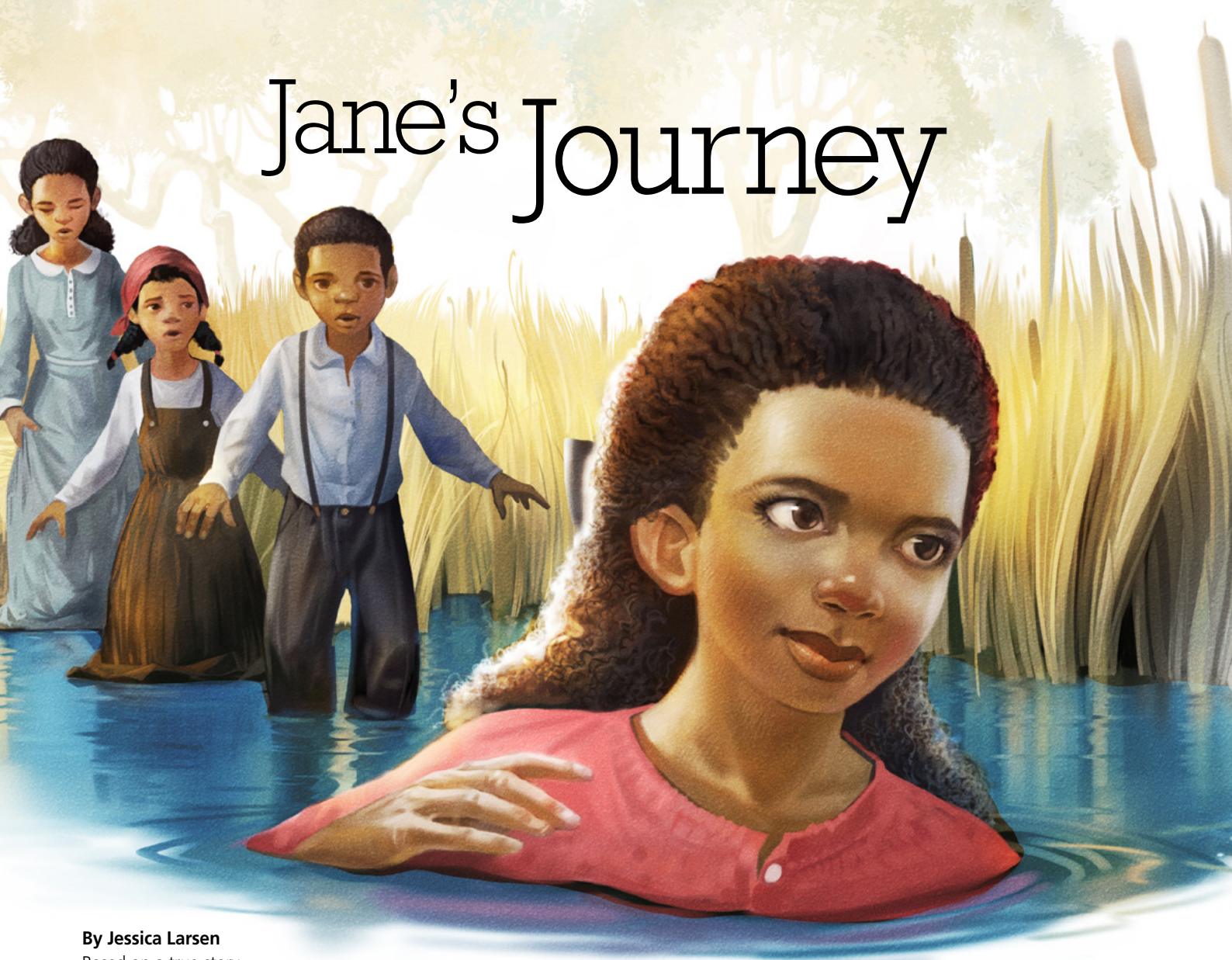


Jane's Journey



By Jessica Larsen

Based on a true story

New York, USA, 1843

Jane Manning watched the boat float from the harbor out to Lake Erie. She felt like her dreams were floating away with it.

Just one year ago, she had joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and decided to move to be with the other Saints in Nauvoo. Her mother and seven other family members had traveled with her down the Erie Canal to Buffalo, New York. But in Buffalo, they weren't allowed on the boat because of the color of their skin.

"What do we do now?" her brother, Isaac, asked quietly.

The question echoed in the frosty air. Nauvoo was still 800 miles (1,287 km) away. They could give up and head home, or try to travel later. . . .

But Jane couldn't wait! She knew the Book of Mormon was true. God once again spoke through prophets. She needed to get to Nauvoo with her family.

Jane squared her shoulders and looked westward. "We walk."

And walk they did. Until their shoes wore out. Until their feet cracked and bled and they had to pray to be healed. Sometimes they slept outside, and the frost was so heavy it felt like falling snow. Some people threatened to put them in jail, thinking that they were escaped slaves. They didn't know that the Mannings were a free black family. And still they walked, singing hymns to pass the time.

They were nearing Nauvoo when they reached a river.

Jane Manning lived with Emma and Joseph Smith for several months. She married Isaac James, and they were among the early settlers of Utah Valley. She remained a faithful member of the Church even though she had many challenges. When she died in 1908, President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) spoke at her funeral.

“No bridge,” Isaac said.

Jane nodded. “We’ll just have to walk through it, then.” As she stepped into the river, the water came up to her ankles. Slowly, she inched forward. The water swirled up to her knees and then past her waist. By the time she reached the middle of the stream, the water came up to her neck! Luckily, it didn’t get deeper, and all the Mannings crossed safely.

At last they came to Nauvoo. Jane could see the beautiful limestone walls of the Nauvoo Temple on a hill overlooking the valley. Even though it wasn’t finished

yet, it took her breath

away. Someone

directed them

to the house

where the

Prophet Joseph

lived.

A tall, dark-haired woman stood in the doorway. “Come in, come in!” she called. “I’m Emma Smith.”

The next few minutes were a blur. Jane met the Prophet, and he set up chairs around the room for all the Mannings. Jane sank into the chair gratefully and listened as Joseph introduced them to everyone there, including his friend Dr. Bernhisel. Then Joseph turned to Jane, “You have been the head of this little band, haven’t you?” he asked.

“Yes, sir!” answered Jane.

Joseph smiled. “God bless you! Now I would like to hear about your travels.”

Jane told about their injured feet and sleeping in the snow and crossing the river. Everyone listened quietly. “But it wasn’t terrible,” she finished. “We went on our way rejoicing, singing

hymns and thanking God for His infinite goodness and mercy to us in blessing us, protecting us, and healing our feet.”

There was silence for a moment. “What do you think of that, Doctor?” Joseph finally said, slapping the man’s knee. “Isn’t that faith?”

“If it had been me, I fear I should have backed out and returned to my home!” Dr. Bernhisel admitted.

Joseph nodded and turned back to Jane and her family: “God bless you. You are among friends.” ■

The author lives in Texas, USA.

