

Episode 39

Legacy MORMON MYTHS

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NATHAN WRIGHT: One of the most remarkable aspects of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is its unique history. Thought out the world great stories from faithful church members have already added to that history. This program shares some of these incredible stories of faith, perseverance, hope and inspiration. You're listening to Legacy and I'm your host, Nathan Wright.

A little more than a decade ago, an article crossed my desktop. On January 25, 1999 the Chicago Tribune published an article about a mysterious object found at the bottom of Lake Michigan. Quote, "If one set out with the preposterous goal of making an oak zeppelin, 31 feet long, 10 feet in diameter, pointed at it ends, complete with an 18" hatch to crawl inside, this is pretty much what you get. Those who have strapped on air tanks and visited the things, says that craftsmanship used to build it, is remarkable. Four inch thick oak boards bent and fitted together and cocked water tight. Like nothing built today, end quote. Course many LDS readers were quick to identify the object as a Jaredite barge and messages were circulated widely around the internet: Proof of the Book of Mormon. Today were going to be talking about Mormon urban and or historical legends. Perhaps even some real stories that get a little bit twisted and joining me today are Jeffery Cannon, Michael Landon, Janiece Johnson and Emily Utt alphabetical order and appreciate all of you being here. (LAUGHING) And were just going to talk about some stories that seem to crop up in the Church whether there true or not. So, let's start off with who has a favorite that they would like to begin with today.

JANEICE JOHNSON: I actually want to take a step back because this could become all of our jobs full time if we wanted it to. Debunking Mormon myths or, you know, every week in Sunday school you'll hear a story and suddenly your friends call you and say is this true, is this true? And this could become our jobs if we let it, but I think an understanding of what these myths are and how we go about debunking them and thinking about them would really help people to perhaps stop sharing them without good sourcing. I think one of the things we love about Mormon myths is that they teach us something that we want to be true. We want to believe that God protects his people. We want to believe that if you sacrifice you

will be blessed. We want to believe that everything in “The Book of Mormon” can be verified. And the real challenge happens is that those things are sometimes not always true, that sometimes you sacrifice and you don’t get a blessing. So we will go back into history and find a story and embellish it just a little bit so we can keep believing some things. And the final part of it then is to go back and try to trace though the story and think about it logically and say do all of these pieces match up.

EMILY UTT:

And blessings are things that are very difficult to try and quantify. But sometimes we try to quantify this is the best or the longest or the greatest. One other recent myth that has gone around was this email and with email the advent of email we get things that are circulated has so much more mileage than they ever would have had before. But after 911 there were emails that went around saying that there were supposed to be a missionaries’ zone conference in the World Trade Center on 911. And there are different versions of the story but something happened so none of the missionaries showed up. Whether none of their alarms went off, none of them woke up, none of them made it there. For people who were in New York at the time, I have a good friend of mine who was there; this was really distressing to her; to hear this. There’s no truth to it, but sometimes we want, we feel those goose bumps and we want something to be true. But if we look at it logically and kind of try to take it apart a little, zone meetings are held in churches, zone meetings are held in easy places for the missionaries to come together.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Which are free?

JANEICE JOHNSON:

Which are free and free is a very (laughing) important consideration there. The world trade center, it’s just not possible, but I think this idea stems from again, what Emily was saying the idea that if we are righteous we will be protected. I do believe that ultimately we will be protected; our souls will not be destroyed if we are righteous. But bad things happen to good people all the time. And I think some stories like that can be really destructive. There were good people who lost their lives that day who weren’t protected and that becomes difficult for those who are very closely involved. Whereas...who knows why people create stories like this, but it can have a disastrous effect.

EMILY UTT:

The World Trade Center story is actually a good one to go through the process that historians use to debunk myths to find out the truth of them. For example, so the first thing we would think about is where do missionaries hold zone conference? They hold them in a

meeting house. So there is no logical reason for them to be held at the World Trade Center and then what are the odds of every single missionary sleeping through their alarm or missing the train that day. If you mean you might have one companionship who's late, but all of them is probably not likely. And then you go back and you try to find the earliest source. So in this case you could call the mission president and say was there a zone conference on that day. No there was no zone conference that day. So that is what we try to do with history, we try to think about it logically, does it make sense with what we know and understand about the world and then you go back and try to find the first time the story is told, and who told it and why they told it. And so a lot of my favorite stories fall apart because you go back and try to find a source and there is no source.

NATHAN WRIGHT: People want, you know, they hear these types of stories and they so want them to be true because they're so fantastic. So you know that may some how confirm something to them.

MICHAEL LANDON: It's a validation process.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Exactly

MICHAEL LANDON: I mean there no exception. In a sense it's a validation for a lot of people. I think that is why some of them you are couched in superlative terms, like the longest march in history was the march of the Mormon battalion.

NATHAN WRIGHT: And everybody knows that.

MICHAEL LANDON: That's well. At least that is understood. [LAUGHTER]

NATHAN WRIGHT: That is why we are here today.

MICHAEL LANDON: And I think that got started because the commander of the Mormon battalion told St. George Cook, said that hurt history may be searched in vain for an equal march of the infantry; Something to that effect. And people will see they had to be. You can search history and are never going to find an infantry march like the Mormon battalion. So it's just a small leap to say the one less that the longest one. When you look again as Emily's pointed out, look you know at the facts. The Chinese communists under Mao marched 6000 miles to the Yangtze in a long march. Alexander the Great, somewhere between 22 to 2500 miles were logged by his infantry and people say well you know there were periods

when they weren't marching but at least one period it was a forced march of over 2000 miles. And even in 1858 during the Utah war, there were some units who went from Leavenworth to Bridger. You tell Utah war situation was solved they sent them on to California and back. And an infantry march which would far exceed anything that the battalion would make. And I think the issue is rather than concentrating on you know the absolutes, was it the most, the best, the longest, the first. It's the other issues that should be considered. Like what was the Mormon battalion experience like for an individual soldier? What kind of sacrifices did he make? The issue of longest really doesn't generate much from me. But if somebody tells me about a sacrifice that an individual battalion member made during that long march that has more meaning to me. And those kinds of things, the experiences he had in his march can be documented. And there's a factual foundation for it. So I think there value in that kind of analysis.

EMILY UTT: Sometimes I think it is that emotional reaction that may be longest or that some sort of superlatively makes us, our ears perk up and we think, oh this is great. We have this emotional reaction, but ultimately history is much more complicated and complex. And there is a lot more to it and in most instances I think the real story is so much better. In most instances it's always better and maybe much more complicated and it may not fit into nice neat little boxes. But it tells us things about what mortality is about. One of the persistent myths is regarding the persecutors of Joseph Smith.

NATHAN WRIGHT: There was a book actually.

EMILY UTT: And there was a book actually, that was written and the author made a collection. People had family's stories of horrible things that happened to everyone but principally the people who were in the trial of Josephs after Joseph's murder. And this book tells these horrific, I mean I have all sorts of images of skin (LAUGHING) falling off and eyes rolling around. But there's really kind of horrific stories of things that happened to these people. And Elder Oaks and Marvin Hill before Elder Oaks was an elder wrote a book call "Carthage Conspiracy" focused on the trial of the accused assassins of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. And in the after word he goes through, they go through very mythically what happened to all of the people who were involved. The accused, the defense attorneys, the prosecuting attorneys, the judge, Governor Ford and most of them lived very successful lives. I don't know where these stories came from but I do know that we have this desire for that we want bad things to happen to bad people. (LAUGHING) And often that doesn't acknowledge any

sort of badness in any of us. (LAUGHING) But we want to see people pay for their sins. And here's an instance where it just didn't play out that way in mortality. I am not the one judging them ultimately and that is left for God to decide but in morality they lived very successful lives. Governor Ford perhaps did not turn out as well as some of the rest. The judge also ended up being committed so that was not a great one. But Ford and this is Ford I think is quite prophetic. It's fascinating he writes a history of Illinois he's very sick later in his life. And trying to provide funds for his family he writes this history of Illinois. And he laments he says it is the possibility that the names of Nauvoo and Carthage jail may become holy and venerable names. Places of classic interest in another age like Jerusalem, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Mount of Olives and Mount Calvary to the Christian. Ford wrote, if this were to be the case, he felt degraded by the reflection that the humble governor of an obscure state who would otherwise be forgotten in a few years stands a fair chance like Pilot and Harod by their physical connection with the true religion. Of being dragged down to posterity with an immortal name hitched on the memory of a miserable imposter. So to be sure that that is clear, he is not saying that Joseph was an equivalent of Christ or someone who should be venerated but that he was a miserable imposter and it was horrible for him to think of the fact that those that where he died might be a venerated place which Carthage has certainly become today. That Nauvoo has certainly become today. And that people would look on him as a Pilot. Washing his hands of his connection with Christ and I but I think that he was a little pathetic there that connection is still there. But for the majority of those people who were involved in Joseph's death directly, they lived happy successful lives. For many of them it was, it was actually it helped there careers.

JEFFERY CANNON: Janiece brings up an interesting point here when she's talking about places that are venerated. No place in Mormon culture is more venerated than the temple of course. And we've discussed amongst ourselves some of these myths that happen about the temple and we've wondered why this is of course. The temple is a sacred and holy place and so it stands to reason that sacred and holy things should happen there and there should be these great miracles. When people expect that people find that and one of the most common myths that I've heard and I've heard this in multiple wards and multiple continents is a story about the Salt Lake temple. And the story goes that when the temple was being designed Brigham Young insisted that there be these mysterious shafts built in the temple and nobody new what they were for. And then many years later, temple engineers when they were getting

ready to install elevators found that these were the perfect size and in the perfect orientation to be elevator shafts. So they installed these elevators and the story told is a sort of proof the elevation of Brigham, and the specialness of the temple. While there's a problem with this story and one of the problems is that the elevator is in the plans to the Salt Lake temple. And that in the 1887 plans of course the temple takes 40 years to build. And the interior isn't built or isn't even designed until after the death of Brigham Young. The 1887 plans are the first plans we see where there is even a shaft that could be considered an elevator shaft and its very clearly labeled elevator. The elevator company that's installed it was the Otis Brothers and Company organization and they were founded in 1853 the same year that the temple was begun construction, when Elijah Otis sold his first elevator. And we actually have in the archives a proposal to build two elevators for the temple which is there for anyone to see (LAUGHING) and we've actually published it in an on line collection that people can view. They can see that there was an elevator in the original temple and that maybe this isn't a great story of Brigham Young's inspiration but I think it is a story of inspiration. And it's much more this idea of studying it out in your minds. The temple in Salt Lake was not the first temple to be built. It was certainly not the first temple to be built in the history of the church but it wasn't even the first temple to be built in Utah. And although it's begun first it was finished last of the pioneer temples. And it's sort of the successor in some ways to those other temples as they were built and they understood the process of the endowment and how the endowment and other temple ordinances are administered. They realize as they built them and they built a better plan and better plan with each temple. And so by the end they had a very good plan that has been, has had very little alteration to the temple in the over a hundred years that it's been in use. And I think that's sort of a demonstration not of this fantastic revelation from Brigham Young but more of this idea of study it out in your minds. This idea of doctrine the doctrine of revelation that we are all very familiar with of studying it in your minds and the Lord will tell you that's it correct. I think it that is sort of a demonstration of the story. The true story really does demonstrate more the ideas of doctrine that were all familiar with then this fantastic idea that prophets have revelations of elevator shafts before elevators are even invented.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Thanks Jeffery.

We are on Legacy here on the Mormon channel we're talking about Mormon urban and historical legends with the ward members of the historical department, Jeffery Cannon, Michael Landon, Janiece Johnson and Emily Utt. There's some stories that

I'm afraid may be, may disappoint some listeners today.
(LAUGHING) I mean of course the elevator shaft story we just heard was true doctrine until just now. Because I guess the biggest surprise is yes they had the elevators in the 1800's. So I have a few quotes here from President Harold B. Lee in a talk he gave in 1973. And I just want to read a couple of these portions of this talk. He said, "There is one thing that shocks me I've learned in some instances that those who have heard of these rumors are disappointed when they tell them they are not so. They seemed to have enjoyed believing the rumor without substance or face. I would earnestly urge that no such idle gossip be spread abroad without making certain as to whether or not it is true." So does that apply to emails too or...?

(LAUGHING)

MICHAEL LANDON: Oh it certainly applies to emails and one of the emails I think that a lot of people have had and one of the really difficult things to do with the myth is to get it stopped. As you mention there are people that really want these things to be true. There is a quote that that gets circulated a lot, email and other wise that's often attributed most frequently to President Packer of the quorum of the twelve Apostles but is also attributed to other people and the story is something along the lines of the youth of today were generals in the wars in heaven and that when they die they will be speaking with the others whom they meet in the spirit world. And they will be discussing the dispensations and time periods in which they live and some will say I lived in the in the time period of Joseph Smith and people will be impressed and others will say I lived in the time period of Brigham Young and people will be impressed. But the youth of today will say I lived in the time period of Gordon B. Hinkley and all in the hall will hush and bow and in their presence. Well President Packer heard this rumor that he has said this and in 2001 released a statement saying, quote "I did not make that statement, I do not believe that statement." End quote. And this was put in the church news. Widely disseminated church news, but it didn't end there. Seven years later just after the death of President Hinkley of course a quote like this is going to gain some currency in a time like that where President Hinkley has just died. But seven years later we have an official statement from the first presidency which in actually in bold types says this is a false statement. It is not church doctrine. So you see the difficulty in squashing some of these myths because people want to believe them. They want them to be true but we have the greatest story in the world. There is no reason to make anything up.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Wanting to be part of such an amazing quote, amazing concept, I think is probably part of the reason why they just keep getting generated even though it's totally false. Let's go back to the Mormon Battalion for a minute. Of course they were there and probably was the first person to find that big nugget of gold. (LAUGHING)

MICHAEL LANDON: Well actually

NATHAN WRIGHT: Gold rush wasn't he? Wasn't he? (LAUGHING) He was he was in the Mormon Battalion he made the march and he was right there.

MICHAEL LANDON: That's right. In fact, who knows what the economic condition of the United States would of been if the Mormon Battalion hadn't found that gold. (LAUGHING)

NATHAN WRIGHT: Ok, we better stop there. (LAUGHING) Some people know exactly what happened.

MICHAEL LANDON: Well there were a lot of people working on a construction project at Coloma on the American river. I was a mill that John Sutter wanted to a lumber mill wanted constructed and his partner James Marshall took some former Mormon Battalion members. They were veterans at this time they had been discharged. Took them up to the sierra foothills on the construction project and the tail race one day Marshall found what appeared to be gold and showed it to the other battalion members. Fortunately one of them, a Henry Begler, recorded in his diary that today some metal was found in the tail race which appears to be gold. Looks like gold. Marshall goes down to Sacramento; Sutter tests it and finds that it is pure gold and Marshall comes back up and tells the battalion members. Well there was also another family that was working was involved in the construction, the Wemer family. The tradition in their family is that it was their children that found the gold in the tail race. There are some scholars who believe that it was actually native Americans who brought the gold to Marshall and showed him and of course most of the many actions so most many of the descendents of those individuals, individual battalion members that were there would like to believe that their ancestor was responsible for such a momentous event that changed the course of American history. But it's the documentary record, Begler's in particular, that really sets the record straight. For a long time they didn't even know what day it was discovered but John Hittell, historian in the late 1800's begun writing the battalion members asking them for the story. And he found that Begler had actually recorded the date.

Begler tore the page out of his journal and mailed it to and Hittell and that page actually is in the holdings of the Society of California Pioneers in San Francisco. Later at the time he sent that, this gold was found gives the date 24 January and later he wrote in above it that it was found by James Marshall, spelled M-a-r-t-i-a-l instead of spelled M-a-r-s-h-a-l-l. The boss of the mill said here's Begler stating categorically who it was who that found the gold. But I've had many discussions with individuals who said "no, that's inaccurate". The battalion discovered the gold and gave it to James Marshall. Even after I've related to them the evidence from both Henry Biggler as well as Henry Smith that Marshall was the discoverer. It doesn't just, didn't seem to register that and my point is: does it really matter? I mean in a sense it was a momentous event but the actual discovery we know it was discovered. Sometimes the problems in there were two other Mormon Battalion veterans who discovered gold at another location. They became known as Mormon island and many people thought that because of this great strike that these two battalion vets found after the discovery of gold in Coloma. That in fact it was the Mormon Battalion that discovered gold. They were definitely involved in it and Henry Begler, once it proved to be gold spent a lot of his spare time hunting for it. He got even, says of all of them that he had the worst case of gold fever. But it's pretty conclusive that James Marshall picked it out and told the battalion members that he in fact when he came back he says boys I'm rich, I found a gold mine.

NATHAN WRIGHT: But yet I think it his desire to be part of something bigger than we are what we are and so no matter what you say Michael I'm pretty sure my great grandfather in the Mormon Battalion found gold there so (LAUGHING) so lets move on to lets go back to Carthage for just a minute. We all know for a fact that a bullet hit John Taylor, it struck his watch and that's what saved his life. Everybody knows that for sure.

EMILY UTT: And the problem with that myth is that John Taylor himself started it and that's a really tough one to deal with. And so the research on this one has actually been pretty recent. That a few people who have expertise in forensics were looking at John Taylor's pocket watch that exact which is on exhibit on the Church History Museum you can go anytime and see it. And were comparing it to some of the damage done to Hyrum Smith's watch and noticing that this they don't work. There's no way that both of those watches could have been hit by a bullet so they did a little bit more research on it and found that, even found other period pocket

watches and started firing bullets at them to see if they could replicate the damage to John Taylor's watch and they couldn't. So they took a closer look at the watch and discovered that it appears and again we can't know this for certain that as John Taylor was falling he fell into the window cell and the force of that fall pushed some of the workings of the watch through the face leaving a small hole in the face of the watch and then creased the back of the watch. And some where in that effort then John Taylor then fell under the bed and survived the attack. And the challenge that we have with that one is that John Taylor felt that his life was miraculously saved, which it was. By all accounts he should have died from his injuries there's no reason for him to have lived. And so as he was healing he asked for his clothes to be brought to him and saw the damage to the watch. Saw a hole in his pocket where the watch had been and assumed that the watch had been hit by a bullet. But in reality this story is much more powerful. God doesn't need a watch to save someone's life. He needed to preserve John Taylor's life for a bigger purpose. He needed him to be a witness of the martyrdom. He needed him to be the president of the Church so he saved his life. The pocket watch is a good artifact to document the event. It is a good artifact to document the time that it happened as he fell against the window the watch stopped. So it is a powerful witness of the martyrdom that the watch itself didn't save John Taylor.

JANEICE JOHNSON: And the watch I think is perhaps the positive about what we want to believe we have some others that come to use because they are negative and people want to believe negative things. There is a persistent rumor historical rumor about Emma pushing Eliza R. Snow down the stairs in Nauvoo. That Emma angry about polygamy pushed Eliza R. Snow down the stairs. This is another instance that most of these ideas come from a time when they were when the Church in general or some of the leaders of the Church were very upset with Emma for not coming to Utah. And you have a variety of different stories but the initial account actually comes from anti-mormon polemic novel that was written in 1886 and talks about two separate things, talks about Eliza Partridge being pushed by Emma down the stairs and talks about Eliza R. Snow actually being attacked by Emma with a broom stick. And we have some sort of conflation of these stories that comes together and creates this idea creates this antagonism. The idea that Emma was antagonist towards plural marriage, there is truth in that. There is definitely truth in that. Yet Eliza R. Snow, when after Emma's death and her son Joseph Smith the 3rd comes in and

gives Emma's last testimony in which she denounces polygamy and says it completely says that Joseph never practiced it that that was never part of the Church that Joseph established. And Eliza's response is Emma would never say such a thing that that didn't that did not come from Emma. And I think that some people have built up that antagonism and this little incident this antidote exemplifies that.

That idea of this antagonism Eliza was the faithful polygamist wife and Emma was the evil one and a lot of these stories also get play because they follow a very simple fictional narrative. You have good and you have evil and they attack one another and one of them triumphs. And it's kind of this basic fictional formulaic that people use to tell a story. But when you try and pin it down historically it doesn't hold up.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Thank you, Janiece. As a reminder you are listening to Legacy on the Mormon channel. We're talking about Mormon myths today. One of the great stories of sacrifice in Church history is the building of the Kirkland temple and how at one point the sisters wanting to be part of the sacrifice and making the temple as beautiful as possible took their china, their good china and ground it up and put it on the walls to make the temple shine. And of course it's a heart warming story but I'm just wondering about the veracity of this.

JANEICE JOHNSON: That is one of those stories who we can't find any sources for it. There's no account that the women gave their fine china to the temple. However, we do have a source that talks about where the bits of china that are in the walls came from because anyone who visits the Kirkland temple can see original pieces of the stucco and see that there are pieces of china there. Artemus Millett who was one of the stone masons on the temple wrote this, when the wall of the temple was finished Artemus sent men and boys to different towns and places to get old crockery and glass to put in the cement which A. Millett had invented. So basically Artemus Mullett sent people out and asked everyone to go through there trash heaps and find all of the pieces of glass and crockery that had broken that anyone who's visited historic sites knows crockery old dishes and things break rather easily specially the common every day things so you would find this in your trash heap. And so they sent boys out with pails and asked people to donate there broken china to the temple. So I think that is a really great story it's not that they donated their finest, it's that they took something that they thought was no longer usable and reworked it into something that added to the beauty of the temple.

NATHAN WRIGHT: And the other temple myths anybody wants to debunk today.

GUEST: Oh there's a great one, there's a great one involving the Hawaii temple the first Hawaii temple in Laie. The story goes like this that on the day of Pearl Harbor that there was one or several Japanese bomber pilots who were assigned to bomb the Hawaii temple. And there are actually several different versions of this but this is my favorite this is probably the most fantastic version. That he was assigned to bomb the Hawaii temple and when he got over the temple - to drop the bomb and the bomb and the bomb wouldn't drop. And he tried this several times and it wouldn't drop and then over the years afterward he was intrigued by this fact and when he was, when he finally found out what the building was, whether missionaries approached him and taught him the gospel before hand or found out from some other means depends on which version of this story you hear but when he found out he was so impressed by this fact that he joined the Church. And that he later became a General Authority. Now there are two potential General Authorities that are apart of this story and one of them is Elder Adney Y. Komatsu who was member of the First Quorum of the Seventy between 1976 and 1993. Now Elder Komatsu was raised in Hawaii and served in the American Army during World War II.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Ok Alright (LAUGHTER)

GUEST: The other possible General Authority is Elder Kikuchi, Yoshihiko Kikuchi who is currently serving in the First Quorum of the Seventy. The problem with that is that Elder Kikuchi was 5 months old. They start them young over there. (LAUGHING) So there's a little bit of a problem with those with those two candidates for having been the person who supposedly dropped the bomb. Kenneth Baldrige of BYU Hawaii has actually researched this story quite extensively and he could find no version of it before the 1960's. So its one of those stories that a great story but come about a little bit later and we can't really verify that it's happened but we also really can't verify that it did happen but I'm pretty sure that Elder Komatsu and Elder Kikuchi are innocent.

EMILY UTT: Another temple story kind of similar that we can trace back to where it started and we can see perhaps you know where it started. The St. George temple tower the story goes that Bingham Young was in St. George and the temple is about finished. He looked up at the tower and said that tower was too short and squatty and change it. And the residents of St. George were not going to change the temple, is too close to being finished. And then Brigham Young

dies shortly after the temple is dedicated and within a very short amount of time the tower is hit by lightning and burnt the base and the story goes that Brigham got his way finally. So, wonderful story. This story originates in 1977, is the problem. There is a member of who use to be a member of the Church history staff who he recalls that he was in St. George and gave a fireside of some kind and told that story as a joke. And then it got printed in the news papers the next day and the story has just continued from there. However there is some eliminative truth to what happened we have one account one source of Brigham Young saying that I don't like that tower. And he had this conversation with his son Brigham Young Jr. in St. George. It was a private conversation and Brigham Young Jr. wrote this in his journal. He said that the tower is wooden and a very unsatisfactory piece of work. Father remarked he would keep the tower locked that he was ashamed of the framing and design. It is some 12 to 18 feet to low to look well. President says they will have that remedied some these days. How mechanics can do such work and call it right is a mystery to me. This is the conversation between two carpenters. I don't like the tower. The problem is in public after they give this both Brigham Young Jr. and President Brigham Young says how beautiful the temple is and how pleased they are with the work. So if Brigham Young had said that to someone it would have been changed. The people of St. George in the 19th century were known for being some of the most faithful "Latter-day Saints". If Brigham Young said change the tower, they would have done it. This was a people they said when they wanted to change the location of the temple construction because the ground was too marshy. But Brigham Young said build the temple there so they kept building. So why would they in case of temple construction follow Brigham Young when the temples finished. Not, just doesn't make any sense. However, about 18 months after Brigham Young dies the temple was hit by lightning but they weren't aware of how much damage had been done until they went up in 1883 to fix the roof. And someone's boot went thought the roof and then they realized just how much damage had been done and decided now is the time to change the tower. So Brigham Young may have disliked it but he really didn't call lightning down. And what's interesting is if you read the quotes from Wilford Woodruff and other church leaders about the temple getting hit by lightning and their comments are that the hand of God has protected this building from more serious damage. They saw minor damage and saw that God had protected them. So it's a very different version.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Which once again is much better story.

EMILY UTT: Yea

NATHAN WRIGHT: So...

JANEICE JOHNSON: This idea of prophets and prophets words are sometimes a difficult thing. Especially when we get to Joseph Smith and Joseph doesn't he writes down his revelations or other people scribes writes down his revelations? Joseph himself doesn't write things down very often and so we have a record that comes from, through other people. Some things get more play than others. The white horse prophecy is a purported prophecy that has got a lot of mileage of the years. Through the years, in this, there are different versions of the prophecy but there is a white horse which is the church pale horse which is the US a red horse and a black horse which some interpret it as Indians or African Americans. But basically the white horse saves everything. The country is in ruin. The banks have all failed. Gold isn't of any use any more. The constitution is hanging by a thread. And the white horse comes and saves everything. This was purportedly given in 1843 by two people who, it's very difficult to actually connect them historically to the stories of this. But in 1918, Joseph Fielding Smith in general conference, he says he's talking about the white horse prophecy says, "I have discovered that people have copies of this purported by the prophet Joseph Smith given in Nauvoo and some people are circulating this supposed vision or revelation or conversation which the prophet is reported to have held with a number of individuals in the city of Nauvoo. I want to say to you my brethren and sisters that if you understand the Church articles and covenants, if you will read the scriptures and become familiar with those things which are recorded in the revelations from the Lord it will not be necessary for you to ask any questions in regard to the authenticity or otherwise of any purported revelation, vision or manifestation that proceeds out of darkness, concocted in some corner surreptitiously present and not coming through the proper channels of the Church." His father Joseph F. Smith who was prophet at the time gets up after him and says that ridiculous story about the red horse and the black horse and the white horse and a lot of trash that has been circulated about and printed and sent as a great revelation given by the prophet Joseph Smith. It is simply false. That is all there is to it. I think in this instance we have authorities a refuting this but yet it is something that still gets a lot of airtime. But I think that the Joseph Fielding Smith quote is very important because it sets out a way for us to analyze these things. The Lord tells us in the Doctrine and Covenants that we receive revelation in our minds and in our hearts. A lot of these things we have an emotional reaction to and we want them to be true. But

the Lord also tells us to not ignore our minds and not ignore our faculties of reason that he has given us and here Joseph Fielding Smith was an apostle is saying, read the scriptures know what's in the scriptures. If you know the articles and covenants, if you read the scriptures, those things that are recorded in the revelations from the Lord, you're not going to be fooled by one of these things. And I think that setting that up is really important if we have a base if our foundation is in faith, repentance and baptism if it is in the foundational principals of the gospel, then even if we heard something we really believed it was true and we later find out it's not, we're going to be ok. We don't base, we can't base our testimony in those things. Our testimony is based, needs to be based in true doctrine and faith, repentance and baptism. Those are the facts. That's the beginning and that is the foundation.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Good thank you. I would like to refer back to the present Lee talk. He quoted a first presidency 1913 warning to members of the Church in his talk and I would just like to read that quick little paragraph. "All faithful members are entitled to inspiration of the Holy Spirit for themselves, their families and for those over whom they are appointed and ordained to preside but anything at discord with that which comes from God thru the head of the Church is not to be received as authoritative or reliable. In secular as well as spiritual affairs, saints may receive divine guidance, and revelation affecting themselves but this does not convey authority to direct others and is not to be accepted when contrary to Church covenants, doctrine or discipline or to known facts demonstrated truths or good common sense." I thought that was such an amazing statement from 1913 and you know it still holds so true in our in our day of electronic rumors. So.

EMILY UTT: Let me give you good common sense examples of some of this. I've heard four buildings with this same general story. Every time I turn around I seem to find another one. That pioneers were building their meeting house and they had the walls up and then they realize they didn't know what to do next. So they stand around scratching their heads and then they remember that Brother Jones down the street is a ship builder who had joined the Church in Scotland or Denmark or fill in your country here. And so they bring him over and he says, Oh I don't know how to build the roof but I know how to build the ships so build your meeting house like and ship and I can we'll work it out. I can think of at least four buildings with this story. There are several problems with these stories. First off, I'm surprised that there were that many ship builders in pioneer Utah and that few carpenters that they could

build the buildings and then suddenly would lose all professional skill.

JANEICE JOHNSON: They could build their houses

EMILY UTT: Yes

JANEICE JOHNSON: But they didn't know how to build a little bit bigger Church buildings.

EMILY UTT: There were several things available to them. First off, people had been building vaulted ceilings, arched ceilings since Roman times. There old vaults are, you know, it's a major feature in Roman architecture and every Gothic Cathedral has an arch in it. So there are lots of examples of how to build arches and vaults and big beautiful ceilings. You don't have to be a ship builder to do. Now you may be able to be able to use some of your ship building skills knowing how to work with large pieces of timber to do this but you don't need to be a ship builder to build a roof. The other thing that happens is that there were design books very common design books in the 19th century that anyone could have had access to. So if you didn't know how to build you could buy one of these books. It's kind of like the historically equivalent of one going down to your local hardware store and asking a guy how to do it.

NATHAN WRIGHT: A how to

EMILY UTT: A how to book and you could learn how to build very complicated very large buildings from these design books. And what else in interesting about Mormon towns is that for many of these communities a good portion of your community knew how to work with wood. I've heard numbers anywhere from 15 to 30% of people in these towns were carpenters who knew how to work with wood who knew how to build large buildings. And so needing to build like a ship is not necessary because you have men in the towns who already know how to build. So I can, so I find these stories most common when I go on tours of historic sights of historic meeting houses. I hear the most from people who have never really looked at their roof. They heard it from somebody else and they repeated it. But if they actually look at their roof and think about it for a couple of minutes, it doesn't make sense. It's far too complicated to have to have a shipbuilder come in to build your roof when you know how to do it yourself because you just finished your house and it has the same thing.

NATHAN WRIGHT: When you have a bridge builder like with the case of the tabernacle you don't need a ship builder.

EMILY UTT: Exactly

(LAUGHING)

NATHAN WRIGHT: Any other were getting to close on time here, any other rumors that we need to dispel today.

EMILY UTT: I think one last favorite is that everyone who came to Utah came by handcart. That's a common one we hear and the handcarts have become a great symbol of the trek.

JEFFERY CANNON: Yea and that's not so much a myth as it is a perceptions as the handcart has become the symbol of this and that.

MICHAEL LANDON: The symbol was a handcart.

JEFFERY CANNON: Which is really quite funny because the handcarts didn't happen for another ten years.

(LAUGHING)

JEFFERY CANNON: Which they handcarts and the early pioneers are separated by quite a few years, a decade at least. And that you know one of the perceptions that a lot of people have we have a lot of stakes and wards that take their youth out on these handcart tacks which are wonderful experiences for these for these young people. And a lot of them have someone dressed up in a Mormon Battalion uniform and they come and they recruit the all of the young men to go off and the Mormon Battalion. And then this is usually on the day of the hardest part of the pull and then they have what they call the women's pull and this happens all over the Church I think. And then all of theses young men have to stand there and watch as these young women pull up these hand carts and this is very emotional very emotional event for theses people and if you talk to these people they will tell you oh this is this is the greatest part of it. Well the problem is there's no recruitment of the Mormon Battalion of the handcart pioneers. And there's this emotional response the spirit cannot testify of a lie. It's very important that we get these things right because the spirit will not testify of something that's not true. And I don't doubt these people have

wonderful experiences and I don't doubt that people have very emotional attachments to things. And I don't doubt that people have a witness from the Holy Ghost. But it's very important that we separate the two.

EMILY UTT: The Mormon Battalion came in 1846 and the handcarts started in 1856.

MICHAEL LANDON: Even more than that I think even if they were making a composite and try to make a representational experience that they would have a disclaimer. You need to understand those of you who are involved in this that there is a decade difference between the recruitment of the battalion and the departure of the first handcart company. There is no connection historically. An entire decade between those two events but what we're trying to give you is a composite experience so they take these they try to take an overview of the overland experience and mesh in sort of blend in some of these experiences. And that's how you get this sort of mixing of the 1856 handcart experience with well 1856 to 1860 with an 1846 Mormon Battalion trek. It's a, I mean, it's a device it may have some utility as long as the participants understand take a look at history and you'll know the two events can't be connected historically.

NATHAN WRIGHT: So as a composite event perhaps to give an overview of what most or all or some of the pioneers went through as long as they know the facts.

MICHAEL LANDON: Right

NATHAN WRIGHT: It's probably ok

MICHAEL LANDON: I would think if they want to understand to the overall experience maybe they could craft it a little bit differently so they would understand it. There is no possibility that these two events which are totally disconnected have a connection. I mean that will be an impression that some may walk away with, is that hey the Mormon Battalion is the same year as the handcarts. The other issue is that everybody really from 1846 until the railroad came pulled a handcart. There may have been a wagon here and a wagon there let me, some Church members they have this idea that people came almost the vast majority of Church members came by handcart. When it was just a fraction of the total and even in wagon trains people walked most of the time.

JANEICE JOHNSON: A wagon is not comfortable, no one wants ride in that.

MICHAEL LANDON: Even then you would try to sheppard your stock. There are lots of reasons not to have people in the wagon. Their drovers walk along side with their, with their whips.

NATHAN WRIGHT: And we know that all pioneer children sang as they walked

EMILY UTT: Yes, put a little plug that anyone who's really interested to know more about the truth behind these stories. Almost all of the sources that we have been quoting are available at the Church History Library. That if you want to better prepare your youth for a pioneer for a pioneer trek come to the Church History Library, come to the Church History Museum there are people there that can help explaining some of the truth to these stories. Or can help you do research yourself you can find the truly behind these stories.

JANEICE JOHNSON: Or if you have a myth that you really want to know the truth of and you can't seem to research and get to it yourself we like answering those questions.

NATHAN WRIGHT: More so than the coworker who probably has a pretty good idea.
Right

(MUSIC STARTING)
(LAUGHING)

NATHAN WRIGHT: Send it off to Bill he probably knows exactly what's going on OK
(LAUGHING)

NATHAN WRIGHT: Well thank you very much we've been talking today with Jeffery Cannon, Michael Landon, Janiece Johnson and Emily Utt from the Historical Department. We've been talking about Mormon myths and trying to debunk a few of the things that have gone on for years. Thank you one and all for being here. It's been really fun.

(END MUSIC)

