

MORMON HOUSE - VOREE

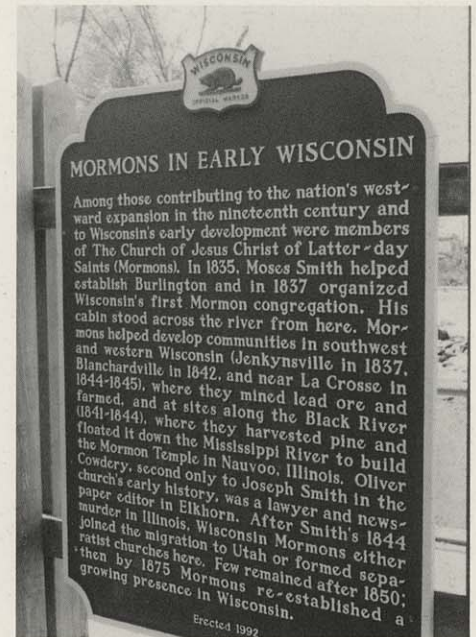
The Strangite Mormon Church had its genesis in June 1844 when James J. Strang claimed he had been appointed by Joseph Smith, Jr. and ordained at the hands of Angels to head the Mormon Church. At Smith's death, the majority of the Mormons followed Brigham Young to Utah, but approximately 2,000 joined Strang at the site of Voree on the outskirts of present day Burlington, Wisconsin.

Under Strang's leadership, a frontier community was developed near the White River on the border of Racine and Walworth Counties as land was cleared and tents and crude shelters transitioned into more substantial log and stone homes and land was purchased and farms were developed by the Communitarian Order of Enoch. A limestone quarry was mined, a newspaper was published and a school was built.

Strang's settlement reached its peak by 1848 and schisms and incursions by rival

Mormon groups depleted the settlement. By mid-1851, Strang called many of the Mormons to Beaver Island in Lake Michigan, but Voree remained in Mormon hands and new lands were even purchased.

When Strang was assassinated in 1856, his Church seriously declined as the destitute Mormons were robbed of their property and were driven from Beaver Island. The Voree properties eventually were sold for back taxes and the Mormons were dispersed throughout the western states. At the turn of the century, several Mormon families pooled their money to purchase 105 acres of the most historical and sacred part of Voree and the Wingfield Watson family made their home at what was once the place where Strang retrieved "hidden" records, made plans to build a temple, conducted the ordinance of baptism for the dead and functioned (according to the belief of his followers) as a Prophet of God.



The Mormons became a diminished force after Strang's death and gradually diminished in numbers as many united with the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints which was headed by Joseph Smith, III, the son of the Mormon founder.

The Strangite Mormons were in a continuing struggle to survive as their numbers dwindled to approximately 200 by 1900 and have further diminished in recent years.

Today, about 50 Strangite Mormons live in the Burlington area and hold services at their Church on Spring Valley Road. Voree is largely a memory at the present time, but is represented by the Hill of Promise, the Voree Cemetery, an 1848 stone house, and several monuments.

*William Shepard*