

Fire and Indians

By Janet S. Porter

The Life and History of Phineas Wolcott Cook
pp. 42-43, using his own words

CHARACTERS (5 – 3 males, 2 females)

Phineas Wolcott Cook (PWC)

Ann Eliza (his wife)

Brother Taft

Sister Taft

Indian

(PWC and Ann Eliza come to the stage)

PWC: We finally crossed the Missouri River. Let's get to the Winter Quarters camp right now so I can start my house before our baby is born.

Ann Eliza: I'm very sorry, Phineas, but it's too late. I need a midwife right now.

PWC: No problem. We'll camp here and I'll go to the main camp.

Ann Eliza: Thank you. The Tafts will stay with me while you're gone.

(Phineas and Ann Eliza leave the stage. He then returns with Brother Taft)

PWC: I just arrived back from the main camp with the midwife, and Sister Sessions delivered Ann Eliza's baby. All is well.

Brother T: In 3 days it will be Sunday. My wife said she would stay with your wife while we go to the Winter Quarters camp to go to meeting. What do you think?

PWC: It's a good idea. Then we could meet people and find where we can build our houses so we can move away from the Indians.

(Sister Taft comes in)

Sister T: Seth, the Indians are shouting we have to give them all we have, including our oxen and food. They say they'll set fire to the grass and burn us out.

Brother T: Quick, let's go, Phineas.

PWC: Oh, no. They shot an arrow into your cow.

Brother T: I'll pull it out, but I think she's going to die. Let's butcher her and I'll give everyone some of the meat.

(The Indian comes in)

Indian: This my cow. See arrow?

Brother T: No, it's my cow. It's your arrow. (Gives him the arrow)

Indian: Give me cow. I'll burn all the grass.

Brother T: I'll give you part of the meat. You'll have to be happy with that.

Indian: My cow. Burn grass.

(The Indian leaves.)

Sister T: Seth and Phineas, they set fire to the grass. Come quickly.

PWC: I'll get my water barrel.

Brother T: I have a bucket, and we'll refill in the river.

Sister T: Now they set fire to our wagon. Phineas, they set fire to your wagon too.

PWC: Ann Eliza is in there with the new baby. I'm going there first.

(They all leave the stage. PWC and Brother Taft come back in.)

PWC: All the fires are out. The Indians didn't come back for two days.

Brother T: Do we dare go to the Winter Quarters camp this morning?

PWC: There are no Indians around. We could go for a few hours.

Brother T: I'll make sure my wife knows where the gun is, and I'll see it's loaded—just in case they come back while we're gone.

(They leave the stage. Sister Taft comes to the stage.)

Sister T: Indians!

(Brother Taft comes to the stage)

Brother T: Where are they?

Sister T: They're out in the trees. They say this is their land and they will burn it all over and then our cattle will die.

(PWC comes to the stage)

PWC: Ann Eliza and the children are all right.

Sister T: They didn't bother her. They want the beef.

Indian: Our cow.

Brother T: I'll give you a quarter of this beef. Take it or leave it.

Indian: Take it.

Brother T: You made an agreement that we could live here. Now stop trying to hurt us. And keep your promise.

(The Indian leaves)

PWC: He's finally gone. We need to get out of here and move to the main camp.

Brother T: We can move tomorrow. Brother Brigham has told us where we can build our houses.

PWC: We've worked hard for this. Now we can live in the city of the Saints.

Brother T: Right now it's more like a tent city.

PWC: And we'll be there tomorrow.

Family Discussion

Phineas was a Bible reader, and he no doubt remembered well the scripture in Romans 8:28:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God..."

The Cooks experienced many trials coming to Zion, which they had been asked to do. Almost everything they had was stolen, they had to stop to work so they would have wheat for the winter, and then Ann Eliza's baby came before they could get to Winter Quarters. And while they were waiting to move, Indians caused damage and great trauma.

How do you think the Cooks could reconcile their experiences with the promise that all things would work together for their good?

Perhaps we just don't understand the meaning of how all things work together for our good. Rather than promising an easy life, Father in Heaven has promised much more:

Jeffrey R. Holland has said:

"Brothers and sisters, may (Father in Heaven) bless us to strive with patience and persistence toward the ideals we have heard proclaimed...knowing that His divine love and unfailing help will be with us even when we struggle—no, will be with us especially when we struggle."
("Tomorrow The Lord Will Do Wonders Among You," *Ensign*, May, 2016, p. 127)

George Q. Cannon said:

"No matter how serious the trial, how deep the distress, how great the affliction, (God) will never desert us. He never has, and He never will. He cannot do it. It is not His character (to do so)...He will (always) stand by us. We may pass through the fiery furnace; we may pass through deep waters; but we shall not be consumed nor overwhelmed. We shall emerge from all these trials and difficulties the better and purer for them" (George Q. Cannon, "Remarks," *Deseret Evening News*, March 7, 1891, p. 4).





This is the one-quarter beef.

