

Joseph Leland Heywood, a son of Benjamin Heywood and Hannah Rawson, was born August 1, 1815 in Grafton, Massachusetts. In his early years, Joseph worked on his father's farm, but he soon decided that he preferred merchandising to farm work. At the age of twenty-four he went into partnership with a brother-in-law, Oliver Kimball, managing a store in Quincy, Illinois.

As a part of his work, Joseph traveled by boat on the Mississippi River. On one trip Miss Sarepta Blodgett boarded the boat, and she was so beautiful that Joseph began courting her at once. Family legend says that his letters to her, his proposal of marriage in particular, have a literary quality ~~unparalleled in publication~~.

The young couple were married on June 24, 1841, when he was twenty-six years of age and she not yet quite twenty.

At the time of his marriage Heywood knew nothing of Mormonism, but in the fall of 1842 he visited Nauvoo and listened to the Prophet Smith preach. He was instantly converted and asked for baptism, although the stream was frozen along the bank. Orson Hyde performed the ceremony, while the Prophet himself helped to cut the ice. Orson Hyde also confirmed him, assisted by The Prophet and Jedediah M. Grant.

A few years later Heywood managed the Prophet's store in Nauvoo, and there grew up a friendship which was genuine, as is clearly shown by letters in Emma's handwriting show. Through all the troubles he remained active in defense of the Church and its leaders.

When the exodus from Nauvoo began, Joseph Heywood was asked to remain with Almon W. Babbitt and John S. Fullmer to dispose of church property. It was a tense and perilous time during which several persons were killed and others wounded, as the mormons contended with angry mobs.

The Church Agents managed the best they could, selling ~~properties~~ properties and trading some for wagons, teams, grain or other supplies, oxen, or horned stock. They completed their work just in time to join the last train of the 1848 emigration from Winter Quarters.