

## LDs Leaders of Prominence

# Friend of Mormons Becomes Presiding Bishop of the Church

**D**OZENS OF BUGGIES and wagons were parked among the trees at Locust Grove. Horses nibbled at the grass and switched flies with their tails.

A crowd of Pennsylvania farm folk had gathered at the grove to hear a Mormon missionary preach. Some had come out of curiosity. Others were prepared to make trouble for the "dangerous" young man. Edward Hunter was there to see that the elder had a fair hearing.

He came with no particular sympathy for the Mormons, but he had inherited from his independent-minded ancestors a strong belief in the right of every man to have his say.

The elder began speaking on the atonement of Christ when Squire Johnson stood up and shouted, "Stop! We'll hear no more of this."

Springing to his feet, Edward declared, "He is a stranger and shall have justice." He pointed to Johnson and said, "We will hear him and then hear you."

The crowd calmed down, for Edward was highly respected in that area. The elder continued his sermon. His humility impressed Edward who somehow felt that the young man had a divine mission.

He invited the elder to his home and heard more of the Gospel message. From that time on, Mormon missionaries were always welcome at Edward's home and often preached at the community meetinghouse located on his 500-acre farm.

Joseph Smith stopped there and preached at the meetinghouse on his way to see Pres. Martin Van Buren. Hyrum Smith also was a visitor at the Hunter farm.

When Elder Orson Hyde of the Council of the Twelve came to the farm on his way to the Holy Land, in October 1840, Edward asked to be baptized.

A year later, the new convert visited Nauvoo where he bought a farm and several city lots. He then returned to Pennsylvania, sold his extensive holdings and moved his family to their new home.

He was elected to the city council. Because of his considerable wealth from which he contributed liberally, he became a financial bulwark of the Church.

Shortly after the death of the Prophet in 1844, Edward was ordained bishop of the Fifth Ward in Nauvoo. He held this position until he left the city in 1846 to join the exiled Church members at Winter Quarters. Here, he was appointed bishop of the Seventh Ward.

The bishop was captain of a hundred in a company that arrived in Salt Lake Valley in September, 1847. He presided over the South Fort, later becoming bishop of the 13th Ward.

On April 7, 1851, he became Presiding Bishop of the Church.

His generous spirit and ready wit became well known throughout the Church. His often-heard advice on vagrants was: "Hunting work, hunting work, yes, yes, but they don't want to find it very bad. Feed them, brethren, feed them—musn't let them starve."

But his favorite counsel to the members of the Church was, "Pay your tithing and be blessed," a truth which he demonstrated in his own life.

Bishop Hunter died at his home in Salt Lake City on Oct. 16, 1883, at the age of 90.

