for advanced study, Hills became assistant editor of Times and Seasons on 15 January 1842 and began to write up the Lyceum’s proceedings for the newspaper. His accounts included this reverent column:

We are pleased to see the laudable zeal manifested by some of our musical friends, to bring about a uniform and careful style of sacred singing. Among a people emigrated from different countries, with different prejudices and habits as we are, this is no easy task, and we can but admire the improvements made, and the judicious order established within a few months past. By the by, we peeped in the other evening, during the performance of the Musical Lyceum, and heard what will make us try to peep in again.

A proper and expressive articulation of the words constitutes the life and soul of music; intelligence thus clothed with the robes of melody, and harmonic numbers, moves gently over the spirit, inspires her heavenly footsteps, and awakens all its energies. We should not be so sure that the performances before hinted at were good, were it not that we are sure we have a tolerably good ear for music, or an ear for good music and we are delighted, whereas out devil, who is known to have a bad ear for good music, and a good ear for bad music, was quite differently affected; he crowded in edgewise, but soon deserted.—said he could not stand the racket.

But for all his noble intentions, Hills and his crusade succumbed to scandal. Both Hills and his friend Mayor John Bennett had persuaded a number of women to embark in an early but disapproved form of Mormon polygamy, a marriage system which Bennett called “spiritual wifey,” but which went beyond the spirit in its consummations. (Bennett, a physician, apparently had promised abortions to “spiritual wives” who conceived.) After an open affair with Sarah Pratt, whose husband was proselytizing in England, Bennett was cut off from the church. The Saints then disfranchised Hills (August 1842) when the young Mary Clift announced she was carrying Hills’s baby. Plummeting from grace in the eyes of his public, Hills quickly lost his musical eminence, although, ironically, he retained his municipal judgeship.

As Hills’s influence began to wane, the singing school’s role in Mormonism expanded. In the seven years after M. C. Davis began the first choir, choral music had begun to take precedence over congregational music in Mormon gatherings. In 1842 the new women’s organization of the church, the Relief Society, founded its own choir to sing hymns for its occasional gatherings. By 1843 a number of Mormon settlements outside of Nauvoo had formed their own groups. Meanwhile in Ohio W. W. Phelps endeavored to keep alive the Kirtland choral tradition. Called to be caretaker for the new desolate temple there, Phelps hosted the Mormon emigrants who occasionally passed through on their way to Nauvoo and played the part of the choirmaster, often standing alone in one of the choir galleries and singing solo.

When Benjamin Wilber left on a mission to the eastern states, Stephen Goddard, a fine bass singer and one of the musical wardens of the city, took over the choir, which by the time of Joseph’s death had at least forty-five singers: twenty-seven women and eighteen men. Under Goddard their repertoire ventured beyond hymns and Masonic songs to the contrapuntal anthems of William Billings and others. (The Mormons apparently had overcome the common objection to such works that they were too complex to be understood by the common man, that the polyphony obscured the words, and that they kept the public from joining in.) A review of Goddard’s choir reveals its popularity:

One word for the leader of the Choir. When in the great congregation of an assembled multitude, numbering variously from five to ten and sometimes twenty thousand. [sic] The high praises of Jehovah are sung, and every heart beat high in union to the joyful lay as it echoes from the general throng. We are ready to reflect upon the loftiness, theme, and grandeur, and harmony with which such scenes are associated—and we are ready to enquire who is the mover of this mighty mass. Notice being given for music, all eyes are eagerly placed upon one individual—the hymn and tune are found—the voices are tuned—at a moment the enraptured feelings of thousands blend in one common anthem or hymn of holiest song and the reviving counterpoints of the throng, forced the conviction on the mind that God (dard) was there.

In the beginnings of Mormonism Joseph and his followers emphatically declared the need of the common people to band together, economically, culturally, and spiritually. In Nauvoo, a city relatively free from genteel hostility, the Mormons determinedly advanced their own culture, attempting to make a heaven on earth patterned after the glories of the world’s great cities. Arguments for the advancement of music in Mormonism included one writer’s hyperbole that “rising generations in coming time will look upon you [the patrons of music in Nauvoo] as the founders of the greatest city in the west, and the greatest benefactors of the age in which you lived.” To unify the Saints in spirit, congregational singing sufficed. But the boisterous chanting of the masses could not suit the building of God’s kingdom in Zion. Mormon leaders began to side with the American spirit of musical reform, epitomized by Lowell Mason, who wrote that to indulge in congregational singing, “everything that belongs to taste in music must be given up.” In Motomond, choirs ascended above congregations and musical formality overtook spontaneous expression.

One of the last acts of the Nauvoo citizenry was to build a public music hall near the temple, primarily to give the choir a resonant hall in which to perform. Joseph had often complained of the burden that

22. See Joseph Smith's description of the physical arrangement of the dedication in Jeese, Personal Writings, p. 172.


25. MA 3 (January 1837): 444. Luman Carter was ordained an elder the same day as M. C. Davis.


30. The first of these appeared to be "To heaven's high architect all praise" (tune: "Arlington") and "Genius of Masonry descended" (tune: "Sudbury"); see the Nauvoo Neighbor, 21 June 1843. Later Masonic songs appear on the broadside "Hymns to be sung at the Dedication of the Masonic Temple, April 5th, 1844," copy in HBL.


32. "Choir of the Stake of Zion in the City of Nauvoo," TS 3 (1 January 1842): 653. The wardens were Titus Billings, Stephen Goddard, Dimick Huntington, and John Pack. For short biographies of each of these men see Andrew Jenson, Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901, 1914, 1920, 1936), 1:242; 4:704; 4:748; and 4:714, respectively.

33. Gustavus Hills Diary (1804–46), photocopy of manuscript in HDC; TS 3 (15 January 1842): 663, 664; and HC 4:454. See the ads for Mason's Sacred Harp in TS 2 (15 October 1841): 582.

34. Hills confessed to the church courts, paid Clift two hundred dollars, and agreed to pay her twenty-five dollars a year for three years if the child thrived. See the paternity settlement in Newel K. Whitney Papers, HBL; also Daniel W. Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith" (Master's thesis, Purdue University, 1975), p. 227.

35. Minutes of the Nauvoo Relief Society, HDC, passim. For mention of the Waldo County (Maine) and Lima (Illinois) branch choirs, see TS 3 (15 February 1842): 698–99, and 4 (15 August 1843): 303.

36. See Mary Ann Weston Maughan Autobiography, microfilm of holograph in HDC, [p. 42].


38. See Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, pp. 122–24. For references to Billings's anthems "Heavenly Vision" and "Denmark," see the conference minutes in TS 6 (15 April 1843): 860–70, and the concert program in Nauvoo Neighbor, 26 February 1845.


40. "Nauvoo Music and Concert Hall."


42. See, for example, Joseph Smith Diary (kept by Willard Richards), photocopy of typescript in author's possession, 21 May 1843.

43. "Nauvoo Music and Concert Hall." For more on the hall, see chapter 4, below.


46. WFE 2:316–17 (22 February 1845).

47. See also Charles Olsen, Autobiography, p. 38: "Singing by notes (not by ear) was adopted. As no psalmody or other music book was printed by the church, the only way to get individual music was for each member to have his own blank music-book and for someone to transcribe from the 'Paritit' (the leader's score) the part wanted."


50. "Deseret Philharmonic Society," DN, 1 March 1855. Grimswh as, a clerk in the church historian's office, had already attempted to answer in the press the question, "Why is not vocal music, such as choruses, quartets, glee, etc. appreciated in this country as in the old countries and the eastern States?" His somewhat timid reply was that the words were too often hard to understand. Chotheers, he suggested, should inform congregations of their texts before singing. Wordbooks should be passed out at all performances so that people could follow along ("Music," DN, 2 February 1854).

51. In August 1856, three days after the citywide festival of the "Literary and Musical Assembly," The Deseret News, Grimswh announced that he "could not stand the hard times" and no longer had faith in Mormonism. He packed and returned to England (WFE 4:433 [4 August 1856]).

The following affidavit was made:

Hancock county, State of Illinois.

Personally came before me Orson Spencer, one of the Aldermen of the City and acting justice in aforesaid county, Mary Clift, an unmarried woman of said county, and made solemn oath that she was pregnant with a child which, if born alive, may be a bastard and that Gustavus Hills was the father of such child.

The said Gustavus Hills about 4 or 5 weeks since requested deponent to remove to Columbus (Adams county) until after her confinement and he would assist her with support as far as his means would permit; and that such illicit conduct was practiced by the heads of the Church and that the time would come when men would have more wives and one, and he wished that time would come.

Mary Clift.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 29th day of August, 1842.

Orson Spencer, Alderman of the City of Nauvoo. In presence of Elisha Averett, Proxcy Keller, Sophia Beals.
Saturday, September 3 - Joseph the Prophet was at home in the forenoon, in company with John Boynton.

A letter was received from br. Hollister to the effect that the missionaries were "halted" on the move, and that two requisitions were issued, one on the Governor of this State and the other on the Governor of Iowa. Their movements were represented as being very secret and restless. Soon after 10 o'clock, Heber and Heber, two of the men came into the house. It had appeared that they had come up the river side, and hitched their horses below the Nauvoo House, and then proceeded on foot, undetected, until they got into the house. When they arrived, President Joseph was in another apartment of the house, writing a letter with his family. John Boynton happened to be the first person discovered by the Sheriffs, and they began to ask him where Mr. Smith was. He answered that he saw him early in the morning; but did not say that he had seen him since.

While this conversation was passing, President Joseph passed out at the back door, and through the corn to his garden of the Near E. Whitney's. He went up stairs, but undiscovered. Messrs. Sydney, Evans went and conversed with the Sheriffs. Eliza said she wanted to search the house for Mr. Smith. In answer to a question by sister Emma, he said he had no warrant authorizing him to search, but insisted upon searching the house. She did not refuse, and accordingly they searched through, but to no effect.

This is another testimony and evidence of the mean, corrupt, illegal proceedings of our enemies. Notwithstanding the constitution of the United States says, Article 4th, "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated; and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized." Yet these men audaciously, impudently, and altogether singly demanded, and searched the house of President Joseph, even without any warrant or authority whatever. Being satisfied that he was not in the house, they departed. They appeared to be well armed, and, as usual, intended to take him either dead or alive; which we afterwards heard they had and they would do, but the Almighty again delivered his servant from their bloody thraltry grip.

It is reported that there are fifteen men in the city along with the Sheriffs, and that they dined together to-day at Amos Dake's. Soon after noon down Thomas King and another person arrived at the house and demanded to search, which they immediately did, but finding nothing they also went towards Quincy. Some of them were seen about afterwards, but at about 10 o'clock all was quiet.

It is said that they started from Quincy yesterday, expecting and fully determined to reach Nauvoo in the night, and fall upon the house unexpectedly, but report says, they lost the road, and got separated away one from another, and could not get along until daylight. This, in all probability is true, as they appeared much fatigued, and complained of being very bad from riding.

President Joseph, accompanied by brother Francis H. Dyer, left brother Whitney's about 9 o'clock, and went to brother Edward Hunter's, where he was welcomed, and made comfortable by the family; and where he can be kept safe from the hands of the enemies.

The High Council met in Nauvoo at 4:30 p.m. There were present: Pres. Marks, Austin Cowles, Charles C. Rich, James Allred, Alphonse Cutler, George W. Harris, Aaron Johnston, Wm. Huntington, Joshua Smith, James Sloan, St. Hunt, Lewis Wilson, David Fullmer, Simon Carter, Rev. Knight, and Leonard Coby.

A charge was preferred against Gustavus Hills, by the teachers of the Church for illicit intercourse with a certain woman by the name of Mary Clift, by which she is with child, and for teaching the said Mary Clift that the hearts of the Church practised such conduct, and that the time would come when men would have more wives than one, etc.

The Council Mary Clift did not appear and upon vote it was adjourned until...
4 o'clock tomorrow. Brother Sant and Brother Pullmer and Bro. Averett and Gustavus Hills were to go 'o her house at 6 o'clock tomorrow morning and bring Alderman Spencer to take her depositions and the trial to take place at 4 o'clock, Sept. 4, 1842.

A matter in dispute between Alexander Stanley and others, and Bro. Peirce, concerning a piece of land was referred to the High Council and afterwards handed over to President Marks. Jos. Allred, Alpheus Cutler, Geo. W. Harris, and A. Johnston as arbitrators, and a bond to be entered into by the parties, the arbitrators to view the land on Tuesday next and hear and decide the case that day, the bond to be executed by all parties on Monday next.

An application of John M. Powers to have a hearing of his appeal from the Bishop's decision, which has lain over, or that he be reinstated, inasmuch as the hand of fellowship has been withdrawn from him. It was decided that the former decision stand confirmed.

Sept 3, 1842. (Sign on file)
Sunday, September 4 - Hyrum Smith and William Law left Nauvoo for the Eastern States.

On this day (September 4, 1842) a conference was held at the house of Peter W. Connover, Hancock county, Ill., for the purpose of organizing a branch of the Church at Golden's point. There were present 8 Elders, 2 Priest and 1 Teacher. L.W. Brandon was chosen president and A. H. Golden clerk. T. Persson, Joseph Hammon and Jonathan L. Hervey were ordained teachers, under the hands of G. C. W. Brandon, A. Williams and B. Wells. T & S 4: 111

On the same day (Sept 4, 1842) a conference was held at Mead's Basin, Passaic co., N. J., for the purpose of organizing a branch of the church for Little Falls and Mead's Basin. Among those present were 1 High Priest, 2 Elders, 1 Teacher and 1 Deacon.

At 1 o'clock p.m. the meeting was called to order by Elder John Leech, (who has been instrumental in building up this branch,) whereupon Elder Addison Everett was unanimously chosen president and Bro A. E. Wright, clerk.

Elder Addison Everett made some remarks on the order of the Church of Christ; its officers, and their duties.

After which the following officers were proposed and unanimously chosen.

Bro C. E. Bolton to be ordained Elder.
A. E. Wright of Philadelphia branch Elder.
James Wheat priest.
Bro Joseph Fairbank teacher.
Samuel Ely teacher.
J. Brewer jr deacon.

The officers chosen as above were then ordained by the laying on of hands, by Elder A. Everett and Elder John Leech.

After which several members were confirmed having been previously baptized.

The sacrament was then administered by Elders Everett and Leech.

The remainder of the time allotted for the occupancy of the room, was taken up in the bearing of testimony of the power of the everlasting gospel.
The High Council met in Nauvoo at 5 o'clock p.m. immediately after the public meeting was dismissed. Joshua Smith being absent, Elias Higbee was appointed in his stead.

The case of Gustavus Hills was called on. Austin Cowles (councilor) spoke by way of an address to the council upon the subject. The affidavit of Mary Clift dated 29th of August 1842, as also one of Sept 4, 1842, were read.

Esther Smith gave evidence that defendant told her it was lawful for people to hold illicit intercourse if they only held their peace and that it was agreeable to the practice of some of the leading men or heads of the church. It took place the Thursday before the choir was dismissed in the upper part of town near the bluff about 9 in the evening, she was going home and he offered and went to accompany her and this took place upon the way, and Mary Clift joined the school at Bro. Joseph's.

Bro. Hills then produced a paper containing questions put to an answers given by Mary Clift this morning after her deposition was taken by Alderman Spencer. Testimony on behalf of defendant Warren Smith. Thinks the singing Lyceum was closed sometime in April she commenced coming latter part of winter or early spring and continued to come generally until she left, said she was sick in forepart of winter. Sister Hills, Mary Clift came first to their house about last March, unless once before last fall, and did not stay more than an hour at a time before spring.

Brother Goddard. She was present at most of the singing meeting during January and it was organized on 15th of December. Defendant stated, first publication respecting the Lyceum was in paper of 15th.

Brother Wilber thinks she was recommended to the Lyceum by Bro. Hill about 2 or 3 weeks after the Lyceum had commenced and attended pretty constant.

Sister Terry does not consider Mary Clift worthy of her confidence on her oath, don't know anything against the character of her parents.

Bro. Goddard saw her at Bro. Joseph's at meeting in the winter.
The council on each side, spoke according to order, say 4 in all, viz Pullmer, Harris, Carter and Johnston. Bro Averett and Hills then spoke and Charles Rich and council gave their judgment, in which the entire Council concurred by vote that is, by disfellowshiping Gustavus Hills."