



A Missionary Named Wilford: Part One

Without Purse or Scrip

I suffered them not to have purse or scrip, neither two coats. Behold, I send you out to prove the world, and the laborer is worthy of his hire (D&C 84:78–79).

Traveling without purse or scrip is pretty heavy,” Wilford Woodruff joked to his missionary companion, Henry Brown. Wilford lifted the small suitcase filled with copies of the Book of Mormon to his back and pulled the ropes around his shoulders.

“These valises of books will protect us if Missouri mobbers try to shoot us from behind,” Henry replied.

Crossing Missouri in 1834 was dangerous, but Wilford had faith the Lord would protect them. Besides, it was the quickest way to Tennessee and the other southern states, where Wilford and Henry had been called to serve as missionaries.

“Let’s get on our way,” Wilford said. “So many people in Missouri hate us that it may be a very long walk before we find food or a place to sleep.”

That day Wilford and Henry did not find anyone who would give them food or lodging. They ate what they found at the edges of fields and in the woods and slept



on the ground. After several days, they came to a place called Harmony Mission, where a minister and his family lived. “Could you spare food and a bed for fellow ministers?” Henry asked.

“Are you Mormons?” the minister asked.

“Yes,” Wilford said.

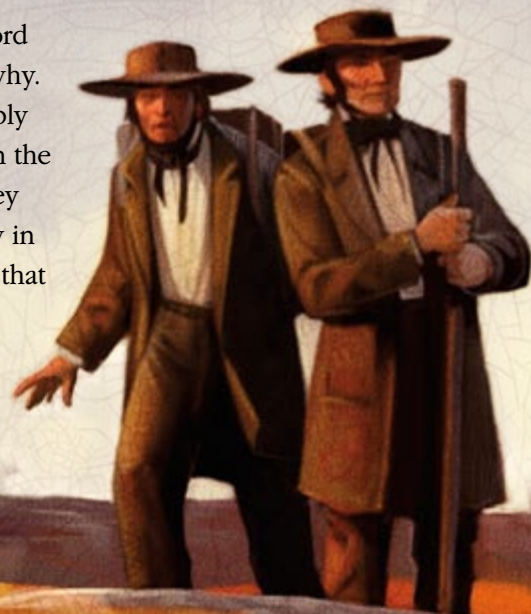
“Then there’s nothing,” the minister said.

“Does anyone else live

nearby?” Henry asked.

“Jereu the Frenchman keeps a trading post 12 miles down the Osage River,” the minister said. “Maybe he’d feed Mormons. Follow the river.” Then the minister laughed.

Henry and Wilford soon understood why. The river was terribly crooked, and when the sun went down they were left to wallow in muddy water. Late that night they dragged themselves out



A scrip is a bag for carrying food. Missionaries traveled without money or food.

A valise is a suitcase. That’s where missionaries carried copies of the Book of Mormon.



By Christine Graham

(Based on an early mission of Wilford Woodruff)

onto the dry prairie, said their prayers, and lay down on the ground.

Soon they were awakened by someone singing and drumming on a tin pail.

“Someone who sings has food,” Wilford said.

The two men picked up their valises and stumbled toward the singing.

Soon they could see the campfires of the Osage Indian village.

Mr. Jereu and his wife gave Henry and Wilford a delicious supper and comfortable beds. Before they fell asleep, the missionaries thanked the Lord for leading them to these kind people.

The next morning they thanked the Jereus for their kindness and headed out again. After walking 30 miles across open plains, they came to a dark wood.

“Is that a man in the trees?” Henry asked.

“Hello!” Wilford called. A large bear came out of the woods and glared at the missionaries.

“Maybe we should go back,” Henry said.

“No,” Wilford said. “If you recall your Bible, the people troubled by bears had mocked the prophet. We are missionaries following the prophet. We shall have no trouble from this bear.”

As the two men approached the woods, the bear sat and watched them. Then it got up and walked away. The two missionaries continued through the woods, rejoicing.

When night fell, Wilford and Henry were still in the woods. They heard something behind them, then to their right and their left.

“Let’s strike a light,” Wilford said. He lit some tinder. There was a low growl. On every side fierce eyes reflected the light. They were surrounded by wolves. ♦

(To be continued next month.)

