
Major Noble Ashley

(1798–1870)

D&C 75:17

Major was his given name. Just as King Follett was never a king, Major Noble Ashley was never a military commander. In the eighteenth century, parents often gave their sons honorific titles as a given name.

Major grew to manhood in Sheffield, Massachusetts, in the Housatonic River Valley. By 1831 he was residing in Ohio and had joined the Church and been ordained an elder. He attended the fourth general conference of the Church, held in June 1831 in Kirtland. (When minutes of that conference were copied into the *Far West Record*, the scribe inserted “cut off” next to the name of Major Ashley.)¹ On October 25, 1831, he attended another Church conference in Orange, Ohio. At this conference, Major was ordained a high priest. A scribe recorded that he said, “It was by the help of the Lord that [I] had been preserved, yet [my] greatest fear was for those who were weak in the faith.”²

Sure of his faithfulness, Major asked the Prophet Joseph Smith to seek the will of the Lord concerning him (see D&C 75:23). The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph on January 25, 1832, “And again, I say unto my servant Major N. Ashley, and my servant Burr Riggs, let them take their journey [mission] also into the south country” (D&C 75:17). The promise given for such a journey was Major would be “laden with many sheaves [meaning many baptisms], and crowned with honor, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life” (D&C 75:5).

If the missionary journey was taken, it was brief, for about six months after the revelation was received by Joseph Smith, on July 3, 1832, Major was present at a council of high priests that met in Edward Partridge’s home in Independence, Missouri. It

¹ Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 22.

² Cannon and Cook, eds., *Far West Record*, 7–8.

appears that he also had set up a small tannery in Independence. Major was forced to abandon his property and business when the Saints were driven from Independence across the Missouri River to Clay County. He endured the physical and verbal abuse heaped upon the Saints from Independence to Liberty and then in Far West.

In 1838 Major left the main body of the Church and moved to Tallmadge, Ohio, where he operated a tannery. In addition to being a tanner, Major took up mining and was listed on a census record as a "learned professional and engineer." He died in July 1870 in Tallmadge, Ohio at age 72.