

*\*The following was taken from a book yellowed and torn with age. Some words were missing and the translation is hopefully accurate.*

PRISON LIFE, IN THE DETROIT HOUSE OF CORRECTION  
by P J Christofferson

Bros. A M Tenney, C I Kempe, and the author were tried for polygamy and unlawful cohabitation before Judge Summer Howard at Prescott Arizona.

Brother Tenney's trial began on November 24<sup>th</sup> 1884 and lasted three days. Mine began on the 27<sup>th</sup> and lasted two days. Judge Howard's charge to the jury was commingled, interwoven and misconstrued as to prevent the jury from knowing what the law really meant, and whether it meant anything or not, except to convict. It was clearly proven by our enemies who appeared against us and witnesses that under the law we were not guilty of polygamy; more than three years having elapsed since all of us had married our second wives; and in Brother Kempe's case he had been married to his for more than twelve years, while Bro. Tenney had also honourably maintained his plural wife for over—years.

The judge charged the jury that unlawful cohabitation in this territory was—bigamy, that bigamy was polygamy, hence—if they (*the jury*) found that we had lived with those women in this territory, that we were guilty of polygamy, and that they must find a verdict accordingly. Through an offense that, under the law, was only punishable by six months imprisonment and \$300 fine, was construed to mean an offense punishable by five years imprisonment and we were accordingly convicted of polygamy.

When the time arrived to sentence us the judge said he wanted to give us a hard sentence, not for our own sakes, but in order to deter others from entering into plural marriage. We were then sentenced to three years and one half at hard labour in the Detroit House of Correction.

As soon as each one of us was convicted we were put into the Prescott jail. Bro Tenney was obliged to stay there nine days, the author----days and Bro Kempe eight days.

While in the Prescott jail we were visited by a Rev. Hunt with whom I had an interview previous to being sentenced. He remarked that he had read some of our works and that he had been informed by a very reliable friend of his that we were honest, industrious people. He asked if he could do anything for us. He said that he did not see as we did but he feared the nation would disgrace itself in trying to put (*edge of page torn*) polygamy. He seemed to be a very kind sympathetic gentleman.

While on board the train going to Detroit a newspaper reporter interviewed us and asked us if we believed polygamy was right. Bro. Tenney assured him most emphatically that we did. He asked us how many wives we had. We replied we were accused of having

two each. After quite a lengthy interview he said he was really surprised to see that we looked just like other people. He said he expected to see a wild barbarous people. Bro Kempe afterwards inquired why the interview was never published. The reply was that the answers were not as he had expected. That he had expected we would have changed our ideas in view of the long sentence we had just received. That he did not think it would interest the reading public to know that we were just as firm in our faith as ever.

We arrived in Detroit on Dec 11<sup>th</sup> about midnight. The Deputy Superintendent of the prison came to the depot after us. It was a bitter cold night. We all suffered much from cold the first winter. The only heat was a few steam pipes and even these were some distance from our cells.

After entering the prison an officer conducted us to our cells for the remaining portion of the night. Each cell had a rock floor and ceiling. On an iron bedstead in my cell was one pair of blankets, a straw mattress, and pillow. I asked the officer if I could have another pair of blankets. He replied that I was big and fat enough to keep warm. Then he shut the large iron door and turned the key.

I knelt down on the rock floor and poured out my soul to my Heavenly Father in humble reverence, and thanked him for my lovely family and for being permitted to come on the earth in a time when the true Gospel was being proclaimed abroad in the earth and that I had been made a partaker of it's blessings; and I asked Him to help me to endure the severe cruelty inflicted on me, that I might remain true and faithful to my family, my brethren and sisters and to my God; and all connected with His great and glorious work on earth, no matter what I was called to pass through for surely this was the greatest desire of my heart.

But, oh, the thought of how I had been dragged 2000 miles from home and friends, leaving my poor heart-broken family in their humble cottage on the prairie of a frontier country, left to the charity of a cold world while I was doomed to toil away my life in a gloomy prison, when my family needed the proceeds of my labour every day----and all this done contrary to law and justice. It made gushing tears steal down my cheeks in spite of anything I could do.

Something that seemed to make it the more provoking to me, was the thought of the character of the men at whose instigation I now found myself here. They were scoundrels of the deepest dye. They were men who would have improper association with a blind maid and pay her in counterfeit money for her charms. By stuffing the ballot-boxes, by causing the names of men who had been gone or dead for years and other illegal ways they had held control of the county for years. For instance, one caused (*the name "Franklin was scratched through*) himself to be elected by stopping with the ballot-box (*which had been entrusted to him to be taken to the county seat to be counted*) on the way and taking the ballots out

and changing them so as to favour himself.

Men had been put to death by this ring (*an organized group of attorneys and long-time residents of St. Johns opposing Mormon influence*) without due process of law, and that to was secret, being at the time prisoners who were helpless in their hands. They had carried things with a high hand in the county. They had previous to our trial at Prescott, had everything their own way in the county, but their cup of wickedness was now full. Their time of retribution was now at hand and their reign has now come to an end (*at this writing*), and they have been made to see the handwriting on the wall in flaming syllables.

The county treasurer, who was one of the prosecuting witnesses on our cases, was robbed----or the county safe was robbed while in his care, of ten thousand dollars. His brother is now serving out a ten-year sentence in Yuma, Arizona for robbing it. The affair has brought shame and disgrace to him and to his family while his bondsmen are taking his property to reimburse themselves for the forfeited bonds.

Another one of them who was a merchant in St. John is also ruined financially and is now serving out a ten-year sentence in Yuma, Arizona for raising county warrants.

Another one who also was a merchant in St John, shot his hand while out hunting and was obliged to have it amputated. He is now also ruined financially, so that it leaves him a cripple and a pauper. His wife offered to sell some of her clothing to the Relief Society of St. John in order to obtain money for their support.

Some have left the county to escape judgement, one of whom dumped two thousand dollars bonds to get away....In short there is not one of the dogs left to show their teeth at us. Not one of our persecutors who dares to raise his voice against us. The day of their power is past forever. Even Judge Howard who stood hand-in-glove with the witnesses who prosecuted us, has lost his position because of his unjust administration of the law.

But to return to our prison life —. On the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup> they brought me a cup of coffee, a piece of bread and a dish of soup. The soup looked as if it had been eaten once. I did not like coffee, so I left the whole of it for the waiter to bring away, as I did not wish to break up the institution on the start, and besides, I thought if they saw I was a light eater they might give me a light job.....

*\*(A notation on the cover of book reads:)*

*Names of our persecutors and witnesses who appeared against us:*

*Saul Barth*

*Lorenzo Hubble*

*Dionicio Bacca*

*Stover*

*Edwin Stanley*

*Charlie Kineer*