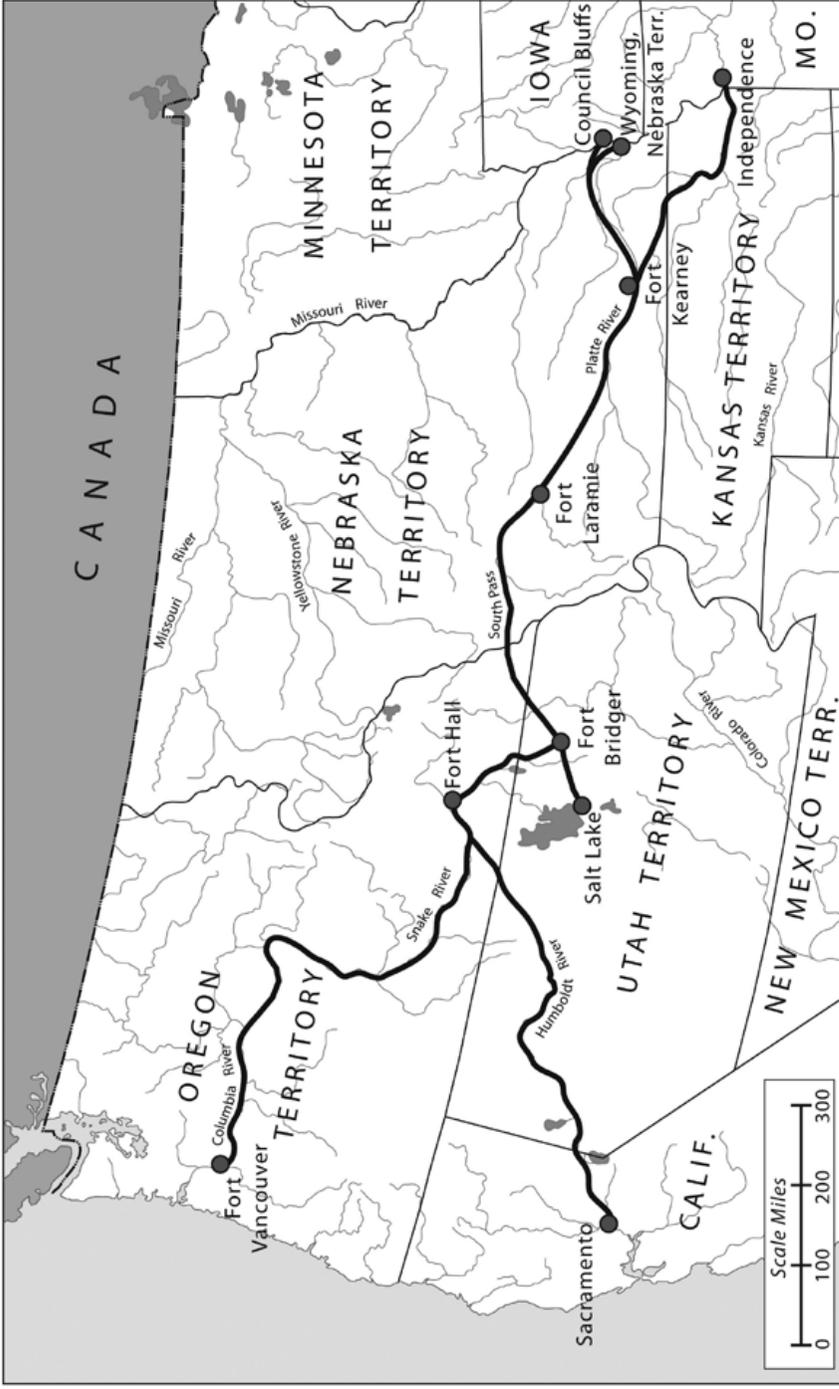# Violence and Disruptive Behavior on the Difficult Trail to Utah, 1847–1868

David L. Clark

Few if any converts to Mormonism during the mid-nineteenth century were adequately prepared for the challenge of traveling to their Zion. Most European members and many American converts had never traveled more than a few miles from their homes. European converts, after sailing across the Atlantic Ocean and traveling almost a thousand miles to staging areas in Iowa City or on the Missouri River, had to walk or ride in wooden wagons or pull handcarts another thousand miles over crude trails or, in some cases, no trail. Most American converts also had to travel long distances to get to an outfitting post. Difficulties during the final thousand miles of travel were enhanced by the anxiety of locating adequate feed for cattle and finding good water and fuel for cooking. In addition, provisions of every necessity were generally in short supply. It is easy to understand that to many, the West consisted of "trackless deserts, impassable mountains, bloodthirsty Indians and savage wild beasts—all of which the courageous little bands of overlanders had to conquer singlehandedly."[1]

A well-adjusted nineteenth-century individual could, with some effort, successfully cope with the challenge of overland travel. However, conditions on the trail were different from anything most of the travelers had experienced, and these conditions tested the basic character of each individual. This paper focuses on one result, disruptive behavior including violence, by individuals both within and external to some

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1. John D. Unruh, *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840–60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 385.

Much of the trail to Utah, California, and Oregon was the same for all travelers in the mid-1800s. Illustration by B. J. Kowallis, showing the main routes.

of the companies. The topic of violence and disruptive behavior on the Mormon trail has not been adequately studied. Western American trail history got a boost in 1979 when John Unruh published *The Plains Across,* which was arguably the first book to provide an overall history of migration across the American West from 1840 to 1860. In 1980, John Phillip Reid published *Law for the Elephant: Property and Social Behavior on the Overland Trail* and then in 1997 published *Policing the Elephant: Crime, Punishment, and Social Behavior on the Overland Trail.*[2] These books mention that contemporary reports of violence on the trail attributed much violence to the Mormons.[3] Mormons were thought to organize into bands that preyed upon emigrants on trails to Oregon or California, especially stealing stock.[4]

It is worth trying to determine if Mormons actually had higher rates of violence while on the westward trail than non-Mormons by looking at Mormon documents. Because Mormons made up about 70,000 of the estimated 300,000 people who crossed the plains from the 1840s to 1860s, their experience specifically regarding violence deserves study.

Data regarding the occurrence of violence on the trail necessarily relies on reports recorded in company histories and personal journals. Approximately three hundred digitized diaries, reminiscences, and interviews archived in the LDS Church History Library of those who traveled to Utah between 1847 and 1869 were searched for keywords (*violence, fight, whip, shoot, murder,* and so on). Some twenty instances of violence, certainly not all of those that occurred, were added to several

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2. Unruh, *Plains Across;* John Phillip Reid, *Law for the Elephant: Property and Social Behavior on the Overland Trail* (San Marino, Calif.: Henry E. Huntington Library, 1980); John Phillip Reid, *Policing the Elephant: Crime, Punishment, and Social Behavior on the Overland Trail* (San Marino, Calif.: Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Library, 1997).

3. Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 50–52.

4. The Mountain Meadows Massacre in 1857 certainly reinforced the perception of Mormons as violent. The massacre is not included in this study because it did not occur among Mormons on the trail to Utah. Historians generally say the causes of the massacre include high tension, zealotry, and fear caused by the Utah War; alleged violence and threats perpetrated on the Utah settlers by the Fancher-Baker company; and alleged connections of Fancher-Baker company members to the death of Parley P. Pratt. Some Mormons at the time placed blame solely on Indians, but recent scholarship acknowledges that Mormons played the lead role.

published and unpublished records of trail violence for this article.[5] These reports are certainly not a complete record of the violence that occurred but still give us a good idea. This study compares incidents of bad behavior and violence recorded in a sample of immigrant journals and reminiscences among Mormons going to Utah with the records of gold-seeking '49ers and those traveling to the Oregon Territory at about the same time and suggests that violence was much more common and more severe among those traveling to California and Oregon than it was for Utah-bound pioneers. Among Utah wagon companies, violence ranged from whippings to verbal abuse, with whippings being the most severe form of violence, while murder was surprisingly common among those traveling to California and Oregon.

What follows is not a philosophical discussion of man's proclivity for violence along Western trails in the mid-nineteenth century, but a documentation of disruptive behavior, including violence, among those traveling the Utah Trail and a brief comparison of these Utah Trail experiences with published accounts of violence among those traveling to California and Oregon. Possible reasons for the different experiences are suggested.

Rules and Regulations for Wagon Travel

Were there rules and regulations for the various wagon companies, and, if so, were there any that addressed problems of human behavior? And because both those going to Utah as well as those going to California and Oregon traveled along much of the same trail, were there different trail conditions that contributed to diverse antisocial behavior among the different travelers, or were the different incidents related to other factors?

Apparently, many of those traveling the Oregon and California trails did so with rules.[6] However, even the best conceived set of rules and regulations could not prevent all forms of misbehavior. Unruh reports, "A high percentage of gold seekers had formally organized into companies—complete with constitutions, bylaws, officers, and, most problematic for what transpired, jointly owned property. When the vagaries of human nature prevailed and the companies disintegrated in bickering and frustration—as most of them did—an equitable distribution of

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5. The three hundred documents I searched are a good sample of records. I invite further research into this topic using the newly available keyword search at the Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel database at http://history.lds .org/overlandtravels/home.

6. Unruh, *Plains Across,* 387.

property was mandatory."[7] Addressing problems of crime and punishment along the Oregon and California '49ers trail, Reid observed, "During the early years of the overland emigration, companies frequently wrote constitutions and adopted bylaws before they started out on the trail. The practice was largely discontinued after the 1850 emigration. By then most emigrants knew that few companies would remain united and rules could be made ad hoc to deal with problems as they arose."[8] Whether or not enforced rules would have made a difference, there were many murders on the Oregon and California trails: a doctor traveling from Indiana to Oregon in 1852 reported that on the overland trail there were "not less than 50" murders that year, as well as a large number of executions of murderers.[9] The year 1852 was the peak year of western wagon travel and may have been the time of the largest number of homicides and executions of the guilty occurring during any of the emigration years, but violence was common almost every year.

Similarly, for many of the Mormon pioneer companies traveling to their new Zion in the mid-nineteenth century, there were rules and regulations. These rules were tailored to the nuts and bolts of wagon travel such as time to begin daily activity, time to pray, how to handle guns, placement of wagons at night, and other specific procedural rules.

For the first company of Mormon western travelers, a written constitution was not really necessary because Brigham Young, the leader, headed the group and he was the law. When this first company to travel to Utah was organized, "It was moved & carryed that B[righam]. Young be General & Commander in Chief of the expedition."[10] At the beginning of the vanguard's trek, Brigham Young outlined rules of the camp in a short lecture emphasizing "vigalent holy & righteous" behavior and the need to pray continually.[11] On the first Sunday in camp, an official

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7. Unruh, *Plains Across,* 313.

8. Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 103.

9. Reid is more cautious: "Whether the total even came close to fifty killings is, at best, a guess." Thomas White, "Oregon Letter," cited in Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 76–77. Chapter 6 of *Policing the Elephant* (73–90) records accounts of murders and executions of murderers between 1849 and 1859.

10. Ronald O. Barney, ed., *The Mormon Vanguard Brigade of 1847: Norton Jacob's Record* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005), 106.

11. Barney, *Mormon Vanguard Brigade,* 103. Barney argues that while Brigham Young's leadership was pronounced, as evidenced by his late May criticism of the company for "idleness, card playing, and practical jokes," even when he was ill "there was hardly a pause in the voyage's momentum."

set of nine rules for the camp was formulated, but these rules were primarily concerned with camp logistics, not with disruptive behavior.[12]

1. After this date the horn or bugel shall be blown every morning at 5 a.m., when every man is expected to arise and pray: then attend to his team, get breakfast and have everything finished so that the camp may start by 7 o'clock.

2. Each extra man is to travel on the off side of the team with his gun on his shoulder, loaded, and each driver have his gun so placed that he can lay hold of it at a moment's warning. Every man must have a piece of leather over the nipple of his gun, or if it is a flintlock, in the pan, having caps and powder-flask ready.

3. The brethren will halt for an hour about noon, and they must have their dinner ready cooked so as not to detain the camp for cooking.

4. When the camp halts for the night, wagons are to be drawn in a circle, and the horses to be all secured inside the circle when necessary.

5. The horn will blow at 8:30 p.m., when every man must return to his wagon and pray, except the night guard, and be in bed by 9 o'clock, at which time all fires must be put out.

6. The camp is to travel in close order, and no man to leave the camp twenty rods without orders, from the Captain.

7. Every man is to put as much interest in taking care of his brother's cattle, in preserving them, as he would his own, and no man will be indulged in idleness.

8. Every man is to have his gun and pistol in perfect order.

9. Let all start and keep together, and let the cannon bring up the rear, and the company guard to attend it, traveling along with the gun, and see that nothing is left behind at each stopping place.[13]

Evidently, these rules were followed with little disagreement. On several occasions during the initial trek to what would be Utah, Young censured individuals for what appear to be minor deviations from his rules. And the record of violence in the vanguard company was minor.[14]

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12. Barney, *Mormon Vanguard Brigade,* 107 n. 53. For more on the vanguard company rules, see Thomas Bullock, Journals 1843–49, 4:13, 29, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as CHL), available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trail ExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=1&sourceId=4398.

13. Young, *Manuscript History,* 1846–47, 550, and Egan, *Pioneering,* 23–24, cited in Barney, *Mormon Vanguard Brigade,* 107.

14. Bullock, Journals 1843–49, 4:29. Barney, *Mormon Vanguard Brigade,* 125, 129, 151, 172, 182, are all examples of censure. In a humorous handling of

There were different rules for different Mormon companies. While on the trail, an 1854 LDS company adopted a company of Church members from Kansas, and the new group was immediately given rules and regulations and warned to obey.[15]

For some companies, there were formal written rules sustained by the company before travel began, such as these in 1853:

> 1st The camp will be called together at the Sound of the Trumpet morning and evening for public prayers When a General attendance is expected except those whose Camp duties require them to be absent.
>
> 2nd No Card playing will be allowed in Camp.
>
> 3rd No Profane Swearing will [be] tolerated.
>
> 4th Those owning Dogs will be required to keep them tied up during the night.
>
> 5th No noise or Confusion will be allowedd in Camp after 9 O'clock at night.
>
> 6th The horn for rising will be blown at half-past 4 Oclock.
>
> 7th The hour for prayers in the morning will be half past 5 O'clock.
>
> 8th That each man will be required to assist in driving to the herd.
>
> 9th The horn will be blown as notice to heardsman to bring in Cattle.
>
> 10th The Correll [corral] will not be broken nor any wagon move[d] from the ground until all the Cattle are yoked.[16]

One company in 1862 had only a mention of rules in the written record: "President J. W. Young addressed us and made known to the camp the regulations of the Saints and what was expected of them."[17]

The lack of rules barring fighting or whipping may have been due to the spiritual goals of Mormon travel, or the various company leaders may have been convinced that bad behavior would not be a problem

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criticism, Brigham Young nominated one of the vanguard group to be the official grumbler for the entire company, 117.

15. Adelia Horrocks Cameron, History of Heziakiah [*sic*] Mitchell, 1959, 14–19, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=15307&sourceId=4858.

16. For example, rules of the Miller-Cooley Company of 1853, in Elijah Mayhew, Diary, 1853 June–September, 1–2, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=13114&sourceId=5650.

17. John Daniel Thompson McAllister, Journals, 1851–1906, 4:38–72, CHL, 38, available online at http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:818.

because the normal rules of society that addressed theft, libel, adultery, fighting, and so on were still in force. This assumption proved wrong, and in a number of cases there were incidents of violence or confrontations when violence was barely avoided. In at least one company, the second group that crossed to Utah in 1847, there was considerable tension over road position of the companies. Having first position on the trail was considered advantageous in helping with the suffocating dust problem, a well-deserved reward for being the first group ready to leave each morning.[18] Heated arguments were followed by acts of forgiveness and stopped short of violence.[19]

So, in spite of both formal and informal rules and regulations, disruptive behavior was a problem for many of the Utah-bound and California- and Oregon-bound travelers in the mid-nineteenth century. Most of the rules were related to the practical details of daily life on the trail, but the strangeness of wagon travel, general fatigue, stress of facing the unknown each morning, shortage of most essential supplies, and frustration with unexpected and uncontrollable travel details took their toll, and social behavior regulations may not have been effective among many of the companies.

Factors Involved in Violence on the Trail

But what caused disruptive behavior on the trail? Were the factors involved different for those on the Utah Trail than for those traveling to California and Oregon? It seems reasonable to assume that the causes of violence were most commonly related to the stress of wagon travel, and therefore the reasons given for violence by those who traveled the trails is not surprising. Explanations of violence on the trail by a number of California and Oregon trail veterans were summarized by travelers: "If there is any meanness in a man, it makes no difference how well he has it covered, the plains is the place that will bring it out."[20] "All the bad traits of the men are now well-developed—their true character is shown, untrammelled, unvarnished. Selfishness, hypocricy, &c. Some, whom at

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18. See the many mentions of dust in John Vance, Journal, June–October 1847; 1849, 1, 13, 14, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overland travels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=1694&sourceId=19385.

19. David L. Clark, *Joseph Bates Noble: Polygamy and the Temple Lot Case* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2009), 121, 122, 124, 130.

20. E. W. Conyers, 1852 Diary, quoted in Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 2.

home were thought gentlemen, are now totally unprincipled."[21] Another emigrant remarked, "If a man has a mean streak about him half an inch long, I'll be bound if it wont come out on the plains."[22] One traveler summarized his observation, "If a man is predisposed to be quarrelsome, obstinate, or selfish, from his natural constitution, these repulsive traits are certain to be developed in a journey over the plains. The trip is a sort of magic mirror, and exposes every man's qualities of heart connected with it, vicious or amiable."[23] Lucina Boren, a Latter-day Saint, concluded after arriving in Salt Lake City in 1853, "No one but those who crossed the plains can even imagine the trials we had to pass through."[24]

Trail stress most likely was the factor that triggered latent antisocial behavior among many travelers despite a contrary view that the trail experience could actually improve a man: "Some optimists took the position that even if the overlanders were not the finest men when they started, they certainly would be when their trek was finished, thanks to the healing powers of western nature."[25] The improved man, especially along the California and Oregon trails, was the exception, and more commonly there was a man whose violent behavior caused suffering and even death for others traveling.

Is it possible that Mormons as a group were predisposed to violence and disruptive behavior in the mid-nineteenth century? Perhaps it is more likely that they felt obliged to turn the other cheek multiple times, as instructed by Christ and expounded upon in a revelation given to Joseph Smith in 1833, which promised rewards for those who, when persecuted, would "bear it patiently and revile not against [enemies], neither seek revenge" (D&C 98:23). On the other hand, during the years the Mormons were headquartered in Nauvoo (1839–1846), the city had a reputation among non-Mormons as a lawless place. The sentiment that Nauvoo was a crime haven may well have carried over to the Saints' reputation as troublemakers on the westward trail. Kenneth Godfrey's study of crime in Nauvoo shows that the city attracted frontier outlaws seeking to take advantage of

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21. J. Goldsborough Bruff, Journals, 1849–51, quoted in Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 3.

22. A. Delano, *Life on the Plains,* quoted in Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 2.

23. Edwin Bryant, *Journal,* 68, quoted in Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 2.

24. Lucina Mecham Boren, History of Lucina Mecham Boren, Pioneer History Collection, Pioneer Memorial Museum, Salt Lake City, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=14864&sourceId=18541.

25. Unruh, *Plains Across,* 59.

the Saints, and there was some criminal activity. At least one Church member was also part of the cause of the city's poor image: a Church member, William Gregory, confessed to and was convicted of having "spread abroad certain slanderous reports and insinuations that go to carry an idea that much pilfering, pillaging, plundering, stealing, &c is practiced by members of said church and that such practice is known to and tolerated by the heads and leaders of the church."[26] One Mormon man was convicted of whipping his wife.[27] The "non-Mormon populace of Illinois came to believe that everything that was stolen in or near Hancock County had been taken by Mormons and that all Mormons were thieves."[28]

But Church leaders never countenanced lawlessness; they worked hard to maintain order and justice. Godfrey concludes:

> The indictment rate is no lower than that of Marion County, Indiana, whose population was greater than Nauvoo's [an indication that crimes were not tolerated]. These statistics [records of court cases] indicate that the crime rate was low in Nauvoo, as the Saints claimed. . . . Often perpetrators tried to make it appear that they were LDS or that they were acting for the LDS church. Many neighboring nonmembers, unable to discriminate between good and bad Saints or to know if lawbreakers from Nauvoo were in fact Mormons, came to believe Nauvoo was a hotbed of criminal activity. . . . Available records regarding Nauvoo's crime and punishment indicate that images of Nauvoo as a crime haven contain elements of truth but are exaggerations.[29]

Thus, while Nauvoo likely had less crime than a typical frontier town, the Saints were not immune from attitudes and habits that may explain at least some of the disruptive behavior that occurred on the trail to Utah.

Certainly trail stress affected both Mormons and non-Mormons, but the degree of violence that resulted was not the same for the two groups. First we consider various varieties of disruptive behavior that occurred along the Utah Trail and then compare this to reports of violence among those traveling to California and Oregon.

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26. Nauvoo High Council Minutes, October 17 and 24, 1840, cited in Kenneth W. Godfrey, "Crime and Punishment in Mormon Nauvoo, 1839–1846," *BYU Studies* 32, nos. 1–2 (1992): 203–4.

27. Nauvoo High Council Minutes, January 17, 1843, cited in Godfrey, "Crime and Punishment," 209.

28. Cecil A. Snider, "Development of Attitudes in Sectarian Conflict," 16, cited in Godfrey, "Crime and Punishment," 209.

29. Godfrey, "Crime and Punishment," 198, 221, 222.

Violence on the Trail to Utah

Disruptive behavior and occasional violence occurred among the Utah travelers but rarely between the Indians and the Utah-bound Saints. Use of the standard bullwhip was the most common tool of violence and was used for fighting, punishment, and motivation. Other tools of violence included knives, guns, and fists. Unintentional or accidental violence and threats of violence also occurred along the trail. This study includes reports of violence that occurred among Mormon pioneers, whether perpetrated by Mormons, Indians, or other Americans, that were found in pioneer records.[30]

A bullwhip in the 6- to 10-foot range. Courtesy of Keith Klein.

Whippings were a common form of corporal punishment during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in both England and the United States. Public whippings of women had largely stopped in England by 1817 and of men during the 1830s.[31] Evidently, whippings as a form of corporal punishment were reduced in frequency during the nineteenth century in the United States but apparently were still part of the culture for many of those traveling the Utah Trail in the middle part of that century.[32]

Along with real whippings on the trail there were also threats of whipping. While a threat of whipping does not constitute an act of

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30. The records included in this study are of time on the trail, not in settlements. In 1847 and 1848, the trail was from Winter Quarters to Salt Lake City. From 1849 to 1866, outfitting points were typically Kanesville, Iowa; or Florence or Wyoming, Nebraska. In 1866 and 1867, the railroad extended gradually farther west and finally reached Utah in 1869.

31. Punishments at the Old Bailey, in *The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, London's Central Criminal Court, 1674 to 1913,* available online at http://www.old baileyonline.org/static/Punishment.jsp.

32. For example, R. Calvert, "Criminal and Civil Liability in Husband-Wife Assaults," in *Violence in the Family,* ed. Suzanne K. Steinmetz and Murray A. Straus (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

violence, the occurrence of threats recorded by the pioneers suggests that whippings were known and accepted as a common form of punishment, retaliation, or simple aggression. Certainly, the threat of being whipped was a challenging or motivating experience for the persons threatened.

Aggression and Disruption. The first trail incident occurred in the Brigham Young vanguard pioneer company of 1847 and involved fighting with a whip. According to Thomas Bullock, one morning in June as the Vanguard Company was preparing to pack for another day of travel, he was approached by George Brown, who told him that "Captains orders" were to make sure the cattle were safe.

> I told him I would go my self as quick as I could put the things away, which took me about 5 or 10 minutes at the outside. I then started after the Cattle, saw them all, & then met G. Brown & told him I had seen them all—he asked why I had not gone when he told me—"instead of idling & fooling away your time half an hour." I replied, "O Good God, what a lie, if you say I have been idling or fooling half an hour". . . . he then struck me with his Whip. saying "I am ready for a fight, for I'd as leave fight as not". I said "you shall hear of this again. for I shall tell the Dr.", he up with his fist to strike me, saying "You may tell the Dr. as soon as you like". but I got out of the reach of his arm, & so avoided another blow. George Brown has lied to, and about the Lord's anointed many times, I have been more abused <& reviled> by him, than any other person, he has now Struck me with his whip. and I now pray that the Lord God of Israel may reward him according to his evil deeds, & punish him until he repent & forsake his evil ways.[33]

In an 1849 company traveling to Utah, William Appleby described an event when "a Driver or Teamster of one of Mr. [Edward] Sayres [Sayers] got into dispute with Mrs. S. (Mr. S. being absent) in regard to driving the Team. He called her by some base, vile epithets, when she retaliated by using a whip on him. He then struck her and blacked one of her eyes. He was left to the care of the officers of the Camp to deal with him for the same."[34]

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33. Bullock, Journals 1843–49, 4:29.

34. William I. Appleby, Autobiography and journal, 1848–56, p. 3, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=4373&sourceId=5985.

In an 1848 company, Oliver Huntington recorded a spousal whipping:

> We were then 380½ miles from Winter Quarters. . . . [A]ll the camps had got along well, and with few accidents. Three had been run over in our camp and one wagon turned over which was brother Gates'. He blamed his women severly for it, and what mortified him worse than all, it disclosed a bbl. of wine; before unknown. The wagon turned square bottom side up, no one in it. That night he quarreled with his wife and whipped [her]. The guard about 11 o'clock saw it and when the hour came to cry, he loudly cried 11 o'clock, all is well and Gates is quarreling with his wife like hell.[35]

While travel fatigue was surely part of this spousal abuse, such treatment was not exceptional, given the general treatment of women in the nineteenth century. While legal authorities prosecuted and newspapers condemned abuse of women, much went unreported.[36]

Fighting with fists and knives and threatened fights with guns also occurred. In 1852, two men competing for the attention of a beautiful seventeen-year-old girl exchanged words that enraged one of them. "Mathews was of a fiery temper and threatened the life of Curtis if he did not recall his words and exposed a dagger which said he would take the life of Curtis as soon as opportunity offered." While the initial dispute was settled without violence, additional discussion of the incident involved at least twenty-five men and another fight between Curtis and a man who threatened to hit him with a crutch. When it appeared that the fight would soon involve the entire company, "a man of resolute courage and good sense—seeing the course things were taking—jumped upon a wagon tongue and in a short and eloquent speech in which he told them how foolish they were acting and warned they were in an Indian country—that union was necessary for self protection. All parties slunk off to their wagons." Later, there was some discussion suggesting that Mathews, the man who threatened to kill Curtis with a knife, should be given a death penalty, but a company council review of the entire event

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35. Oliver Boardman Huntington, Diary and Reminiscences, 1843 June–1900 January, 20–43, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=4&sourceId=4579.

36. Carolyn Ramsey cites examples of domestic violence in the American West and compares them to similar problems in Australia in the late nineteenth century. It was often the case that women were reluctant to testify against husbands. Carolyn B. Ramsey, "Domestic Violence and State Intervention in the American West and Australia, 1860–1930," *Indiana Law Journal* 86, no. 1 (2011): 185–255.

ruled that no punishment should be forthcoming. The company arrived without further incident in Salt Lake City on October 3, 1852.[37]

In another 1852 company, a ruling that personal cattle could be requisitioned to help pull other wagons, when the wagons needed help, initiated violence. When a man named Horne came to get a requisitioned cow, its owner, a man named Pullen, refused to give up ownership. He defended his cow by pulling a knife on Horne, who then threatened to hit Pullen with a bridle. In the exchange, Horne's hand was cut by the knife before Pullen was knocked to the ground by others. After a hearing before a hastily assembled group of men from the company serving as judges, Pullen was sentenced to be bound for three days, perhaps something similar to a house arrest. The company then continued on the trail past Devil's Gate and camped on the Sweetwater.[38]

In an 1855 company, a fistfight led to the loss of a tooth by one of the participants. At a company council meeting to adjudicate the event, it was decided that the victim should either receive twenty dollars from the aggressor or the aggressor should pay for the best tooth that could be found for the victim when the company reached Salt Lake City.[39]

One whipping on the trail did not involve members of the traveling company but a group of Indians who came into camp to beg and, unfortunately, to steal. One visiting Indian trying to make off with a sack of crackers was caught by a member of the company. The chief of the Indian visitors gave the thief a beating with his riding whip as well as "a terrible talking to." However, members of the company concluded that the chief whipped his tribesman because he was caught, not because he was stealing.[40]

In another incident, a whip lash supposedly intended for oxen struck a person. In an 1858 company, a family agreed to transport a woman and her ten-year-old daughter whom they did not know. Mrs. Miller turned out to be a problem. She would take the family's food and trade it off for

37. George Armstrong Hicks, "Family Record and History of Geo. A. Hicks," typescript, 1, 2, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trail ExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=10337&sourceId=12163.

38. John Oakley, Journal, in William Carter Staines, Journal, August 1852–May 1860, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trail ExcerptMulti?lang=eng&sourceId=5615.

39. Richard Ballantyne, Diaries and reminiscences, 1852–96, 6:5–6, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti ?lang=eng&pioneerId=17308&sourceId=4803.

40. Samuel Kendall Gifford, Reminiscences, 1864, 8–10, CHL.

personal items at the few trading posts along the way. The family decided that they would no longer transport the woman, but the company captain suggested that she just needed a lecture. A lecture was given, but this was ineffectual. In addition, the woman refused to walk when it was necessary to do so. One day she was riding in the wagon and evidently criticized the driver, who took his whip to lash the oxen and "accidentally" struck the woman across her mouth. She screamed and a minor skirmish occurred. Officially, the company captain judged that it was an accident but said, "She was in the rong and to blame and had just got what She deserved."[41] If this is an accurate account of the event and its resolution, the "accidental" nature of the whipping is questionable.

Another whipping threat occurred in an 1852 company when an outbreak of cholera frightened Elizabeth Robinson to the extent that she refused to walk with the others in her company but stayed in bed in her wagon because she thought she had cholera. Her husband was convinced that it was fear that caused her sickness. He ordered her to get out of bed and begin walking or else he would give her a "'good flogging' . . . —she recovered immediately."[42]

While fighting with whips occurred, the use of a whip for punishment suggests a different kind of violence.[43] A report of one egregious whipping on the trail to Utah is the story of John Griffiths, a member of the Martin Handcart Company. Griffiths suffered from "rheumatism," perhaps rheumatoid arthritis. After riding in one of the three wagons that accompanied the handcarts, he thought he was strong enough to walk

41. Mary Sophia Foremaster Maudsley, Autobiography, 1928, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=21340&sourceId=4819.

42. Hicks, *Family Record,* 10–11.

43. Bullwhips and whip-substitutes were most commonly used for driving the cattle that pulled the wagons. But on occasion the whip and even the butt of the whip were used as fighting implements. From 1847 to at least 1865, there were trail whippings of people for a variety of reasons. In addition, the whip was used as a threat against both friend and foe. On the more social side, the whip was used as an alarm clock. Ruth May Fox recalled that the crack of a whip on their little tent was the signal to get up and get ready for the day's journey. "One crack of his whip on the tent or wagon cover, whether at 3 a.m. or 5 a.m. meant roll out. . . . So get up my lads, gee, whoa, Push on, my lads, hi, ho, For there's none can lead a life Like we merry Mormons do." Ruth May Fox, "My Story," 11–13, "Pioneer History Collection," at Pioneer Memorial Museum, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=35569&sourceId=18744.

with other members of the company. This was a bad decision because he couldn't keep up with the company: "He took hold of the rod at the end gate of the wagon to help him along and when the teamster saw him, he slashed his long whip around and struck father [Griffiths] on the legs and he fell to the ground." Griffiths was unable to stand up. He was behind the last wagon of the company, and the company moved on, leaving Griffiths crawling by himself on the trail. His family, pulling their cart with the main part of the company, assumed that he was still riding in a wagon, and it was not until camp was made that night that the situation was realized. His daughter walked back for three miles along the trail but was unable to find him. After falling, Griffiths, fortunately, was able to crawl to the Jesse Haven Company camp, just off the handcart trail. Reaching the camp, he told his story, and members of the Jesse Haven Company transported him to the Martin Company camp at about 11:00 that night. After a dramatic winter rescue, the Martin Company reached Salt Lake City on November 30. Sick and exhausted from the trip, John Griffiths died the next day.[44]

A similar senseless act of violence occurred in an 1864 company that included Jane Rogerson Ollerton and her family. Jane did not know that she was pregnant when her journey began in England, and while walking from Nebraska to Wyoming, she was unable to eat, and her health deteriorated rapidly. In Wyoming, walking behind the wagon driven by the company captain, she became faint and grabbed the back of the wagon for support. William Warren, the company captain, turned and saw her holding onto the wagon and used his bullwhip to whip her and ordered her to move away from the wagon. Jane, starving and sick, and now whipped by the company's captain, collapsed and died a short time later. The apparently unsympathetic company moved on and left the Ollerton family to bury their mother. With the help of friendly Indians, a burial was accomplished, and the next day the Indians helped the family reach the wagon company. Only a few members of the grieving family remained with the LDS Church after reaching Utah.[45]

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44. Margaret Ann Griffiths Clegg, Autobiographical sketch, at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=19041&sourceId=15676. This story is also recorded in Andrew Olsen, *The Price We Paid: The Extraordinary Story of the Willie and Martin Handcart Pioneers* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 350–52.

45. Ollerton family records, in the author's possession. Some of these details are recorded in the story of Jane Rogerson Ollerton by Lola Turley, in "Graves along the Trail," *Our Pioneer Heritage,* ed. Kate B. Carter, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City:

Another report also sounds foolishly harsh: in the 1856 Edmund Ellsworth First Handcart Company, Pierre Stalle was dying.

> It is claimed, by the children . . . that he died of starvation. It is claimed that Mr. Ellsworth sold part of the food that should have gone to the saints. When Pierre Stalle was dying, his wife [Jeanne Marie Gaudin-Moise] climbed to the wagon to have a few last words with her husband. Ellsworth came with a rope and cruelly whipped her until she was forced to get down. This was verified by the French families who came. "The captain was a very mean man. At one time a man died and they whipped and kicked him and threw him under the tent."[46]

Though confusing, this story suggests that ill-tempered treatment including whippings were of some concern for many of those traveling to Utah.

In at least four records, whippings were used to keep people alive and moving. During the Willie Handcart trek, Ann Jewell Rowley recorded: "I watched John, so cold, drowsy and sick, want to lie down in his tracks, never to rise again. I had to stand helplessly while Captain Willie whipped him, to make him go on. Gladly would I have taken the whipping myself."[47]

Similar whippings occurred during the Martin Handcart trek. Nicholus Teeples recalled problems during times when the company waded streams, climbed mountains, or made and repaired roads. "On the best days they could travel ten miles a day. But on bad cold days it was torture to go but a third of that." Eventually the tired pioneers would lie down under a bush or tree. But this resulted in an indifference to resuming their trek. According to Teeples, "The leaders had to take a whip to them and lash them back to consciousness, when they would beg to be

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Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958–77), 16:464–65. One of the Warren Company, Orley Dwight Bliss, recorded the death of a Sister Holliton on September 28 and burial the next day. Probably, this refers to Jane Ollerton, but Bliss's account is very brief. Orley Dwight Bliss, Reminiscences, CHL, at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=32120&sourceId=6258.

46. Margaret Stalle Barker, Reminiscences, 8, in Rebecca Cardin Hickman, "History of Susanna Goudin Cardon," in [Biographical sketches of the Cardon family, 1934–60], CHL, available under Pierre Stalle's name at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=18599&sourceId=2870.

47. Ann Jewell Rowley, autobiography, in James Albert Jones, comp., *Some Early Pioneers of Huntington, Utah and Surrounding Area* (1980), 244–46, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=19798&sourceId=7457. John Rowley survived, had five wives and twenty-seven children, and lived in Nephi, Utah, and later Mexico.

left to die."[48] While whipping as a means of motivation may not be considered a form of violence by some, severe whipping is violence regardless of motivation or intent.

In an 1848 company traveling with the second Brigham Young company going to Utah from Nebraska, Morgan Hinman recalled a different kind of whipping. Henry, a boy who "formerly lived on pies and cakes," was without pastry on the trail and refused to eat the poor rations provided. Fearing that he would become so weak that he could not travel, his mother forced him to eat the meager rations by whipping him. Evidently, the whipping was successful, and mother and son arrived in Salt Lake in September.[49]

Annie Kershaw remembered that in 1865, she and a group of children found a grove of "potawatome plum" trees and stopped to feast on their find. They were about a mile behind the company when the company captain, William Willis, rode back on his horse. Willis then drove the children ahead of him, cracking his "black snake whip at us, and I tell you we never stayed behind again."[50]

The threat of the use of the whip was also a factor in dealing with hostile Indians. In an 1854 company, an eight-year-old girl was taken from the back of a moving wagon by an Indian. The girl's father raced to the rescue and cracked his whip several times just above the Indian's head. The girl was released unharmed, the unsuccessful kidnaper escaped, and the young girl rode in the front of the wagon after that.[51]

One company, traveling from California to Utah because of the 1857 war recall by Brigham Young,[52] successfully used the threat of whipping to avoid a serious incident with hostile Indians. The Indians tried to

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48. Nicholus Gourley Teeples, Interview, in "Utah Pioneer Biographies," 44 vols., 28:95–101, 105–6, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=192&sourceId=7572.

49. Rojanea Jacobs Bingham, "A Brief Life Sketch of My Grandparents: Henry Lyman Hinman and Mary Jane White Hinman," 5–6, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=2142&sourceId=4538.

50. Annie Maria Kershaw Thompson, "History of Annie Maria Kershaw Thompson," in Danny Jessop and Marla W. Jessop, comps., *Joseph Frederick Thompson Ancestry* [1996], 38, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=32971&sourceId=11905.

51. Cameron, History of Heziakiah Mitchell, 16.

52. For the recall of members to Utah, see Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 261; for the Utah War, see Norman F. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict, 1850–1859,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960); and more recently David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, *The Mormon*

capture a wagon ahead of the small group but were threatened with a whip. Before the whip was used, other members of the company arrived at the scene, and the Indians did not harm the wagon or its occupants.[53]

One report of a whipping along the trail may have been merely in a metaphorical sense. In early September, between the ninth Sweetwater crossing and Rocky Ridge, the second 1847 company met part of the Brigham Young Company on its return to Winter Quarters. Acquaintances were renewed and a program was arranged for the evening activities with Brigham Young as principal speaker. Because of this activity, the guard duty was neglected that night and "about 40 horses & mules stolen."[54] According to one account, as a result of losing the animals, "Presdt. Young whips Col. Markham for neglecting to have watch."[55] There were two President Youngs in camp that night, John Young of the second 1847 company, and President Brigham Young and his company returning to Winter Quarters. Because Markham was with Brigham Young's company, the reference to the whipping most likely refers to Brigham Young, not John Young. However, other accounts of the same event make no reference to a whipping with a whip by Brigham Young, and probably it is accurate to assume that this was a verbal whipping rather than one involving a bullwhip.

In 1864, violence was barely avoided when a disagreement resulted in a major split of the John Chase Company. The company had traveled peacefully until reaching Ash Hollow, in what is now westernmost Nebraska, where a company of soldiers was stationed. At this point, George Dunford, owner of eight wagons of merchandise driven by LDS teamsters, disagreed with a camp decision concerning the appointment of his head hired man, Isaac Nash, as a sergeant of the guard for the whole company. Dunford decided to form his own company and to fire his teamsters, who would then need to be assimilated with the remainder of the John Chase Company in order to complete the trip to Utah. There was some discussion, and Isaac Nash tried to negotiate severance pay

Rebellion: America's First Civil War, 1857–1858 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

53. Melissa Keziah Rollins Heyborne, Autobiographical sketch [ca. 1925], 1, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerpt Multi?lang=eng&pioneerId=43678&sourceId=19734.

54. Eliza Roxcy Snow, *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow,* ed. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, vol. 5 of Life Writings of Frontier Women (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), 199.

55. Vance, Journal, 11.

for the teamsters in provisions (which Dunford amply possessed) rather than cash. Dunford would not agree, and during the argument, Dunford, fearing that Nash would take provisions for the teamsters rather than "legal currency" that he offered, drew his revolver and threatened to shoot Nash. "It was cocked and his finger was on the trigger when a man by the name of Hall jumped and grabbed the revolver away from Dunford who cried out to his son Henry to run to his carriage and bring another revolver. As Henry was returning to his father [with the additional gun], a man who was sitting by the camp fire knocked the revolver from his hand with a stick of wood. Soon after that, Dunford [with his wagons] moved to the soldiers' camp and we started on our way."[56] The teamsters, without jobs or wagons for transportation, were assigned to ride with others for the remainder of the trip to Utah.

A less serious confrontation occurred in Richard Ballantyne's 1855 company. One evening, a Brother Simmons and a Sister Berry were setting up tents next to each other. Simmons asked Berry to move her tent a little, and when she refused, he pushed her and she fell over her bed, which was already in position. According to witnesses, a struggle followed with inappropriate name calling, and Berry scratched the face of Simmons. At a hearing before the company council, the entire incident was reviewed and both Sister Berry and Brother Simmons were required to apologize to the company.[57]

Accidental and External Violence. Unfortunate incidents that could be considered accidental violence also occurred. In the same Ballantyne Company of the Berry-Simmons quarrel, two were hurt in accidental shootings. One injury was the result of careless handling of a loaded pistol while setting up camp,[58] and another occurred when a man readied his gun while Indians were in camp and accidently shot a woman in the knee.[59] During the William Budge Company travel in 1860, three friends went hunting for sage hens. With guns loaded, one man stumbled and shot another, who died that night.[60] In 1867, traveling with the Leonard G.

56. Isaac B. Nash, [Reminiscences], in Carma L. Sandberg, "Nellie Nash (A Pioneer Biography of Mrs. Ellen Elvira Nash Parkinson, Wife of William Chandler Parkinson)" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1959), 7–9, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=30842&sourceId=4949.

57. Ballantyne, Diaries, 9.

58. Ballantyne, Diaries, 6.

59. Ballantyne, Diaries, 8.

60. Christian Lyngaa Christensen, [Journal], in Susan Arrington Madsen, *I Walked to Zion: True Stories of Young Pioneers on the Mormon Trail* (Salt

Rice Company, Ruth May Fox recorded that a young man was killed by a stray shot.[61]

Violence because of unfriendly Indians was a constant worry, and a few instances are cited here. According to a *Deseret News* warning, "There are Indians, numbers of them, on the route, but they keep out of sight until they see a sure chance for plunder and blood; then they show themselves, murder and rob, and are out of sight immediately."[62] In an 1848 company, the business of setting up camp for night was interrupted by a report that Indians were taking cattle from a grazing ground located several miles from the evening's campsite. Armed men from the company immediately pursued the Indians, and in the ensuing gunfight two pioneer men and one Indian were wounded. The two wounded men, losing blood, were rushed back to camp for care, and the cattle were recovered with the loss of only one ox. Both wounded men recovered.[63]

In 1856, Almon W. Babbitt hired several people to carry government property to Utah. The small company was attacked by Cheyenne Indians; four of the party were killed, including a woman by the name of Wilson, and some escaped.[64] Babbitt himself was following a few days behind them. While stopped at Fort Kearney, Babbitt heard of this attack. Although warned against it, he set off for Salt Lake with only two men. The three men were attacked and killed by the Cheyenne at Ash Hollow on September 7, 1856.[65]

Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 89–90, available online at http://history.lds .org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=24266&source Id=9434.

61. Fox, "My Story," 1.

62. "Travel on the Plains," *Deseret News,* September 6, 1865, 389, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng& sourceId=9794.

63. Huntington, Diary and Reminiscences.

64. "The Death of the Captive Mrs. Wilson," *The Mormon,* January 10, 1857, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang =eng&sourceId=8889; "Journey from Florence to G. S. L. City," *Deseret News,* October 22, 1856, 258, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtrav els/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=356&sourceId=8762; John D. T. McAllister, Diary, September 7, 1856, cited in Lyndon W. Cook, *Nauvoo Marriages, Proxy Sealings, 1843–1846* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Books, 2004), 124.

65. "The Indian Outrages—Confirmation of the Death of Col. Babbitt," *New York Daily Times,* November 7, 1856, available online at http://history.lds .org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&sourceId=8746; "Obituary," *The Mormon,* November 22, 1856, 1, available online at http://history.lds.org/ overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=356&sourceId=8738.

An incident of Indian violence affected a company traveling to Utah, but not on the Utah trail from Nebraska; rather, it was on the trail from California to Utah. The Jonathan Holmes/Samuel Thompson Company consisted primarily of Mormon Battalion members traveling from northern California to Utah in 1848. On June 28, a few days after leaving Sutter's Fort, the company sent three men ahead of the main company to serve as scouts looking for a suitable trail across the Sierra Nevada but south of the Donner Pass. Three weeks later, the bodies of the three men were found. They had been murdered in their sleep in a shocking manner. After burying the dead, the company moved on, and, after minor trouble with Indians, reached Salt Lake City in September.[66]

Not all encounters with Indians were troublesome. According to Unruh, although "nearly 400 emigrants were killed by Indians in the first twenty years of overland travel, Indian tribes provided overlanders with information, foodstuffs, clothing, equipment, horses, canoeing and swimming skills, traveling materials, and other assistance,"[67] at least for the '49ers and Oregon travelers.

Alleged Murder and Real Murder. In an 1853 company, according to one account, Francis J. Brey mysteriously disappeared. Company members assumed that he had simply wandered off and was lost. A search was conducted, but Brey was not found. Several months after the company reached Salt Lake City, Elijah Ables, a member of the company, noted that another member of the company who previously had few funds now had acquired a sum of money. Ables suspected that person may have murdered Brey on the trail and taken his money, and Ables wrote Brigham Young requesting an investigation. However, there was no investigation, and no contemporary accounts supported the murder suspicion of Ables.[68] An alternate account of the incident suggests that Ables's suspicion of murder was wrong and that Brey simply had left the company, taking his ox and horse teams with him when he joined a company of passing traders.[69]

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66. Jonathan Harriman Holmes, Diary 1846–48, vol. 1, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng& pioneerId=42693&sourceId=18348.

67. Unruh, *Plains Across,* 386.

68. Russell W. Stevenson, "'A Negro Preacher': The Worlds of Elijah Ables," *Journal of Mormon History* 39 (Spring 2013): 234–35.

69. Cornelius Bagnall Emigrating Company, Journal, March–October 1853, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerpt Multi?lang=eng&pioneerId=12047&sourceId=2432.

Another account of alleged murder on the Utah trail is the testimony of Martin Wardell, who in 1889 claimed that twenty-seven years earlier, a man named Green in the William Dame Company was brutally murdered. However, no man named Green is on the roster of the Dame Company, and testimony by a number of the Dame Company participants denied the presence of a man named Green in the company and indicated that the incident described by Wardell did not occur. In support of these reports, two of Wardell's children who also were part of the company discredited their father's story and testified that the senior Wardell often imagined things that never happened and believed they were true.[70]

A real murder, though unrelated to the theme of Utah trail stress violence, occurred in 1851, only a few miles east of Salt Lake City. A resident of Salt Lake City, Howard Egan, returned home after a considerable absence because of work in California. He discovered that in his absence one of his three wives had a new child and that the father was James Monroe. Learning that Monroe was working with a freight company just a few miles from Salt Lake, Egan rode out to the freight company, found Monroe, and killed him. Questions of justification and jurisdictional procedure complicated court action, and eventually Egan was acquitted of murder.[71]

Violence among the Gold-Seeking '49ers and the Oregon-Bound

The several occurrences of violence that occurred along the Utah Trail seem almost trivial when compared to the record of murders and other incidents of violent antisocial behavior that occurred at the same time for those traveling to and from California and Oregon. More than 150 years

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70. Martin D. Wardell, [Court Testimony], *Salt Lake Herald*, November 15, 1889, 8; Joseph H. Morgan, [Court Testimony], *Deseret Evening News,* November 18, 1889, 3; William A. Rossiter, [Court Testimony], *Deseret Evening News,* November 18, 1889, 3; George Sargent, [Court Testimony], *Deseret Evening News,* November 18, 1889, 3. Isabel Wright, [Court Testimony], *Deseret Evening News,* November 18, 1889, 3; George Wardell, [Court Testimony], *Deseret Evening News,* November 18, 1889, 3; all available online at http://history.lds .org/overlandtravels/companyDetail?lang=eng&companyId=101.

71. Kenneth L. Cannon II, "'Mountain Common Law': The Extralegal Punishment of Seducers in Early Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (1983): 310–16; William Woodward, Reminiscences, 8–10, William Woodward Collection 1851–1919, CHL, available online at http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/ trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&pioneerId=19866&sourceId=22688.

after the fact, it is difficult to verify the reports and to understand the circumstances of the trail and specific causes of violence. While greater violence may have resulted from greater stresses on the trail, California- and Oregon-bound companies experienced violence that far exceeded what is known concerning violent behavior among the Mormons on the Utah Trail.

As indicated earlier, Reid records one report of fifty murders along the Oregon trail in 1852 alone. The number can only be estimated because the accounting is based on a collection of diary reports, counting gravesites along the trail, and hearsay.[72] Gravesites were often marked with identification of the murderer as well as the murdered, providing some insight. For example, a board at the north fork of the Humboldt River in 1849 read, "Samuel A. Fitzsimmons, died of a wound inflicted by a bowie knife in the hands of James Remington, on the 25th of August, 1849." On occasion, the fate of the murderer was recorded: "At Goose Creek Mountains entering Nevada in 1859 emigrants saw the grave of Joseph Selleck 'executed for the murder of W. Humble.'"[73] In the bloody year of 1852, one emigrant counted the graves of three victims of homicide one day and one the next, and ten days later reported the grave of another murdered man as well as the grave of the man who murdered him nearby.[74] Another emigrant in 1859 copied a grave headboard that read, "John Snyder Shot by James Garner may 14."[75] In 1849 and 1850, homicides are reported by Reid including two cases of fathers killing young men for molesting their daughters and another case on the Sweetwater River in 1849 of attempted murder of Mr. Jenkins for having an affair with another man's wife.[76]

In his compilation of death and homicide along the California and Oregon trails, Reid concludes that quarreling leading to fighting was the major cause of homicides and that most of the problems were between individuals traveling in the same company, with only occasional problems between members of different companies.[77]

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72. Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 76–77.

73. Israel Shipman Pelton Lord, *Journal of 1849,* August 27, 1849, and Merrill J. Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives,* 497, cited in Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 80.

74. Polly Crandall Coon, "Journal," June and July 1852, cited in Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 77.

75. J. A. Wilkinson, *Journal: Across the Plains,* May 20, 1859, cited in Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 79.

76. Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 83.

77. Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 85.

Violence was not limited to fighting. Another extreme form of anti-social behavior among members of the California- and Oregon-bound companies was the abandonment of individuals on the trail. Certainly, abandonment on the trail could have been a *de facto* death sentence. In the several cases cited by Unruh, more civil behavior on the part of passing companies was the salvation of those abandoned. A young girl and her brother, who was ill from cholera, were abandoned in their wagon on the trail after the parents died and the thoughtless company moved on, taking the family's oxen. Passing companies soon provided new oxen, "two passing doctors prescribed medicine for the boy, and a Missouri group volunteered to take care of the orphans for the rest of the trip." In another instance in 1850, when a company found "an abandoned mother and her young daughter on the trail about seventy miles west of Salt Lake City, two westbound overlanders escorted them back to the Mormon center and then turned around and retraced their own steps toward California." Reasons for the abandonment are not clear. Unruh continues, "Another 1850 gold seeker had been left by the trail after having been accidentally shot by one of his company. A passing physician attended to him, and westbound overlanders contributed money for his continuing care."[78]

Different Responses to Similar Trail Experiences

While reading these stories of those involved in western travel, one must be reminded that the descriptions of hardship and violence recorded in diaries and reminiscences could be exaggerations. This fact compelled one observer to conclude that "every genuine pioneer is honor bound to have had the hardest time on the plains of any other person living or dead."[79] However, descriptions of violence were less likely to be exaggerations than records of general hardships.

On all of the western wagon trails, the same kind of travel problems challenged the emigrants. As this study has shown, the response to the problems of travel was quite different among the Mormon compared to non-Mormon companies traveling along much of the same trail at the

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78. Unruh, *Plains Across,* 148–49. Unruh devotes an entire chapter to "emigrant interaction," 118–55. Also see Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 73–90, 314, 413, for additional accounts of violence of the California-Oregon trails. Reid, *Policing the Elephant,* 75, also discusses the reckless use of weapons and reports that mountain man Kit Carson would rather fight Indians than travel near emigrant wagons, where accidental shootings were common.

79. Unruh, *Plains Across,* 4.

same time. It would be easy to conclude that the newly acquired LDS philosophy of life was the principal factor that tempered the Utah travelers' response. But this is only part of the explanation.

There were clear demographic differences that distinguished the LDS travelers, especially in contrast to the gold-seeking California emigrants. The rush for California gold attracted young vigorous men with few ties to community or professional responsibilities and whose principal thought was to get to their promised land quickly with little regard for anything else. Ships chartered to transport gold-seekers from the eastern U.S. were abandoned by both passengers and crews once they reached San Francisco.[80] Few were involved with care for family or friends, and they were the very type of individuals most likely to be ready for an argument or a fight. In contrast, those on the Utah Trail were largely family groups including children, women, and older people moving in church-organized groups with the shared hope to reach their new Zion without dying. Traveling as organized religious groups and dependent on the entire company for support, help, and spiritual comfort, individuals were much less likely to quarrel or fight, and problems that occurred were settled by company council. Oregon companies were more similar to the Utah travelers because many emigrants were families, but they were independent of authority and dependent on their own resources for solving travel problems, and this led to violence.[81]

Richard Brown describes the settling of the American West as "the Western Civil War of Incorporation": "More often than not, the nonviolent means of legislation, administration, court rulings, and the impersonal trends of economics and culture accounted for incorporation in the West. But westerners, frequently with violence, vehemently resisted this incorporation." Disputes that could be seen as isolated were in fact part of a "broad, unified pattern of intra-regional strife."[82] Brown counts at least forty-two violent episodes from 1850 to 1910, including the Indian wars, the rise of the gunfighters, the Tonto Basin War, and the North Mexican War as examples of wars of incorporation in the American West.[83] The Mormon Trail experience from 1847 to 1869 fits within this

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80. H. W. Brands, *The Age of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the New American Dream* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 61, 85, discusses the armada of ships abandoned in San Francisco harbor.

81. Unruh, *Plains Across,* 339–42.

82. Richard Maxwell Brown, "Western Violence: Structure, Values, Myth," *Western Historical Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (1993): 6.

83. Brown, "Western Violence: Structure, Values, Myth," 6–20.

time period, but the Mormon experience never reached the magnitude of the explosive violence that Brown described. While there may be some aspects of the small amount of violence that occurred on the Mormon Trail that are similar to Brown's wars of incorporation, the Utah experience may be more closely related to what Brown elsewhere described as part of the violence that resulted from the evolution of the English common law into the American interpretation of that law. British common law suggested that violence could and should be avoided by the offended party by retreating from confrontations, whereas the Western American interpretation of such circumstances was that there was no duty to retreat. Self-defense was the more proper choice.[84] Obviously, confrontation would lead to violence more often than retreat. For Mormons, contrasting that trend was the injunction to suffer the trespasses of others (D&C 98:33–48).

Conclusions

Among the approximately 70,000 immigrants traveling to Utah between 1846 and 1869, there were at least 4,000 to 5,000 deaths, not quite 10 percent of the total number traveling. One estimate is that approximately 700 of these deaths occurred on board ships sailing to America and between 3,400 and 4,300 occurred while traveling overland to Utah,[85] most related to sickness, weather, or age, and several due to accidents. But there were virtually no deaths due to violence. While there were incidents of violence, most of those traveling to Utah were united in a spiritual view of their journey; they were traveling to the promised land, a real Zion, where their kingdom of God would be established. There were other important factors as well. Certainly, the idea of Zion tempered possible antisocial behavior that similar travel conditions generated among those traveling to Oregon and California in the mid-nineteenth century. All of the travelers shared the difficulties, frustrations, disappointments, and stress of the journey, and the wagon trails extracted similar responses from each of the groups, but some of these

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84. Richard Maxwell Brown, *No Duty to Retreat: Violence and Values in American History and Society,* Kindle edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

85. Shane A. Baker, "Illness and Mortality in Nineteenth-Century Mormon Immigration," *Mormon Historical Studies* 2 (Fall 2001): 88. This figure includes deaths in Iowa, Winter Quarters, and locations before immigrants began the trek over the plains.

responses on the Oregon and California trails were more violent. Theological beliefs united the Utah pioneers in a way that was foreign to the gold-bound '49ers or the land-seeking pilgrims eager to establish new lives in the Pacific Northwest. Unruh suggests that the Mormons traveled as a cooperating community that was more disciplined and better organized than were their fellow travelers going to California or Oregon. For example, companies of Utah-bound emigrants often improved the trail for the benefit of those who would follow. In contrast, along the California trail, wagon companies were known to make the trail worse, fearing competition in getting to the gold the quickest.[86]

Antisocial behavior among those traveling to Utah has not received much attention from historians, but the data given here suggest that it was the result of a combination of unanticipated travel frustration and fatigue, the evolving concept of "no need to retreat" from any confrontation, the ongoing nineteenth-century treatment of women (in at least one case), as well as just plain human orneriness. The more violent behavior of many of those traveling to California and Oregon is most likely explained by the fact that the background of these travelers was significantly different and the manner of travel was not as well organized or supervised for the California and Oregon groups as it was for the immigrating Utah Saints. With the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, the stress and problems of the overland trail were eliminated for the LDS traveler as well as for others going west, and with it the end of trail-originated violent behavior.

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86. Unruh, *Plains Across,* 18–19.