

## **Adam-ondi-Ahman Short Tour**

Elder Ken Wilcock – October 2020

Most people who come to Adam-ondi-Ahman go first to the East Overlook which with the rest rooms and picnic tables is not a bad choice and if you take the overlook trail it presents a great view of the Valley. But the real significance of what happened here and is yet to happen is in the vicinity of Tower Hill. So, use the facilities at the East Overlook and then head to Tower Hill where the real story begins.

On the way to Tower Hill we see people stop at the Spring Hill sign where the Tower Hill Road intersects with Koala and they have that look on their face like they were expecting something more. You may want to take a quick picture there but do not waste too much time trying to figure it out, it did not happen there. Turn left and continue to the Tower Hill Parking Lot. Once you get to the parking lot, make sure you have some good walking shoes and you might want to take some water with you, I would suggest you plan on being gone 45 minutes to an hour. Then head down the trail to the overlook area. When you come to the open grassy area walk to the left and you will come to a place where you can look down into the Valley. There is a nice view of a small part of the Valley here and it is the part of the Valley where Adam's posterity was gathered when he gave them his last blessing.

Continue along the trail and you will come to another opening in the trees looking down into the Valley. Ahead of you is a nice bronze sign which explains a little about the establishment of the community and Stake of Adam-ondi-Ahman in 1838. After reading the sign, turn back to your left and towards the top of the mound there and you should be able to see a small concrete square. In the early 1980's BYU sent an Archeological crew out here and they had a copy of the old townsite map and from that, using surveying equipment, they were able to determine that this was the lot assigned to Benjamin Franklin Johnson, a younger brother to Joel Hills Johnson. In Benjamin's journal he states that his lot was a large pile of rocks, that didn't look to inviting as a cabin site, but as the prophet told them that it was the location where Adam had built his alter and offered sacrifice, he no longer felt bad about it. He was young and single at the time, so he never built a cabin there, as he spent most of his time helping others built their cabins to provide shelter for their families. It remained a pile of rocks into the 1950's at which time souvenir hunters pretty well collected most of the rocks and carried them away.

When the Saints were here in 1838, they described the pile of rocks as a Nephitish alter to which the Prophet explained that the Nephites also recognized it as the place where Adam had built his alter and so they like wise rebuilt it and offered sacrifice there as a tribute to father Adam. I would recommend setting on the bench there and reflecting on some of the events that transpired there recognizing that at the bottom of the slope there, is where Adam blessed his posterity and where he will return again in the not too distant future with the leaders of all the dispensations to relinquish keys to the Savior.

After some time there, head down the trail to Preachers' rock. Just before you get to Preachers' rock look back on your right and you should see an orange colored pole sticking out of the ground. It has a # 4 on it. This is where Lyman Wight, a counselor in the Adam-ondi-Ahman Stake Presidency built a large cabin which was still here in the 1940's. The Prophet spent several nights here.

Continue to Preachers' rock where the brethren often held meetings preaching to congregations on the slope below the rock. The natural acoustics here are quite good and one can hear a normal voice carry out into the meadow for some distance.

From preachers rock head downslope to the nearest tree that is down from the edge of the road and as you look off slightly to the left of the tree, you will see a corridor in the pecan trees open up for you inviting you to enter and walk to the end of it where if you turn left you will find a small plank bridge crossing the stream bed. Use the plank and follow the mowed path up the hill into the grassy area. Notice the Orange Pole to your left as you emerge from the trees. It has a # 24 on it. This marks the location where Lyman Wight bought a cabin from Adam Black in February of 1838 where Lyman became the first Latter Day Saint to settle in this area. He sent word to the Prophet that he had found an ideal place to establish a community of Latter-Day Saints. So, in May of 1838 the Prophet brought a survey crew here to survey out a townsite. It was at that time, May 19th, 1838, at this location, that it was revealed to the Prophet, that this was Adam-ondi-Ahman, Section 116 in the Doctrine and Covenants. The name and events that had occurred here had been revealed years earlier and they had lovingly sung the song, # 49 in our Hymnbook for several years, but until that moment, they had no idea where it was.

I am thinking that they learned of this with some degree of excitement. They had been driven out of Jackson County where they had hoped to be able to establish Zion, much as Adam and Eve had been driven out of Eden. Now they had found the goodly land, richly blessed where Adam and

Eve had established the Human race and had prospered for more than 900. Years. It occurs to me that they probably saw some parallels to this in their lives, and that they then anticipated that they could establish a Stake of Zion here and greet the Savior and Adam when they returned. The Prophet and his survey crew spent 19 days laying out a townsite, staying in Lyman Wights cabin right here. Shortly after his return to Far West, the Prophet returned here on June 28, 1838 and organized the Adam-ondi-Ahman Stake with John Smith as the Stake President and Reynolds Cahoon and Lyman Wight as Counselors. Immediately after that people began gathering here to establish homes where the family of Adam had thrived for so long. By August there were more than 200 cabins in various stages of completion and about 50 families living in wagons and tents. So, the townsite of Adam-ondi-Ahman was centered up the hill to the North of here, but that area is now a hayfield.

From this location turn back down the mowed trail, but just past the tree line is a trail going in a North East direction. Take this trail for a ways and you will see another orange pole with a # 25. This marks the location of William C. Huntington's cabin. He related a story in Kirtland about a stranger that came to their home years before, in upper New York State asking for lodging. They had an interesting experience with him and after relating that experience to the prophet Joseph Smith, he identified the stranger as one of the three Nephites. William served as the commissary agent for Adam-ondi-Ahman. His son Oliver, was a teenager at the time they lived there in 1838, and related stories about the Far West Militia camping in the fields between their home and the Lyman Wight Barn which is up the trail a ways. William Huntington, in 1846, was ordained to be the presiding Elder at Mount Pisgah, along the trail across Iowa. He died there that year. Years later, his son Oliver, now living in Utah, was instrumental in establishing the Church's first historical site in Mount Pisgah. His fathers name is near the top of the monument there.

Continue along the trail, cross the road, and you will see another orange pole, # 26, Lyman Wight's barn. As Lyman Wight learned of the significance of this place, he decided to build a newer larger home and a good-sized barn for his livestock. For most of the year he was able to water his animal's in the nearby Spring Creek. The Mormon Militia camped in the loft of the barn here and in the meadow that was to the West of the barn. From this location go back to the road and after it crosses the creek, go a short distance where a gravel trail takes off on the left. Follow this trail for a short distance and you will see a small rock lined depression just off the trail on he left. This was a curbed-up spring that the Prophet helped to

construct. There is an orange pole to the right of this identifying this site as # 5, The Lyman Wight Spring.

Continuing up the gravel trail, you will find pole # 6 and the old concrete foundation to Clayton Barlow's Cabin Site. Clayton came here in 1910 long after the Saints had left, but he researched as much as he could and served as an unofficial guide to the Area for about 40 years. He kept a guest book and had Over 2,000 people sign it after he had shown them around the area.

From the Barlow Cabin continue along the trail in a North East direction until you reach pole number 7, the Harrison Burgess Cabin Site. The BYU Archeological crew was able to identify who lived at this site due to the fact that they had access to Harrison's journal, and He identifies his lot being an exact distance North from Adam's Alter. You can still see some of the foundation stones here. Harrison, a few years before, was serving as a missionary when after bearing testimony of the Book of Mormon, he had an experience where the adversary tried to confuse him and questioned his testimony. After about 2 hours of fervent prayer, a heavenly messenger appeared to him and showed him the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. Thus, Harrison became an additional witness of the Gold Plates. He later went to Utah and served faithfully in various callings of leadership. He remained true to his testimony and is buried in Pine Valley Utah.

From Harrison's Cabin Site head back down the trail the way you came past the Barlow cabin to the # 5 pole, and head up the trail to the left there. This trail will lead back to Lyman Wight Cabin 2, or Pole # 4.

From here head back up to the Overlook and then back to the parking lot reflecting on what it was like to walked where the early Saints walked. Where the Nephites recognized the Altar of Father Adam, and of course where Adam and Eve lived for over 900 years, and raised a righteous posterity and blessed them.

So why was the Saints stay here so short? Why did they leave? In August of 1838 there was a confrontation caused by William Pennington who was running for a political office and whose support of slavery resulted in the Latter-Day Saints choosing not to vote for him. He brought a barrel of whiskey and offered some to anyone who would vow to stop the Saints from voting in the Gallatin election. A knock down drag out battle ensued from which several individuals were knocked unconscious, and others were injured, but no one was killed.

Pennington lost the election, largely blaming the Saints for his defeat. He along with other began building the opposition to the Saints and inciting groups of vigilantes to begin raiding and burning isolated cabins around the periphery of Adam-ondi-Ahman. By the of November, the Saints had left and gathered in Far West following the counsel of the Prophet, hoping to achieve safety in numbers.

It was in Far West that George Hinkle betrayed the Prophet resulting in his arrest and subsequent confinement in Liberty Jail. Lyman Wight was also confined with the Prophet and others in the Liberty Jail.