tremendous things that are yet to occur at this spot on Grand River; and there read:

9. I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and the wheels thereof burning fire.

10. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him; thousands of thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set and the books were opened\*\*\*\*\*

13. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

14. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed\*\*\*\*.

21. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.

22. Until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

A better understanding of what Joseph Smith, the prophet, meant by his reference to Adam and to the ancient of days is made possible when one knows that Mormon theology teaches that the ancient of days and Adam are one and the same person.

Not only are these stupendous things yet to glorify this sacred spot but we learn from Doctrine and Covenants of the Church that wondrous things have already occurred there, to-wit: it was revealed to Joseph Smith in March, 1832.

"That through my providence, notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you, that the Church may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world, that you may come up unto the crown prepared for you, and be made rulers over many kingdoms, saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Zion, who hath established the foundations of Adam-Ondi-Ahman; who hath appointed Michael your prince, and established his feet and set him upon high and given unto him the keys of salvation under the Counsel and direction of the Holy One, who is without beginning of days or end of life."

Another revelation in November, 1834, disclosed to Joseph Smith that:

"Three years previous to the death of Adam he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch and Methuselah, who were righteous, unto the valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing, and the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the Prince, the Archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam and said unto him, I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee; and thou art a prince over them forever."

So we learn that Adam; the ancient of days; and Michael the Archangel are all one and the same person, and that he, from the dawn of life in the Garden of Eden till the judgment

shall open the books, is forever identified with this spot in Grand River Valley in Daviess county, Missouri.

Yet despite all of this clear elucidation of Adam-Ondi-Ahman it early became the conviction of the denizens in Grand River Valley outside of the hierarchy and of many in the Church as well that Adam-Ondi-Ahman referred to the grave of Adam. One James H. Hunt made an assault upon Mormonism in his book printed by Ustick and Davies of St. Louis in 1844, wherein on page 144 he says:

"Adam-on-di-ah-mond, alludes, as we are informed, to Smith's finding the bones of Adam and Eve, which were buried at that place in very early times." Hunt was a very careful historian, he states with conscientious regard to facts that this burial took place in very early times.

Major Joseph H. McGee, whose memory is venerated in Grand River Valley, lived in Daviess county through all of its Mormon experiences. He tells us about the pre-emption of John D. Lee, (later of Mountain Meadow fame) in what was to become Monroe Township, and of the place where Chauncey G. Webb, father of Ann Eliza, Brigham Young's wife No. 19, settled near the mouth of South Big Creek and of many historic facts connected with the Mormon War and of the early joys and struggles of the pioneers. Maj. McGee tells of the location of the Stake to Zion in Daviess county as the result of a revelation in which Joseph Smith was directed to:

"A point of upland which was made memorable and should be held dear to every son and daughter of Adam. As it was on this spot that the great Father Adam was buried.

"It was here where he died and was gathered to his father, and it is here you shall locate the Stake of Zion in Daviess County, and you shall call the name thereof Adam-Ondi-Ahman, which being interpreted means the grave of the first man, Adam."

Major McGee tells us also that this place was familiarly called "Diahmon."

We even find a suggestion of this grave theory in the history of the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints, for in Church History, Volume 2, Page 111, we read:



"The locality was named 'Adam-Ondi-Ahman' signifying it is said: The grave of Adam, as certain of the wise men claimed it to be the burial place of the progenitor of the human race."

However, the above Church history was compiled by Heman C. Smith, a most careful historian, who in telling the story of a visit to Adam-Ondi-Ahman that appeared in the Journal of History of April, 1916, wrote:

"The superstitious still tell of lights seen there on Friday nights and that Adam comes out on these occasions. Where these traditions originated we do not know for there is no record of the Latter Day Saints claiming, in that early day, that Adam was buried there."

Reverting to the organization of the Stake we find the following words from the pen of Lyman Wight:

"About June, Joseph Smith, together with many others of the principal men of the Church, came to my house, and taking a view of the large bottom in the bend of the river, and the beautiful prairies on the bluffs came to the conclusion that it would be a handsome situation for a town. We, therefore, commenced surveying and laying off town lots, and locating government lands for many miles north of this place. This beautiful country with its flattering prospects drew in floods of emigrants. It had not less than thirty comers and goers through the day during the three summer months, and up to the last mentioned date (last of October) there were upwards of two hundred houses built in this town, and also about forty families living in their wagons."

On June 28, 1838, a Stake was duly organized, the minutes of which meeting are as follows:

Adam-Ondi-Ahman, Missouri, Daviess County, June 28, 1838.

A conference of Elders and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was held at this place this day, for the purpose of organizing this Stake of Zion, called Adam-Ondi-Ahman.

The meeting convened at ten o'clock A. M. in the grove near the house of Elder Lyman Wight.

President Joseph Smith, Jr., was called to the chair, who explained the object of the meeting which was to organize a Presidency and High Council, to preside over this Stake of Zion, and attend to the affairs of the Church in Daviess County.

It was then motioned, seconded and carried by the unanimous voice of the assembly, that President John Smith should act as President of the Stake of Adam-Ondi-Ahman.

Reynolds Cahoon was unanimously chosen first Counselor, and Lyman Wight second Counselor.

After prayer the Presidents ordained Elder Wight as second Counselor.

Vinson Knight was chosen acting bishop pro-tempore, by the unanimous voice of the assembly.

President John Smith then proceeded to organize the High Council.

The Counselors were chosen according to the following order, by a unanimous vote: John Lemon, 1st; Daniel Stanton, 2nd; Mayhew Hillman, 3rd; Daniel Carter, 4th; Isaac Perry, 5th; Harrison Sagers, 6th; Alanson Brown, 7th; Thomas Gordon, 8th; Lorenzo D. Barnes, 9th; George A. Smith, 10th; Harvey Olmstead, 11th; Ezra Thayer, 12th.

After the ordination of the Counselors, who had not previously been ordained to the high priesthood, President Joseph Smith, Jr., made remarks by way of charge to the President and Counselors, instructing them in the duties of their callings, and the responsibility of their stations, exhorting them to be cautious and deliberate in all their Councils and to be careful and act in righteousness in all things.

President John Smith, R. Cahoon, and L. Wight then made some remarks.

Lorenzo D. Barnes was unanimously chosen clerk of this Council and Stake, and after singing the well-known hymn, Adam-Ondi-Ahman, the meeting closed by prayer by President Cahoon and a benediction by President Joseph Smith, Jr.

Lorenzo D. Barnes  
Isaac Berry, Clerks.

The hymn Adam-Ondi-Ahman was perhaps sung for the first time at the dedication of the temple at Kirtland, Ohio, in 1836. Its author is unknown but the hymn is as follows:

This earth was once a garden place,  
With all her glories common;  
And men did live a holy race  
And worship Jesus face to face,  
In Adam-Ondi-Ahman.

We read that Enoch walked with God,  
Above the pow'r of Mammon;  
While Zion spread herself abroad,  
And saints and angels sang aloud  
In Adam-Ondi-Ahman.

Her land was good and greatly blest,  
Beyond old Israel's Canaan;  
Her fame was known from East to West;  
Her peace was great, and pure the rest  
Of Adam-Ondi-Ahman.

Hosanna to such days to come—  
The Savior's second coming—  
When all the Earth in glorious bloom,  
Affords the saints a holy home,  
Like Adam-Ondi-Ahman.

This is about all of the story of Adam-Ondi-Ahman, for a general election for Daviess county was held in Gallatin on August 6, 1838, at which the Mormons were denied the right to vote, a fight followed and what is known as the Mormon War ensued resulting in the expulsion of every Mormon from Missouri and the establishment of a new Zion at Nauvoo, Illinois, during the spring of 1839.

The land that once constituted the preemption of Lyman Wight is now owned in fee simple by Mrs. May Robertson of Gallatin, Missouri. The cabin of Lyman Wight still stands, lone survivor of the log cabins that once constituted the town of Adam-Ondi-Ahman.

Above where stood the village is the picturesque elevation warmed by the strata of limestone that compose it. Adown the sides of which grow the wild cactus luxuriant with beautiful yellow bloom, and on the top of which stands a giant hackberry, at the foot of which is a little pile of limestone loosened in the making of a shallow excavation in the top of the hill. That spot is a Mecca to the followers of Joseph Smith, Jr., who are scattered round the world and the public is privileged to call it the grave of Adam if it wants to.