

Historians' Corner

Edited by Ronald W. Walker

We feature in this issue's Historians' Corner a letter written by Elder Parley P. Pratt to President Joseph Smith. Written from Manchester, England, in late 1841, the letter provides a window through which we can view the religious setting of early Victorian times. It is, of course, a personal perspective. Parley Pratt, an early Mormon convert, preacher, pamphleteer, missionary, and Apostle, was one of the first evangelists of his faith dispatched to Great Britain. As such, his words convey the wonder of his new environment. Perhaps as significant, they also carry a hint of that introspective, otherworldly melancholy that was common to the man.

The letter is ably edited by David H. Pratt, an associate professor of history at Brigham Young University. Professor Pratt, incidentally, is a descendant of Parley P. Pratt.

Oh! Brother Joseph

David H. Pratt

Urban England, particularly Manchester in 1841, personified all that was wrong with this earth to a millenarian. Parley P. Pratt came to England with the majority of the Quorum of the Twelve in 1840 and went to Manchester in April to edit the *Millennial Star*. After the initial conversion rate of the first year, which must have seemed like a harbinger of the millennium, Pratt was left to preside over the missionary work while the other Apostles returned to Nauvoo. He was to reside for another year and a half in Manchester during one of its stormiest periods.

Manchester was the crown jewel of the Industrial Revolution. However, the concomitants of industrial progress in the early nineteenth century were overcrowding, disease, and crime. Manchester's growth rate was over 40 percent between 1811–31. By 1851, more than 70 percent of the population had been born outside of Manchester.¹

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