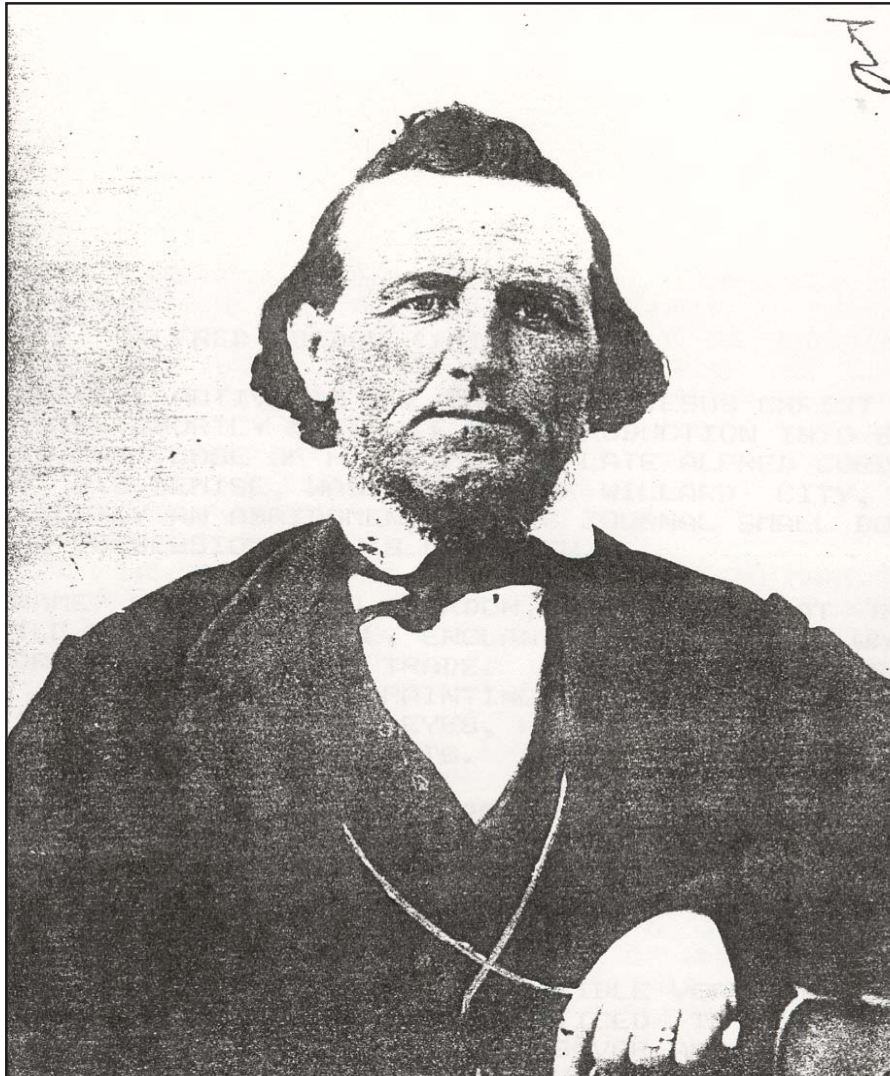


The Journal of Alfred Cordon

The Alfred Cordon Diary of June 1839-June 1840

**Edited and with an introduction
by
Douglas K. Sheffield**

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“I Was Quite Willing to Give up My Sins and to do Anything to Find Salvation” Alfred Cordon 1817 - 1871

Was baptized into the LDS “Mormon” Church on the 30th of June 1839 by Elder David Wilding in Manchester, England. Became a Missionary and a significant force in the Staffordshire Potteries area:

Emigrated to the United States and arrived at Nauvoo, Illinois on the 28th of September 1842: And the Prophet Joseph Smith was Preaching to a large congregation in front of the Temple Block. And after hearing the Prophet Preach but One Sermon, recorded in his journal that he had been well paid for all the trials that he had experienced since joining the Church; (By - Alfred S. Cordon 10-3-87)

Introduction

From the financial crisis of 1837 which spread across the United States, The Mormons were not exempt.(1) The speculation that had run rampant through Kirtland, Ohio resulted in a monetary depression that caused myriad's of problems for Joseph Smith and the Church. There was wholesale apostasy that not only affected the rank and file members of the church, but also the leaders.(2) Joseph Smith was not free to walk the streets of Kirtland and eventually had to flee to Missouri for safety. Soon, the main body of the Church was relocated in Missouri. This was but a short season of peace and refuge. With Joseph and others of the leaders incarcerated, the membership of the Church was again forced to flee for safety.

Even though the times were perilous, solutions came. On June 4, 1837, Joseph Smith called Heber C. Kimball to undertake the first mission to England.(3) The resulting British converts would be the stabilizing factor to aid the Church in the trying times to come. Heber C. Kimball's company was comprised of two apostles, Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde,(4) and included Willard Richards, Joseph Fielding, John Goodson, John Snyder and Isaac Russell. These missionaries to England met with moderate success. (5) They generally labored in Preston, Lancashire and surrounding areas, including Manchester.

When Heber C. Kimball left England, Joseph Fielding was appointed president of the British Mission with Willard Richards and William Clayton, a new convert, as his counselors.(6) These three men labored as the presidency of the British mission from April 1838 until July 1840. From the beginning of 1840 through the middle of the next year, a new group of apostles provided reinforcements to the growing missionary work. Included in this group were Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, George A. Smith, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt and Heber C. Kimball. Even though Joseph Fielding was still the British Mission President, with the arrival of Brigham Young, the reigns of leadership shifted.

In Latter-day Saint literature, there is a great deal of information about the apostles and their callings and missions to Great Britain from 1837 to 1842. The arrival of Heber C. Kimball inaugurated the first apostolic mission. With the arrival of the others two years later, the second apostolic mission began. There is relatively little available on the interim period between the two apostolic missions. The studies and articles also tend to be elitist in that they cover the lives of leading Church members. The purpose of this paper is to study Alfred Cordon. He joined the Church in June 1839, and was instrumental in spreading the gospel throughout the Potteries area of England. The Potteries is located in the north west quarter of Staffordshire. The principal towns that comprise the Potteries are Stoke upon Trent, Hanley, Newcastle under Lyme, Hanley, Burslem, and Lane End.(7) Because of the great value of his journals for illuminating this very important period of the early British Mission, my paper presents a scholarly editing of his first volume. (8)

Alfred Cordon was born in Toxteth Park, Liverpool, on February 28, 1817. His father, Sampson Cordon, was a potter by trade and at age 12, Alfred was apprenticed to the same. Although a member of the Church of England, he gives the impression that he was but loosely connected with the Anglican Church through the first seventeen years of his life. He laments the fact that he is "wicked" and a "heavy drunkard". He also acknowledges the fact that he made many resolutions to change and that the Spirit "troubled" him. Alfred Cordon was going through the same struggle that many of his contemporaries were. He married Emma Parker on December 19th, 1836, but still continued in his wicked ways. With the death of his eight-month-old daughter, Alfred earnestly sought God. Three friends ask him if he is interested in a future state. Alfred writes that he is "quite willing to give up my sins and do anything to find salvation."

He is invited to attend some meetings in connection with Robert Aitkin. He goes and while praying has the Lord lift the burden of guilt from him. He helps his wife to be made happy also. After at least ten months, Alfred becomes a class leader for the Aitkinites and reaches some conclusions concerning the second coming. He meets Mary Powel, who is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Upon hearing her explain the message of the restoration Alfred starts for Manchester to be taught more. It is there that he joins the Church.

Alfred Cordon becomes a significant force in the Staffordshire Potteries area. Six months after his baptism, Elder William Clayton leaves him in charge of the Church members in this area. Alfred spends many evenings and weekends away from home doing missionary work. He preaches and works with Wilford Woodruff, Theodore Turley, George A. Smith, Brigham Young and Willard Richards. He also attends conferences and represents the Potteries district.

Probably one of the greatest values of the journals of Alfred Cordon is their honest, open appraisal of the times and lives of ordinary working class people. One can feel the empathy and love that John Rowley exhibits when he forces William Bradbury to take a loaf of bread, even though he is “very badly off. When Cordon and others are persecuted for preaching the gospel, the intensity and devotion of the missionaries is felt. The trauma of having problems through a birthing situation is extremely touching. The humor of Alfred Cordon is not lost when he describes the great persecution they have in Leek with the “swarm of fleas.”

Alfred Cordon is advised by Heber C. Kimball to become a full time preacher in August of 1840. On October 6, 1840 he is appointed to preside over the Staffordshire Potteries Conference. Alfred spends the rest of his time working full time for the Lord. In July of 1812, the Cordon family finally emigrates to Navoo. He is in Nauvoo but a short time and is called on a mission to Vermont. Cordon is on this second mission when Joseph and Hyrum are killed. In 1848, Orson Hyde calls Alfred on a second mission to England. Upon returning from this mission, Alfred and Emma make the trek West and eventually settle in Willard, Utah. Here Alfred is called as the Bishop of the Willard Ward and has that calling for the last twenty years of his life.

The Alfred Cordon journals were donated to the LDS Historical Department in August of 1958. They are comprised of seven volumes. The first six volumes cover the period of June 1839 through September 17, 1850 and the seventh covers May 4, 1868 through October 21, 1868. Unfortunately, twenty years are missing. Alfred Cordon had four wives and when he died, the journals were divided among the four family branches. The missing years are the polygamy years of Alfred Cordon’s life. For this study, only the first volume will be edited. Volume one starts out with a short retrospective account of Alfred Cordon’s life up to June 1839 and then has entries that cover through

June 6, 1840.

The editing has been done with a general readership in mind. Except for some slight editorial changes, the journal is reproduced as closely as possible to the original. Alfred Cordon did not generally punctuate, so sentence punctuation has been added. Capitals were added to the beginning of each sentence for consistency. The spelling is often inconsistent, for example: Woodruff, is spelled Woodruf, Woodruff, Woodruffe and Woodrough. This however adds to the credibility and life of the journal. The spelling and the use of capital letters has been left as close as possible to the original. For clarification purposes, the editor has added some letters and words in brackets. The letters inside of brackets that are romanized are unclear in their meanings. Dots inside of brackets represent lost or illegible letters. The first ten pages of the journal are divided into paragraphs to represent new thoughts or new time periods. On the 22nd of December, 1840 Alfred Cordon was ordained an Elder by William Clayton. On the 23rd, Alfred writes “I was now left by myself to attend and watch over the flock of Christ.” From this point on in the journal, Cordon takes great care to offer divisions between the dates. In the edited journal, the editor from this point on has added dates at the beginning of each entry. These were not in the original. For your convenience see Appendix 1 at the end of this paper. This is a typescript of Cordon’s journal just as it appears in the original. It is hoped that the editing has been done in such a way that the reader can still feel the joys and disappointments that Alfred Cordon felt.

Douglas K. Sheffield

**ALFRED CORDON JOURNAL:
AND TRAVELS IN THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL
1840**

My Fathers name was Sampson Cordon. He was born in Toxteth Park (9) at the Herculaneun Pottery (10) about a mile from Liverpool, which is a seaport Town in Lancashire. Here my Father lived. His Father was a Potter of the Name of Ralph Cordon. As soon as my Father was about 12 Years of Age, he was put Apprentice to Painting on China. When he had served his Master about 4 or 5 Years, he got kicked by a horse in the face. His nose was broke and one of his Eyes hung down upon his cheek. They thought for some time he was dead, but he soon recovered from this. But it left a very Bad Head Ache upon him so that he was obliged to leave Painting and he went to Printing upon the Pots. This was not so affecting to the Eyes. Shortly after this he got Married to My Mother whose nam[e] was Myrah Hampson.

In the Year of our Lord 1816, they had a Son Named Horatio Cordon, but this Died. In 1817 On February 28th, I was Born and named Alfred Cordon.

When very Young, I was able to Read very well and I was very fond of reading the Bible and I committed a good portion of the Word to my Memory. I was brought up in the fear of God. I was brought up to the Church of England.

My Grandfather was Clerk of Saint Michal Toxteth Park 16 Years. At his Death, My Father took the Clerkship. It was at [a] Situation of about 30 L per Year.

When about twelve Years of Age, I was put Apprentice to the Potting Business at Hollow Ware Pressing, which is a very particular Branch in this Business. When I had been Apprentice about 2 Month[s], I had a near escaped of being scalded to Death. I fell in a large Caldron of Boiling Grease from Bones. My Legs and feet and Back was Scalded very much. I was brought to the gates of death. I was quite willing to depart. I was perfectly happy in my mind. My Grandfather took my case in hand and I was soon healed. I was no sooner healed and at work again than I began to Swear and take the name of God in vain, go with wicked company and became awfully wicked.

At about 17 Years of Age, I began to Drink Ardent Spirits and in a little time I became a heavy Drunkard. During this Period, the Spirit of God sorely troubled me, but I rejected the strings of the Spirit. I made a many resolution to serve God, but the[y] failed as fast as I them.

I served my apprenticeship, but through bad conduct, I left my master And I came into Staffordshire Potteries. I got a situation in Burslem at Mr. Benjamin Clutow Godwins Works. I still was as wicked as ever. I then left him and I went to work for Messe Mayers and Mawdesly [modestly], I left them throug[h] Drinking and I went to work for Enoch Wood and Sons at Burslem. I still continued as wicked as before. I kept company with a young woman named Emma Parker.

In October [1836], I was brought to the gates of Death once more with the Small Pox. My life was despared of but I got better soon and I set off[f] for Liverpool to my Fathers, leaving Emma Parker very ill of the Small Pox. When I got hom[e], I soon got pretty well, but it left a very bad Billious Upon me. I now got a Situation at Saint Helens which is 12 Miles from Liverpool.

In Dec [1836], I came over to the Potteries and was Married to Emma Parker on I9th December 1836, at the Old Church in Burslem. We then went to Saint Helens. We remained there some time. I still led a desolate life. We then came back to Burslem in Staffordshire. Trade was very bad. I was 14 Week out of employ and my Wife was confined in the inn. We were in a Very bad state. I was troubled again and again on account of my sins, but I would not begin to serve God. I continued in this way until about March 3rd.

On February the 24th, 1837, the little Girl that we had was took very ill with convulsions. It remained in this state about 12 hours and then Died. This was a great loss unto us. She was 8 Month[s] Old. I was aroused again in my mind and I began to pray to the Lord to direct me and to have mercy upon me.

When at the end of the 14 weeks out of Employment, I got a situation at Mr. Thomas Godwins Navigation Road Burslem and here I have remained ever since.
