# William and Wilson Law

*Two Brothers in Joseph Smith's Nauvoo*

*Faith, family, work, and the lives behind two court papers of 1843*

**Revised illustrated story • Prepared for David Larsen • October 2026**

### Highlights

Two original court papers place William and Wilson in an 1843 lawsuit—one accepting financial responsibility, the other attending as a witness. [1,2]

Their story begins in households and congregations: Canadian converts, the Fielding sisters, and friendships with Joseph and Hyrum Smith. [3–7]

A saved box, a mill, missionary travel, a wedding, and a dinner reveal what the later estrangement would undo. [6,9,13,21]

## Before the break

### Before William and Wilson Law became Joseph Smith's opponents, they had helped make his city their home.



**William Law in later life. Historical portrait reproduced by the BYU Religious Studies Center; date and photographer unspecified.** [39]

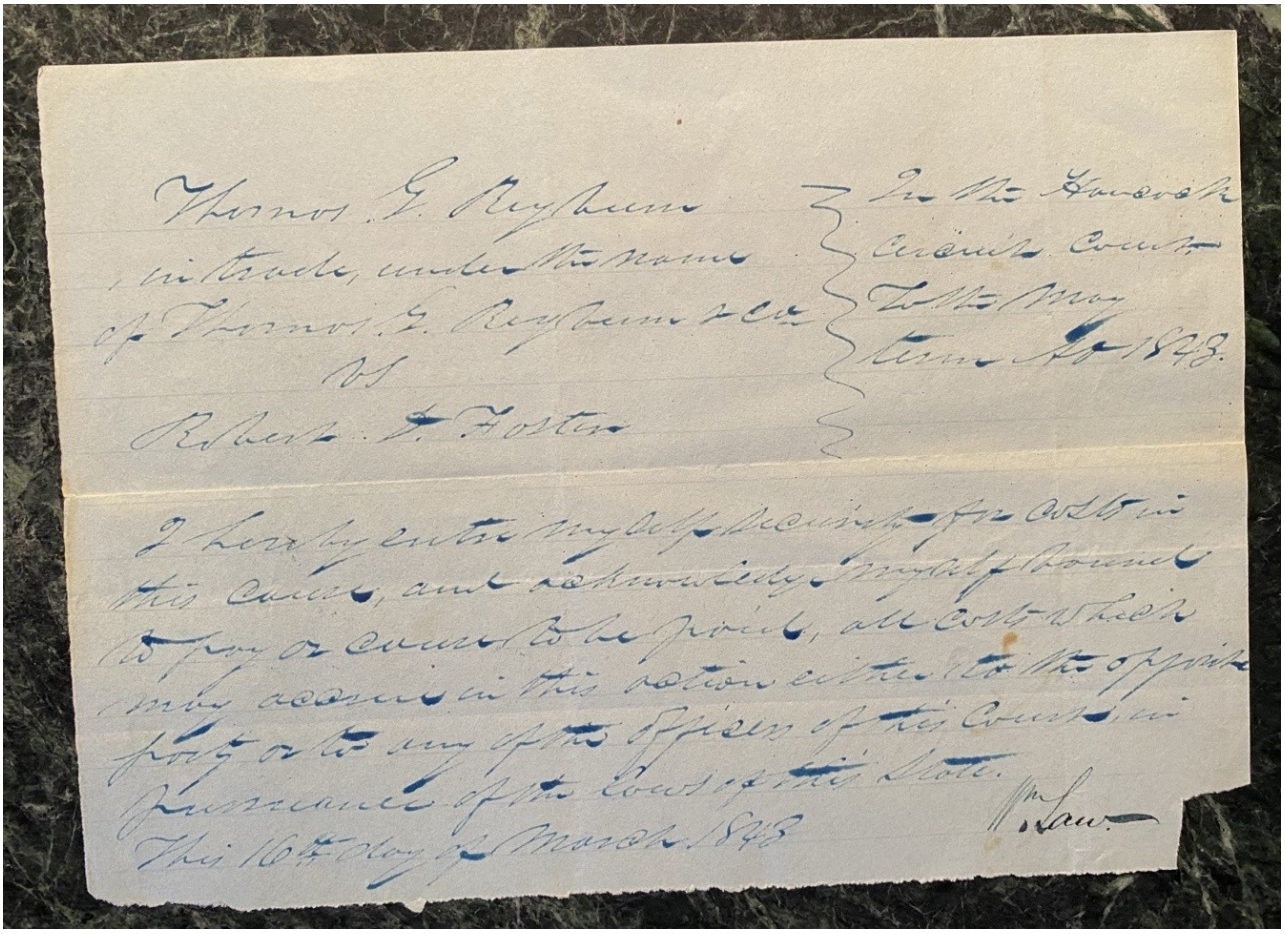
William was a counselor in the First Presidency. Wilson commanded the Nauvoo Legion as major general. Their business turned grain into meal and flour, and timber into lumber. Their obligations ran through homes, church meetings, public offices, and the county court. [3,4,13,14]

Joseph had performed Wilson's Christmas wedding. Weeks later, Wilson and Elizabeth joined Joseph and Emma for a celebratory dinner. That spring, William and Wilson signed the two papers reproduced here. They belonged to the city's circle of confidence, not yet to the opposition for which they would be remembered. [1,2,4,21]

The papers do not explain the later rupture. They open a door into the lives that existed before it.

# William puts his name behind the costs

**16 March 1843 • Filed 20 March • Hancock Circuit Court, No. 122**




**William Law's undertaking, front. Original photograph IMG_3663.jpeg, David Larsen collection; rotated upright and background trimmed.** [1]

## Reading transcription

Thomas [G.?] Rayburn, in trade, under the name of Thomas [G.?] Rayburn & Co.
vs Robert D. Foster

In the Hancock Circuit Court. To the May term A.D. 1843.

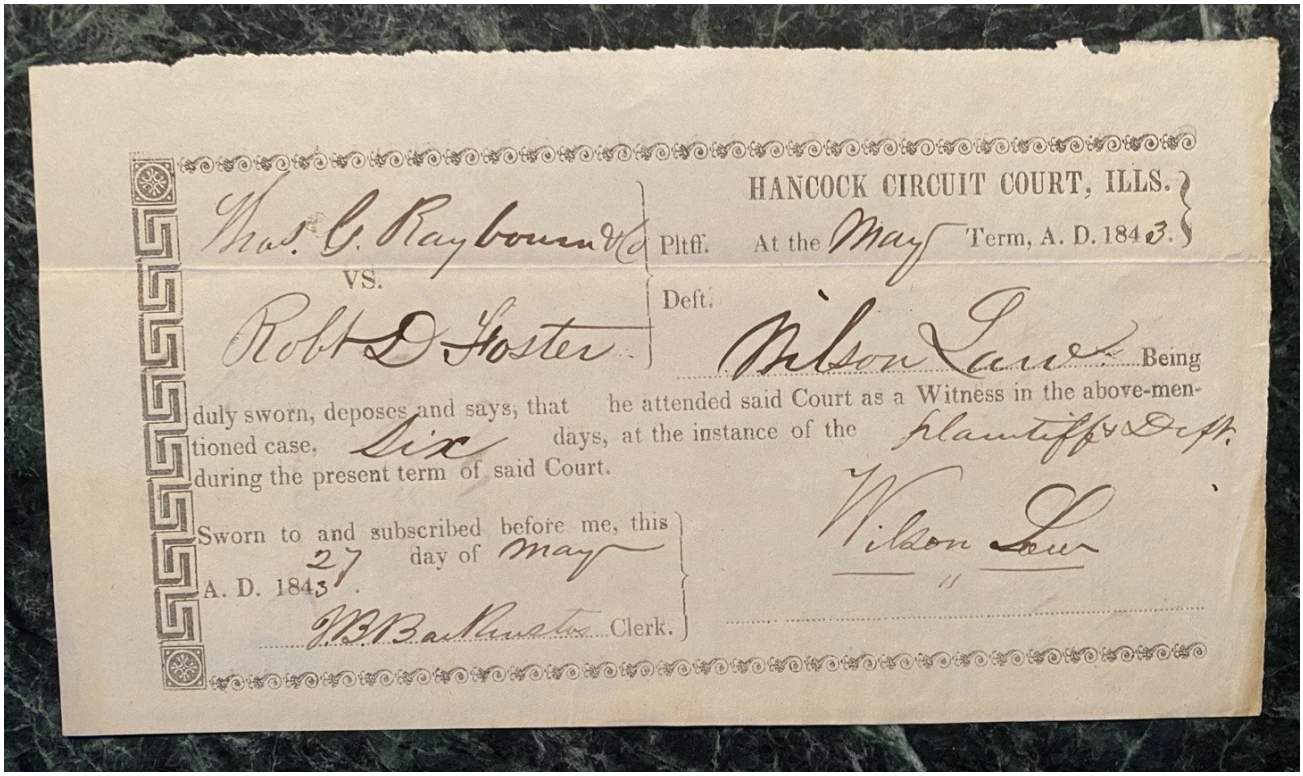
I hereby enter myself security for Costs in this Cause and acknowledge myself bound to pay or Cause to be paid, all Costs which may accrue in this action either to the Opposite party or to any of the officers of this Court in pursuance of the laws of this State.

This 16th day of March 1843
Wm. Law

**William accepted responsibility for litigation costs. The paper does not say why. Brackets identify an uncertain reading; punctuation and line breaks are lightly regularized. Detailed documentary cautions appear at the back.** [1]

# Wilson records six days at court

**27 May 1843 • May term • Hancock Circuit Court, No. 122**


HANCOCK CIRCUIT COURT, ILLS.

Thos. G. Raybourn & Co Pltff. At the May Term, A. D. 1843.

VS.

Robt D Foster Deft.

Wilson Law Being duly sworn, deposes and says, that he attended said Court as a Witness in the above-mentioned case, six days, at the instance of the plaintiff & Deft. during the present term of said Court.

Wilson Law

Sworn to and subscribed before me, this 27 day of May A. D. 1843.

J. B. Backenstos Clerk.

**Wilson Law's witness-attendance affidavit, front. Original photograph IMG_3661.jpeg, David Larsen collection.** [2]

## Reading transcription

HANCOCK CIRCUIT COURT, ILLS.
At the May Term, A. D. 1843.

Thos. [G.?] Raybourn & Co, Pltf.
VS. Robt D Foster, Deft.

Wilson Law Being duly sworn, deposes and says, that he attended said Court as a Witness in the above-mentioned case, six days, at the instance of the [plaintiff & Deft.?] during the present term of said Court.

Wilson Law

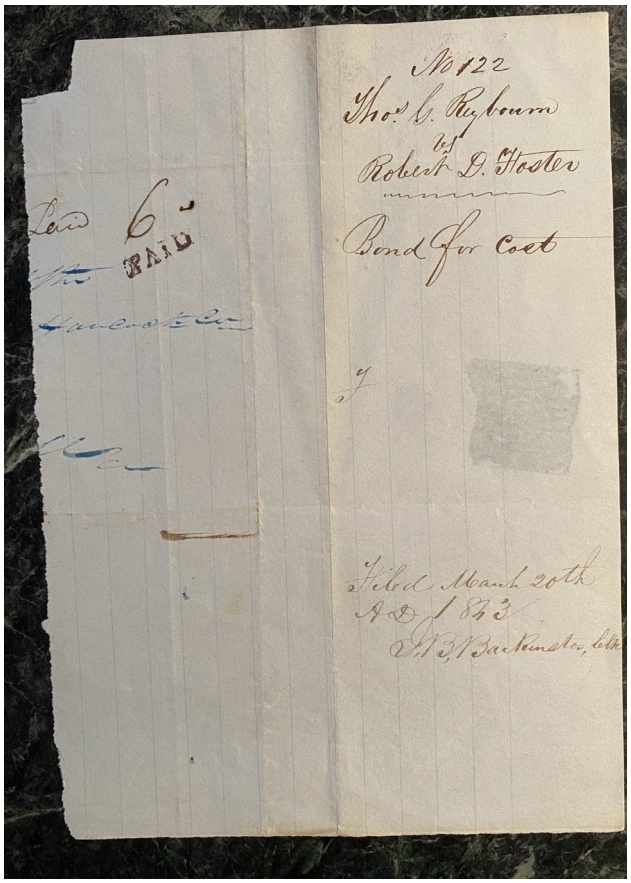
Sworn to and subscribed before me, this 27 day of May A. D. 1843
J. B. Backenstos Clerk.

**The party designation appears to name both plaintiff and defendant and remains provisional. The document records attendance; it does not preserve Wilson's testimony.** [2]

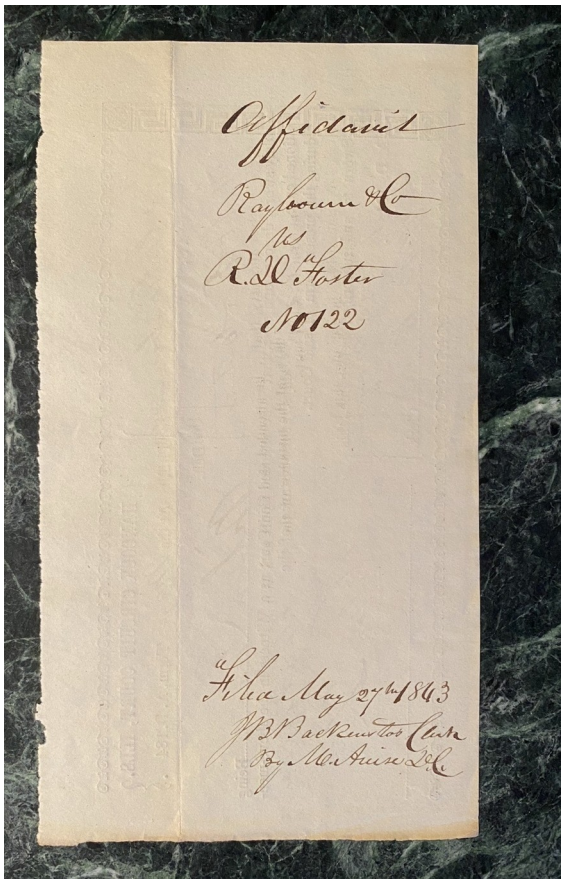
The word "six" gives the paper its human scale: time taken from a life that also included a household, a mill, and military responsibilities.

## The clerk’s side of the story

The matching case number links two different acts, recorded more than two months apart. [1,2]




**William’s paper, reverse. IMG_3664.jpeg.** [1]




**Wilson’s affidavit, reverse. IMG_3662.jpeg.** [2]

### William’s filing

No 122 / Thos. [G.?] Raybourn / vs / Robert D. Foster / Bond for Costs

Filed March 20th / A.D. 1843 / J. B. Backenstos, Clk.

### Wilson’s filing

Affidavit / Raybourn & Co / vs / R. D. Foster / No 122

Filed May 27th 1843 / J B Backenstos Clerk / By M. Avise D.C.

**Slashes separate lines. The separate “PAID” mark, number-like notation, and incomplete blue-ink writing on William’s reverse remain visible in the image. No judgment or account of the underlying claim has been recovered.** [1,2]

To meet the men behind these signatures, the story turns back six years—to a house in Upper Canada, and an invitation to stay.

## A place in the Law home

William did not begin his life in the Church by occupying a prominent chair in Nauvoo. He began among a small company of converts in Upper Canada, where belief quickly became a matter of finding rooms for travelers, helping absent friends, and keeping families in touch.

Born in Ireland in 1809, he had grown up after his family's move to western Pennsylvania. His older brother Wilson, born in 1806, shared that early migration. William later crossed into Upper Canada and married Jane Silverthorn in 1833. Jane was baptized in 1836. William had joined by 1837, and on April 24 of that year Parley P. Pratt ordained him an elder. He became the presiding elder of the Churchville branch. [3–5]

In May 1837, William wrote to Isaac Russell, who was preparing to travel to Kirtland. Would Russell let his wife and children stay with the Laws? William offered to send a wagon to Toronto, or a team to meet them at the mouth of the Credit River. He pressed the invitation rather than merely extending a polite courtesy. Jane wanted Mrs. Russell to stay, too. [6]

> *"They will be no trouble but a pleasure."*
>
> **William Law to Isaac Russell, 12 May 1837.** [6]

There was a journey to arrange, a woman traveling with children, and a family willing to make room. William could not remove all the burdens of missionary work, but he could carry some of them.

By November, another woman had been staying with William and Jane for several weeks: Mercy Rachel Fielding Thompson. Her husband, Robert B. Thompson, was engaged in missionary work. Mercy was anxious for news of her brother Joseph Fielding, who had gone to England with Russell and other missionaries. William's letter carried her concern along with reports about the local converts. [6]

Mercy's sister Mary Fielding married Hyrum Smith that December. A woman who had lived with William and Jane was now the sister of Hyrum's wife. Friendship and hospitality—not an established blood relationship—had joined the Laws to this family circle. [6,7]

Before there was a place for William in the First Presidency, there had been a place for Mercy in the Law home.

## A prophet encountered, not merely imagined

The same November letter recorded a visit from Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon. William reported that they had stayed in the area for four or five days and had given the Saints much instruction. His verdict was enthusiastic. [6]

> *"Bro Joseph is truly a wonderful man he is all we could wish a prophet to be."*
>
> **William Law to Isaac Russell, 10 November 1837.** [6]

He also admired Rigdon's eloquence and sacrifice. He rejoiced at the prospect of converts joining in England and hoped they would remain faithful. His letters were full of people moving toward one another: missionaries crossing the Atlantic, families waiting for news, and converts hoping eventually to gather in one place. [6]

That faith did not arrive without tensions inside his own family. In January 1839, William wrote that his father was strongly opposed to the Church because of reports he had heard. William's mother had recently died after a long illness. One brother was a strong advocate of the teachings, though not yet a member; the published letter edition identifies him as Wilson. William hoped that he would join. [6]

William already led a congregation. Wilson's baptism and ordination as an elder would come in Nauvoo. The brothers were approaching the same faith by different paths. [3,4,6]

## Waiting for a place to gather

By January 1839, William was writing from Georgetown in western Pennsylvania. He had expected money from Canada that had not arrived. The delay had held him back from Missouri. "I did not get up to Missouri," he told Russell. His letters are the record of a man trying to gather with the Saints, not the recollections of someone personally expelled from that state. [6]

He was still caring for someone else's family. Mary Ann Walton was with the Laws, and William promised to look after her as if she were his own child. They occupied a comfortable rented house, and he kept his teams working. He had asked a friend to advance forty dollars to Sister Walton, offering to settle the obligation when he reached the Saints. Even at a distance, he was trying to be useful. [6]

News from Missouri came slowly and in fragments. William wanted letters from his old friends. He wanted to know who had lost horses, who was safe, where people were going, and what the latest revelations said. His own plans depended on a question that the scattered Saints were also trying to answer: where could they make a home now? [6]

> *"I cant get Letters enough."*
>
> **William Law to Isaac Russell, 17 January 1839.** [6]

He preached while he waited and reported one baptism. The journey had stalled; his religious work had not. [6]

## The box Mercy carried

When William wrote again in late March, the household friendship with Mercy had become a story of help returned. She had brought a box connected with the Laws' affairs to Quincy and had paid sixteen dollars on it. Writing to Robert Thompson, William asked that enough of its contents be sold to repay the advance and transportation expenses, with anything remaining kept until the Laws arrived. [6]

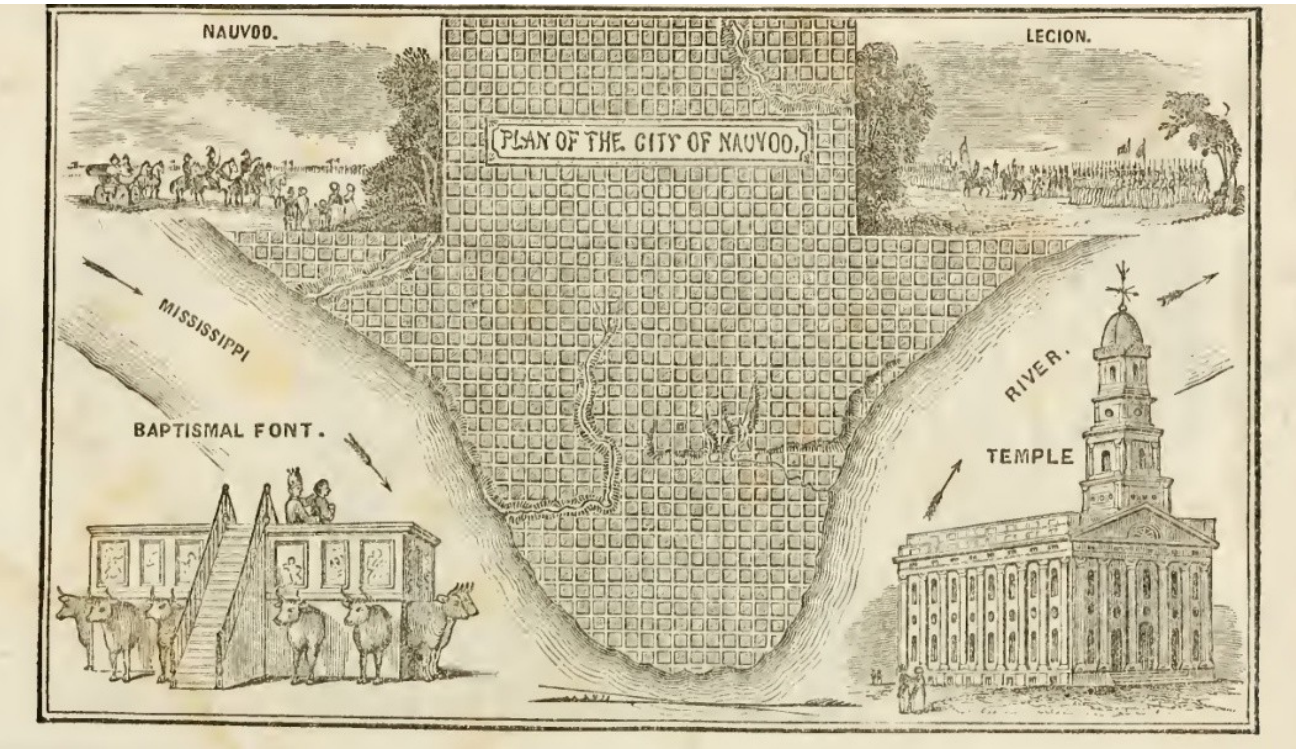
The woman who had once stayed with the Laws had now cared for property they could not attend to themselves. William wrote that they were very thankful and would not forget the burden she had borne. [6]

The letter then turned from gratitude to business. Wilson wished to go west. William wanted to know what goods people needed, how customers paid, how much capital a store required, and where it should be located. He also asked whether a new horse-powered machine for grinding and sawing might be useful. [6]

The Laws wanted to gather with believers; they also needed a livelihood. William's questions already concerned the two kinds of work that would later pass through their Nauvoo mill: grain and timber.

In another March letter, William put the religious wish plainly: he longed to be with the Saints and would move as soon as their resting place was known. By the autumn of 1839, that place was Nauvoo. [5,6]

## The city they chose




**Nauvoo in John C. Bennett's 1842 book. The Mississippi and the street grid give the Laws' plans a setting. The Temple vignette shows an intended design, not a completed building in 1842.** [33]

William and Jane arrived in the autumn of 1839; Jane's biographical record places her arrival in early November. Wilson was apparently in Commerce, soon called Nauvoo, by about the same period. The reunion William had wanted was now possible. So was the business life about which he had asked Robert Thompson so many questions. [3–6]

Arriving did not settle every doubt about remaining. A January 1841 revelation addressed William's concern about sickness and told him not to take his family east to Kirtland. The instruction placed a family decision inside the religious work of building Nauvoo. William was being asked to stay. [8]

He had already begun to judge Joseph by close experience. In November 1840, he wrote again to Russell, whose relationship with the Church had broken down. William urged his old friend to return. He said that he had watched Joseph's conduct and had found him honest and honorable in substantial transactions. [6]

His defense did not depend on claiming Joseph was without faults. William allowed for follies, forgiveness, and the imperfections of a community. He nevertheless believed that Joseph continued to lead the work of God. The invitation to Russell was personal as well as religious: he would be received with open arms. [6]

The man later remembered for leaving Nauvoo's leadership was, in this letter, trying to bring a discouraged friend back into its fellowship.

## Work, money, and a city taking shape

The Laws' questions about western commerce became contracts and petitions. In April 1841, William agreed to build, or cause to be built, the Nauvoo House. Wilson witnessed the agreement. The projected boardinghouse would accommodate visitors and give the growing city a substantial public establishment. [10]

Its planned price was ninety thousand dollars, with payments in cash, merchandise, provisions, and other trade. William would need to turn that mixture into supplies and labor. A signed contract was only the beginning. [10]

The Nauvoo House was separate from the Temple. Yet both projects exposed the same practical problem: religious and civic ambition required labor, materials, and credit. The Laws' abilities made them useful where those demands met.

In May 1842, William and Wilson petitioned the city council for permission to construct piers and abutments in the Mississippi in connection with the steam mill they were erecting. Their business was a private investment, but the waterfront improvements required public permission. [13]

The mill stood on Sidney Street between Locust and Marion. It combined flour milling and sawing and probably began operating in late summer or autumn 1842. Grain and timber were not abstract measures of prosperity. They were things that households, builders, and other enterprises needed processed. The brothers had invested in work that the city could use. [14]

Credit moved through their hands as well. In January 1842, Joseph entrusted them with a five-hundred-dollar note to collect. They promised to pay him the proceeds when collected. The receipt shows money still expected, rather than money already in hand—a familiar distinction in a city being built through promises as well as payments. [12]

William had accepted an even more consequential obligation the previous June. When Joseph became guardian of the Lawrence children, William and Hyrum joined him on a bond with a penal sum of $7,759.06. Joseph was the guardian. William and Hyrum stood behind his fulfillment of the trust. [11]

Their signatures created an obligation that could last longer than affection or agreement. In 1841 the bond was an act of confidence. In 1844, after the relationship had changed, William would return to court worried about what that same promise could cost him. [11,29]

## On the road with Hyrum



**Hyrum Smith, circa 1844, by Sutcliffe Maudsley. Church History Library, reproduced by the Joseph Smith Papers.** [34]

William's standing in Nauvoo was not simply the consequence of his business resources. His years as a Canadian branch leader preceded his appointment as Joseph's counselor in 1841. The January revelation joined that office to care for the poor, preaching, and support for the publication of Joseph's revision of the Bible. [3,8]

The Fielding connection also became a working companionship. During 1841, William traveled east with Hyrum. They visited Salem, Massachusetts, and reached Philadelphia by early July. Their counsel helped set in motion the assignment of Erastus Snow and Benjamin Winchester to establish the Church in Salem. [9]

The journey took William away from his customers and construction plans. He was helping guide missionary work far from home, alongside a man whose family was already connected with his own.

The revelation also named Warsaw, Carthage, Burlington, and Madison as places where William was to preach. The documented eastern journey with Hyrum shows how far his responsibilities could take him beyond Nauvoo. [8,9]

Back in the city, religious confidence deepened. On May 4, 1842, William joined the small group introduced to the Nauvoo endowment in the upper room of Joseph's store. Hyrum, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Newel K. Whitney, and other associates were present. These sacred instructions were given before the Temple was complete. [18]

William had once written admiringly about a visiting prophet. Now he was receiving religious instruction within an intimate circle. The trust involved more than money and office; it reached into promises about salvation.

Jane had a place of her own in the city's religious life. She joined the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo on March 24, 1842. The woman who had helped make the Law home available to other believers now belonged to an organized community of women. Her later objection to plural marriage would be the objection of a participant in Nauvoo's religious world, not of someone who had merely observed it from outside. [5,27]

## The general and his friend

Wilson's most conspicuous responsibility carried a different kind of authority. Elected a brigadier general in 1841, he became the Nauvoo Legion's major general in August 1842. Joseph was lieutenant general. Their relationship joined command to friendship. [4]




**Joseph Smith in Legion uniform, engraved by Oliver Pelton after Sutcliffe Maudsley; published in 1842.** [33]




**John C. Bennett in the frontispiece of his 1842 book. The former mayor and general had worked in the same public circles as the Laws.** [33]

On August 15, Wilson wrote to Joseph as his dear friend. The letter began with the safekeeping of guns and continued with an emphatic promise of support. So long as his hand could wield a sword, Wilson wrote, Joseph could depend on it in the defense of civil and religious rights. [19]

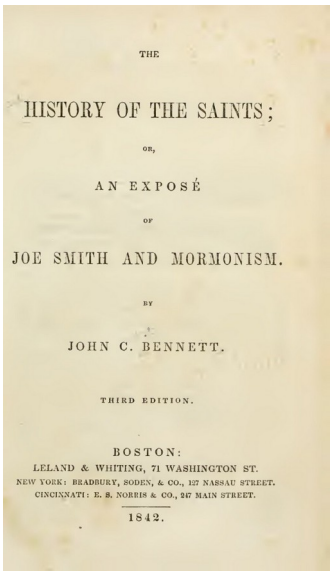
Wilson wanted peace, but he threatened retaliation if the Saints' blood were shed. His pledge contemplated force as well as friendship. [19]

At the end, he turned to the election returns for major general and the commission that should follow. His protective promises had come with practical business to finish. [19]

## Bennett's departure and the city's public voice

John C. Bennett had occupied the mayor's chair and the Legion's major generalship while the Laws were building their own public careers. When he resigned as mayor in May 1842, William moved that he receive thanks for his service. A Legion resolution in Wilson's handwriting extended similar thanks in June. [15,16]

Those formal courtesies did not prevent the break that followed. Bennett's departure became a public quarrel involving sexual misconduct, accusations of deception, and competing claims about what Joseph had authorized. Nauvoo's published responses challenged the former colleague's account. The controversy forced people who had worked together to decide whose testimony they trusted. [26]


THE

HISTORY OF THE SAINTS;

OR,

AN EXPOSÉ

OF

JOE SMITH AND MORMONISM.

BY

JOHN C. BENNETT.

THIRD EDITION.

BOSTON:
LELAND & WHITING, 71 WASHINGTON ST.
NEW YORK: BRADBURY, SODEN, & CO., 127 NASSAU STREET.
CINCINNATI: E. S. NORRIS & CO., 267 MAIN STREET.

1842.

**Title page of Bennett's History of the Saints, 1842. A former insider turned his Nauvoo experience into a hostile publication.** [33]

William was still defending the community. His signed "Much Ado about Nothing" appeared in the Times and Seasons in July 1842. He presented the Saints as law-abiding against hostile representations. The man later associated with the Expositor had already used print on the other side of the argument. [25]

The Laws' earlier publishing connections were varied. William had a commission to support publication of Joseph's Bible revision; his signed newspaper article supplied a public defense. Wilson would shortly help compose a printed song of celebration. Publishing did not first enter their lives as an instrument of dissent. [8,20,25]

The Masonic lodge provided another meeting place. Both brothers belonged to the Nauvoo lodge, adding fraternal associations to business, city council, Legion, and Church relationships. The same men could meet repeatedly under different kinds of authority. A friendship strengthened in one setting could be tested in another. [3,4]

When relationships later deteriorated, there would be no simple way to confine the damage to a single office or institution. Too many connections crossed the boundaries.

## A Christmas wedding and a January dinner

On Christmas Day, 1842, Joseph Smith performed Wilson's marriage to Elizabeth F. Sikes. The general had entrusted his wedding to the religious leader whose safety he had pledged to defend. [4]

Less than two weeks later, Wilson was riding with Joseph's party on the return journey from Springfield. On January 7, snow lay over mud that had not frozen, and the cold whitened the horses with frost. As they rode, Wilson sang a new jubilee song celebrating Joseph's legal victory. [42]

Wilson and Willard Richards were its coauthors. The song was sung repeatedly during the journey, then printed in The Wasp and on a broadside. Its refrain carried the relief of the traveling party into Nauvoo. [20]

*“With heart and voice we’ll all rejoice”*

**From the refrain of the jubilee song by Wilson Law and Willard Richards, January 1843.** [20]

On January 11, an invitation was drafted requesting Wilson and Elizabeth’s company at a dinner given by Joseph and Emma on January 18. The gathering would celebrate Joseph’s return from Springfield and the Smiths’ wedding anniversary. [21]

Wilson and Elizabeth attended. Before noon, Joseph distributed the printed songs and the guests sang together. They listened to conversation, readings, and informal speeches. At two in the afternoon, they sat down to dinner; Joseph and Emma waited on the tables. Around six the gathering broke up, and Joseph went to a Masonic lodge meeting. [20,21,42]

Only weeks after their wedding, Wilson and Elizabeth were celebrating in the Smith home. The general was not simply an officer promising protection: he was a guest whose words helped give the day its music.

William’s friendship had grown through Canadian hospitality, travel with Hyrum, religious instruction, and financial promises. Wilson’s had its own history of service and celebration. That spring, their names would appear on two papers in the county court. [1,2,6,9,11,18]

## Six days in the Rayburn case

The plaintiff’s name was Thomas Rayburn—or Raybourn, as the spelling appears elsewhere on the papers—with an uncertain middle initial. The costs undertaking described him as trading under the name Thomas [G.?] Rayburn & Co. He brought the action against Robert D. Foster in the Hancock Circuit Court. [1,2]

Foster belonged to the same crowded public world as the Laws. A physician and justice of the peace, he had accompanied Joseph’s party to Washington and held positions associated with the Nauvoo House, the University of Nauvoo, and the Legion. In 1843, he was not yet the public opponent he would become the following year. [24]

William’s part in this surviving fragment is direct. On March 16, he entered himself as security for costs and acknowledged responsibility for costs that might accrue in the action. The clerk filed the paper four days later. Whatever private arrangement persuaded William to sign has not survived in these two instruments. [1]

Wilson’s part is recorded differently. On May 27, he swore that he had attended court as a witness for six days during the term. The handwritten designation appears to name both plaintiff and defendant as the parties at whose instance he attended. His affidavit tells us how long he was there, not what he said or whose position his evidence favored. [2]

Six days could be reduced to one handwritten word in a printed blank. The form did not ask about the work awaiting a merchant and millwright, the obligations of a general, or the household of a man married only months before. It was designed to account for attendance. The rest of Wilson’s life has to be recovered elsewhere.

The two papers also preserve the routine labor of the clerk’s office. J. B. Backenstos’s name appears on both. Wilson’s filing endorsement identifies the deputy, M. Avise. Case No. 122 links the undertaking and the affidavit, even though their purposes and dates differ. [1,2]

Rayburn remains the least visible person in the case. His identity, the substance of his complaint, and the judgment are still unknown. The papers preserve the brothers’ involvement, but not the dispute that brought them to court.

The relationship between the Laws and their city continued beyond the courthouse. By autumn, William was publicly supporting the Temple Committee; the brothers' mill was part of the practical economy on which that religious undertaking depended. [22,23]

## What the Temple needed



**Henry Lewis, The Mormon Temple, published in the 1850s from his earlier Mississippi River work. This later view shows the completed building toward which the Nauvoo effort was directed—not its unfinished state during the Laws' service.** [41]

A temple required more than a plan and a stone wall rising into view. The work generated ordinary needs, and the committee responsible for it faced practical shortages. In October 1843, William moved that the conference support the committee through its members' means and exertions. Hyrum seconded the motion. [22]

A surviving account dated March 7, 1844, takes the connection into the mill. It lists meal, flour, bran, and repeated charges for grinding grain in the Temple Committee's dealings with William and Wilson. The total was $570.92, including $516.10 brought forward. This was a business account, not a record of a donation. [23]

The committee dealt with an enterprise bearing both brothers' names. The city's sacred ambitions and its everyday work met in these accounts for grain and its processing.

The account reaches into early 1844, when religious confidence was already failing. Grain still needed grinding, and existing obligations still needed attention. The practical ties of a city did not end neatly on the day a friendship changed.

## A revelation carried home

William's place in the First Presidency ended by January 1844. During the spring, disagreement became open separation. It involved religious authority, personal relationships, and obligations that were not dissolved simply because men no longer trusted one another. [3,27,29]

Plural marriage was a central issue. Joseph had introduced the practice confidentially among a limited circle in Nauvoo. Those who accepted it and those who rejected it could each regard their response as a matter of conscience and faith. The disagreement touched not only the organization of the Church but the meaning of marriage inside particular homes. [38]

William and Jane later made separate affidavits about the revelation. William said that Hyrum had shown it to him, that he took it home for Jane to read, and that he returned it. Jane affirmed that she had read it and stated her objections. Their accounts were sworn before Robert D. Foster on May 4, 1844. [27]

Earlier, William's letters had carried Jane's invitation to a friend's wife, news of Mercy's stay, and his own confidence in Joseph. Now Jane spoke in her own name about a teaching she would not accept. Her affidavit was not merely an entry underneath her husband's office; it was her own public statement. [6,27]

The revelation, according to William's affidavit, had reached him through his former traveling companion and fellow signer on the guardianship bond. Hyrum was also the husband of Mercy's sister. This was a disagreement among people who already shared years of history. [7,9,11,27]

That circle did not respond uniformly. Mercy's later recollection describes accepting plural marriage to Hyrum after Robert Thompson's death, following religious counsel and personal misgivings. William and Jane rejected the teaching. The record does not establish what the Laws knew of Mercy's particular circumstances, but it does show that connected households came to different conclusions. [7,27]

Years of shared faith and hospitality had not brought them to the same decision.

Wilson's spring brought a separate personal loss. Elizabeth died in late March 1844, little more than a year after the Christmas wedding and January dinner. The surviving record does not tell us how that bereavement affected his religious decisions. It places grief in the same season as public conflict, and it leaves the private experience of the marriage largely unrecorded. [4]

## Obligations that outlasted friendship

In April, William, Jane, and Wilson were excommunicated. The brothers joined other dissenters in organizing a new church. In May, Wilson faced a Legion court-martial and lost his commission. The separation was now religious, military, and public. [3–5,28]

It was not, however, a clean release from earlier commitments. On May 28, William petitioned the probate court for an accounting in the Lawrence guardianship. The bond he had signed beside Joseph and Hyrum in 1841 could still expose him to loss. In his petition, he alleged circumstances that made him apprehensive about that responsibility. [29]

William now sought protection from a promise he had once willingly made. His petition records his apprehension and allegations, not a judicial finding of misconduct.

Foster's position had changed as well. In the 1843 Rayburn fragments, he appears as a defendant whose connection with the Laws is only partly explained. In May 1844, he took William and Jane's affidavits. His participation in their public challenge was explicit. [1,2,27]

The dissenters were also preparing to speak through print. Their declarations continued to affirm foundational Mormon scriptures. They presented themselves as reformers of a faith they believed had been diverted, rather than beginning with a rejection of everything they had once accepted. [27]

That position would make the challenge particularly forceful. These were not strangers describing a city they had scarcely seen. They had belonged to its households, offices, and religious meetings. Their knowledge of the community gave their accusations weight with some readers and made them seem all the more threatening to those they accused.

## A newspaper and a catastrophe

The Nauvoo Expositor appeared on June 7, 1844. Both brothers were among its publishers; Sylvester Emmons was named as editor. The issue carried William and Jane's affidavits and the reformers' challenge to Joseph's leadership. It also opposed his political ambitions. [27]

A public reversal was now visible in print. William had defended the Saints in the Times and Seasons in 1842. Wilson had helped compose the jubilee song celebrating Joseph's freedom in 1843. The publication they now backed challenged the leadership they had supported. [20,25,27]

The city council treated the newspaper as a danger to the community, not simply an unwelcome criticism. Its deliberations expressed fears that the issue could inflame opposition and provoke violence. On June 10, the council declared the establishment a nuisance. The press and printing materials were destroyed under municipal authority. [30]

That outcome was a decision, not the only course imagined in the room. Benjamin Warrington urged notice and financial penalties instead of immediate destruction. The alternative was rejected. The council's fears explain its reasoning; they do not remove the contested questions raised by destroying a press. [30]

Within weeks, Joseph and Hyrum were killed at Carthage Jail, on June 27. The earlier dispute had become part of a much larger catastrophe. The fact that the Law brothers opposed Joseph does not, by itself, establish that they planned or participated in the murders. The two papers at the center of this volume provide no such evidence. [31]

The contrast with the January dinner is painful because the earlier relationship was real. Joseph had married Wilson and Elizabeth. William had traveled with Hyrum. Jane had welcomed fellow believers. Their lives had touched through confidence before they became connected through accusation and loss. [4,6,9,21]

## The lives beyond Nauvoo

The Laws left Nauvoo in 1844. Their subsequent lives took them through Iowa, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. William's later work included medical practice. Jane died in 1882, and William lived until January 1892. Wilson married Eliza Sowash in Pennsylvania in 1853; he died at Shullsburg, Wisconsin, in 1876. [3–5]

The brothers lived for decades after leaving Nauvoo. The years in the city did not contain their whole lives, but they left the relationships and papers through which the brothers are most readily remembered.

The surviving 1843 papers return us to a point before the final division. William accepted responsibility for court costs. Wilson accounted for six days' attendance. Their business continued to operate, their relationships still carried the weight of years, and the future had not become a finished story. [1,2]

Read alone, the papers are brief. Read beside the letters and other records, they recover a larger world: Jane helping make a home available to friends; Mercy carrying a box for people who could not retrieve it; William asking what kind of mill the Saints would need; Hyrum traveling with him; Wilson celebrating his marriage in Joseph's company. [6,9,21]

That is what the documents give back. Not a hidden explanation for every later event, but a chance to meet two brothers while they were still building lives in the city they had chosen.

# William Law

*Biographical companion • 1809–1892*

## From migration to a household of his own

William was born on September 8, 1809, in County Tyrone, Ireland. His family had settled in Mercer County, Pennsylvania, by 1820 and moved within the county before his adulthood. By 1833 he was in Churchville, Upper Canada, where his marriage to Jane Silverthorn began the household that would later play a part in the Canadian Saints' gathering. They married on June 11, 1833, in York. [3]

The early letters show a man whose religious commitments had practical expression. He offered transportation and accommodation for Isaac Russell's family, welcomed Mercy Thompson, cared for Mary Ann Walton, and tried to arrange assistance for her mother. When he could not reach Missouri, he kept his teams working and preached in Pennsylvania. These are activities recorded in correspondence, not qualities assigned to him solely because he later held high office. [6]

They also show family disagreement. William described his father as opposed to the Church and hoped that one of his brothers would become a member. His faith did not simply reproduce the convictions of everyone around him. It was a commitment he defended within his existing family as well as among fellow converts. [6]

## Conversion and leadership

Jane's baptism is dated to 1836. William's baptism was no later than 1837; the Joseph Smith Papers uses that qualified date. His ordination as an elder by Parley P. Pratt on April 24, 1837, and his service as presiding elder at Churchville in 1837–1838 are more precisely documented. The branch supplied leadership experience before Nauvoo. [3,5]

William's January 1839 letter makes clear that he had not reached Missouri. His account of persecution was written from a distance. He was eager to join the Saints, but financial and business matters had delayed the move. His arrival in Nauvoo in autumn 1839 therefore belongs to a story of interrupted gathering, not personal expulsion under Missouri's extermination order. [3,6]

Kirtland was present in his correspondence and contemplated plans. He wrote about others traveling there and later received an instruction not to move his family there. No actual residence or visit has been established for him in the evidence assembled here. [6,8]

## The counselor who traveled

Appointed to the First Presidency in 1841, William also served on the Nauvoo City Council and as an aide-de-camp to the Legion's lieutenant general. His most clearly recovered missionary journey was the 1841 trip east with Hyrum, including Salem and Philadelphia. The two men's counsel affected the mission assigned to Erastus Snow and Benjamin Winchester. [3,9]

The revelation of January 19, 1841, addressed both his family and his calling. It named places where he was to preach, directed help for the poor, and assigned support for publication of Joseph's Bible revision. It also offered conditional spiritual promises. These instructions form part of William's religious history even where the eventual performance of a particular task has not been independently documented. [8]

His participation in the first Nauvoo endowment group on May 4, 1842, placed him among trusted associates in Joseph's store. No separate patriarchal blessing text has been recovered for this edition. His endowment, revelation-based instructions, and any still-unlocated blessing are distinct subjects and should not be merged. [18]

## Livelihood and financial responsibility

William's documented occupations and activities include commerce and milling, with medical practice in later life. In Nauvoo he contracted for the Nauvoo House, partnered with Wilson in the mill, accepted a note for collection, and stood as surety on legal obligations. These records give specific content to the broad description "businessman." [3,10–14]

The two surety papers in this account differ. The 1841 Lawrence guardianship bond backed Joseph's performance as guardian. The 1843 Rayburn undertaking concerned litigation costs. Neither document identifies William as an attorney, and no evidence assembled here establishes admission to legal practice. [1,11]

His Temple connection includes public support at the October 1843 conference and the committee's commercial dealings with the brothers' mill. The surviving account should not be transformed into a personal donation or a record of stone work. William's real involvement is useful enough without enlarging it. [22,23]

## Jane, print, and separation

Jane was born in York, Upper Canada, on April 2, 1815, the daughter of Thomas Silverthorn and Mary Anderson. Her own chronology includes conversion, the family's migration, Relief Society membership in March 1842, and a separately sworn affidavit about plural marriage in May 1844. Her life in the Church cannot be reduced to William's office or his dismissal. [5,27]

William's publishing history began before the Expositor. The Bible-revision instruction and his signed Times and Seasons article were different kinds of involvement: one a religious commission, the other an actual published contribution. In June 1844 he was a publisher of the Expositor, whose editor was Emmons. These roles do not establish authorship of every unsigned article. [8,25,27]

His removal from the First Presidency by January 1844, April excommunication, organization of a rival church, and participation in the newspaper mark the public stages of separation. The May guardianship petition shows that older financial exposure continued after his religious position changed. [3,27,29]

## The later decades

After Nauvoo, William lived at Burlington and Hampton and subsequently in Jo Daviess County, Illinois. Later records place him in Findley Township, Pennsylvania, Apple River, Illinois, and Shullsburg, Wisconsin. Jane died on September 8, 1882. William survived for almost another decade, dying in January 1892. The precise day is left open because the Joseph Smith Papers records conflicting readings. [3,5]

The early letters remain a necessary companion to his later statements. They preserve admiration, concern, hospitality, and a wish to gather that cannot be recovered from a list of offices or the last phase of his Nauvoo career alone.

# Wilson Law

*Biographical companion • 1806–1876*

## An older brother with a different religious beginning

Wilson was born in Ireland on February 26, 1806. The family's migration brought him to Mercer County, Pennsylvania, where he lived before his move west. The Joseph Smith Papers places him in Commerce, later Nauvoo, presumably by 1839. His baptism and ordination as an elder took place in Nauvoo; exact dates remain uncertain. [4]

William's letters suggest how business and religion approached one another before the move. In January 1839 he described a brother who supported the Church's teachings but had not yet joined. In March he asked Robert Thompson for commercial information on that brother's behalf. The letter edition identifies Wilson as the brother in both passages. [6]

What kind of goods would sell? How would people pay? How much capital was needed? Those questions belong beside Wilson's subsequent public titles. They recover a man planning an enterprise, not simply waiting to receive a military commission. [6]

## Merchant and millwright

The biographical directory identifies Wilson as a merchant, millwright, land speculator, and farmer. In Nauvoo, the joint mill petition of May 1842 and the collection receipt of January 1842 show him participating under his own name alongside William. He was a partner in practical affairs, not merely the counselor's older brother. [4,12–14]

Their mill combined processing grain with sawing timber. Its likely opening in the latter part of 1842 put it into operation before the Rayburn affidavit. The Temple Committee account dated March 7, 1844, records dealings with both brothers, extending that commercial connection into the season of their religious rupture. [14,23]

Wilson witnessed the Nauvoo House agreement in which William was the contracting builder. That signature is a different role from assuming the contract. The distinction is small but important in recovering the separate work of two men so often mentioned together. [10]

## City council and Legion

Wilson served on the Nauvoo City Council from 1841 to 1843. He became a brigadier general in the Legion in February 1841 and major general in August 1842. William's aide-de-camp position and Wilson's generalship were not the same office. Neither should be confused with William's place in the First Presidency. [3,4]

His August 15, 1842, letter to Joseph supplies the most immediate voice for his command. He discussed the storage of guns, expressed agreement with Joseph's instructions, pledged readiness to defend civil and religious rights, and attended to the paperwork of his election. The letter's threatening language makes clear that his pledge contemplated force as well as loyalty. [19]

The text survives through a contemporary copy in Joseph's journal, written by William Clayton. It is not an extant original autograph letter. The copy nevertheless preserves a statement made during the relationship, before later events altered the way the men were remembered. [19]

## The lodge and Bennett

Wilson belonged to the Nauvoo Masonic Lodge, as did William. Exact degree dates and a complete record of any lodge offices remain subjects for further research. His membership is established without assigning him an unverified position. [4,17]

His June 1842 resolution thanking John C. Bennett for military service belongs to the period of Bennett's departure. It records formal recognition of a colleague's work. No direct evidence recovered for this edition establishes an ongoing partnership between Wilson and Bennett in Bennett's later hostile publication. [16,26]

The importance of these associations is their overlap. Council, Legion, lodge, Church, and business brought the same people into contact. Wilson's later loss of religious standing and military office therefore changed several parts of his public identity at once.

## Elizabeth and the January celebration

Joseph married Wilson and Elizabeth F. Sikes on December 25, 1842. The invitation drafted in January 1843 and the account of the banquet place the couple at Joseph and Emma's home on January 18. The wedding and dinner are unusually valuable personal episodes in a record otherwise dominated by public responsibilities. [4,21]

Wilson's coauthorship of a jubilee song with Willard Richards adds another aspect of his life. He contributed words for a celebration of Joseph's freedom. Publication in The Wasp and in a broadside made that support visible beyond the private gathering. [20]

Elizabeth died in late March 1844. The marriage had been brief, and the recovered record does not allow a detailed domestic history. Her loss should remain present in Wilson's biography without being turned into an unsupported explanation of his dissent. [4]

## Mission, witness, and separation

Wilson served a mission to Ohio in 1843. The itinerary has not been reconstructed, and an Ohio mission alone does not prove a Kirtland visit. It also predates Joseph's presidential campaign. No verified assignment as a presidential electioneer has been found. [4]

His May 27, 1843, affidavit records six days' court attendance in the Rayburn action. The testimony itself is missing. Calling the paper a deposition about the underlying dispute would promise evidence it does not contain. [2]

Excommunicated on April 18, 1844, Wilson helped organize the dissenting movement and was among the Expositor's publishers. The May court-martial ended his Legion commission. The public reversal was profound, but it followed years of participation in the city's work and leadership. [4,27,28]

## A second marriage and Wisconsin

Wilson moved to Burlington in June 1844 and was in Hampton, Illinois, by October. He was back in Mercer County, Pennsylvania, by 1850. On January 13, 1853, he married Eliza Sowash in Jefferson Township. Later records place him in Gratiot, Wisconsin, by 1860 and in Shullsburg by 1870. He died there on October 15, 1876. [4]

No securely attributable portrait of Wilson has been recovered for this edition. His original signature is reproduced on the court affidavit. It is a small but direct trace of an individual whose life should not be supplied from his brother's likeness or biography.

## A chronology of the two lives

| Date | Event |
|---|---|
| 1806 / 1809 | Wilson and William are born in Ireland. [3,4] |
| 1833 | William marries Jane Silverthorn in Upper Canada. [3,5] |
| 1836–1837 | Jane is baptized in 1836. William has joined by 1837 and is ordained an elder on April 24. [3,5] |
| 1837 | William leads the Churchville branch. Mercy Thompson stays with the Laws; Mary Fielding marries Hyrum on December 24. [3,6,7] |
| January 1839 | From Pennsylvania, William reports that he has not reached Missouri. [6] |
| March 1839 | William thanks Mercy for caring for the box and seeks western business information for Wilson. [6] |
| Autumn 1839 | William and Jane reach Nauvoo; Wilson is apparently there by about this period. [3–5] |
| 1841 | William joins the First Presidency, travels east with Hyrum, signs the Nauvoo House agreement, and joins the guardianship bond. Wilson becomes a brigadier general. [3,4,9–11] |
| 1842 | Mill petition; William's endowment on May 4; Bennett-related resolutions; Wilson's promotion and August letter. [13,15,16,18,19] |
| 25 December 1842 | Joseph performs Wilson and Elizabeth's marriage. [4] |
| 18 January 1843 | Wilson and Elizabeth attend Joseph and Emma's dinner. [21] |
| 16 / 20 March 1843 | William dates the costs undertaking; the clerk files it. [1] |
| 27 May 1843 | Wilson swears to six days' attendance; the affidavit is filed. [2] |
| 1843 | Wilson's Ohio mission. William's October conference motion supports the Temple Committee. [4,22] |
| Early 1844 | William's presidency service ends. The Temple account is dated March 7; Elizabeth dies in late March. [3,4,23] |
| April–June 1844 | Excommunications; Law affidavits; Wilson's court-martial; guardianship petition; Expositor publication and destruction. [3–5,27–30] |
| 27 June 1844 | Joseph and Hyrum are killed at Carthage Jail. [31] |
| 1853 / 1876 | Wilson marries Eliza Sowash; later dies in Wisconsin. [4] |
| 1882 / 1892 | Jane dies in 1882; William dies in January 1892. [3,5] |

# Reading the papers and the evidence

Documentary notes on uncertain readings, surviving records, and the limits of the evidence.

## The two originals

There are two instruments, each photographed on both sides. Matching captions and case No. 122 connect them. William's undertaking secures costs, not a specified underlying debt, and it does not identify him as an attorney. Wilson's affidavit records attendance, not the content or duration of testimony. Neither instrument establishes a verdict. [1,2]

The plaintiff's surname varies in appearance between Rayburn and Raybourn. The middle initial is tentatively read as G. The trading designation "& Co." does not identify the partners. The party designation in Wilson's affidavit appears to name both plaintiff and defendant and remains bracketed. A "PAID" stamp on the costs paper is not a judgment or satisfaction of the claim. [1,2]

## The unresolved lawsuit

The Illinois State Archives holdings database identifies the Hancock Circuit Court case files, 1829–1858, accession 2/0102/23; court index, 2/0061/36; and court record, 2/0061/32, at the Western Illinois University IRAD depository. These are series-level leads. Survival of the individual file has not been confirmed, and no archival retrieval is represented as completed. [32]

Thomas Rawcliff's separate May 1843 complaint about Foster and the Laws is not evidence that Rawcliff and Rayburn were the same person. That letter has not been connected to case No. 122. [36]

## Transactions, assignments, and allegations

The Nauvoo House sum represents projected contractual terms, not proved payments or completed construction. The Lawrence bond's amount is a penal sum, not a gift. The $500 note was entrusted for collection. The Temple Committee account is neither a personal donation list nor a payment receipt. [10–12,23]

A preaching assignment does not prove every locality was visited. A publishing commission is not proof that a completed edition appeared. No precise Kirtland itinerary, complete Masonic degree history, separate blessing text, or full personal Temple-donation ledger has been recovered for either brother. [3,4,8,17]

The May 1844 affidavits and guardianship petition are attributed statements made during conflict. They establish what the signers asserted; contested allegations are not silently converted into judicial findings. Later recollections are identified as such. [7,27,29]

## Family chronology

The account follows the Joseph Smith Papers for the brothers' dates and Jane's birth year. Some identifications in the 1980 letter edition differ, including its annotation of William's mother. The narrative uses the letters' own references to mother and father without presenting the conflicting maternal identification as resolved genealogy. The Fielding connection is one of hospitality and marriage, not established Law–Fielding blood kinship. [3–7]

## Illustrations as part of the story

The original court papers remain near the front. The other images are placed where they introduce a person, locate an enterprise, or show how Nauvoo was represented in print. None is an invented reconstruction.

### Portraits and published images used here

William Law. The later-life portrait reproduced by the BYU Religious Studies Center is inserted at the opening, so the reader encounters a face rather than only a signature. Its original date and photographer are not supplied. It is not presented as an 1843 likeness. [39]

Wilson Law. No securely attributable portrait was recovered. His original autograph remains on the reproduced attendance affidavit. William's portrait has not been reused to stand for him.

Hyrum Smith. Sutcliffe Maudsley's circa-1844 likeness accompanies the missionary partnership and religious confidence. John C. Bennett and Joseph Smith appear in contemporary printed portraits near the discussion of the Legion and Bennett's departure. Bennett's title page accompanies the change from colleague to hostile publisher. [33,34]

Nauvoo and the Temple. Bennett's map places the brothers' ambitions beside the Mississippi. Henry Lewis's later lithograph supplies the scale of the completed Temple when the narrative turns to grain and the committee's mill account. Its later date is stated in the caption. [33,41]

### Fielding portraits located online

Mary Fielding Smith. A portrait by Sutcliffe Maudsley is documented in the Book of Mormon Art Catalog, which identifies it as a companion to her husband's portrait. View the cataloged portrait

Mercy Fielding Thompson. An identified historical portrait is reproduced with "Mercy Thompson and the Revelation on Marriage" in Revelations in Context. View Mercy's portrait and source

These two portraits were located and viewed online, but their image files could not be transferred into this edition. Links to the cataloged images are provided above. A specific painting of Mercy matching the owner's recollection has not yet been authenticated.

Reproduction credits: original photographs, David Larsen collection; William Law image reused from the established Potts narrative; Bennett plates and map reused from the Bennett case study; Hyrum portrait reused from the Masonic Hall report; Henry Lewis image reused from the Armstrong biography. Their underlying sources are listed below.

## Sources and further reading

Small source numbers in the text lead to this register. Online source titles are linked. The original documents are identified by photograph number; quotes from William's early letters are from the nineteenth-century texts published in source 6.

[1] William Law, undertaking as security for costs, 16 March 1843; filed 20 March 1843. Thomas [G.?] Rayburn/Raybourn & Co. v. Robert D. Foster, Hancock Circuit Court, No. 122. David Larsen collection, photographs IMG_3663.jpeg and IMG_3664.jpeg. Reading transcriptions made from the photographs; unresolved readings remain bracketed.

[2] Wilson Law, witness-attendance affidavit, 27 May 1843, with filing endorsement of the same date. Same case, No. 122. David Larsen collection, photographs IMG_3661.jpeg and IMG_3662.jpeg. This is evidence of attendance, not a preserved account of testimony.

[3] Joseph Smith Papers, "Law, William," biographical directory. Dates, family, offices, occupations, and later residences. The death day is shown there as 12/19 January 1892; this draft uses the month only. Open source

[4] Joseph Smith Papers, "Law, Wilson," biographical directory. Distinct conversion history, military career, marriages, mission, later residences, and death. Open source

[5] Joseph Smith Papers, "Law, Jane Silverthorn," biographical directory. Baptism, arrival, Relief Society membership, and later life. Open source

[6] William Law, letters of 12 May and 10 November 1837; 17 January and 27 March 1839; appended letter to Robert B. Thompson, 27–29 March 1839; and 29 November 1840. Published with annotations by Lyndon W. Cook in "Pre-1844 Letters of William Law," BYU Studies 20, no. 2 (Winter 1980), 207–218. The quoted words and household episodes are from the letters themselves. The editor identifies the brother in the 1839 business passages as Wilson and Sister Thompson as Mercy. Open source

[7] Jed Woodworth, "Mercy Thompson and the Revelation on Marriage," Revelations in Context (2016), including the Fielding family relationship, Robert Thompson's death, Mercy's later recollections, and the identified historical portrait reproduced online. Open source

[8] Doctrine and Covenants 124, revelation of 19 January 1841, especially verses 82–102 and 107. Kirtland, family illness, preaching, publishing, presidency appointment, and conditional promises. The locality assignment is verse 88. Open source

[9] Benjamin Winchester to Joseph Smith, 18 September 1841, Joseph Smith Papers, with historical notes on Hyrum Smith and William Law's Salem and Philadelphia travels. Open source

[10] "Agreement with William Law, 26 April 1841," Joseph Smith Papers, pages 1–2. Nauvoo House construction terms and Wilson's witness role. Projected costs and installments are contractual terms, not proof of completion or payment. Open source

[11] "Bond, 4 June 1841 [JS Guardian of Maria Lawrence et al.]," Joseph Smith Papers. Joseph as guardian; Hyrum Smith and William Law as sureties; penal sum $7,759.06. Open source

[12] "Receipt from William Law and Wilson Law, 24 January 1842," Joseph Smith Papers. The $500 note was accepted for collection and remittance to Joseph, not recorded as a gift. Open source

[13] "Petition from William Law and Wilson Law, circa 14 May 1842," Joseph Smith Papers. Waterfront structures connected with the steam mill being erected. Open source

[14] Joseph Smith Papers, "William Law and Wilson Law's mill," reference entry. Location, functions, and qualified operating chronology. Open source

[15] "Motion from William Law, 19 May 1842," Joseph Smith Papers. Thanks for Bennett's mayoral service. Open source

[16] "Resolution, 3 June 1842–C," Joseph Smith Papers. Legion thanks to John C. Bennett; handwriting attributed to Wilson Law. Open source

[17] "Minutes, 7 April 1842," Nauvoo Masonic Lodge, Joseph Smith Papers. Petitions and lodge procedure must be distinguished from completed degrees and attendance; no unverified degree date is assigned in this draft. Open source

[18] "Introduction to Documents, Volume 10: May–August 1842," Joseph Smith Papers, discussion of the 4 May 1842 endowment and participants. Open source

[19] Wilson Law to Joseph Smith, 15 August 1842, Joseph Smith Papers. Contemporary copy in Joseph's journal. Read both its language of friendship and its willingness to use force. Open source

[20] "Jubilee Songs, between 11 and 18 January 1843," Joseph Smith Papers. Wilson Law and Willard Richards's contribution and the songs' printing history. Open source

[21] "Invitation to Wilson and Elizabeth Sikes Law, 11 January 1843," Joseph Smith Papers. Draft in Willard Richards's handwriting; historical introduction documents the 18 January banquet and the couple's attendance. Open source

[22] “Minutes and Discourses, 6–9 October 1843,” Joseph Smith Papers, page 3, conference support for the Temple Committee. The discussion is dated by the event, not the nominal date of the delayed newspaper issue in which it appeared. Open source

[23] “Statement of Account, Nauvoo Temple Committee to William Law and Wilson Law, 7 March 1844,” Joseph Smith Papers; Newel K. Whitney Papers, BYU. $570.92 total includes $516.10 brought forward. The account is not a receipt for payment or a personal donation record. Open source

[24] Joseph Smith Papers, “Foster, Robert D.,” biographical directory. Nauvoo religious, medical, legal, civic, and business positions. Open source

[25] Times and Seasons, 1 July 1842, “Much Ado about Nothing,” William Law’s signed contribution; digitized in the Joseph Smith Papers. Authorship of this item does not imply authorship of surrounding unsigned editorial material. Open source

[26] Times and Seasons, 1 August 1842, responses and affidavits concerning John C. Bennett, Joseph Smith Papers. These preserve contemporary opposing assertions and attributed testimony. Open source

[27] Nauvoo Expositor, 7 June 1844. Primary text, including prospectus, publisher list, reform declarations, and William and Jane Law’s separate affidavits of 4 May before Robert D. Foster. Online transcription at FAIR; the newspaper, not FAIR commentary, is the source used. Open source

[28] “Court-Martial against Wilson Law, 9 May 1844,” Joseph Smith Papers. Read with the military chronology in Wilson’s biographical directory. Religious discipline and military proceedings were distinct. Open source

[29] William Law, “Petition, 28 May 1844 [JS Guardian of Maria Lawrence et al.],” Joseph Smith Papers. Assertions in a petition are not independently established findings. Open source

[30] “Minutes, 10 June 1844,” Nauvoo City Council, Joseph Smith Papers, historical introduction and deliberations concerning the Expositor. Includes the proposed alternative of notice and financial penalties. Open source

[31] Doctrine and Covenants 135, contemporary announcement and account of the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Used for the date and fact of the Carthage killings, not as proof that the Law brothers were participants. Open source

[32] Illinois State Archives, Local Governmental Records Holdings Database, Hancock County: circuit court case files, index, and record series held through IRAD at Western Illinois University. A series-level lead, not confirmation that case No. 122 survives. Open source

[33] John C. Bennett, The History of the Saints; or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842), third edition. Map from University of Illinois scan page 202. Joseph Smith plate by Oliver Pelton after Sutcliffe Maudsley: alternate Google/Internet Archive copy, scan page 68, between printed pages 56–57. Public-domain artworks recovered from the project’s prior illustrated Bennett report; no visual reconstruction was generated. Open source

[34] Hyrum Smith portrait: Sutcliffe Maudsley, ink on paper, circa 1844; Church History Library, reproduced by the Joseph Smith Papers. Reused from the project’s prior Masonic Hall report. Open source

[35] Illustration repository for the Bennett map: University of Illinois digitized copy of The History of the Saints. The map’s Temple vignette represents a projected building, not its completed state in 1842. Open source

[36] Thomas Rawcliff to Joseph Smith, 24 May 1843, Joseph Smith Papers, page 3. This is a separate creditor complaint. The complainant has not been identified with Rayburn and the letter has not been connected to case No. 122. Open source

[37] Joseph Smith to Wilson Law, 16 August 1842, Joseph Smith Papers. Companion correspondence for further study of the relationship; not used to attribute unquoted private motives. Open source

[38] “Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo,” Gospel Topics Essays, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Used to distinguish the documented practice from allegations about individual encounters and to acknowledge differing religious responses. Open source

[39] William Law, later-life portrait reproduced in Lawrence R. Flake, “William Law,” Prophets and Apostles of the Last Dispensation, BYU Religious Studies Center. Used for the image attribution; date and photographer unspecified. Open source

[40] Sutcliffe Maudsley, Mary Fielding Smith, Book of Mormon Art Catalog. Cataloged portrait and attribution; linked as a located image, not reproduced in this edition. Open source

[41] Henry Lewis, The Mormon Temple, color lithograph in Das illustrirte Mississippithal (Düsseldorf, published in parts in the 1850s; completed volume cataloged 1857). University of Pittsburgh scan via Internet Archive. This public-domain work is a later published view, not a picture of Temple construction or of the Laws at work. Image copy retained in the prior Armstrong project. Open source

[42] Joseph Smith journal, 7 and 18 January 1843, kept by Willard Richards, book 1, pages 110 and 135–139; Joseph Smith Papers. Contemporary entries record the winter journey, Wilson’s singing, and the January gathering. See also sources 20–21. Open source

Revised illustrated edition, October 2026. Original photographs and transcriptions are retained; the lawsuit’s underlying claim and outcome remain unresolved.