THE 1856 HANDCART DISASTER

POPULAR LDS NOVELS

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BYU Studies is abstracted in Current Contents: Behavioral, Social, and Management Sciences; indexed in Religion Index One: Periodicals (articles) and Index to Book Reviews in Religion; and listed in Historical Abstracts, Arts and Humanities Citation Index, American History and Life Annual Index, and MLA International Bibliography. BYU Studies is indexed in Religion Index One: Periodicals, Index to Book Reviews in Religion, Religion Indexes: RIO/RIT/IBRR 1975- on CD-ROM.

BYU Studies is published quarterly at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. ©1997 Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. All rights reserved.
Printed in the U.S.A. on acid-free paper
4-90-46359-3.3M ISSN 0007-0106
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Both the Willie and Martin handcart companies suffered greatly at these places. On October 23, 1856, the Willie Company struggled up through the Rocky Ridges in the face of a fierce winter storm, and, further east on October 29, the Martin Company slogged up through snow and mud from the North Platte to a bleak camp at the Rocky Avenue.
Weather, Disaster, and Responsibility: An Essay on the Willie and Martin Handcart Story

Arguably the most heroic and the most tragic episode of the westering experience, the handcart trek of late 1856 is a magnificent story of individual faith in the midst of serious mistakes.

Howard A. Christy

It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.
—2 Nephi 25:23

On October 4, 1856, a warm, calm day in Great Salt Lake City, Franklin D. Richards, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, accompanied by twelve other returning missionaries, arrived after a fast trip across the plains. This should have been a moment for rejoicing: Elder Richards’s “Swiftsure Train” arrived eight days after the jubilant arrival of the Ellsworth and McArthur handcart companies and just two days after the Bunker handcart company, supposedly the last group of emigrants for the year.

The happy arrival of Elder Richards and the other missionaries, most of whom had worked hard to bring the first “poor Saints” to Utah via handcart, would therefore have been a fitting cap to an extremely successful season that had, among other things, proved the viability of using handcarts in place of the slower and much more expensive ox-drawn wagons. But Richards brought startling news: at least four more companies, two of which were handcart companies, all together numbering more than a thousand Saints, were still out on the plains. Further questioning of the returned missionaries revealed that the members of those companies were badly equipped, seriously short of supplies, and were so far back on the trail that they would surely experience severe cold weather.
The next morning, after what may have been a restless night, Brigham Young resolutely called up and ordered out one of the most massive resupply efforts in western history—an effort that, when a terrible storm struck throughout the region two weeks later, became a desperate rescue operation that barely averted total catastrophe. The disaster that befell the Willie and Martin handcart companies and an analysis of what was responsible for that disaster will be the focus of this essay.¹

Narrative Methods

Before turning to the particulars, a word about scope and method will set the stage. Wherever possible, I have restricted all details regarding dates, places, persons, road and weather conditions, and descriptions of events to information gleaned from accounts of eyewitnesses—not that I am convinced that they are necessarily the most accurate or the least biased. Rather, I emphasize eyewitness accounts in the belief that those who suffered through the disaster deserve to be studied first, the most thoroughly, and with the most sensitivity. I quote secondary sources sparingly except where they give valuable background or are the depositories of important primary accounts such as that of John Chislett. Further, I briefly present evidence and observations on geographic and climatic conditions, which played such a major role in the disaster.

The narrow time frame imposed by the seasons—and evidence of clear prior knowledge of that time frame—begins the essay, followed by a discussion of geographic and health factors that in combination wore the emigrants down. Then follows an abbreviated chronology of the Willie and Martin handcart companies' trek west from Florence—and to some extent the Hodgett and Hunt wagon companies that accompanied the Martin Company—along that sector of the trail where the trouble developed and disaster ultimately occurred. The essay concludes with an observation on faith and responsibility.

At the outset, I admit to a particular perspective—or bias if you will. From experience as a career infantry officer who participated in several disastrous and tragic events on the battlefield, and
from more than twenty years of reading and pondering military history with a recent emphasis on moral leadership, I have become convinced that, when grave risk is involved, some leaders lack the practical experience and sense of responsibility to adequately protect the lives and welfare of those they have been called to serve. I believe that the Willie and Martin handcart disaster presents a compelling example of this lack, and, if so, there may be a timely lesson in it for us all.³

The Handcart Plan

The belief that emigrants could walk across the plains of America was neither farfetched nor unique to the Mormon faithful. Most of those who were knowledgeable of the westward migration well knew how expensive and slow ox-drawn wagons were, and at least a few pioneers determined to attempt the long trip on foot with carts or wheelbarrows.⁴ They also knew that, regardless of what transportation was used, most individuals would walk much of the distance, but that walking, though tedious and exhausting, if carried out during the warmer seasons of the year tended to have a toughening effect on those who were otherwise healthy and strong. This knowledge, coupled with the Church’s serious lack of funds and the extreme poverty of many of the European converts, made the handcart “experiment” justifiable as well as feasible. The Saints proceeded with their handcart plan beginning in 1856, and by 1860, when the plan was discontinued, they had clearly proved its feasibility by the fact that eight of the ten emigrant handcart companies had made the trip as successfully as any wagon company.⁵

Although neither feasibility nor justifiability were ever much in question, the handcart plan was feasible only if great care were taken as to timing and provisioning. But in 1856 these aspects were insufficiently known or considered. Many details were notably lacking, such as availability and procurement of seasoned wood with which to build the carts, availability and commitment of experienced craftsmen, availability of trained oxen to pull the supply wagons, and proper initial provisioning and arranging for resupply en route on the overland trek. Additionally, it is apparent that few
Church leaders, if any, in the United States knew how many "poor Saints" were coming—and they prepared for too few of them. Further, the lack of practical experience of those in charge of the handcart operation—a scheme that had never been attempted or tested by the Church before 1856⁶—and the difficulty of supervising such a complicated undertaking involving so many people over such vast distances importantly influenced the outcome for Willie and Martin. This inexperience had another serious effect—an absence of prudence sufficient to allow for alternatives in case of unforeseen misfortune or breakdown, imprudence that was heightened by an apparent belief that God would directly intervene, if necessary, to assure success. And, looming above all, was a seeming unawareness of, or unconcern for, the serious limitations for safe travel imposed by the time and the seasons. The combination—not any single aspect—resulted in a disaster that only great individual courage and faith on the part of the emigrants, and extreme and heroic measures in the nick of time on the part of the rescuers, saved those involved from total destruction.⁷

Although shortcomings in the planning in Europe and provisioning in the Eastern United States figured importantly in the ultimate outcome and deserve careful study and description, they are not discussed here owing partly to limitations of space and to the lack of available documentation, but also because they did not in fact cause the disaster, since all that was needed to have averted the tragedy, once the appropriate departure date to assure a safe passage had passed, was to have postponed to the next spring the overland travel of the last several emigrant companies leaving Florence, Nebraska. Rather, I begin this essay with a discussion of those aspects of the journey that had an immediate and continued effect on the disaster once organizers in the East decided to proceed in the face of the known risk.

The Time Frame

The narrow seasonal time frame or window for safe travel across the plains was well known in 1856. Having studied large-scale overland emigration since its inception in 1843 and having organized the provisioning and transportation to Utah of thousands
of emigrant Saints since 1847, Church leaders were as well informed about the time frame as anyone. The First Presidency published several annual epistles that warned emigrant Saints to start early enough to avoid the challenging fall weather of the mountains and high plateaus of Wyoming and Utah. The essential element of that time frame—the latest safe departure date from Winter Quarters (Florence, Nebraska)—could be readily adduced from these statements. The matter was pointedly reiterated by Brigham Young in November 1856 when it became clear that a disaster was under way in Wyoming.

For example, the first known epistle from Church leaders in the Salt Lake Valley, published in December 1847, warned the Saints to both leave early and to carry clothing to protect against cold weather en route. To be safe, a May departure was advised (to avert severe coldness in the West), and it might also have been the earliest safe date (to allow grass for the animals at the start of the trek), making the window of opportunity for departure relatively narrow:

Gather yourselves together speedily, near to this place, on the east side of the Missouri River, and, if possible, be ready to start from hence by the first of May next, or as soon as grass is sufficiently grown, and go to the Great Salt Lake City, with bread stuff sufficient to sustain you until you can raise grain the following season. . . . All Saints who are coming on this route, will do well to furnish themselves with woollen or winter, instead of summer clothing, generally, as they will be exposed to many chilling blasts before they pass the mountain heights.

The epistle dated October 9, 1848, clearly indicated the weather hazard of late summer along the trail in Wyoming and the need for re-supply from the valleys of Utah:

On the 28th of August last, we wrote you an epistle from the Sweetwater . . . considering it wisdom that they should have an early start, make the best of their way while the weather and feed were in tolerable condition, so that they may reach their destination before the severity of the weather would be likely to set in upon them—while we remained at the Sweetwater with our goods and families on the ground, exposed to the keen frosty nights and storms that are so prevalent in that country.

On the 30th of August we were glad to meet with a number of the brethren from the Valley, with 47 wagons and 124 yoke of oxen,
being three yoke of cattle over and above replacing the wagons and teams that we had previously sent back to the Saints in Iowa, towards filling the vacancy of the great number of cattle, that had unfortunately died on our hands, and been left by the wayside to feed the ravenous wolves and birds, that inhabit the desolate country through which we are obliged to travel. Yet, not withstanding so inadequate assistance, our hearts fainted not; but relying on the arm of Jehovah, we reloaded our wagons and continued our journey.

On the 1st of September, going through the South Pass to the waters that flow into the Pacific . . . had a miserable evening's journey of it; the next day we had a mizzling rain, and only removed about a mile in order to find feed to sustain our cattle, at night a snow storm passed over us, and on Sunday, the 3d of September, the entire of the Wind River chain of mountains, was covered with snow, the weather was then severe, but afterwards cleared up with pleasant days and frosty nights, which continued with us nearly the whole of our journey.11

The epistle dated September 22, 1851, is especially illuminating because it is the first known discussion of the handcart experiment to come five years later. As in most of these early epistles, the First Presidency claimed the feasibility of overland travel but once again urged early departure from the Missouri River:

Elder Richards will continue to ship the Saints by way of New Orleans to Kanesville, as hitherto, only be particular to start them earlier in the season, so that they can be at Pottawatamie in season to build their hand-carts, and walk or ride over the mountains as they may have means, before snow falls. . . .

Elder Richards will also appropriate so much of the Emigrating Fund in his possession, as may be necessary to forward two ship loads of the Saints to Kanesville, where they should be in April, ready to prepare for their journey over the mountains.12

The epistle dated April 18, 1852, speaks of bad weather—the recollection of which may have weighed on Brigham Young's mind on the night of October 4, 1856, and may have haunted his memory in mid-November 1856, when knowledge of the disaster became clear. Speaking of the arrival to the valley in 1851, the Seventeenth General Epistle of the Brethren reported:

The last company of the emigrating Saints arrived October 24th. The mountains and table lands were covered with snow, for the first time, last fall, November 10th, followed the next day by the severest gale of wind ever known in our Valley.13
The October 1852 epistle gives some highly interesting information. Not only does it once again point up the need for early departure, but it also recalls an early winter storm that impeded the emigrants in Wyoming, who were rescued by a resupply train of the same magnitude or greater than the emergency rescue mission of 1856:

The Saints were late in their emigration this year, and for the last two or three weeks [mid-to-late September], have suffered from occasional snow storms in the mountains, which retarded their progress, and helped to make them short of provisions; but some two hundred or more teams and wagons went from the Valley to their assistance, taking to the various camps some forty or fifty thousand pounds of flour, and large supplies of vegetables, which enabled them to come in, in safety.\textsuperscript{14}

The **Willie and Martin Timetable**

The ship *Thornton*, which carried the Willie Company, did not set sail from Liverpool until May 3. These Saints reached Iowa City on June 26 and were held up until July 15 in order to build their carts and obtain provisions for the trek across Iowa and over the plains to Utah. They arrived in Florence on August 11 and finally struck westward from the Missouri River on August 18, a departure date that assured a late October arrival in Great Salt Lake City.

The Saints who formed the Martin Company departed Liverpool aboard the *Horizon* on May 25 and arrived at Iowa City on July 8. Like the Willie Company, they were detained there for three weeks to build carts and collect provisions. They departed Iowa City on July 28, arrived in Florence on August 22, moved to the staging area at nearby Cutler Park, and recommenced the westward trek on August 27, assuring an arrival in Great Salt Lake City no earlier than November 1.\textsuperscript{15}

Both companies were therefore more than two months late in their departure from Florence if they were to avoid exposure to the severe fall weather conditions that were well known to prevail on the high plateaus of Wyoming and Utah. A disaster of some proportions was probable at the outset. Little did anyone know, however, that a terrible winter storm—like that of 1852—might strike to make disaster a surety in 1856.\textsuperscript{16}
1 Deer Creek (5,009 ft.)
Here, two days before the October 19 storm, members of the Martin Company, exhausted and on short rations, abandoned as much as 40 percent of their individual belongings, including clothing and bedding.

2 Crossing of the Platte (5,120 ft.)
Martin, Hodgett, and Hunt companies forded the North Platte River near the old Mormon Ferry (at present-day Casper) just minutes before the blizzard struck on October 19. Earlier that day they passed by Richard's Bridge, about 10 miles north of the site of the ford, because they did not have enough money to pay the toll.

3 Red Buttes (5,200 ft.)
Martin, Hodgett, and Hunt companies, suffering greatly from the effects of cold, wind, and wet, camped for nine days on the west bank of the North Platte River after fording the river about 5 miles further downstream. The advance express of the Grant Rescue Party found them here, almost out of food.

4 Prospect Hill (6,588 ft.)
Martin, Hodgett, and Hunt companies struggled up and over Rocky Avenue and Prospect Hill through snow and mud.

5 Greasewood Creek (6,000 ft.)
At this camp the Martin, Hodgett, and Hunt companies received their first supplies of food and clothing provided by the Grant Rescue Party.

6 Devil's Gate (5,960 ft.)
Martin, Hodgett, and Hunt companies camped here for five days with the Grant Rescue Party in miserably crowded conditions, bitter cold, and piercing wind.
7 Martin's Cove (6,200 ft.)
Owing to the crowding and cold, the Martin Company forded the Sweetwater River and moved into this more-sheltered location, which is 2½ miles from Devil's Gate.

8 Sixteen-Mile Drive (6,700 ft.)
The October 19 blizzard struck the Willie Company as it was crossing this unprotected and waterless place. They went into camp near Sweetwater Station, on the Sweetwater River, about 12 miles west of here, at which camp the advance express of the Grant Rescue Party found them. The Willie Company, which was entirely out of food when found, suffered greatly at this camp.

9 Rocky Ridges (7,300 ft.)
The Willie Company struggled up through this difficult terrain during a fierce resurgence of the storm. High winds, driving snow, and extreme cold produced windchill conditions of as much as 70 degrees below zero.

10 Rock Creek (7,400 ft.)
At this camp, the Willie Company buried fifteen who had succumbed to the terrible conditions of the Rocky Ridges the day before.

11 South Pass (7,550 ft.)
By the time they reached South Pass, the Willie and Martin companies, resupplied and riding in wagons, were largely out of danger.
The Trail and the Climate

The Trail. The route taken by the 1856 handcart companies was little different than that taken by the first Mormon wagon company in 1847. Map reconnaissance, photographs, and direct observation show that the route through Wyoming has no particularly dramatic features. The trail is relatively flat and follows major rivers most of the way. The region where the disaster occurred, however, has features that, at that late season, had a decidedly unfavorable influence on the Willie and Martin Companies. Between Fort Laramie to the east at an elevation of 4,230 feet and Great Salt Lake City to the west at 4,366 feet, elevations are high throughout, one of the primary reasons for cold fall weather in that region.

The elevation where the emigrants last forded the North Platte River (present-day Casper, Wyoming) is 5,120 feet, only a few hundred feet higher than the prevailing elevations along the Wasatch Front in Utah. But immediately southwest of the last crossing of the Platte, the trail climbs quite steeply to the Rocky Avenue and on to the crest of Prospect (Ryan) Hill, where the elevation is 6,588 feet. Beyond Prospect Hill, the trail drops down

**Trail Elevation Graph**

1. Florence (1,000')
2. North Platte (3,000')
3. Fort Laramie (4,230')
4. Black Hills (5,600')
5. Crossing of the Platte (5,120')
6. Prospect Hill (6,588')
7. Devil's Gate (5,860')
8. South Pass (7,550')
9. Big Sandy (6,580')
10. Fort Bridger (6,995')
11. Big Mountain Pass (7,420')
12. Great Salt Lake City (4,366')
13. West Desert (4,270')
toward Independence Rock and Devil's Gate but remains comparatively high. At Greasewood (Horse) Creek, the elevation is 6,000 feet, and Devil's Gate is at 5,960 feet. From Devil's Gate, the trail remains above 6,000 feet but is relatively flat, climbing very slightly over the sixty miles to Sweetwater Station, where the elevation is 6,544 feet. From just past Sweetwater Station, the trail climbs steeply through the Rocky Ridges to 7,300 feet, then continues across a high, open plateau to Rock Creek, at 7,400 feet, and on to South Pass, at 7,550 feet.¹⁷

All along this route, but especially across the high plateau between the Rocky Ridges and South Pass, there is a distinct atmosphere of loftiness and a keenness in the air. Open and flat though the high plateau is, it is also extremely bare. Whereas normal fall conditions in such places as Fort Laramie and Salt Lake City are bracing but pleasant, fall conditions in the high, windy plains of Wyoming are much colder—and much more dangerous.

The Campsites. From the first, pioneers understood the crucial importance of the campsites along the trail. These places had to have readily accessible pure water, grass for the animals, wood for fires, and, hopefully, some protection from the wind. Campsite locations and descriptions were the most important part of any good emigrants’ guide, and William Clayton’s famous guide, compiled in 1847 (acclaimed by most trailmen to be the best), was an important reference for all Mormon emigrant trains.¹⁸

Deer Creek (present-day Glenrock, Wyoming), one good day’s travel east of the last crossing of the Platte, was the best example of an ideal campsite. Virtually everyone praised it as abundantly providing all the necessities—and ample wild game to augment the limited food supply to boot.¹⁹ But it also had another important attribute, though perhaps less tangible: it was a pleasant, comfortable-looking place, and it was the first campsite on the Platte after the long and relatively difficult cross-country pull through Wyoming’s Black Hills. The campsites beyond Deer Creek—at the big bend of the Platte (between present-day Casper, Wyoming, and nearby Red Buttes), Greasewood Creek, Independence Rock/Devil’s Gate/Martin’s Cove, Sweetwater Station, Rock Creek/Willow Creek, and Pacific Springs—had similar attributes in most cases.²⁰ Unfortunately, most of these were places of tragedy
and sorrow for the Willie and Martin Companies. Red Buttes, Devil's Gate, Sweetwater Station, and Rock Creek are the most notable examples. These campsites, and the troubles experienced there, are described in the following chronological narrative.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{The Climate.} Beyond the obviously difficult climbs—through the Black Hills, up through the Rocky Avenue and on to Prospect Hill, and up through the Rocky Ridges—the relative flatness and openness, although giving a feeling of height and remoteness, can otherwise be deceiving as to apparent comfort and ease of travel, especially when observed in warm, clear weather. But when the Willie and Martin Companies and the Grant rescue party came through in October and November 1856, much of the trail was covered with snow or mired in mud,\textsuperscript{22} the rivers were either frozen over or flowing with ice chunks, and for many days the temperatures hovered near zero—and the wind was blowing.

The wind always blows in Wyoming. A calm day is rare anywhere at any season of the year, but calmness for any significant length of time is extremely rare in the general vicinity of the Sweetwater River.\textsuperscript{23} Most secondary historical accounts make little or no mention of it, but wind, in combination with cool or cold temperatures, produces an extremely dangerous effect. The accompanying simplified chart shows that effect.\textsuperscript{24}

Note that as the wind increases and the temperature drops, the equivalent windchill drops geometrically. For example, on a thirty-degree day an accompanying wind of thirty miles per hour creates an equivalent windchill of zero degrees, or thirty degrees colder than what would be experienced on a calm day. But on a zero-degree day, the same thirty-miles-per-hour wind will produce a windchill of fifty degrees below zero—fifty degrees colder than what would be experienced on a calm day.

In late October and early November, both the Willie and Martin handcart companies experienced equivalent windchill conditions of as low as seventy degrees below zero, generated by heavy, piercing winds and reported temperatures of as much as eleven degrees below zero. People who are experienced with windchill warn that accompanying temperatures do not have to be uncomfortably low to produce life-threatening windchill. That is, a person comfortably walking along on a cool day, clad in a good shirt
### Chart for Determining Equivalent Windchill Temperatures

(expressed in °F)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Air Temperature (°F)</th>
<th>Wind Speed (mph)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>30 20 10 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>15 5 0 -5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>5 -10 -20 -20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>-10 -25 -30 -35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>-20 -35 -50 -55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-10</td>
<td>-35 -50 -65 -70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-20</td>
<td>-45 -65 -80 -85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Equivalent windchill temperatures are rounded but are within five degrees of the several charts consulted. Wind speeds in excess of forty mph have little increased effect on equivalent windchill. Equivalent windchill temperatures below −30 are likely to produce freezing of the flesh within one minute. Temperatures below −60 are likely to produce freezing of the flesh within thirty seconds. If the victim is wet, the chilling effect is far worse. Most of the equivalent windchill temperatures shown here are likely to dramatically lower core body temperatures, bringing on hypothermia.

or light sweater or jacket, can become dangerously cold—cold enough to experience hypothermia—if even a moderate wind begins to blow. Hypothermia had a terrible effect on the Willie and Martin Company emigrants, as will be seen as their saga unfolds.

### Preliminaries to the Disaster

**The Late Start.** That the last emigrant companies of 1856 started far too late to assure a safe trek over the plains is clear. The evidence, especially that provided by eyewitnesses, overwhelmingly indicates that a fatal mistake was made in allowing the Willie and Martin handcart companies and the Hodgett and Hunt wagon companies to continue any further than Florence. But the mood of those supervising the handcart migration was to push on, even at
high cost, including considerable risk to the lives of all. This attitude was clearly manifest at Florence by those supervising the effort there. Although at least two experienced leaders of the Willie Company, Levi Savage and Millen Atwood, were against moving forward, the main organizers were in strong agreement that the handcart companies should continue West.

On August 12, Savage wrote in his journal that he was “much opposed to taking women & children through, destitute of clothing, when we all know, that we are bound to be caught in the Snow, and Severe colde w[e]ather, long before we reach the valey. I have expressed my fe[l]lings, in part, to Brothers McGaw, Willey; & Atwood.”25 On August 13, Savage wrote that

Willey Ex[h]orted the Saints to go forward regardless of Suffering even to death; after he had Spoken, he gave me the opportunity of Speaking. I Said to him, that if I Spoke, I must Speak my minde, let it cut where it would. He Said Certainly do so. I then related to the Saints, the hard Ships that we Should have to endure. I Said that we were liable to have to wade in Snow up to our knees, and Should at night rap ourselve[s] in a thin blanket, and lye on the frozen Ground without a bed; that was not like having a wagon, that we could go into, and rap ourselves in as much as we liked and ly down. No, Said I, we are with out waggons, destitute of clothing, and could not cary it if we had it. We must go as we are.26

Then, at an open meeting that day, members of the Willie Company debated whether or not to go on so late in the season, and most voted to go. But Savage importantly commented in his journal that, after he “warmly” voiced his objection, “the people, judging from appearance and after expressions, felt the force of it, (but yet, the most of them, determon[e]d to go forward if the Authorities Say go).”27 Savage went on to write that on August 15 another meeting was held, and “Elders McGaw; Kimble; Grant [and] Vancott addressed the Saints; exhorted them to Go forward regardless of concequences.”28

The above scenario was largely repeated immediately prior to the departure of the Martin Company. In this instance, however, Franklin D. Richards was present, and, according to at least two eyewitnesses, he warned the emigrants of the probability of cold weather, then called for a vote. In his autobiography, Benjamin Platt stated that “Apostle Franklin D. Richards called a meeting and
advised us to stop at Florence until the next season.\textsuperscript{29} Josiah Rogerson, in an account published half a century later in the \textit{Salt Lake Herald}, described the scene:

I can hear, even now, the voice of President Richards, as he stood there and reasoned with us in his fatherly and gentlemanly manner, as to the lateness of the season, as to the possibility of the storms coming on earlier than usual, that no doubt many of the infants and aged might fall by the way, and some other through disease and from the impurities of the water in the streams, fatigue and exhaustion; and that it was left for us now to decide, whether we would go on and take the risks and chances of these possible and probable fatalities; or remain there and around Florence.\ldots

Elder John T. D. McAllister\ldots spoke afterward at that meeting for going on, and Cyrus H. Wheelock, General George D. Grant and others; but Brother Webb urged that we should not start, but stay there for the winter. His remarks were Webb's alone. Some others spoke and then President Richards, arising at last, advised all to vote with their free agency and responsibility. The vote was called, and with uncovered heads and uplifted hands to heaven and an almost unanimous vote, it was decided to go on.\textsuperscript{30}

Richards recalled that “when we had a meeting at Florence, we called upon the Saints to express their faith to the people, and requested to know of them, even if they knew that they should be swallowed up in storms, whether they should stop or turn back. They voted, with loud acclamations, that they would go on.”\textsuperscript{31} John Jaques later recorded that “owing to the lateness of the season, the important question was debated, whether the emigrants should winter in that vicinity [of Florence] or continue the long and wearisome journey to Salt Lake. Unfortunately, warm enthusiasm prevailed over sound judgment and cool common sense, and it was determined to finish the journey the same season.”\textsuperscript{32}

Obviously, it is hard to determine who was responsible for the decision to go. Assuming that Platt's and Rogerson's recollections are accurate, Richards strongly warned the Martin Company emigrants of the probable dangers of such a late start. But his judgment in calling for and abiding by the vote of the emigrants is questionable. It was well within his authority to have ordered the Martin Company to winter over at or near Florence and to have ordered the Willie Company to turn back—irrespective of the company votes.
On November 2, 1856, after first reports of the disaster in the making arrived in Great Salt Lake City, both Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young strongly addressed the fatal error made at Florence in August. President Young opened the November 2nd meeting at the Bowery with a short sermon indicating his continuing deep concern about those still out on the trail. Then President Kimball came to the stand and rebuked those who had begun to complain that the late start was a mistake that was affecting the fortunes of everyone, those providing for the resupply and rescue as well as the emigrants. Kimball somewhat mockingly paraphrased detractors as claiming, "What an awful thing it is! Why is it that the First Presidency are so unwise in their calculations? but it falls on their shoulders," and then went on to say:

Well, the late arrival of those on the plains cannot be helped now, but let me tell you, most emphatically, that if all who were entrusted with the care and management of this year's immigration had done as they were counseled and dictated by the First Presidency of this church, the sufferings and hardships now endured by the companies on their way here would have been avoided. . . .

If the immigration could have been carried on as dictated by br. Brigham, there would have been no trouble.33

President Kimball's remarks regarding criticism brought President Young abruptly back to the stand. Among much else, he rebuked Franklin D. Richards and Daniel Spencer for not having terminated further emigration beyond Florence while they were there in late August.34

On August 21, Richards and his party had clattered into Florence by stagecoach from St. Joseph, Missouri—this after crossing the Atlantic aboard the steam packet Asia. They traveled overland by train to St. Louis and up the Missouri to St. Joseph by powered riverboat.35 The party made the trip, in relative comfort, from Liverpool to Florence in a remarkable twenty-six days.36

Members of Richards's party mixed with members of the Martin Company in Florence between August 22 and 27, when most of that company departed with their handcarts. Then the Richards party, on horseback and with carriages, departed Florence on September 3, passed the Hunt Company on September 6, the Martin and Hodgett Companies on September 7, the rear
element of the Willie Company on September 9, and the main part of that same company on September 12. This Swiftsure Train then proceeded rapidly onward and arrived in Great Salt Lake City on October 4, having averaged thirty-two miles per day.\textsuperscript{37} It may have been too rapid—too comfortable to have allowed proper reflection on the risk of permitting the last handcart companies to leave Florence so late.\textsuperscript{38}

Knowledge of this quick and comfortable journey may have influenced President Young's remarks on November 2. First he informed his audience that the future "penalty, to be suffered by any Elder or Elders who will start the immigration across the plains after a given time ... shall be that they shall be severed from the Church."\textsuperscript{39} Then he rightly claimed that several previous epistles to the Church had strongly urged the earliest possible departure from the Missouri River.\textsuperscript{40} He then turned his attention to Elder Richards and Daniel Spencer, who together had organized the handcart project—Richards in England and Spencer in Iowa City.

But if, while at the Missouri river, they had received a hint from any person on this earth, or if even a bird had chirped it in the ears of brs. Richards and Spencer, they would have known better than to rush men, women, and children on the prairie in the autumn months, on the 3d of September, to travel over a thousand miles. I repeat that if a bird had chirped the inconsistency of a course in their ears, they would have thought and considered for one moment, and would have stopped those men, women and children there until another year.\textsuperscript{41}

The Shortage of Food. Malnutrition and ultimately starvation, another major contributor to the disaster, was probably the result of what turned out to be a second fatal mistake that was almost as significant as the late start.

Wheat flour was the staple upon which the health and energy of every handcart pioneer depended. Although the formula varied somewhat between companies, the basic daily food ration was built around one pound of flour per person per day, to be augmented primarily by meat provided by beef cattle that were to accompany each train and by whatever wild game that could be hunted along the way. The total amount of flour that was to be pre-loaded was apparently calculated by multiplying the number of
emigrants by the number of days required to make the trip across the plains and applying that product to one pound of flour per person per day. Further, all evidence indicates that the food plan provided that the emigrants would preload virtually the entire allotment at Florence, since resupply stations could not be counted on along the trail.

This may have led to a serious miscalculation. Since the emigrants could not carry such a large amount of flour on their handcarts, ox-drawn supply wagons would have to be attached to each company. Such attachments slowed the handcart companies to roughly the same pace as wagon companies, which called for basing the estimate of the number of days for the trek not so much on how fast the emigrants could pull their handcarts, but rather on how fast oxen could pull the heavily loaded supply wagons.

Sixty days was set for the 1,031-mile trek from Florence to Great Salt Lake City, which would require that each company would have to move at least seventeen miles per day, or, if the Sabbath was to be observed, almost twenty miles per day. None of the ten handcart companies between 1856 and 1860 matched that pace. For example, the Ellsworth Company needed sixty-nine days, and both the McArthur and Bunker Companies needed sixty-five days. The sixty-day assumption alone shorted both the Willie and Martin Companies more than 2,000 pounds of flour each.

However, the sixty-day assumption was first suggested, not in Liverpool, but in Great Salt Lake City. Brigham Young, in his September 30, 1855, instruction to Franklin D. Richards, stated that he “should not be surprised” if the handcart emigrants “should make the trip in sixty or seventy days.” Later in the letter, he commented that “fifteen miles a day will bring them through in 70 days, and after they get accustomed to it they will travel 20, 25, and even 30 [miles a day].” This confident estimation could well have influenced Richards to decide on the most optimistic estimate suggested—a sixty-day crossing, which estimate was clearly set forth in an editorial printed in the December 22, 1855, issue of the *Millennial Star.* Still, in his September 30, 1855, letter, President Young also stated that the handcart emigrants would “only need 90 days’ rations from the time of their leaving the Missouri river,” which at least hints that he was allowing for contingencies.
Nevertheless, resupply along the route was also planned for, to be provided by all the means available and affordable. These included Church provisions and private stocks sent out from the Wasatch Front for free issue or sale and for procurement by purchase from entrepreneurs at settlements, forts, and trading posts along the way. Further, plans for wheat farms along the trail in Nebraska were under discussion. But it appears that the resupply plan was not pursued with sufficient clarity or urgency to generate proper action in either the West or East. From the sketchy evidence at hand, it is apparent that the entire food plan was short of the mark because of a tragic combination of things: slow and poor communications generally; mild, perhaps overly subtle and ambiguous instructions from the West; overoptimism; and too little knowledge or accountability in either the West or East regarding the number of emigrants actually involved.47

Continuous resupply from Great Salt Lake City was promised as early as July 1856. In a letter to Orson Pratt, who had by then replaced Franklin D. Richards as president of the European Mission, President Young stated that “we expect to start out fifteen wagons loaded with flour to meet the hand-cart train on the 28th inst. Our harvest is now commencing and that [July 28] will be as soon as we can get flour ready. . . . We shall follow up sending out detachments of teams with flour every week so long as may be necessary.”48 These and other communications indicate that, although not integral to the food plan, such resupply was being heavily counted upon in Liverpool, Iowa City, and Florence.49 For example, Daniel Spencer, in a letter to Brigham Young dated June 19, 1856, reported that the first three handcart companies, which had just departed west from Iowa City, “were fitted out with provisions to Florence. There, in anticipation of assistance from the valley, they will be provided with scanty supplies for 60 days.”50

Resupply en route was in fact made available, apparently for cash or voucher, at Deer Creek and South Pass. Journals of both the Ellsworth and McArthur handcart companies reported the purchase of significant amounts of flour at Deer Creek, where a resupply train of five wagon loads with a total of five thousand pounds of flour was stationed, and other records indicate that as many as two resupply parties were at South Pass. For example, the
McArthur handcart company of 222 people purchased 1,000 pounds of flour at Deer Creek, east of the last crossing of the Platte, and another 1,000 pounds at Pacific Springs, just beyond South Pass.51 For that company, the resupply plan seemed to have worked. The thousand pounds of flour at Deer Creek almost exactly made up for the shortfall owing to the sixty-day assumption, and, further, the additional thousand pounds at South Pass assured the McArthur Company full rations all the way into Great Salt Lake City, with perhaps some to spare.

But somehow, information that at least four more companies of emigrants were on the way either was never sent, never arrived, or was misinterpreted in Great Salt Lake City, and the resupply promised by Brigham Young was shut down on the assumption that whatever more emigrants there might be would be detained in the East until the next season, a matter that President Young later made clear.52 On June 11, William Woodward, who at the time was postmaster at the emigrant camp at Iowa City, wrote a letter to President Heber C. Kimball from Iowa City reporting the departure of the Ellsworth, McArthur, and Bunker handcart companies, but went on to state that “we have heard that another ship of immigrants have arrived at New York by the ship ‘Thornton,’ numbering when they left Liverpool 764 souls. . . . We expect them at this point by the 16th or 17th of June.”53 This letter was received in Great Salt Lake City on July 30.

In his June 19 report to Brigham Young, Daniel Spencer then wrote, “I am looking every day for the arrival of the Thorton company, and in a few days for the last of the Fund Passengers by the Horizon. They will together have nearly 1200 souls to go by hand carts. . . . The wagon companies will be ready to move in a few days.” This letter was published in the Deseret News on August 6, 1856. Although further westward advance of “the wagon companies” was indicated by Spencer, neither the Woodward nor Spencer letters indicate that the Thornton and Horizon emigrants would in fact be sent on west at that time. Nor, however, do they say that a decision had been made that those emigrants would be wintering over in the East.

Silence in these regards apparently led both leaders in the East and West to make dangerous assumptions, those in the East
assuming significant resupply from the Valley, and those in the West assuming that the emigrants were wintering over in the East. The tragic result was, in the East, sending out handcart companies with “scanty” provisions and, in the West, shutting down the resupply effort.

The shortage of food was not limited just to travel west of Florence. Both John Chislett and Levi Savage reported that members of the Willie Company were allotted less than two-thirds of the ration calculated by the planners for the pull across Iowa. It must be supposed that, absent any contrary evidence, the company left Iowa City as much as 4,000 pounds short of its flour allotment. On July 24, Savage quietly entered into his trail journal that “our rations are very Short, viz 10 oz flour per one day, 10 oz pork per 28 days. Short rations of tea, coffee, Sugar, rice and aples. It is not enough.”54 After the disaster, Chislett was much more critical:

“Our rations consisted of ten ounces of flour to each adult per day, and half that amount to children under eight years of age. Besides our flour we had occasionally a little rice, sugar, coffee, and bacon. But these items (especially the last) were so small and infrequent that they scarcely deserve mentioning. Any hearty man could eat his daily allowance for breakfast. In fact, some of our men did this, and then worked all day without dinner, and went to bed supperless or begged food at the farmhouses as we travelled along. . . .

“I do not know who settled the amount of our rations, but whoever it was, I should like him, or them, to drag a hand-cart through the State of Iowa in the month of July on exactly the same amount and quality of fare we had. This would be but simple justice.”55

Lastly, since there were no contingency plans, any delays were sure to seriously exacerbate the problem. As long as the basic ration was one pound of flour per person per day, the emigrants in the Willie and Martin Companies consumed about a thousand pounds of flour each day.56 Accordingly, a three-day delay of the Willie Company between September 4 and 7 cost them more than a thousand pounds of flour—an amount that would have supplied them for the three days before they reached South Pass, during which time they had no food.

In summary, the shortage of food, although all handcart companies suffered from it to some extent, especially robbed the Willie and Martin emigrants of the extra energy they needed to generate
the necessary body heat to maintain internal body functioning in the face of the increasingly cold weather occasioned by the late start. Responsibility for the food shortage is hard to pin down, but surely among the prime reasons were insufficient practical experience, lack of a viable resupply plan, miscommunication, and the failure to allow for contingencies. And surely, the responsibility for these causes was not solely that of those leaders in the East. Whatever the reasons, both the Willie and Martin Companies left Florence with significant shortages, and both companies ran out of food far short of Great Salt Lake City.

**Exhaustion.** By October 19, the Willie Company had pulled their handcarts 760 miles from Florence, the Martin Company, 649 miles—or 1,037 and 926 miles, respectively, if the pull across Iowa is included. Not only was the length of the trek overwhelming, but the trail had become increasingly tougher as all pulled through heavy stretches of sand along the North Platte, made the ascents through the Black Hills, and, in the case of the Willie Company, the difficult ascent over Prospect Hill west of the Platte. Again, this was expected, but in combination with malnutrition and cold, exhaustion was all the more serious.

The combination of malnutrition and cold nights, for example, produced an increased incidence of sickness, and increasingly the sick had to ride on the wagons and on handcarts. The extra weight pulled by both the animals and the emigrants increased the incidence of exhaustion. (There are numerous entries in trail journals regarding growing exhaustion of both people and animals; as in other discussions, evidence in this regard is presented where and when it occurred in the following chronological narrative.)

**Insufficient Clothing and Bedding.** Few if any of the handcart emigrants had sufficient clothing to protect them from the cold weather that increasingly prevailed after October 1, especially at night. The seventeen-pound overall weight limitation placed on all adult emigrants by the handcart organizers at Iowa City, although it made sense for summer travel, would greatly exacerbate the situation the Willie and Martin Companies found themselves in after passing Fort Laramie and entering the higher country further west in October.

In addition to the severely restricted amount of clothing and bedding imposed by the seventeen-pound individual maximum, the
emigrants' clothing had become ragged by the time they reached the last crossing of the Platte, and the shoes of many had become badly worn or had completely come apart. Blankets were also ragged and in short supply, which became even shorter when some clothing and bedding was burned in mid-October, to further lighten the loads. The seventeen-pound limit allowed no replacements.

**Hypothermia.** The colder weather, especially in combination with the wind that prevails in the high country along the western portion of the North Platte and throughout the length of the Sweetwater and beyond, dangerously worsened the condition brought on by the malnutrition and exhaustion. Now all these difficulties worked together to break down resistance, and, most dangerous, bring on hypothermia and apathy.

Descriptions of the horrors of frostbite by many eyewitnesses are legendary. Because the malady is so visible, and because so many who lost limbs lived to exhibit and tell about it, frostbite is the only malady due specifically to cold mentioned in any detail. Nothing was said about hypothermia, that invisible killer, which probably caused most of the deaths experienced by the Willie and Martin Company Saints. Quickly defined, hypothermia occurs when the core temperature of a person’s body drops below ninety-five degrees Fahrenheit. Alan Fry, in his *Wilderness Survival Handbook*, following an excellent description of hypothermia, goes on to list “rules for the trail” to guard against hypothermia that read as if he were using the Willie and Martin handcart disaster as his prime real-life example:

The first rule for the prevention of hypothermia: *wear and have with you . . . all the clothing you will need for the most adverse weather you could encounter . . .*

. . . You produce the energy for your day’s excursion and the heat necessary for healthy body function from the food you eat.

Eat well and go well. Eat poorly and go poorly. Therein lies the second rule for the prevention of hypothermia: *eat well of food which will provide fuel for heat and energy.* Eat well before you set out and carry good food with you to eat during your travels. . . .

. . . The third rule for prevention of hypothermia: *know your limits and do not push yourself to the point of exhaustion . . .*

In summary, prevent hypothermia by being *well clothed, well fed,* and by *avoiding exhaustion.*
It is appropriate now to fit the above factors into a brief chronology of events as told by eyewitnesses in both the Willie and Martin handcart companies. Also woven into the narrative are actions and observations of other important players in the saga—the leadership in Great Salt Lake City, members of the Richards Swiftsure Train, and members of the Grant rescue party.

Chronology of the Disaster

That the Willie Company departed Florence short of food is initially indicated by Levi Savage, who on August 17 wrote in his journal that “our wagons are loaded with 35 or 40 Hundred of provisions and we yet want 25 Hundred or more and have no wagon, nor cant purchase one to hall it in.” As a probable result of this shortage of transportation, a ninety-eight-pound sack of flour was added to every handcart—effectively doubling the load.63

Nevertheless, the emigrants maintained good morale, and, since they ate the flour on the carts first, after twenty days their loads would have returned to normal weight. But on the nineteenth day, they ran into trouble. On September 4 (169 miles out from Florence), a buffalo stampede carried away most of the oxen, which could not be recovered even though three days’ delay and much energy were expended in the effort to do so.64 The emigrants were therefore required to harness up their much weaker and totally untrained milk cows and beef cattle, which could not haul as much, and a second ninety-eight-pound bag of flour was placed on each handcart.65

In addition to the delay,66 the continued extra weight on the handcarts had a serious wearing effect. John Chislettt observed that the “axles and boxes being of wood, and being ground out by the dust that found its way there in spite of our efforts to keep it out, together with the extra weight put on the carts, had the effect of breaking the axles at the shoulder.”67 The extra loads also wore on the emigrants, and the added fatigue became increasingly severe when food rationing was imposed and colder weather set in. In the meantime, the Martin Company, with fewer supply wagons per capita than any other 1856 party, also departed Florence with a ninety-eight-pound bag of flour on each handcart.68
Franklin D. Richards knew something of this weight problem, since he spent several days with the Martin Company in Florence and passed both companies on the trail at a time when they were laboring under the extra burden. But he seemed not to be much concerned. Richards did, however, take the opportunity to openly rebuke Levi Savage, one of the team captains of the Willie Company, upon overtaking that company on September 12. John Chislett claimed that Richards "rebuked" Savage "very severely in open meeting for his lack of faith in God" for honestly—and, as things turned out, rightly—objecting to leaving Florence so late in the season.69

Richards, again according to Chislett, then "told Captain Willie they [the Richards party] wanted some fresh meat, and he [Willie] had our fattest calf killed for them."70 Richards also seems to have favorably interpreted the fact that the company had withstood the loss of most of their cattle and took the occasion to exhort the people to be even more strictly obedient to counsel. The author of the company's trail journal had this to say about Richard's remarks on that occasion:

Prest. Richards then addressed the Saints expressing his satisfaction at their having journeyed thus far & more especially with handcarts and congratulating them on the loss of their cattle which he knew had proved and would prove their salvation if they would hearken to and diligently obey counsel to the letter in which event he promised in the name of Israel's God and by the authority of the Holy Priesthood that no obstacle whatever should come in the way of this Camp but what they should be able by their united faith and works to overcome God being their helper and that if a Red Sea would interpose they should by their union of heart & hand walk through it like Israel of old dryshod. On the same conditions he promised that though they might have some trials to endure as a proof to God and their Brethren that they had the true "grit" still the Lamanites heat nor cold nor any other thing should have power to seriously harm any in the Camp but that we should arrive in the Valleys of the Mountains with strong and healthy bodies.71

Upon parting company with the Willie Company on September 14, Richards apparently promised that he would "leave . . . provisions, bedding, etc., at Laramie, if he could, and to secure . . . help from the valley as soon as possible."72 Savage would record on October 10 that Richards had been able to leave thirty-seven buffalo robes for them at the Platte bridge.73
Beginning September 8, both the Willie and Martin Companies began to experience heavy head winds, and on September 15 "sharp frosts" were reported at night, although the days continued warm. On September 17, Savage recorded that "just before the camp got under way, a colde, and Strong wind arose from the N.W. This togethether with the hea[v]y Sand, made our progress very Slow, and extreamly laborious. Several were obliged to leave their carts, and they with the infirm, could Scarcely Get into camp. Our teams also, at times, could Scarcely moove." On September 23, Savage wrote that

This morning was cold and foggy. The Saints dilatory in rising and geting Brake fast early, notwithstanding Brother Willies repeated order to arise at the Sound of the horn (daylight) apparently not realizing the nessessity of our makeing as much distance as possible, in order to reache the valey before too severe colde weather. Some comeplaing of hard treatment, because we urge them along. Many hang to the wagons.

On September 27, Savage reported that "the olde appear to be fail- ing con[s]iderably."

Upon their arrival at Fort Laramie on October 1, the Willie Company found none of the promised resupply of food, nor were any oxen available to replace the losses of September 4. An inventory of food still on hand revealed that the company was so short of flour that without significant rationing they would probably run out somewhere near the crossing of the Platte, some 350 miles short of Great Salt Lake City.

Levi Savage wrote in his journal that "Brothers Willey; Atwood; myself; and others went to the Fort and perchased provi- sions. They are extreamly costly." The most important item pur- chased was 400 pounds of "hard bread" or biscuit. Apparently, no flour was available. The company headed into the Black Hills the next day or the day after. William Woodward reported that "about 8 miles west of Laramie we issued flour as follows: 14 ounces to each man; 12 ounces to each woman; 8 ounces to each child; and 4 ounces to each infant per day." The Willie Company journal reported at about the same time that "many of the company are sick & have to ride in the wagons." Additionally, deaths had begun to occur with increasing frequency. Six had died during September, but at least six more died in the first week of October alone.
Still in Nebraska, the Martin Company moved along regularly and without notable incident during this same period, but also began to experience hunger, exhaustion, and an increased incidence of death. Nine had died in September, six in the last week of that month, and, like the Willie Company, six more died in the first week of October.\textsuperscript{84}

Another debility began to occur in both companies as the flour rations were reduced. Apparently, as the emigrants increasingly relied on beef for sustenance (especially the beef of lean animals that themselves were starving), they became ill with dysentery and diarrhea, a condition that, in addition to being the most miserable form of sickness, can be life-threatening. Many eyewitnesses complained of this misery, and numerous entries gave it as the cause of death.\textsuperscript{85}

On October 4, the day the Richards party arrived, the citizens of Great Salt Lake City were enjoying a classic Indian summer week of warm sun and quiet breezes.\textsuperscript{86} Nevertheless, President Young, obviously worried about trouble ahead owing to both the lateness of the season and the fact that no resupply had been planned, especially for so many, on October 5 ordered out the vanguard of what would ultimately become the first wave in a massive resupply effort. George D. Grant, with "22 teams—two span of mules or horses to each wagon loaded to the bows," left Great Salt Lake City on October 7 and over the next few days moved smartly through the Wasatch and on toward the Wyoming plains, expecting to meet the lead element of the emigrants somewhere in the vicinity of Fort Bridger.\textsuperscript{87} But the nearest company was still about 240 miles—more than two weeks' travel—further east.

By the second week of October, conditions were worsening rapidly in both the Willie and Martin Companies as hunger, fatigue, and increasingly cold temperatures during the night wore everyone down. Levi Savage observed on October 8 that at Deer Creek "our olde people are nearly all failing fast."\textsuperscript{88} William Woodward added that "Many of our men now began to get weak; some had died. This made the duties of the camp to fall on a few and began to weaken the rugged and the strong."\textsuperscript{89}

On October 10, after crossing the North Platte and as the company worked its way up through the Rocky Avenue and on to
Prospect Hill, Savage stated that “our teams are very weak,” and on October 11, “3 of our working cows gave out and one died and the remainder of our oxen were nearly over cum.”90 On October 15, Savage, with apparent foreboding, wrote in his journal that, although the company had traveled over fifteen miles that day, “the peopple, are geting weak, and failing very fast, a grate many Sick. our teams are als[0] failing fast and it requires great exertion to make any progress. our rations were reduced, last night, one quar- ter bringing the mens to 10 1/2 oz, womens to 9 oz and the children, some to 6 and others to 3 oz each.”91 This was at Independence Rock. Then on October 16 he wrote, “This morning we had three deaths and one birth.”92

The next sentence in his journal comments that the heavy loading of the wagons “increased daly by the weak and Sick.”93 John Chislett stated that at Independence Rock:

“Captain Willie received a letter from apostle Richards informing him that we might expect supplies to meet us from the valley by the time we reached South Pass. An examination of our stock of flour showed us that it would be gone before we reached that point. Our only alternative was to still further reduce our bill of fare. The issue of flour was then to average ten ounces per day to each person over ten years of age, and to be divided thus: working-men to receive twelve ounces, women and old men nine ounces, and children from four to eight ounces, according to age and size.”94

Then, on beyond Devil’s Gate, Chislett went on to observe:

“Many of our men showed signs of failing, and to reduce their rations below twelve ounces would have been suicidal to the com- pany, seeing they had to stand guard all night, wade the streams repeatedly by day to get the women and children across, erect tents, and do many duties which women could not do. . . .

“We had not travelled far up the Sweetwater before the nights, which had gradually been getting colder since we left Laramie, became very severe. . . . In our frequent crossings of the Sweetwater, we had really "a hard road to travel." The water . . . when we waded it time after time at each ford to get the carts, the women, and the children over . . . lost to us its beauty, and the chill which it sent through our systems . . . left a void, a sadness, and—in some cases—doubts as to the justice of an overruling Providence.”95

The Willie Company, already suffering badly from malnutri- tion and exhaustion but nevertheless having once again to drastically
reduce individual rations and struggle on as food rapidly ran out, had reached the breaking point.

The same pattern unfolded in the Martin Company. John Jaques wrote that

up to this time the daily pound of flour ration had been regularly served out, but it was never enough to stay the stomachs of the emigrants, and the longer they were on the plains and in the mountains the hungrier they grew.

... [A]t this time when the great appetite was fairly roused up and had put on its strength and was still further strengthened and sharpened by the increasing coldness of the weather, the extra pinching time commenced. Soon after Fort Laramie was passed, it was deemed advisable to curtail the rations in order to make them hold out as long as possible. The pound of flour fell to three-fourths of a pound, then to a half pound, and subsequently yet lower. Still the company toiled on through the Black Hills, where the feed grew scarcer for the cattle also. As the necessities of man and beast increased, their daily food diminished, at the time when it was, as the emigrants might have said, with Sir Walter Scott, "like a summer-dried fountain, when our wants were the sorest."96

On October 14, at Black's Fork, just past Fort Bridger, George D. Grant sent an express led by Cyrus Wheelock out ahead of the resupply train with instructions to find the handcart emigrants, expecting to find the Willie Company somewhere west of South Pass. But he had either miscalculated or had been misinformed: the company was at Independence Rock, 101 miles east of South Pass, and the Martin Company was still in the Black Hills.97

Then on October 17, at Deer Creek, members of the Martin Company carried out a tragically unfortunate decision. In a later reminiscence, John Jaques explained that

Owing to the growing weakness of emigrants and teams, the baggage, including bedding and cooking utensils, was reduced to ten pounds per head, children under 8 years, five pounds. Good blankets and other bedding and clothing were burned, as they could not be carried further, though needed more than ever, for there was yet 400 miles of winter to go through. Again might the emigrants have said, with the Scotch poet, "Like a summer-dried fountain, when our wants were the sorest."98

The burning of precious warm clothing and blankets because of exhaustion clearly indicates that, like the Willie Company, the Martin Company had also reached the breaking point.
Hypothermia, which was brought on by the combination of malnutrition, exhaustion, and windchill, was now bringing members of both companies down, one by one and in small groups, with grim regularity. Eyewitness accounts describe the process. John Chislett’s eloquently tragic account of conditions before October 19 is an appropriate example:

“Our seventeen pounds of clothing and bedding was now altogether insufficient for our comfort. Nearly all suffered more or less at night from cold. Instead of getting up in the morning strong, refreshed, vigorous, and prepared for the hardships of another day of toil, the poor ‘Saints’ were to be seen crawling out from their tents looking haggard, benumbed, and showing an utter lack of that vitality so necessary to our success.

“Cold weather, scarcity of food, lassitude and fatigue from over-exertion, soon produced their effects. Our old and infirm people began to droop, and they no sooner lost spirit and courage than death’s stamp could be traced upon their features. Life went out as smoothly as a lamp ceases to burn when the oil is gone. At first the deaths occurred slowly and irregularly, but in a few days at more frequent intervals, until we soon thought it unusual to leave a camping-ground without burying one or more persons.

“Death was not long confined in its ravages to the old and infirm, but the young and naturally strong were among its victims. Men who were, so to speak, as strong as lions when we started on our journey, and who had been our best supports, were compelled to succumb to the grim monster. These men were worn down by hunger, scarcity of clothing and bedding, and too much labour in helping their families.”

John Jaques of the Martin Company put it this way:

Worn down by the labors and fatigues of the journey, and pinched by hunger and cold, the manliness of tall, healthy, strong men would gradually disappear, until they would grow fretful, peevish, childish, and puercile, acting sometimes as if they were scarcely accountable beings. In the progress of the journey it was not difficult to tell who was going to die within two or three weeks. The gaunt form, hollow eyes, and sunken countenance, discolorled to a weather-beaten sallow, with the gradual weakening of the mental faculties, plainly foreboded the coming and not far distant dissolution, though the limbs and faces of some were swollen or bloated. Many, whose lives were saved by their arrival in this valley, would have died as sure as fate if they had been subjected to two or three weeks more of exposure, fatigue and privation. Nothing could have saved them.
Some of the classic indicators of severe hypothermia are clearly present in these descriptions.\textsuperscript{101}

On October 18, the Willie Company, moving as quickly as they could along the Sweetwater, ran completely out of food, still more than two days short of the hoped-for resupply at South Pass. By the end of October 18, the combined death count from Florence for the Willie and Martin Companies had reached at least thirty-nine—twenty in the Willie Company and nineteen in the Martin Company.\textsuperscript{102} The Grant resupply party reached South Pass and, with ugly storm clouds looming, moved quickly into camp to wait out the coming storm.\textsuperscript{103}

On October 19, the Willie Company emigrants, their stomachs empty, struggled out over the bleak and waterless Sixteen-Mile Drive, while the Martin Company, having passed by the well-made Platte Bridge (apparently because they had no money to pay the toll), plunged into and across the wide, deep, cold, and rapidly flowing river and emerged on the other side with many soaked to the skin.\textsuperscript{104} All the emigrants were now staggering on the brink.

And then the storm struck.

Much has been said about the early-season winter storm that struck so savagely throughout the region on Sunday, October 19.\textsuperscript{105} It largely overwhelmed the collective memory of many of the eyewitnesses—to the extent that some historians seem to blame the storm almost entirely for the disaster.\textsuperscript{106} The storm was indeed terrible, and it caused much of the death and suffering, but disaster was already at hand, and unnecessarily severe breakdown and loss of life had already occurred or was well under way.\textsuperscript{107}

Brigham Young was not anticipating such a devastating early-season storm when, on that warm and calm October day two weeks before, he so forcefully precipitated the resupply effort. He was worried, and he felt the urgency to act quickly because he knew that suffering from routinely expected fall cold weather was beyond question and that starvation was also a distinct possibility since no organized resupply, especially for so many, had been planned, prepared, or sent out. In a way, the storm, among other things, had the effect of turning a major resupply effort already underway into a desperate rescue operation.
President Young's immediate action nevertheless had a miraculous affect. Had he allowed the amount of time that could have been reasonably expected to prepare for such a major undertaking—the distant resupply of as many as 1,400 starving people—as indicated above, death resulting from the combination of normal cold weather, exhaustion, and especially starvation would have been great had no storm occurred. The miracle is that, without the immediate dispatch of the lead resupply element under Grant, the storm, which so cruelly and ironically struck when it did, would probably have killed hundreds who were already tottering at the brink. Further, a later start might have prevented the rescue entirely. One must be reminded that the storm struck Grant's party (just as they crossed South Pass, fully exposed and at an elevation of 7,550 feet) as hard as it struck the emigrant companies. Had Grant been a day or more short of the pass when the storm struck, out of concern for his own men he might well have given up and turned back, as did many others of the follow-up resupply groups.\textsuperscript{108}

When the storm did strike, Grant immediately left the trail at Willow Creek, just east of South Pass, and escaped to the protection of the thick willows and embankments where the creek enters the Sweetwater River, fully two miles south of the trail. There he began to wait out the storm—and probably to worry about what was happening further east to the handcart emigrants and to his advance express.

Perhaps of equal importance, the earliest departure of the rescue party may have assured barely enough time for all those on the trail, emigrants and rescuers alike, to break back through the Wasatch before the deep snows in late November and early December closed the high passes until the next spring.\textsuperscript{109} The rescue, although it was too little too late for many, came just in the nick of time for the rest. At least in its timing, therefore, the rescue was a miracle in the best sense of the term.

But the storm took a heavy toll. The Willie Company was struck head on while fully out in the open on the waterless and desolate Sixteen-Mile Drive. Fortunately, they were almost simultaneously met by the advance express of the Grant rescue party, which, although it had no food, at least promised hope for relief soon ahead. They staggered on to a partially sheltered camp at the
Sixth Crossing of the Sweetwater (present-day Sweetwater Station) and, for three days, awaited the resupply wagons, which seemed never to arrive. Chislett's account of "those three days" is plaintive.

"We killed more cattle and issued the meat; but, eating it without bread, did not satisfy hunger, and to those who were suffering from dysentery it did more harm than good. This terrible disease increased rapidly amongst us during these three days, and several died from exhaustion. Before we renewed our journey the camp became so offensive and filthy that words would fail to describe its condition, and even common decency forbids the attempt. Suffice it to say that all the disgusting scenes which the reader might imagine would certainly not equal the terrible reality. It was enough to make the heavens weep. The recollection of it unmans me even now—those three days! During that time I visited the sick, the widows whose husbands died in serving them, and the aged who could not help themselves, to know for myself where to dispense the few articles that had been placed in my charge for distribution. Such craving hunger I never saw before, and may God in his mercy spare me the sight again."110

Daniel W. Jones, a member of the Grant advance express, corroborated Chislett, and in the process gave information regarding the importance of the rescue party beyond merely bringing hope and, ultimately, desperately needed provisions. At Sweetwater Station, he later recalled:

we found them in a condition that would stir the feelings of the hardest heart. They were in a poor place, the storm having caught them where fuel was scarce. They were out of provisions and really freezing and starving to death. The morning after our arrival nine were buried in one grave. We did all we could to relieve them. The boys struck out on horseback and dragged up a lot of wood; provisions were distributed and all went to work to cheer the sufferers. Soon there was an improvement in camp, but many poor, faithful people had gone too far, had passed beyond the power to recruit. Our help came too late for some and many died after our arrival.111

Back at the crossing of the Platte, the Martin Company could not have been hit by the storm at a worse time. The killing effect of hypothermia under dry conditions has already been discussed, but here the members of the Martin Company had to deal with something far more threatening. The driving wind, rain, and snow burst upon them when many were dripping wet after having just waded and swum across the bitterly cold river. These people had to go into camp immediately to survive.
Descriptions of the difficulties of that day and night are difficult to read. The severity of their condition and the inability to do anything about it except to suffer through it makes one wonder how so many could have survived. They lay there numbed to the bone and in deep shock, many unable to move. Some just unfolded their wet tents on the snow-covered ground and crawled underneath, too cold and weak to attempt to raise them. Others searched desperately for dry firewood with which to save themselves. Death stared them all in the face.

Like the Willie Company, they staggered along for a short distance, then went into a more permanent camp at Red Buttes, where they stayed for nine terrible days as the storm raged and the last of their food ran out. This is where the advance express of the rescue party, again with no supplies to give, found them in their misery, essentially waiting to die. Fifty-six were already dead when the advance party arrived on October 28, and many more dropped in the days that followed.

Last crossing of the North Platte. Both the Willie and Martin Company emigrants last forded the Platte somewhere in the vicinity of Fort Caspar, in present-day Casper, Wyoming—the Martin Company on October 19, 1856, under blizzard conditions. This photograph is from the fort grounds on the downstream side, looking north.
John Jaques described conditions at the fording of the Platte:

On the 20th [19th] of October the company crossed the Platte for the last time, at Red Buttes, about five miles above the bridge. . . . That was a bitter cold day. Winter came on all at once, and that was the first day of it. The river was wide, the current strong, the water exceedingly cold and up to the wagon beds in the deepest parts, and the bed of the river was covered with cobble stones. Some of the men carried some of the women over on their backs or in their arms, but others of the women tied up their skirts and waded through, like heroines as they were, and as they had done through many other rivers and creeks. The company was barely over when snow, hail, and sleet began to fall, accompanied by a piercing north wind, and camp was made on this side of the river.¹¹⁴

Jaques's description indicates windchill conditions of from fifty to seventy degrees below zero, but in this case it was far worse, since most members of the company were also wet to the skin. Later in her life, Patience Loader Rozsa gave a harrowing

Martin Company campsite at Red Buttes. The Martin Company, after fording the Platte five miles further downstream, camped in this vicinity from October 20 to 29, 1856. At least thirty-seven Martin Company Saints died here. The photograph looks westward toward Red Buttes from across the river. The campsite was probably just to the left of the photographer's position.
account of her personal experience in the water and immediately afterward and described the misery that prevailed in camp at Red Buttes:

"We were all glad to move from this place. It seemed that if God our Father had not sent help to us that we must all have perished and died in a short time, for at that time we had only very little provisions left and at the request of Captain Martin we had come on four ounces of flour a day for each one to make the flour last as long as we could. I don't know how long we could have lived and pulled our handcarts on this small quantity of food. Our provisions would not have lasted as long as they did had all our company lived, but many of them died causing our provisions to hold out longer."  

However, both handcart companies, and the two wagon companies as well, had more suffering to endure. Now virtually starving and experiencing severe winter conditions, on October 23, the Willie Company, finally resupplied to some extent, moved out onto the trail and up through the Rocky Ridges in the teeth of a fierce northwest gale that furiously buffeted them all that day and through the night in windchill conditions that very probably reached seventy degrees below zero. Once again, John Chislett painted the experience with heartbreaking clarity. It is a story of suffering, apathy, death, heroism, courage, tenacity, endurance, will, duty, and faith that has hardly any equal. An accounting of deaths to this point reveals an uncannily grim parallel between the two beleaguered handcart companies. William Woodward (Willie Company) and John Jaques (Martin Company) accounted for almost identical numbers. Deaths beyond Florence up to October 19 were nearly identical: twenty for the Willie Company and nineteen for the Martin Company; and deaths from the onset of the October 19 storm to October 28 were apparently thirty-one for the Willie Company and thirty-seven for the Martin Company. After October 28, deaths in the Willie Company dropped off significantly; the company by then was well past South Pass and comparably well provided for by many resupply and rescue teams and personnel. The Martin Company, however, still had another week of bitter winter conditions to endure before it too could enjoy some respite.

Back at Red Buttes, men of Grant's advance express were obliged to forcefully urge the Martin Company, and the Hodgett
Trail through the Rocky Ridges. This high, open terrain caused considerable difficulty for all emigrants owing to the steep gradients and rocky conditions of the trail surface. The Willie Company suffered greatly here during a fierce resurgence of the storm on October 23, 1856.

Willie Company campsite at Rock Creek. This excellent campsite is the first place after crossing the Rocky Ridges that could have offered at least partial protection from the storm. Fifteen members of the Willie Company, most of whom died as the result of their ordeal at the Rocky Ridges, were buried here, thirteen of them in a single grave.
and Hunt Companies as well, to move on immediately or die. Out from their camp of death and despair, they slogged steeply upward to a camp on the Rocky Avenue and, during the following day, on to another camp at Willow Springs, thence the next day on and over Prospect Hill.\textsuperscript{119}

The campsite at Red Buttes, in the vicinity of Bessemer Bend, is beautiful and tranquil—one of those ideal camping places like Deer Creek. But the fifty-mile cross-country section between this place and the Sweetwater River is ugly—a matter commented upon often, from William Clayton in 1847 onward.\textsuperscript{120} It is open, treeless, bleak, windblown, dangerously boggy, smelly, largely devoid of grass and of pure water except for a few puny little spring-fed brooks, and seemingly without relief, since close-by undulations of the depressing topography hide a more hopeful distant horizon. A word often used to describe it is "desolate." It is probably the most desolate stretch of the entire Mormon Trail east of South Pass. But worst of all, the trail also courses steeply up and down.

It was with great relief that the emigrants reached, first, some good water at Willow Springs and, just a short pull further, the crest of Prospect Hill, where a great vista opened up—and gratefully downward—toward the beautiful country to the southwest.\textsuperscript{121}

The Martin Company Saints departed Red Buttes under improved weather conditions, but the comparative warmth of the air was largely nullified by the steepness and mud-and-slush condition of the trail. The mud of this part of Wyoming is nasty, clinging stuff. It builds up, thick and heavy, on wheels and shoes, making onward movement, especially uphill, extremely difficult and discouraging.\textsuperscript{122} Daniel W. Jones of Grant's advance express described that miserable ascent by those still-starving, frozen, sick, and demoralized people:

We continued on, overtaking the hand-cart company ascending a long muddy hill. A condition of distress here met my eyes that I never saw before or since. The train was strung out for three or four miles. There were old men pulling and tugging their carts, sometimes loaded with a sick wife or children—women pulling along sick husbands—little children six to eight years old struggling through the mud and snow. As night came on the mud would freeze on their clothes and feet. There were two of us and hundreds needing help. What could we do? We gathered on to some of the most helpless with our riatas tied to the carts, and helped as many as we could into camp on Avenue hill.\textsuperscript{123}
The Rocky Avenue. The Martin Company reached this site on October 29, 1856, after an agonizing ascent through mud and snow from their camp at Red Buttes.

Prospect Hill. This is the highest location along the trail between the Black Hills and Sweetwater Station. This photograph looks north and back down the trail toward the Rocky Avenue. Both the Willie and Martin Companies reached this point after an exhausting ascent from the North Platte, which runs just beyond the horizon at the right.
To further indicate the degree of difficulty, suffering, and breakdown at this point, Patience Loader Rozsa described a frightening incident:

"There was poor William Whittaker. He was in the tent with several others. He and his brother, John, occupied one part of a tent. In the other part another family was sleeping. There was a young woman sleeping and she was awakened by poor Brother Whittaker eating her fingers. He was dying with hunger and cold. He also ate the flesh of his own fingers that night. He died and was buried at Willow Springs before we left camp that morning." 

The full portent of this account, had rescue not come in time, is dismaying.

Real relief finally came on October 31 at Greasewood Creek, the last camp before Independence Rock and the Sweetwater. Although the general vicinity of the campsite is rather bleak, this attractive little creek of pure water snakes tightly back and forth in its banks. But the Martin Company emigrants mostly remembered only the blessed relief provided there by Grant's main party with six freight wagons full to the bows with food, blankets, and clothing. Now, their severe starving abated, in relative warmth, and with the realization that they had been saved from sure death, they could look forward again with some hope. But trouble still lay ahead—once again owing to the weather.

The campsites at Independence Rock and Devil's Gate are beautifully situated. The willow-lined Sweetwater River winds majestically around and through rather handsome low but sheer granite mountain formations of an even chocolate-milk hue. Here and there are picturesque campsites that, in addition to providing the requisite features of water, grass, and firewood, are nestled among recesses in the rock, largely protected from the wind. Martin's Cove is a grand example. When one climbs away from the river and into the cove, at a certain point a door seems to shut, suddenly closing off the wind, and there is seeming silence, at least momentarily, until one notices the sound of the wind rustling through the tops of the aspen and pine trees and brushing along the rock walls overhead. The grass is thick and soft, and tiny brooks course to the right and left behind the low hill that shuts off the eastern entrance to the cove. It is also beautiful, and, especially because of its history, shrinelike.
Martin Company campsite at Greasewood Creek. Here members of the Martin Company, after their descent from Prospect Hill on October 31, 1856, received the first supplies brought to them by the Grant rescue party.

But no beauty and relative comfort of any campsite could compensate for the bitter cold—and crowding—that occurred on November 1 and 2 at the camps at nearby Independence Rock and Devil's Gate. The temperature suddenly plummeted to below zero, the wind blew as usual, and over a thousand people of the Martin, Hodgett, Hunt, and Grant parties jammed into and around the several small buildings of the Devil’s Gate stockade that existed there in 1856. That Grant must have felt overwhelmed by the dilemma he faced is indicated by his pathetic appeal to Brigham Young for more help, which was written and dispatched by express on November 2. It reads in part:

The snow began to fall very fast, and continued until late at night. . . .

... You can imagine between five and six hundred men, women and children, worn down by drawing hand carts through snow and mud; fainting by the way side; falling, chilled by the cold; children crying, their limbs stiffened by the cold, their feet bleeding and some of them bare to snow and frost. The sight is almost too much for the stoutest of us; but we go on doing all we can, not doubting nor despairing.
Camp at Devil's Gate. The Martin, Hodgett, and Hunt emigrant companies joined the Grant rescue party here on November 2 and 3, 1856. This photograph looks north along the Sweetwater River from the campsite towards the river’s upstream entrance to Devil’s Gate.

Martin’s Cove. The Martin Company, forced to move from nearby Devil’s Gate Stockade because of the severely crowded conditions there, arrived here on November 4, 1856, after a terrible crossing of the Sweetwater River during a blizzard. The cove, nestled amongst rock escarpments, is protected not only by rock walls front, left, and rear, but also by a large, dune-line, brush-covered dirt hill to the immediate right.
Our company is too small to help much; it is only a drop to a bucket, as it were, in comparison to what is needed. I think not over one third of br. Martin's company is able to walk. This you may think is extravagant, but it is nevertheless true. Some of them have good courage and are in good spirits; but a great many are like little children and do not help themselves much more, nor realize what is before them.

"Nor realize," indeed. Although the Devil's Gate campsite was partially protected by both the terrain and the stockade buildings, it was woefully inadequate for so many, and the Martin Company, on November 4 under blizzard conditions, had to move on, and, in the move, perhaps the most stirring story of the company unfolded. Fortunately, Martin's Cove, which was well known to the rescue party, was only two miles further south along the trail; but it was also on the other side of the river. If the Martin Company could only get across the nearly frozen river and up into the cove, relative comfort, protection from the wind, and plenty of firewood could be theirs.

It was an awful trip, however. The windchill created by the frigid temperature and the high winds must have created conditions equivalent to at least sixty-five degrees below zero. Even though short in distance, the relatively steep climb into the cove was difficult in and of itself, but fording the Sweetwater, which ran fast, deep, and relatively wide through that vicinity, was a near impossible task for these people who had already suffered so much and who were weak, sick, and demoralized. John Jaques's account of the crossing of the Sweetwater largely matches Chislett's account of crossing the Rocky Ridges for its pathos.

It was here also that the rescue party played its most heroic role. Grant's men had been saviors several times over by then, but most memorable was their courage, willingness, and fresh strength in helping those devastated people—more than five hundred of them—ford that stream under the awful conditions that existed. Carrying men, women, and children on their backs, these good men crossed the freezing water, with the piercing winter wind blowing in their faces and against their wet bodies, back and forth, again and again. The rescuers could not, however, have brought all the emigrants over by themselves; there were far too few of them
Crossing of the Sweetwater River. On November 4, 1856, the Martin Company, assisted by members of the Grant rescue party, forded this river under extreme conditions of below-zero cold and driving wind in order to get to Martin's Cove, which offered the only protection from the storm. The cove is a half mile behind the photographer's position here. The photograph looks easterly, with Devil's Gate two miles away and slightly to the left.

and far too many emigrants. Many, if not most, emigrants had to get across by themselves, which of course they did, as John Jaques eloquently attested. It is a story of iron courage and will that should never be forgotten.129

Yet the camp at Martin's Cove can be considered the turning point of the disaster. The bitter cold continued and more members of the Martin Company died in the cove from the combined effects of all they had experienced, but then the enormity of the suffering and loss began to abate: On November 10, the Martin Company, followed by the Hodgett and Hunt wagon companies, now reasonably well fed and somewhat warmer, abandoned the handcarts and continued westward in comparably good weather, most of them in wagons pulled by strong teams. On that same day, the survivors of the Willie Company enjoyed their first full day safe,
well fed, and warm in Great Salt Lake City. Here the chronological narrative ends, although more bad weather, difficulty, heartbreak, and death remained ahead for the Martin, Hodgett, and Hunt Company Saints, who finally arrived in the valley between November 30 and December 15.

An exact accounting of those who perished has as yet not been determined and may never be determined. Although identification of those who perished in the Willie, Hodgett, and Hunt Companies may be nearly complete, an accounting of the deaths in the Martin Company is probably still well short of the mark.

Apparently, no daily journal was kept after October 18, the day before the winter storm struck. An estimate of the dead was reported to the advance express of the Grant rescue party as totaling fifty-six up to October 28, but no other counts were given other than a few deaths along the trail well beyond Martin’s Cove. A significant number of Saints must have died in the cove, however. The Martin Company arrived at the cove greatly debilitated from the ordeals of the crossing of the Platte two weeks previously, the struggle over Prospect Hill, the cold at Devil’s Gate, and, importantly, the terrible crossing of the Sweetwater the day they entered the cove.

Individual accounts indicate many deaths at Martin’s Cove, and some researchers feel that deaths there may have equaled or even exceeded those at Red Buttes. But few of those deaths have been confirmed by name or date. At the time of this publication, the confirmed totals for the disaster are as follows: 103 for the Martin Company, 74 for the Willie Company, 20 for the Hunt Company, and 9 for the Hodgett Company.  

Concluding Thoughts on Faith and Works

Reflection on the foregoing narrative, which focuses so sharply on the disaster, raises the question of faith. The enormity of the disaster is beyond doubting. The staggeringly dangerous crossing of the Platte, the starvation and emotional devastation at Sweetwater Station, the freezing at the Rocky Ridges and at Devil’s Gate, and the tortuous crossing of the Sweetwater—these and more experiences were so terrible that one wonders, not so much that as many
as two hundred died, but that more than a thousand lived. Only
great individual faith on the parts of these people can explain why.
The Willie and Martin Company handcart experience is arguably
the greatest story of the triumph of individual faith in the history
of the Mormon people. Indeed, coupled with the courage, tenacity,
endurance, and will to live that always accompany great faith,
the story is one of the great witnesses to faith in American history
that can inspire and strengthen us all.

Yet the disaster was also a terrible mistake that raises another
question—How could good men of great individual faith have
risked the lives of so many others so imprudently? This essay pur-
posefully opens with evidence regarding the mistake of allowing so
many people to go out on the plains so late in the season. It cannot
be glossed over any more than any other great mistake in history.
There are reasons why this tragedy occurred, and those reasons
may include a kind of overconfidence that God would guide the
emigrants safely through all the perils ahead, whether precipitated
by nature or by man. If any story can prove the folly of such over-
confidence, it is this one. The storms cruelly struck those people
down at the worst possible times. Only the immediate departure
of the initial element of the rescue effort from Great Salt Lake City
on a calm Indian summer day saved them. A few days' delay could
have resulted in the death of all of them.

Brigham Young seems entirely correct in his remarks of
November 2, when he rebuked Franklin D. Richards for not stop-
ping the last handcart companies in Nebraska. He also seems to
have been prophetically correct when he, paraphrasing the scrip-
tural passage that opens this essay, stated that the Lord would have
been responsible "after everything the Saints could do" to bring
the emigrants in if the rescue failed. On November 16, Brigham
Young explained:

If br. Willie's company had not been assisted by the people in
these valleys, and he and his company had lived to the best light
they had in their possession, had done everything they could have
done to cross the plains and done just as they did, asking no ques-
tions and having no doubting; or in other words, if, after their Presi-
dent or Presidents told them to go on the plains, they had gone in
full faith, had pursued their journey according to their ability, and
done all they could, and we could not have rendered them any assistance, it would have been just as easy for the Lord to send herds of fat buffaloes to lay down within twenty yards of their camp, as it was to send flocks of quails or to rain down manna from heaven to Israel of old.

My faith is, when we have done all we can then the Lord is under obligation and will not disappoint the faithful; he will perform the rest. If no other assistance could have been had by the companies this season, I think they would have had hundreds and hundreds of fat buffaloes crowding around their camp, so that they could not help but kill them. But, under the circumstances, it was our duty to assist them, and we were none too early in the operation.

It was not a rash statement for me to make at our last Conference, when I told you that I would dismiss the conference, if the people would not turn out, and that I, with my brethren, would go to the assistance of the companies. We knew that our brethren and sisters were on the plains and in need of assistance, and we had the power and ability to help them, therefore it became our duty to do so.

The Lord was not brought under obligation in the matter, so he had put the means in our possession to render them the assistance they needed. But if there had been no other way the Lord would have helped them, if he had had to send his angels to drive up buffaloes day after day, and week after week. I have full confidence that the Lord would have done his part; my only lack of confidence is that those who profess to be Saints will not do right and perform their duty.\footnote{132}

Fat buffalo were in fact near the emigrants’ camps, as Ephraim Hanks proved on November 11. Hanks came upon and easily shot two fat buffaloes on the trail along the Sweetwater very near where the Willie Company ran entirely out of food on October 18.\footnote{133} Did the Holy Ghost prompt the prophet of this? Had God truly positioned those fat buffaloes in preparation for the possibility that the rescue would start too late or otherwise fail in its mission? It is not impossible; and it is further possible that some number of the emigrants would have found enough food along the trail to survive had the entire rescue turned back at South Pass, but one must wonder at what additional cost.

That Brigham Young links faith with “when we have done all we can” should not surprise anyone. Besides being a great spiritual
leader, Brigham Young was a pragmatic man, a splendidly practical man, and, as much as anything else, this aspect of his character greatly contributed to the initial survival and ultimate success of all the Utah Saints. On November 30, the day the Martin Company arrived in Great Salt Lake City—but while the Hodgett and Hunt Companies and many of the rescuers were still in danger out on the plains—President Young stated that

the great majority of the brethren here, so far as we have called on them to assist this year’s immigration, have freely and nobly manifested their faith by their works. . . .

. . . Works have been most noble when they were needed; we put works to our faith, and in this case we realize that our faith alone would have been perfectly dead and useless, would have been of no avail, in saving our brethren that were in the snow, but by putting works with faith we have been already blest in rescuing many and bringing them to where we can now do them more good.134

The faith of team captain Levi Savage prompted him to warn the company before departing Florence that

the lateness of the Season was my only objection, of leaving this point for the mountains at this time. I spoke warmly upon the Subject, but spoke truth. . . . Willie then spoke again in reply to what I had said, evidently dissatisfied, and said that the God that he served was a God that was able to save to the utmost, that was the God that He served; and he wanted no Jobes co[m]forters with him. . . . I then said that what I had said, was truth. . . . I had spoken nothing but the truth, and he and others knew it.135

Savage’s objection was voted down by the majority of the company, and by several returning missionaries as well, including George D. Grant and William H. Kimball, who were among those appointed to arrange for outfitting the handcart companies at Iowa City and beyond. Although he had felt humiliated by Willie’s public reprimand, and later by Richards, Savage remained as a team captain and continued with the company. He proved to be of great service throughout and was one of the heroes of the trek.136

The faith of George D. Grant and William H. Kimball took them right back out on the trail in the vanguard of the resupply and rescue effort. For the next six weeks they gave everything they had to bring succor to those in need. They too were heroes.
The faith of James Willie, who may have been overconfident about the degree to which God would intervene, strengthened him to heroically do his duty to the utmost along the trail at great personal risk and suffering. Willie's dutifulness was willingly and liberally conceded by John Chislett, whose courage and duty were equal to anyone's, even though his own faith seems to have wavered sometime after the ordeal was over.137

Moreover, "after all we can do" calls for more than great individual faith on the part of leaders. Any leader must be dedicated to the lives and welfare of those the leader has been called to serve. Among other things, such dedication requires great care, concern, caution, restraint, and moral courage. Great care requires great foresight, planning, and preparation—planning that in turn requires being open to contingencies when unforeseen circumstances impose themselves sufficiently to make the risks too high. And this degree of concern sometimes requires the moral courage to make unpopular decisions. Some of those appointed to carry out the handcart plan, as fine and faithful as they all were, seem to have fallen short on this occasion in some of these elements of leadership, and, what is more, may have labored under an erroneous belief that God would "overrule" the elements sufficiently to assure success irrespective of the degree of risk. That is, in the face of sure knowledge of the many dangers, such faith may have led to decisions that simply risked too much.138

On September 13, according to John Chislett, Richards promised the Willie Company Saints that "though it might storm on our right and on our left, the Lord would keep open our way before us and "we should get to Zion in safety,""139 an apparent personal conviction that he repeated to the Church membership in Great Salt Lake City on October 5, the day after the Swiftsure Train dashed into Great Salt Lake City and exactly two weeks before the storms slammed into the emigrants head on.

The Saints that are now upon the plains, about one thousand with hand-carts, feel that it is late in the season, and they expect to get cold fingers and toes. But they have this faith and confidence towards God that he will overrule the storms that may come in the season thereof and turn them away, that their path may be freed from suffering more than they can bear.

They have confidence to believe that this will be an open fall.140
The emigrants had every reason to respond with such confidence—inexperienced, anxious, and so strongly assured by their authorities as they were—but those authorities did not.\textsuperscript{141} By the time John Chislett gave his powerful account, he had lost much of his faith, at least enough of it to have been cut off from the Church in 1864, apparently for his unwillingness to pay tithing. Nevertheless, he always maintained his gratitude for the rescuers, the prophet who sent them out so expeditiously, and the people of Utah who generously provided so much of the succor.\textsuperscript{142} Although most historians, and Church authorities as well, have quoted liberally from his tragic but eloquent account, few if any have quoted his conclusion, presumably because of his apparent bitterness after the fact. But it deserves to be quoted:

"After arriving in the Valley, I found that President Young, on learning, from the brethren who passed us on the road, of the lateness of our leaving the frontier, set to work at once to send us relief. It was the October Conference when they arrived with the news. Brigham at once suspended all conference business, and declared that nothing further should be done until every available team was started out to meet us. He set the example by sending several of his best mule teams laden with provisions. Heber Kimball did the same, and hundreds of others followed their noble example. People who had come from distant parts of the Territory to attend conference volunteered to go out to meet us, and went at once. The people who had no teams gave freely of provisions, bedding, etc.—all doing their best to help us..."

"Immediately that the condition of the suffering emigrants was known in Salt Lake City, the most fervent prayers for their deliverance were offered up. There, and throughout the Territory, the same was done as soon as the news reached the people. Prayers in the Tabernacle, in the school-house, in the family circle, and in the private prayer circles of the priesthood were constantly offered up to the Almighty, begging Him to avert the storm from us. Such intercessions were invariably made on behalf of Martin's company, at all the meetings which I attended after my arrival. But these prayers availed nothing more than did the prophesies of Richards and the elders. It was the stout hearts and strong hands of the noble fellows who came to our relief, the good teams, the flour, beef, potatoes, the warm clothing and bedding, \textit{and not prayers nor prophecies}, that saved us from death. It is a fact patent to all the old settlers in Utah, that the fall storms of 1856 were earlier and more severe than were ever known before or since. Instead of their prophecies being fulfilled and their prayers answered, it would
almost seem that the elements were unusually severe that season, as a rebuke to their presumption.\textsuperscript{143}

But let John Jaques, that good and faithful Saint who with his beloved family suffered so much with the Martin handcart company, have the last word. Long after the tragedy and still strong in the faith, he refused to find fault with anyone, especially Franklin D. Richards, who after the ordeal had so generously taken Jaques and his grieving family into his home and lovingly nurtured them back to health:

To all, the journey, with its great and incessant toils, its wearing hardships, and wasting privations, was a hard and bitter experience, wholly unanticipated. But to many, and especially to women and children who had been delicately brought up and tenderly cared for, and who had never known want nor had been subject to hardships previously, as well as to the weakly and elderly of both sexes, it was cruel to a degree far beyond the power of language to express, and the more so for the reason that the worst parts of the experience were entirely unnecessary, because avoidable by timely measures and more sagacious management.

The question may be asked, whom do I blame for the misadventures herein related. I blame nobody. I am not anxious to blame anybody. I am not writing for that purpose of blaming anybody, but to fill up a blank page of history with matters of much interest. I may say that notwithstanding the serious misfortunes of this company, I have no doubt that those who had to do with its management meant well, and tried to do the best they could under the circumstances.\textsuperscript{144}

Let the matter rest there. But at the same time, let all be reminded, and take whatever lessons from this towering story that might be of personal benefit—and of benefit to those whom we all may, from time to time, be called to serve.
NOTES

1The term “disaster” has been applied to the experience of the Willie and Martin handcart companies by many historians. For example, see B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century One, 6 vols. (Provo, Utah: Corporation of the President, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965), 4:82. John Jaques, a member of the Martin handcart company who was later a General Authority and assistant Church historian under Franklin D. Richards, forthrightly stated that the “expedition” was “a grand mistake” that was ultimately “fraught with disaster and death.” Jaques’s account was published under the title “Some Reminiscences” on the front page of the Salt Lake Daily Herald beginning on Sunday, December 1, 1878, and running serially each Sunday until January 19, 1879. A transcript of the series is available on microfilm at the Archives Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

2The best eyewitness accounts are the official or semiofficial journals of the Willie and Martin handcart companies; the Grant rescue party journal; the brief account of the Swiftsure Train of returning missionaries led by Franklin D. Richards; the Levi Savage journal; and the more extensive narrative accounts of several eyewitnesses to the disaster published after the fact. The narratives that I have relied on most are the comparatively more complete, detailed, and insightful accounts of John Chislett, a team captain in the Willie Company; John Jaques, at least initially a team captain in the Martin Company and an excellent writer; and Daniel W. Jones, a member of the Grant rescue party. Although written several years after the fact, their length and thoroughness, clarity, agreement with other eyewitness accounts, dignity, and seeming honesty make them especially valuable. All of the aforementioned journals are located in the LDS Church Archives.

3Brigham Young often looked for lessons to be learned from difficulty. See, for example, Brigham Young to Orson Pratt, October 30, 1856, in Millennial Star 19 (February 14, 1857): 99: “Let this be a lesson to us in future, not to start companies across the Plains so late. It is a great mistake.”


5For a fine brief account of all the handcart companies, see LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, Handcarts to Zion: The Story of a Unique Western Migration, 1856–1860 (1960; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

6The scheme was more than once labeled an “experiment.” See, for example, Erastus Snow to John Taylor, September 15, 1856, in Millennial Star 18 (November 1, 1856): 701.

7Sources concerning the people involved in planning and provisioning for the emigrant companies are somewhat sparse. Two references, however, give apparently reliable information on staffing. The April 12, 1856, issue of The Mormon, published in New York City by the Eastern States Mission, states:
APPOINTMENTS.—George D. Grant and William H. Kimball are appointed to purchase cattle for the coming emigration. Alexander Robbins is appointed to purchase provisions and general supplies for emigration, and carry them to Florence, the outfitting place for the plains.

Daniel Spencer is appointed general superintendent of emigration in the West, with liberty to call for such aid as he may need, in Iowa City and other places.

James H. Hart, of St. Louis, Mo., is appointed agent to receive orders and moneys for the purchase of cattle, wagons, provisions, &c., for the emigration. . . .

James McGaw, John Van Cott, William Walker, Joseph France, and all the elders going West, on the way to Utah, are requested to report themselves to Daniel Spencer, at Iowa city, and assist him, if needed. . . .


In a letter to Heber C. Kimball dated June 11, 1856, William Woodward reported that "Bro. Spencer is president of the emigration to Deseret from Europe. . . . James Ferguson assists him. . . . C. G. Webb superintends the making of handcarts, E. Bunker the making of ox-yokes." Andrew Jenson, Journal History of the Church, June 11, 1856, 1, LDS Church Archives.


10"General Epistle from the Council of the Twelve Apostles to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Abroad, Dispersed throughout the Earth," December 23, 1847, in Clark, Messages, 1:329.

11Brigham Young to Elders Orson Hyde, George A. Smith, and Ezra T. Benson, and the Saints Scattered Abroad, in Pottawatamie County, and Neighborhood," October 9, 1848, in Clark, Messages, 1:342.
13"Seventh General Epistle of the Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, from Great Salt Lake Valley, to the Saints Scattered throughout the Earth," April 18, 1852, in Clark, Messages, 2:94.
14"Eighth General Epistle of the Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, from Great Salt Lake Valley, to the Saints Scattered throughout the Earth," October 13, 1852, in Clark, Messages, 2:104.
15The Ellsworth Company required sixty-nine total days for the trip; both the McArthur and Bunker Companies required sixty-five days. Departure and arrival information is given in several sources, especially Jenson, Journal History; and Hafen and Hafen, Handcarts.
16See Hafen and Hafen, Handcarts, 46, 91-98. According to Franklin D. Richards, the Willie Company consisted of "404 persons, 6 wagons, 87 handcarts, 6 yoke of oxen, 32 cows, and 5 mules"; the Martin Company consisted of "some 576 persons, 146 hand-carts, 7 wagons, 6 mules and horses, and 50 cows and beef cattle; also one wagon mostly loaded with church goods"; the Hunt Company consisted of "240 persons, 50 wagons, 297 oxen and cows, 7 horses and mules, and some 4 church wagons" and that the "majority of this company have light loads and good teams, and are generally well provisioned"; and the Hodgett Company consisted of "150 persons, 33 wagons, 84 yoke of oxen, 19 cows and some 250 head of heifers and other loose cattle." Franklin D. Richards and Daniel Spencer to Brigham Young, in Deseret News, October 22, 1856, 258. See also Jenson, Journal History, October 4, 1856, 1-2. Such statistics are reported in several other trail journals, cited in later notes. These counts give a total of 1,370 persons late out on the plains. The Willie Company, which numbered 500 persons upon departure from Iowa City, dropped to 404 upon departure from Florence.
17See Maps, U.S. Department of Interior, Geological Survey, topographic quadrangle 7.5-minute series, scale 1:25,000, for Wyoming; and maps, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, topographic quadrangle 30 x 60-minute series (Surface Management Status), scale 1:100,000, for Wyoming. The name "Rocky Ridges" describes the cobblestone-like surface of the trail more than it does the surrounding terrain. Although remote and largely empty of significant human habitation, concrete posts have been installed along the trail in recent times between Sweetwater Station and Rock Creek. Plastic stakes mark the trail between Red Buttes and Greasewood Creek.
19See, for example, William Clayton, William Clayton's Journal: A Daily Record of the Journey of the Original Company of "Mormon" Pioneers from Nauvoo, Illinois, to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1921), 229-30. Clayton's journal is an excellent companion when studying the 1856 trail journals dealing with the handcart experience. The trail varies somewhat in the immediate vicinity of present-day Casper, Wyoming, but is the same elsewhere. Most of the trail is easily accessible by four-wheel-drive vehicle between Red Buttes and Devil's Gate. The highway south and west of Devil's Gate either traces exactly or crosses the trail in several places as far as Sweetwater Station. Restricted ranch roads, sections of Bureau of Land Management roads,
and sections of trail follow the route exactly between Sweetwater Station and South Pass.

20These campsites are easily accessible by hard-surface highway, unsurfaced roads, or trail. Several are identified by posts or historical monuments or displays.

21Regarding the well-marked Rock Creek campsite, see “James G. Willie Emigrating Company,” Journal, typescript, LDS Church Archives. In the appendix to that journal, William Woodward, who acted as “clerk of the camp from October 1st till our arrival in G. S. L. City,” stated that the camp occupied by the Willie Company on October 23–24 was “near Willow Creek on the banks of the Sweetwater.” If so, this would place the Willie Company camp not at Rock Creek, but at the same location as the Grant rescue party camp of October 19–20, which location, when accounting for the downstream detour to the Sweetwater, was about four miles further. Personal reconnaissance of both the Rock Creek campsite and the site where Willow Creek enters the Sweetwater, however, strongly indicates that the Willie Company camped at the excellent site at Rock Creek.

22Hiking over this part of the trail in winter, in addition to the trail being slippery and sticky, is lonely to the point being a little scary. Beyond the Rocky Ridges to the west, the trail is easily lost in the snow and wet meadows typical of the high country above timberline. The concrete posts, which can be easily spotted now, are extremely valuable for staying on course, although they can be confusing also, especially in the vicinity of McLean Meadows, where two trails—the older Oregon/Mormon Trail and the Pony Express Trail, established a few years later—and segments of recent range roads intersect or cross each other. Compass and map are advisable for those interested in traversing this fascinating backcountry on foot.

23Pioneer trail accounts repeatedly mention the wind. During my visits to Wyoming in February and March 1997, the wind blew hard every day, all day. The flag stood straight out from the pole at the rest station at South Pass. When asked about the wind at Muddy Gap, just south of Devil’s Gate, the gas-station attendant gave me the station’s business card, which has a windchill chart on the back. I had difficulty maintaining my balance when walking in the strong east wind from Sun Ranch to Martin’s Cove and back. (It would have been a very strong east wind that blew down many, if not all, the tents of the Martin Company one night while they were in the cove.) The folks at Sun Ranch stated that the windchill reached seventy degrees below zero or more several times during the winter of 1996–97. At the campground at Fort Caspar, after being kept awake all night listening to the wind, I asked the campground attendant if the wind always blew around there. He wryly motioned his head toward a sign on the wall, which lists the five most often asked questions around there. Question 1 reads: “Does the wind always blow around here?”

24Many sources give windchill information. See notes 61 and 62 below for references.

25Savage wrote that Atwood, although he apparently did not speak openly, confided to Savage that “with all his experience, he had never been placed in a position where things appear so dark to him, as it does to undertake to take this Company through at this late Season of the year.” Levi Savage, Journal, August 12, 1856, holograph, LDS Church Archives. This is a splendid journal, many of its entries being detailed, richly written, honest, and self-deprecating. Written in the
bold hand of one of the Willie Company’s captains of hundred, it stands with the longer narratives of Chislett and Jaques as one of the most valuable eyewitness accounts of the Willie and Martin handcart disaster. It has the added value of having been written on the spot.

26Savage, Journal, August 13, 1856. The prophetic accuracy of this statement, written on a warm day in August, is striking. See Savage, Journal, October 22–24, 1856.


28Savage, Journal, August 15, 1856. This would have made the decision unanimous on the part of the emigrants’ “authorities.”


32Jaques, Salt Lake Daily Herald, December 1, 1878.


34See Young, “Remarks,” November 12, 1856, 283; compare Young, in Journal of Discourses, 4:66–70, November 2, 1856. In his October 30, 1856, letter to Orson Pratt, who had replaced Richards as president of the European Mission, Young stated that “the immigration is too late; this is an evil that must be remedied in future.” Young to Pratt, October 30, 1856, 97.

35I am indebted to Stella Jaques Bell, for her book-length biographical account of John Jaques, which incorporates his diaries, letters, and other writings, the extensive account of his sister-in-law Patience Loader Rozsa, who was also a member of the Martin Company, and the series of reminiscences published by Jaques in the Salt Lake Daily Herald. Stella Jaques Bell, Life History and Writings of John Jaques (Rexburg: Ricks College Press, 1978). Bell states in her dedication that Jaques’s diaries and letters, which were owned and kept by the family, were lost in the Teton Dam Disaster of 1976. The information regarding the Asia is found at pages 100 and 123. See also “Departures,” Millennial Star 18 (August 9, 1856): 504. Further regarding the Richards party’s trip to Florence, see J. Linforth to Asa Calkins and the brethren in the Millennial Star Office, September 1, 1856, in Millennial Star 18 (October 25, 1856): 683–84.

36Cyrus H. Wheelock to J. A. Little, September 2, 1856, in Millennial Star 18 (October 25, 1856): 681–82.

37Richards and Spencer to Young. The term “Swiftsure Train” was used several times by contemporary observers. Erastus Snow reported that this very well-equipped train “consisted of four carriages and three light wagons, hauled by four mules each.” Erastus Snow to President John Taylor, September 15, 1856, in Millennial Star 18 (November 1, 1856): 701. John Chislett described it as “a grand outfit of carriages and light wagons” with “each vehicle drawn by four horses or mules, and all the appointments seemed to be first rate.” “Mr. Chislett’s Narrative,” pt. 1 of ch. 37, in T. B. H. Stenhouse, The Rocky Mountain Saints: A Full and Complete History of the Mormons, from the First Vision of Joseph Smith to
the Last Courtship of Brigham Young (New York: D. Appleton, 1873), 319 (hereafter cited as Chislett Narrative). It may be that Richards hurried on to Great Salt Lake City as quickly as possible to report that many more emigrants were still on the trail. No records show, however, that Richards himself said anything more than that he hurried in hopes of getting to the city in time to attend the October Conference of the Church. See, for example, Savage, Journal, September 13, 1856.

On the parts of the returning missionaries, confidence in the handcart "experiment" seems to have been high. Richards, in a letter to J. A. Little, stated:

But for the lateness of the rear companies, everything seems equally propitious for a safe and profitable wind-up at the far end. From the beginning we have done all in our power to hasten matters pertaining to emigration, therefore we confidently look for the blessing of God to crown our humble efforts with success, and for the safe arrival of our brethren the poor Saints in Utah, though they may experience some cold. (Franklin D. Richards to J. A. Little, September 3, 1856, in Millennial Star 18 [October 25, 1856]: 682)

Cyrus H. Wheelock wrote:

The presence of brothers Franklin, Spencer, and my humble self among them seemed like the magic of heaven. Their spirits and bodies seemed almost instantly refreshed, and when we passed up and down the lines we were met with those hearty greetings that none but Saints know how to give and appreciate. All were in good spirits, and generally in good health, and full of confidence that they should reach the mountains in season to escape severe storms. . . . I have never seen more union among the Saints anywhere than is manifested in the hand-cart companies. And hundreds bear record of the truth of the words of President Young, wherein he promised them increasing strength by the way. (Wheelock to Little, September 2, 1856)

Erastus Snow, who saw the returning missionaries off at Florence and then returned east, wrote that "so far as yet known, the experiment with hand-carts is likely to succeed quite as well as the most ardent advocate of the measure could have anticipated." Snow to Taylor, September 15, 1856.

Young, "Remarks," November 12, 1856, 283; compare Brigham Young, in Journal of Discourses, 4:67, November 2, 1856.

See "Fourteenth General Epistle of the Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to the Saints in the Valleys of the Mountains, and Those Scattered Abroad throughout the Earth," December 10, 1856, in Clark, Messages, 2:200. The epistle states in part:

In the first place, our emigration MUST start earlier in the season, and the necessary arrangements MUST be made and completed by the time they arrive on the western frontier, and no company must be permitted to leave the Missouri river later than the first day of July.
They must be provided with stronger hand-carts, and endeav-
or so to arrange as to have the burden upon each cart vary as little
as possible during the journey. [Rather] than starting with such
heavy loads and lightening them up so soon, it would be better to
start with lighter loads and gradually increase them, as the brethren
become more accustomed to the labour. This might be accom-
plished by sending out a few teams with provisions a few days in
advance of the companies, to be taken on the handcarts as they
come up, when the teams could return. (italics in original)

The General Epistle to the Saints dated December 23, 1847, suggested
being ready to depart from Winter Quarters on May 1. Clark, Messages, 1:329.
The Sixth General Epistle, dated September 22, 1851, instructed that emigrants
should be ready to depart Winter Quarters in April. Clark, Messages, 2:89. Prior to
the Martin and Willie Companies arriving in the Great Salt Lake Valley, President
Young instructed Orson Pratt “not to permit any company to leave the Missouri
river later than the first of August, and it is far more preferable that they leave
early in June or May.” Young to Pratt, October 30, 1856, 97. See also Brigham
Young to Orson Pratt, July 19, 1856, in Millennial Star 18 (October 11, 1856):
651, and for an apparent response, see the editorial under the title “Emigration”

These sources imply that the suggested safe departure date from Winter
Quarters varied from as early as April to as late as August 1. There is apparently
no record of a safe departure date after May being mentioned before the spring
of 1856, however. Jedediah M. Grant, of the First Presidency, summed up the
matter of the safe departure date from Winter Quarters in his remarks of Novem-
ber 12, 1856:

The grand difficulty with a portion of our immigration this year has
been starting in the forepart of September instead of the first part of
May. . . . Unless I have different feelings to what I now have, I should
never wish to see a train leave the Missouri river after the middle of
June, or after the first day of July at the latest. (Jedediah M. Grant,
“Discourse,” Deseret News, November 12, 1856, 284)

41Young, “Remarks,” November 12, 1856, 283; compare Young, in Journal
of Discourses, 4:68, November 2, 1856.
42Although all companies apparently worked from a base of one pound per
person per day, women and children were apparently, in varying amounts, allot-
ted less.
43The five handcart companies after 1856 took far longer; one company
took sixty-nine days, the same amount of time taken by the Ellsworth Company in
1856, but the other four averaged eighty-five days. See Hafen and Hafen, Hand-
carts, 193 and throughout.
44This and all further estimates of food shortage have been roughly calcu-
lated from company rosters and allotments of different amounts of flour depend-
ing on gender and age. In the absence of exact data, these estimates can only be
approximate; they have, however, been made conservatively. In most instances,
the shortages were probably worse than the estimates in this essay. An example
of the lack of exactness that leaves a question is William Woodward's statement that "From Iowa City to Florence, we had 10 ounces of flour per day, a little or no groceries. When we left Missouri River we had not quite enough provisions for sixty days at 1 lb. per head each, per day." William Woodward to Wilford Woodruff, February 17, 1857, in Jenson, Journal History, February 17, 1857, 17; italics added.

45Brigham Young to Franklin D. Richards, September 30, 1855, in Millennial Star 17 (December 22, 1856): 814.

46"Taking 15 miles as the average rate per day at which a company with hand-carts would travel, the journey would be performed in 70 days. . . . If the companies average twenty miles per day on the last half of the journey, it will reduce the time to sixty days, or two-thirds of that occupied by heavily loaded ox trains. We believe that experience will prove sixty days to be about the medium time that it will require to cross the plains." "Emigration," Millennial Star 17 (December 22, 1856): 810.

47A lack of knowledge or concern regarding numbers is indicated by the Millennial Star in its May 3, 1856, feature "News from the United States." In March 1856, George D. Grant and W. H. Kimball "contracted for 100 hand-carts of excellent quality, at about two guineas each." "News from the United States," Millennial Star 18 (May 3, 1856): 281. The Ellsworth, McArthur, and Bunker Companies departed Iowa City with 164 handcarts. The 266 handcarts needed by the Willie and Martin Companies had to be crafted, of unseasoned wood, by the Willie and Martin emigrants themselves. This created a delay of at least three weeks, which delay ultimately proved devastating. This reference, of course, could have been one of several other such notices that did not get published. Nevertheless, the emigration required at least 430 well-made handcarts, and extant evidence indicates that those in charge of the emigration in Iowa City fell far short of that number in time to prevent dangerous delays. See Hafen and Hafen, Handcarts, 193.

48Young to Pratt, July 19, 1856, 651.

49A year previously, Heber C. Kimball had written Richards that "about 40,000 lbs. of flour started out last week to meet our present emigration who are now on the road." Heber C. Kimball to Franklin D. Richards, August 31, 1855, in Millennial Star 17 (November 17, 1855): 730.

50Daniel Spencer to Brigham Young, June 19, 1856, in Deseret News, August 6, 1856, 173.

51Daniel D. McArthur to Wilford Woodruff, January 5, 1857, in Hafen and Hafen, Handcarts, 215; see also "Official Journal of the First Handcart Company," August 30–31, 1856, in Hafen and Hafen, Handcarts, 209. Although evidence on the resupply train that provided flour to the Ellsworth and McArthur Companies (and probably the Bunker Company) at Deer Creek is sketchy, it is apparent that the train was privately owned by John Smith. Franklin D. Richards reported that "near Independence Rock, we nooned near Patriarch John Smith and two other brethren, who had come out with flour for the companies. Br. Smith returned with us." Richards and Spencer to Young.

52"We had no idea there were any more companies upon the Plains, until our brethren arrived [on October 4, 1856], presuming that they would consider their late arrival in America, and not start them across the Plains until another year, but so it is, and now too late to remedy." Young to Pratt, October 30, 1856, 99.

Savage, Journal, July 24, 1856. Again, planners may have anticipated that the emigrants would augment their supplies by purchasing food from Iowa farmers and merchants along the trail. Apparently, such purchases were minimal—perhaps owing to a lack of funds.

Chislett Narrative, 316. See also Woodward to Woodruff, 17.

The combined total of emigrants in the two trains was about 950. See note 16 above.

For good information on mileages, consult Clayton, Emigrant's Guide, ed. Kimball. William H. Kimball to Franklin D. Richards, April 7, 1856, in Millennial Star 18 (May 24, 1856): 333, reported that “the route from Iowa City to this place [Florence, or Winter Quarters] is 277 miles.”

On July 14, Levi Savage commented on the potential difficulty that the seventeen-pound limit would pose: “Agreeable to Council we Solde and hired carried all luggage over 17 lbs per person this makes us rather destitute for wearing apperil, and Beding.” Savage, Journal, July 14, 1856. See also Savage, Journal, October 19, 1856.

See, for example, George D. Grant to Brigham Young, November 2, 1856, in Deseret News, November 19, 1856, 293.

For comments by eyewitnesses, see Savage, Journal, August 13 and 22, 1856; “Willie Emigrating Company,” Journal, appendix.

For useful information on this malady, see Daniel F. Danzl and Robert S. Pozos, “Accidental Hypothermia,” New England Journal of Medicine 331 (December 29, 1994): 1756-60; and Evan L. Lloyd, “Temperature and Performance I: Cold,” British Medical Journal 309 (August 20-27, 1994): 531-34. Hypothermia strikes silently and unobserved, is hard to shake off, and can kill quickly. I have had two personal experiences with mild hypothermia: on the summit of Mount Fujiyama, Japan, in June 1956, and during and immediately after the Seattle Marathon in 1980. These experiences proved to me how quickly and silently it takes effect and how hard it is to throw off. In both cases, even after being warmed by vigorous physical activity under sunny conditions after coming quickly down from the summit of Mount Fujiyama or by hot showers and warm blankets after the Seattle Marathon, I experienced uncontrollable shaking for about seven hours. The Seattle Post-Intelligencer and Seattle Times reported that more than 250 runners were hospitalized with hypothermia following the 1980 Seattle Marathon, which was run on a cold, wet day where the wind blew the rain horizontally—probably somewhat like the conditions (though in Seattle it was much warmer) that prevailed along the Mormon Trail at the crossing of the Platte and along the Sixteen Mile Drive on October 19, 1856.


There is misery on the trail, and pain, and death. . . .

. . . The vast majority of weather-caused fatalities—among veterans as well as novices—result from hypothermia, whereby the body loses more heat than it can generate. . . .
. . . Muscles become clumsy, thinking gets tangled. . . .

A common misconception is that hypothermia is a danger only at below-freezing temperatures. . . . Wind chill can cause hypothermia at temperatures far above freezing.

Moisture cools somewhat by wetting the skin but mainly by reducing the insulation value of clothing; the thermal conductivity of water is 240 times greater than that of still air. Hypothermia is not confined to high ridges but can occur in low forests from water chill. The combination of wind and rain is particularly lethal. (Manning, Backpacking, 76–79; italics in original)

63See Chislett Narrative, 317. Just how many pounds were placed on the handcarts is hard to determine and probably varied to a considerable extent. Chislett, a captain of a hundred, commented on the typical load:

“To each hundred there were five round tents, with twenty persons to a tent; twenty hand-carts or one to every five persons; and one Chicago wagon . . . to haul provisions and tents. Each person was limited to seventeen pounds of clothing and bedding, making eighty-five pounds of luggage to each cart. To this were added such cooking utensils as the little mess of five required. But their cuisine being scanty, not many articles were needed, and I presume the average would not exceed fifteen to twenty pounds, making in all a little over a hundred pounds on each cart.” (Chislett Narrative, 314–15; italics in original)

Other evidence indicates that at Florence the tents were placed on handcarts in order to further reduce the weight of each supply wagon. See Jaques, Salt Lake Daily Herald, December 8, 1878. This being so, at least one out of every four handcarts would have had the extra weight of one twenty-person tent, which would have weighed as much as fifty pounds.

64See Chislett Narrative, 318; and “Willie Emigrating Company,” Journal, September 1856 and throughout. This is one of the most useful documents dealing with the 1856 handcart story. It is arguably the best-kept journal of any of the ten handcart companies.

65Chislett Narrative, 318.

66The three-day delay had the effect of costing the company about nine hundred pounds of flour.

67Chislett Narrative, 318.

68See Jaques Journal, August 25, 1856, in Bell, Writings of John Jaques, 129. With the Martin Company’s departure from the Florence staging area on August 27, for the next thirty days all five 1856 handcart companies were traveling on the trail.

69Chislett Narrative, 319. See also Savage, Journal, August 13 and September 13, 1856. Savage was openly humiliated by Willie on August 13, especially when Willie in effect labeled him as a sort of whining “Jobes Comforter.” On September 13, Willie, apparently still angry at Savage, misinterpreted (to Richards) Savage’s August 13 opposition to leaving Florence so late in the season, which
evoked Richards’s further censure. The misinterpretation was not so much that Savage opposed the late departure, but that he had opposed the entire handcart “sistem” or “skeeem,” a matter that Savage vigorously denied in his journal both on August 13 and September 13. On September 13, Savage went on to state that “Brother Richards repremanded me Sharply. Bro. Willey Said that the Spirit that I had manifested from Iowa City. This is Something unknown to me and Something he never before expressed. I had always the best of feelings toward him, and Supposed he had to ward me until now.” Savage, Journal, September 13, 1856.

Savage’s journal, which has been preserved in his own hand, is hard to refute in retrospect. This incidence smacks of an age-old vexation—and challenge—for leaders: controlling one’s ego and pride when one’s judgment is honestly questioned by a subordinate. It is to Willie’s great credit, however, that, whatever his pride, he did not replace Savage as a captain of one the company’s hundreds when Savage offered to step down on August 14. See Savage, Journal, August 14, 1856. Willie was a great leader and proved it many times when the chips were down, and he knew a good man when he saw one. Willie, Savage, and Chislett were great men—heroes of the first order—throughout the course of the disaster.

70Chislett Narrative, 319.
72Chislett Narrative, 319; and see Savage, Journal, September 29, 1856.
73Savage, Journal, October 10, 1856.
75Savage, Journal, September 17, 1856.
76Savage, Journal, September 23, 1856.
77Savage, Journal, September 27, 1856.
78See Chislett Narrative, 319; and Savage, Journal, September 29, 1856.
79“Brother Richards has no cattle provided for us here, & no other provisions made.”
80Savage, Journal, October 1, 1856; see also “Willie Emigrating Company,” Journal, October 1, 1856.
81Shortage of supplies at this late date is understandable; merchants along the trail can have been expected to have sold out their stocks as completely as possible by the end of the emigration season, which normally extended to the end of July.
82Woodward to Woodruff, 17. These amounts were condensed by Savage to be “an average of 12 oz flour per head.” He went on to state that “we are not certain of Supplies before arriving at the Pacific Springs.” Savage, Journal, October 4 and 6, 1856. See also Chislett Narrative, 319; and James G. Willie, “Synopsis of the 4th Hand Cart Company’s Trip from Liverpool, England, to Great Salt Lake City in the Spring, Summer and Autumn of 1856,” in Jenson, Journal History, November 9, 1856, 8–15.
84“Willie Emigrating Company,” Journal, September 3, 13, 15, 21, 22, 26; October 1, 3, and 4, 1856.
85Bell, *Writings of John Jaques*, 306–7. That is, by October 9, both companies had already suffered more deaths than any other handcart company experienced during their entire trek.
The flour ration fell to four ounces per day. In addition to the flour ration, considerable beef was killed and served to the company, as had been the case most of the journey. But the cattle had now grown so poor that there was little flesh left on them, and that little was as lean as could be. The problem was how to cook it to advantage. Stewed meat and soups were found to be bad for diarrhoea and dysentery, provocative of and aggravating those diseases, of which there was considerable in the company, and to fry lean meat without an atom of fat in it or out of it was disgusting to every cook in camp.

See Jenson, Journal History, October 1, 1856 and throughout, for daily weather reports for Great Salt Lake City on most dates in October and November; especially see Henry E. Phelps, "Meteorological Observations for October, 1856," Deseret News, November 5, 1856, 280. Brief weather synopses are given in this concise table for each day in October. According to Phelps, noon temperatures ranged from seventy to seventy-eight degrees between October 1 and 6. Phelps, "Meteorological Observations."

Harvey Cluff’s Account of the Rescue,” in Hafen and Hafen, Handcarts, 232.

Savage, Journal, October 6, 1856.
Woodward to Woodruff, 16.
Savage, Journal, October 11, 1856.
Savage, Journal, October 15, 1856.
Chislett Narrative, 320.
Chislett Narrative, 320. Chislett probably knew nothing about hypothermia, but he ably described its effects.
See Clayton, Emigrants’ Guide. At first glance, this is not significant information, but it almost forced a fatal decision. The discovery that the lead handcart company was not yet west of South Pass, according to his own admission, started Grant thinking that the emigrants might have “wintered over” some significant distance east of South Pass. Had he acted on that hunch and turned around when the storm hit on October 19, all the emigrants might have perished in the absence of the succor and hope that Grant’s rescue party ultimately rendered to both beleaguered handcart companies. Richards estimated that the Willie Company was averaging fifteen miles per day. In actuality it was averaging only twelve miles per day. To have covered the 582 miles from North Bluff Fork to Black’s Fork in the thirty-one days since Richards parted company with the Willie Company, that company would have had to average almost nineteen miles per day.
A difference in average daily travel of three miles over a sixty-day period, the period estimated for each handcart company to make the trek from Florence to Great Salt Lake City, equates to twelve extra travel days. The Willie Company would need more than 3,500 extra pounds of flour to make up the difference; the Martin Company, about 5,000 pounds. That is, small deviations from inflexible estimates can yield major errors when so many people are involved; in this instance as many as 1,400 people, and 1,400 pounds of flour per day, were involved.

98Jaques, Salt Lake Daily Herald, December 8, 1878.
99Chislett Narrative, 320–21.
100Jaques, Salt Lake Daily Herald, January 5, 1856.
102By then there were also three deaths in the Hunt wagon company. Jesse Haven, Journal, October 4 and 13, 1856, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives. See “Willie Emigrating Company,” Journal, throughout, and Bell, Writings of John Jaques, 305–7 and throughout. Owing to the incompleteness of extant evidence, the death count, up to October 19 and especially beyond, cannot be assessed with total accuracy.
104Jaques, Salt Lake Daily Herald, December 15, 1978. Although tolls fluctuated, apparently the per-wagon toll was $3 in May 1856; see George A. Smith to Editor of the Deseret News, April 28, 1856, in Deseret News, May 14, 1856, 76. For other details about the Platte (or Richard’s) Bridge, see Robert A. Murray, “Trading Posts, Forts and Bridges of the Casper Area—Unraveling the Tangle on the Upper Platte,” in Bison Hunters to Black Gold: A Brief History of the Fort Caspar Area from Pre-historic Times to Oil Development (Casper: Wyoming Historical Press, 1986), 6–9. Tolls for wagons are given but not for handcarts.
105The storm covered a wide area, including the Wasatch Front; see “Snow,” Deseret News, October 29, 1856; Jenson, Journal History, October 19–21, 1856; and Phelps, “Meteorological Observations.”
107At least fourteen members of the Willie Company died between October 1 and 19. Several if not most probably died from hypothermia. See “Willie Emigrating Company,” Journal, October 1, 1856, and throughout.
108See Juanita Brooks, ed., On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 2:605; and Jenson, Journal History, November 11, 1856, 1. The resupply effort nearly came apart completely, with as many as half the teams turning back. For a discussion of this

109 Jesse Haven of the Hodgett Company indicates that those still on the trail after December 1 had to leave many wagons and teams at Fort Bridger and race against the weather to get through the high passes of the Wasatch before those passes were buried under many feet of snow. See Haven, Journal, December 1–14, 1856.

110 Chislett Narrative, 324; and note 85 of this essay.

111 Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years among the Indians* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1890), 64.

112 Accounts describing where the Martin Company forded the Platte are ambiguous and misleading. By piecing the accounts together, however, it becomes apparent that the company, upon passing the Platte (Richard’s) Bridge, which was located just downstream of the big bend of the Platte, at present-day Evansville, Wyoming, continued along the east bank of the river to a crossing somewhere between four and six miles upstream from the bridge, then continued upstream on the west bank to their camp at Red Buttes, which was probably just across from present-day Bessemer Bend. The company could have forded the river at several places in this vicinity. Part of the confusion arises from the name Red Buttes being applied to several features, both historically and geographically, which are several miles apart.

113 See Grant to Young, November 2, 1856. Joseph A. Young, who on November 2 had been dispatched by Grant to report the plight of the Martin Company to President Young, arrived in GreatSalt Lake City on November 13, and spoke at the Tabernacle on November 16. “Capt. Martin informed us that about 56 of 600 had died upon the plains, up to that date [October 28].” Joseph A. Young, “Remarks,” *Deseret News*, November 19, 1856, 292. If John Jaques’s accounting is correct that nineteen members of the company died from August 27 to October 19, no more than thirty-seven individuals could have died between October 19 and October 28. See Bell, *Writings of John Jaques*, 306–7.


116 Bell, *Writings of John Jaques*, 150.

117 Chislett Narrative, 326–29; and Savage, Journal, October 23–24, 1856. Levi Savage, in his rich account of the Rocky Ridges ordeal of October 23, fully corroborates Chislett. In addition to the descriptions of the difficulty encountered by everyone and of the courage of the many emigrants involved, these accounts also indicate the dedication to duty and heroism of Willie, Savage, and Chislett, who unstintingly served the company under blizzard conditions throughout the day and night of October 23–24.

118 See “Willie Emigrating Company,” *Journal*, October 1, 1856 and throughout; and Bell, *Writings of John Jaques*, 306–7. William Woodward recorded each of the thirty-seven deaths in the Willie Company individually by name, date, and location. For Martin Company deaths, see note 113 above.

119 See Jaques, *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, January 5, 1879, for the Martin Company’s itinerary of camps between Red Buttes and Martin’s Cove from October 29 to November 4, 1856.
See, for example, Clayton, *Journal*, 244–45; and see Stanley B. Kimball’s recent description in Clayton, *Emigrants’ Guide*, 67.


This information comes from my personal reconnaissance. In a February 1997 attempt to traverse this section, the mud piled up on my one-ton van so thickly and the road was so slippery that I had to turn back. In March 1997, I hiked up through the Rocky Ridges in very similar conditions of snow mixed with mud. In addition to slipping a lot, I had to deal with heavy mud buildup on my boots, the combination of which made the climb tedious and difficult.

Jones, *Forty Years*, 68. This is a remarkable assertion for a man who had witnessed so much danger and difficulty during his many years on the frontier.

Bell, *Writings of John Jaques*, 150. Willow Springs is beyond the Rocky Avenue and just short of the crest of Prospect Hill.

These are the Granite Mountains; see map on pages 14–15.


Grant to Young, November 2, 1856. Joseph A. Young rushed the dispatch westward on horseback on November 3. He arrived in Great Salt Lake City on November 13, having averaged thirty-three miles per day.


One of the most splendid stories about the tragedy is the sacrifice and heroism of so many rescuers. As a remarkable example, no fewer than seven sons or nephews of the three members of the First Presidency of the Church were represented. George D. Grant, President Jedediah M. Grant’s nephew, who had so strongly urged that the Martin Company go on late from Florence, nevertheless on October 7, only three days after arriving in Salt Lake City with the Swiftsure Train, went right back as the leader of the advance resupply party. He took with him his teenage son George W. Grant. Three sons of Heber C. Kimball were involved. Like George D. Grant, William H. Kimball was also in Florence in August 1856 and urged the Martin Company to go out regardless of circumstances. And, like Grant, he went back only three days after arriving home with the Swiftsure Train. He was accompanied on the rescue by his two younger brothers David P. Kimball and Heber P. Kimball. And two of Brigham Young’s sons were involved. Joseph A. Young had also just arrived with the Swiftsure Train and went right back with Grant’s advance party. Lastly, Brigham Young Jr. assisted the rescue as one of those who kept the trail open through the high passes of the Wasatch. Two of the four young men named by John Jaques as the heroes who carried members of the Martin Company across the Sweetwater on November 4 were teenagers George W. Grant and David P. Kimball. Bartholomew and Arrington, *Rescue*, 21–29, 47–49, 54 n. 31, 58 n. 99.

James Willie reported a total of seventy-seven deaths for his company. The number of deaths for the Martin Company cannot be precisely determined. John Jaques, who acted as an unofficial scribe for the company, entered deaths into his diary as they occurred until October 18, 1856, when his diary ended—understandably the day before the storm struck and his attention turned to survival of his family and himself. Later he stated, “I do not know what the mortality
amounted to. My general impression has been that it was about one in six, but others who claim to know put it at about 100, or about one-eighth of the entire number that left Liverpool in the ship Horizon in the spring.” Jaques, Salt Lake Daily Herald, December 22, 1878. Other, not very reliable, estimates are much higher—as high as 150. Hafen and Hafen, Handcarts, 193. B. H. Roberts apparently combed the records to get an accurate number for the Comprehensvive History, but could only conclude:

The exact number of those who perished in this company is not of record in our official annals; and it is difficult to fix upon any approximate number with certainty. . . . All things considered the estimate of Chislett and Jaques,—putting their estimate at 145—is perhaps not far from the facts. And these added to Willie’s seventy-seven deaths, brings the total of deaths to 222. (Roberts, Comprehensive History, 4:101)

Stella Jaques Bell lists only two more deaths in her compilation from the combined writings of Jaques and Patience Loader Rozsa: William Whittaker at Willow Springs on October 30, and Flora Loader Jaques, John and Zilpah Jaques’s daughter, who died at Green River, Wyoming, on November 22, just one week before the company arrived in Great Salt Lake City. Of this heartbreaking loss, Patience Loader Rozsa said, “My sister’s . . . dear little two year old girl died near Fort Bridger. She wrapped her in a blanket and fetched her into Salt Lake City” where she “was buried in Franklin D. Richards’ lot” (Bell, Writings of John Jaques, 170, 172; see also 307). Jaques mentioned one more death, that of George P. Waugh, who “died at our last camping ground.” Jaques, Salt Lake Daily Herald, January 19, 1879.

Intensive research of extant records is under way by members of the Riverton Wyoming Stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as an essential part of their highly commendable “Second Rescue” effort—the carrying out of temple ordinances for all those who perished and for their families. The individuals who make up the 206 total listed in the text here, which have been confirmed by the Riverton Stake, are listed by name and by company at the Devil’s Gate Visitors’ Center.

131 See Young, “Remarks,” November 12, 1856, 283; compare Brigham Young, in Journal of Discourses, 4:66–70, November 2, 1856.
133 Sydney Alvarus Hanks and Ephraim K. Hanks, Scouting for the Mormons on the Great Frontier (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1948), 134–36; see also Journal of the First Rescue Party, October 24, 1856: “Saw a large herd of buffalo three miles distant.” Daniel W. Jones also mentioned the advance express’s horses straying from camp to follow “a band of buffaloes” in the same general vicinity in late October. Jones, Forty Years, 66. Although Hanks’s account is somewhat sketchy and was given many years later, many members of the Martin Company gratefully acknowledged him for both providing buffalo meat and gently treating several emigrants suffering from severe frostbite. He is counted among the heroes of the handcart story.
Brigham Young, "Remarks," Deseret News, December 10, 1856, 320. President Young, in eloquent and colorful language so typical of his style, elaborated on this theme at considerable length.  

Savage, Journal, August 13, 1856. According to John Chislett, Franklin D. Richards deemed Savage's warning to have been because of his "lack of faith in God." Chislett Narrative, 310.  

John Chislett paid Savage just tribute: "Brother Savage was true to his word; no man worked harder than he to alleviate the suffering which he had foreseen, when he had to endure it. Oh, had the judgment of this one clear-headed man been heeded, what scenes of suffering, wretchedness, and death would have been prevented!" Chislett Narrative, 317. Chislett stated that when Savage was voted down he said, ""Brethren and sisters, what I have said I know to be true; but, seeing you are to go forward, I will go with you, will help you all I can, will work with you, will rest with you, will suffer with you, and, if necessary, I will die with you. May God in his mercy bless and preserve us. Amen.""] Chislett Narrative, 317. Savage, true to his apparent modesty, said nothing of this remarkable pledge in his personal journal.  

See Chislett Narrative, 324, 325.  

Richards's use of the word "overrule" may have come from his interpretation of a letter written to him by Brigham Young on July 30, 1855. President Young, after expressing concerns about funding for the migration of Saints from Europe, stated, "Still shove them across the water as fast as you can, and if they prove faithful they will soon make their way over the plains. The Lord is truly hedging up the way by distress of nations and various other ways, still His hand is over His work, and He will overrule all for the good of His people. Israel will be gathered, and Zion redeemed." Brigham Young to Franklin D. Richards, July 30, 1855, in "Foreign Correspondence," Millennial Star 18 (October 20, 1855): 666-67.  

Chislett Narrative, 319.  

Franklin D. Richards, "Discourse," Deseret News, October 12, 1856, 252; compare Franklin D. Richards, in Journal of Discourses, 4:115, October 5, 1856. Daniel Spencer, who directed the handcart plan at Iowa City, stated from the same pulpit just before Richards:

The emigration is late, quite late, but it is useless for me to undertake to explain why it is so. They are late, but the faith of those that have been associated with them is that the God of heaven will control the elements, providing that you, my brethren and sisters, render them that assistance which he has given you ability to do. (Daniel Spencer, "Remarks," Deseret News, October 15, 1856, 252)

Savage, Journal, August 13, 1856.  

Chislett Narrative, 326, 331; letter from Chislett to Brigham Young. Salt Lake Daily Tribune Extra, April 15, 1873.  

Chislett Narrative, 331-32; italics in original. Chislett's observation regarding beef and potatoes vis-à-vis prayers and prophecies was largely paralleled by Brigham Young. See Young, "Remarks," December 10, 1856.  

Jaques, Salt Lake Daily Herald, January 19, 1879.
Outward Bound:
A Painting of Religious Faith

In 1876, LDS artist George M. Ottinger uniquely and accurately depicted the January 1853 departure of the Mormon emigrant ship Golconda from the Liverpool harbor.

Richard G. Oman

Outward Bound, January 17, 1853 Golconda was painted in 1876, in the high desert valley of the Great Salt Lake, over seven hundred miles from the nearest ocean. It was undoubtedly a commissioned work of art, appointed not by the owner or captain of the ship, as were most marine paintings of the time, but probably by someone who traveled in “steerage,” the most humble accommodations on the ship. These elements alone make this painting unique.

At first glance, Outward Bound appears to be similar to many marine paintings from the nineteenth century. While the image and style of this painting are not distinctive, its context and meaning are noteworthy—significant now, as well as at the time of its creation over a century ago. Ultimately, it is a painting about religious faith, documenting the obedience of LDS converts in Europe to the call of a prophet in far-off Utah, as well as the generosity of the Saints in Utah to European Saints whom they had never met.

The Golconda was a ship chartered by the Perpetual Emigrating Fund to bring new converts from Liverpool to America. The funding for the charter was heavily subsidized by contributions from the Saints in Utah. Most of the passengers on this ship left Europe in response to the call for the Saints to gather in Zion, and most would never see their native lands again.

The Ship

Outward Bound is a rare painting of a Mormon emigrant ship painted by a Latter-day Saint artist. The work is a highly accurate
rendition of this British merchant ship that carried Latter-day Saints on two different voyages from Liverpool to the New World. The Golconda was launched in St. Johns, New Brunswick, Canada, in 1852. A large Atlantic merchant ship for its time, the ship was registered in Liverpool and sailed under the flag of the British merchant marine.

Though Ottinger probably never saw this ship, he is amazingly exact in depicting a British packet ship built in the late 1840s or the early 1850s. The artist's care in accurately depicting the ship is demonstrated in the following details: The figurehead is present but truncated. Before the late 1840s, the figurehead would have been full sized, and after the mid-1850s, it would have been eliminated altogether. The "gun stripe" along the side of the ship is shown, but without painted "gunports." Prior to this period, black gunports would have been painted onto the white gun stripe. Afterward, even the stripe itself would have been eliminated. The ship's deckhouse is green—the era's most popular color for deckhouses—and the Golconda's flag accurately flies the insignia of the British merchant marine. The top mainsail (the second sail up from the bottom sail on the mast) of the Golconda is a very large single sail, and the ship's total number of sails per mast is four. Later, ship-builders increased this number to six by splitting the large top mainsail into two smaller sails for easier management and by adding another smaller sail to the top of the mast.

The Captain

The captain of the Golconda was George Kerr, who was respected and beloved by the Mormon emigrants on his ship. The Millennial Star noted that Captain Kerr's conduct "gave great satisfaction to all the company [and before parting] a vote of thanks, with three cheers, was tendered him." While favorable comments were not rare for a captain of a Mormon emigrant ship, most captains did not receive such an accolade. Kerr was the captain on both voyages that carried Latter-day Saint emigrants in 1853 and again in 1854.

The 1853 Voyage

The painting shows the Golconda sailing out of Liverpool on January 23, 1853, with 321 Latter-day Saint passengers aboard.
In the mid-nineteenth century, Liverpool was the center of world maritime commerce. A bustling port city of over two hundred thousand people, it had the finest dock facilities in the world. Upwards of twenty thousand ships sailed in and out of the Liverpool harbor yearly.\textsuperscript{14}

The entrance to the Liverpool harbor is clearly, but economically, stated in the painting. A buoy, prominently painted in the lower right corner, clearly indicates the shipping channel. The scene is full of sailing ships, communicating the busy nautical traffic of the harbor. To the right stands the harbor entrance lighthouse—a prominent landmark. In the background, one can dimly see the Liverpool docks fading into the haze as the \textit{Golconda} sails away from the English shores. The mainsail on the mainmast is still in the process of being set. Ships were usually towed out to the harbor entrance by steam tugs. As the lines linking tugboat and ship were cast off, the ship's sails were set. The \textit{Golconda} is depicted in the final phase of setting its sails, clearly indicating the beginning of the voyage and reinforcing the title, \textit{Outward Bound}, given the painting by the artist.

On the 1853 voyage, the \textit{Golconda}'s destination was New Orleans. The voyage was apparently, for the most part, a positive experience, but not without incident: "During the crossing a brief storm wrecked the vessel's three top masts. Two emigrants died, two couples were married, four babies were born, and a Swedish sailor was baptized."\textsuperscript{15} Upon arrival in New Orleans, the company of Saints, led by Jacob Gates,\textsuperscript{16} transferred to a 682-ton wooden steam packet, the \textit{Illinois}, probably commanded by Captain David T. Smithers. The \textit{Illinois} transported the Saints to St. Louis and then on to Keokuk, Iowa.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{The Patron of the Painting}

I believe this painting was probably commissioned by a person who, as an LDS emigrant, had sailed on the \textit{Golconda} and wanted to commemorate the experience. \textit{Outward Bound} was created in 1876, almost a quarter of a century after the ship had sailed from Liverpool. Paintings commemorating historical events are frequently done in retrospect, after a historical perspective has
been achieved. For example, just two years after the *Golconda* was painted, C. C. A. Christensen painted his famous series, *Mormon Panorama*, to memorialize pre-Utah Mormon history.

Extreme limitation of financial resources in the early days of pioneer Utah was another probable reason for the delay in commissioning the painting. Emigrants often arrived in debt to the Perpetual Emigrating Fund. With time, individual financial resources increased. Life became less of a hard scramble, leaving time for people to reflect on the meaningful events of their lives. Sailing across the Atlantic on the *Golconda* was undoubtedly a "crossing of the Rubicon" for the LDS emigrants on board. A painting was an excellent way to commemorate this life-changing event.

The Artist

George M. Ottinger was born in Springfield Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, on February 8, 1833. He was the third child of William and Elizabeth Ottinger. As a youth he traveled to New York City to live with his uncle, a clergyman, and attend school, where the study of history became his favorite subject.

In New York, Ottinger first became entranced with ships and the sea. At the age of seventeen, he ran away aboard a whaling ship, the *Maria of Nantucket*. He eventually sailed on other ships until he finally arrived again in New York, having traveled the world, visiting San Francisco, Mexico, Panama, the Galapagos Islands, Peru, Chile, Brazil, South Africa, and China. While sailing around the world, he made small sketches. The LDS Museum of Church History and Art owns several of Ottinger's paintings that document his adventures as a sailor, including a view of Mt. Fuji. Ottinger received some additional art training in Philadelphia after returning from sea, but he worked mostly in industrial occupations, such as painting carriages and hand coloring photographs.

Ottinger was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on June 7, 1858. In 1861 he set off from Philadelphia with one hundred other Latter-day Saints to cross the plains to Utah, arriving in Salt Lake City on September 12. While en route to Utah, Ottinger completed at least three paintings of scenes and events along the way. In Salt Lake City, he found work
painting scenery in the Salt Lake Theater and eventually went into business with C. R. Savage, a successful photographer and businessman in the arts. The art market in Utah was not very strong, so Ottinger tried a variety of different occupations in order to survive financially. He was on the faculty of the Deseret Academy of Art, where he was elected president. He became an officer in the Nauvoo Legion, the Utah Territorial Militia. Eventually, Ottinger became the Salt Lake City fire chief. Ottinger Hall, the Firemen’s Association building named in his honor, stands today at the mouth of City Creek Canyon in Salt Lake City.

Still, it is as an artist that George M. Ottinger is most frequently remembered. During his lifetime, he was perhaps Salt Lake City’s best known painter. His association with C. R. Savage was an asset. Savage’s shop on Main Street in Salt Lake City was centrally located, and his social and professional connections helped bring Ottinger commissions. Aside from his association with Savage, Ottinger himself had a fairly high profile in the community and was known to do commemorative paintings on commission. For example, the Museum of Church History and Art owns a painting of the Mormon Battalion done over thirty years after the time it depicts. The Museum also has an Ottinger painting of the town of Putney, England, that was commissioned by the Squires family, who emigrated from Putney to Salt Lake City. Ottinger’s experience as a sailor and his intimate working knowledge of ships made him the perfect choice for a commission to paint the Golconda.

The Significance of Outward Bound in the History of Mormon Art

Latter-day Saints have recently celebrated the sesquicentennial of the coming of the Mormon pioneers to Utah. Many of the Utah pioneers began their journey aboard a Church-chartered ship sailing out of Liverpool. As the Church becomes increasingly international in membership, it is well to remember that one of the most “American” events in our history—the pioneers coming to Utah—had a significant international component. The ships loaded with LDS converts, the Mormon wagon trains, and the nineteenth-century LDS settlements in the American West were heavily populated with members of the Church from many different countries.
Outward Bound celebrates the broad international aspect of LDS history that began early and continues in our time. The painting also represents acts of faith and consecration. But, perhaps most significantly, as members of the Church from all parts of the world poured into Zion, it represents the bond of fellowship felt by Latter-day Saints, who truly believed that “ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19).

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NOTES


2The Perpetual Emigrating Fund was a Church corporation set up to assist the emigration of the poor to Zion. The theory behind it was that Saints in Utah would donate to the fund to assist emigrants in paying for the cost of passage. Once they had arrived in Zion and became established, the emigrants would pay back the cost of their passage. These repaid funds would then go to help others gather to Zion.

3The other known painting by an LDS artist of a Mormon emigrant ship was painted by pioneer artist C. C. A. Christensen. Richard L. Jensen and Richard G. Oman, C. C. A. Christensen, 1831-1912: Mormon Immigrant Artist (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984), 40. This tiny painting of the Westmoreland was painted by the artist in 1867, ten years after Christensen left his native Denmark and sailed across the Atlantic on that ship.

4The tonnage of the Golconda has been variously listed as 1,170, 1,087, 1,044, and 1,224 tons. Sonne, Ships, Saints, and Mariners, 89-90.

5Conway B. Sonne, Ships, Saints, and Mariners: A Maritime Encyclopedia of Mormon Migration, 1830-1890 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 89-90.

6The Golconda is not listed in Lloyd's Register after 1868. Sonne, Ships, Saints, and Mariners, 90. Ottinger did not create the painting until 1876.

7For centuries mock gunports had been painted on merchant ships to disguise them as men-of-war. These gunports helped foil pirates and privateers that preyed on helpless merchant ships that sometimes carried rich cargoes. After the defeat of Napoleon and the end of the War of 1812, the British navy enforced the Pax Britannica on the high seas, making pirates and privateers mostly a thing of the past, but the old style of painting mock gunports continued for a few decades. The Golconda was painted with a transitional design signaling the end of an old tradition.
James Raines, conversation with author, September 29, 1997, Salt Lake City. A nautical historian, Raines is a model ship builder and editor of Ships in Scale, a ship-modeling publication. Raines is also a member of the staff at the Museum of Church History and Art, where he spent several years building the model of the Enoch Train, a Mormon emigrant ship. The model is now on permanent exhibition at the Museum.


For another example, see Richard J. Dunn, "Dickens and the Mormons," BYU Studies 8, no. 3 (1968): 334.

Sonne, Ships, Saints, and Mariners, 89.

Sonne, Ships, Saints, and Mariners, 89. There is a discrepancy here with the January 17, 1853, date on the back of the painting. This could be explained as a lapse in the patron's memory after almost a quarter of a century, or perhaps it could also be the result of a false start. It was not uncommon for a ship to set off to sea only to have to be towed back into harbor for another try in a few days. Usually these delays were caused by too much wind or no wind at all.

Sonne, Ships, Saints, and Mariners, 89.

Conway B. Sonne, Saints on the Seas: A Maritime History of Mormon Migration, 1830-1890, University of Utah Publications in the American West, vol. 17 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), 33-34.

Sonne, Ships, Saints, and Mariners, 89.

Sonne, Ships, Saints, and Mariners, 89.

Sonne, Saints on the Seas, 105.

Journal of George Martin Ottinger," typescript, 2, in possession of the author. The original manuscript is in Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.


Ottinger painted these scenes later in life, after he had emigrated to Utah. Acquisition Records, Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake City.

Journal of George Martin Ottinger," 60.

Journal of George Martin Ottinger," 60.


Very few paintings exist that were done by pioneer artists while on the Mormon Trail. The Museum of Church History and Art has three paintings that George M. Ottinger completed during his trek to Utah: Burial of John Morse at Wolf Creek; Chimney Rock, August 3, 1861; and Mormon Emigration Train at Green River. Acquisition Records, Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake City.


Acquisition Records, Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake City.
Fig. 1. Thomas Lowe's odometer. For over fifty years, many people believed that this odometer was the first ever invented and that it was designed by Orson Pratt for use by the first company of Mormon pioneers.

Fig. 2. Lowe's miniature odometer. This miniature replica is part of the evidence confirming the fact that Thomas G. Lowe built the odometer shown above for use during his missionary travels.
The Mormon Pioneer Odometers

This full account of the wooden machines that measured distances along the Mormon Trail documents interesting details and corrects old misconceptions.

Norman Edward Wright

The wooden odometers built and used by the first Mormon pioneer company of 1847 have fascinated students of Western history for one hundred and fifty years. Two odometers were constructed. The first, built by Appleton M. Harmon during the westward journey, was used from a point near present-day North Platte, Nebraska, to the Great Salt Lake Valley—May 12 to July 24, 1847. The second, built by William A. King during the three-week hiatus in the valley, was used during the return trip to the Missouri River—August 17 to October 21, 1847. The well-publicized accounts of the creation and use of these machines are found primarily in the journals of William Clayton and Orson Pratt.

Not so well known, however, is the history of another wooden odometer (figs. 1, 2) built by Idaho pioneer Thomas G. Lowe in 1876, while he was serving as a missionary to the Oirba Indians in northern Arizona. This instrument was, in 1911, mistakenly identified as the original 1847 machine. Ten years later, the misidentification of Lowe’s odometer was associated with another error—the claim that it was the first such measuring device ever invented.

Historical research on the subject of odometers in general and on the Mormon pioneer odometers in particular, has provided a more complete and accurate account of these wooden, distance measuring instruments.

Instruments and Estimates

On April 8, 1847, the vanguard company of Mormon pioneers was camped seven miles west of Winter Quarters, a large
staging area north of present-day Omaha, Nebraska. On that day, Parley P. Pratt arrived with news that “John Taylor was on his way up the [Missouri] river with about five hundred dollars worth of astronomical and other [scientific] instruments” purchased in England.¹ They included

one circle of reflection, two sextants, one quadrant, two artificial horizons, one large refracting telescope, several smaller ones, two barometers, several thermometers, besides nautical almanacks, books, maps, &c.²

This list of instruments purchased for the journey did not include a device for measuring the miles traveled each day, despite the fact that one was readily available. Such an instrument, known in England as a viometer (fig. 3), could have been purchased from any instrument maker in London for a reasonable price.³ Since one was not acquired, the implication is that distance measurement was not an anticipated need.⁴ For the first

Fig. 3. English viometer, c. 1850. Distance-measuring devices such as this were available at the time the pioneers crossed the plains.
three hundred miles of the westward journey, individuals in the company simply estimated the distances traveled each day. Such estimates were imprecise, as they depended entirely on the observational skills of the estimator.

William Clayton saw the need for an instrument that would provide a more accurate mileage measurement. Others—Orson Pratt, Appleton M. Harmon, and William A. King—played essential roles in developing the instrument, but it was Clayton’s love of precision that prompted the whole odometer episode.

Developing the “Roadometer”

William Clayton was one of the last volunteers to sign on as a member of the original Mormon pioneer company. The lead groups had already moved out of Winter Quarters onto the western trail when Clayton made his commitment to go. Heber C. Kimball’s journal entry for April 13, 1847, records:

This day Brother Young, and Bishop Whitney and myself were in the store [at Winter Quarters] in company with Brother William Clayton. We then and there beset him to go with us to the mountains. He most cheerfully volunteered to go . . . [if] his family could have some assistance. . . . He remarked that he was destitute of means to fit himself out for the journey. I replied I would see that he had a proper fit out to go on.5

Two days later, Clayton joined the main pioneer company, which was then camped about twelve miles west of the Elk Horn River in eastern Nebraska. His recognized talents as a writer, observer, and record keeper were qualities that had prompted the Church leaders to extend their invitation to him to go West with the lead company of pioneers. He now began employing those talents to compensate for the benefits of transportation, food, and clothing that he was receiving. One of his primary tasks was writing the journal of Heber C. Kimball, the Church leader who provided the wagon in which he was riding. Clayton performed this compensatory service by copying an edited version of his own personal writings onto the pages of Kimball’s journal.6 He also rendered secretarial service for his benefactor.7 In addition, Clayton was asked to draw a map of the pioneer company’s route superimposed on Frémont’s map of 1845, using Orson Pratt’s ongoing
observations of elevation, latitude, and longitude.\(^8\) In addition to these tasks, Clayton kept his own personal journal, which he evidently planned to publish for the benefit of his family:

I shall not write my thoughts here, inasmuch as I expect this journal will have to pass through other hands \([\text{sic}]\) besides my own or that of my family but if I can carry my plans into operation, they will be written in a manner that my family will each get their portion, whether before my death or after, it matters not.\(^9\)

The Mormons’ western route coincided with a large segment of the Oregon Trail, which, even at that time, was a major thoroughfare over which thousands were traveling. Although, initially, Clayton had no plans for publishing an overland trail guide per se, he did know that a trail guide would benefit later emigrants and that it would have the potential for a significant monetary return. Observing and recording the data for such a publication—describing the road, the locations of water, wood, and grass, and the distances involved—fit naturally into Clayton’s daily tasks. Moreover, his training as a clerk made it natural to record such details.\(^10\)

As the journey west began, however, Clayton’s estimates of the number of miles traveled each day were always significantly lower than those given by others. It was a source of irritation to him that his values were always considered to be too conservative.\(^11\)

Just four days after beginning the journey, Clayton was thinking about this problem and its solution:

MONDAY [April] 19TH. . . I walked some this afternoon in company with Orson Pratt and suggested to him the idea of fixing a set of wooden cog wheels to the hub of a wagon wheel, in such order as to tell the exact number of miles we travel each day. He seemed to agree with me that it could be easily done at a trifling expense.\(^12\)

Orson Pratt’s verbal endorsement of his idea was undoubtedly encouraging. The idea of using “cog wheels” (gears to count wheel rotations) was not new or inventive. In all likelihood, Clayton was acquainted with the gear-driven viometers of his native England. He undoubtedly would have built an odometer himself had he possessed the necessary mechanical skills. But lacking these, he needed the approval and support of the company’s leaders, who could commit both men and resources to the project.
Over the next four days, Clayton discussed his idea with members of the company. He also outlined the design of a machine that could perform the task:

**Thursday [April] 22nd. . . .**

I again introduced the subject of fixing machinery to a wagon wheel to tell the distance we travel, describing the machinery and time it would take to make it, etc., several caught the idea and feel confident of its success.\(^{15}\)

No longer a general idea, he now had developed a specific design for the odometer and a time estimate for its construction. Clayton had done his homework. In doing so, he perhaps demonstrated more technical skill than is generally ascribed to him.

Within three weeks after Clayton’s initial conversation with Orson Pratt, the pioneer company had moved three hundred miles west of Winter Quarters, near present-day North Platte, Nebraska. Nothing had been done about the proposed odometer. Distances traveled each day were still being estimated. His patience spent, Clayton decided the time for action had arrived.

**Saturday, [May] 8th. . . .** I have counted the revolutions of a wagon wheel to tell the exact distance we have traveled. The reason why I have taken this method which is somewhat tedious, is because there is generally a difference of two and sometimes four miles in a day’s travel between my estimation and that of some others, and they have all thought I underrated it. This morning I determined to take pains to know for a certainty how far we travel today. Accordingly I measured the circumference of the hind wheel of one of Brother Kimball’s wagons being the one I sleep in, in charge of Philo Johnson. I found the wheel 14 feet 8 inches in circumference, not varying one eighth of an inch. I then calculated how many revolutions it would require for one mile and found it precisely 360 not varying one fraction which somewhat astonished me. I have counted the whole revolutions during the day’s travel and I find it to be a little over eleven and a quarter miles,—twenty revolutions over. The overplus I shall add to the next day’s travel. . . . Some have past the days travel at thirteen and some fourteen miles, which serves to convince more strongly that the distances are underrated. I have repeatedly suggested a plan of fixing machinery to a wagon wheel to tell the exact distance we travel in a day, and many begin to be sanguine for carrying it into effect, and I hope it will be done.\(^{14}\)

In early Western history, Clayton is well known for this simple yet tedious solution to his problem. During that first day, he tallied
4,070 wheel rotations, a measurement that would perhaps have been enough to prove his point, but he wanted to make sure. For three additional days, he collected similar data and obtained similar results. With accurate numbers in hand to support his claim that the estimated distances were incorrect, Clayton’s proposal to build a mechanical odometer was at last advanced to the top of the priority list. Regarding this matter, Orson Pratt recorded the following entry in his journal:

May 10, 1847 . . .

. . . For several days past, Mr. Clayton, and several others, have been thinking upon the best method of attaching some machinery to a wagon, to indicate the number of miles daily travelled. I was requested this forenoon, by Mr. B. Young, to give this subject some attention; accordingly, this afternoon, I proposed the following method:—Let a wagon wheel be of such a circumference, that 360 revolutions make one mile. (It happens that one of the requisite dimensions is now in camp.) Let this wheel act upon a screw, in such a manner, that six revolutions of the wagon wheel shall give the screw one revolution. Let the threads of this screw act upon a wheel of sixty cogs, which will evidently perform one revolution per mile. Let this wheel of sixty cogs, be the head of another screw, acting upon another wheel of thirty cogs; it is evident that in the movements of this second wheel, each cog will represent one mile [see fig. 1]. Now, if the cogs were numbered from 0 to 30, the number of miles traveled will be indicated during every part of the day. Let every sixth cog of the first wheel, be numbered from 0 to 10, and this division will indicate the fractional parts of a mile, or tenths; while if any one should be desirous to ascertain still smaller divisions, each cog between this division, will give five and one-third rods. This machinery (which may be called the double endless screw) will be simple in its construction, and of very small bulk, requiring scarcely any sensible additional power, and the knowledge obtained respecting distances in travelling, will certainly be very satisfactory to every traveller, especially in a country, but little known. The weight of this machinery need not exceed three pounds (appendix A).  

Because Clayton left no record of his own odometer design, we do not know what influence it may have had on Orson Pratt’s specifications, as given above. Pratt certainly had the technical skill to design his own machine independently. However, since his design begins with the same 360-rotations-per-mile wheel Clayton used in his earlier empirical solution, it appears that he may have
followed Clayton's lead quite closely. One thing is certain; Pratt wrote the initial design specifications in his journal whereas Clayton did not. As historical credit typically goes to the one who writes, Orson Pratt is generally recognized as the designer of the first Mormon pioneer odometer.

More likely, the instrument's final design was a team effort because Pratt's original specifications, as given above, proved to be impractical and had to be modified significantly to simplify construction. In the completed odometer, the second gear wheel had forty teeth instead of the thirty that Pratt had specified. It overlaid the first gear and was turned by four teeth on the axle of that gear (fig. 4 and appendixes B, C). One rotation of the second gear therefore represented ten miles, each tooth being one-quarter of a mile.

Appleton Harmon, a skilled carpenter in the company, was assigned the task of building the wooden odometer. Undoubtedly,

Fig. 4. Replica of gear arrangement of pioneer odometer. The large gear revolved once every mile. Via a second gear, it turned the third gear, which had forty teeth, one-quarter of a mile at a time. Thus the third gear completed a full revolution every ten miles. William Clayton based his mileage observations on this gear.
he also made suggestions for its final elegant design, which would account for Clayton’s report that Harmon considered himself to be the odometer’s inventor.\textsuperscript{16}

The project was completed in two distinct phases over a period of seven days. First, the sixty-tooth gear wheel, which rotated once every mile, was built and installed on the wagon box, along with the threaded, eighteen-inch-long drive rod. Clayton records:

\textit{Wednesday, [May] 12th. . . Brother Appleton Harmon has completed the machinery on the wagon so far that I shall only have to count the number of miles instead of the revolutions of the wagon wheel.}\textsuperscript{17}

Next, the smaller forty-tooth gear wheel was built and installed, along with a box to cover and protect the whole mechanism:

\textit{Sunday, [May] 16th. . . About noon today Brother Appleton Harmon completed the machinery on the wagon called a “roadometer” by adding a wheel to revolve once in ten miles, showing each mile and also each quarter mile we travel, and then casing the whole over so as to secure it from the weather. We are now prepared to tell accurately, the distance we travel from day to day which will supercede the idea of guessing, and be a satisfaction not only to this camp, but to all who hereafter travel this way.}\textsuperscript{18}

In his journal, Amasa M. Lyman also noted the installation of the ten-mile gear wheel: “May 17, 1848 A.M. Harmon put another wheel to his roadometer, gaged for ten miles.”\textsuperscript{19} Its two gear wheels and eighteen-inch drive rod could count up to 3,600 rotations of the wagon wheel without recycling, a distance of ten miles. The completed odometer project was a source of satisfaction not only to the principals involved, but also to others in the company who noted the event in their journals.\textsuperscript{20}

William Clayton provides us with the only known description of the completed machine:

\textit{Sunday, [May] 16th. . . The whole machinery consists of a shaft about 18 inches long placed on gudgeons [a sleeve in which the rod turns], one in the axle tree of the wagon, near which are six arms placed at equal distances around it, and in which a cog works which is fastened on the hub of the wagon wheel, turning the shaft once around at every six revolutions of the wagon wheel. The upper gudgeon plays in a piece of wood nailed to the wagon box, and near}
this gudgeon on the shaft a screw is cut. The shaft lays at an angle of about forty-five degrees. In this screw, a wheel of sixty cogs works on an axle fixed in the side of the wagon, and which makes one revolution each mile. In the shaft on which this wheel runs, four cogs are cut on the fore part which plays in another wheel of forty cogs which shows the miles and quarters to ten miles. The whole is cased over and occupies a space of about 18 inches long, 15 inches high and 3 inches thick.\textsuperscript{21}

For the whole mechanism to fit within a protective box with dimensions of 18 x 15 x 3 inches, the two gears would have been about 9 inches in diameter and 1 inch thick.

At long last, Clayton had a fully operational “roadometer”—his name for the odometer. But it was a machine, and, like all machines, it could and did malfunction. Just four days after announcing the machine’s completion, Clayton records a major problem with its operation:

\textsc{Thursday, [May] 20th.} . . . At 7:45 we started out again but had not traveled over a quarter of a mile before the roadometer gave way on account of the rain yesterday having caused the wood to swell and stick fast. One of the cogs in the small wheel broke [the 40-tooth, ten-mile wheel]. We stopped about a half an hour and Appleton Harmon took it to pieces and put it up again without the small wheel. I had to count each mile after this.\textsuperscript{22}

There is no mention of repairing or replacing the broken ten-mile gear wheel until they arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley. It appears that the one-mile, sixty-tooth gear wheel is the only part of the machine that was operational during the remainder of the journey west. If this is true, Clayton would have had to watch the gear wheel closely and record each rotation as they traveled, that is, every mile:

\textsc{Tuesday, [June] 8th.} . . .

. . . The road over was indeed very crooked but mostly bending to the north. . . . we began to descend gradually, and while watching the roadometer I discovered it did not work right which made me pay more attention to it.

\textsc{Wednesday, [June] 9th.} Arose at 4:20 and at 5:15 a.m. we moved onward. . . . At 5:45 we halted for breakfast. . . . While we halted I got the roadometer fixed again and also put up a guideboard marked “To Fort John [Fort Laramie] 60 miles.”\textsuperscript{23}
The Upper Platte River Ferry

From Winter Quarters, the Mormon pioneer company traveled along the north side of the Platte River. With the odometer on board, they continued up the river's north fork to Fort Laramie, where they crossed over and continued west on the Oregon Trail. Seventy miles farther on, they again met the Platte River where it flows eastward in a gentle arc from its headwaters in the Colorado Rockies. Due to high spring run-off conditions, one full week was required to ferry the wagons across the river.

In order to expedite the crossing of eight other Mormon emigrant companies farther back on the trail, a decision was made to leave a small contingent of men at the river crossing to continue operating the ferry. The ferry operation would also be financially profitable since large numbers of Oregon and California pioneers on the Oregon Trail would also need to cross the river. One of the men assigned to the ferry crew was Appleton Harmon, the builder of Clayton's "roadometer."

On July 10, 1847, a small company of Oregon-bound pioneers arrived at the Mormon Ferry. They camped that evening and were ferried across the river the next day. Two entries in Harmon's journal refer to them. The first entry is particularly important because it corroborates the fact that Oregon-bound pioneers were also using odometers, thus invalidating a later claim that Clayton's machine was the first odometer ever built:

[Saturday,] July 10. . . . The company altogether bought about $100 worth of goods of Mr. H. Quelling [sic], a Quaker. He had a roadometer on one of his wagons. Captain Bonser's company of twelve wagons ferried.

[Sunday,] July 11. Received for blacksmithing $16.45, $1.00 for ferrying. Twelve wagons of Captain Bonser's company, $10.55 cash. . . . We ferried a nursery of seven hundred fruit trees, which, were apple, peach, plum, pear, currants, grapes, raspberry and cherries all growing nicely in clover. They were owned by H. Lieuelling [sic], a Quaker from Salem, Iowa.24

The nurseryman was Henderson Luelling (note different spellings), an early pioneer of Oregon's Willamette Valley. His load of seven hundred fruit trees was indeed unusual, but his use of an odometer was not. Odometers were used by many westward
moving pioneers of that period. Unlike Clayton’s wooden one, they were made of brass and were constructed by English or American instrument makers.25

Interestingly, four-hundred of Luelling’s fruit trees survived the wagon trip to the Williamette Valley, and with them he initiated the fruit industry of the Pacific Northwest.26 What happened to his odometer is unknown.

The Salt Lake Valley

The broken ten-mile gear wheel of Clayton’s roadometer had not been repaired or replaced when the pioneers arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847. Three weeks of intense activity followed their arrival—plowing, planting, watering fields, hauling logs, making adobe houses, building cabins, laying out a new city, and exploring the valley with its towering mountains to the east and the Great Salt Lake to the west. The need to measure distance was no longer a priority. During this time, Clayton continued to write, compile distance tables, draw maps, and help Orson Pratt determine the elevations of significant points of geography. Within two weeks, however, Clayton again became involved with the design and testing of a second wooden odometer.

Roadometer: Model II

The pioneers had just completed an overland journey of more than one thousand miles. Nevertheless, their plan called for more than half of the men to return immediately to Winter Quarters on the Missouri River and prepare their families to move west the following spring. The families had been left behind because of the difficulties anticipated by the advance party. William Clayton was one of those designated to make the return trip:

MONDAY, [AUGUST] 2ND.

... After dark President Young sent for me to come to his wagon and told his calculations about our starting back. He wants me to start with the ox teams next Monday so as to have a better privilege of taking the distances, etc. ... He wants the roadometer fixed this week and Elder Kimball has selected William King to do the work.27
TUESDAY, [AUGUST] 10TH. . . . I am expected to keep a table of
distances of the whole route returning from here to Winter Quarters
and make a map when I get through, and this for public benefit. 28

Brigham Young, recognizing the value of Clayton's distance
measurements over the last two-thirds of their outbound journey,
now wanted him to expand the data to encompass the entire route.
In published form, this information would be useful to future emi-
grant companies traveling west. Earlier, as noted above, Clayton
had not planned to publish a trail guide. Now he had specific
instructions to do so.

Instead of repairing the first odometer, as President Young
had suggested, William A. King 29 began building a new machine
two days later. The decision to make a new odometer instead of
repairing the old one was undoubtedly prompted by a desire for
increased measuring capacity. The new instrument was designed
to measure one thousand miles instead of ten. The exact design
specifications of the second roadometer are not known, but the
basic features of the first machine, in modified form, probably car-
rried over into the second. Three facts support this idea: (1) frac-
tional distances of 1/4, 1/2, and 3/4 miles were recorded by both
machines; 30 (2) the first machine's threaded drive rod had its coun-
terpart in the "shaft or screw" of the second; 31 and (3) the second
machine was installed on "Clayton's wagon:" 32 Since Clayton had
no wagon of his own, the implication is that the new machine was
installed on the same wagon and wheel as its predecessor—the
wheel that was exactly 360 rotations per mile.

It took William A. King just four days of uninterrupted work
to build the new odometer. Clayton's journal entry, "again at the
roadometer," 33 tells us that he, too, was involved in the project. His
journal also notes its completion:

SATURDAY, [AUGUST] 7TH. Today William A. King has finished the
roadometer which will now tell the distance for one thousand miles
without keeping any account. 54

You can almost hear a sigh of relief in the words "without keeping
any account." The improved instrument would make Clayton's task
much easier.

Before leaving the valley, the new odometer was tested on
two occasions: first on a twenty-two-mile excursion to the Great
Salt Lake and then on a one-and-one-half-mile jaunt to the warm spring north of their camp. In the first instance, the shaft screw broke and had to be replaced, but in the second, the new odometer proved to be operational and ready for the return journey to Winter Quarters, which began on August 17, 1847.

The Return to Winter Quarters

Apparently, Clayton encountered only one problem with the new odometer on the return trip to Winter Quarters. With the brief note on September 13, 1847, “We fixed the roadometer this morning,” he records the only known difficulty he had with the machine. “We” in that note credits the assistance of others in making the necessary repairs. Exactly what was done and who helped is not known.

We do know that Clayton’s traveling companions took little interest in the mile-measuring project. This activity had no relationship to daily necessities—moving teams and wagons over rough terrain, protecting themselves from Indians, hunting for food, and so forth. Nevertheless, Clayton persisted in his appointed task and, in the end, produced a legacy of lasting value.

On October 21, 1847, Clayton’s company arrived at Winter Quarters. With characteristic thoroughness, he wrote,

We have been prosperous on our journey home and have arrived in nine weeks and three days, including a week’s delay waiting for the twelve and killing buffalo. . . . I have succeeded in measuring the whole distance from the City of the Great Salt Lake to this place, except a few miles between Horse Creek and the A La Bonte River which was taken from the measurement going up. I find the whole distance to be 1032 miles and am now prepared to make a complete traveler’s guide from here to the Great Salt Lake, having been careful in taking the distance from creek to creek, over bluffs, mountains, etc. It has required much time and care and I have continually labored under disadvantages in consequence of the companies feeling no interest in it.

Mistaken Identity

By February 1848, Clayton had prepared his trail-generated data for publication. With a letter of introduction from Brigham Young in hand, he proceeded to St. Louis, Missouri, where he
arranged for the publication of the first five thousand copies of *The Latter-Day Saints’ Emigrants’ Guide*. Its later use by many western pioneers is well documented.40

What happened to the two gear-driven counting machines that provided the data is not known. It is important to recognize that Clayton’s first roadometer (and undoubtedly the second) was a series of individual parts mounted on the side of a wagon box. Those parts—wooden gear wheels, threaded drive rods—may be found someday in a museum or in a private collection. At present, they are artifacts lost to history.

To say that the original odometers are lost, however, immediately raises a question about the identity of a wooden odometer displayed for many years in the old Latter-day Saint Museum on Temple Square and identified as the original 1847 pioneer instrument. Sometime in the early 1900s, the odometer on display had been mislabeled as Clayton’s machine, even though it did not match his journal description. This case of mistaken identity persisted for many years, primarily because there was no hard evidence to support a different conclusion. The machine on display had a number of missing components, raising questions that could not be resolved. Many assumptions were made which attempted to explain the differences between the odometer and Clayton’s description, but none of these were conclusive.41 Eventually, new evidence confirmed that the machine on display was built in 1876 by a man named Thomas G. Lowe.42

In 1921, the Lowe machine, under its misnomer, was associated with the creation of a myth that the Mormon pioneer odometer of 1847 was the first such instrument ever made. The story of how this myth came into existence constitutes a continuation of the odometer episode and involves not only Lowe and his machine, but also a man named Harry B. Parrish.

**The Thomas G. Lowe Odometer**

In the year 1875, Thomas G. Lowe was living in the small pioneer community of Franklin, Idaho, twenty miles north of Logan, Utah. That fall, Brigham Young called Lowe to serve a mission to the Oribia Indians on the Little Colorado River of Northern Arizona.
While engaged in this service, this twenty-five-year-old craftsman and engineer provided the Indians with water-powered machinery that greatly improved their ability to produce Indian blankets.\(^{43}\)

His labors required him to move from village to village and to sleep in his wagon at night. One evening, after retiring, he gave some thought to the design of a wooden machine that would count the rotations of the wagon wheel as he traveled, thereby enabling him to calculate the distances between villages. He subsequently built the machine he had designed and successfully used it on his own wagon.

In the midst of his missionary labors, Lowe returned to his home in Idaho. On the way, he stopped briefly in Salt Lake City, where he was interviewed by a *Deseret Evening News* reporter who wrote an article that appeared in the newspaper on August 10, 1876.

**Arizona Matters**

Yesterday we received a call from Elder Thomas Lowe, of the Moan Coppel mission, in Arizona, having just arrived in the city . . . expecting to return to the South in the Fall.

Brother Lowe . . . has a decided mechanical and inventive turn. He exhibited to us a roadometer, which he invented and manufactured himself, from wood. It is a small machine, very simple in construction, consisting of a frame and four solid wheels, caged or notched at the edges. One turn of the wagon wheel to which it is attached passes one notch on the largest wheel on the machine, and so on till it gets to the fourth wheel, which moves one round every six miles. This machine was thoroughly tested and found to operate with exactness. Brother Low [sic] never knew that there were such things in existence as road-meters, and there is probably not another one that operates on the same principle. . . .

By means of his machine he was enabled to make calculations of the distances between different points in the south and the first settlement on the Little Colorado.\(^{44}\)

**The First Odometer Myth**

Before leaving Salt Lake City, Lowe gave his odometer to the Deseret Museum,\(^{45}\) an institution established in 1869. The odometer was on display from 1876 until 1903, when the museum closed and its holdings were placed in storage for a period of eight years. When the museum reopened to the public in July 1911, Lowe's
odometer was prominently displayed, but in the interim, its identification had been changed. How this occurred is not clear, but a label that was attached to the machine read as follows:

Deseret Museum

"ROADOMETER"

Used by the Pioneers of 1847 to measure the distance across the plains. Made by Appleton M. Harmon. —William Clayton.46

As a result, Lowe's machine became known as the original 1847 instrument of William Clayton, Orson Pratt, and Appleton Harmon. This switch in identity has mystified historians because Clayton's and Lowe's machines are distinctly different. A list of the individual machine components makes this abundantly clear:

Clayton, Pratt, and Harmon Odometer (per Clayton's description)

1 60-tooth gear wheel, approx. 9" diameter
1 40-tooth gear wheel, approx. 9" diameter
1 18-inch, threaded drive rod
1 Enclosing box, 3" x 15" x 18"
Each part was mounted separately on the wagon box (fig. 5).

Lowe Odometer (per actual measurement)

1 42-tooth gear wheel, 13" diameter
1 38-tooth gear wheel, 10 3/8" diameter
1 28-tooth gear wheel, 6" diameter
1 18-tooth gear wheel, 4 5/8" diameter
1 Rachet-activated drive mechanism
Each part was set in a fixed, 8" x 30" wooden frame that was mounted on the wagon box (fig. 6).

B. H. Roberts, in his Comprehensive History of the Church, noted these differences but was unable to explain them:

According to the Deseret Museum Curator's report upon the machine in that institution and . . . [Clayton's description of his machine] . . . there are material differences, both as to the size of the machine over all, and the number of cogs in wheels and in the levers for transmitting motion, etc. Which differences may be accounted for either by defectiveness in the description, or by the absence of parts of the machine, perhaps by both of these circumstances.47
Fig. 5. Mounted replica of pioneer odometer. Following Clayton's specifications, Steven Pratt re-created the pioneer odometer. This version is mounted on a wagon at the Museum of Church History and Art.

Fig. 6. Mounted miniature of Lowe odometer. The differences in components and method of mounting between the two odometers on this page are readily apparent. This replica of the Lowe odometer was made by Lowe himself. For a close-up view, see fig. 2.
Misidentification of Lowe’s odometer as the 1847 pioneer machine continued for many years.

Coupled with this identification error was the inaccurate story that the Mormon pioneer odometer was the first such device ever invented. This latter error was initiated by an interesting series of circumstances involving a salesman named Harry B. Parrish, a cloth-measuring machine, and Lowe’s odometer in the Church museum.

The Second Odometer Myth

In the spring of 1921, Parrish, a businessman from Grand Rapids, Michigan, came to Salt Lake City as a representative of the Simplex Computing Machine Company, manufacturers of a newly invented device for measuring yardage goods. The machine was of primary interest to department stores and mercantile institutions engaged in retail sales.

While in the city, Parrish visited the Church Museum on Temple Square and saw Lowe’s odometer displayed as the original 1847 Mormon pioneer artifact. He was fascinated with the machine, its early origin, its ingenious design, and its pragmatic use. His interest was the basis of an article that appeared in the Deseret News on May 19, 1921. That newspaper report initiated a myth that persists to this day:

Pioneer Measuring Device May Prove to Be
First Speedometer Ever Made

The old roadometer [Lowe’s] in the L.D.S. Church museum, used by the Utah pioneers crossing the plains is likely to become famous in the near future. It is believed it may be proved that the machine was the first of its kind ever made and that it may be proven to be the forerunner of the modern speedometer. It is possible that authorities in the research department of the Smithsonian Institute, which has to do with pioneer inventions may be appealed to in order that the exact status of the pioneer instrument may be determined.

Mr. Parrish’s interest in the machine has attracted the attention of local citizens and because of the visitor’s connection with measuring machines, he has been consulted as to the place the relic may hold among such devices. Mr. Parrish believes it to be the first of its kind.
To the understandable error about the odometer’s origin, this *Deseret News* article added a new inaccuracy, that the instrument on exhibit [Lowe’s] was “the first of its kind ever made.”

Because Parrish represented a company that manufactured a linear measuring device, his word was accepted as authoritative. What Parrish did not know, however, was that gear-driven odometers were in use at the time of the pioneers (figs. 7, 8). This fact was explained two weeks later by Albert A. Gentry, a Salt Lake City engineer, whose letter to the *Deseret News* was published on June 4, 1921:

I read with interest the description of the old Clayton (Lowe’s) “roadometer” contained in the *Deseret News* of recent date and note also the existing supposition on the part of some that this mechanical device may possibly be the “first of its kind.”

It may be of interest to those concerned to learn that Marcus Vitruvius, architect and engineer to Emperor Augustus, fully described a somewhat similar odometer 13 years B.C. in his great work “De architectura” Book X, 9. This work covers Vitruvius’s observations on civil and mechanical engineering founded on Roman and Grecian experience. The odometer he describes is similar to Clayton’s [Lowe’s] in principle only and is perhaps more elaborate.50

The article goes on to describe the gear-driven odometer of Vitruvius which dropped one pebble into a “counting box” every Roman mile.

Although this newspaper article established the fact that odometers had been built and used anciently, it did little to curtail the spread of the false information generated by Harry Parrish’s visit to Salt Lake City. From that time forward, the myth that the Mormon pioneers were the inventors of the first odometer found its way into print in many places.51

**Correcting the Record**

In 1921, when the *Deseret News* printed the articles cited above, Thomas G. Lowe was seventy years old. Although he knew that the odometer on display in the L.D.S. Museum was his own, Lowe had been unable to convince museum authorities of that
Fig. 7. Odometer from the 1850s. Odometers were commonly used by surveyors and the military during the Utah pioneer period. This odometer was probably employed by John W. Gunnison during his last survey. Shortly after he was massacred by natives in 1853 south of Delta, Utah, the pioneers recovered all of his equipment except his odometer. Some years later, this odometer was found on a trail near the massacre site.

Fig. 8. Military odometer, dating to Civil War times. This style of odometer was used relatively unchanged from the 1850s to WW1.
fact. Now, recalling the 1876 *Deseret Evening News* article about his odometer, he set out to use it as evidence to validate his claim. An account of his endeavors was printed in *The Salt Lake Telegram* on July 13, 1921:

Proves Orson Pratt Was Not Inventor

LOGAN, July 13—Thomas G. Lowe has returned from a trip to Salt Lake City, where he went to attempt the rectification of what he considered an injustice to himself, with every prospect of success. Visiting the Deseret museum sometime since he saw enclosed in a case a form of roadometer in use in early days, the invention of which was attributed to the late Orson Pratt, but which Mr. Lowe at once recognized as his own, invented forty-three years ago for the purpose of measuring the road from Moan-Coppy, Ariz.—which he had been called to help settle—to Salt Lake, the device recording the revolutions of one of the hind wheels of the wagon from which the distance could be readily computed.

Mr. Lowe related the facts to the curator, but having no proof, it looked as if the mistake would go unrectified, and especially as Mr. Pratt was known to have invented a roadometer, although the description, still extant, did not fit the appliance on exhibition. Recently it occurred to Mr. Lowe that upon his arrival from that trip a reporter from a Salt Lake paper saw it, was interested and wrote a description of it. Mr. Lowe then made the trip to Salt Lake, from which he had just returned. The paper's files were overhauled, the description and narrative found and he was given a certified copy which he presented to the authorities with every prospect of having the mistake rectified.52

The *Logan Journal*, Lowe's hometown newspaper, also noted his dilemma in an article that appeared July 12, 1921. Then, in a follow-up article on August 16, 1921, the *Journal* reprinted the full 1876 *Deseret Evening News* report and concluded by saying that it fully established Lowe's claim.53

From these newspaper accounts, it would appear that the odometer in the LDS Museum should have been credited to Thomas G. Lowe from 1921 onward. But such was not the case. For another sixty-two years, his wooden instrument continued to be known as the original 1847 Mormon pioneer “roadometer.” Interestingly, Lowe played a posthumous role in correcting the error. The mechanical skill that had produced his original odometer also produced a sure means of identifying it.
In 1931, Lowe, who was then eighty years old, constructed a miniature working model of a pioneer wagon (fig. 9). It was authentic in every detail. He carved, assembled, and installed a tiny odometer on the wagon box of this model, similar to the one he had built some fifty-five years earlier. This diminutive device incorporates the same gear design as his original instrument. Its ratchet-like drive mechanism, activated by the rotation of the rear wheel, provided the missing information required to fully understand the machine’s drive mechanism. Lowe placed the model in a glass case and gave it to the Pioneer Museum in his hometown of Franklin, Idaho, where it can be seen today.

It was not until 1977, after I inspected the model of Lowe’s odometer in the Franklin museum, that I could offer convincing proof of its identity to the authorities of the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City. Finally, in 1983, the museum curators changed the label on the odometer, correctly identifying it as Thomas Lowe’s. This action resolved one of the fascinating puzzles in Mormon pioneer history.

The Sesquicentennial Reenactment

On May 16, 1997, a new chapter was added to the saga of the Mormon pioneer odometers. As the westward-moving sesquicentennial Mormon Trail wagon train approached North Platte, Nebraska, Virginia Starling, a member of the company, volunteered to count the rotations of a wagon wheel for one day, duplicating William Clayton’s heralded task of 150 years earlier. She attached bandannas to the spoke of a wheel and succeeded in counting 7,360 wheel rotations during the day—a distance of 19.2 miles. She was honored that evening at an odometer installation ceremony attended by Church and civic leaders. Descendants of the Clayton, Pratt, and Harmon families were also honored as a replica of the original, ten-mile odometer was installed on one of the wagons (fig. 10).

This historical reenactment makes it clear that the Mormon pioneer odometers constitute an ongoing legacy that is as alive today as it was 150 years ago.

Norman Edward Wright is Professor Emeritus of Computer Science at Brigham Young University.
Fig. 9. Lowe’s Miniature Pioneer Wagon. Late in life, Thomas G. Lowe built this working model of a pioneer wagon and included a tiny replica of his 1875 odometer. This model helped convince museum authorities that the odometer attributed to Pratt and Harmon was actually built by Lowe.

Fig. 10. Sesquicentennial installation of Steven Pratt’s replica of the odometer used by the first pioneer company. Left to right: Robert Killpack, relative of Appleton Harmon; Vernon Combs, President of the Lincoln County Nebraska Mormon Trails Association; Gary Clayton, descendant of William Clayton; Theron Roundy, descendant of Shadrach Roundy, member of Brigham Young’s 1847 company.
Appendix A

Pratt’s Proposed Odometer

Note axles at right angles to each other

30-tooth gear wheel
Would have made one full revolution every thirty miles

Threaded drive rod No. 2
Would have rotated once for every mile

Threaded drive rod No. 1
Would have rotated once for every six rotations of the wagon wheel

60-tooth gear wheel
Would have made one full revolution every 360 rotations of the wagon wheel—or one mile

Rotation powered by cog on wheel hub
Appendix B

Clayton’s Odometer as Built by Harmon

60-tooth gear wheel
Made one full revolution for every 360 rotations of the wagon wheel—or one mile

40-tooth gear wheel
Made one full revolution every ten miles

Threaded drive rod
Rotated once for every six rotations of the wagon wheel

Rotation powered by cog on wheel hub
Appendix C

Diagram of Top View of Clayton’s Odometer

- Box covering
- 4 axle cogs
- 40-tooth gear wheel
- 60-tooth gear wheel
- Threaded rod
- Drive rod
- Wagon box gudgeon
- Wagon box
- Axle gudgeon
- Axle tree
- Trip arms
- Trip cog on wagon wheel hub
- Wagon wheel
NOTES

1Erastus Snow, “From Nauvoo to Salt Lake in the Van of the Pioneers: The Original Diary of Erastus Snow,” Improvement Era 14 (May 1911): 634. Orson Pratt tells of ordering these instruments sometime earlier, “During our stay in ‘Winter Quarters,’ we had sent to England, and procured the following instruments preparatory to our exploring expedition, viz;—two sextants, one circle of reflection, two artificial horizons, two barometers, several thermometers, telescopes &c.” Orson Pratt, “Interesting Items concerning the Journeying of the Latter Day Saints from the City of Nauvoo, until Their Location in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. (Extracted from the Private Journal of Orson Pratt),” Millennial Star 12, no. 2 (January 15, 1850): 18.


3“The Viometer or Travelling Register,” Scientific American 3 (July 8, 1848): 332. This brief article provides a detailed description of the viometers [odometers] used in London in 1848:

“Viometers are sold in great numbers in London, and the following account of them as sold there, will not be uninteresting to our readers.

The Viometer consists of a brass plate having a fixed axis placed perpendicularly to its surface with an endless screw cut on its middle part. On this is suspended a small brass frame which swings freely below. In this frame are two brass wheels turning freely and independent of the same axis, each cut with teeth on its edges beveling toward each other, one containing 100 and the other 101 teeth. The endless screw on the fixed axis engaged in the teeth of both wheels drives them in the same direction, every revolution of the carriage wheel moving them one tooth. In 100 revolutions the wheel with 100 teeth has returned to its original position, and the other wheel is one tooth behind, and so on successively, so that the number of teeth the second wheel is behind the first will be a register of the number of hundreds of revolutions the carriage wheel has made since it started, or since the machine was set and the number of revolutions the carriage wheel has made beyond the even hundreds.”

4The list of scientific instruments purchased in England is almost identical in type and number to those used by Captain John C. Frémont, U.S. Army Topographical Engineer, during his 1843–44 western expedition. Frémont’s list did not include an odometer. Odometers were not available as a standard item of army issue until 1848. Frémont’s report does, however, include a table of distances traveled each day. These values, all whole numbers, were undoubtedly obtained from individual estimates or calculated from astronomical measurements and rounded.

In 1845, the Mormon leaders in Nauvoo obtained a copy of Frémont’s report and studied it diligently. His use of scientific instruments undoubtedly
underscored their importance and may account for the fact that the Church leaders ordered a similar list of instruments from England and that they overlooked an odometer.

A comparative list of instruments follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frémont—1843-44</th>
<th>Mormon Pioneers—1847</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One reflecting telescope</td>
<td>One reflecting telescope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One reflecting circle</td>
<td>One circle of reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two sextants</td>
<td>Two sextants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two barometers</td>
<td>Two barometers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six barometers</td>
<td>Several barometers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Pocket Chronometers</td>
<td>Two Pocket Chronometers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Odometer</td>
<td>No Odometer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Artificial Horizon reported</td>
<td>Two Artificial Horizons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Quadrant reported</td>
<td>One Quadrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Small Telescopes reported</td>
<td>Several small telescopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(J. C. Frémont, Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842, and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843-44 [Washington: House of Representatives, 1845], 106)</td>
<td>(Pratt, “Conference Minutes,” 264-65)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


FRIDAY, [MAY] 21ST. . . . Elder Kimball proposed tonight that I should leave a number of pages for so much of his journal as I am behind in copying and start from the present and keep it up daily. He furnished me a candle and I wrote the journal of this day’s travel by candle light in his journal, leaving fifty-six pages blank. (Clayton, Journal, 166, 169)

To compare the content of the Heber C. Kimball journal to that of William Clayton’s for the same days (May 23 and 29, 1847), see Heber C. Kimball, Journals, holograph, book 94, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as BYU Archives); and Clayton, Journal, 178, 194-95.

7“SUNDAY, [APRIL] 18TH. This morning I wrote a letter for Heber to his wife Vilate, which was sent by Brother Ellis Eames who has concluded to go back on account of poor health.” Clayton, Journal, 79.

Clayton, Journal, 156, 159:

TUESDAY, [MAY] 18th . . .

. . . After encampment was formed, went with Elder Orson Pratt to Dr. Richards’ wagon to enter into arrangements for making a map of our route. The doctor wants me to do it, assisted by Elder Pratt’s observations. He handed me Fremont’s map, and I retired to my wagon to commence operations, but soon found that the map does not agree with my scale nor Elder Pratt’s calculations. I then proposed to Elder Pratt to wait until we get through the journey and take all the necessary data and then make a new one instead of making our route on Fremont’s.


MONDAY, [MAY] 24th . . . I have been writing in Elder Kimball’s journal since dark, and have but little chance to write as much as I want in my own and his both, but I feel determined to do all I can to keep a journal of this expedition which will be interesting to by children in after days, and perhaps to many of the Saints. (Clayton, Journal, 180, 182)

From the above entry, it is clear that Clayton, on this occasion, wrote Kimball’s journal first and then, apparently, copied it back into his own journal with augmentations.


Clayton, Journal, 81, 83.


Clayton, Journal, 136–37. Clayton does not describe the particular method he used for observing or for tallying the rotations of the wagon wheel. I am not aware of a single source document that corroborates his use of a piece of “red flannel” tied to a spoke to note wheel rotations. This widely reported detail appears to be an embellishment by later writers. The pages of Clayton’s journal contain no counting data or calculations. Worksheets were evidently used for this purpose and later discarded. Clayton did not know that a wheel 4’ 8” in diameter was one of the standard sizes manufactured by wheelwrights of that period.

Orson Pratt, The Orson Pratt Journals, ed. Elden Jay Watson (Salt Lake City: Elden Jay Watson, 1975), 390–92. The principle of the “endless screw” is centuries old. Today, we call it a worm gear. It was commonly used in many odometers of that period. In this respect, Pratt’s design proposal was not new or unique but rather a practical application of his general knowledge of gear works.

Clayton, Journal, 149.


“...I wish it understood that during the forepart of our journey we had to guess at the distance, and sometimes overstated it. But by the mechanical genius of Appleton Harmon’s, we have now the distance counted off to us like clockwork through the agency of a machine attached to his wagon bed, the wheels of which are turned by the revolutions of the wagon wheel.” Erastus Snow, “From Nauvoo to Salt Lake in the Van of the Pioneers: The Original Diary of Erastus Snow,” Improvement Era 14 (October 1911), 1099.


“A. M. Harmon fixed a roadometer by which we have since measured.” Lyman, “Journals,” 26.


Clayton, Journal, 163.


Of all the participants in the pioneer odometer episode, we know least about the life of William Avidus King. I have searched extensively in Utah, Massachusetts, Maine, and New York to obtain more information with the hope of documenting the specifications of his one-thousand-mile-measuring machine. My efforts have produced only scattered pieces of biographical data. The following facts regarding his life have been established:

Born: July 3, 1820 at Paris, Maine
Parents: George and Polly Hall King
Siblings: Miranda, Augustus, Erastus, Octavius, and Cyrenus

Joined the Church in early 1840s
Ordained an Elder in 1844 (est.)
Member of the 25th Quroum of Seventy in Nauvoo
Adopted son of Heber C. Kimball
Carpenter on the Kimball home in Nauvoo
Endowed in the Nauvoo Temple, January 10, 1846
Member of Brigham Young’s 1847 pioneer company
After returning to the East, he never came back to Utah
Met Erastus Snow in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in July 1850
Lived in New York City in March 1851
Reportedly left the Church
Believed to have died in Boston in 1862

A significant amount of King family research remains to be done. The author will be grateful to any reader who could provide additional information.


"William Clayton, with the assistance of William King and Orson (Whitney) was engaged today in making a new Roadometer, as he intends to start back with the ox teams on Monday next." Howard Egan, *Pioneering the West, 1846 to 1878; Major Howard Egans' Diary* (Salt Lake City: Skelton Publishing, 1917), 115.

31Egan, *Pioneering the West*, 122.
32Egan, *Pioneering the West*, 123.
37Egan, *Pioneering the West*, 122.

An often asked question is, "How accurate were Clayton's measurements?" The answer, his measurements were reasonably accurate. An odometer, however, is not a high-precision device. Years later, the accuracy ascribed to Clayton's wooden instrument was distorted. In particular, a sign that described the odometer artifact [Lowe's] in the old Church Museum on Temple Square read as follows: "The difference between the measurements made by this instrument and those made by the government surveyors who subsequently passed over the route, was less than 60 feet." The government surveyor referred to was Albert Carrington, a member of the Church, who in 1849-50 was assigned to assist Captain Howard Stansbury of the U.S. Army in his survey of the Great Salt Lake. Afterwards, he accompanied Stansbury to Washington, D.C., where the final government report was prepared. In 1851, Carrington returned to Salt Lake City over the same route that Clayton had taken, measuring the distances with a brass, pendulum odometer similar to an English viometer.

On July 17, 1851, Carrington made the following notation in his journal:
"Clayton only measured the track and we measure turning off to water and camp etc." When Carrington completed his journey, he totaled the distance from Kanesville to the Temple Block in Salt Lake City and found it to be 1,203 miles. This total included a 150-mile detour around the Loupe River to avoid high water and twenty-two additional miles traveling on the north side of the Platte River from the Ft. Laramie ford to the upper ferry. Subtracting these from the total gives 1,031 miles, which agrees exactly with Clayton's total published in his 1848 *The Latter-Day Saints' Emigrants' Guide*.

The identical totals of the two measurements appears to be the source of the statement on the Church Museum sign. Although Carrington included the measurement of all the side trips, he later approximated them to be nine miles so
as to make his total mileage agree exactly with Clayton's. Precision, therefore, was not a consideration. The "less than 60 feet" difference between the two surveys is undoubtedly fictitious.


Clayton's published guide, prepared with such meticulous care, is silent with regard to the contributions of Orson Pratt, Appleton M. Harmon, and William A. King in designing and building the machines that provided the data.


47"Arizona Matters," Deseret Evening News, August 10, 1876, 3. The precise operation of the Lowe odometer remains unclear because machine parts that transmit motion from the larger to the smaller gears have been lost. In addition, the size of the wagon wheel that drove the instrument is unknown. From the 1876 Deseret Evening News article, however, we learn that the largest gear counted forty-two revolutions of the wagon wheel and that each tooth of the smallest gear represented one-third of a mile.

48The specimens of reptiles brought from Arizona by Brother Thomas Lowe, of Franklin, have been placed in the Deseret Museum by him, and also the roadometer of his invention, where they can be seen by all desiring to examine them." In the Museum," Deseret Evening News, August 12, 1876, 3.

49Label on Lowe's odometer, Deseret Museum.


50The odometer in an automobile measures the distance traveled whereas the speedometer shows the rate of speed. These two instruments are structurally related so that they are often referred to collectively as the "speedometer."

52Pioneer Measuring Device May Prove to Be First Speedometer Ever Made," Deseret News, May 19, 1921, 8.


54Today, many people still believe that the Mormon pioneers were the inventors of the first odometer in history. This is a clear demonstration of the power of the printed word—even an erroneous claim appearing in print is accepted as fact. This is particularly true where pride in a common heritage is engendered or enhanced. Once the information appears in print, it takes on a life of its own. Without verification, subsequent writers follow what was previously written and the myth spreads to an ever widening audience. The rapid acceptance and dissemination of the myth of the Mormon pioneer odometer is not a unique cultural phenomenon.

It interested me to learn that a disciple of Brigham Young invented the speedometer. Few of us ever give the origin of that delicate and useful instrument a thought [in its artistic little frame in front of us]. We consult it occasionally to learn just how many miles per hour we are exceeding the speed limit.

Until I read Werner's Life of Brigham Young, I never gave the speedometer a second thought. Perhaps if the Mormons had not set out from Nauvoo, Illinois, for the Far West, it might not have been invented.

The far seeing Brigham wanted to know distances, and he assigned the faithful William Clayton to that job. Clayton sat all day long with his eyes glued to one of the wagon wheels, counting the number of times it revolved each day. This exacting task soon got on Clayton's nerves. It occurred to him that an attachment on a wagon wheel would be "more accurate and less burdensome" than his guesses based on the wheel's revolutions. (Fremont Older, "The First Speedometer," *San Francisco Call Bulletin*, September 23, 1931)

Fremont Older wrote follow-up commentaries on the Mormon pioneer odometer which appeared in the *San Francisco Call Bulletin* on October 31, 1931, and on August 31, 1932. See also Helen Kroll, "Books That Enlightened the Emigrants," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 45 (June 1944): 109; "Crude Speedometer Built to Measure Miles," *Deseret News*, July 22, 1931; and Harmon, "World's First Speedometer." 12.

52"Proves Orson Pratt Was Not Inventor," *Salt Lake Telegram*, July 13, 1921, 7.

Sleeping Out at the Farm

August nights in Wyoming raise a cold dew.
We return for clarity: visible heavens
mapped with stars,
thick slush of the milky way
across Salt River Range.

We lie before moonrise
under grandmother-quilts, our bodies curved
over feather ticks from the attic.
Through fences, my father's last few Angus—
shipped to market—seem still to move,
invisible and real.

Birthplace, pasture, creek bed,
hills . . . we float with nebulae
as the east grows pale,
cirrus moving in with a wafer moon.
We dissolve toward sleep
with high-altitude cloud,
our lives a faint cluster of plenty.

—Dixie Partridge
Another Marvelous Thing

For my mother on her first Mother's Day without hers.

Tessa Meyer Santiago

I'm planting roses in my garden. Pulling off my gloves to tie Julia's shoelaces, I see my fingers for the first time. Are these my mother's square, short-nailed, garden-dirt-rimmed hands or are they mine? I never noticed her garden much as a child: plum trees on the periphery; hydrangeas lifting heavy, pastel-blossomed heads that brushed my thighs as I ran by; a short, orange skirt of chrysanthemums ringing the bougainvillea boa hugging the front door; mint by the garden tap, gathered on Christmas Eve for the lemon-banana punch; and hibiscus lady blossoms we undressed with eager fingers. My younger sister Laura remembers trips to the nursery as hot and tedious, Mom lifting pony pack after pony pack, sniffing each like a bloodhound on the trail of the perfect petunia; aisle after aisle in the African sun, geranium after geranium, camellias, freesia, dahlias, and daisies, sniffing—while we waited, shifting from leg to leg, squinting in the sun.

I tried to go to Homebase yesterday. Well, I did go, but not the way I wanted to. My children ended up in the ornamental fountain splashing all the nice old ladies heading for the petunias and too brightly orange marigolds. After a strict castigation delivered in the violently hushed voice I recognized as the one my mother used to use on us in church and in public, the children shifted their attention to the moveable stepladder that some agile youth used to stack Homebase's white trellis thirty-five feet high on the shelf. I had almost found the perfect purple salvia when Christian yelled, "Wump," and spread his wings from the top step. I loaded Christian, Julia, not the perfect purple shade of salvia, not the right kind of rose food, too many Shasta daisies, and a giant dahlia instead of a regular one onto the cart and headed for the door. You know, just
as Christian was about to plant himself in the concrete, I had the salvia held up close to my face. I was checking to see if it was a healthy plant. But, if you were looking at me, you would have sworn I was sniffing it.

Perhaps in Julia’s memory, the trips to the nursery will be long and tedious, the Utah sun beating down on her head as she watches me standing mesmerized before pallets of fertilizer, head cocked to one side, a glazed look in my eyes, as I conjure up visions of my garden’s summer bouquet. Perhaps she will have hazy memories of afternoons in the garden—playing in the wading pool in her bright pink swimsuit, her motherputtering off to the side, fussing in the soil, pulling grass here and there—just as I have memories of me and my mother.

I climbed trees for a living when I was five. As my childhood mother, who never changes in my memory—always the same size despite two pregnancies, the same height, the same smell, the same hands—planted her nursery treasures, I climbed trees. I hung upside down. I swung from limb to limb. I stole loquats from the neighbor’s tree and grapes from the other neighbor’s toolshed vine. I walked like a trapeze artist along the single-brick-wide, red wall dripping with passion fruit vines. I traced cobblestone pathways in my head and checked the clover patch for fairies. All the while, on the edge of my adventure, my mother plodded, planting.

Except once. Once my childhood mother stole my center stage. One afternoon she told me, while she checked on the seedlings beneath the study window in the front garden, that she had done acrobatics when she was a child. I didn’t believe her. I couldn’t believe her. This was my mother who dyed her gray hair, wore panty hose on Sundays, and knew how to make chocolate chiffon cakes so light they floated. So there, in her flowered housecoat, surrounded by passion fruit vines and hibiscus trees, and watched by her disbelieving fifth child, my ancient mother kicked off her sandals and did a cartwheel, landing, quite gracefully, with her long, brown legs in the splits, her garments peeping out from beneath her hem. I was shocked, stunned. She might have just as well grown wings and taken to the air. I asked her to do it again. She didn’t. She laughed that laugh she laughs when she can’t quite believe she just did what she did and went back to weeding. If I’m
correct, Mervyl, the ancient, unchanging mother of my childhood, was only thirty-seven at the time.

Why then was I so shocked at her impulsive gesture? Perhaps because it revealed the Mervyl behind the mother. To me as a child, my mother was not a woman. She was mother. She was a collection of parts melted together that took her face and smell. She was a red-and-white Volkswagen bus waiting at the end of the school driveway on the days it was too rainy to walk home. She was clean, cool, cotton sheets on my sick bed while I took a bath during weeklong asthma attacks. She was a green, dimpled bottle of 7-Up in the refrigerator door during my bouts with tonsillitis. She was a cooler of egg-salad sandwiches wedged between the front seats of the VW bus on the way to Plettenburg Bay. She was ripe-red tomato sections and Vienna sausages on a plate on the counter when Julia Smitherman came to lunch after school. She was fingers stroking my hair as I slept on her lap during golden-lighted Sunday evening sacrament meetings. She was a voice rising, falling, then stopping as she fell asleep during my bedtime story. She was the hum of the sewing machine making quilts from piece goods bought at the Laura Ashley store in London; the bark of dogs as they rounded the corner early on the gray morning walks before the rest of us were awake. She was the smell of Nivea on summer afternoons spent pouring over her Sunday School lessons. She was there, always, mother, unchanging, warm.

Rarely did I see Mervyl. I saw Mervyl in the cartwheel. I saw Mervyl in the shoes that came flying after me when I had been particularly rude. I saw Mervyl in the nervous stroking of the hair at the nape of her neck. I saw Mervyl in her hands clasped tightly to her waist, as if to reassure herself, as she ventured into a social encounter. I used to wonder why she felt so inadequate around other people when she was all to me. But I never really knew her story. I heard fragments of it at night: about Blue, her fat horse when she lived on the farm in the Orange Free State, who never wanted to do more than walk when heading away from the farmhouse, but who would gallop in a frenzy the moment you turned his head around; about eating eggshell sandwiches during the war when food was rationed; and about lying awake at night in a wet bed afraid to tell the nuns at the Catholic boarding school her
mother sent her to when she was five years old. Then, just as she was getting to the best part of the story, the part when I would really be able to see what it was like for her as a child, her voice would rise, fall, then stop with the nodding of a sleeping head. Now, I see she was exhausted. Then, I used to elbow her awake demanding that she finish. She never did. So fragments of her life beyond me floated in my consciousness, assuming mythic proportions as I created a childhood Mervyl who did cartwheels atop fat Blue as he plodded away from a farmhouse that was filled with egg-shell sandwiches and a wicked mother, who sent her only daughter away to a lonely, Catholic boarding school when she was five and still a child.

This wicked mother, my grandmother, wasn’t always so wicked. Most of the time she, too, floated in parts in my memory: lemon creme biscuits that tasted of laundry detergent (she kept them in the same cupboard), stories on tape she sent to her grandchildren so that we could eat her peanut butter biscuits and listen to her voice on long afternoons, a shimmery white purse like crocodile skin, and amber crystal vanity sets arranged on her dark wood dresser. She was a grandmother of superlative stature, complete with yearly trips to the ballet where we got to eat in a restaurant and order fizzy drinks. But, I sensed and heard snatches of other stories that didn’t fit so neatly next to her cut-glass perfume bottle with the diamond stopper. In fact, when I was in my teens, I regarded my grandmother with a sort of horror for what I perceived she had done to my mother.

I specifically recall one school picture I had found in a cigar box in the linen chest that smelled of mothballs. In it, my mother stood among many rows of other young school girls in the wartime South Africa of the early 1940s. Each wore a dark pinafore with a white-collared shirt. My mother’s collar swooped in two perfect half-moons around her neck. I thought it quite beautiful. On the sides of each row stood nuns—dark angels waiting to punish my mother for wetting her bed; I silently cursed them with all the virulence an eleven year old can muster. Then my mother said, “Oh, those collars. Look at them. They were the biggest in the whole school.” I looked again. They really were. “My mother used to embarrass me so much. She insisted on making all my school
clothes. She always tried to make them so stylish. And I always looked so different. I know we were poor, but she always had to be different. I hated it.” I knew exactly what she meant. She had sent me to first grade with a homemade, green gingham apron festooned with a red rickrack-smile face with red button eyes. I was to wear it over my green school uniform. I loved it. That was, until a seventh grader, assigned to welcome the first graders to junior school, sneered, “Ooh cute, did your mother make that?” “Well, yes,” I stuttered quietly, my six-year-old heart shriveling inside me. So I knew what my mother meant.

But that was only an apron. Her mother also made her do acrobatics and perform in front of people to overcome her shyness. She made her eat those eggshell sandwiches to get enough calcium. She left my mother alone at night in a tent in a dark mining camp so she could go dancing. And the nuns, well, who can forgive a mother who sends her five year old to a place where dark angels make children sleep in their own urine to teach them a lesson? I would watch my grandmother sometimes, watch her face and her body as she walked among us, wondering whether she knew what she did to her child, whether she was sorry for the pain she caused.

To try to tell a mother’s story, we must tell the story of two women’s lives: the child who becomes the mother, and the woman who mothered her. The story of any woman is essentially the story of two women. I suppose I could put any two names there: Johanna and Mary, Mary and Mervyl, Mervyl and Tessa, Tessa and Julia. For in each woman’s life, the root of memory is watered and shaded by her mother’s choices.

My mother was an only child because her mother had borne six children before her who all died within a week after their births. My mother was raised in a single-parent family for most of her life because her mother divorced her father, a particularly reprehensible man, who not only forced my grandmother to marry him by raping her, but also forced her to live with his constant
adultery as part of her marriage vows. (This story my grandmother never told her only child for fear, perhaps, my mother would find her lacking. We have been told, though, that we are not to name any of our children after my mother's father.)

My grandmother took my mother to Northern Rhodesia, as far away as she could get, I suppose, and worked as a mining-camp nurse to support her child. It was there my young mother used to lie awake at night, petrified, with a candle for company, while her mother went dancing. Then Mary, my grandmother, took a chance on love and married a kind man, a Mr. Vernon-Harley. My mother left school after the tenth grade because her stepfather, who took this small family to his farm and loved them, died of cancer. She said once she used to dream that he was her real father, but she knew he wasn't.

The story of a mother is so intricately connected with her own mother's, it is difficult to tell where one stops and the other begins. I suppose Mary thought nothing of taking her child with her into the African bush because her mother, Johanna, had raised her two girls while following her husband around Africa as he plied his trade as a hunting guide. I suppose Ella, my mother-in-law, has a garage full of hidden treasures because she was raised by Rose who homesteaded near Stansbury Island with her beloved Stanley in a home with no running water and an icehouse. I believe my father became an architect because Margaret, his Scottish mother, had a husband who spent too much time lawn bowling, so she built an addition to her house helped by her seventh child, young Gerard. I'd like to think Mervyl filled her adult home with children and good books because she wanted us to have what she never did.

I think, though, that the truth is somewhat different. I had in my childhood, and still do have, exactly what she had in hers—a woman, who, now mother, does what she must to raise her child or children in peace and joy. If it took a scandalous divorce in the late 1930s and work in a mining camp, so be it. If it took nursing a newborn through breasts swollen with mastitis, so be it. That is what mothers do. How do we know? Because our mothers showed us as best they could.

I remember another picture that hides itself as a backdrop to the wedding of my oldest sister, Margo. It shows my older mother,
forty-two years old. Her hair is almost gray. She is standing in the dining room beside her sewing machine. Behind her, hanging from the sliding-door track, are seven dresses: a bride’s dress, two bridesmaids’, and the flower girls’. Her oldest daughter is getting married in about two weeks. In her arms, she holds her youngest child, Alexandra Margaret, not three weeks old. She is looking at her child with tender eyes, the same way she looked at my children when she cared for them after their births. Her face, though, is almost gray, heavily lined, her shoulders bent.

In my child’s eye, I remember the wedding, the pieces and parts of it: My mother’s food, the tuna mousse, the chippolata sausages, the cast-iron tubs swimming with grape juice bottles and ice cubes. My red-sprigged flower girl’s dress, the dancing and the reading of telegrams; my youngest sister, five weeks old, in her bridesmaid’s dress, carried in my mother’s arms down the aisle.

As a woman and a mother now, I see a different picture of the same event. I am shocked by the exhaustion in my mother’s face. I am stunned by the sheer logistics of the whole picture: giving birth to your seventh child in your forties, sewing seven dresses while plagued by a severe case of mastitis (I remember the doctor and his black bag visiting her in bed; I had never seen my mother sick in bed before), catering a whole reception six weeks after the birth, and caring for your family in the meanwhile. The woman in me aches for Mervyl during that time—that she swallowed her pain, her exhaustion, and her fear that she could not do it all and went on anyway. I ache for her intense love for this unexpected child who made her way into the family at such a time and for her loss as she watched her daughter marry a man clearly unsuited for her. But the child in me thanks the mother in Mervyl for not stopping, for not sitting down in a heap on the kitchen floor and declaring, “That’s it. I can’t do it any longer. I’m done.” While the woman battled her exhaustion and her fear, I practiced for life, building memories of weddings and turkeys with white-frocked drumsticks, filing away snatches of “jolly, good fellows” and confetti baskets to pull out when I remember Margo’s wedding.

How many other events could I examine more carefully and reinterpret, now that I am grown? She piled us into the red-and-white VW bus some afternoons, laden with carrot sticks and bread
crusts to feed the mountain deer. They nuzzled our hands with their skittish black noses, stealing carrots softly from our outstretched palms. My mother read in the car, sometimes she walked around, far from us. Quieter that way, I realize now. I used to wonder why she didn’t join in or why she always invited a friend. She needed an adult to talk to.

She let me take ballet lessons, music lessons, squash lessons, art lessons. Every afternoon of the week found me in a different place: Monday, I was doing pirouettes, spotting the exit sign at Oakhurst Girls’ Assembly Hall; Tuesday, Mr. Barlow, with his Swedish accent, taught me tennisette underneath the oak trees; Wednesday, I watched Sister Brockbank’s glitter nail polish sparkle in the sun during Merrie Miss A in Classroom 8; Thursday, I was surrounded by boys speaking Afrikaans and girls who never looked at me in classes at the white-pillared art school; Friday, ballet again, this time on the splintered floor of St. Thomas’s; and some Saturdays, it was music lessons. I know another reason now for this full childhood schedule, other than my mother wanting her children to develop confidence. For the very same reason, I’ve signed Julia up for creative dance lessons this summer, as well as summer craft camp—she swung off the top of the bookshelf one too many times, and she leaves me no time for my reading.

Discovering that my mother’s mothering contained strains of a struggling self, as well as the woman she was before she was my mother, does not scar my shining memories. It makes her, in fact, more precious. That she could so gently and unobtrusively work her own desires into my incessant demands without pushing me off my stage is remarkable. In my own motherhood, I keep waiting for that Kodak moment when the world will turn hazy around the edges and the camera will focus on me, dressed in pastel, with a tear in my eye as I watch Julia and Christian sing an eager “Mother, I Love You” at the top of their voices during the Primary program. At that moment, I assume I will be supremely Mother. It has never happened yet. I have hardly felt that supreme confidence, that overwhelming urge to be mother that I assumed my mother always felt. I almost always feel split between my mothering duties and my personal desires.

Once I felt raw emotion, love, I suppose, but bordering on desperate obsession: Christian lay strapped to a table, a large needle in
his spinal column; they were testing for meningitis. That night, as I lay next to him in his hospital crib, I would have dealt with the devil for my second child. My love for him was matched only by my fear and utter helplessness. But during the darkest hours when his temperature hovered around 106 degrees, when I hadn’t slept for more than two days and I was reduced to tears, I realized my mother had loved me, nursed me, cared for me in the very same, desperately fierce way as I struggled to breathe in my childhood bedroom. Simultaneously, I was filled with both a desperate longing to have my child sleeping peacefully in my arms and a lightening sense of awe that somebody on this earth felt about me in this passionate, powerful, almost primeval way.

But most of the time, I walk the route between mothering and me too many times a day. For two people, though, I am beginning to occupy the same mythic space my mother filled for me. I see Julia doing things I remember doing with my own mother as audience. And I realize she must feel about me the same way I felt about my own mother. Covered with dirt, I leave my rose bushes to pick Julia up from nursery school. I am often late; I forget she is there. But her smile lights the room when I walk in. I find my hand brushing Julia’s forehead in a good-night caress as my mother’s hands brushed me. I drive Julia around Provo with me on errands; I see her hiding underneath fabric trees in the $2 Fabric Store; I see her pulling shopping carts over on herself. I hear the panic rising in her voice as she loses sight of me in the grocery store. She sits in the back of the cart now, her place in the front usurped by her younger brother. I tell her to share with Christian; he’s only a baby. She pouts back at me with my pout I used successfully for years. It is her face that flirts with me from what used to be my fifth-grade picture: the round eyes, the round lips, cheekbones bunching beneath the smile. We share them, just as I do, I am told, with Margaret, my paternal grandmother. It is hard to tell where I end and Julia begins. Time’s strange circle has woven itself around me and my daughter, and for a moment, if the light is just right, you cannot tell whether it is mother or daughter. And rightly so. For to be a daughter is to mother. And to be a mother is to add to that long chain of mothers and daughters, parents and children stretching far back before oak trees were acorns, before
mothers were daughters, and grandmothers were only babies suckled at their mother's breast.

Two weeks ago, Mervyl laid Mary to rest in a cool, deep grave beneath a blue gum tree in small cemetery overlooking a fishing village. Mary had lived ninety-two strong, vibrant years on God's earth, yet she ended her life as helpless as she began it. My mother cared for her mother in her final months, like a mother with a newborn child. She became her mother's mother. In the letter she wrote to her children following the funeral, she said of her final hours with her fragile mother:

I went to her room and saw her still and peaceful at last, the strain lines on her forehead had smoothed, and she seemed to have grown smaller. . . . I cannot tell the feelings that filled my heart at that moment—relief for her sake, sorrow for her leaving me. She had mothered me for sixty years. She was the one constant in my life—the one person who would always support me regardless, always showed love and expressed it, was always there to help with whatever needed to be done, loved each of my children as much as I did.

As I think back to my mother's mothering of me, I must add my grandmother's love as part of it. The woman who raised my mother loved me as fiercely as she loved her own child. She too, I believe, would have dealt with the devil for my soul. And there, perhaps, is my mother's most precious gift to me. As she took her place in a long line of women who mothered their children, she gave me twice a mother's love: hers and her mother's. To know that on this earth, there is somebody who loves me with the fierceness with which I can love my own children; who thinks of me as constantly as I think of Julia and Christian; who prays for me with the protectiveness with which I pray for my two; who would march resolutely into hell to bring me back; who would try, despite her personal desires, her fear, her exhaustion, to do her best by me, is satisfying to my soul. But to think there were two women who loved me this way . . . ah, now that is a bright, marvelous, wonderful thing.

Tessa Meyer Santiago is a daughter, wife, and mother of three.
A Shepherd to Mexico’s Saints:
Arwell L. Pierce and the
Third Convention

National pride, local suspicion, and
perceptions of insensitivity were overcome as a
group of Mexican Saints were lovingly returned to the fold.

F. LaMond Tullis

The series of events that split the Church in Mexico and swept into existence the schismatic group known as the Third Convention began with the Mexican Revolution (1910–17) and continued through the early 1930s. Motivated by isolation, intense feelings of nationalism and pride resulting from the revolution, and a perception of insensitivity shown toward Mexicans by some Anglo Latter-day Saints, a large number of Mexican Saints became dissatisfied with the leaders chosen to guide the Church in Mexico.¹ This dissatisfaction caused a strain between the mainstream Church and these central Mexican Saints.² By 1936 the strain was stretched to the breaking point, and an apparently irreversible schism occurred—the Third Convention was born, taking one-third of Mexico’s members from the main body of the Church.

Relationships between members of the Church in Mexico and the dissident Conventionists were filled with suspicion, acrimony, and, in many cases, a loathing reserved for only the very incarnation of evil. These antagonistic feelings remained unchanged until the Church called a remarkable man to serve as president of the Mexican Mission. From 1942 through 1946, Arwell L. Pierce carried out a persistent and inspired crusade to undo the schism and bring the Mexican Saints back into a harmonious relationship with each other and with the Church. Through patient self-effacement, spiritual commitment, and diplomatic tact, Pierce accomplished that
daunting task. He counseled with mainline members, dissident members, General Authorities, and even the prophet, President George Albert Smith. Pierce softened hearts and helped to make extraordinary ecclesiastical decisions. The direct result of his labors was a reunification in 1946, which made possible the Church’s subsequent rapid growth in Mexico. The story of Pierce’s ordeal and his subsequent success should never be lost from memory.

Events Leading to the Schism

The Revolution and the Cristero Rebellion. The Mexican Revolution and related intermittent rumblings lasting into the 1930s set up the initial conditions for the Third Convention. One consequence of the war was the Cristero rebellion of 1926, which disrupted the country’s religious life for nine years and forced all foreign clergy, including Latter-day Saint leaders, out of Mexico. The ensuing isolation of the Mexican Saints from Church headquarters in Salt Lake City resulted in an understandable independence among them. This independence, along with strong feelings of nationalism and ethnic pride generated by the revolution, were factors that led to the impending schism.

A Change in Mission Leadership. A second significant event, independent of the revolution’s effects, played into its disruptive influence by accelerating independence and pride among many—perhaps most—Mexican Saints. In 1924 the Church decided to send Mexico’s much beloved mission president, Rey L. Pratt, out of Mexico temporarily to help open the Church’s mission in Argentina. Before he left Mexico, Pratt empowered the Mexican leaders to act on their own, which they began to do, basing their actions on how they thought Pratt would have wanted them to function. Pratt’s absence and the subsequent Cristero rebellion brought Mexican members into leadership positions at a dizzying pace. When some of these leaders asserted themselves with nationalist and prideful sentiments, they complicated their relationship with Church headquarters in Salt Lake City.

Because of the Cristero rebellion, matters changed little when Pratt returned from Argentina to take up his duties again in the Mexican mission. The Mexican government prohibited his
functioning in any official religious capacity in Mexico; thus, Pratt did the only thing he could—he empowered the members to govern themselves to a greater extent while he gave them what guidance he could, mostly in absentia from the United States. The Mexicans did, in effect, what Pratt and other missionaries from the U.S. had done—they coordinated, advised, and tried to preserve and enhance faith and brotherhood within the Church.

Pratt appointed Isaías Juárez to preside over the Central Mexico District, with Abel Páez and Bernabé Parra as his counselors. These three men brought stability and confidence to the small branches in central Mexico. The branches survived their isolation from Salt Lake City, and some even flourished. Nevertheless, Church members and leaders alike depended emotionally and otherwise on Pratt’s arm’s-length guidance, which he sought to provide at every conceivable opportunity.

Then disaster struck. On April 14, 1931, following an operation for an intestinal rupture, Rey Pratt died. With Pratt’s death and the appointment of a new mission president, the very independence that had allowed the Saints to survive provoked severe strains in the Church in Mexico. Subsequent Church leaders in the United States were unaware of how the revolution, its aftermath, and Rey Pratt’s sojourn in Argentina had affected Mexican members. The consequences of leadership decisions made during the years following Pratt’s death incited dissident sentiments among many of the Church members in Mexico.

The First Convention. Antoine R. Ivins succeeded Rey L. Pratt as president of the Mexican mission. After Elder Ivins’s appointment, Mexican members waited several months to see what he would say or do with respect to them. When nothing seemed to be happening, a group of Mexican members under district president Isaías Juárez met on the outskirts of Mexico City—probably in San Pedro Mártir—in late 1931 or early 1932 to discuss problems such as the lack of missionaries in Mexico and the inadequacy of Church literature in Spanish. They also discussed the mission leadership. Who was in charge? What should they do? Some of the members, feeling a need to take the initiative in some action, deliberated and prayed together at this meeting, which has come to be known as the “first convention.”
Leaders of the Central Mexico District with the American Ambassador, J. Reuben Clark Jr., c. 1931-32. Two of the earliest native Mexican Church leaders, Abel Páez, left, and Isaías Juárez, right, faithfully guided their fellow Saints at a time when the mission president was prohibited from functioning in Mexico. Both men also served after the Third Convention Saints reunited with the Church. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.
The group determined that they would write to Salt Lake City, petitioning Church leaders for one of their own nationality as mission president—one who could both understand and represent them. This course of action seemed reasonable to them. The political situation in Mexico made it illegal for a North American to be their president. Besides, they felt that President Ivins seemed uninterested in Mexico—certainly, he had never paid them a visit or communicated with them.

**The Second Convention.** Beneath the surface of this petition ran a strong emotional current. Historically abrasive relations with the United States had made the Mexican Saints sensitive—even touchy. President Ivins's perceived lack of attention fanned the fires of Mexican nationalism. The fact that they received no response to their petition provided additional fuel. The members met again in San Pedro Mártil to renew their request. This meeting, probably held in the early spring of 1932, is known as the "second convention."

Word of the second convention and a renewal of the original petition for a Mexican national as mission president reached President Ivins. Following the second convention—nearly a year from the time of his appointment as mission president—he traveled with Elder Melvin J. Ballard to Mexico City to meet with the first- and second-convention Saints.

President Ivins's approach to the problem was aggressive. He reprimanded the members for their assertiveness, their holding of extraofficial meetings, and their drafting of petitions. Petitions of the kind they had sent to Salt Lake City were out of order, he informed them. Unlike the Mexican political system, which encourages the gathering of signatures for petitions to capture the attention of aloof public bureaucrats, in Utah such procedures were viewed as inappropriate. He softened his reprimand by assuring the members that, with the Lord's inspiration, the First Presidency would meet the Mexican members' desire for local leadership in due time. In the meantime, the Saints were obligated to support the President of the Church in his decisions and actions.

In time the strain between President Ivins and the first- and second-conventionists subsided, mostly because President Ivins returned to the United States and left them alone once again. They
seemed to set the whole leadership problem aside, carrying out their normal Church activities for the entire period of Ivins’s 1931–34 administration. President Ivins did not help them, but neither did he hinder them by interfering with their programs. The silent arrangement between President Ivins and President Juárez seemed, in the short run, acceptable to all parties.

Another New Mission President. While the Mexican section of the mission remained officially under President Ivins’s leadership, in actuality Isaías Juárez continued to lead the Mexican Saints as he had before Rey L. Pratt’s death. Following Antoine R. Ivins’s release as mission president in 1934, Church headquarters moved to meet the Mexican Saints’ growing needs by appointing Harold W. Pratt, Rey L. Pratt’s half-brother, as the new mission president.

Given Harold Pratt’s dedication and high principles, his severe trials as a mission president seem both unfortunate and unjust. Following Mexican law, Pratt quickly registered in Chihuahua as a cleric, an action he was able to take because he was a Mexican citizen from the Mormon colonies. He proceeded to tour the Mexican part of his mission. He worked efficiently, forcefully, and very visibly in his Church position—presiding over conferences and reorganizing branches, purchasing land for chapels, and directly resolving numerous ecclesiastical difficulties. He handled many long-standing problems that Juárez had lacked the time and travel money to resolve. Pratt believed that the Saints in Mexico clearly needed a strong ecclesiastical leader, and he tried diligently to meet that need through his service.

By the early 1930s, Anglo-American Latter-day Saints could once again enter Mexico and, although not officially registered as missionaries, do missionary work there. As had been done before, President Pratt called these Anglo-Americans to fill almost all the leadership positions in central Mexico. This move augmented Mexican members’ anxieties about their own standing with the Anglo leadership and wounded some Mexicans’ personal and national pride. They began to resent the dramatic constriction of local leaders’ activities. First, President Ivins had not given the Mexican Saints much help; then, suddenly, as soon as the Anglo members returned to Mexico, President Pratt called them to most of the local leadership positions. Mexican leaders were frustrated and
confused. Tension developed between them and the mission leadership. Concerned, Pratt decided that he needed to spend even more time in Mexico. He requested that the Church divide the mission and appoint someone else to supervise the Spanish-speaking mission in the southwestern United States, thereby freeing him entirely for service in Mexico.

When the Mexican members heard that the mission might be divided, they were stimulated at the prospect of having their own mission. They did not, however, see Harold Pratt as its president. First- and second-convention rhetoric about having a “real Mexican” (de pura raza y sangre) as president caught hold among the members and circulated widely.

The Mexican Saints’ optimism was not without reason. Missionary work had begun painfully and slowly in Mexico. However, by 1935 the Church’s endeavors had gained important momentum despite past problems. Several new chapels had been built. Membership had grown substantially, reaching approximately 2,800.8 Parts of the Doctrine and Covenants had been translated into Spanish. A new Spanish hymnal was being printed. A beautiful, modern chapel was to be constructed only five miles from the center of Mexico City. It seemed that the Church had achieved a substantial presence in Mexico.

Margarito Bautista and Ethnic Identity. But a problem—ultimately a large problem—was poised to disrupt the Mexican members. Margarito Bautista was one of the most articulate members of the Church in Mexico. Bautista, a member for many years, was an experienced leader in the Church and was an ordained high priest. He had known and admired Rey L. Pratt.9 Bautista was an uncommonly literate man and a gifted orator who had worked to educate himself, studying English and living for many years in Salt Lake City, where he taught the Spanish-American branch’s Gospel Doctrine class in Sunday School. He had observed Church government over a number of years and had done ordinance work in the Salt Lake Temple. Like many temple workers, Bautista had become an expert genealogist.10 After 1934 he was back in Mexico helping the Mexican Saints trace their ancestry.11

Bautista took to heart many Book of Mormon prophecies that speak of the rise of the Lamanites. An avid scriptionian, he agreed with Rey L. Pratt and numerous other leaders that Mexican history
was inseparable from Lamanite history and that Book of Mormon promises were inseparable from both. Rey Pratt had often expressed this theology to the Mexican Saints, many of whom took great pride in their mighty Lamanite ancestors. Bautista, stimulated by Rey Pratt’s sentiments, decided to write a book correlating Book of Mormon teachings with the Old Testament. Pratt, who was anxious to see more literature become available to the Mexican members, encouraged Bautista. Even after Pratt’s death, Bautista persisted, completing his manuscript in 1934.

Aside from other doctrinal problems, Bautista’s book spiritually argued that the “chosen people” were the Latin Americans, particularly the Mexicans. “Gentiles”—by which he meant those who were of the House of Israel not by descent, but by adoption—were considered second-class. Bautista argued that being a son or daughter of Israel by direct descent (which he interpreted as being of Native American lineage, however diluted) was decidedly better than being adopted (which he thought included most Anglo-American members).

Bautista proudly presented his manuscript to the authorities in Salt Lake City, expecting the Church to publish it. The Church, of course, could not publish the book. Bautista was stunned by the rejection. He took the book back to Mexico, where it was published by Apolonio B. Arzate, a member who owned a printing establishment in Mexico City. It quickly became a bestseller among Mexican Saints.

Harold Pratt, as mission president, crusaded to delegitimize the book in the minds of the Mexican members, many of whom read it with a passion reserved for scripture. A missionary who served in Mexico at the time remembers that many Saints preferred to quote from Bautista’s work rather than from the Book of Mormon. As Harold Pratt continued to try to diffuse the book’s divisive influence, his relationship with Margarito Bautista deteriorated markedly, and their discussions were often agitated. The more heated their conversations became, the more interest in the book was generated.

It was difficult for members of the Church in the United States to understand the Bautista book’s popularity among Mexican members and to comprehend the Mexican members’ concern with
national pride and personal dignity and their preoccupation with ancestral heritage. Since the turn of the century, few Americans had been interested in those subjects. They had forgotten their own postrevolutionary nationalism that had followed the U.S. Revolutionary and Civil Wars. A similar nationalism was very much alive in Mexico. Suspicion, distrust, and prejudice had to be overcome each time a new missionary or Church leader from the U.S. entered Mexico. Remarkably, however, the Mexican Saints always grew to love the foreign missionaries.

Margarito Bautista and his book fit perfectly into this growing Mexican nationalism. Mexican members thrilled as they read Bautista's interpretation of Book of Mormon promises to them—giving them a proud past and a glorious future. Bautista became a kind of charismatic leader among them.

Bautista called for an ethnic Mexican mission president as a lineage right for his people. Otherwise, he said, the actions of authorities in Salt Lake City could only be interpreted as an attempt to stunt Mexican leadership opportunities. A good many members were persuaded that Bautista was right. In the words of one Mexican Saint, "It would be a most splendid privilege for our people to have a man of our own race to govern the affairs of the Church in this choice part of the continent."17 Others added:

If the Church does not give us the means as well as open the way for us to officiate with authority among our own people for their complete development, we will never be able to carry forth this important work for ourselves and our people. . . . It will be impossible for us to make the necessary progress without this leadership opportunity.18

Once people knew that Harold Pratt's recommendation to divide the mission might be acted upon, predictions about what would happen diverged sharply. An embittered Bautista and those who joined with him said that the division would bring no good to Mexico because of the certainty that the Church, out of mean-spirited racial prejudice, would not appoint a Mexican as president. Others were not so sure and patiently waited to see if an ethnic Mexican would be selected. It was clear that whatever the choice, the implications would be substantial.
The Third Convention and the Schism

In April of 1936, the Church divided the Mexican Mission into the Mexican and Spanish-American Missions, with the Rio Grande forming their common border. Harold Pratt would preside over the new Mexican Mission and would arrange for new mission headquarters in Mexico City.

When the news of Pratt’s appointment reached Mexico City, Abel Páez, first counselor in the Mexican district presidency, was at work. Spurred on by his uncle, Margarito Bautista, he summoned the Saints to a crisis conference, where they would once more petition the First Presidency for a real Mexican mission president.

Sensing his people’s mood, district president Isaías Juárez was alarmed by the preparations for this third convention. He knew that this would be no simple petition: quite a few Mexican members were determined to settle for nothing less than a Mexican leader, however unusual such a demand was for Latter-day Saints, who prize obedience to prophetic guidance. Juárez also sensed accurately the mood of the Church authorities: he knew that no Mexican mission president would be forthcoming. Although he was as frustrated as many other Mexican Saints, Juárez realized that another convention would ultimately part ways with the Church. He refused to align himself with the convention and worked to undermine it. He met repeatedly with Abel Páez, trying to dissuade him, and he counseled Harold Pratt. Despite all efforts to dissuade him, Abel Páez ultimately agreed to preside over the convention. With Bautista’s help, he set out to organize the proceedings.

The leaders of the convention decided to form their own congregations, which became known as the Third Convention. Margarito Bautista set apart his nephew, Abel Páez, as the group’s president.19 With a note of finality, Páez claimed all responsibility for the Third Convention and its activities, stating publicly his determination to implement its decisions, which, he felt, were too beneficial and necessary to the Church’s well-being to be ignored any longer.20 If “proper channels” were closed, he would work outside those channels. With equal finality, Church leaders in Salt Lake City carried out their plan to divide the Mexican Mission and invest Harold Pratt with stewardship over the Church’s activities in Mexico. The
new mission president entered Mexico with his wife and five children to begin a long and difficult ordeal.

In the initial years following the schism, Harold Pratt and Church leaders in Salt Lake City worked diligently to bring the dissident group back. By May of 1937, however, the breach was absolute. With no possibility of reconciliation in sight, President David O. McKay, then a counselor to President Grant, became uncharacteristically frustrated and urged that excommunication procedures against Third Convention leaders begin.21

On May 6, 7, and 8, 1937, Church courts were convened in San Pedro Mártir, and Conventionist leaders were excommunicated for rebellion (having worked against the mission authorities), insubordination (having completely disobeyed the orders of mission authorities), and apostasy (having failed to recognize the Church’s authority).22 The Conventionist leaders left the Church, along with about one-third of Mexico’s members. They took possession of some chapels, furniture, and Church records.

But unlike most splinter groups, most Conventionists refused to part ways doctrinally with the Church or to do other than revere the prophet in Salt Lake City. So when, within weeks of the schism, Margarito Bautista challenged the Convention’s leadership on a number of doctrinal points, including his desire to incorporate polygamy and the united order into Third Convention activities, he was thrown out.23 Bitter and scornful, Bautista left the Third Convention to its “darkness” and went to Ozumba, Mexico, where he set up his own colony, the “New Jerusalem.”24 While Bautista’s group was not totally isolated (he kept in touch with other fundamentalist and apostate groups such as the Church of the Firstborn), Conventionists and non-Conventionists alike largely rejected him.

Thus the Third Convention continued without Margarito Bautista, polygamy, the united order, or any other doctrines radically different from the mainline Church.25 To underline their intention to remain doctrinally orthodox, the Conventionists called themselves The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Third Convention). They organized Sunday Schools, conducted sacrament meetings, established “mutual improvement associations” (MIA) and functioned very much like normal Latter-day Saint congregations.
They blessed infants, baptized children, and ordained men to the priesthood. They sent out missionaries and trained their youth in public speaking—an art especially appreciated in Mexico. They launched an ambitious building program. Donating land, labor, and capital, the Conventionists constructed at least six new meetinghouses and, in accordance with Latter-day Saint custom, dedicated them to the Lord.

The Third Convention also wanted access to religious literature. Some of its members learned English—an effort that at first seems strange, since Conventionists were openly nationalistic. However, anxious to learn more about the gospel and impatient with the slow pace of Salt Lake City’s translation work, they wanted to be able to read more than the thirty (out of 136) sections of the Doctrine and Covenants that had been translated into Spanish under Antoine R. Ivins, and they wanted to read and study James Talmage’s *The Articles of Faith* and *Jesus the Christ*, both noncanonical but fundamental LDS works. They began translation of several sections of the Doctrine and Covenants, but these were never completed.

The Convention continued to exist for ten years, from April 1936 to May 1946, growing and progressing alongside mainline Church groups. While mainline members did not have an indigenous Mexican mission president, they nevertheless did receive considerable material and organizational help from Salt Lake City, and Harold Pratt worked as hard as he could on their behalf. Thus, both Latter-day Saints and Conventionists grew in stature and organization, parallel in sentiment and structure but passionately divided over who their mission president should be.

Harold Pratt was released in 1938 because of health problems. He was succeeded by A. Lorenzo Anderson. Everything seemed to be stacked against President Anderson and his wife. Dissidents spread rumors about Anderson’s alleged militant leadership style and about how some members of his family were said to view Mexicans as racially inferior. Whether the rumors were true or false was beside the point; they were socially significant, damaging Anderson’s credibility. He managed to lead the mission for four years, treading water and holding the line. Finally, in May 1942, he was replaced by Arwell L. Pierce.
The Healing Process

The Mission of Arwell L. Pierce. Arwell Pierce was a month short of being sixty years old when he entered Mexico as mission president.28 Given his age, some wondered if he would be up to the task of holding the Church together in Mexico, a challenge that had taxed a series of mission presidents beyond their capabilities. Actually, Pierce’s age may have worked in his favor; the problems in Mexico called for someone with patience, wisdom, insight, and compassion—characteristics frequently associated with maturity and possessed in good measure by President Pierce. He put these attributes and all his other skills to work to try to salvage the Church in Mexico. He was an ecclesiastically experienced man, a diplomat, and a politically sensitive leader. He developed greater understanding of the society of Mexican Saints than anyone the Church had sent to Mexico since Rey L. Pratt. Pierce’s success is a story of implementation of Sermon-on-the-Mount principles and an uncommon insight into winning people’s hearts and minds so that they desired to do the right things for the right reasons. A vast difference exists between the art of coercion and the art of persuasion. Arwell Pierce knew everything about persuasion and consciously eschewed coercion.

Pierce’s assigned task was to bring Third Conventionists back to the fold. President David O. McKay had told him that “we don’t have a divided mission; we have a big family quarrel,” adding that “you are the Abraham Lincoln who must save this union.”29 Pierce got his inspiration not only from this mandate, but also from the Savior’s Sermon on the Mount, “Agree with thine adversary quickly” (Matt. 5:25; 3 Ne. 12:25), and other scriptures that he cited often—for example, “And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also” (Luke 6:29).30 So he persuaded, loved, and gathered in the Saints and former Saints.31

But Pierce’s work in Mexico was not easy. He was not Mexican, either by race or birth. Special arrangements had to be made for him legally to serve as president of the Mexican Mission.32 Feeling a compelling immediacy, Pierce began working enthusiastically and vigorously, changing procedures, establishing new policy
guidelines, and generally turning the mission upside down. After evaluating his missionaries, he concluded that they understood the gospel insufficiently and were teaching what little they did know ineffectively. He immediately set up a strict regimen of work and study for them, eventually winning their respect and admiration.35

**Pierce and the Third Convention.** Next he approached the Third Convention. The Convention genuinely puzzled Pierce. The more he looked into it, the more he realized that its members were energetically carrying out Church programs. The Conventionists were building chapels, sending out missionaries,34 and teaching Latter-day Saint doctrine faithfully. Their reasons for apostasy, he concluded, were certainly not doctrinal—yet Conventionists were outside the community of the Church. As he studied the situation, he wondered how brotherhood could have decayed so completely.

During the five years since the schism, the issues had become clouded, remembrances diffused or altered, and passions changed. If Pierce could not initially see the issues involved, he had no difficulty in recognizing that the Convention’s return to the Church would bring great strength to the Church in Mexico. And so, slowly and painstakingly, he put all his diplomatic skills to the task. Realizing that feelings had been hurt, he set out to heal those wounds. Although the Conventionist’s initial response was antagonism,35 that soon changed—first to respect and later to admiration, in part because Pierce met every travails with kindness and understanding.

Pierce began by attending Third Convention meetings and conferences. Slowly and carefully, he introduced himself and built friendships with Third Convention members and leaders. He even tried to assist the Convention in its own programs, inviting its members to the mission home to pass on information from Salt Lake City, giving advice when asked, and distributing recently translated Church literature.36 And he talked with Abel Páez and his wife, with Othon Espinoza, Apolonio Arzate, Julio García, and even Margarito Bautista, all of whom had been principal leaders in the Third Convention. Always ready to listen and to understand, he extended personal hospitality and acceptance unconditionally.
After weighing all that he had heard, Pierce concluded that the Third Convention problem could have been handled better. Given the circumstances, he even thought that some of the Convention's complaints were justified.\(^{37}\) Although having an ethnic Mexican mission president was the Third Conventionists' primary concern, they also wanted a building program for chapels, access to Church literature, and an opportunity for their young people to go on missions—all privileges that members in the U.S. had. They also wanted an educational system for their children like the system that the Anglo members had established in northern Mexico.

Pierce realized that he did not object to the Conventionists' goals, although one could legitimately wonder how programs to achieve them could possibly have been funded in the 1930s. On the other hand, he saw how the Third Conventionists' methods for achieving their goals had brought them trouble. Pierce did not approve of the Third Convention's rebellion and withdrawal from the Church. Because of his willingness to listen, however, disagreeing people, for the first time in nearly a decade, were discussing the issues rather than shouting about them.

In the meantime, the Conventionists had generally maintained doctrinal integrity, had done a lot of proselyting in central Mexico, and had promoted much interest in the Book of Mormon. Given all of these factors, reunification was possible and desirable. So Pierce listened, argued, lectured, sympathized, persuaded, and worked long hours. On one occasion, he met with the Third Convention committee for three days straight—culminating his many arguments with "the brethren are willing to give you everything you want, but not the way you want it."\(^{38}\) Because the Conventionists had continued to accept the prophet, this oft-repeated statement softened them. Arwell Pierce loved the gospel, and he loved Mexico. He was confident that the Church could now make giant strides there, if only the members would unite.\(^ {39}\)

In time, Pierce's efforts began to pay off. The Convention recognized him as a friend, its leaders even asking him to speak in Convention conferences. He did so, carefully honoring their confidence in the initial stages by avoiding sensitive issues, speaking instead on "neutral" subjects such as prayer.\(^ {40}\) He spoke of his own desire for reunification only when such talk was appropriate. In
return, Third Conventionists began to visit mainline Church meetings, and Pierce characteristically asked them to sit near the front. In years past, when Conventionists had visited a mainline branch, the seats would empty of mainline members as quickly as the Conventionists sat down. The animosity was so high that no mainline member wanted to be seated even in the general vicinity of a Conventionist. But as Pierce welcomed Conventionists back, the members could not easily find justification for continuing to shun them.

Soothing actions were not the only methods that Pierce employed to bring the Convention around to his point of view. After the Conventionists had accepted him, Pierce began engaging them in various ways. He usually took Harold Brown, his special assistant, on his speaking engagements, often instructing Brown to give them “the word.” The word was hardheaded and tough. Then Pierce would follow with his “sweet, loving, come- unto-Zion talk.” Thus, Brown, as the “tough man,” absorbed the Third Convention’s anger, and Pierce, as the “loving and understanding man,” received a positive response, which he used to bring the Saints back into the fold.

Circumstances within the Convention itself aided Pierce’s careful wooing of its members. Abel Páez’s physical condition was perhaps most important. Páez had long suffered from a severe case of diabetes. Since he was responsible for the spiritual welfare of over a thousand people, he worried considerably. What would happen to them after he died? Pierce could see this thought weighing heavily on Páez’s mind, and he began to appeal to Páez’s sense of responsibility. Who was going to lead the people after he died? If the Convention was a temporary way of bringing about Mexican leadership, how would the people get back into the Church after Páez was gone? Would future generations be deprived of the Church’s blessings, and would Páez want the responsibility for that? Finally, Páez began to soften and warm up to Pierce and started to think with cautious enthusiasm about reunification.

A Change in Circumstance and Attitude. Meanwhile, the focus of Church leadership in Salt Lake City was changing. In 1945, President Heber J. Grant died and was succeeded by George Albert Smith. The Church was growing more stable financially, and World War II was over, enabling President Smith to turn his attention
more fully to other nations, Mexico among them. More Church literature was in translation, and the Church was developing a stronger missionary program. More missionaries would soon be called, some of them to serve in Mexico.

President Smith especially trusted David O. McKay, now President of the Quorum of the Twelve. President Smith asked President McKay to continue on as his counselor in the First Presidency. The continued involvement of President McKay augured well for the Mexican Mission. He had enthusiastically and extensively toured the Church’s operations in Mexico two years earlier. Among other things, he wanted to begin an extensive building program in Mexico and had spent time examining possible sites for chapels. During his visit, he had met, made friends with, and counseled individual Mexican Saints and had listened to their hopes and aspirations for the Church in their native land. Listening, President McKay had refrained from arguing. He had accepted their proffered hospitality gracefully, even going to the home of Third Conventionist Othón Espinosa to bless his infant granddaughter. Mexican members were impressed. Conventionists were overwhelmed. President McKay’s presence and concern made the Mexican Saints and the Conventionists feel that leaders in Salt Lake City cared about them. If Church leaders were extending the olive branch of peace, why not respond in like spirit? So reasoned many Third Conventionists.

As the Church became more attractive to the Mexican Saints, the Convention became correspondingly less so. In spite of Páez’s stature, serious leadership quarrels had developed within the Convention by 1945. Some members who had previously supported Páez began to shift their allegiance to President Pierce, which seemed to him to be the first step in getting Conventionists to return to the Church.

Pierce kept up the initiative. He took Church literature to Apolonio Arzate to be printed—and then used the occasion to have long talks with him. He chauffeured Third Convention leaders in his car, talking all the while. He reasoned, argued, and pled—all the time and anywhere.

Perhaps more than any other single characteristic, Arwell Pierce’s self-effacing nature enabled him to deal successfully with
the Third Convention. He showed them how to contain and understand their own pride. He never claimed credit for accomplishments, but he always said, “Not I alone, but I with your help and with the help of the Third Conventionists—together we can bring to pass a great work.”46 Never vindictive, punitive, or perceptibly worried about his own place in history, he took abuse without returning it.47 For that reason, Conventionists remembered him as “a wise man, a very good man, very diplomatic; one who knew how to deal with people of all kinds in the world.”48

As Third Conventionists began to trust Pierce, they began to see the truth in his arguments: “I don’t understand why you want a mission president of Mexican blood,” he would say,

A mission president is actually only a representative of the First Presidency of the Church. He is only in charge of the missionaries and the proselyting work. Mission presidents and missionaries only supervise branches until they are strong enough and numerous enough to be organized into a stake. What you really need here in Mexico is a stake organization,49 the same as the Hawaiians have. A stake is an independent unit indirectly under the supervision of the First Presidency of the Church. But we cannot have a stake in Mexico until we are more united. Let’s all unite under the leadership of the First Presidency of the Church, strengthen our branches and prepare to become a stake. We will never achieve this so long as we are divided and so few in number.50

Pierce then would drive his point home relentlessly, advising his listeners that the Church would never give the Third Conventionists a Mexican mission president while they persisted in rebellion. Their cause was hopeless. Moreover, their goal was undesirable. If they wanted Mexican leadership, they should seek a Mexican stake president. And in order to build a stake, they must rejoin the Church and build the kingdom in Mexico. Mexico could rapidly achieve stakehood, he affirmed, once the Third Convention returned to the Church.51

Given the evolving circumstances, this argument began to make sense to Convention members. Pierce supported his words with action. He got the priesthood manuals and other leadership materials translated, mimeographing some and hiring Apolonio Arzate to print others. He organized new districts under local leadership. He held leadership seminars and told the Mexican Saints
that they must begin taking care of matters on their own rather than coming to the mission president with every little problem. Conventionists began to notice that Pierce was achieving their goals. He was, in a word, a new Rey Pratt—intent on developing local leadership, not because it was required by politics of the time, but because it was the right thing to do for Mexico and its members. Pierce effectively diffused the leadership issue, which was, after all, the only genuine Third Convention complaint.

**Steps to Reunification.** The Third Convention was becoming increasingly unalluring to its members. Aside from its internal leadership dissension, Abel Páez's health was deteriorating. For many Third Conventionists, the central issue began to shift from "Should we reunite ourselves to the Church?" to "How can we reunite ourselves to the Church without losing our personal dignity?"

Pierce understood this dilemma and the role that personal dignity (*dignidad*) played in Mexican culture. If steps to rejoin the Church were too humiliating for the Conventionists, the resulting loss of dignity would be so unredeemably devastating that they would not be able to function in the Church. Strong and faithful members who also happened to be Conventionists—and their descendants—would be lost to the Church forever. Pierce energetically sought to avoid that loss, "even if some extraordinary measures have to be taken... as far as the Church is concerned." He convinced the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve that, in this case, extraordinary measures were both called for and justified.

Perhaps Arwell Pierce's crowning achievement was his initiation of an ecclesiastical review of Conventionist leaders' excommunications. He persuaded the First Presidency to overturn the excommunications, thereby nullifying the original disciplinary councils' decisions. In April 1946, the First Presidency changed the excommunications to disfellowshipment, a less severe sanction that made the Conventionist's reentry into the Church much easier. This decision was no doubt influenced by the First Presidency's view that the Church's trouble in Mexico seemed more like a "family quarrel" than apostasy. In any event, the change from excommunication to disfellowshipment meant a lot in terms of *dignidad*. Most conspicuously, Third Conventionists did not have to be
rebaptized to come back into the Church.\textsuperscript{55} Less obviously, it implied that the Church recognized that circumstances had changed, allowing for a different outcome in the Third Convention episode. All these factors smoothed the path to reunification.

The Church made another move that allowed Third Convention members who had been baptized without Church-acknowledged authority to preserve their \textit{dignidad}. They were told not that they had to be "rebaptized," which would ordinarily have been the case, but rather that a "restitution" or "ratification" of their baptisms would have to be made. Whether it was called rebaptism, restitution, or ratification, the effect was the same: members were rebaptized by those holding the proper priesthood authority. But the softer terminology preserved \textit{dignidad}, as did the fact that Pierce himself performed most of the rebaptisms.\textsuperscript{56}

Pierce tried in other ways to help Third Convention leaders preserve their \textit{dignidad}. He explained that by rejoining the Church, the Third Conventionists were not "selling out" on the idea of Mexican leadership—they were taking steps toward it. After the reunification, Pierce argued, the Church in Mexico would develop rapidly, and thereafter a stake would be organized with local leaders presiding over it. Pierce's reasoning enabled the Conventionists to feel that the Third Convention had made its point and that its goals were being achieved.

President George Albert Smith's 1946 visit to Mexico was another important milestone toward unity in Mexico. Pierce had argued long and hard for this visit. When he first broached the subject with President Smith, the President turned to J. Reuben Clark, then his counselor in the First Presidency, and said, "You haven't been down there for a while; why don't you go."\textsuperscript{57} President Clark responded by suggesting that they think about it and make the decision later. President Clark, remembering his own memorandum to the Mexican Saints nearly ten years earlier\textsuperscript{58} and seeing the wisdom of President Smith's personal visit to Mexico, joined Pierce in persuading him to go.

Church members and Conventionists alike were immensely proud and honored to receive the man all Saints recognized as prophet, seer, and revelator. During President Smith's visit to the Tecalco conference, the home of the Third Convention, members
spread flowers along the lane leading into the chapel and stood on each side in long lines, singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," as the president walked along the flower-strewn path. Many voiced the opinion, "He looks like a prophet; he acts like a prophet; he talks like a prophet; he is a prophet."  

Despite his illness while in Mexico, George Albert Smith's visit was a striking success. People pressed in from all sides wanting to shake his hand or just to be near him, and they were thrilled that he would sit at their table and share their food. Of course, many also wanted to receive him in their homes. He accepted the Mexicans' hospitality graciously, as had David O. McKay three years earlier.

The Reunification

The Mexico City conference over which President Smith presided saw approximately 1,200 Third Conventionists return to the fold. Tension was high as the conference began. No one was sure what President Smith might say. He might speak in a condemning tone, chastising Third Conventionists, as other Church leaders had done. He might point an accusing finger. He did none of these things. His love and kindness soon dispelled all anxiety. Harold Brown, who translated for President Smith on this occasion, said that as the President spoke, the tension eased and people relaxed and began to smile and respond to his words. Brown remembered the occasion as a most extraordinary one.

The prophet spoke in both the morning and afternoon sessions, stressing the need for harmony and unity. The Third Convention choir, comprised of more than eighty voices, provided the music. President Smith asked Abel Páez to speak to the congregation. The Third Convention leader expressed his joy at being able to return to the Church and his happiness about the work that would now be accomplished. Pictures were taken, and an article of considerable length, along with the pictures, was published in the Deseret News. Obviously, the Third Convention's return to the Church was an important and happy event to nearly everyone.

However, a few malcontents were not satisfied. Some accused the Church of giving Páez $25,000 to betray the Third Convention.
Third Convention leader, Abel Páez, speaking at the 1946 reunification conference. Given the opportunity to speak by President George Albert Smith (to the left of Páez), Páez expressed his joy at returning to the Church. President and Sister Arwell L. Pierce of the Mexican Mission are seated next to President Smith. President Pierce was instrumental in bringing together Conventionists and mainline members. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.
Others, echoing Margarito Bautista, accused Páez of delivering the sheep of Israel to the Gentiles. Margarito Bautista and his own group remained in Ozumba, appearing only occasionally to hurl epithets— "Gentiles! Sons of Egyptians! Fathers of obscurantism!" Some Anglo members in Mexico were also upset, feeling that Pierce had soft-pedaled the seriousness of the Third Convention's actions and had gotten its members back into the Church on false pretenses.

Be that as it may, the Conventionists came back, and Pierce, making good his declared intention of developing local leadership, put people to work right away. By special permission of the First Presidency, on June 19, 1946, he selected and organized a Comité de Consejo y Bienestar (Committee of Counsel and Well-Being). Guadalupe Zárraga, Abel Páez, Bernabé Parra, Apolonia Arzate, and Isaías Juárez—strong leaders with highly diverse backgrounds—were called to serve on this committee.

Zárraga, Harold Pratt's confidant whom he had sent literally to spy on a Third Convention meeting, had remained faithful to the mainline Church through the troublesome years. Parra also had continued loyal to Church authorities, even though he had been excommunicated for moral infractions unrelated to the Third Convention. He had recently been restored to full membership. Páez and Arzate were, of course, former Convention leaders. Isaías Juárez, the former district president of central Mexico, had become inactive during Harold Pratt's presidency. First, Juárez had been exiled to Guatemala for political activities, but then, in keeping with his leadership talents, he had returned to Mexico to help found his country's national farmworker's union (Confederación Nacional Campesina). That effort and his work with the Mexican federal government's agrarian department had kept him traveling virtually every Sunday. Frustrated with Anglo leadership in the Church in Mexico, he had sought other outlets for his talents but had kept in close touch with many Church members.

As different as these men were, they now came together in a new spirit of brotherhood and worked harmoniously in the Church. They counseled and advised the mission president, assisted in branch and district conferences, and worked in every way possible to prepare Mexico for the organization of a stake. They were also aided by Narciso Sandoval of the Puebla region, one of Mexico's
great missionaries, who had done everything for the Church except support the Anglo-American leaders sent to Mexico. Later, when he was in his fifties, Sandoval served still another mission for the Church.75

Many problems remained following the reunification, of course, but all of them were overshadowed by two facts: the members were together again, and they shared a buoyant optimism about the future.

One Fold

In 1946, the Saints in Mexico, brought together by the reuniting of the Third Convention with the Church, began to learn to work together, regardless of ethnic origin—retaining their individuality, yet conflicting less in their perceptions of the world than they had ten years earlier. Arwell Pierce, a U.S. citizen, was the successful president of the sorely tried but newly united Mexican Mission, accompanied by over forty-five missionaries from the U.S. Moreover, gifted Mexican leaders like Isaías Juárez, Abel Páez, Julio García, Bernabé Parra, Apolonio Arzate, Guadalupe Zárraga, Narciso Sandoval, and Othón Espinoza were faithfully serving the Church, as were several Mexican missionaries. Almost everyone was pleased.

Fifteen years would pass before the new vineyard matured; the first stake in Mexico was not organized until 1961, sixty-six years after the organization of the first stake in the Mormon colonies at Colonia Juárez in 1895. The new stake president was Harold Brown, a Mexican national of Anglo descent. Brown, raised in the Mormon colonies like so many previous Church authorities in Mexico, was cast in the mold of Rey Pratt and Arwell Pierce. He quickly opened up leadership opportunities for his Mexican brothers. Brown chose Julio García, a former Conventionist leader, as his first counselor. Gonzalo Zaragoza served as second counselor and Luis Rubalcava as clerk. The stake presidency reflected the feeling of brotherhood that had developed among the Saints in Mexico.

In 1997 this feeling continues. Today, more than half of the Church’s members reside outside the United States. Approximately 18 percent of these live in Mexico. In 1997, Mexico has nearly
800,000 members, 152 stakes, 47 districts, 18 missions, a temple in Mexico City, and a second temple planned for northern Mexico. About 1 in every 125 Mexican citizens is a member of record. Moreover, Mexicans by birth and race preside over almost all the stakes, wards, missions, districts, and branches and serve as missionaries, not only in Mexico, but throughout the world. Leadership in Mexico, which started to come of age in the 1930s, has now matured; the Church there, despite intense growth pains, is now stable and thriving. This blessing is a direct result of the efforts of Arwell L. Pierce, who, exercising his stewardship with diplomacy and love, became a shepherd to the Mexican Saints.

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NOTES

An abbreviated and popularized version of the Arwell Pierce story has been published as "A Diplomat's Diplomat: Arwell Pierce and the Church in Mexico," in Bruce Van Orden, D. Brent Smith, and Everett Smith Jr., eds., Pioneers in Every Land: Inspirational Stories of International Pioneers Past and Present (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), 113–24.

For an extensive discussion of these points, see F. LaMond Tullis, Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamics of Faith and Culture (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1987). I am grateful to Elizabeth Hernández for her early research on these matters as reported in LaMond Tullis and Elizabeth Hernández, "Mormonism in Mexico: Leadership, Nationalism, and the Case of the Third Convention" (August 1976), unpublished.

The Anglo-American Mormon colonies in Chihuahua and Sonora provided an excellent reservoir for trained Church leadership to serve in central Mexico. Despite the years of Church service of these Anglos, many central Mexico Saints did not believe that these qualifications were sufficient. They wanted leaders of their own "flesh and blood" (de pura raza y sangre).

President Ivins had first turned his attention to the Spanish-speaking members in the southwestern United States, who were also under his jurisdiction.

Sources of information on the first convention include:

a. Harold Brown, oral history interview by Gordon Irving, copy of transcription from tape, Mexico City, 1973, Oral History Program, Archives Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, 31–42 (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).
b. Julio García Velázquez, oral history interview by Gordon Irving, copy of transcription from tape, Mexico City, 1974, Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives, 4–34.


d. Informe General de la Tercera Convención, Mexico, 1936, Historical Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

e. Santiago Mora González, oral history interview by Gordon Irving, magnetic tape, Puebla, Mexico, 1974, Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives, Spanish, translation by the author.


"That the white race is our tutor we do not deny, but it is also true that at some point in time our tutor, by a humanitarian act, must set us free to develop our own selves. . . . The success or fruits of sixty years of our Church's labor among us cannot be recognized until the moment that it [the Church] has sufficient faith to confer upon us the responsibility of guiding our own destinies for the development of our spiritual life and the redemption of our people." Informe General, 20, translation by the author.

It is now commonplace throughout the world that ethnic groups undergoing rapid value changes (such as rural Mexicans adopting a new religion of hope and expectation) tend to seek equality in both form and substance with their associates. They tend to develop an extreme sensitivity to their dignity and personal worth, and they struggle for the day in which others will respect them as much for what they hope to become as for what they are. These are some of the new conditions that contribute to a rejection of paternalism, actual or implied. Almost all forms of cultural, social, or economic dependency and, in general, any position that may imply "the rear seat on the bus" are repudiated.

Melvin J. Ballard, report on his trip to Mexico, Deseret News, "Church Section," March 19, 1932, 2.

In 1912, during the Mexican Revolution, the Anglo-American Mormon colonists left Mexico. Five of the original seven colonies were abandoned. However, by 1917, colonists were reentering Mexico, some permanently. Many of those called to serve in Mexico in the 1930s were originally from the Mormon colonies or were descendants of colonists. They had strong ties to Mexico and spoke Spanish.

The figure is an extrapolation. Official membership records for the mission before it was divided show the following: 1933, 4,045; 1934, 4,219; 1935, 4,245; and 1936, 4,317. For 1937, the year after the division, the figures show 2,854 for Mexico. Assuming constant ratios between the Mexican and United States sections of the mission before division, Mexican membership in 1935 would have been approximately 2,800.
Information on the relationship between Rey L. Pratt and Margarito Bautista derives from García Velázquez, interview, 15.


Both Julio García Velázquez and William Walser state that the First Presidency sent Bautista to Mexico to train Mexican Latter-day Saints in genealogical matters. While some General Authorities may have encouraged Bautista, I do not know that he was directly commissioned to do this work. It is more likely that he was doing it on his own, due to his intense interest in genealogy, although Walser does state that Harold Pratt objected to Bautista’s “being sent.” García Velázquez, interview, 60; and Walser, interview, 24.

Mary Pratt Parrish, oral history interview by Gordon Irving, typescript, 1974, Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives, 19.

The book is lengthy, including pictures and maps. Margarito Bautista, La Evolución de México: Sus Verdaderos Progenitores y Su Origen y el Destino de América y Europa (Mexico City: Talleres Gráficos Laguna, 1955).

García Velázquez, interview, 60. In addition, we learn from reading Rey L. Pratt’s writings in “The Restored Gospel” that Pratt was fascinated by the possible connections between Native Latin-Americans and the peoples of the Book of Mormon. In his writing, Pratt speculated on these connections, closely paralleling some things that Margarito later wrote in his book. In 1927, Pratt began sending a monthly newsletter to Mexico that he entitled El Evangelio Restaurado (The Restored Gospel), drafting most of the newsletter himself. Several issues are preserved in the LDS Church Archives.

García Velázquez, interview. In addition, the title page of Bautista’s book bears the name of Apolonio Arzate as the printer.


Enrique González, quoted in Informe General, 18, translation by the author.

Informe General, 18.

Arwell L. Pierce, interview by Karl Young, magnetic tape, El Paso, Texas, February 22, 1962, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. I know of no discussion about people’s perception regarding Bautista’s authority to set apart anyone for any calling.

Mexican Mission Historical Record, April 22, 1936, LDS Church Archives. Entries for May were placed on this date.

Antoine R. Ivins to Harold W. Pratt, February 25, 1937, Antoine R. Ivins Papers, LDS Church Archives. In November of 1936, Elder J. Reuben Clark Jr. prepared a carefully written letter that was read in all the Mexican branches still affiliated with the Church. Elder Clark was a logical choice for this assignment, since he had lived in Mexico as U.S. ambassador from 1930 to 1933. The Mexican Saints knew and respected him. In the letter, Elder Clark explained that the people who had signed the convention’s petition were entirely out of order and that the mission president was not the representative of the members to the President of the Church, but rather of the President to the members. He further stated that a mission president should be acquainted with all the Church’s procedures in order to prevent disruption and disorder and that (at that time) none of the Church’s missions were presided over by any other than men who had grown up in the Church. He went on to say that the Mexican Saints already had an unusual
number of their own people in responsible positions; that if the President of the Church ever felt inspired to do so, he would appoint one of their number to preside over them; that the Mexicans were not exclusively (among Latter-day Saints) of the blood of Israel; and that Mexican and other American Saints were from the same family (that of Joseph) and all of the Book of Mormon's promises applied as well to one people as to the other. For a summary of the Clark letter, see Antoine R. Ivins to Harold W. Pratt, October 27, 1936, Ivins Papers, LDS Archives. For extended background discussion, see Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico*.

22The minutes of the proceedings are found in the Mexican Mission Historical Record for May 6, 7, and 8, 1937.

23Brown, interview, 33–34. Brown states that Margarito Bautista felt himself to be the logical choice for mission president before the Convention split with the Church. Bautista did not like being passed over by Church authorities. (Bautista thought, since he was a high priest and Harold Pratt "only" a seventy, that Pratt was of "lower rank." ) His continued jockeying for leadership after the schism may have proved to be an insupportable challenge to Third Convention leaders who were, after all, just then in a difficult process of organization. This view, however, must be balanced by the minutes of the initial Third Convention meeting, which state that Margarito Bautista turned down a proffered nomination for mission president (*Informe General*, 18–19). See also Mora González, interview by Gordon Irving; Walser, interview, 27; Brown, interview, 27; 86; and García Velázquez, interview, 14.

24Eran A. Call, oral history interview by Gordon Irving, 1973, copy of transcription from tape, Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives.

25"Doctrinal purity" was a goal of the Third Convention from the very beginning. See Mora González, interview by Gordon Irving; and García Velázquez, interview.

26Harold W. Pratt, Journal, August 6, 1938, LDS Church Archives. Pratt had suffered from chronic appendicitis since April 1937, and in December 1937, he submitted to an appendectomy. Shortly after recovering from this operation, however, he began suffering from what he called "kidney colic" and eventually had to have a kidney removed. He was released when he returned to the United States for that operation.

27See also Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico*, 150.

28Pierce was born June 8, 1882, in Glenwood, Sevier, Utah. He married Mary Brentnall Done on October 2, 1907, in the Salt Lake Temple, and he died October 23, 1967, in Americus, Sumter, Georgia. Ancestral File, 4.17, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. At the time of his mission call he was residing in El Paso, Texas.

29Pierce, interview.

30Pierce, interview.

31Arwell Lee Pierce, "The Story of the Third Convention," typescript, LDS Church Archives, 1.

32I do not know the exact arrangements that made it possible for Pierce to serve in Mexico as mission president—only that Pierce took great care to work them out "properly." The Third Conventionists had previously hired a Salt Lake City lawyer to look into Harold W. Pratt's military training service at Utah State Agricultural College in Logan, Utah. They then attempted to use this information
as a basis for getting Pratt expelled from Mexico. Mexican authorities would not accept their argument, however, because Pratt was a bona fide Mexican citizen—a condition they considered not to have been destroyed by obligatory military training at an American university. But Church authorities in Salt Lake City felt certain that if Conventionists found out that Pierce was born in the United States they would try to use this information to have him expelled from Mexico. A. Lorenzo Anderson to Arwell Pierce, April 16, 1942, Ivins Papers. There was some irreverent speculation about Pierce paying *mordidas* (bribes) and J. Reuben Clark’s subsequent disgust about any talk of bribes. Ami Lorenzo Anderson, oral history interview by Gordon Irving, typescript, Salt Lake City, 1973, Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives, 105.

30Mexican Mission Manuscript History, quarter ending March 31, 1943.

34The Third Mission Convention had about 1,200 members, fifteen functioning branches, six constructed chapels, and a small corps of missionaries. Garcia Velázquez, interview.

35Brown, interview, 34–35.

36Pierce’s immediate predecessor, A. Lorenzo Anderson, had refused to give the Third Convention any literature. In a letter to Anderson, Antoine R. Ivins had confirmed the perceived correctness of this hardline approach to dealing with dissidents. Antoine R. Ivins to A. Lorenzo Anderson, July 3, 1939, Ivins Papers.

37Brown, interview, 34.

38Pierce, interview.

39Some American members vigorously objected to Pierce’s efforts, even accusing him of deceiving David O. McKay into believing that the Conventionists had not apostatized from the Church. Walser, interview, 28.

40See, for example, the Mexican Mission Manuscript History, November 30, 1942.

41In a district conference in Cuautla in 1946, Brown gave a speech that analyzed the ideological errors of the Third Convention, documented and based on scriptures the Conventionists themselves had been using. This major address was later published in the *Liahona* under the title “Ephraim esparcida entre los Gentiles.” *Liahona* 10 (November 1947): 446–51. It formed the basis for many of Brown’s speeches as he accompanied Pierce.

42Mexican Mission Manuscript History, quarter ending December 31, 1943.

43In the early days of the difficulty, David O. McKay, then a counselor to President Heber J. Grant, had taken a hardline, punitive approach to the Convention leaders. Following his return from Mexico, however, he apparently viewed things differently. He asked Antoine R. Ivins to research the Third Convention correspondence to see if there would be anything precluding the First Presidency’s reconsidering, or reviewing, the cases of those who had been excommunicated. See Antoine R. Ivins to David O. McKay, March 9, 1944, Ivins Papers.

44García Velázquez, interview.

45Brown, interview, 34–36; Call, interview; Mexican Mission Manuscript History, throughout this period, with specific illustrations in the entries for the quarter ending March 31, 1943.

46González de la Cruz, interview.

47Brown, interview, 34–36.
Cirilo Flores Flores, oral history interview by Gordon Irving, 1974, Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives. See also Mora González, interview by author, and González de la Cruz, interview.

Harold W. Pratt had earlier spoken to the Third Conventionists about a stake, but when he reported as much to the First Presidency, they cautioned him about... promising them a stake organization or even the possibility of one of their number presiding over the mission. The privilege of their receiving the Gospel should merit their appreciation and support of those who have been sent down, appointed, and set apart to preside over that Mission. The Lord will dictate when reappointment or reorganization should be made. In the meantime it is the duty as well as the privilege of members to conform to the teachings and requirements and the ideals of the Church.

The letter was signed by Heber J. Grant and David O. McKay and entered in the Mexican Mission Manuscript History for the quarter ending June 30, 1936.

This statement is reconstructed from the Mexican Mission Manuscript History, quarter ending March 31, 1943.

Narciso Sandoval Jiménez, oral history interview by Gordon Irving, magnetic tape, Puebla, Mexico, 1974, Spanish, Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives.

Brown, interview, 34.

In February 1937, the First Presidency (Heber J. Grant, David O. McKay, J. Reuben Clark Jr.) instructed Harold W. Pratt to convene an ecclesiastical trial for Third Convention leaders. Pratt, Journal, February 27, 1937. However, the First Presidency’s notification letter to Convention leaders was signed by Antoine R. Ivins and George F. Richards so that the position of the First Presidency would not be compromised in the event of an appeal. A. R. Ivins to the First Presidency, February 27, 1937, Ivins Papers; and Antoine R. Ivins to Harold W. Pratt, March 2, 1937, Ivins Papers. Pratt convened his appointed court on May 6, 7, and 8, 1937, and the court voted to excommunicate Margarito Bautista, Abel Páez, Narciso Sandoval, Pilar Páez, Othón Espinosa, Apolonio Arzate, Felipe Barragán, and Daniel Mejía. The minutes are recorded in the Mexican Mission Historical Record for May 6, 7, and 8, 1937. A majority of those excommunicated were branch presidents; Abel Páez was a member of the district presidency.

Shortly thereafter, David O. McKay made an inquiry to Harold Pratt asking whether it would be a good idea to invite the disaffected leaders to El Paso to meet with some of the brethren there. Perhaps a rehearing of their trials could be held. Pratt, Journal, May 18, 1937. President McKay’s overture seemed to suggest that if the Conventionists were willing to show a contrite spirit, the “lower” court’s decision might be reversed. If the invitation was ever extended, the men did not accept it (none of them even went to the original trials) because they considered Pratt’s court to have operated unrighteously. They therefore concluded that the verdict was null and void in the eyes of God. Mexican Mission Manuscript History, quarter ending June 30, 1943, also quarter ending December 31, 1943.

Pierce explains how the earlier court’s decision was eventually changed by the First Presidency:
President George Albert Smith, in a special meeting I had with him and his counselors in the First Presidency’s office in April of 1946, had me read the appeal to the First Presidency of the Church translated from the Spanish into the English and, also, the Mission President’s recommendation to the First Presidency about the appeal. My recommendation as Mission President was that we accept the appeal as presented and I recommended that the action taken against these men in the beginning, excommunication from the Church for rebellion, be changed from excommunication to disfellowshipment because I thought excommunication was too severe in view of all the circumstances. . . . President Smith then asked for one of his counselors to make a motion and President McKay moved that the appeal, as presented, be passed upon favorably. . . . This was passed on favorably by the First Presidency with President Pierce, by request of President Smith, voting with them. (Pierce, “Story,” 4)

54 Pierce, “Story,” 5.
55 However, all ordinances performed by Third Convention brothers while outside the fellowship of the Church were repeated.
56 Mexican Mission Manuscript History, quarter ending September 30, 1946.
57 Pierce, interview.
58 See note 21.
59 E. LeRoy Hatch, interview by the author, Colonia Juárez, Mexico, May 5, 1975; García Velázquez, interview.
60 Pierce, interview.
61 García Velázquez, interview.
62 Brown, interview.
65 García Velázquez, interview.
66 Daniel Mejía, as cited in González de la Cruz, interview.
67 Brown, interview.
69 Mexican Mission Manuscript History, quarter ending December 31, 1946. Pierce made public announcement of the action in “Anuncio de Interés a la Misión Mexicana,” Liabona 11 (October 1946): 405, 433, and strongly urged the members to support these men in their callings.
70 Anderson, interview, 61.
72 Agricol Lozano Herrera, interview by author, Mexico City, May 31, 1975.
73 Lozano Herrera, interview; García Velázquez, interview.
74 Mexican Mission Manuscript History, March 31, 1943.
75 Lozano Herrera, interview. See also F. LaMond Tullis, “Reflections on a Mexican Legacy,” Martin B. Hickman Outstanding Scholar Lecture, Brigham Young University, March 6, 1997, 7-9.
Rain Forest

No shadows here, but shawls of moss above our heads.
We woke to a revision of daylight, no slant to give hour or direction. The hush of our voices carries the dimness.

From the bed of a fallen tree: a blossom overnight, and we kneel to gaze at its lavendar center, a gravity that holds.
Moments long but cushioned, we can't account for time, or luck at staying dry all night where rain falls eight days of ten. We wait as if for a signal, some slight motion we should leave before rains settle in without rhythm, distilling down through the canopy here where everything is watershed into the concentrated present.

—Dixie Partridge
Popular and Literary Mormon Novels: Can Weyland and Whipple Dance Together in the House of Fiction?

The two major streams in Mormon fiction seem to be radically at odds with each other, but an occasional dance together might lessen divisiveness.

John Bennion

The Two Windows

In "To Tell and Hear Stories: Let the Stranger Say," his 1991 presidential address to the Association for Mormon Letters, Bruce W. Jorgensen reacted to essentialistic criticism—that which admits only literature of the orthodox into the Mormon canon. Readers, Jorgensen said, should open their hearts and minds to the stranger and the uncircumcised, delaying judgment until the whole story is heard and then delaying even longer. The next year, Richard H. Cracroft said in his presidential address, "Attuning the Authentic Mormon Voice: Stemming the Sophic Tide in LDS Literature," that many Mormon writers miss their audience by writing literature "grounded in the 'earth-bound humanism' of contemporary secular society, but reflecting little or no essential Mormonism." Cracroft divides literature into the mantic—that which reaches toward God—and the sophic—that which reaches toward the wisdom of men.

This debate is not new. Long before these lectures, critics followed a tradition of dividing Mormon literature into two or more camps. Although each critic crafts terms carefully, trying to be objective, the implication is always that one kind of literature is superior and the other inferior. In 1982, Eugene England differentiated between "home literature" and that written by the "lost
generation” of Mormon writers. In 1978, Edward Geary separated literature created out of dogma from that created out of experience. In 1974, Karl Keller classified Mormon writing as being either orthodox or “jack-fiction.” Half a century ago, Don D. Walker wrote that “writers need a tradition, a system of moral values in which they can make meaningful judgments—they need a frame of belief.” Insiders build fiction on that frame without questioning it, Walker says. Outsiders think of the frame as “merely historical.” I see the same opposing attitudes in my students, who are readers either of Jack Weyland and Gerald N. Lund or of Maurine Whipple and Levi S. Peterson.

Each of these readers separates the sheep from the goats by privileging one side or another of their binary oppositions. In addition to being unbalanced, the terms are also definitionally fuzzy, which can be shown by trying to place actual novels in the categories. Is the work of Walter Kern, who was raised Mormon but is now “lapsed,” insider or outsider fiction? Are Maurine Whipple’s *The Giant Joshua*, Samuel Taylor’s *Heaven Knows Why*, Margaret Young’s *Salvador*, and Levi Peterson’s *The Backslider* mantic or sophic? Characters in all these works wrestle with figurative or literal angels, but all have a humanistic bent.

Despite the ambiguity of these critical categories and terms, Mormon readers and publishers feel a definite difference between the works of popular fiction written by the camp of Weyland and the works of literary fiction written by the camp of Whipple. We still bemoan either the weakening influence of popular, sentimental forms or the damning influence of humanism, feminism, and other isms. From opposite windows of the house of fiction, we continue to praise our view of the drama of experience, proclaiming other
positions as simplistic or faithless, sentimental or cynical, unsophisticated or tainted with the philosophies of men.

We may sense something familiar in the fictions of the opposite camp—perhaps similar structure, recognizable experience, and common language—but they also smell slightly off, like week-old meat. Perhaps it is time to establish an aesthetic that values the distinctive nature of both popular and literary forms—a split perspective that will allow readers to relinquish their desire to measure each form against the other. Let me explain.

In “Literary Fiction Versus Popular Fiction,” Jonathan Penner discusses a national manifestation of a similar debate. Of elitist literary readers he writes, “Confidently—yet also vaguely—we feel that fiction is of two types. There’s real fiction, serious fiction. And then there’s junk.” He says that this hasty judgment, based on “absolute value,” does not explain why so much serious fiction is rotten and why so much junk sells millions of copies. He suggests that it is more useful to examine “distinctive nature”—the ways in which each form is uniquely pleasing to readers.

Penner defines and exemplifies the two genres of fiction, showing the problems that arise when the two are equated and judged by one standard. He writes, “In fact, literary and popular fiction cannot compete. Competition implies similarity. Male walruses compete for mates, but only with other male walruses. At county fairs, pies aren’t judged against poultry. All readers sense that literary fiction and popular fiction are radically different enterprises.”

Because mantic, home, dogmatic, orthodox, insider fiction is often rooted in popular national forms and sophic, lost-generation, experiential, jack, outsider Mormon literature often grows out of national literary forms, Penner’s analysis is instructive. Have the
two streams of Mormon literature persisted separately because they are "radically different enterprises"? The practical reality of Mormon publishing indicates that this is true. Aspen, Bookcraft, Covenant, and Deseret Book have a distinctive publishing list, as do Signature Books and various university presses that have in the past published Mormon literary novels. In the following sections, I will analyze examples of Mormon fiction using methodology similar to Penner's.

Examples and Characteristics of Popular Mormon Fiction

For examples of popular fiction, I choose Jack Weyland, Gerald Lund, and Orson Scott Card, all successful writers of popular Mormon fiction. Weyland's aim is to write books that will act as maps to young people as they chart their way through serious social challenges: selection of marriage partners, death of loved ones, drug addiction, sexual abuse. There are excursions into the moral wilderness, but readers can be confident that the narrator and one or more of the characters have a reliable map that clearly marks good and evil and will lead everyone back to safe ground.

One example is Weyland's Stephanie, which portrays a young woman with a serious drug problem. Weyland takes her from addiction to recognition of her illness to recovery at a drug and alcohol abuse center to membership in an AA group, but he's still not finished. A literary writer might end the novel there, leaving her recovering but stranded outside the portals of the Church, but for Weyland she's not home yet. She's still a member of a group that smokes and swears, obvious strangers and foreigners to Weyland's Mormon audience. The narrator must lead her out of that group and fully back into the Church, where she has the promise of marrying a returned missionary in the temple. My academic training makes me want to mock this kind of extended plot, but Weyland's books sell like peanuts at a circus. It strikes me as simpleminded elitism to say that all Weyland's readers are ignorant, that they cannot tell the difference between the vital and weak in literature.

Lund's remarkably popular works show characters who wander across the physical landscape, moving with the Church from New York to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. The physical journey is
parallel to a spiritual one; the fictional tension is between doubt and faith. The characters are challenged with physical and spiritual danger, but readers know that the wanderers will generally arrive spiritually intact. Readers of both Weyland and Lund enjoy texts that strengthen familiar values.

The physical and spiritual journey out and back is found also in Orson Scott Card's *Lost Boys*, a work that is closer in harsh realism to literary fiction than either of the others. But the shape is that of popular fiction: a Mormon couple makes an excursion into the evil world of dishonesty, power games, sexual abuse, hypocrisy, and humanistic intellectualism. They must find a pathway through a dangerous wilderness. But at the end no one is left stranded. Even the murdered boys are safe at last in heaven.

Characteristically, these popular fictions generally involve an excursion into a strange and dangerous world and a return to a safe one; characters whose faith and spiritual strength are tested and magnified; clear marking of good and evil; a heroic protagonist, usually one who is unambiguously good; knowledge that the reader is in the hands of a safe, orthodox, and reliable narrator; a focus on the plotted outcome—on bringing the protagonist back home—rather than on the process of exploring the world (often miracles are necessary to achieve this goal); a narrative based on universal and unquestioned principles; and a theme revolving around simple and well-defined issues.

In his AML presidential lecture, Cracroft summarizes many of these qualities: "The Latter-day Saint sees as his or her mission the preparation of a Zion people (beginning with their own families) for the second advent of Jesus Christ. Enroute, the Saints must walk by faith, not skepticism and doubt, learning, as Brigham Young called it, to be 'righteous in the dark.'"15 Readers are drawn to fiction that mimics this persistent return home, he suggests, and Mormon writers should respond to that interest:

This people deserves a literature grounded in Mormon metaphors, exuding their essences, mirroring their dualistic world, establishing their vision of themselves as pilgrims wandering by faith across a twilight stage, buffeted by the forces of evil, seeking the forces of good, and wondering at the shadows and ambiguities to be found between these bewildering parentheses in eternity.16
In Cracroft’s view, a proper Mormon fiction has lofty purposes—to help build a Zion people, to show the Saints how to walk by faith, and to establish rather than fragment the Mormon world view. He is right that one quality of popular Mormon fiction is its faith-promoting, mantic nature. However, popular Mormon literature has other qualities: it is recreational, easily digested, and unambiguous. Despite the explosion of Mormon novels in the past two decades, few mantic fictions that are also difficult or morally ambiguous have been published by popular Mormon presses.17

As I read popular Mormon fiction, I am moved by the reaffirmation of my culture. I admire the devotion of the boy to the abused girl in Sara, Whenever I Hear Your Name,18 the creative and vigorous faith of DeAnne and Step in Lost Boys,19 the trials of Mara in The Earthkeepers.20 But I must use my training in popular genres—my years of reading science fiction, mystery, suspense, and romance—before I can enjoy these works. Even then my literary training sometimes takes over and I cannot suspend disbelief. However, it does not follow that Weyland, Lund, and other popular writers should be measured against an aesthetic that promotes harsh realism, humanistic philosophy, doubt, and open-ended structure.

Examples and Characteristics of Literary Mormon Fiction

In The Giant Joshua,21 a Mormon example of what Penner calls serious fiction, one of Maurine Whipple’s purposes is to explore the difference between principle and practice among the pioneers. Her process necessarily shows the cracks at the base of traditions that readers thought sound. Clory and the other pioneers travel from Salt Lake City to the wilderness of newly settled St. George. As they move southward, moral and physical survival both become more complex: what is the duty of a wife toward a selfish, noble, domineering, emotional, cruel, and loving man? Clory’s faith at the beginning of the novel is transformed by her experiences with polygamy into something complex and even vague. The pattern of the novel is a physical and a moral journey away from a sure, stable, and safe place into a foreign wilderness that transforms the characters and the reader in ways even the writer could not predict.
Levi Peterson's *The Backslider* is another example of literary fiction. Frank Windham wanders the wilderness of southern Utah but also wanders a moral and spiritual wilderness. The novel opens with Frank's bargain with God over his girlfriend. “Actually it was Frank's bargain, God having never confirmed it. That was the way with God. He never offered Frank any signs, he never gave him any encouragement. He left him penned up with his own perversity like a man caught in a corral with a hostile bull.” Frank loses his girlfriend and determines to become a sinner, a rebel against God.

The course of the book details his efforts to hide himself from God, but he cannot. He marries a Lutheran woman, who is a true and compassionate Christian. Toward the end of the novel he baptizes her a Mormon, but he still fears God. After the baptism, Frank has changed out of his white baptismal clothing and is standing at the urinal when he has a vision; Jesus appears to him in the form of a tobacco-smoking cowboy. Frank says to him, “I love the world. . . . I love my wife and my little kid that hasn’t been born yet and I love a big truck under me and I love sunrise out over the Escalante breaks and I love the sound of the diesels running the pumps in the middle of the night. That’s what I love. I hate God.” Jesus says to him, “Well, I'm sorry to hear that. Myself, I love God.” The figure representing Jesus reminds Frank that he is married to a good woman. “Why don’t you just settle down and enjoy her like a husband would who has some good sense?”

This scene bothers most Mormon readers, who do not believe that Jesus should be rendered as an ambiguous character, one who swears and smokes but whose face is as “kind as an August dawn.” Readers are not taken carefully home by Peterson; his novel gives Mormon culture a sharp shake by the shoulders.

These examples show that, instead of one sure voice, we have in literary fiction at least two or three contrary voices. In Whipple and Peterson, the traditional voice of the community is opposed by the voice of individuality, wandering free in a physical universe. “But,” many of my students ask, “why read such irreverent fiction?” Like popular fiction, Mormon literary fiction has a moral purpose: through careful consideration of experience, writers observe the deconstruction of unreliable practices and principles. The works of
Whipple and Peterson illuminate the flaws that all Mormons can rightly criticize—authority when it has become authoritarian, patriarchy that is abusive, purity that is merely bigotry.

Characteristically, authors of these literary fictions begin in an unstable world that is slowly transformed around the reader; imitate life by presenting good and evil in a complex manner; permit no figures to be heroic; use only characters with mixed qualities; construct narratives so that the reader expects to be surprised, led into a strange place, and left there; and focus on the process of experience, on the development or degradation of the character, on the ways people fall in love, meet opposition, sin, overcome, and survive.

In The Art of the Novel, Milan Kundera, one of the champions of literary fiction, writes, "As God slowly departed from the seat whence he had directed the universe and its order of values, distinguished good from evil, and endowed each thing with meaning, Don Quixote set forth from his house into a world he could no longer recognize." The universe became uncertain, Kundera implies, because of the historical shift from trust in inherited tradition to trust in experience as the world entered the empirical age—the age of the novel. Cervantes moves readers toward the light of agency and self-reliance instead of stagnation in the darkness of the Middle Ages. He does this by raising central questions about contemporary culture.

Kundera also describes a concept that is problematic for me and for most Mormon readers—God's departure from a position of authority over the universe. However, I can agree with his criticism of the human-created structures of ritual, dogma, power, and authoritarianism, which Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers, the reformers, and Joseph Smith also rejected. So while I know that God is still with us, I believe that in his act of giving us free agency, God has thrust us into a world similar to the one Kundera describes, where we must sort through opposing claims.

Kundera writes further that "the world suddenly appeared in its fearsome ambiguity; the single divine Truth decomposed into myriad relative truths parceled out by men. Thus was born the world of the Modern Era, and with it the novel, the image and model of that world."
Once again, I cannot go all the way with Kundera. All truth is not relative. My faith is founded on universal truths. However, Kundera's statement does describe the way humans come to many truths. Even within the gospel we often judge between paradoxical opposites: the last shall be first, the best leader is a servant to all, the meek shall inherit the earth, cleave unto a spouse but love God first, consecrate all your time and possessions to God but provide for a family, love the sinner but hate the sin. God's children grow by being forced to decide between alternatives.

Often both alternatives are a mixture of good and evil—or at least a choice between a greater and a lesser good. Life is a fearful enterprise, the hazardous walk of faith described by Cracroft. Often my good friends in my ward fear novels that thrust readers into this confused world. Their ardent desire to return to God's presence causes them to shun fictions that deal ambiguously with good and evil. Why should those good people learn to read literary fiction?

Kundera writes, “Man desires a world where good and evil can be clearly distinguished, for he has an innate and irrepressible desire to judge before he understands.”27 He then makes a blanket condemnation: “Religions and ideologies are founded on this desire.”28

Again, I agree in general but not in particular. The gospel I know teaches that we will all be judged after the pattern of our own judgment and that we must be as wise as serpents but as harmless as doves. In my relations with my family, my colleagues at work, and the members of my ward, I work to judge after I understand. If, for example, a man is an alcoholic, as my father was, it is essential that I understand before judging. As a teenager, watching my father's erratic and embarrassing behavior, I was unable to suspend harsh judgment, but now, as an adult, I can understand that he had a disease. I can hope that now, after his death, he is working through his problems. Such novels as Under the Volcano29 and Naked Lunch30 have taken me into the world of addicts and returned me, shaken but relatively unscathed. They have given me the gift of compassion for those afflicted by this disease.

I cannot go far with Kundera, but he does describe a truth about the world in which we live, a world in which God's children have become "as Gods, knowing good from evil, placing themselves
in a state to act, or being placed in a state to act according to their wills and pleasures, whether to do evil or to do good” (Alma 12:31). The Latter-day Saint doctrines of free agency, eternal progression, and continuing revelation make it possible for us as a people to embrace a genre that rejects “dogmatic discourse.”

In popular fiction, truth is easily understood; good and evil are clearly marked. But in literary fiction, outcomes are uncertain and characters ambiguous. The reader is invited by literary fictions to judge between relative truths and to question former truths. The focus is not on a didactic outcome but on the experience of the characters, the career of their lives. When readers try to use the conventions of popular fiction to decode ambiguous fiction, they read good and evil into the characterization. Kundera writes that “they require that someone be right: either Anna Karenina is the victim of a narrow-minded tyrant, or Karenin is the victim of an immoral woman; either K. is an innocent man crushed by an unjust Court, or the Court represents divine justice and K. is guilty.”

Literary fiction will not settle for that kind of dichotomy. It allows us instead to observe a realistically ambiguous situation from two or more viewpoints at once. Readers of this kind of fiction have the opportunity to grow in charity for fallible human beings and to exercise choice between tangled alternatives, just as they do in life. Literary novelists and readers “face not a single absolute truth but a welter of contradictory truths”; the novel is not a “moral position” but an “inquiry.”

All of us wish at times that our children could inhabit a universe where choices are easy and all issues clear. The fact remains that God, in His wisdom, has thrust us into a world where choices are difficult. We must choose between a welter of political philosophies, many of which seem moral and good. We must be businesspeople in conditions where ethical choices are confounded by contradictory laws, shady but accepted business practice, and aggressive competition. Sifting between degrees of good and bad in contemporary philosophy and literature is also difficult. Choices in this life are not always clearly marked with a luminous glow, and even when they seem to be so marked, we find, as fallible humans, that we occasionally mistake our conditioned instincts for the
illumination of the Holy Ghost. We live in a universe that God designed to be difficult—a test of our mettle—and realistic, literary novels can help us learn about existence in the universe.

The literary novel is an experiment in existence, in being. It is moral, not because it spells out answers and defines abstract principles, but because it requires moral decisions in a fictional universe that approaches the complexity and ambiguity of the universe we find ourselves in.34 Admittedly, some of the authors of this kind of literature are not moral people. They may even desire to promote values foreign to our own. But, partly because of the aesthetic requirement of balance (a novel is no sermon or persuasive essay), careful readers can still grow morally by being forced to decide in the world of the literary novel.

I first encountered this type of Mormon literature when reading the stories in Under the Cottonwoods by Douglas Thayer.35 These stories are internal dramas and trace the motions of conflicted souls—a returned missionary debates whether he should kill a deer, a Vietnam vet tries to heal himself, a boy who has fornicated prepares for priesthood meeting. These narratives, which dissolve the distinction between mantic and sophic, taught me patterns for moral wrestling. Whipple continued my education with The Giant Joshua. Clory wavers between independent and potentially destructive will and obedience to religious authority; her struggle matches my own in a culture that wants safe but also great works of literature. Reading about her life, I am better able to live my own. Like Frank Windham in The Backslider, I have occasionally feared God and mistrusted Christ’s ability to transform my earthy self. The cowboy Jesus soothes my own troubled soul as he soothes Frank’s.36

The Two Aims

Each of the two genres fulfills a distinct but different narrative aim. Popular fiction, as its label indicates, is literature of the people. It stresses solidarity of cultural values at the expense of serious questioning of those values. Literary fiction stresses complexity and ambiguity at the expense of reverence for tradition. One designs to shore up community; one shows how experience deconstructs
some communal values and strengthens others. Both aims are worthy, and critics of American literature—the broad category into which most Mormon literature fits—have long differentiated between the tendency to reinforce community and the tendency toward allowing wildness or wilderness to disrupt community. By stepping back and viewing more broadly the national literature that influenced our Mormon literature, perhaps we can learn further how to make space in the Mormon canon for both ways of writing and reading.

One of the first to articulate these two aims or tendencies was Walt Whitman, who was hopeful that the impulse toward shoring up community and the impulse toward individual independence would converge in one great literature. In “Democratic Vistas” he issues a call for a national literature based on democracy, not feudalism. This new literature, writes Whitman, should express the national character in terms of two opposing and important values: political democracy, or working together as a people, and self-reliance, or frontier independence. He names these two vistas patriotism and individualism and hopes that a third value will arise dialectically from the tension between these two.

More recent critics have described a similar split. In The Continuity of American Poetry, Roy Harvey Pearce writes that all American poetry is Puritan. By this he means that all poets have a compulsion to relate their sense of inwardness with their sense of having a role in the world at large. He says that poets are conservative in wanting the dignity of the community to survive but antinomian in terms of fighting against certain cultural values. What he says of poets is also true of novelists such as Hawthorne, whose writing embodies the tension between communal and individual values. I find it interesting that Pearce discovers both tendencies in single works—a point that I will discuss shortly.

Phillip Rahv, in Image and Idea, divides American writers into “palefaces” and “redskins.” Palefaces are solemn and clerical; they view experience in terms of discipline. They write symbolically, allegorically, morally, and according to a “refined estrangement from reality.” The prime example in novel writers is Henry James. Redskin writers consider the lowlife of the frontier or city.
They are naturalistic, anti-intellectual, vital, aggressive, crude; they see life as opportunity and consider themselves one with the environment. One example is Mark Twain. “At the one pole,” Rahv writes, “there is the literature of the lowlife world of the frontier and of the big cities; at the other the thin, solemn, semiclerical culture of Boston and Concord.” He writes further that “the process of polarization has produced a dichotomy between experience and consciousness—a dissociation between energy and sensibility, between conduct and theories of conduct, between life conceived as an opportunity and life conceived as a discipline.” Popular Mormon literature often hearkens back to the communal, paleface, Puritan strand in American literature; and literary Mormon literature, written by sophic questioners, finds affinity with individualistic, redskin, antinomian writers.

Tony Tanner notes in *City of Words* that individual writers suffer from two opposing fears—iso
clation and entrapment. As humans, they fear being alone, but they also fear being controlled by the community. As writers, they fear formal chaos, lack of any patterning, while at the same time they fear forms that might have the strength to smother their individual, unique voices. I am reminded of the characters invented by Saul Bellow, such as the protagonist in *Henderson, the Rain King* or Tommy Wilhelm in *Seize the Day*. Both are torn between their desire to act independently, free of ethical constraints, and their desire to be known and loved, intimate with some other humans.

American Mormons and Mormon writers have both these desires. Ours is naturally and properly a variety of American literature, and especially literature of the West, where the tension between community and wilderness is a powerful fictional force.

**Room for Both at the Inn**

As with most neat abstract analyses, the real-life situation is more complex. The conventions that define popular and literary fiction are clear and well distinguished, as evidenced by the publishing lists I referred to earlier; Deseret Book will never publish Levi S. Peterson, and Signature Books will never publish Jack Weyland. But is this oppositional relationship also symbiotic, where
each form defines the limits and aspects of the other? Even though the two forms can be easily distinguished in general, few examples are purely mantic and popular or purely sophic and literary. No individual work perfectly entertains the stranger; no novel secures the home culture unchanged. Popular fiction that allows no excursion into the unfamiliar world has no tension; literary fiction that allows no firm framework is valueless, having no moral center.

In most popular texts, the voice of the stranger is present, if buried. Most literary fiction works against the voice of the community. For these fictions to work, the voice of community must be clearly and sympathetically defined. Especially in literature, there must needs be opposition. I believe that a healthy tension, a kind of yin and yang, exists between popular and literary fictions—each type is defined and beneficially complicated by the other. Neither the purest popular fiction nor the rankest literary fiction can survive without the other to work against. But, like two sisters in a single bedroom, both remain convinced that they would like to try taking solitary dominion.

Like the greedy sister, some of us writers and critics privilege our human need for the humanistic, open-ended tendency in literature—which meets our need to question existence, explore the world more fully, ask "what if," and voice fear of being trapped in institutions. Others of us privilege the tendency toward popular forms—which assumes a community of Saints, defines ways of living in but not of the world, and voices our fear of losing self in the wilderness of doubt. Does the kind of story we hunger after depend on the kind of person we are? Or do all humans need both kinds of stories?

In my own life, a diverse array of stories has formed my reading character. Science fiction makes me angry at faceless institutions. Sentimental Mormon fiction occasionally moves me, surprising me out of my training. The novels of Levi S. Peterson, Maurine Whipple, and Virginia Sorensen teach me love for inner and outer wilderness and anger at unrighteous dominion. Personal testimonies from the Ensign, which are significant cultural stories, make me feel that a benevolent God cares for the worldwide community of Saints. The Book of Mormon transformed my life and
urged me onto my mission. British fiction shows me that there are more responses to community than the western American desire to escape. Mormon and western history teaches me skepticism toward apologetic history and land developers. Postmodern fiction teaches me mistrust of and love for language. I would be less myself if I lost any of these stories, if either my hunger for the community of Saints or my appetite for wildness and individual agency were stinted. Am I an oddball?—a dangerous question. In the rest of this paper, I will explore why it may be that both of these manifestations of deep human impulses are culturally precious.

**Why We Need a Balanced Narrative Diet**

Constructionist psychologists have studied how narratives create social identity. In “Transformations: A Blueprint for Narrative Changes in Therapy,” Carlos E. Sluzki claims, “Our social world is constituted in and through a network of multiple stories or narratives.” Our cultural narratives establish “the frames within which we become aware of self and others, within which we establish priorities, claim or disclaim duties and privileges, see the norms for appropriate and inappropriate behavior, attribute meanings, and order events in time.” Sluzki simply states what writers have known all along: our perspective on reality is constituted by the stories we tell and hear. William A. Wilson’s “In Praise of Ourselves: Stories to Tell” proposes that a variety of written and told stories gives meaning to our lives, but that the “most essential of these stories may be those we tell about our own experiences and narrate primarily in family contexts.”

Miller Mair in “Psychology as Storytelling” pronounces that stories are essential to being: “We live in and through stories. They conjure worlds. We do not know the world other than as story world. Stories inform life. They hold us together and keep us apart.” Latter-day Saints form their identity with reference to the great stories of Mormon culture: the journey of Lehi and his family into the desert and across the ocean, the rise and fall of the Nephite and Lamanite nations, the visit of God and His Son to Joseph Smith, the travails of the pioneers.
How exactly do stories form our psyche? Developmental psychologists have theorized that natural movement between stability and crisis is essential to the construction of the identity during adolescence. For true identity formation "adolescents must not only affirm a set of commitments, but also relinquish some fantasized, glamorous possibilities of what they once thought they would become as unrealistic, impractical, and unattainable." Both the set of commitments and the soul searching, both the possibilities and the release of those possibilities are necessary for growth of an individual. We often think of formation as only occurring in youth, but if souls eternally progress, perhaps we continue to reform our identities even as adults. Perhaps we need experiences and narratives that form identity inside a stable communal cocoon and others that urge us to shed old self-concepts and grow into new beings.

Our Hunger for Affirmation of Community

What kinds of stories build our concept of stable community? Edgar C. Snow Jr., in "One Face of the Hero: In Search of the Mythological Joseph Smith," writes that on a Young Men's outing he rediscovered the powerful and unifying force of our cultural stories:

While standing in front of a crackling fire, I told many tales, including the discovery of the golden plates, the escape from Liberty Jail, and the shootout at the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum. To my amazement these stories became magical spells holding the gaze of all present. I felt somehow during this ritual of storytelling that we became one organism much the same way a congregation may feel spiritual oneness during a church conference while standing in unison singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

This illustrates the use of story described by Cracroft—that which establishes one's identity as a Latter-day Saint, a member of a Zion people. Snow writes that such "life-affirming" stories have the power of living myths. They "reconcile us to the mysteries of existence and awaken our own inner spiritual potential." They fulfill our need to receive "transcendent truths—difficult to articulate—in the form of a story and/or a ritual which is not only easy to articulate, but which explains the ineffable through tangible symbols."
In our telling of the First Vision and the trials accompanying the organization of the Church, we often make the Prophet Joseph Smith and other leaders and pioneers into heroes. Snow says that Joseph Campbell's articulation of hero-myth patterns can illuminate why we need to tell stories this way. He uses language reminiscent of Cracroft's description of the Mormon journey through a foreign world, where the "hero represents everyone in his or her individual quest for personal identity and happiness." Snow points out that Campbell's heroes symbolically discover the inner world of their own psyche and invite listeners to follow their own call to adventure. The hero's call is a call to leave the ordinary world to seek an authentic life. The trials are our inner fears of self-discovery. The boon recovered is the wholeness of our soul. Our return to the ordinary world with a self-actuated soul inspires others to make their own journey.

I suppose that some readers will rise and shout that novels by Weyland, Lund, and other popular writers fall far short of the depth and quality of the Restoration story. But Snow describes a natural descent from the Joseph Smith story to a variety of other narratives. He writes that "new Mormon converts often narrate their conversion experience along the lines of the first vision story and see themselves as bearers of a great boon to a reluctant world." And it is not just converts who benefit. "More seasoned Mormons often find that they are spiritually reawakened when they hear the new convert's story of hero-quest and reflect on their own conversion and experience a renewal engendered by the teller of the conversion faith-story." I suggest that, just as someone's conversion story is often told after the pattern of the First Vision, some popular Mormon fiction is narrated along the lines of a conversion story.

This movement from revelation to true conversion story to fictional conversion story in Mormon literature is similar to the descent that produced the first British novels. Both popular Mormon and early British novels, such as the work of Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding, have avowed moral purposes. J. Paul Hunter in *Before Novels: The Cultural Roots of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* writes that the true ancestors of early novels are not the romances from which they borrowed structure,
but didactic and journalistic writing from which they borrowed technique and rhetorical purpose.\textsuperscript{61} The first novels descended from authentic spiritual autobiographies through studies of fictitious cases. Both the ancestor and the descendant form had similar writerly purpose and readerly effect, just as didactic and fictional Mormon forms have similar aim and effect—to shore up faith by establishing a Zion community.

The Moral Benefits of Ambiguous Fictions

As already discussed, the moral purpose of literary fiction is different from that of popular fiction. Once, in a class, Arthur Henry King described how we experience well-made stories. He said that he never reads or hears the story of the prodigal son without weeping. He identifies with the father’s sorrow and joy, the son’s lust for experience and his subsequent repentance, the brother’s industry and jealousy. The detail in the parable enables a reader to experience vicariously the characters’ anguish. The complexity of detail and emotion produces the illusion of reality—enables the story to live in the reader’s head. This order of realistic story produces hope out of despair, security in the context of danger, and confidence after betrayal.\textsuperscript{62} As we walk through this wilderness in which rattlesnakes, badger holes, and scorpions lurk, we may need to cast our eyes up to heaven and back to earth in a wary pattern. In a dangerous world, we need both sophic and mantic fiction.

Stories like the prodigal son allow us to live for a time in a stranger’s head, an astonishing gift that helps us obey the second great commandment—to love our neighbor as ourselves. In the parable of the good Samaritan, Christ designs another story full of pain and hypocrisy to show that our neighbor is often a stranger. As Jorgensen claims, reading gives us the opportunity to practice Christian charity toward a variety of characters.

As discussed earlier, another moral benefit of literary fiction is that such stories force readers to discover good and evil themselves. This form of fiction gives a different kind of experience than does didactic fiction. It focuses not on predictable or even desirable outcomes, but on the process of struggle; by reading
ambiguous fiction, we vicariously participate with the characters as they make difficult social and moral decisions. Popular faithful fiction focuses on plot and a secure dogmatic structure, giving us the answer from the beginning. Such stories give security and reestablish the boundaries of a familiar world. Reading literary fiction allows us to expand, to perceive new universes.63

“The Eye Cannot Say ‘I Have No Need of Thee’”

On my shelf, the works of Jack Weyland, Gerald Lund, Levi Peterson, Orson Scott Card, Virginia Sorensen, and Maurine Whipple stand side by side. All, in different ways, are cultural phenomena. Weyland, Card, and Lund have sold hundreds of thousands of books. Each new book appeals to a large number of Latter-day Saints. After more than half a century, Whipple’s The Giant Joshua remains provocative and enriching to new groups of readers. Like Orson F. Whitney, I hope that more books—books even better than these—will be written and that more bookshelves will contain books from both camps. I have two proposals toward this end: that we develop a popular Mormon aesthetic and that we write more novels which blur the distinction between the literary and the popular.

A tool for improvement of any genre is close and careful criticism, but despite the current explosion of popular Mormon fiction, the bulk of analysis has been written by literary critics using the aesthetics of literary fiction. Exceptions are emerging. Richard Cracroft’s column “Book Nook” in Brigham Young Magazine and Eugene England’s “Worth Reading” in This People each distinguish between the good and the bad in both popular and literary Mormon literature. Wasatch Review International publishes reviews and criticism of both forms. Similar discussion occurs on the many e-mail lists that examine Mormon literature. Perhaps we can add this new work to that already done by Keller, Bradford, Geary, England, Mulder, Cracroft, and numerous others to build toward a cohesive aesthetic of popular Mormon fiction. This aesthetic should recognize the basic structural/rhetorical difference between the two forms.
At the core of good literary fiction is opposition between two or more voices, so a central aesthetic principle of this divided fiction is balance. At the core of faithful fiction is the mythic voice of the community of saints. How do we consider fiction constructed to shore up that voice—fiction that borrows pattern and convention from both popular national genres and from our deepest cultural narratives, such as conversion stories and the Joseph Smith stories? We have a great need for a popular review of Mormon literature—a journal, accessible to a wide readership, which would help readers distinguish between poor and high-quality popular fictions.

Literary Mormon novelists create a unique hybrid also, in trying to graft Mormon culture into a genre that is generally empirical and godless. The result is often bizarre. For example, when Maurine Whipple tries to describe the motion of the Spirit, she uses such vague and misleading phrases as “the Great Smile.”64 Cracroft may be right that literary writers miss their audience and distort their material by ignoring deep Mormon culture, but it is excruciatingly difficult to translate spirituality into a humanistic and rationalistic medium. Literary Mormon writers might concern themselves with this question and explore ways of writing intimately about spiritual struggle.65 Perhaps we can learn technique from magical-realist and other postmodern writers who step outside rationality. Christian writers such as Flannery O’Connor have long served as models, but we can turn to others. For example, Kierkegaard writes in Fear and Trembling: And the Sickness unto Death that true Christians fear not pain and death, but the second death: separation from God. This Christian existentialist describes dozens of ways in which people separate themselves from their true selves before God. His sketches read like outlines of plots for spiritually oriented literary fiction.

So we might, through careful criticism and careful writing, gradually achieve a compromise between faithful and literary writers and critics, beginning by recognizing that each is different and each culturally precious. I am encouraging a grudging friendship, an occasional dance where readers of faithful and literary fiction each take turns leading (and not with a strong right). Through such efforts, we might overcome the divisiveness that dominates
much discussion of Mormon literature. The stories I treasure are from both genres: The Giant Joshua with its spirituality and realism; Saints with its picture of Joseph Smith as both hero and human; Backslider with its cowboy Jesus, a mediator between God and humankind; Weyland’s and Lund’s portraits of faithful people struggling in a frightening world. I want all of these stories.

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NOTES


The “lost generation” refers to a group of writers, beginning with Vardis Fisher in the 1930s, who were “defined by various degrees of rebellion against their ‘provincial’ culture, by a patronizing alienation infused with nostalgia for a vanishing way of life that would not let them turn completely away to other loyalties and subject matter, even when they became in one way or another expatriated.” They saw the Mormon culture changing from rural to urban and felt that the “Mormon experiment was rapidly ending. They saw themselves as the first well-educated generation of Mormonism, able to look with some amusement upon the naiveté of Mormon thought.” Geary, “The Poetics of Provincialism,” quoted in England, “The Dawning,” 143.


5Karl Keller, “The Example of Flannery O’Connor,” Dialogue 9 (winter 1974): 62. All these examples are of literary critics performing analysis; the Mormon tradition has had a paucity of critics of popular, orthodox literature.


11I do not suggest that insider, mantic fiction always fits in the popular genre or that outsider, sophic fiction is always literary. I simply suggest that there are instructive similarities between the corresponding national and Mormon forms. One example of direct popular influence is Jack Weyland’s Charley, which was published soon after Love Story and which has structural similarities to that work. The popular influence of home literature is discussed briefly in England, “The Dawning,” 141–42.
12“Well,” said Cracroft over lunch after hearing this paper delivered at the Association for Mormon Letters section of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association meetings (RMMLA), “you’ve certainly stacked the deck on this one.” The deck was stacked from the beginning by our desire to look at popular fictions according to the light of a literary aesthetic.
13In the margin of an early draft of this paper, Jorgensen wrote, “On paved tracks, with guardrails, picnic tables, and pit toilets.”
14Such a writer—and I am one—would also rewrite the bulk of it for a more earthy realism.
17Exceptions are Margaret Young’s Salvador and much of Orson Scott Card’s work. Still the question remains: who will publish and read literary mantic fiction, such as the stories of Job or Abraham translated into modern terms?
18Jack Weyland, Sara, Whenever I Hear Your Name (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987).
23Peterson, Backslider, 354–55.
24“Makes the reader a stranger in a strange land?” wrote Jorgensen in his margin notes.
26Kundera, Art of the Novel, 6.
27Kundera, Art of the Novel, 7.
28Kundera, Art of the Novel, 7.
31Kundera, Art of the Novel, 7.
32Kundera, Art of the Novel, 7.
33Kundera, Art of the Novel, 6–7.
34Not all ambiguous fiction forces moral decisions, but the work of the best Mormon literary writers does. I am referring specifically to fiction by Maurine Whipple, Virginia Sorensen, and Levi Peterson. Not all faithful fiction reinforces positive principles, either; some is sexist, violent, or propagandistic of popular national philosophies.

Some literary elitists might say that the mass of Mormon readers will never become sophisticated enough to be morally instructed by these works. I have faith that careful essays and careful education will prove them wrong.

Certainly, as the Church continues to grow worldwide, there is Mormon literature from cultures other than American and in languages other than English being written, but this essay focuses on a discussion of American Mormon literature.


Rahv, "Paleface and Redskin," 2.

Rahv, "Paleface and Redskin," 1.

Rahv, "Paleface and Redskin," 1.


This contrasting quality of good literature was described by Welsh poet and short-fiction writer Leslie Norris in "Without Contraries Is No Progression," his 1991 Maeser lecture at BYU.


Snow, "One Face of the Hero," 234.

Snow, "One Face of the Hero," 234.

Snow, "One Face of the Hero," 236.

Snow, "One Face of the Hero," 236.


62 I have heard mantic and allegorical readings of the prodigal son story. The son who remained behind will gain the father's kingdom, while the prodigal son already has his inheritance—he is forgiven but will not receive all that the father has. This reading is not the one that makes me weep. It is the other reading, the story of the father forgiving one son and mediating with the offended son, that moves me.


64 Whipple, *Giant Joshua*, 633.

65 We also need publishers who will publish mantic literary fiction.
The Visionary World of Joseph Smith

Several people around the time of Joseph Smith had visionary experiences, opening a way for some to hear and receive the Prophet's unique messages.

Richard Lyman Bushman

In the fall of 1829, when the first proofs of the Book of Mormon were coming off E. B. Grandin’s press in Palmyra, Solomon Chamberlin, a restless religious spirit who lived twenty miles to the east, broke a journey to Upper Canada, stopping not far from the residence of Joseph Smith Sr. Born in Canaan, Connecticut, in 1788, Chamberlin had joined the Methodists at age nineteen, moved on to the Methodist Reformed Church about seven years later, and then tried life on a communal farm where property was held in common, following the New Testament pattern.

Dissatisfied with the religions he had tried, Chamberlin prayed for further guidance, and in 1816, according to his account, “the Lord revealed to me in a vision of the night an angel,”¹ whom Chamberlin asked about the right way. The angel told him that the churches were corrupt and that God would soon raise up an apostolic church. Chamberlin printed up an account of his visions and was still distributing them and looking for the apostolic church when he stopped in Palmyra.²

In “A Short Sketch of the Life of Solomon Chamberlain,” written at Beaver, Utah, when Chamberlin was nearly seventy, he said, “When the boat came to Palmyra, I felt as if some genii or good Spirit told me to leave the boat.” Guided by his inspiration, Chamberlin walked south from the town center, heard about the “gold bible” at the house where he spent the night, and the next day made his way to the place where Joseph Smith Sr. was living.
[I] found Hyrum walking the floor, As I entered the door, I said, peace be to this house. He looked at me as one astonished, and said, I hope it will be peace, I then said, Is there any one here that believes in visions or revelations he said Yes, we are a visionary house. I said, Then I will give you one of my pamphlets, which was visionary, and of my own experience. They then called the people together, which consisted of five or six men who were out at the door. Father Smith was one and some of the Whitmer's. They then sat down and read my pamphlet. Hyrum read first, but was so affected he could not read it. He then gave it to a man, which I learned was Christian Whitmer, he finished reading it. I then opened my mouth and began to preach to them, in the words that the angel had made known to me in the vision, that all Churches and Denominations on the earth had become corrupt, and no Church of God on the earth but that he would shortly rise up a Church, that would never be confounded nor brought down and be like unto the Apostolic Church. They wondered greatly who had been telling me these things, for said they we have the same things wrote down in our house, taken from the Gold record, that you are preaching to us. I said, the Lord told me these things a number of years ago, I then said, If you are a visionary house, I wish you would make known some of your discoveries, for I think I can bear them.

After hearing the Smiths' story, Solomon was convinced that this was the work he was looking for. The Smiths gave him sixty-four pages of Book of Mormon proofs, and he set off again for Canada, this time as a missionary for the gold bible. Solomon was later baptized by Joseph Smith and, in 1862, died in Washington County, Utah.³

Chamberlin's story captures the attention of anyone interested in the cultural history of Joseph Smith's time. One reason is that Solomon and Hyrum, though complete strangers when they met in 1829, recognized each other as kindred spirits. When Solomon asked Hyrum if he believed in visions or revelations, Hyrum answered, "Yes, we are a visionary house." Apparently Hyrum saw in Chamberlin's pamphlet the same message that he and the others had learned from Joseph's experiences and from the Book of Mormon. At least as Solomon told the story—and John Taylor later copied the whole account into his Nauvoo journal—Joseph Smith and Solomon Chamberlin had received similar instructions from heaven.⁴

Chamberlin's story of meeting the Smiths, although involving only himself and a half dozen others, had implications for many more. Chamberlin's and Hyrum's mutual understanding of the
word “visionary” implies a general category of people who were known to believe in visions. For the recognition to occur, visionary houses and visionary persons must have been a well-known type. Solomon and Hyrum shared membership in a class of people who believed that the heavens sometimes opened to human view.

Evidence of this early nineteenth-century visionary culture can be found in today’s computer culture with a few clicks of a mouse. The heading “visions” turns up a dozen titles in a standard research library’s catalog, and a little more searching produces more. I have found thirty-two pamphlets that relate visionary experiences published in the United States between 1783 and 1815, all but seven about visions experienced after 1776 (see pp. 198–200 below).

Still more visions are embedded in religious autobiographies of the period. The famed revivalist, Charles Grandison Finney, for example, who was living in Adams, New York, in 1821, stole into the woods to pray privately for forgiveness and afterwards in his law office had a vision of the Savior. “It seemed as if I met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face,” he wrote in his autobiography. Later in life, he decided the vision was “a mental state,” but at the time, he said, “It seemed to me that I saw him as I would see any other man. It seemed to me a reality, that he stood before me, and I fell down at his feet and poured out my soul to him.” Finney was not alone in thinking he had seen a heavenly being; many others, some on their way to careers as preachers and reformers like Finney, had such stories to tell. With additional effort, more visionary pamphlets of the type studied here would doubtless be uncovered.

The interest in visionary writings goes back in Anglo-American culture to a time when even the most educated segments of the population thought that supernatural wonders appeared in the heavens, and visions of angels and devils were open even to simple peasants. Then as the Enlightenment developed momentum in the early eighteenth century, writers at the upper levels of society cast doubt on all the wonders of late Renaissance culture—magic, dreams, and visions—labeling them all superstition. Belief in supernatural miracles of any kind was left for credulous and ignorant common people. A 1793 parody of the visionary accounts offered the common elitist judgment that “a great part of mankind, in every age, are pleased with the marvellous. Stories of witchcraft, fairies,
hobgobblins, revelations, visions, and trances always excitce [sic] the attention of the superstitious, gain belief, and afford them unspeakable pleasure.” In the parodist’s story, a visionary is caught in many foolish mistakes by “a man of discernment and knowledge,” implying that discerning people would never believe such reports.9 In that rationalist atmosphere, an educated man like Finney could not believe even his own visionary experience and, to protect his credibility, had to call it “a mental state.”

But the Enlightenment could not dam all the currents of belief flowing from the seventeenth into the nineteenth century. An 1814 pamphlet published in Philadelphia went back to an earlier period for instances of divine occurrences, joining an older age to modern times. Some Extraordinary Instances of Divine Guidance and Protection and Awful Warnings of a Just Retribution through Dreams and Visions was a 108-page miscellany of various uncanny happenings and brushes with the supernatural collected from many times and places going back several centuries. Inter-spersed with a tale of Thomas Cranmer in the reign of Queen Mary Tudor was a 1798 “Account of a Trance or Vision of Sarah Alley, of Beekman Town, Dutchess County, and State of New-York.”10 In the editor’s eyes, the older world of wonders was as relevant in 1814 as the most recent vision, perhaps proving the parodist was right in thinking that the marvelous brought together people from every age.

Besides reprinting stories from centuries earlier, the visionary pamphlets mingled people of different nations and social classes. Experiences in England and Canada were on a par with those from the United States; only three of the thirty-two pamphlets in the sample directed their messages to America as a nation.11 Gender and social class figured scarcely at all in the accounts. In a time when a female preacher would have been an oddity, women commonly had visions. Over a third of the accounts concerned female visionaries, and their stories gained hearers as readily as the men’s. The pamphlets were virtually oblivious to social class. The stories that were carried over from England were somewhat more likely to speak of wealth and poverty; one of the American tales spoke of the subject’s trouble in finding employment, and another told of a prostitute’s repentance.12 Otherwise, the stories, especially the
American ones, were socially neutral. The wealth, the social position, the economic aspirations of the visionaries were nearly invisible. The classifications that mattered were religious: wickedness and righteousness, belief and disbelief, conversion or preconversion, illness and health. The stories united all kinds of people in a visionary culture.

Common religious themes, more than the visionaries' social position or national outlook, give the stories their characteristic flavor. Ten of the thirty-two pamphlets delivered apocalyptic warnings of impending judgments, usually without specifying the exact nature of the danger save that a conclusive change was near.¹³ A Dream, or Vision, by Samuel Ingalls, of Dunham, in the Province of Lower Canada, on the Night of Sept. 2, 1809 was typical of the apocalyptic visions. Standing on the bank of the White River in Vermont in 1809, a mile upstream from the Connecticut River and so within a few miles of the farm where Joseph Smith was born, Ingalls

heard a rushing noise in the air; and instantly casting my eyes upward, there appeared to my view three carriages of polished gold, (in the form of the top of a chaise without wheels) passing through the air in a direct line abreast, and steering toward the South.

One carriage contained three women, the second three men, and the third "three Angels as I supposed by their having wings suspended from their shoulders." The angels sang a hymn from which Ingalls recalled one line: "Prepare to give me room, ye nations, I am coming!"¹⁴

Ingalls saw the angels descend over the town of Hartford on the west bank of the Connecticut River where they paused to talk. They condemned to immediate destruction a "wicked club, who are laying plots to deceive the nations" and announced that God would spare the world for 140 years. Then they disappeared, and Ingalls's vision ended.¹⁵ The author drew no moral, claimed no authority for himself, issued no explicit warning. For an apocalyptic people, the message was clear: Evil was abroad in the land, God surveyed it all, and the end was near.

Another apocalyptic visionary, Caleb Pool of Gloucester, Massachusetts, who published News from Heaven in 1805, opened his account by reporting that "God has been speaking by signs, by wonders and visions, to me for many years." In the first of his
visions, he saw in a dream “two fierce bulls coming very fast in pursuit of me, roaring, and their tongues lolling out of their mouths.” Provided with “the sword of the Spirit,” he thrust it into the head of one and into the side of the other, causing them to flee. Pool’s inspiration told him one bull was the devil and the other the evil spirit of the adversary “infused into men, raging wonderfully against the gospel.” The bulls raged because their time was short: “God will convince them that are striving against his Holy Spirit in a few years, perhaps in two or three,” and “they shall bow the knee to King Jesus.” After other dreams and visions, Pool asked for an audience with his local parish congregation following their meeting and told them “I come, to let you know that God is angry with you.” He reported his dreams and visions “and with a loud voice called upon them to repent and turn unto the Lord.” Meeting only disbelief, Pool predicted an imminent earthquake, which struck an hour later. The church people’s disregard did not discourage Pool. He went on receiving visions, being healed by Jesus personally in one of them, and concluded his pamphlet by expressing the hope that it would “be a mean[s] of opening the eyes of blind sinners, and shewing to many the error of their ways.”

The attitude of warning characterizes virtually all of the pamphlets, save for a few that seem merely agog at the fabulous marvels reported. The apocalyptic visions were embedded in the familiar biblical story of the coming end of the world and the judgment awaiting unrepentant sinners.

A second category of visionary stories, the heavenly journey visions, comprising another nine of the thirty-two pamphlets, send a warning to readers based on the promise of heaven and the threat of hell. In their journeys into the afterlife, these visionaries saw actual acquaintances either in bliss or suffering and brought the news back to their earthly acquaintances. Often an angel or guide accompanied the visionaries as they were lifted from the earth and entered heaven. Commonly, Satan raged at them as they proceeded on their heavenly journey, but the traveler passed by unharmed just beyond the devil’s reach. The obvious message to readers is to stay out of Satan’s grasp.

One author of a heavenly journey pamphlet, Sarah Alley of Beekman Town, New York, a twenty-year-old single woman, fell
into a swoon for four or five hours while sitting by the fire in her father’s house and was transported to the world beyond. Accompanied by an angel, she came first to a burning lake where an “abundance of people who appeared to be in the utmost anxiety, distress, and unutterable misery” sat one above the other, “the flames of fire passing up between them.” A great devil tried to lay hold on her but was tethered by a chain. A man she knew well urged her “to go and warn his family and friends to do better than he had done” before it was too late. Her guide then conducted her to a place of happiness “where I saw Christ and the holy angels around him, and abundance of people clothed in white robes,” though she could not recognize any of them.

Returning to consciousness and finding several people around her, Alley “pressingly advised them to take warning by her.” Then she fainted again, and her guide took her directly to heaven, where this time she did recognize many of the inhabitants:

They appeared to be sitting, and in a situation of perfect peace and happiness, God sitting above them, and my guide telling me which he was, though he did not converse with me. I also saw Christ, who seemed a little before the rest, of whom I begged entrance into that peaceful situation.

Christ said no; she must return and warn people, a charge repeated by a person she knew well who “pressingly desired me to warn his friends and relations to change their way of walking.” After more such admonitions, “they seemingly all joyfully bid me farewell, and my guide conducted me back to my body.”

Sarah Alley’s experience, like that of all the apocalyptic and heavenly journey visionaries, changed her into a witness. While intensely personal, often involving the visionary’s own conversion, a revelation of heaven carried a responsibility to tell everyone. Sarah Alley was admonished over and over to warn her friends; Caleb Pool called a meeting of church people to hear his story. All of the accounts in the sample were published, just as Solomon Chamberlin had his account of his vision printed for distribution. While private and personal, the vision was for the public. The experience set up an obligation to tell and warn the world, forcing the visionaries to make connections outside of their personal spheres.
The impulse to speak ultimately created or, perhaps more accurately, perpetuated visionary culture. To make the voice of warning heard, visionaries, or sometimes their friends, called printers to their aid. The published narratives linked the visionaries to many others—the circle of friends who helped with the printing, a band of small-town printers who knew the market, and a wider audience who read the accounts with varying degrees of belief and skepticism. This conglomerate of visionaries, friends, printers, and readers made up the visionary culture that enabled Solomon Chamberlin and Hyrum Smith to recognize their spiritual kinship. 20

Solomon Chamberlin's attraction to the Smiths is easy to understand. Not only was Joseph Jr. a visionary, but his father was also. Furthermore, Joseph Sr.'s dreams were similar to some of the visions in the pamphlets. Recorded by Lucy Smith in her Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, Joseph Smith Sr.'s dreams sound like the visions of Caleb Pool. Joseph Sr. saw wild beasts, desolate landscapes, ominous buildings, and antagonistic crowds, all symbolizing the spiritual condition of the world. 21 These scenes would not have surprised readers of visionary pamphlets. Running through Joseph Sr.'s dreams was the familiar sense of moral decay and danger and the implied warning to turn to God now.

We are most interested, however, in Joseph Smith Jr.'s place in the visionary culture. How did his revelations compare to the stories in the pamphlets? Of all the pamphlets, the one most like any of Joseph's revelations was The Religious Experience of Norris Stearns, Written by Divine Command, Shewing the Marvellous Dealings of God to His Soul, and the Miraculous Manner in which He Was Delivered from the Jaws of Death and Hell; and His Soul Set at Liberty;—Likewise His Appointment to the Ministry; and Commission from on High, to Preach the Gospel to Every Creature, published in 1815. In its entirety, Stearns's narrative is a shapeless, picaresque story of a marginal young man's wanderings about New England and New York, punctuated by occasional visions and premonitions. Though Stearns's life was quite different from Joseph's, here and there Stearns's account strikes a familiar note, as in a few sentences in the preface.

The public are here presented with a book written by an illiterate youth, who has been highly favoured of God, and shown many things,
which he is now commanded to write. He earnestly solicits the candid attention of every reader, that it may not stand (as the useless Parenthesis) among the other books of the world; for it is written in obedience to the Divine Command, as a Testimony to show his Calling. Care has been taken, that nothing should be written, but by the immediate command of the Lord; whose Servant and Prophet I am.\textsuperscript{22}

The religious predicament of the Smith family is also echoed in Stearns’s description of his father’s faith:

My Father was once a praying man, and belonged to the Baptist Church in Leyden; but not having faith in ceremonial ordinances, and dead forms of religion, he withdrew from their meetings, and was soon given up to the buffetings of Satan, that his soul might be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus.\textsuperscript{23}

Most of the story sounds nothing like Joseph Smith’s, but one striking passage resonates with the 1839 account of the First Vision. Stearns had a vision early in his life, when he was still laboring through heavy doubts about religion:

At length, as I lay apparently upon the brink of eternal woe, seeing nothing but death before me, suddenly there came a sweet flow of the love of God to my soul, which gradually increased. At the same time, there appeared a small gleam of light in the room, above the brightness of the sun, then at his meridian, which grew brighter and brighter: As this light and love increased, my sins began to separate, and the Mountain removed towards the east. At length, being in an ecstasy of joy, I turned to the other side of the bed, (whether in the body or out I cannot tell, God knoweth) there I saw two spirits, which I knew at the first sight. But if I had the tongue of an Angel I could not describe their glory, for they brought the joys of heaven with them. One was God, my Maker, almost in bodily shape like a man. His face was, as it were a flame of Fire, and his body, as it had been a Pillar and a Cloud. In looking steadfastly to discern features, I could see none, but a small glimpse would appear in some other place. Below him stood Jesus Christ my Redeemer, in perfect shape like a man—His face was not ablaze, but had the countenance of fire, being bright and shining. His Father’s will appeared to be his! All was condescension, peace, and love!!\textsuperscript{24}

Nothing after these passages parallels Joseph Smith’s experience. Stearns was actually beset by skepticism and was driven to believe in the divine by visions whose reality he initially doubted. After the vision related here, he wandered aimlessly from one job to another, dabbling in preaching, seeking a vocation, and forever
stumbling up against the supernatural. He broke off the pamphlet in the middle, before his life’s work was resolved and even before his own beliefs were crystallized.

What are we to make of Stearns’s account? Although his life never came into focus and his visions went nowhere, we still are interested in his relationship to the Restoration and Joseph Smith. Were Stearns’s visions a premonition of what was to come or in some way a preparation for a later revelation of God? Chamberlin’s visions readied him to believe visions and to accept the Book of Mormon without the doubts that impeded most Americans. Did the visionary culture open the minds of others? Can we imagine little gleams of light breaking through the clouds everywhere, as a preliminary to the fullness of the Restoration? Or were the visions mere delusions, manufactured by the visionaries’ own feverish imaginations or by Satan?

Unfortunately, we have no way to judge the authenticity of these visionary accounts: Some present fabulous, cumbersome stories that sound like the fantasies of troubled souls, straining one’s credulity. Others, like the heavenly journey of Sarah Alley, may have sobered readers and turned them to God. Why not concede to Sarah a measure of divine inspiration?

Inspired or not, Stearns’s pamphlet and the writings of the other vernacular visionaries dispel the idea that revelations were unknown until the First Vision opened the heavens in 1820. In the experience of the visionary writers, the heavens were anything but sealed, for the writers saw angels, bizarre beasts, and sacred mountains or looked into heaven and hell and saw and heard Christ and the devil. We can imagine this flow of religious stories trickling through rural villages and possibly washing over the Smiths. It is unlikely that we will ever know if any single pamphlet save Chamberlin’s reached them, and we cannot conclude that the similarities of tone and style mean that Joseph imitated Norris Stearns or anyone else. What the resemblances between the 1839 account of the First Vision and a few passages in Stearns’s narrative do demonstrate, in my opinion, is that Joseph did not have to invent a literary voice for himself anymore than he had to invent the English language. When searching for the right tone for his story, one was readily available. Precedents existed for a young boy
offering a simple account of his experience. The visionaries did not argue for the reality of their visions, apparently not troubling themselves with the questions of skeptics. The writers simply stated the facts of their visions, as if awed and impressed themselves by what transpired. That voice suited Joseph perfectly, and he adopted it as his own with immense success in his simple narrative of innocence overtaken by divinity.

The stylistic similarities only highlight, however, the differences between Joseph and the host of now forgotten visionaries. Putting him alongside Norris Stearns forces on us the question of why their lives took such divergent paths. Stearns proclaimed himself a prophet, but he did not go on to organize a church. His writings did not become scripture or attract believers. Nor did the writings of any of the other thirty-one pamphleteers. People did not flock to hear the visionaries' teachings or pull up roots to gather with fellow believers. Followers of Joseph Smith did all of these things and more. They reoriented their entire lives to comply with his revelations. The differences are so great that we can scarcely even say Joseph was the most successful of the visionaries; taking his life as a whole, he was of another species.

Focusing on the differences rather than the similarities, we see the limited force of the visionary writings. The narratives of dreams and miraculous appearances did not imply the construction of any institutional forms; they did not propose doctrine; they did not proclaim commandments. They were apocalyptic warnings, visions of worldly wickedness and onrushing doom. In a sense, they were titillations of the religious sensibilities that imposed no obligations beyond a general revulsion against sin and responsiveness to divine purpose. The visionary writings were a later version of the Puritan preoccupation with wonders. They inspired awe at the presence of invisible powers made visible but were an occasion to marvel rather than to act.

Joseph Smith's revelations by contrast radically redirected people's lives. His writings became authoritative statements of doctrine and the divine will. They implied an ecclesiastical polity and a reorganization of society. Out of a few verses in the Doctrine and Covenants, a new economic order emerged. Moved by the revelations, people went on missions to distant places, migrated to
Missouri, paid tithing, underwent life-threatening persecutions, built cities. The revelations formed a new society created in the name of God. Joseph's words were read as divine commandments with immediate implications for the conduct of life.

The contrast with other visionary writings compels us to ask how Joseph Smith turned into a prophet who led a movement. What path led him away from the visionaries who wrote a pamphlet or two, issued warnings to their neighbors, and then disappeared into obscurity? If the similarities gave Solomon and Hyrum instant recognition of one another, how did Joseph Smith separate himself from the visionary culture and become the prophet to a people?25

Perhaps the most important difference between Joseph and the visionaries was the way Joseph first presented himself to the world. In the early years, the key formal statements, the ones recorded as revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, played down visionary experiences. One might expect Joseph Smith to preface the Doctrine and Covenants with the story of the First Vision, as Mormon missionaries later handed out the pamphlet *Joseph Smith's Own Story* to prospective converts. But judging from the written record, the First Vision story was little known in the early years.

For twenty years after the vision occurred, Joseph Smith published nothing about the vision of the Father and the Son to link him to the other visionaries. By his own account, after he returned from the grove he did not tell his own mother about the vision. He related the experience to a local clergyman, whose negative response must have discouraged further retellings.

The vision gets an oblique reference in section 20 (1830) as a time when "it was truly manifested unto this first elder that he had received a remission of his sins," without so much as mentioning the appearance of the Father and the Son (D&C 20:5).26 The account of the vision at the beginning of Joseph Smith's 1832 history again emphasized forgiveness of sins and played down the details of what he saw, saying only that "I saw the Lord and he spake unto me."27 Even that spare account was not published, and the whole story made so little impact that for years some scholars believed no narration of the First Vision existed until his 1839 history.28 Rather
than cultivating the kinship with Solomon Chamberlin's culture, Joseph seems to have made little of the revelation that connected him most strongly to the visionaries of his time.

He was less reticent about the visit of Moroni—a visionary story, albeit one without parallel among the visionary accounts. Still he held back information about Moroni, too. Although Joseph told family and friends about the angel's appearance, the preface to the first edition of the Book of Mormon says nothing about the angel, only that "the plates of which hath been spoken, were found in the township of Manchester, Ontario county, New-York." If he had been playing to the visionary culture, the visit of an angel would have received top billing. When questioned about the discovery of the plates, Joseph Smith at first was reluctant to elaborate, saying it was not expedient for people to know more. Only later did he choose to include it as a standard part of the story he told about the Church's origins.

By the same token, descriptions of the angelic visitations of John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John were not included in the 1833 Book of Commandments. The 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants made references to the angelic visitations that were only slightly more descriptive than the mention of the First Vision in section 20. The current section 13, which records John the Baptist's words, did not appear in either of the early compilations; Joseph apparently had said little about John the Baptist's bestowal of the Aaronic Priesthood until Oliver Cowdery gave an account of it in an 1834 letter published in the Messenger and Advocate. Oliver went into raptures about the experience: "What Joy! what wonder! what amazement!" When Joseph finally wrote about the event in 1839, he was much more low key, avoiding the sensational: "A Messenger from heaven, descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us." Joseph never gave a detailed written description of the visit of Peter, James, and John; he simply mentioned that it happened (D&C 27:12; 128:20). He was closemouthed enough that we have trouble now knowing exactly when it occurred.

Joseph himself never made reference to other visionaries, and we cannot tell for sure if he consciously distanced himself; but when compiling revelations for publication in these early years, he did omit almost every account that might connect him to the
visionaries of his time. The revelations he published struck another
note entirely. The opening line of Doctrine and Covenants 20, a
primary defining document in the 1835 compilation of revelations,
sounds a theme unheard in any of the visionary reports: “The rise
of the Church of Christ in these last days . . . it being regularly orga-
nized and established agreeable to the laws of our country, by the
will and commandments of God.” None of the visionaries spoke of
the rise of a church. Mostly these people stood along the margins
of conventional church life, skirting it, sometimes resisting it, usu-
ally disregarding it altogether.36 By publishing a pamphlet rather
than seeking a place in the pulpit or space in the denominational
newspapers, the visionaries circumvented the institutional. Caleb
Pool knew he could not speak to the congregation during services
and asked to be heard after the meeting. The visionaries turned to
the printers to get the warning message out, rather than to the
clergy. Sarah Alley fulfilled her obligation by speaking to her imme-
diate friends and then writing up her account for publication. The
visionaries related to the whole world through the press rather
than to a congregation through a church.

After the publication of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith
immediately organized a church. Rather than dissipating his reli-
gious energies in messages published to the world at large, he
focused on the formation of an institution. The early revelations to
his father and his brother, to Joseph Knight Sr., and to the Whit-
mers stressed the theme of “a great and marvelous work is about to
come forth among the children of men.” He told them to preach
repentance, to “establish the cause of Zion,” and to ready them-
selves to reap the harvest of souls (D&C 11:1, 6; compare sections
4, 12, 14–16). Instead of impressing his followers with the miracu-
loous visions he had seen, he recruited them to carry the gospel to
the world. “Say nothing but repentance unto this generation,” Hyrum
was told (D&C 11:9).

Speaking in that voice, Joseph Smith set himself apart from
the visionary culture of Solomon Chamberlin and Norris Stearns.
He did not repudiate that culture, but he took another path. To be
sure, the similarities that did exist likely worked in Joseph’s favor.
One can imagine a warm reception for the Mormon message among
people who believed that the heavens were not sealed. After asking
the Smiths to tell their visions, Solomon Chamberlin assured them
"I can bear them," implying that some Christians might balk at renewed revelation, while he was sympathetic. A population ready to bear such news would be of great help to the infant church.

Also embedded in Joseph’s works are the two narratives that ran through the visionary reports—the coming judgments on the earth and the punishment and rewards of the life to come. The first narrative foresaw the return of Christ; the second told of the soul’s journey from earth life through death to the hereafter. Both stories had as much meaning for the Saints as for the visionaries. The preface to the Doctrine and Covenants was a “voice of warning” to all people prior to the Second Coming, and the vision of the three degrees of glory held out promises of glory in the afterlife.

But in Joseph’s teachings, another narrative stood out above either of these—the building of Zion in the last days. Unlike the pamphlet visionaries, Joseph harnessed the energy of his visions to the cause of the Church. His followers loved the stories of visions and made more of supernatural occurrences in their tales of Joseph than he did himself. Not wanting to suppress the visionary entirely, Joseph did relate the details of the First Vision and the coming of Moroni—after the Church was firmly established. Having put Zion first, Joseph’s visions inspired his followers to preach the gospel in all the world, to gather from the four quarters of the earth, and to build cities and temples. Going beyond the simple warnings of the visionary pamphlets, Joseph’s revelations became the founding stories of a new religious movement.

Joseph Smith’s experiences can be compared to reports from the visionaries of his time, just as he can be linked to other nineteenth-century cultures—universalism, rational skepticism, republicanism, progress, revivalism, magic, communitarianism, health reform, restorationism, Zionism, and a host of others. But no one of these cultures, or even all of them added together, encompasses the whole of his thought. Joseph went beyond them all and produced a culture and society that the visionaries around him could not even imagine. Visions and revelations lay at the core of the Restoration, but the doctrinal and institutional outworks extended well beyond the limits of Solomon Chamberlin’s visionary culture.

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LIST OF PAMPHLETS


Ashburn, Rebecca. *Three Remarkable Dreams in Succession, on Thursday Night, April 15th, Friday Night, April 16th, and Saturday Night, April 17th, 1802*. [Philadelphia?]: n.p., 1802.


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Stearns, Norris. *The Religious Experience of Norris Stearns, Written by Divine Command, Shewing the Marvellous Dealings of God to His Soul, and the Miraculous Manner in Which He Was Delivered from the Jaws of Death and Hell; and His Soul Set at Liberty,—Likewise His Appointment to the Ministry; and Commision from on High, to Preach the Gospel to Every Creature.* Greenfield, [Mass.]: By the author, 1815.

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Wood, Abraham. *A Remarkable Prophecy of Abraham Wood, Who Was Born Dumb and Blind, and It Pleased the Lord to Unloose His Tongue and Open His Eyes, to Declare the Truth unto the World at Twenty-Three Years of Age. Published for the Benefit of God's Children.* Lancaster, [Pa.]: n.p., 1811.

NOTES


2For Chamberlin’s life, see David F. Boone, “Prepared for the Restoration: Spiritual Manifestations Foreshadowed the Return of the Gospel to the Earth,” Ensign 14 (December 1984): 17-21. Chamberlin’s 1829 pamphlet partially supports his later account of his vision. He describes his discovery of apostasy in 1816 and his search for God’s “true church and people,” but another vision that year led him to the Reformed Methodists, among whom he found “Gods dear children.” The pamphlet does not mention a search for an apostolic church. A recently discovered copy of Chamberlin’s tract, A Sketch of the Experience of Solomon Chamberlin, to Which Is Added a Remarkable Revelation, or Trance of His Father-in-Law Philip Haskins (Lyons, N.Y.: n.p., 1829), is now on deposit in Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, and will be published with an introduction by Larry C. Porter in a forthcoming issue of BYU Studies. Solomon wrote his name “Chamberlin”; family members later changed the name to “Chamberlain.” See also “Remarkable Vision and Revelation: as Seen and Received by Asa Wild, of Amsterdam, N.Y.,” reprinted from the Amsterdam, N.Y., Mohawk Herald, October 1, 1823, in the Palmyra, N.Y., Wayne Sentinel, October 22, 1823, also submitted for publication to BYU Studies, together with commentary by Elden J. Watson.


7For two visionaries closer to Joseph Smith’s time and place, see Richard L. Bushman, Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 58. See the additional references in Neal E. Lambert and Richard H. Cracroft, “Literary Form and Historical Understanding: Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” Journal of Mormon History 7 (1980): 34-35. Professor Herbert Sloan of Barnard College has drawn my attention to a pamphlet beyond the time boundaries of the sample: Remarkable Visionary Dreams, of a Mulatto Boy, in Northfield, Mass. by the Name of Frederic W. Swan, Aged Thirteen Years: Together with a Sketch of His Life, Sickness, Conversion, and Triumphant Death (Chesterfield, N.H.]: Joseph Merriam, 1822). Swan’s dreams fell into conventional patterns, including a heavenly journey, as analyzed in this paper.


11 Nicodemus Havens and Abraham Wood pamphlets are cited in full in the list of pamphlets at the end of this article; see pp. 198–200. Hereafter, author’s names without citation refer to this list.

12 Norris Stearns and Mehetable Churchill.

13 The ten apocalyptic pamphlets include those by Ebenezer Adams, Isaac Child, Samuel Clarke, Nicodemus Havens, Samuel Ingalls, Ann Phillips, Caleb Pool, Norris Stearns, Timothy Walker, and Abraham Wood.

14 Samuel Ingalls.


16 Rebecca Ashburn, Norris Stearns, and Benjamin Say.

17 The heavenly journey pamphlets, cited in full in the list of pamphlets, include Sarah Alley; Anonimuss’s Travels; Nathan Culver; The Glory of the Heavenly City; John Mills; A True Narrative; A Warning to Disobedient Youth; Chloe Willey; and A Wonderful Account.

19 Sarah Alley, 50–55.

20 The visionaries who published their dreams and visions in pamphlets are only part of the larger visionary world of that era. A computer catalog brings up a half dozen books on visionary poetry, much of which was written in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These books are a reminder that within the span of Joseph’s life, the idea of divine revelation fascinated all segments of the cultural spectrum. The interest was nearly as common among the educated classes as among the uneducated. William Blake—learned, sophisticated, and acclaimed—reported daily visions and wrote poems that were close to automatic writing. Poets from Shelley to the American John Trumbull used visions as frames for their poems. Emerson admonished the graduating class at Harvard Divinity School in 1837 to dream dreams and see visions. Where Joseph fit in this broader picture is a question that also deserves attention. See, for example, Judith Weissman, Of Two Minds: Poets Who Hear Voices (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1993); and Andrew J. Welburn, The Truth of Imagination: An Introduction to Visionary Poetry (London: Macmillan, 1989).


22 Norris Stearns, preface; italics in original.

23 Stearns, 5.

24 Stearns, 12. God or Christ or both appear in visions in ten of the pamphlets: Sarah Alley, George De Benneville, Nathan Culver, Glory of the Heavenly City, John M’Gowan, Caleb Pool, Dorothy Ripley, Norris Stearns, A Warning to Disobedient Youth; and A Wonderful Account. Many of the appearances occur in the heavenly journey stories where the visionary sees God or Christ in a celestial setting.
The question is addressed from a literary perspective in Lambert and Cracroft, "Literary Form and Historical Understanding," 31-42.

In the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, what appears as section 20 in the present edition was prominently located immediately after the revealed preface, appearing as section 2. *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints* (Kirtland: F. G. Williams, 1835).


*Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints*, 180 (now Doctrine and Covenants 27:7-8, 12).


Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:290; see also 1:238.

Stories of priesthood restoration may have circulated unofficially, judging from Ohio newspaper reports on Mormon claims to authority. *Painesville Telegraph*, November 16 and December 7, 1830. The “Visions of Moses” given in June 1830 carried the instruction to “show them not unto any except them that believe,” (Moses 1:42) and had little circulation for many years. See also Cannon and BYU Studies, “Priesthood Restoration Documents,” 162-207, especially 177, no. 7; and Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:238-39.

Only three of the visionaries in the sample are explicitly favorable to or at ease with a church or minister: Rebecca Ashburn, Thomas Chamberlain, and A Wonderful Account.


Visionaries were probably bound to one another by their willingness to suspend disbelief, for they had in common the opposition of a doubting world. On the one hand, visionaries suffered from the attacks of skeptics spawned by the
Enlightenment who were questioning all the Christian revelations, and, on the other, by preachers in most of the mainstream denominations who were embarrassed by any manifestation of enthusiasm. A writer in the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* in 1805 wrote that no person should “publish to the world the discoveries of heaven or hell which he supposes he has had in a dream, or trance, or vision.” Cited in Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 59.


Doctrine and Covenants 128:21 refers to visitations that were never reported to the church. In May 1843, Joseph said, “I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them.” Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 5:402.

This last point is the argument of Lambert and Cracroft, “Literary Form and Historical Understanding,” 39–42.
Ammon said unto him:
a I am a man; and man in the beginning was created after the image of God,
b and I am called by his Holy Spirit to teach these things unto this people,
c that they may be brought to a knowledge
  d of that which is just and true;
b and a portion of that Spirit dwelleth in me,
c which giveth me knowledge, and also power
  d according to my faith and desires
a which are in God.

Now when Ammon had said these words,
e he began at the creation of the world, and also the creation of Adam,
f and told him all the things concerning the fall of man,
g and rehearsed and laid before him the records and the holy scriptures of the people,
b which had been spoken by the prophets, even down to the time that their father, Lebi, left Jerusalem.
i And he also rehearsed unto them all the journeyings of their fathers in the wilderness, and all their sufferings with hunger and thirst, and their travail, and so forth.
i And he also rehearsed unto them concerning the rebellions of Laman and Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael, yea, all their rebellions did he relate unto them;
g and he expounded unto them all the records and scriptures
  b from the time that Lebi left Jerusalem down to the present time.
f But this is not all; for he expounded unto them the plan of redemption,
e which was prepared from the foundation of the world;
  c and he also made known unto them
a concerning the coming of Christ,
a and all the works of the Lord
  c did he make known unto them.

—Alma 18:34-39
Lieutenant Allen D. Young (November 1944). This photograph was taken in England several days before the young fighter pilot was shot down during his fifty-seventh mission over Germany. Courtesy Allen Dahl Young.
Prisoners of War: Minutes of Meetings of Latter-day Saint Servicemen Held in Stalag Luft 1, Barth, Germany

In spite of hardships and shortages, LDS prisoners of war faithfully held Church meetings and kept records of their religious activities.

Colleen Whitley

In the months following D day, June 6, 1944, as Allied forces increased their bombing raids into Germany, many aviators were shot down, captured, and confined in prisoner-of-war camps. The Allied prisoners held in Stalag Luft 1, Barth, Germany, on the edge of the Baltic Sea, were housed in wooden barracks, sleeping three deep and twenty-four men to a room.¹

Most of the men at Stalag 1 were Americans, primarily pilots and navigators. Among them were several Latter-day Saint prisoners, who individually and, when possible, collectively clung to their faith and the practices of the Church. One of the Latter-day Saint prisoners, Clare Oliphant, a former missionary, led their appeals to the Nazi guards that they be allowed to meet together to hold religious services. On February 18, 1945, a small group from Oliphant’s barracks was allowed to congregate for prayers, hymns, talks, and the administration of the sacrament. In time, prisoners from other barracks and even other compounds were allowed to leave their own areas and join with them. Allen Young, who kept the minutes recorded here, said, “To my knowledge, we were the only group sanctioned to go from one compound to another to gather together as a group.” He also added, “Meeting for services made life tolerable.”²

The priesthood offices held among the Latter-day Saint prisoners ranged from deacon to elder, and none of the men were over
twenty-five years old. Most of them had very little experience in Church administration. While Oliphant, as a missionary, had been involved in several levels of Church government, most of the others could only draw upon their own experience, primarily as observers, in their home wards and branches. In Young's diary, he comments, "Went to church. We had 7 or 8 fellows out each Sunday. Sure wish I knew more about my church. I hope to do as much as I can in it when I get home."

The men continued to hold meetings until April 8, 1945. By that time, Allied forces had recaptured most of Europe, and, though many Nazi commanders refused to concede defeat, most of the German officers and men realized that the Nazi regime was dying. In isolated prison camps such as the one near Barth, food was difficult to get; bread was hauled in on the same wooden wagons used to haul out garbage, and Red Cross parcels ceased to arrive. Mail did not come through at all. The Germans had moved all available men to the fighting front, and few were left to guard prisoners. (The prisoners themselves suspected that many of those guards were quietly slipping away to be found by the Allies as simple farmers.) Any privileges, including church meetings, were suspended.

**Background to the Minutes**

The secretary of the group, Allen Dahl Young of Salt Lake City, was a member of the 339th fighter group stationed at Fowlmere, near Cambridge, England. On November 18, 1944, while piloting a P-51 fighter on his fifty-seventh mission providing protection for bombers raiding Germany, Young was shot down near Metz. He describes the experience in the diary he kept secretly while a prisoner:

On the way out from a fighter sweep near Munich, Germany I was hit directly in the Belly of my ship by heavy flak. I was flying at 15,000'. I lost my oil and coolant but worst of all I had lost my elevator controls. I made my first attempt at getting out at about 13,000'. I believe, at that time, that I was traveling at an indicated 300 mph. The air stream was so strong that it threw me straight back upon the radio section. I couldn't pull myself free and it seemed an eternity
before I was finally thrown free of the plane. That is the last I remem-
ber until I came to to find myself practically on the ground. Whether
I pulled my ripchord or my chute was torn open on the radio, I'll
never know. I probably unconsciously pulled it after leaving the
ship. I later had a large bruise on my left shoulder and neck and some
sore ribs on my right side.

For the first 3 or 4 days I could hardly move my left leg or my
head. To feed me in the mornings the Jerries ["Germans" is written
above the line] would have to come in and lift me out of bed. Evi-
dently the chute had been opened at an extremely high speed. I can
hardly see how I got out of it all without hitting the tail of my plane
or without breaking my neck or back when the chute opened. After
hitting the ground (like a ton of lead) I got out of the chute as fast as
I could and hid it in the water and mud of a trench that I had barely
missed landing in. I couldn't run so I hid in a hedgerow a few yards
away. I layed there for about two seconds before a shot whistled
through the hedge. Whoever had fired shouted "stand up." I stayed
where I was, hoping that I had not been seen. Another shot and this
time it was much closer. I figured then that they knew where I was
so I started to stand up. I guess I waited too long for he shot again,
missing my head by inches. I hit the ground with a bang. He shouted
again so I stood up in a hurry. There was as I remember now, about
six soldiers and a mess of young kids out there and they had me
pretty well surrounded. It seemed as though the world had come to
an end for me. Here I was, a P.O.W. and unable to help myself. They
searched me and took everything I had—which wasn't much—a
lighter, watch, and knife.  

When he arrived at Stalag 1, Young was issued a Red Cross
"joy box," which included essential toiletries such as soap and a
toothbrush. His box also included two small notebooks (6.5 inches
by 8 inches) from the Young Men's Christian Association. To aug-
ment these precious notebooks, like other prisoners who did not
smoke, Young used the cigarettes given him to provide paper on
which to write letters, notes, or diaries.

Young used one of the notebooks to keep a daily diary of the
events in the camp and his own feelings about the war and his per-
sonal situation. He used the other to record the minutes of meet-
ings held by Latter-day Saint prisoners of war from February
through April 1945. Recently, he donated these minutes to the
Church Historical Department. Richard Turley, director of that
department, believes this document to be unique: the Church
holds nothing else like it, nor are any other LDS meeting records from prisoners of war in World War II known to exist.6

Aside from their singularity, the minutes are significant as an example of members not only holding to their faith in very trying circumstances, but holding to the organization of the Church as well. Cut off from any contact with the local or general authorities, they re-created the organizational pattern of the Church and conducted their own meetings. Since no higher authorities were at hand to issue callings, Oliphant became the leader of the group primarily because he had the most experience. Young says he probably became the secretary because, “It seems like I’ve always ended up being secretary to something.”7

The men had no scriptures except a copy of the New Testament obtained from an imprisoned chaplain.8 Together they were able to remember eleven of the thirteen Articles of Faith and to reconstruct the prayers and instructions for most of the ordinances of the Church. They recorded how baptism, confirmation, naming and blessing a child, laying on of hands for a healing, administering the sacrament, and a patriarchal blessing should be performed, even though they knew that under their circumstances they would not be called upon to perform most of those ordinances.

In addition to recalling the ordinances themselves, they were extremely careful to record changes necessary for performing the ordinance for a woman as well as a man, “brother (sister),” “servant (handmaiden)”9—a remarkably broad-minded view in light of the fact that no women were in the area. They recorded both the actions to be taken and the prayers to be said for each ordinance.

The summaries of the meetings held and the talks given sound very much as though they could have come from any Latter-day Saint ward or branch, which is exactly what those isolated prisoners wanted and doubtless needed. They created for themselves a piece of the homes they missed so greatly, and they worshipped, as nearly as they possibly could, according to the manner revealed through the prophets of the Church.
# Membership and Minutes

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints  
Barth on the Baltic  
Stalag Luft #1  
Compound North

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members:</th>
<th>Priesthood</th>
<th>Home Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- S/Sgt Clare H. Oliphant</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Silverdale, Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Lt. Paul R. Smith</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Stafford, Arizona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Lt. Allen D. Young</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Salt Lake City, Utah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Lt. Oral B. Birch</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Salt Lake City, Utah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- Lt. Donald N. Evans</td>
<td>Priest</td>
<td>Lehi, Utah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Lt. Alfred Cryer</td>
<td>Deacon</td>
<td>_____, Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7- ___ Leroy Bair</td>
<td>Priest</td>
<td>Nyassa [sic], Oregon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8- Lt. Reece Robertson</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Lovell, Wyoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9- Lt. Lewis M. Webster</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rexburg, Idaho</td>
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<td>10- Sgt. Budd C. Argyle</td>
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<td>Bountiful, Utah</td>
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<td>11- Capt. Kenneth D. Peterson</td>
<td>Deacon</td>
<td>Mesa, Arizona</td>
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<td>12- Lt. Glen J. Rhodes</td>
<td>non-member</td>
<td>Boise, Idaho</td>
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<td>13- Lt. Dave W. Thompson</td>
<td>Priest</td>
<td>Salt Lake City, Utah</td>
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<td>14- Lt. Carl D. Larson</td>
<td>Deacon</td>
<td>Salina, Utah</td>
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<tr>
<td>15- Lt. Richard E. Plathow</td>
<td>Priest</td>
<td>Peru, Indiana</td>
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<tr>
<td>16- Lt. Clive O. Stevens</td>
<td>Deacon</td>
<td>Provo, Utah</td>
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<td>17- Lt. Clifford G. McIlveen</td>
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<td>Boise, Idaho</td>
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<tr>
<td>18- Lt. Paul P. Butler</td>
<td>non-member</td>
<td>Douglass, Arizona</td>
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<tr>
<td>19- F/O Ralph E. Weaver</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Blackfoot, Idaho</td>
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<td>20- Sgt. Hugh L. Lamborn</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Laketown, Utah</td>
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<tr>
<td>21- Sgt. Allen B. Foutz</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Kirtland, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22- Lt. William Hanson</td>
<td></td>
<td>San Francisco, Calif.</td>
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<td>23- Lt. Lou Kearns</td>
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<td>Salt Lake City, Utah</td>
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<tr>
<td>24- Sgt. N. R. Bishop</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>_____, Utah</td>
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<td>25- Lt. Jesse Moses</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Blackfoot, Idaho</td>
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<tr>
<td>26- Sgt. Wayne M. Davis</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Ogden, Utah</td>
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<tr>
<td>27- Rondo D. Edler, Sgt.</td>
<td>Deacon</td>
<td>Grantsville, Utah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Short Summary of the Meetings Held

February 18, 1945

The members of the L. D. S. Church gathered together today for their first meeting in Prison Camp.

Clare Oliphant was chosen as our leader, Paul R. Smith, 1st counselor and Allen D. Young as secretary.

After the opening prayer by Donald Evans the members joined in the hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers."

The Sacrament was presided over by Leroy Bair and Oral Birch.

Clare Oliphant gave the first talk: A Rock of Offense and a Stumbling Block will I plant in Zion. By the weak and foolish things of creations among mankind God confounds the wise, Mathew [sic] 11:25, 13:54-58, Acts 4:13. The Last shall be first and the first shall be last.

Principles of the Gospel so simple and precious causes confusion among men who are unenlightened by the Spirit of God. There were few who saw the virtue of His Plan of Salvation. Of the Apostles He chose the majority from the poor, relatively ignorant classes. He chose those in whom he saw a ray of uncomplicated faith, those who would be most susceptible to His Doctrine. The many times the righteous cults of the Jews listened to and were astonished at His Doctrine, they demonstrated increasing antagonism toward Him. They sought occasion to trap Him in His Teachings, to the end that they might legally imprison Him. In all instances the Lord turned their cunning to their own confusion. Jesus Christ is the Rock of Offense and the Stumbling Block to the Jews. He commissioned His Apostles to carry His Gospel to all the world, and prophesied that those to whom the Gospel was presented first would be the last to accept it, and those who heard it last would accept it first. The Jews, among whom the Gospel was preached first will be the last to come to the Faith, while the Gentiles, who were last in order of hearing it are the first to whole heartedly believe and take upon them the Spirit of the Faith.

Allen Young gave the second talk and a discussion on the Spirit of Giving. St. Mark 12:41-44 After teaching in the court of the Gentiles, Jesus sat down near to the treasury in the court of the women, He watched those who came to contribute. As (a poor widow)
brought her last coin as an offering to God, she received high praise from Jesus. A love which can give up all, ranked in his eyes as the highest wealth a man can win. Jesus admired both the generosity and the faith of the woman. Trusting God she could surrender all she had. Jesus pronounced poverty blessed in so far as the poor stand always nearer to genuine sacrifice than the rich, who may give largely of their superfluity, of that which costs them little.

Paul Smith closed the meeting with prayer.

Februry 25, 1945

Followed by the hymn “Jesus Savior Pilot Me,” Allen D. Young opened the meeting with prayer.

The Sacrament hymn was “How Gentle Gods Command.” Sacrament was presided over by Leroy Bair and Donald Evans.

Oral Birch gave the next talk on Faith. Our best example of Faith was the Faith of Jesus. Some of the points touched upon were: Christ’s stilling of the waves—Math. 8:3-27, Moving of mountains—Math. 21:21-22, the Faith of the Romans—Mathew 8:5-10. Another example of Faith was that of Joseph Smith.—Math. 7:7-8 “Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Due to such a short period for our meeting we were unable to have the second talk that was scheduled for today.

Followed by the hymn “Praise God From Whom all Blessings Flow” Reece Robertson closed with prayer.

March 4, 1945

Clare Oliphant opened the meeting by welcoming the L. D. S. members from the South Compound. The first song of the meeting was “Master The Tempest Is Raging.” Prayer was given by Brother Larson.

The Sacrament song was “The Lord is My Shephard” and [administration of the sacrament] was presided over by Brothers Davis and Weaver.

Each man introduced and said a few word about himself.

Paul Smith gave the first talk. God’s plan of Salvation and the things we can do to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. By living up to
the teachings of our parents and through living the Articles of Faith, the Word of Wisdom, and loving thy brother as thyself we may attain this glory. Be careful of thy talk—not taking the Lord’s name in vain, by not swearing, and keeping out of heated arguments. By our works and faith we will be judged and be saved.

Leroy Bair gave the next talk. “Accounts of The Apostles.” The gift of tongues was the work of the Lord. Among the people Jesus was the proof of God. The people gladly accepted Peter’s word and repented and were baptized for the remission of their sins. This was at the time of the crucifixion of Christ.

The closing song was “Bethany” followed by brother Argyle with prayer.

March 11, 1945

Today’s meeting was opened by singing “Come Thou Almighty King” followed by Oral Birch with prayer.

The Sacrament Song was “The Green Hill” and [administration of the sacrament] was presided over by Donald Evans and Paul Smith.

Wayne Davis gave the first talk of the meeting—Restoration of the Gospel and the Story of Joseph Smith. The second talk was by [Jesse] Moses. The principles of the L.D.S. Church. With the talk was much discussion concerning the Word of Wisdom.

The closing song was “Rock of Ages”

Closing prayer was by Reece Robertson.

March 18, 1945

The members from the South Compound were able to be with us again this afternoon. When it is possible for their being with us, our attendance is near the twenty mark.

The opening song was “Onward Christian Soldiers” followed by prayer by Brother Leroy Bair.

Sacrament theme was “More Holiness Give Me” and [administration of the sacrament] was officiated by Lewis M. Webster and Allen D. Young.

Reece Robertson and [Rondo] Edler gave their talk in conjunction with one another. The first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ. Many occurrences and signs were cited
upon the second coming of Christ and a group discussion was carried on.

Clare Oliphant, during the week, had written down the Ordinances of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and presented them to us. It is hoped that we may all obtain a copy while we are here.10

The closing song was "How Firm a Foundation" and closing prayer was by Brother Lamborn.

March 25, 1945

The meeting was opened by singing "The Lord is my Shepherd," followed by prayer by Allen Young.

The Sacrament Song was "How Gentle Gods Command" and the Sacrament was officiated by Brothers Thompson and Plathow.

The first lesson was given by Brother Webster on the Crucifixion of Christ and the events leading up to the Crucifixion—Math. 26–27.

Brother Evans gave the second talk on the resurrection of Christ, telling of the Burial of Christ and a description of the tomb and events from the time of Burial and Resurrection. Ref.—Cor. 21–22, Math. 28:2–8, John 20:17, Luke 24:36–51. The talk was summarized by giving a few points or things we can live up to for a full righteous life.

The closing song was "Jesus Savior Pilot Me" followed with prayer by Brother Foutz.

April 1, 1945

Opening song of the meeting was "There’s a Green Hill Far Away" followed with prayer by Brother Edler.

The Sacrament song was "Joseph Smith’s First Prayer &" was officiated by Brothers Birch and Argyle.

The first Sunday of the month being both Easter Sunday and Fast Sunday. Brother Oliphant led us by bearing his Testimony and encouraging us all to do so. The following is the members who gave their Testimony: Brothers Davis, Larson, Weaver, Birch and Plathow.

The closing song was "Jesus, The Very Thought of Thee. and closing prayer was by Brother Larson."
April 8, 1945

Due to lack of a meeting place we have had to discontinue our meetings. We hope that in the near future we will be meeting in our own respective wards.1

Colleen Whitley is Associate Lecturer in the Honors and English Departments at Brigham Young University.

NOTES

1The camp was liberated by Russian troops on May 1, 1945. The prisoners remained under Russian control for several days until transport could be arranged to take them west. During that time, Morris Roy collected funds from the other prisoners to produce a book detailing their experiences. One of the prisoners, Allen Young, used the paper carefully culled from a cigarette to create a personal check to help fund the project; he was delighted when his bank in Salt Lake City honored it. The book was published as Morris Roy, Behind Barbed Wire (New York: Richard Smith, 1946). Allen Dahl Young, interview by author, tape recording, Salt Lake City, spring 1995. Most of the background information about this document comes from these interviews and from the diary Young secretly kept while a prisoner.

2Young, interview.

3Allen Dahl Young, Diary, March 11, 1945, in possession of Allen Dahl Young, Salt Lake City. Since his return, Young has taught various priesthood quorum classes and Primary classes and served as a scoutmaster, stake clerk, ward librarian, president of a ward Sunday School, secretary of priesthood quorums and groups, and on the Sunday School General Board.

4The day before he was shot down, Allen received word that his wife, Betty, had given birth to their first child, a son. Allen did not see his son until his return to the United States seven months later. The boy was named by Bishop Kenneth Lake of the Salt Lake Highland Park Ward where Betty was living with her parents. She remembers it as a very sad meeting because in the congregation were two widows who had recently learned of their husbands’ deaths and two other women whose husbands were POWs. At that time Allen was simply listed as “Missing in Action.” Betty eventually learned from ham radio operators on the east coast of the United States, who intercepted propaganda broadcasts, that Allen was a prisoner in Germany; the Air Force sent official notification to her later.

5Young, Diary, introduction, December 17, 1944.


7Young, interview.

8"Padre" Clarke was a U.S. Air Force chaplain who felt he could not counsel the men adequately unless he had flown a mission with them, so he persuaded the crew of one plane to let him go along. The flight was shot down, and
Clarke was imprisoned with the rest of the men. In Young's words, "He should never have been off the ground." Young, interview.

9The prayers and instructions for the ordinances were recorded by Allen D. Young, along with the minutes of the meetings. The minutes have not yet been cataloged. The probable listing will be Service Men's Group, Stalag Luft 1, Archives Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

10Copies would, of course, have to be handwritten.

11The camp was freed on May 1, 1945. Young's diary entry for that day reads in part:

Learned this morning that the camp came under Allied control about 1:30 this morning. There is no activity at all here today. No planes no nothing except that a few delayed action demolitions are still going off. . . . Berlin has fallen. Straslund also. . . . Germany announces Hitler's Death and then the Russians arrived at a quarter to eleven tonight. This is one day that I'll never forget. What a day. (Young, Diary, May 1, 1945)
Hope House

After the land, the basement comes first. All you need is muscle and cement,
a little plumbing, framing, wiring—kitchen, bath, and at most two bedrooms—you keep it cheap and simple because probably it's the depression and you don't have a dime.

(It ain't a hope house anyway unless you live low down and hope for something better.)

Then the roof goes on—flat and a foot or so off the ground, with tiny windows. Some folks like a peaked roof, but it ends up looking like a regular house drowned in dirt—so don't put on any airs, just pour some steps and throw up an entry, like a lean-to standing there.

Utah used to be full of hope houses—places where you could live indefinitely if things didn't work out.

—R. A. Christmas
Book Reviews


Reviewed by Arnold K. Garr, Associate Professor of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University.

This publication boldly sets forth a nontraditional view of the origins and unfolding of the priesthood during the early years of Church history. The volume is the second in a series of monographs published by the Independence Press for the John Whitmer Association. Prince, a medical doctor, accumulated over ten thousand pages of sources from Joseph Smith's era, which he entered into a computer database. The result is a volume that will, no doubt, cause some readers to reevaluate several aspects of this significant subject. The monograph is now part of a larger book on priesthood during the lifetime of Joseph Smith.¹

Prince divides the development of the priesthood into five phases. He calls phase one, from September 1823 to March 1829, a period of "Implicit Authority." These were the years the Prophet was tutored by the Angel Moroni, the guardian of the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. Prince advocates nothing particularly unconventional in his discussion of this era. During this time, "Joseph Smith acted in his unique position by virtue of his relationship with Moroni, rather than formal ordination" (78); "his authority to act in God's name, however, was implicit rather than explicit" (16).

Prince entitles phase two, from April 1829 to October 1830, a period of "Angelic Authority." Here the author begins to depart from conventional paths and with each successive phase, he encounters
problems with interpretation and documentation. According to Prince, the authority of God was indeed restored by angels, but the term *priesthood* was not used to refer to either level of that authority (except in the Book of Mormon) until 1831. He further asserts that the angels who restored the authority in 1829 were not named until 1835. A review of the available sources seems to substantiate his claims. Prior to 1831, the written record is void of the word *priesthood* in connection with the restoration of authority. Likewise, the names of John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John do not appear prior to 1835 in the accessible accounts of the restoration of the priesthood. However, wisdom dictates that one should be cautious in perpetuating these conclusions, since lack of evidence in written documents does not prove that something never happened. The accumulation of related documents for the period in question may be incomplete.

For example, Prince suggests that for six years Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery postponed recording the names of John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John as the angelic messengers who restored the priesthood in order “to give priority to Moroni, rather than to other messengers then viewed as subordinate to him” (25 n. 29). This point falters according to Prince’s own documentation. He points out that the names of John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John were absent from the Book of Commandments (see 1833 chapter 28) and were first used in reference to the Restoration in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, section 50, verses 2 and 3 (see 1981 D&C 27:7–12). However, Prince fails to point out that Moroni’s name was also missing from the 1833 Book of Commandments and was added to the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants at the same time as the names of John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John (see 1835 D&C 50:2–3).

Another of Prince’s revisionist views is the idea that “twelve apostles may have been selected as early as 1830” (30). This would place the selection date of the Twelve approximately five years prior to the traditional date of February 14, 1835. However, the author overemphasizes some questionable and rather obscure sources as his basis for this position. First, he cites an itinerant preacher named David Marks, who stayed with the Whitmer family on March 29, 1830. Marks quoted the Whitmers as saying that
"twelve apostles were to be appointed, who would soon confirm their mission by miracles" (30). Of course, David Whitmer, as one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, was called as early as June 1829 to "search out the Twelve" (D&C 18:37). He and his family would be understandably excited to talk about this possibility to the Reverend Marks in early 1830. However, just because Marks writes about the idea in his memoirs in 1830 does not necessarily mean that the Twelve were actually named or called that year. While David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris did indeed seek out the original members of the Quorum of the Twelve, the organization and calling of the Quorum did not take place until 1835.

Prince also quotes an article in the Cleveland Herald, dated November 25, 1830, reporting that leaders of the Church had "sent out twelve Apostles to promulgate its doctrines" (30). I believe Prince interprets the term "twelve Apostles" in this quote too literally. Is it not more likely that this non-Mormon periodical mistakenly used the term "twelve Apostles" when it would have been more appropriate to use a phrase such as "several disciples" or "a group of missionaries"?

Nevertheless, Prince attempts to identify the names of men who were referred to as Apostles prior to 1835. He uses good sources to show that five men—Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, and Orson Pratt—were referred to as Apostles prior to 1835. This fact is not new. For example, we know that the Doctrine and Covenants calls Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer Apostles as early as 1829 (D&C 18:9). However, Prince's effort to ascribe the pre-1835 apostolic title to Peter Whitmer, Ziba Peterson, and Samuel Smith seems speculative.

The implication seems to be that if Prince can find pre-1835 documents that use the title Apostle for early Church leaders, these leaders must have belonged to a pre-1835 Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Joseph Fielding Smith addressed this issue sixty years ago: "Men have been called apostles who have been sent forth with the gospel message even when they have not been ordained to that particular office." Elder Smith continues, "The seventies of the Church are at times referred to as the seventy apostles. . . . In like manner the Lord spoke of the brethren who were ordained
high priests in 1831." Elder Smith then quotes Doctrine and Covenants 84:62–63, which states, "You are mine apostles, even God's high priests." He also asserts, "This revelation was given two years and four months before the first men were ordained to the special calling as apostles in the Church, but as they were commissioned to go forth proclaiming the gospel as witnesses for Christ, he designated them as his apostles." The following statement by Wilford Woodruff is a good example of the general use of the title Apostle in the early years of the Church: "Let the Twelve Apostles, and the Seventy Apostles, and High Priest Apostles, and all other Apostles rise up and keep pace with the work of the Lord God, for we have no time to sleep."

Prince names phase three of his book "High Priesthood." This phase covers the period from December 1830 to November 1831. Here, he maintains that in June 1831 men were ordained to a new "Order of Melchizedek" or "High Priesthood," but that "it was not the office of high priest" (38; italics in original). However, William G. Hartley has noted that William E. McLellin's missionary journals challenge this claim. McLellin, a close observer of early Church leaders, noted on October 25, 1831, that "a number of Elders were ordained to the High-Priesthood of the Holy order of God among whom though I felt unworthy I was ordained and took upon me the high responsibility of that office." McLellin uses the word office.5

Hartley's article questions still another of Prince's claims. In the discussion on organizational development found in the section Prince entitles "Phase IV: November 1831 to March 1836—Organizational Development," he asserts that prior to "mid-1832 the only use of the word 'priesthood' had been in conjunction with 'high priesthood'" (51). Yet Hartley points out that McLellin's journal contradicts that claim. As early as October 25, 1831, McLellin wrote, "A number of others present were ordained to the lesser Priest-Hood."6

Turning to phase five, "April 1836 to April 1844—Elijah and the Fulness of Priesthood," Prince maintains that in 1836 the roles of John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John "in the Restoration began to be eclipsed by the Old Testament prophet, Elijah" (81), eventually becoming "completely overshadowed" by him (14). He further states that "after 1840 [Joseph] Smith never associated
John the Baptist or Peter, James, and John with the concept of priesthood” (14). It would seem that Doctrine and Covenants 128 contradicts this position. In this epistle, dated September 6, 1842, the Prophet gives a brief recitation of many key heavenly messengers that were involved with important events of the Restoration. In verses 20 and 21, he writes about Peter, James, and John, along with many others, but he never mentions Elijah. The revelation also states that these messengers, including Peter, James, and John, declared “their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood” (128:21).

As I attempt to assess the value of this monograph, I must admit that I have mixed feelings. On the one hand, I acknowledge that through countless hours of research Prince has found and made available to us many sources that have not been widely used before. On the other hand, I am uncomfortable with the fact that he bases many of his conclusions on the assumption that the lack of evidence in recorded documents proves that something never happened. He leaves himself vulnerable when evidence that refutes his claims is later discovered. Such is the case with the McLellin journals and the use of the term lesser priesthood. Prince has helped me understand that the term Apostle was often used in a general way in the early days of the Church. Yet I am not persuaded his sources prove the existence of twelve specific Apostles or a Quorum of Twelve Apostles prior to 1835. Consequently, I recommend the book as worthy of study, with the understanding that some of its conclusions are subject to question.

NOTES

1Gregory A. Prince, Power from On High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995).
A careful study needs to be made of how the early brethren understood the High Priesthood or high priest and the relationship of these terms to the Melchizedek Priesthood—whether these expressions represented a different order of the priesthood or an office within the Melchizedek Priesthood.


Reviewed by William G. Hartley, Associate Professor of History at Brigham Young University and Research Historian for the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History.

"I'm glad you are doing priesthood history," a prominent LDS historian once told me, "because it bores me to tears." True, studies of priesthood development aren't ripsnorting reading, but they are fundamental for understanding early Mormonism and are literally foundational for LDS and RLDS history. In this expansion of his 1993 volume on priesthood origins, Gregory Prince gives us a carefully researched, thoughtfully interpreted, and measured exposition about the vital foundational years of LDS and RLDS priesthood theory and practice. This is a solid, finely sawed and sanded first plank in what needs to be a three-plank floor for fully understanding early priesthood restoration, development, and operations.

Responsible priesthood history studies are rare, primarily because they require meticulous textual analyses that ultimately produce interpretations wrapped in qualifiers. Not only is the Joseph Smith period a big time span through which to research any topic, but the priesthood's growth occurred so subtly that some of it can only be glimpsed, and not clearly seen, in oblique and ambiguous statements too often tucked inside obscure sources.

Priesthood studies about early Mormonism are few. The most detailed are Robert Marrott's thesis about early Aaronic Priesthood work,1 James Baumgarten's thesis that surveys seventies' history into this century,2 Ronald K. Esplin's dissertation regarding the development of the Quorum of the Twelve,3 and D. Michael Quinn's monumental and controversial The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power,4 along with less than a dozen excellent scholarly articles. In 1996, after a decade of research and editing, BYU Studies has published a definitive edition of seventy "Priesthood Restoration Documents,"5 which should be consulted while reading Prince's book.

Greg Prince's fine history takes its place as one of the most important published studies of early LDS priesthood development. Power from On High contains eight chapters: Authority; Offices;
Ordinances, 1829–30; Ordinances: the Endowment; Ordinances, 1831–36; Ordinances: the Second Anointing; Judicial Systems; and Women and Priesthood.

Joseph Smith’s prophetic claims are bound tightly to his explanations about and implementations of priesthood authority. Scholars who write positively about an inspired Joseph Smith, those positing naturalistic assessments, and writers who are adamantly anti-Mormon in their approaches all must face several problematic priesthood “facts” and developments, which Prince addresses. Was apostolic authority present by 1829? When did Joseph Smith and others first speak of “priesthood” rather than “authority”? How and when did higher and lesser priesthoods become defined as such? Where does patriarchal priesthood fit into the Aaronic-Melchizedek Priesthood duality? What was the relationship between the “endowment from on high” and priesthood callings? Why were the Book of Mormon office of high priest and the biblical office of bishop not present in the Church in 1830? What were the connections between ordinances and priesthood? What did “ordain” mean and not mean? How did women interface with priesthood and ordinances?

Prince develops firm positions on these matters, based on research as good as anyone has done to date. One of his overriding theses is that the crowning piece in the priesthood restoration picture is the coming of Elijah and that the sealing powers he restored directly shaped Joseph Smith’s final understanding of priesthood.

Prince documents, sometimes month by month, statements about priesthood offices and functions as found in the early revelations, minute books, diaries, sermons, and histories. Only a few factual errors are evident. Now that we have the McLellin journals, it is clear that the terms “lesser priesthood” and high priesthood “office” were in use at least as early as 1831. 6 Similarly, appointment of pastors started in 1852 in the British Mission, 7 not 1856 as Prince states (49).

Prince’s familiarity with the source materials is equal to Quinn’s, but he uses more responsible judgment about what weight to give many of the questionable or lesser sources. Prince adheres to primary sources religiously—even to a fault, because he chooses not to cite or discuss studies by other scholars, except in
Review of *Power from On High*

a rare case. Regrettably, the book provides no bibliography of Prince's sources, let alone of the basic secondary books, articles, and theses relevant to his subject.

As Prince demonstrates, no researcher can hope to deal documentarily with early Mormonism without scrutinizing the earliest versions (not current versions) of the revelations and making hard, painstaking word and phrase comparisons. Such text-checking requires serious scholarship, and Prince carefully consults Robert Woodford's monumental dissertation, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants," and Dean C. Jessee's meticulously crafted editions of *The Papers of Joseph Smith*.

Prince takes a documentary, evolutionary approach, and anyone using this methodology must ultimately decide what weight to give Joseph Smith's later, fuller explanations of priesthood operations in contrast to his early, initiating statements. Priesthood offices and operations were first announced, then implemented, then made to fit changing realities of Church growth and spread, then reexplained and clarified. So, does the scholar credit Joseph with integrity for introducing and then modifying offices and operations and then later offering explanations of the beginnings? Or does the scholar distrust the later explanations, suspicious that they are dishonest or disingenuous? Prince is willing to give more credence to the later explanations than does Quinn, but both still subscribe to the documentary, natural evolutionary approach to writing priesthood history.

This interpretive choice brings me to four qualifiers I believe need to be applied by anyone taking the evolutionary, documentary approach to LDS priesthood development:

1. Joseph Smith's later perspectives on early events deserve as much trust as do his early statements. Only after years of experience and implementation was Joseph Smith able to say how priesthood offices and operations worked together or should work together realistically and functionally in a maturing church structure. My experience with diaries and diarists convinces me that the later, reflective recollections sometimes are more important than comments recorded at the time of an event. It takes time to understand some things that are ongoing.
2. As Dean Jessee cautions, only a small percentage of what Joseph Smith ever taught survives in our records, so conclusions we reach based on all available documents can only be partial and tentative.\(^{10}\)

3. Ideas have little meaning until implemented. That is, priesthood and keys can be bestowed, but they have meaning only when put into use. Restoration is more than an act—it is function. Elijah came and bestowed keys in 1836, but a full understanding of what that meant could not come until sealing ordinances actually were being performed involving spouse to spouse, children to parents, and deceased to deceased. (Thus, the sealing powers were not fully implemented and restored until 1877 when the St. George Temple was opened and deceased were sealed to deceased for the first time.)

4. Joseph Smith's life was cut short as far as implementing all that was revealed to him, so researchers need to examine closely Brigham Young's directions of priesthood work to discern as much as possible what was innovative on his part and what was implementation of what Joseph had taught him. Brigham Young devoted himself and the Church to completing Joseph Smith's work—finishing the Nauvoo Temple, taking the gospel to the world, gathering Israel, and implementing priesthood operations.

For example, just after Joseph Smith's death, the Twelve engineered a mass-ordination of seventies in late 1844, designed apparently to launch a vast missionary outreach in the United States, with seventies serving as the missionary force (Prince says there is little evidence the seventies had a missionary function by 1844). Was this an intended new use of the seventies by the Twelve, or rather an intended implementation of the seventies' missionary function that Joseph Smith had already taught the Twelve? Likewise, was Brigham Young's role in widely developing wards, ward bishops, and ward ordinances innovation or implementation?

When the Church transplanted itself from Nauvoo to Utah, it settled into a theocratic situation where, for the first time, it had the ability to fully implement several priesthood operations and offices. In early Utah, we see such priesthood developments (which Prince does not discuss) as the center stake having authority over
other stakes; wards functioning as fundamental worship and membership units; ward bishops becoming the most important local officers in the Church; priesthood relating to local congregational meetinghouses and therefore local meetings, which the Church lacked until then; and, rebaptism additionally functioning as a ritual of joining—joining Zion in the mountains, joining communities, joining united orders, joining in a Churchwide reformation.

Further, discussions of women and early priesthood should take into consideration the fact that in Utah the first Relief Societies did create mirror “quorums” to the priesthood, complete with deaconesses who took care of Relief Society meetinghouses just as ordained deacons cared for the ward meetinghouses; teachers quorums that visited the sisters just as priesthood teachers and priests visited families; and a presidentess who presided over the ward Relief Society.

In many aspects, the pre-1844 period was an experimental farm for priesthood work, but much of the implementational field was cultivated during the next few decades. Post-1844 implementations and teachings do shed light on what the pre-1844 understandings were and deserve to be considered in studies like *Power from On High*. (Prince does stick a toe or two through that door, such as when he explains that the endowment was first written down in 1877.)

Another cross-check to help assess what Joseph Smith’s generation understood about priesthood operations is to evaluate how LDS Church leaders explained and activated priesthood offices when their church started in 1860. Given the tight parameters Prince has chosen for his study, a more appropriate subtitle for his book might be “The Early Stage of Development of the Mormon Priesthood, 1823–1844.”

As mentioned previously, Prince gives us a sturdy, finely sawed and sanded first plank of a three-plank floor required for a historical understanding of the early progressions in priesthood restoration. A needed second plank would be a study of the post-1844 “implementations” and further developments of priesthood matters. A third plank would be a wider search in and study of diaries, autobiographies, and recollections of priesthood officers
who served during the Joseph Smith period to determine what they did and how they functioned as holders of specific priesthood offices.

As a useful study in building our understanding of the history of the priesthood, and subject to the allowances mentioned, Prince's book is a thoughtful, masterful, major contribution—a "must" book for all serious scholars dealing with the beginnings of Mormonism and the history of LDS priesthood and Church government.

NOTES

1Robert L. Marrott, "History and Functions of the Aaronic Priesthood and the Offices of Priest, Teacher, and Deacon in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1829 to 1844" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1976).
8Robert Woodford, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974).
Reviewed by Cherry B. Silver, researcher and writer in the field of English and American literature.

*Worth Their Salt*, edited by Colleen Whitley, is an “effort to take note of women who have too often gone unnoticed” (viii). This volume contains new as well as previously published biographical accounts of eighteen women living in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Utah “who had been overlooked, neglected, or misrepresented” (viii). In these sketches, biographers focus on Utah’s pluralistic social, economic, and religious communities. They bring to light stories of remarkable women—a few who attained wealth and prominence; some who founded schools, hospitals, newspapers, clubs; still others who worked quietly in their neighborhoods. Whitley recognizes that this collection of notable Utah women is not definitive and mentions omissions in her preface (x). Some of these missing personalities may be included in the second volume of short biographies she is assembling.

This collection tests the reader’s knowledge of Utah trivia. Perhaps only one-third of the women included in the collection earned cultural or political renown: Patty Bartlett Sessions, Mary Teasdel, Maud May Babcock, Alice Merrill Horne, Sarah Elizabeth Carmichael, Maude Adams, Ivy Baker Priest, Esther Rosenblatt Landa, and Helen Zeese Papanikolas. Some played a role in Salt Lake City’s developing social life: Eliza Kirtley Royle, Elizabeth Ann Claridge McCune, and Susanna Bransford Engalitcheff. And others seem to round out a roster of political correctness: Jane Manning James, a black pioneer; Mother M. Augusta, who helped found St. Mary’s Academy and Holy Cross Hospital; Chipeta, Apache wife of a Ute tribal leader; Mother Rachel Urban, a Park City madam; Georgia Lathouris Mageras, midwife and stalwart in the Greek community; and Kuniko Muramatsu Terasawa, a Japanese publisher.

Despite the natural drawbacks of a miscellany of this sort, I find a comfortable tone of competency throughout. The biographers are professional scholars or experienced private researchers, drawing on solid sources and offering skillful characterization.
Sources vary from newspaper articles and diaries to census documents and interviews, and from land records to personal reminiscences.

For a reader wanting to learn more, the twelve-page bibliography of primary and secondary sources invites further reading. The bibliography, however, does not cover the best-known primary and secondary collections edited over the last twenty-plus years: *Mormon Sisters* (1976), edited by Claudia L. Bushman; *Sister Saints* (1978), edited by Vicki Burgess-Olsen; *Women’s Voices* (1980), edited by Kenneth and Audrey Godfrey and Jill Mulvey Derr; *A Book of Mormons* (1982), by Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker; *Supporting Saints: Life Stories of Nineteenth-Century Mormons* (1985), edited by Donald Q. Cannon and David J. Whittaker; and *Sisters in Spirit* (1987), edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson—all sources one would expect to find if the listing were to be comprehensive.¹ Maureen Ursenbach Beecher’s series *Life Writings of Frontier Women* continues the gathering of women’s histories with diaries of Mary Haskin Parker Richards (1996), edited by Maureen Ward, and Patty Bartlett Sessions (1997) edited by Donna Toland Smart.² Major studies on Emmeline B. Wells, Eliza R. Snow, Utah club women, and others are also underway.

Whitley’s collection is a little different from many books on Utah history and finds its own place. The essayists have a political perspective to share and something to tell us about Utah’s diverse culture. They help us recognize that Utah’s religious origins are Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Greek Orthodox, Native American, and Buddhist, as well as Mormon, and that the state’s ethnic origins are just as diverse. Without acknowledging this diversity, we cannot fully understand Utah’s history.

A dozen forces—such as mining and railroading, depression and war, upheavals overseas and desire for professional advancement—brought families to Utah. Utah had its gilded age. It had its mining and agricultural booms and busts. Its landscape included Native Americans. It kept busy its madams as well as its sisters of charity. It needed its community servants and politicians. It rallied around its cultural leaders. It was enriched by its scholars and writers, artists and actors. It grew with neighborhoods and families of many types. “Incredible” women performed on all of these stages.
While this adjective is intended by Wallace Stegner in *The Gathering of Zion* as a tribute to Utah’s Mormon women, Whitley helps it apply to Utah women of many backgrounds.

As readers dip into this volume, they will find their own favorite women. I admire the authors’ taking time to look for patterns and spell out consequences. They creatively select revealing details. They explore the enigmas. They are witty and ironic. For example, become acquainted with Patty Sessions (1795–1892) as a remarkable midwife, diarist, orchardist, and entrepreneur. She married twice and both her husbands married plurally. Donna Smart writes:

Patty’s attitude towards her husbands was respect, devotion, and acceptance of their faults. . . . Apparently neither of them helped much with the physical labor of pruning and caring for the orchards and gardens—or any of the other heavy work that needed to be done. Where were they when she had to hire men to help with the farming or with fixing up the property? She sometimes hinted at her exasperation, but did not belabor the subject. And she regularly met the needs or requests of her husbands in level-headed and supportive ways in times of ill health and in times of material shortages. (7)

Consider the semirespectable position of Mother Rachel Urban (1864–1933), a leading madam in Park City who ran an upscale house of prostitution. Biographer Cheryl Livingston reports:

Mother Urban always held a Christmas party for [the bachelor miners] and it was considered a respectable place where they could gather. It was also a place where they could go and have a letter written home, as many of them did not know how to write. . . . The mining companies’ owners seemed to regard Rachel Urban as providing a valued and much needed service. (127)

Remember Maud May Babcock (1867–1954), who brought the programs of physical culture and elocution to the University of Utah. David G. Pace summarizes, “Four generations of college students and many others . . . had been brow-beaten and blessed by Maud May, a woman who was always sure she was right and pretty much convinced everyone else that she was” (157).

Learn about the calm heroics of Georgia Lathouris Mageras (1867–1950), the midwife serving in Magna’s Greek Town. Helen Z. Papanikolas vividly describes her work:

Women clamored for Magerou. Small though she was, her voice carried through the neighborhoods, exhorting, shouting, “Scream!
Push! You’ve got a baby in there, not a pea in a pod!” Once the baby was born, Magerou gave her entire time to the newly delivered mother, the lebóna, and to the baby. . . . For the first time in her life, the woman knew what it was to be pampered. The autocratic young husbands were reduced to errand boys. (165)

Follow the political maneuvering of Alice Merrill Horne (1868-1948), who distinguished herself in the 1899 Utah legislature along with Martha Hughes Cannon by passing landmark bills on art, education, and health. Horne’s granddaughter Harriet Horne Arrington describes Alice’s later “campaign to clear Salt Lake City’s air of smoke coming from coal and wood fires, smelters, railroads, and assorted backyard bonfires.” Salt Lake newspapers refused to publish reports of their activities. Determined to make them carry a story, she and two friends set up a coal cookstove on the corner of Main Street and South Temple, near the Brigham Young Monument, and proceeded to bake rolls and pies, attracting a considerable crowd and disrupting traffic. The women used smokeless coal—coal from which the oil and gas had been removed. Alice reported: “My friends and I wore white dresses and white gloves. We would pick up lumps of coal and I even wiped off the inside of a stove lid with a lace handkerchief with nary a smudge. Needless to say we got columns of publicity that next day.” (186-87)

Admire immigrant Kuniko Muramatsu Terasawa (1896-1991), whose daughter Haruko T. Moriyasu remembers:

During her early years in Salt Lake City, Kuniko’s major role was that of the Meiji ideals for women—"good wife, wise mother." . . . She took the position of being an “ennoshibita no chikaramochi,” literally, the foundation that supports the house, figuratively, the person who does the disagreeable work that is never recognized but necessary to do. (207)

When her husband died in 1939, Kuniko resolved to continue publishing the Utah Nippo newspaper. She managed the sheet, handset the Japanese type, and made the contacts, successfully surviving World War II censorship and adapting the paper to English-speaking readers until her death at age ninety-five.

While the individual essays offer intriguing insights into personality and culture, they are stand-alone pieces. I would suggest adding scholarly mortar work, fitting these personalities together within a context of social and cultural history: tell which personalities
are dancing in the same arena of politics or journalism or art and trace the lines of influence—the mentors and followers. Thomas G. Alexander offers an example of this contextual linking in his official state centennial history, *Utah: The Right Place* (Gibbs Smith, 1995). Several sections on Utah culture at the turn of the century (265–75) provide a setting for some of the same characters expansively memorialized in Whitley’s collection. An interpretative essay by the editor of *Worth Their Salt* would profitably reveal the ties that are part of the felt excitement of her work. For example, she might compare the contributions of Elizabeth Ann Claridge McCune and Susanna Bransford Emery Holmes (Engalitcheff), who both lived in the Gardo House but made quite different uses of their wealth and influence.

This collection edited by Colleen Whitley rewards us for either browsing or delving. The book originated in excited conversation among researchers and ought to invite a profitable continuation of shared discoveries.

**NOTES**


Clothed with Charity: Talks from the 1996 Women’s Conference, edited by Dawn Hall Anderson, Susette Fletcher Green, and Dlora Hall Dalton (Deseret Book, 1997)

Women and men from all walks of life have contributed to this volume, offering support, insight, and advice. Their topics include managing stress, spending time wisely, making decisions, studying the scriptures, building self-confidence, developing spiritual maturity, finding holiness, improving family relationships, and doing the charitable works of God.

Recognizing the potential of women, Patricia Holland believes that “a woman seeking the cloak of charity, a woman desiring with all her heart to receive the fulness of God, has a chance to break through these telstial, temporal trappings” (8-9). One of these “temporal trappings” is judging others, and many of the chapters deal with the consequences of unrighteous or inappropriate judging. Elaine L. Jack counsels, “As you take stock of yourself and your situation, base your evaluation of where you are on your own criteria, not that of another person” (50). Helen B. Stone agrees that “unrealistic expectations of others or self needlessly compicate life” (154).

These essays also explore ways in which we might improve our experiences. Several essays discuss the benefits of journal writing. In this context, Carol Clark Ottesen quotes the poet Rilke: “If your daily life seems poor, do not blame it; blame yourself . . . [for you] must call forth its riches” (54). Life is improved by realizations reached through learning about or from other people. Mary Kirk declares that God will provide opportunities to learn from the people around us or from God himself—indeed, God will “pour out his holiness upon us at the rate that we open our eyes and perceive, open our ears and understand, and open our hearts and invite him in. And then we’ll become like him” (117).

And to keep a proper perspective on life, Louise Durham proclaims the benefits of laughter: “As far as I’m concerned, humor is serious business. It is both a salve to heal wounds and an astringent that occasionally stings in the right places. . . . Laughing often clears vision and can put things back into focus” (72).

Several other contributors show that trials in life—including childbirth, loss, or loneliness—are part of the learning process. This volume of essays and poems provides
encouragement, shares understanding, and promotes hope.

—Claire Foley


This small book describes the precious experiences of more than thirty women who traveled with the Mormon Battalion. Most were wives who, refusing to be left behind, enlisted along with their husbands as soldiers in the Mexican War. The women served as nurses, laundresses, and companions to their husbands during the long march. Only four women accompanied the battalion all the way to California; the rest became part of the battalion sick detachment and spent the winter at Fort Pueblo, Colorado. All the women suffered the hardships of the march—shortage of food, water, clothing, and the comforts they had left behind. At least two who marched to California, Melissa Burton Cory and Lydia Edmunds Hunter, were pregnant.

Colonel Thomas L. Kane, present at the enlistment of the battalion at Council Bluffs, Iowa, observed that the Mormon women had been bred to other lives. . . . Before their flight, they had sold their watches and trinkets as the most available resource for raising ready money; and . . . [even though they] were without earrings, finger rings, chains, or broaches . . . they lacked nothing most becoming the attire of decorous maidens. They neatly darned white stockings, and clean, bright petticoats, the artistically clear-starched collar and chemisette, the something faded, only because too well-washed, lawn or gingham gown, that fit modestly to the waist of the pretty wearer—these, if any of them spoke of poverty, spoke of a poverty that had known its better days. (28)

Even though this 130-page book lacks personal journals written by the women, the statements recorded by their biographers give the reader a picture of what the women of the Mormon Battalion experienced during their trek across the deserts of the southwestern United States during the fall and winter of 1846–47, as well as additional details of these women’s lives as they joined their husbands in colonizing the Great Basin and parts of California.

—Clark V. Johnson


The 1996 Women’s Conference Committee extended a call for essays on a theme taken from an address by Relief Society General President Elaine Jack entitled “Relief Society: A Balm in Gilead.” The balm of Gilead was a salve used in ancient times to heal and soothe wounds. The healing properties of the balm seemed an appropriate metaphor “through which women could share perspectives on their
own life experiences” (1) and define their paths to peace.

Essays poured in. This volume presents thirty of these essays, each having its own individual style and focus, yet uniting with the others in expressing the struggle to reap the benefits of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to find peace in a world of adversity. Whether she struggles with physical, mental, or spiritual aspects of her life, every woman can find hope in these stories, which bear testimony of the love and mercy of God, the truthfulness of his plan and the promises of salvation and happiness.

One essayist describes her balm of Gilead as “the sweetness of Christ and the gospel of service that has come into my life. It has helped to heal my heart and will continue to do so as long as I turn my eyes to him” (88). Another essay suggests that the balm of Gilead “is produced from the yield of the Tree of Life. . . . Balm has been abundantly available for me as the need has been manifested throughout my life. It has been supplied at times by my own effort, but often it comes through another’s compassion” (10–11). Through her struggles, another writer has realized peace and purpose in pain: “We will not be judged on what problems we have but how we handle them. And I’ve learned that every problem, if we look hard enough, has a silver lining” (97).

These essays encourage the joy-yielding traits of faith, hope, and charity. They promote learning and growth from experience and trials, and they testify of the purpose of life, and the love of the Savior.

—Claire Foley

A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography, edited by Donald W. Parry, Jeanette W. Miller, and Sandra A. Thorne (Research Press, 1996)

A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography, a massive compilation recently published by FARMS, is an essential source of information for Book of Mormon scholars. The 650-page volume describes more than 6,300 pieces about the Book of Mormon, including books and monographs, articles, theses, dissertations, pamphlets and reports, book reviews, newspaper articles, plays, and poetry.

The bibliography lists all published Book of Mormon sources that could be found, drawing items from the Mormon collections of sixteen major libraries in the United States and England. To facilitate access, the book includes a diskette with the same bibliographic information in electronic form. This extensive information will provide students of the scriptures with a comprehensive overview of scholarly research on the Book of Mormon, as well as bring attention to areas that need further study.

FARMS has also published a shorter version—A Guide to Publications
on the Book of Mormon. This convenient volume contains over 3,200 items, omitting less-substantive or outdated materials and anti-Mormon literature.

Accessing information in these volumes is quick and painless. Annotations and the index are closely interrelated through the use of key words. This time-saving aspect of the book adds to its value as a research tool.

Among FARMS’s most important achievements in recent years, these bibliographies allow researchers and students of the scriptures to access many years of Book of Mormon research by LDS scholars and others, providing a complete perspective. No one who is serious about research and writing on the Book of Mormon should fail to consult one of these volumes.

—David Allred

Religions of the World: A Latter-day Saint View, by Spencer J. Palmer, Roger R. Keller, Dong Sull Choi, and James A. Toronto (Brigham Young University, 1997)

In early 1997, President Hinckley announced that Church membership outside the United States had surpassed that within the country. Now, more than ever before, Latter-day Saints are interacting regularly with peoples of other faiths and cultures. In keeping with this international outreach, this popular text, used throughout the Church for the study of world religions, has been revised and expanded. Two additional authors, several new chapters, a number of new illustrations, and much updated material add fresh perspectives to the former edition’s tried-and-true approach. The result portrays the vivid spectrum of truth as it extends across cultures and religious systems. The book presents a wealth of vital information for leaders, missionaries, and members seeking greater understanding of the peoples of the world and the beliefs that motivate them.