

Society Island Disaster in Which Mormon Courage Figured

Saving U. S. Records

Heroic Work of Mormon Missionaries Officially Commended.

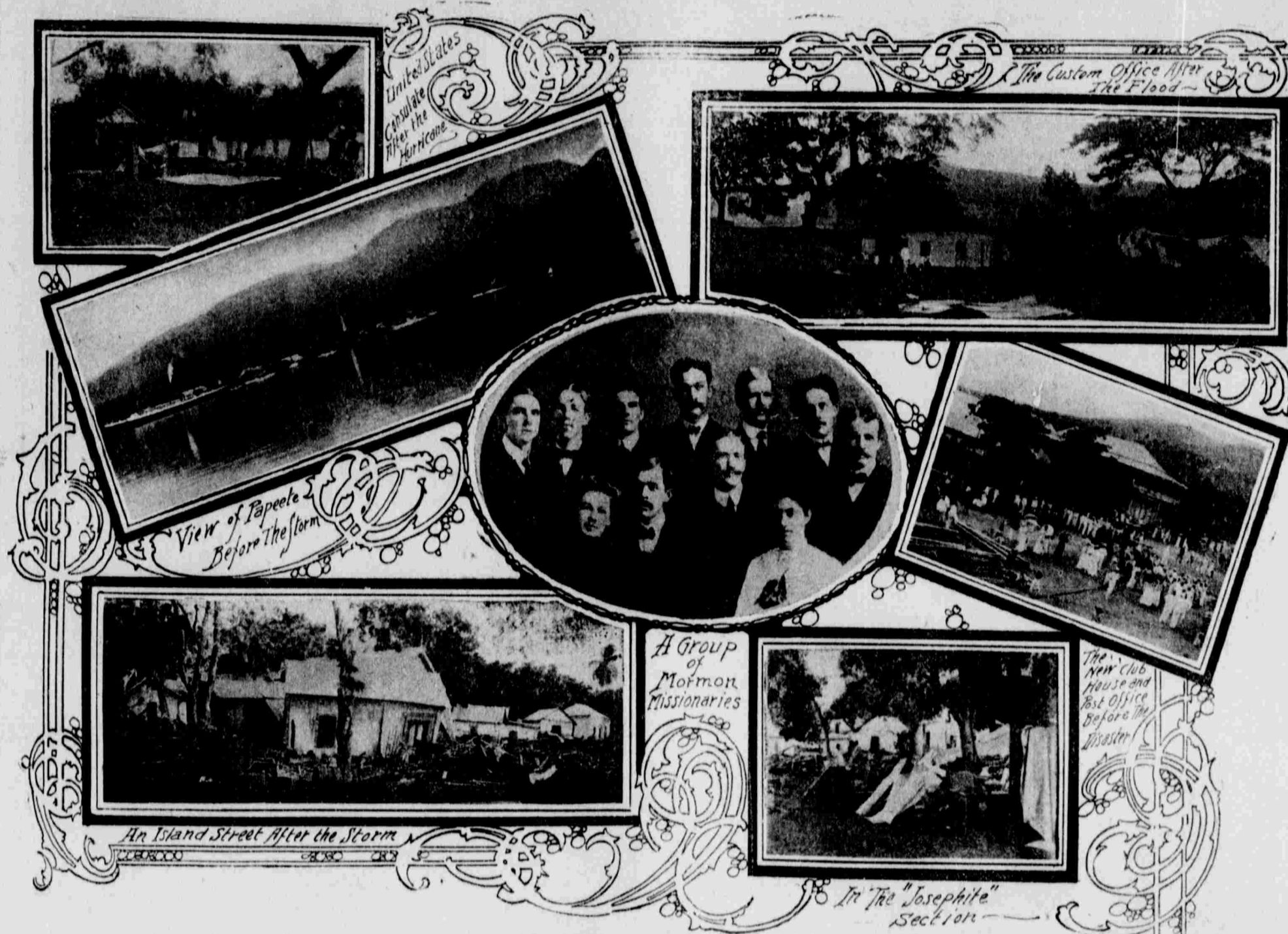
As already noted in the Deseret News, Hon. William F. Doty, United States consul at Tahiti, wrote to President Smith strongly commending the heroic work of the "Mormon" missionaries in saving the government records at the risk of their own lives. The letter follows in full:

Consular services U. S. A., Tahiti, S. L. Feb. 13, 1906. President Joseph F. Smith, of First Presidency Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. Dear Sir—It gives me great pleasure to inform you that during the cyclone and high water at Papeete, Tahiti, Feb. 8, the "Mormon" Elders rendered conspicuous service at the American consulate, at the risk of their lives, to rescue the archives. The Elders were Messrs. Hall, Peck, Clawson, Pierson, Tibbitts, Miner, Wilkinson, Noall and Huffaker. Mrs. Hall and Mrs. Wilkinson also were kind and hospitable to myself and my relatives during three days, while we were their guests.

The Elders have produced a splendid example of loyalty to the interests of their country abroad. I have reported their bravery and successful service to the department of state.

I congratulate you upon such noble representatives in this insular community. I am glad to see that the mission house is nearly completed; it is a splendid structure. With high regards, I am,

Respectfully yours,
WILLIAM F. DOTY,
Consul.



SCENES AND PERSONS IN THE DREADFUL SOUTH SEA ISLAND FLOOD AND CYCLONE.

Writing to the Deseret News of the recent dreadful and disastrous work of wind and wave at Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands, President Edward S. Hall says under date of Feb. 13:

Never since the island was discovered in 1769 by Capt. Cook has the sea been known to rise high enough to do any damage, and the people have always felt perfectly secure until now. On the evening of the 8th of this month, however, the road that runs along the beach was flooded. The city of Papeete is situated on the beach at the base of two giant mountains which rise up out of the sea to a height of 8,000 feet, and though the people had never seen the road flooded as it was, they entertained no fears. They felt assured that the sea had reached its limit, and retired for the night without the slightest apprehension of danger.

MADE LITTLE NOISE.
Strong as the sea was it made very little noise, and owing to the fact that a gentle rain was falling on the iron roofs of the houses, the large portion of the population did not awaken to their danger until some of their houses were being carried away. By midnight the sea had risen high enough to shake some of the houses. Church bells were tolled to arouse the populace and by 2 o'clock excitement was rife.

WORK OF MORMON ELDERS.
Merchants tried to save their stock; the beach residents tried to save their household effects; officials tried to save their records; but the danger of entering the falling buildings, and the intense darkness, made it difficult. People deplored the fact that they had not taken warning in the early evening and moved their belongings to the higher part of town, but they were too late, and were caught by the strong waves and gently carried back till the force of the waves were spent. Nine of our Elders who were here at Papeete erecting a new mission headquarters, en-

deavored to move some of the books and records from the American Consulate but owing to the darkness and confusion were forced to abandon it until daylight, at which time they took out the most important records.

WRECKAGE AND CONFUSION.
The sea continued to rise until 8 o'clock in the morning, when the cyclone broke down onto us, uprooting trees and tearing off roofs. Fortunately, however, it ran in opposition to the sea, cutting the tide and holding it in check. At noon all was peace again, but the beach was a scene of wreckage and confusion. The fronts of most of the business houses were broken in, while nearly all frame buildings were lifted off their foundations and carried from five feet to 500. The market place, a small square in the center of the business part of town, was filled with boats and debris from the beach.

ALMOST WASHED AWAY.
A little islet in the bay, used by the government as a quarantine station, was almost entirely washed away. There is not a single building and but a very few trees remaining. A man and his wife were the only ones there during the storm and it was not until after daylight that a boat could be sent for them, but that was too late. The man had been washed away just a few moments before, and the woman was nearly exhausted.

"JOSEPHITES" WERE HARD HIT.
The old Josephite mission, consisting of about 20 frame buildings, including the meetinghouse, was washed entirely away, leaving a cutter from the sea as the only object to mark the spot, the road being entirely lost. In this part of town the sea came up so suddenly and unexpectedly that many had to swim from their houses, and had they been other than natives and such good swimmers, the death list would have

reached hundreds, whereas only seven deaths have been reported.

SEA STILL HIGH.
The beautiful drive along the beach is entirely gone, and the sea at normal now reaches to where the houses used to be. The new clubhouse, a two story frame building built less than a year ago, was moved about 10 feet out of its place, and so little damage done that they are still using the upper floor. The new postoffice on the opposite corner was washed entirely away. (See photo, No. 4, the clubhouse and post-

office before the disaster; and No. 5, after.) The postoffice stood where the man now stands.

DESTRUCTION OF CONSULATE.
The United States consulate was destroyed, although it stood until morning, and the ruins were not washed away.

HISTORIC LITTLE HOUSE.
A little house that was washed far up the street is a historical structure with the mission. When a party of nine of our Elders came down in 1893 on the bark Galilee, they were very crowded for passage room, and built the little house to serve as a cabin for them. It has since been used as a custom inspection house near the wharf and now it takes another float up the street, sustaining no injury.

L. D. S. CHURCH UNDAUNTED.
The new Latter-day Saints' mission

headquarters, now being erected by the Church at a cost of \$1,000, was not damaged in the least, as it is in the high part of town.

All the low land of Tahiti has suffered greatly, but the heavy loss is in Papeete. The question as to whether the town will build up again or not depends greatly on the damage done in the Tuamotu islands, as they are the commercial life of the colony. They are rich in pearls and pearl shell, but being so low they are washed in every storm. Only three islands have been reported, but they were entirely submerged.

A vessel has been sent out by the government with provisions for the islanders in case they are in distress.

FEARS FOR VESSELS.
The damage in Tahiti is estimated at \$1,000,000 and presumably a similar amount of property was destroyed on the Tuamotu islands. The city of Papeete was inundated and about 75 buildings destroyed, including the American consulate and the French government building. The shipping in the harbor of Papeete escaped injury, owing to the direction of the wind, but fears are entertained for vessels which were cruising near the Tuamotu islands.

The schooner Papeete was submerged for an hour near Anaa, Tuamotu. Her captain, Philip Michaelis, estimated that the waves were 65 feet high. It was impossible to see 20 feet away at 3 o'clock in the daytime and the sailors had to be lashed to the vessel. M. Marcad, a French resident at Papeete, Tuamotu islands, abandoned that place in a small cutter after all the government buildings, dwelling houses and the Catholic church had been swept away. Many of the natives climbed coconut trees, while others put out to sea in small boats. The schooner Ina, which was anchored in the lagoon at Makemo, successfully rode out the storm in Tuamotu islands.

Makemo was badly washed. Many natives escaped from drowning have been reported. Bridges and roads were badly damaged on the island of Tahiti. Bread, fruit, coconut, banana and plantain trees were blown down in great numbers, which will result in hardships to the natives and materially affect commerce during the next two or three years. The French gunboat Zelee has gone to the Tuamotu islands with supplies of food and fresh water. The British consul has appealed to his government for aid for about 500 British subjects. Some Americans have sustained heavy losses and probably there will be a few instances of utter destitution. The Americans are hopeful of securing help from the United States. Money and not food is required.

WIND'S FEARFUL VELOCITY.
The cyclone or hurricane reached the velocity of 120 miles an hour. It struck the islands about midnight on Feb. 7 and continued until about 4 o'clock on the next afternoon. The island of Anaa, Tuamotu group, is believed to have been the center of the storm.

At Papeete, about 7 o'clock on the evening of Feb. 7, the sea began to break heavily over the reef and the

waves in the harbor washed over the quay. There was no perceptible wind. About 8 o'clock in the morning the American consulate, the oldest structure in Papeete, having been built about 1835, collapsed. In the absence of the American consul, his mother, Mrs. Doty, supervised the removal of the archives, aided by several "Mormon" missionaries. Mrs. Doty was in serious jeopardy several times. The records were temporarily stored at the Latter-day Saints' mission house. Mr. Doty's family also accepted their hospitality. Beyond the American consulate several government buildings, including the treasury and storerooms, sustained great damage.

The deputy mayor of Papeete, M. Longamayo, lost not only his own residence, but six other houses. M. Pore lost many of his buildings. All the dwelling houses near the Protestant church were wrecked. The British consulate was slightly damaged. Captain Bonall had to abandon his home with his family on account of the rush of water. Another American, Edward Grich, was washed out.

The substitute guardian at the quarantine station at Montautu Island, Papeete harbor, was saving a lantern for many hours during the night, as he and his wife clung to the tops of coconut trees in the midst of waves that dashed thirty feet high over the island.

On shore M. Andre, the chief pilot, called out to Commander Hurbin of the gunboat Zelee to let him have a boat and crew for the rescue of the man and woman at the quarantine station. Commander Hurbin explained that he deemed it his duty to decline to send his men into what appeared a forlorn hope expedition, but promised to let M. Andre have a boat without a crew. Pilot Andre requisitioned four prisoners at the local jail and with them proceeded to the Zelee. Commander Hurbin did not wish to risk the lives of his crew, even to send a boat ashore, the four native prisoners, who were splendid swimmers, were pressed into service.

NATIVES CLIMB TREES.
At Papeete the natives had to climb into the coconut trees, although a few of them preferred to put to sea in cutters and anchor their boats as securely as possible in the lagoons. M. Marcad, the French resident, put to sea in a wooden cutter and after three days reached Tahiti, reporting that the government buildings, the Roman Catholic church and all the dwellings had been swept away. He knew of no loss of life, but feared that many would succumb to hunger, thirst and exposure.

He proceeded with the French gunboat Zelee with supplies and a sharp report in addition to the property destroyed at Papeete, an equal amount is believed to have been destroyed altogether along the beach around Tahiti. Scores of dwelling houses were blown down. There is much distress among the homeless people. The local government extended the military barracks and hospital grounds as a temporary retreat and provided food when needed, but the funds of the treasury are practically exhausted.

CAPTAIN LAWLESS' STORY.
On reaching San Francisco, Captain Lawless of the Mariposa made the following report: "Immediately on the arrival of the Mariposa at Tahiti on Feb. 19 the services of the company's agent to render any aid that might be required. After leaving Tahiti, we kept a sharp lookout for the derelicts and, also, for the French gunboat Zelee, which we hoped to intercept on her way back to Papeete. We saw nothing, however, until the next day, when we spoke a schooner crowded with excited people, who told us that the island on which they had just landed was a sharp report had been swept away. They were bound to Tikahau for provisions. They informed us that the Zelee was on her way back to Papeete and should arrive there that day.

"The schooner was commanded by a man named Peters, who asked me to report that the destruction was widespread. "I kept a sharp lookout along the shore of Tikahau and Rairoa, but saw no living thing, just plain destruction. Inside the lagoon of Tikahau was a large schooner ashore, probably blown over the reef at some other point. We could make no landing, as the reef was breaking heavily. If on board, the crew was safe, as the vessel was standing upright with spars intact. "At Rairoa, 120 miles northwest of Tahiti, they had more wind than sea, and native houses and iron roofs sailed through the air like gigantic bats. Half an old iron bridge was sucked up and dumped on top of another bridge half a mile away. It will be impossible to get exact details for a month or more, but when the news does come I am afraid it will be bad. "The Zelee had probably distributed all her stores and was returning to Papeete for coal and a fresh supply of provisions. "There is one consolation in this great calamity. So far there has been no report of any great loss of life. "When the Mariposa left Papeete conditions were again normal, and the work of reconstruction was going on under the supervision of Governor E. Julien."

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