



THE JIMSON HILL BRANCH

by
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Woodcuts by Gary Smith



THE JIMSON HILL CHAPEL

Samuel Jimson
Gave the land to God
To save the souls of
Progeny unborn.
He gave the hill and
Rough-cut white pine boards
In easy walk of
Cornfields where half-read
Jimsons grew and spread.

He hoped, an old man,
To plant the gospel
Seed in fields grown high
With corporal tares.
He prayed an old man's
Prayer and died secure
That posterity
Would see the error
Of their way and turn.

Hope and prayer were good,
But forty soul-sad
Years have brought not one
Live Jimson under
That tarred roof inspired
By their father's faith.

TESTIMONY OF SOPHIA FINGREN

It's funny those young men
Will count me a proselyte,
Me who's known the truth
More than both their years.

Knowing the truth and finding it —
That's where my problem was.

The Baptists brought me in,
Dunking me in Willow Pond
Before I'd turned fifteen.
I stayed for seven years
Then wore plain Pentecostal gowns
seven more. Then Methodist,
Christian, Presbyterian, in turn;
Each time I changed,
The truth was just in sight.

I met the Jimson children
When I was twenty-eight.
I thought to marry one,
Or rather he thought me
The wifely sort. Who knows
What might have been if I'd
Said yes. But shyness, and the fact
No others asked have kept
Me to my search.

I love the Lord, and yet
On winter days sometimes
I dream I walk this hill
With children's hands in mine,
And husband's following form.



I'm eighty-four next spring,
And aging hope must testify
That Mormon hills are steep
And benches are just as hard
As Baptist brotherhood.
The difference between us all
Is not of bench or hill
But priesthood and celestial dream.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

THE TESTIMONY OF JONAS TENDER

You know me and my family.

We come, sit, bow our heads,
Listen, and hope. This much
I testify.

Amen.

TESTIMONY OF SYLVAN HANKS,
ELIZABETH TENDER,
AND JOHN FOSTER

We are the children,
We sleep
 smile
 laugh and
 cry our noisy reverence.

We are the hope
 and light of the church
set innocent upon this hill.

We are the children,
We grow
 shout
 hear and
 dream the stories we are told.

David, Moses,
 Joseph Smith and we
will all live forever.

Amen.

THE MIRACLE OF THE WASPS

AS TOLD BY STEPHEN HANKS

I found them when I came
To light the kerosene
Before our Sunday school.
A window partway up
Had let them in before
A first October frost.

They couldn't fly. New cold,
Like sin, had left them numb
And helpless to our brooms.
In buzzing, crawling piles
We heaped them in the fire
Before first-hymn was sung.

We thought we'd done our best
But growing warmth and song
Revived some that were missed,
And they rose up like fury.
One of the sisters screamed,
And brother Ward stood up . . .

"Our father, we are met . . ."
I can still hear him pray
Above the rising dread:
"Protect us, Lord, from these
Come by the devil's wish
And let us meet in peace."

I know as I am here
Our prayers were heard. No soul
Was stung, nor since have wasps
Come back inside this hall.
This is a true story,
I testify.

Amen.



TESTIMONY OF
ELDER JOHN WILLIAMSON

I was rocked in a Mormon cradle
Sucked pioneer milk
From my mother's breast
And grew on genealogies
Who walked and sang
While Zion bound.

Born in the church,
I convert came
Two months ago
To this small hill-bound
Meeting house.

A proselyte to brotherhood
And all believers in belief,
I do intend to share
This truth with all I meet:

Praise God his goodness in
Restoring to us all
The gift of faith.

Amen.

THE TESTIMONY OF WARD FOSTER

I know God made Deseret,
Defined it Zion and made
It blossom in His work.

Beyond that land
There is no place
Where men may live,
Except in sin.

I weep the hymn,
"Strength of the Hills."

There's godliness in height
Denied to close-grown trees
On gentle rolls of earth.
It takes great rock
And childhood sky
With pine-green thatch
To paint a new Jerusalem.

I've lived here
Thirteen years,
My family's begun,
And yet, I testify
This has never been home.

Amen.

THE TESTIMONY OF
WILLIAM HANSEN HARVEY
AS RELATED BY WENCIL THOMAS

William Hansen Harvey,
Dead five years this summer,
Still stands at every meeting,
Just there inside the door,
Still shadows smiles; and breaths
Of handshook air still swirl
The place he stood greeting,
Knowing us all.

Mister Harvey,
Wild Will, Brother William:
A confirmed member of the church
Since thirty-three, and never
Taught a class, said prayer,
Or blessed the sacrament.

Confirmed a year, first time
They tried the priesthood on him
He only smiled and shrugged to say,
"I know my work," and never
Once, in following years
Accepted any call.



Some blamed his wife;
Her family was one of few
Catholics who'd stayed on.
We knew how strict and sturdy-
Willed such women, married,
Could become. Yet when
She died he mourned her gone
But did not change his place.

The winter before he left,
A snow that started flurries
Changed to wet and deep,
Blocked roads and broke down trees.
Sunday morning, no tracks
But his climbed here. I don't
Know what service, alone,
He could have held, and yet
I think there was communion
Here that day.

Five years
Dead, this summer. His faith
Stays on: God is as good
As we are.

Amen.

THE HILL

I keep my space.

Squat piers of man-piled stone
Deny the church my full embrace,
Holding its frame aloof
And raising gentlest wind
To pentecostal moans
That blend with children's cries
Above the quiet saints who sleep in me.

Though separate by stone and wind,
We've still become good friends,
This Mormon church and I,
Each assured that time
Will verify his role:
Mine to measure body,
The church to weigh the soul.



GARY SMITH