



THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION

Bound for Zion: The Ten- and Thirteen-Pound Emigrating Companies, 1853–54

By POLLY AIRD

Let all who can procure a bit of bread, and one garment on their back, be assured there is water plenty and pure by the way, and doubt no longer, but come next year to the place of gathering, even in flocks, as doves fly to their windows before a storm,” urged Brigham Young in April 1852 to the “Saints Scattered Through-out the Earth.”¹ To a poor, working-class British believer in the new Mormon religion, these words gave bright hope for escape from the daily, hungry treadmill to a life with God’s elect in Zion, the home he had set aside for them in the Great Salt Lake Valley.

Young’s epistle to the scattered Saints followed more than eleven years of Mormon emigration from Great Britain to the United States. Since 1848 some six thousand converts had made the seven-thousand-mile journey from the green hills of Britain all the way to the desert kingdom of Utah. Much has been written about British Mormon emigration; in particular, P. A. M.

Bird’s eye view of New Orleans from the Lower Cotton Press in 1852 showing both sailing ships and steamboats. Lithograph by D. W. Moody after J. W. Hill and B. F. Smith, Jr., delineators.

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¹ Seventh General Epistle, *Millennial Star*, July 17, 1852. Brigham Young was president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also known as the LDS or Mormon church).

Taylor's *Expectations Westward* gives a wealth of historical context for the missionary work in Great Britain and the planning of emigration by the church leaders in Utah.² This paper builds on that background and focuses on an experiment in moving British Mormons for a minimal amount of money from Liverpool, England, to Salt Lake City, and it explores why the scheme was abandoned after two years.

Most immigrants to Utah, who came primarily from Great Britain and Scandinavia, had never ventured more than a few miles from their doorsteps and could not imagine the vast distances they would have to travel.³ What impelled these zealous believers to immigrate, not just to the eastern seaboard of America as so many others from Europe had done but to go another thousand miles inland from the then-frontier on the Missouri River?

The great impetus came from a belief integral to the LDS faith in the mid-nineteenth century: "gathering to Zion." Believed literally and fervently, this tenet was nearly as fundamental as baptism. It reenacted the gathering of the Israelites to the Promised Land and was a necessary preparation for the coming of Christ in the "Last Days." For the individual, it was the only way one might receive the full ordinances of the faith, for these had to be performed in a temple, the "house of the Lord."⁴ Joseph Smith, the founder of the new religion, had proclaimed God's revelation: "Ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect.... The decree hath gone forth from the Father that they shall be gathered in unto one place...to prepare...against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked. For the hour is nigh and the day soon at hand when...all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that wickedness shall not be upon the earth."⁵

Besides its spiritual purpose—to prepare for Christ's "imminent" return by bringing the righteous out of "Babylon," the sinful world—the gathering had earthly aims as well. The church needed people to build the new kingdom and to stake out the Mormon claim to a vast territory in the West. In addition, a large population in Utah Territory would bolster the leaders' application for statehood, a status that would give them more control over political affairs.

² P. A. M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966). For studies by other authors, see James B. Allen, Ronald W. Walker, and David J. Whittaker, "Emigration and Immigration," *Studies in Mormon History, 1830–1997: An Indexed Bibliography* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 633–35.

³ For example, Samuel Claridge wrote that when he traveled the thirty-five miles to Liverpool in early 1853 it was the first time he had ever gone more than a few miles from home; see S. George Ellsworth, *Samuel Claridge: Pioneering the Outposts of Zion* (Logan, Utah: author, 1987), 20.

⁴ *Millennial Star*, January 15, 1852, May 26, 1855.

⁵ *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989) 29:7–9 (hereafter cited as D&C); this section was first published as section 10 of the *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints*, comp. Joseph Smith, Jr., et al., (Kirtland, OH: F. G. Williams and Co., 1835).

Mormon missionaries to Great Britain began teaching the tenet of gathering in 1840. Between then and 1847, about five thousand immigrated to church headquarters at Nauvoo, Illinois, and the surrounding country.⁶ In 1848 the first emigrants bound for Utah sailed from Liverpool, arriving in the Salt Lake Valley just a year after the Mormons first settled there.

British converts were but a tiny current in the vast river of emigration from Great Britain and Europe. To understand the context of the British Mormon experience in 1853 and 1854, the years of interest here, one needs to compare it to the overall British immigration to the United States. The peak for the British came in 1849 through 1853, and for the Mormons in 1853 through 1856, with the two overlapping in 1853.⁷ In that year at least 231,000 British came to the U.S. Only 2,609, or 1.12 percent of these were Mormons. In 1854 some 193,000 British emigrated; 2,034 of these, or 1.05 percent of the whole, were Mormon.⁸

The Mormon emigrants were almost all urban working-class families. The occupations recorded by U. S. customs officials for immigrants in 1852, the closest year for which figures can be found, were first "laborers" and then farmers. Since the term "laborer" could encompass many types of work, and since the records include 25,000 returning U.S. citizens, one cannot draw meaningful conclusions, but the percentage of the next occupation in rank, farmers, is far higher than the tiny percent of Mormons listed as farmers. The Mormon emigrants thus appear to have represented a fairly different strata of society: an urban one, unskilled in the arts that would help a pioneer. Certainly, their religious motivation contrasted with the economic motives of the average emigrant.⁹

By 1853, British converts could travel to Utah by one of four methods:

1. *Independent, "through" emigrants.* These paid their own way on Mormon-procured ships and steamboats. Most sent money ahead to a Mormon agent on the frontier to buy oxen and wagons. Not only did they benefit from an advantageous price this way, but such help was almost a necessity, for few of the city converts had ever seen, much less handled, an ox. In 1852 it was estimated that £20 would see an independent emigrant from Liverpool through to Salt Lake.¹⁰

2. *Emigrants for the United States only.*¹¹ These emigrants paid for their own passage and then were instructed to make their way to Council Bluffs,

⁶ *Deseret News 1989–1990 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1988), 166.

⁷ Terry Coleman, *Going to America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 213, 295; Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 145.

⁸ Coleman, *Going to America*, 295–96; James Linforth, "Introduction," in Frederick Piercy, *Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley*, ed. Fawn M. Brodie (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1962), 43; *Millennial Star*, April 23, 1853. Linforth records 2,312 Mormon emigrants for 1853, whereas the *Millennial Star* reports 2,609. The discrepancy comes from a difference in the reported numbers of independent emigrants.

⁹ Linforth, "Introduction," 46–48; Coleman, *Going to America*, 299–300.

¹⁰ *Millennial Star*, November 27, 1852, January 15, 1852.

¹¹ Richard Jensen terms these "ordinary" emigrants, but in this period at least, all primary sources used "ordinary" to mean independent, through emigrants; see Richard L. Jensen, "The British Gathering to

Iowa, on the east bank of the Missouri River, opposite today's Omaha. They settled in the area to work and earn enough for an outfit to use in crossing the plains sometime in the future. In mid-1854 church leaders began to encourage emigrants to come to the eastern states and work in their port of entry or in a frontier city, for they felt the emigrants could earn the needed money more quickly in America than in Britain.¹² Steerage across the ocean from Liverpool to New York in 1850—presumably comparable to passage to New Orleans in 1853–54—cost approximately one month's wages for a skilled worker or two months' wages for an unskilled one.¹³ For a large family, it was a major undertaking to save enough money for the voyage and have some left over to find a job and a place to live in the eastern states.

3. *Prepaid and sent for from Utah.* Relatives or friends already in Utah could pay for someone in Europe to come through the Perpetual Emigrating Fund. Payments of cash were preferred, but as there was little money in circulation at the time, most relatives paid in produce, livestock, equipment, or labor. By April 1854, 349 people had come to Utah this way. In July 1855 Brigham Young emphasized that such passage must be fully prepaid, but before then, sending for someone frequently involved a partial payment and a promise, or even just a promise.¹⁴ In one example, two Scottish brothers, Dougal and Alexander Adamson, sent for their sister Agnes's family, promising to pay the \$300 for the family's passage by making adobe bricks.¹⁵

4. *Perpetual Emigrating Fund (PEF).* In 1849 the PEF was established to gather the penniless Saints who had been driven out of the former church headquarters in Nauvoo, Illinois, and who waited on the frontier in Pottawattamie County, Iowa. Once that task was accomplished, the fund was opened to others who could not afford to come on their own. California Gold Rushers, by buying goods and services as they passed

Zion," in *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987*, ed. V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter (Solihull, England: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987), 179. For primary sources, see, for example, the passenger list of the *John M. Wood* in "Emigration Records of the Liverpool Office of the British Mission, 1851–1855," Historical Department Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Archives); and the *Millennial Star*, May 13, 1854.

¹² *Millennial Star*, August 1, 1849, July 8, 1854. In practice, however, the emigrants were often pushed through to Utah out of concern that they would apostatize if left in the States.

¹³ Dudley Baines, *Emigration from Europe, 1815–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 40.

¹⁴ Linforth, "Introduction," 27; *Deseret News*, July 25, 1855; *Millennial Star*, November 24, 1855.

¹⁵ PEF Financial Accounts, LDS Archives, CR 376 2, reel 2, fldr 83; and reel 8, item 25. At an exchange rate of \$5=£1, this came to £60, or £10 for each person. Archibald Anderson came to Utah in 1855, and his wife Agnes Adamson and their three sons came by handcart in 1856. Their daughter did not come. For Archibald Anderson, see the ship's roster for the *Samuel Curling*, sailed April 22, 1855; "Emigration Records from the Liverpool Office," LDS Archives; and Milo Andrus's overland company roster, Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, October 24, 1855, LDS Archives (hereafter cited as Journal History). For Agnes and their sons, see passenger list for the *Enoch Train*, Journal History, March 22 and 23, 1856, and Daniel McArthur's handcart company roster, Journal History, September 26, 1856, 33.

through Utah, brought money to the Mormons, helping to make the fund a reality and quickening the hope that one day “The poor can sit under their own vine, and inhabit their own house, and worship God in Zion.” In 1852 the first 251 British PEF emigrants sailed from Liverpool. Their trip launched the complex endeavor of moving a large number of people over an ocean, up rivers, and across the plains, almost all arranged before embarkation. When they arrived in Salt Lake City, residents there greeted the first PEF Saints with joyful fanfare.¹⁶

The PEF was a revolving fund started and sustained by donations from which emigrants could borrow to finance the journey. The number of PEF emigrants in any year depended on the resources available and was determined by Brigham Young, the president of the fund. In a signed contract, the emigrants promised to pay back the cost of the journey once they got to Utah, so that others could come. As Utah during this period had mostly a subsistence economy, and because PEF immigrants were also burdened with tithing and various local taxes, many could not pay back their loans (which did not accrue interest, at least for a time). Consequently, the fund continually lacked money, and church leaders tried various means to raise more. The primary means was to sell the animals and wagons after the immigrants reached Utah. Samuel Richards, president of the British Mission, implemented an additional strategy by encouraging the British saints to deposit their money into the PEF instead of a bank. The saints would receive no interest, but they would have the credit available to them whenever they were ready to go, and “The blessing God will bestow upon those who put their means and their hearts into His work, is not to be compared with a two per cent interest.”¹⁷

Richards, who was only twenty-eight years old, also proposed two sub-PEF plans. The first was a “donation and loan” scheme whereby one would give whatever one had to the PEF and then borrow from the fund as if one had donated nothing, with the obligation to pay back the full amount after arriving in Utah. This helped others emigrate and ensured that the donors through their show of faith would make the list of those going. More than £2,000 was raised between this plan’s announcement in November 1853 and May 1854.¹⁸ The second 1853 sub-plan was that all who could raise £5 per person would pool their money under Samuel Richards, the British

¹⁶ Linforth, “Introduction,” 23, 29; *Millennial Star*, December 11, 1852.

¹⁷ *Millennial Star*, November 26, 1853. A copy of the PEF contract can be found in the *Millennial Star*, January 12, 1856. On interest not being charged immediately, see B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century 1*, 6 vols. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), 3:410.

¹⁸ *Millennial Star*, November 26, 1853, and May 13, 1854. Charles Derry, who later joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, was bitter about this plan, complaining that such emigrants were told it would be an easy matter to pay back the loan once they got to Utah, but instead they found themselves destitute “of every comfort of life, with a debt upon his hands that will cost him years of labor to get rid of”; Charles Derry, *Autobiography of Elder Charles Derry* (1908, republished Independence, MO: Price Publishing Co., 1997), 513–14.

The sailing ship International carried more £10 emigrants than any other ship: 237 out of the total 425 passengers. Engraving shows a waterspout during a severe storm on March 10, 1853. Built in 1853, lost at sea in 1863. Engraver unknown.



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agent for the PEF, and he would arrange for half of them to emigrate. Then two years later, the other half could come. This

would “throw the advantages of emigration within the reach of many who had not been blest with them before.” This arrangement continued in 1854, but with £6 10s required, as the price of emigration had risen.¹⁹

The four methods of emigration brought 6,546 emigrants across the Atlantic Ocean in the five years before 1853, and most had gone all the way through to Utah. But the desire to emigrate kept intensifying in Britain, and Brigham Young wanted still more people to build up the Mormon kingdom. Samuel Richards described the increasing fervor: “Many have thought they would willingly sacrifice all they had, and undergo almost any hardship that they could endure, if they could only be gathered with the Saints; and were it not for the watery deep that lies between, we have thought many could scarcely be persuaded from starting on foot, to follow the example of Israel when they went out of Egypt in search of a promised land.”²⁰

In an epistle issued in the fall of 1851, Brigham Young declared that many British Saints “think it a trifle to walk fifteen or twenty miles to hear preaching on the sabbath, and return home at evening, and then stand at their labor the remainder of the week; and can they not walk twenty miles per day for fifty days, for the sake of getting...to the home of the Saints in the Valley of the mountains?”²¹ Although it is true that most were used to walking, Young made it sound so simple—too simple, in fact, when one considers that he wrote this just after the emigration for 1851 had ended. The seven wagon trains that had made the overland journey from Council Bluffs that season had taken an average of 108 days for the trip—more than twice the length of time given in the epistle.²²

¹⁹ *Millennial Star*, November 26, 1853; “Discourse by S. W. Richards, delivered in the Tabernacle on Sunday, Oct. 29, 1854,” Huntington Library, Mormon File, box 12, p. 6.

²⁰ Linforth, “Introduction,” 42–43; *Millennial Star*, October 2, 1852.

²¹ Sixth General Epistle, *Millennial Star*, January 15, 1852.

²² *Deseret News 1989–1990 Church Almanac*, 175. Not all were used to walking. Joseph Greaves, a tailor,



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Samuel W. Richards, president of the British Mission, who first proposed the £10 emigrating plan. Probably taken by "Bro. Foster" in June 1846 in Nauvoo, as described in Richard's diary.

Six months later, Young sent the epistle with which this paper opened: "Let all who can procure a bit of bread, and one garment on their back...doubt no longer, but come...." The poetic images are brilliant and irresistible but also irresponsible. Believers took what Brigham Young said literally; after all, they were the words of the prophet. An 1853 missionary, Perregrine Sessions, described the members' credulity: "The English Saints were like so many cock robins on a cold morning, ready to swallow all they heard preached from the [Salt Lake] valley."²³ Young's statement encouraged them to set forth in simple faith and trust but with no realistic notion of the rigors of the western landscape they would have to traverse. Yet the fervor for gathering to Zion was vivid and near, while the hazards were vague and far away.

In the same epistle, Young encouraged tens of thousands to emigrate, and "it was even talked of their crossing the plains with hand carts and wheelbarrows," Samuel Richards said. "I did not feel that it was right for me

and my Brethren to sit down without doing anything. I therefore counselled with my Brethren and we finally fixed upon £10 as the lowest sum for which any person could be emigrated. This put Emigration within the reach of many of the poor saints." Those who took part in the planning were probably Richards's counselor and uncle Levi Richards and the presidents of the British Mission districts: Cyrus Wheelock, Jacob Gates, Isaac Haight, Appleton Harmon, Moses Clawson, and Robert Campbell.²⁴ All except Levi Richards and Cyrus Wheelock had already made the trip to Utah.

Thus was born the £10 emigrating plan, a fifth way to get to Utah—similar to the PEF plans but separate in its accounting system. Although many Scandinavians had also begun to emigrate, the £10 plan was limited

wrote about starting across Iowa in 1853, "This 300 miles was one of the greatest trials I have ever passed through, except losing my wife. I had never been used to walking and it was a great deal of labor to me. I have many a time lay down on the ground and cursed the day that I was born. I am sorry to say it but it is so"; Joseph Greaves to cousin, September 14, 1897, LDS Archives, MS 3915.

²³ Thomas A. Poulter, "Life of Thomas Ambrose Poulter from His Diary," *Utah Pioneer Biographies*, 44 vols. (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1964), 44:144.

²⁴ "Discourse by S. W. Richards," 6; *Millennial Star*, July 10, 1852. This meeting may have taken place on July 3, 1852, for Joseph W. Young noted in his diary on that day, "In the evening all the Presidents of conferences met in Council at Prest. S. W. Richard's [sic] and talked over the subject of the emigration"; Joseph W. Young, Papers, LDS Archives, MS 1529, vol. 2, p. 15.

to British converts. The *Millennial Star*, the Mormon newspaper that served as the primary source of information in Britain, announced the new scheme on October 2, 1852, which gave time for it to be put into effect before the start of the next sailing season in January. To get all the way to Salt Lake City in one year, the emigrants needed to leave Liverpool between January and late March so that they could be at the outfitting grounds in May and ready to start once the grass had grown enough to sustain the animals but no later than the end of June to escape the possibility of encountering early snows before reaching their destination.

The £10 company plan (which rose to £13 in 1854) was essentially a half-price scheme. The cheap price was based on reducing everything to a minimum: no extra food and more people per wagon and milk cow, which meant each person could take less luggage and would receive less milk. The principle of volume buying—keeping the unit price down through discount—also played a part; one receipt shows that Horace Eldredge, a Mormon agent, paid \$2.50 per person for passage of 221 people from St. Louis to Kansas City when the usual rate that year was \$3.00 to \$5.00, the higher amount being charged when the river was low, making navigation more difficult.²⁵

To understand the actual experience of the emigrants, one must turn to the diaries and memoirs of the emigrants themselves. Unfortunately, no diaries written by those who traveled on the £10/£13 scheme, except one for the ocean voyage, have been found.²⁶ The eight sources positively identified as written by £10 emigrants are one letter written right after the company's arrival in Salt Lake City and seven reminiscences. Of these, two were written by men who became disillusioned with Mormonism: Stephen



Announcement of the £10 emigrating plan in the *Millennial Star*.

²⁵ Empey file, March–August, 1854, Mormon file, HM 52609, Huntington Library; *Millennial Star*, May 6, 1854; William A. Empey Diary, LDS Archives, MS 4524, 110. John Davis also mentions the principle of buying in volume; John E. Davis, *Mormonism Unveiled, or, A Peep into the Principles & Practices of the Latter-day Saints* (Bristol, England: C. T. Jefferies, 1856), 23.

²⁶ The one diary is that kept by John Lyon, who sailed on the ship *International* in 1853. It is reprinted as appendix A in Frederick Stewart Buchanan, "The Emigration of Scottish Mormons to Utah, 1849–1900" (master's thesis, University of Utah, 1961), 141–56.

Forsdick and John E. Davis.²⁷ Forsdick wrote his account with the help of his journal, the whereabouts of which is unknown; his account is straightforward and does not show bitterness.²⁸ Welshman John Davis wrote one of the most detailed accounts. It was published within three years of his journey, which gives it more immediacy than most of the others, but after a nine-month stay in Salt Lake City, he went to San Francisco and then by ship back to Great Britain. His book was written as a warning to others about the “truth” of what converts would find if they went to Utah.²⁹

The six who remained in the church are Samuel Claridge, Hannah Cornaby, Joseph Greaves, Mary L. Morris, James Ririe, and Marie Radcliffe Shelmerdine, who wrote the letter. The views of the apostates in describing the difficulties of the trip are echoed closely by those who stayed loyal. Although these latter emigrants may have exaggerated their sufferings in later years to enhance the view of pioneer heroism and their part in it or simply had selective memories, the consistency among the accounts leads one to believe that they agreed on what actually happened. It is hoped that other writings, especially diaries, will be found eventually to refine the description of the trip given here.

As £10 was half of what it had cost in 1852 for an independent emigrant, those eager to go were warned that they could not “expect to go as comfortable as those who go with £20; for while the amount of means is reduced, the conveniences are necessarily reduced in proportion.”³⁰ The expenses to be covered were (1) shipping and food from Liverpool to New Orleans in steerage; (2) steamboat up the Mississippi River (and, in 1854, the Missouri River) on the lowest deck, where passengers slept however they could among the cargo or sometimes on rough bunks, but food was not included; (3) basic food in the outfitting camp; (4) an outfit for crossing the plains consisting of one tent, one wagon, two yoke of oxen, and two milk cows for every ten people; (5) provisions for every ten people from the outfitting camp to Council Bluffs; and (6) provisions for every ten people starting at Council Bluffs, Iowa, in 1853 and Westport, Missouri, in 1854. The list of provisions issued at Westport in 1854 included, for each group of ten, one thousand pounds of flour, fifty pounds of sugar, fifty pounds of bacon, fifty pounds of rice, thirty pounds of beans, twenty pounds of dried apples and peaches, five pounds of tea, one gallon of vinegar, twenty-five pounds of salt, and ten bars of soap. Added to the diet were milk from the cows and whatever game the emigrants were able to shoot along the way.³¹

²⁷ Stephen Forsdick, “On the Oregon Trail to Zion in 1853: Memoirs of Stephen Forsdick,” ed. Fletcher W. Birney, Jr., *Brand Book of the Denver Westerners* 9 (1953): 31–55, and Stephen Forsdick, *Autobiography*, MS 164, LDS Archives; Davis, *Mormonism Unveiled*.

²⁸ See Forsdick, “On the Oregon Trail to Zion,” 31 n.

²⁹ See Davis, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 4, 46.

³⁰ *Millennial Star*, October 2, 1852.

³¹ Linforth, “Introduction,” 52. For the 1853 provisions from the outfitting grounds to Council Bluffs, see James Ririe, [Autobiography], *Our Pioneer Heritage*, comp. Kate B. Carter, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1966), 9:355–56; and Forsdick, *Autobiography*, chap. 10, p. 17.

These provisions appear inadequate by any measure. The thousand pounds of flour for ten people meant one hundred pounds per person, or less than a pound per day for a journey that averaged more than a hundred days.³² Captain Randolph B. Marcy of the U. S. Army recommended in his handbook for emigrants, *The Prairie Traveler*, 1.4 pounds of flour per day and

Table 1
One Day's Provisions for One Person on the Overland Journey

	Brigham Young, 1846 ^a	£13 Company, 1854 ^b	Capt. R. Marcy, 1859 ^c
Flour	1.5 lbs	1 lb	1.4 lbs
Rice	0.2 oz	0.8 oz	No mention
Beans	1.4 oz ^d	0.5 oz	No mention
Bacon	No mention	0.8 oz	3.6 oz
Beef	"A little dried beef"	No mention	"Beef driven on the hoof"
Sugar	2.5 oz	0.8 oz	3.6 oz
Dried Fruit	0.4 oz	0.3 oz	"Citric acid"
Salt	0.6 oz	0.4 oz	"A quantity"
Pepper	0.04 oz	No mention	"A quantity"
Yeast/saleratus	0.1 oz	No mention ^e	"A quantity"
Tea/coffee	0.1 oz	0.09 oz	2.1 oz
Vinegar	No mention	0.3 Tbs ^f	No mention
Milk	Share cow with 2.5 persons	Share cow with 5 persons ^g	No mention

^a Brigham Young's recommendation for supplies was from Nauvoo to Salt Lake City. For simplicity's sake, the calculations are based on 30 days from Nauvoo to Council Bluffs and 100 days from Council Bluffs to Salt Lake City. Most trips took a few days more than this. Source: Brigham Young to Luther C. White, January 29, 1846, Brigham Young Papers, as quoted in Richard E. Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri, 1846-1852: "And Should We Die..."* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 245 fn. 32.

^bSupplies were to last from Westport, the 1854 outfitting camp, to Salt Lake City. No list of the 1853 supplies from Council Bluffs has survived, but the assumption here is that it was similar. For this table, 100 days was used, although the trip averaged 105 days from Council Bluffs to Salt Lake City in 1853 and 103 days from Westport in 1854. Source: James Linforth's introduction to Frederick Piercy, *Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley*, edited by Fawn M. Brodie (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1962), 52.

^cMarcy's recommendations were based on a 110-day trip. Source: Randolph B. Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler: A Hand-Book for Overland Expeditions* (1859, reprinted Williamstown, Mass.: Corner House Publishers, 1978), 33, 35-36.

^dYoung recommended 1 bushel for five people. A bushel of navy (white) beans is approximately 55 lbs.

^eThe emigrants kept a piece of dough each day to start the next day's batch. Source Stephen Forsdick, "On the Oregon Trail to Zion in 1853: Memoirs of Stephen Forsdick," ed. Fletcher W. Birney, Jr., *Brand Book of the Denver Westerners* 9 (1953): 40.

^fConsidered a general cure-all, vinegar was particularly favored to counteract the effects of bad water. Source: Jacqueline Williams, *Wagon Wheel Kitchens: Food on the Oregon Trail* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1993), 87-89.

^gBecause of the difficulty of obtaining them, no company appears to have had what was allowed. Claridge said there was one cow in milk for 14 people. Ririe reported in his company they had one cow for 36 people. Morris wrote that the cows became dry or nearly so, giving only a teacup of milk a day. Sources: S. George Ellsworth, *Samuel Claridge: Pioneering the Outposts of Zion* (Logan, Utah: S. George Ellsworth, 1987), 35; James Ririe, [Autobiography], *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 9:355; Journal of Mary L. Morris, *Journal History*, October 10, 1853, 2.

³² *Deseret News 1989-1990 Church Almanac*, 177-79. Of the thirteen companies listed for 1853, eight give the date at which they left Council Bluffs (Kanesville) or Winter Quarters as well as when they arrived in Salt Lake City. The quickest trip was made in 92 days, and the longest took 129 days; the average for all was 105 days. For 1854, of the seven companies for which a date of departure from Westport is known, one took only 91 days, and the longest 112 days; the seven companies averaged 103 days.

³³ For a 110-day trip, Marcy recommended for each adult these provisions: 150 lbs flour or its equivalent in hard bread, 25 lbs bacon or pork, beef driven on the hoof, 15 lbs coffee, 25 lbs sugar, saleratus or yeast, salt and pepper. Randolph B. Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler: A Hand-Book for Overland Expeditions, with Maps, Illustrations, and Itineraries of the Principal Routes between the Mississippi and the Pacific* (1859, reprint Williamstown, MA: Corner House Publishers, 1978), 35-36.

1.5 pounds of bacon per week, and then he cautioned that these were subsistence supplies.³³ Brigham Young himself had in 1846 recommended more than half again the amount of flour allotted to the £13 companies.³⁴ Table 1 shows a comparison of these three diets, broken down to show what one person was allowed for one day.

The calories in one day's provisions for the £13 companies shown in Table 1 are as follows: Flour, 1,600; rice, 86; beans, 48; bacon, 142; sugar, 27, and dried fruit, 23. Together, these give 1,926 calories. If each person also received two cups of milk per day, at least at the beginning of the trip, the additional 318 calories would bring the total to 2,244.³⁵ These figures assume that no bacon spoiled or melted away in hot weather and that no flour was lost by getting wet during river crossings or storms.³⁶ With the daily allotment for ten people being 5 ounces of dried beans (or about 2/3 cup), it seems unlikely that the group cooked beans each day; probably they saved up the allowance and cooked once a week, so the calories given above are only the average per day. Today's recommended dietary allowances for ages fifteen to fifty are between 2,900 and 3,000 calories for men and 2,200 for women.³⁷ However, the emigrants expended considerably more calories than the average person as they walked daily twelve to twenty miles and attended to the myriad camp and animal chores. Perhaps the food was adequate for children and for men and women over fifty, but for most, especially the active young men, it was insufficient. Lansford Hastings pointed out in his *Emigrants' Guide* that those making the trek West should figure that they would need double the food they were used to at home.³⁸

The emigrants supplemented this meager diet with hunting and fishing, though Hastings' book also warned emigrants against expecting to depend on buffalo, especially if they were traveling in a large group. Nevertheless, the Mormon companies did shoot the animals from time to time. Stephen Forsdick said that between Deer Creek (20 miles east of today's Casper,

³⁴ Young recommended for five people from Nauvoo to Salt Lake City, a 30-day longer trip than from Council Bluffs: 1,000 lbs flour, 100 lbs sugar, 10 lbs rice, 25 lbs salt, 2 lbs pepper, 1/2 lb mustard, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, 5 lbs saleratus, 10 lbs dried apples, 1 bushel beans, 5 lbs dried peaches, a few pounds of dried beef, 1 lb tea, 5 lbs coffee, and 2 or more milk cows; Brigham Young to Luther C. White, January 29, 1846, Brigham Young Papers, as quoted in Richard E. Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri, 1846-1852: "And Should We Die..."* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 245, n32.

³⁵ Calculated using Irma S. Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker, "Tables of Equivalents and Conversions," *Joy of Cooking* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1962), 557-63; and U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Handbook of the Nutritional Value of Foods in Common Units* (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), 5, 15, 17, 97, 111, 135, 161. I used calories for navy (white) beans and whole wheat flour, which were probably similar to the emigrants' types; see Jacqueline Williams, *Wagon Wheel Kitchens: Food on the Oregon Trail* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1993), 5-7, 25-28.

³⁶ Marcy recommended storing bacon in boxes surrounded by bran to help prevent the fat from melting; Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler*, 30.

³⁷ If women were pregnant or lactating, as many were, they would need between 300 and 500 more calories per day; see National Academy of Sciences, *Recommended Dietary Allowances* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1989).

³⁸ Lansford W. Hastings, *The Emigrants' Guide, to Oregon and California...* (1845; reprint, Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1994), 144.

Wyoming) and Independence Rock, “Although we saw buffalo by the thousands, we only killed two or three.” He also mentions killing sage hens between South Pass and the Green River and that on Sundays, after two or three meetings, the emigrants were free to hunt or fish. Eighteen-year-old Mary Morris said her father often shot rabbits or prairie chickens. Hannah Cornaby mentioned picking berries, fishing, and hunting.³⁹ In addition, some emigrants reported selling clothing or other items they could spare in order to stock up on extra provisions at Council Bluffs, and Samuel Claridge said that when they reached Fort Laramie, “Those that had got money bought a few supplies.”⁴⁰

These strategies did not compensate for the inadequate provisions. Mary Morris related that “While our extras lasted our rations were abundant, but when they were gone, they were insufficient.” About their stay in the outfitting camp at Keokuk, Iowa, Marie Radcliffe Shelmerdine wrote to her parents, “Our food was scant. We was allowed one pound of flour a day and a pound of bacon a week per head.” This is somewhat of an exaggeration as they were given a little butter and sugar as well, but as the amounts were small, it is not surprising she did not count them. Stephen Forsdick, however, wrote that eggs were cheap in Keokuk and that he and his wagon companions made a feast with bacon and eggs and pancakes.⁴¹

Flour, the staple of the emigrants’ diet, was also inadequate for the trip from Keokuk to Council Bluffs, the final jumping-off spot. James Ririe, a Scottish convert, said that each received thirty pounds of flour to last the thirty-day trip. “But,” he wrote, “it did not do us.... At the Bluffs I asked President Haight if I could take 25 pounds of flour extra with me, as I had seen that in coming from Keokuk to the Bluffs, a pound a day was not sufficient. Abruptly he said ‘We won’t haul it for you sir.’” Although Haight’s response seems unduly curt, he was probably thinking of the extra weight, especially if others also wanted extra flour. The wagons varied in build, but most, with two yoke of oxen pulling, could handle only 2,000 pounds, and 1,500 was the recommended amount.⁴² The leaders had to find a balance between adequate supplies and the weight that would too quickly exhaust the animals.

³⁹ Forsdick, “On the Oregon Trail,” 40, 44–45; Journal of Mary L. Morris, *Journal History*, October 10, 1853, 2; Hannah Cornaby, *Autobiography and Poems* (Salt Lake City: J. C. Graham & Co., 1881), 33–34. “Sage hens” are sage grouse, *Centrocercus urophasianus*; the prairie chicken would be the greater prairie chicken, *Tympanuchus cupido*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 33; Davis, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 25; Morris, *Journal History*, October 10, 1853, 1; Ririe, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 9:356; Marie Radcliffe Shelmerdine to her parents, October 29, 1853 (letter owned by Muriel Larsen), in *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 12:360; Ellsworth, *Samuel Claridge*, 42.

⁴¹ Morris, *Journal History*, October 10, 1853, 2; Shelmerdine, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 12:360; T. Edgar Lyon, Jr., *John Lyon: The Life of a Pioneer Poet* (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1989), 189; Forsdick, *Autobiography*, chap. 9, p. 15. The clerk of a PEF company under Appleton Harmon reported that the weekly ration in the outfitting camp was 7 lbs of flour and 1.5 lbs of bacon; see Cornelius Bagnall Emigrating Company, *Journal*, typescript, MS 871, 44, LDS Archives.

⁴² Ririe, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 9:355–56; George R. Stewart, *The California Trail: An Epic with Many Heroes* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1962), 110. One guidebook said that one could start with 2,500 lbs if one had four yoke of oxen; see Joel Palmer, *Journal of Travels Over the Rocky Mountains (1845–46)*, as quoted in Gregory M. Franzwa, *The Oregon Trail Revisited* (Tucson: Patrice Press, 1988), 31.

One wonders how Samuel Richards and his counselors thought it possible to travel on such scanty provisions. Maybe they expected that the emigrants would purchase flour along the way, find abundant game, and receive supplies from Utah for the last stage of the journey, as most companies did. Nevertheless, the leaders did not mention such thoughts in their descriptions of the system, and few poor emigrants could afford the high prices charged by the trading posts along the way.⁴³ Perhaps Richards and the others simply became swept up in the gathering enthusiasm, made a push to send as many as possible, and believed God would see them through.

According to the plan, each person over the age of eight could take one hundred pounds of luggage—including bedding, clothing, cooking utensils, and tools; those between four and eight years could take fifty pounds; and those under four received no weight allowance.⁴⁴ The 1,230 pounds of food and 700 pounds of personal luggage (assuming four adults and six children per wagon) would make 1,930 pounds, and this does not include the weight of rifles, tent, cooking pots, churns, and the other equipment needed for the trip, such as axes and blacksmithing tools. There is little doubt the wagons were overloaded.

In looking again at the list of supplies, one hopes that the bars of soap were large, for each person received only one for the three and a half months of sweaty, dusty, and sometimes muddy traveling. Although a weekly bath was the norm in that period, the one bar was to cover both bathing and washing clothes. With this, the minimal food, and the overloaded wagons, one can see that the emigrants would indeed not go as “comfortable” as those who had more money for the trip.

Initially, it appears that children under the age of one received no discount. When the plan was announced, Samuel Richards wrote, “But, says one, must I furnish £10 for my child which is only three months old? Yes, it is included in the estimate. Every child under one is taken free over the ocean; but when they come to take passage upon the land, they are proportionably expensive; and that portion of the £10 which they will not consume, others of the family will be sure to find use for.”⁴⁵ However, James Linforth, the editor for Frederick Piercy’s book recounting the latter’s journey to Utah in 1853 which was published by the Liverpool Office of the British Mission, said children under one went for half price. Confirming this, Samuel Claridge happily wrote in his account, “I then went to the office to settle for the remainder of my passage and then when S.W. Richards told me the baby was only half fare I felt I was rich.”⁴⁶

⁴³ Non-Mormon emigrants bound for Oregon and California might also run short of food, but, being better provided with money than were the £10/£13 emigrants, they were able to buy from better-supplied emigrants or trading posts along the way, or they could trade with Indians; see John D. Unruh, Jr., *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840–60* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 145–48, 165–66, 275.

⁴⁴ Linforth, “Introduction,” 52.

⁴⁵ *Millennial Star*, October 2, 1852.

The animals and wagons belonged to the emigrants, and once they arrived in Salt Lake City they were to be sold and the proceeds divided among the members of the company.⁴⁷ John Davis expected to do well this way. According to his account, the Mormon missionaries in Britain who accompanied the emigrants to Salt Lake told them that when they sold their wagons and animals, they would realize a profit above their cost because such commodities commanded higher prices in the West. Davis thus expected to finish the trip with almost half of the £10 he had paid, or about \$20 to \$25, which he thought would give him a start in Utah. Davis was not alone; Charles Derry, a PEF emigrant who traveled with a £13 company, described the same understanding.⁴⁸

The emigrants' owning the outfit and prepaying for the trip were the primary ways the £10/£13 companies differed from the PEF companies. One other distinction was that missionaries returning to Utah regularly traveled with the £10 and independent companies rather than with the PEF.⁴⁹ In everything else, the two plans were identical: They shared the same types of accommodations on ships and steamboats, number of people per wagon and tent, amount of luggage, and quantity and quality of provisions.

To join the £10 company, a British convert had to follow a procedure. First, to reserve his or her place, the emigrant sent £1 for each person in the party over one year old to the Liverpool office through the conference president. Next, for each person the convert would forward £5 the same way, which money would be sent ahead to the agent on the frontier, who would then buy the outfits for the overland journey. The remaining £4, for passage to the outfitting grounds, was due upon arrival in Liverpool before boarding the ship, the Liverpool Office having notified the intended emigrant of the date of sailing. A fine quality of twilled cotton was sent to the ship so that during the voyage the women could make wagon covers and tents according to certain specifications. On the ship, the emigrants were under the charge of a president appointed by the Liverpool office before departure. These men handled the money until the group arrived at the outfitting camp, where they handed over what remained to the agent there.⁵⁰ Eight ships sailed from Liverpool between January and early April in 1853 and eight more in 1854, each carrying an average of 329 Mormon passengers.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Linforth, "Introduction," 35; Ellsworth, *Samuel Claridge*, 21.

⁴⁷ *Millennial Star*, October 2, 1852; Ririe, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 9:357.

⁴⁸ Davis, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 13–14, 27–28. Derry, *Autobiography*, 513.

⁴⁹ *Millennial Star*, January 27, 1855.

⁵⁰ *Millennial Star*, November 20 and 27, 1852; *Contributor* 11 (Feb 1890): 157; Christopher J. Arthur, Records (5 parts), 1:4–5, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

⁵¹ Conway B. Sonne, *Saints on the Seas: A Maritime History of Mormon Migration, 1830–1890* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), 150–51. Two other ships carried Mormon passengers in 1854, but together they carried only 39 Mormons and so are not counted in the figures.

The *Millennial Star* published an article at the start of the emigration season in 1853. It warned emigrants of the trials they would face in the close quarters of crowded ships and of the dangers in encountering apostates in the valleys of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, and it encouraged each to “set his face as a flint Zion-ward.” Although earlier articles had touched on the overland portion, this one made no mention of the 1,300-mile trek the saints would have to undertake in order to get to Utah. Emigrant Stephen Forsdick wrote that when the ship docked in New Orleans in March 1853, “Here the first part of our journey came to an end and a good many of us thought that the worst was over, but we were badly mistaken, as we found before our journey was really ended.”⁵²

Except for initial seasickness and some dramatic storms, all the emigrants appeared to have enjoyed the sea voyage and found the organization of the ship and the provisions adequate.⁵³ Even the two who later left the Mormon faith found it “a remarkable voyage” and “a very fine passage.”⁵⁴ Mormon emigrant ships had gained a reputation for being the best on the seas, and British Mission president Samuel Richards was called before a select committee on emigrant ships in the House of Commons to describe the Mormon program of organization onboard. His testimony was well received, and both the Parliament and the press praised the system.⁵⁵

When the sailing ship arrived in New Orleans, the Mormon agent there, John Brown, arranged for passage up the Mississippi River as quickly as possible to avoid additional expenses in the city. Before leaving the ship, the people were to divide any food that might remain after a short voyage. This took place according to plan when the *Falcon* made a voyage of fifty-three days in 1853 and when the *John M. Wood* arrived after fifty-five days in 1854. But provisions were not forthcoming when the *Jersey* landed in New Orleans in March 1853 after only forty-four days, to the great chagrin of the emigrants who had counted on them for their trip up the Mississippi. According to John Davis, three weeks later a little “hard bread, and a small quantity of damaged rice” from the *Jersey’s* stores arrived in the outfitting camp.” The cause of this apparent mismanagement is unknown.⁵⁶

Each steamboat was met in St. Louis by the six-foot-tall, handsome Horace S. Eldredge, the Mormon agent, who once more speedily arranged for the emigrants’ transfer to a steamboat to take them north to Keokuk, Iowa, the outfitting ground in 1853, or up the Missouri River to Kansas City, Missouri, close to the 1854 camp in Westport. Sometimes Eldredge

⁵² *Millennial Star*, January 15, 1853; Forsdick, *Autobiography*, chap. 8, p. 14.

⁵³ One possible exception is Hannah Cornaby, who expressed great fear of the water but also mentioned the close bond felt by all the saints; Cornaby, *Autobiography and Poems*, 79.

⁵⁴ Forsdick, *Autobiography*, chap. 8, p. 13; Davis, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 6.

⁵⁵ *Millennial Star*, August 19, 1854; Jensen, “The British Gathering to Zion,” in *Truth Will Prevail*, 178.

⁵⁶ Cornelius Bagnall Emigrating Company, *Journal*, 43; Linforth, “Introduction,” 56; Davis, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 9–10, 16. Davis’s bitterness makes one skeptical of this story, but other emigrants corroborate his account on many other points.

was able to arrange to move the party from the New Orleans steamboat right onto the next one within a few hours, which saved the expense of storing the luggage and finding a place for the emigrants to stay.⁵⁷ These quick transfers in New Orleans



and St. Louis saved money, but the emigrants had only the briefest view of two important cities in their new country. However, having been warned of the sinful ways of those cities and told that New Orleans was the “first Hell” through which they must pass and St. Louis the “second Hell,” all appear to have welcomed their speedy progress toward Zion.⁵⁸

*Outfitting camp at Keokuk, 1853.
Steel engraving by Charles Fenn
from sketch by Frederick Piercy.*

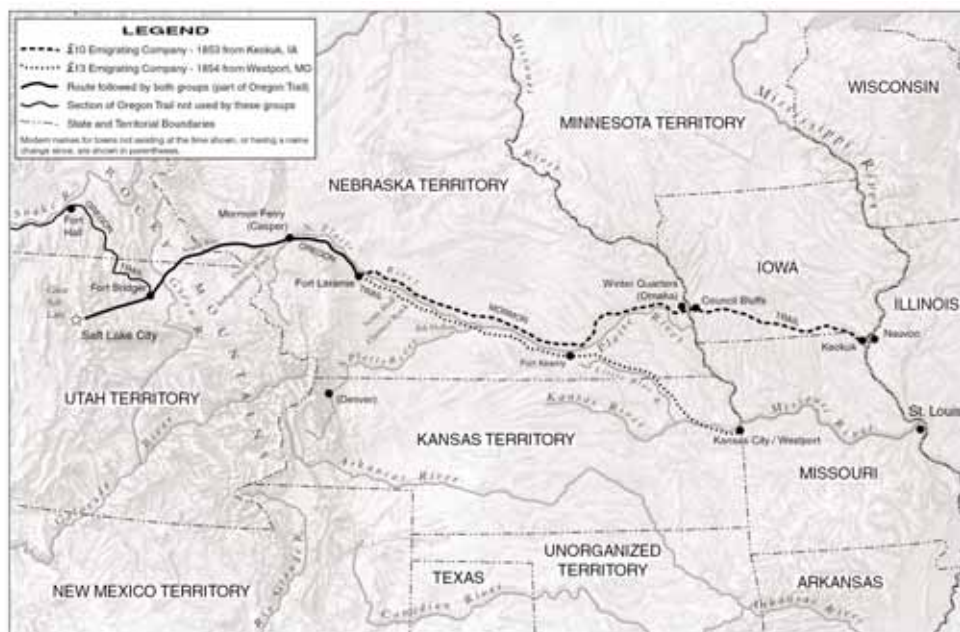
When they arrived at the outfitting grounds, the emigrants were turned over to the care of the frontier agent, who was Isaac Haight in 1853 and William Empey in 1854. The agent and his assistants, who became leaders of the companies across the plains, were assigned to buy oxen and cows, often driving them to camp over long distances; arranging for the wagons to be made to order in Cincinnati and St. Louis and brought by steamboat to the camp; and buying ox yokes, tent poles, chains, axes, Dutch ovens, ropes, and provisions. The emigrants made some tent poles and pegs in camp while they waited for their animals and wagons.⁵⁹

As the cattle and wagons arrived, the campground turned into a circus of sorts, or as Joseph Greaves put it, “When the cows came, life was something new for a tailor.” The animals were not used to working together, and the urban emigrants had to be taught to handle the teams. “Our cattle were

⁵⁷ *Millennial Star*, May 21, 1853.

⁵⁸ Davis, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 9–10. Davis said that Kaneshville (Council Bluffs) was called the “third Hell” (22).

⁵⁹ Isaac Haight, Journal, August 1852–February 1862, MS 1384, 44, 47–48, 52, LDS Archives; Horace S. Eldredge, Journal, September 1852–April 1854, MS 8795, reel 1, item 10, February 22 and March 21, 1853, LDS Archives; Appleton M. Harmon, *Appleton Milo Harmon Goes West*, ed. Maybelle Harmon Anderson (Berkeley, CA: The Gillick Press, 1946), 161; Peter McIntyre, “Autobiography of Peter McIntyre,” MS 3261, 39, LDS Archives. Isaac Haight, forty years old in 1853, had been a member of the Nauvoo police and was later implicated in the Mountain Meadows Massacre.



principally raw and our teamsters entirely so. *Routes taken in 1853 and 1854 by the £10 and £13 company emigrants.*

They were right from the factories in England and many of them had never seen an ox team,” wrote John Brown, the New Orleans agent who had arrived in Keokuk with the last party in 1853 and led a company across the plains. James Ririe wrote of his doubts, “I did not know how we could get through the Rocky Mountains with wooden axles, oxen, and a stick across the oxens’ necks to pull by. I had never seen any such outfit. American ways were all new to us.” Hannah Cornaby wrote that watching the men yoke the oxen “was the most laughable sight I had ever witnessed.”⁶⁰

Eventually, the frontier agent sent out companies one by one, often in mixed groups—PEF, £10, and independent—for he oversaw all three classes. In 1853 Haight organized nine companies varying in size from 79 to 400 emigrants. In 1854 Empey put together eight companies, one having 550 emigrants. When the last company departed, the agent went by horse from group to group to check on their progress and take care of problems, reaching Salt Lake City first so that he could greet them there upon arrival.⁶¹

Operations, however, did not go as planned. The monumental problem the frontier agent faced was procuring livestock, which had become scarce and costly. Ever since the Gold Rush had brought thousands of hungry

⁶⁰ Joseph Greaves to cousin, September 14, 1897; John Brown, *Autobiography of Pioneer John Brown, 1820–1896*, ed. John Z. Brown (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, 1941), 132; Ririe, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 9:355; Cornaby, *Autobiography and Poems*, 32.

⁶¹ *Deseret News 1989–1990 Church Almanac*, 177–79; Linforth, “Introduction,” 53; *Millennial Star*, November 12, 1853.

miners to California, the price of beef had soared there. Speculators bought up cattle in the eastern states and drove them across the plains to the mining camps. The profits were enormous. In May 1853 the adventurous Italian count Leonetto Cipriani set out from Westport for California with 500 cows, 600 oxen, 60 horses, and 40 mules, which had cost him \$35,000. He expected to make \$200,000 in California even if he lost half the stock, a profit of more than 600 percent. Another speculator, John Hackett, set out in 1853 from Texas. He started with a herd of 937 cattle; by the time he reached California, he had only 182 remaining, but he still made money. Frederick Law Olmstead, traveling as a journalist to the Southwest in early 1854, reported seeing a California-bound "cattle train." The cattle had cost \$14 per head in Texas, and the men expected to sell them in California for \$100 each, a profit of more than 600 percent.⁶²

Cyrus Wheelock, who led one of the emigrant companies in 1853, wrote to Samuel Richards when he arrived in St. Louis at the end of March:

Elders Haight and Eldridge [*sic*] were off up the country in search of stock.... The California speculators have their agents out through all the Western States [i.e., Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri], buying up all cattle, horses, and sheep that they can lay hold of, and sending them off by tens of thousands to the markets on the Pacific coast, where it is said they command an incredible price. These operations...make prices enormous, compared with what they were some two or three years since, or even as late as last season.⁶³

When one considers that Fort Kearny recorded 105,792 cattle as having passed there by the middle of August 1853, it is hardly surprising that finding stock was difficult.⁶⁴ The men assisting Isaac Haight ranged far into Missouri and Illinois and then had a long drive to get the animals to camp in Iowa. Appleton Harmon said they had to go as far as Pettis County, Missouri, some 200 miles southwest of Keokuk, where they bought 805 oxen; they then spent a day branding the animals before starting the drive north. Heavy rains and wind that season made streams hazardous to cross and further delayed getting the stock to camp. Harmon wrote that they progressed "with exceeding toil through new country, guarding our cattle on the prairie, nights. The roads were much cut up and heavy with the late rains. The streams had to be crossed, and several times we were obliged to draw some of the cattle out of the mud and mire with ropes." Also on that cattle-fetching trip, Joseph W. Young bewailed, "This was one of the most severe & trying trips that man ever undertook...twenty-one days having to drive cattle all day & guard them at night, ferry & swim many streams of watter which were swollen to full bankes."⁶⁵

⁶² Leonetto Cipriani, *California and Overland Diaries of Count Leonetto Cipriani from 1853 through 1871*, trans. and ed. Ernest Falbo (Portland, OR: Champoeg Press, 1962), 72; David Dary, *Cowboy Culture: A Saga of Five Centuries* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1980), 99; Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey Through Texas, or a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (1857; reprint Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 274.

⁶³ *Millennial Star*, May 14, 1853.

⁶⁴ Dary, *Cowboy Culture*, 96.

⁶⁵ Haight, *Journal*, 52–59; Eldredge, *Journal*, April 5, 1853; Harmon, *Appleton Milo Harmon Goes West*, 159–160; Joseph W. Young, *Papers*, 122.



LDS CHURCH ARCHIVES

Isaac C. Haight, agent in charge of procuring oxen, wagons, supplies, and provisions for the emigrants in 1853. Photo probably taken in 1860s; photographer unknown.

With the higher price for livestock, the agents had to stretch the outfits. Twelve people rather than ten were assigned to a wagon and tent. With more people and their food allotment per wagon, the load of everything else had to be reduced, so luggage was cut almost in half.⁶⁶ As Stephen Forsdick related, “We were promised in England that we could each take a hundred pounds across the plains. Before we left Keokuk, we had to throw away our trunks, boxes, and some of our books, and make bags for our clothing, so that we probably averaged sixty pounds each.” Marie Shelmerdine wrote to her parents, “We had to sell all our books and our bed tick and flocks [mattresses] and best blankets and many things to lighten our luggage.” James Ririe reported that one milk cow had to be shared by thirty-six people instead of five, and the cow died when they reached the Sweetwater River.⁶⁷ Bacon was reduced from

two pounds per person per week to three-fourths of a pound.⁶⁸

Having run short of money, the agents had to choose between borrowing or making arrangements for some of the emigrants to remain on the frontier and find jobs and homes, with the hope they could get them to Utah the following year. The agents decided to borrow. Haight, recognizing that the wagons were too heavy for two yoke of oxen to pull, noted in his diary, “Started to go to St. Louis to negotiate a loan of some eight thousand dollars to purchase another yoke of cattle to each waggon but failed to obtain the money and returned [to Keokuk] much cast down in my mind as the season was getting late and the saints having some fourteen hundred miles to travel to the valley with very heavy loads.” He then turned to the PEF for a loan. He also asked to borrow money from at least one wealthy individual. Christopher J. Arthur related that Haight came to his father, Christopher A. Arthur, in Keokuk and asked for a loan; his father lent him \$1,000, which was paid back after Arthur and Haight reached Salt Lake

⁶⁶ Haight, *Journal*, 60–61. John Davis, however, said that in his 1853 company led by Joseph W. Young, death and apostasy reduced the company’s number by about 100, once again making about ten people to a wagon; see Davis, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 23.

⁶⁷ Forsdick, “On the Oregon Trail,” 38; Shelmerdine, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 12:360; Ririe, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 9:355.

⁶⁸ Davis, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 24. This reduction is a discrepancy with the list of provisions given earlier and in Table 1. As those figures were based on the 1854 £13 company rations, one must assume that in 1853 the emigrants started off with a slightly better allowance, at least for bacon, or that Davis failed to recall the correct amount.

City.⁶⁹ Besides cutting back on the outfits and borrowing money, the companies dealt with shortages as they neared Salt Lake City by sending men ahead to request assistance.⁷⁰

The agents were challenged beyond what they could have imagined. Isaac Haight a number of times admitted how “oppressed” he felt by the responsibility of outfitting the emigration. Joseph W. Young exclaimed, “No one can form a correct idea of the perplexity of fitting [*sic*] up a company of people who are unacquainted with traveling for a journey over the plains.” The agents must have realized that their predicament was forcing them to stretch things too far, putting everyone at risk. As the last of the 1853 companies started out, Haight, having done what he could to outfit them, but with doubts about its adequacy, wrote, “We all lef[t] camp bidding Keokuk and its inhabitants farewell and went out to the end of the plank.”⁷¹

One must listen to the £10 company emigrants to fathom the effect of the food shortages. James Ririe said the salt, sugar, and tea were gone before Fort Laramie, the halfway point, and some had finished their flour as well. With more than 500 miles to go before reaching Utah, the cattle began to give out: “When they could no longer work they were driven ahead of the train. When they could not walk any longer, they were butchered for beef and divided among the company. But such beef! It did keep the most of us alive until we got to Salt Lake,” recorded Ririe. The usually disgruntled John Davis described a near-revolution over the way food was apportioned in the camp just beyond Fort Laramie, but he did not agree with the complainers: “Some contended the victuals were not fairly divided, but I believe they were wrong.” Hannah Cornaby wrote that her group began to have serious trouble just after South Pass, when they were still more than 200 miles from Salt Lake City. Marie Shelmerdine wrote that her company finished its flour three weeks before they reached the Salt Lake Valley (i.e., someplace between Ft. Laramie and Independence Rock) and everything else long before that. She added, “The brethren came from the valley with some flour for us or we should have perished on the way.” Joseph Greaves described his terrible hunger: “I was so hungry the latter part of our journey that I had made up my mind that as soon as I got in the valley of Salt Lake I would commense [*sic*] to beg.... The people commenced to beg at every house they passed.”⁷²

Not all survived to reach the valley. James Ririe told of the family that

⁶⁹ Haight, Journal, 60–61; *Millennial Star*, November 26, 1853; Arthur, Records, 1:5. Christopher A. Arthur appears to have been a generous man, having already paid for the fare of forty people he brought with him from Wales; see Lyon, *John Lyon*, 172. Haight was not able to borrow enough to purchase an extra yoke of oxen per wagon.

⁷⁰ The records are incomplete because of a paper shortage that suspended the publishing of the *Deseret News* at the height of the emigration season from the end of July to October 1853, the time when appeals for aid were normally published; *Contributor* 13 (August 1892): 466.

⁷¹ Joseph W. Young, Papers, 123; Haight, Journal, 52, 58–59, 63.

⁷² Ririe, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 9:355–56; Davis, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 25; Cornaby, *Autobiography and Poems*, 35; Shelmerdine to her parents, October 29, 1853; Greaves to cousin, Sept. 14, 1897.

shared his wagon, the father of whom, Junius Crossland, a thirty-two-year-old umbrella maker from London, stinted himself in order to feed his three oldest children, a fourth having been born in the camp at Keokuk. At the Green River he became sick with mountain fever, and in his weakened condition he died west of Fort Bridger, eighty miles from Salt Lake City. "He said to me one day 'If I die, I should like to write my own epitaph.' 'What would you write, Brother Crossland?' 'I should write, I am murdered by the unwise procedure of the Ten Pound Company.'" Stephen Forsdick, of the same company, finished the story: "It was pitiful to hear the wife's lamentations when we took him out of the wagon, sewed up in a sheet to bury him."⁷³

One must not forget, however, that the emigrants believed they were reenacting the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, and most expected and even relished trials and hardship to some degree as a test of their worthiness.⁷⁴ John Davis, usually so negative about the trip, expressed the sentiment most probably felt: "I thought nothing of it [the privations], if the Lord should spare my life to reach the journey's end; we all kept up our spirits pretty well; I made up my mind to endure everything in order to reach the promised land, this sort of feeling seemed generally to pervade the whole camp." In addition, the emigrants experienced times of joy and assurance that they were following God's will. Mary Morris wrote that when the evening's work was done, "In the early part of our journey, when the days were long, we would sit on the yokes of the oxen and sing hymns."⁷⁵

When the emigrants finally arrived in Salt Lake City, Marie Shelmerdine lamented, "We landed here destitute of every comfort of life." Ririe noted that the cattle and wagons were sold as promised and the emigrants received \$3.50 each in credit from the Tithing Office, an amount confirmed by the £10 company account book.⁷⁶ John Davis, who apostatized nine months later, was sadly disappointed to receive his \$3.50, having expected \$20 to \$25 from the sale of the stock and wagons. He complained that they were not shown records of the sale and the \$3.50 was in Tithing Office scrip, not in cash.⁷⁷

Only one letter relating to the 1854 £13 company emigrants has been

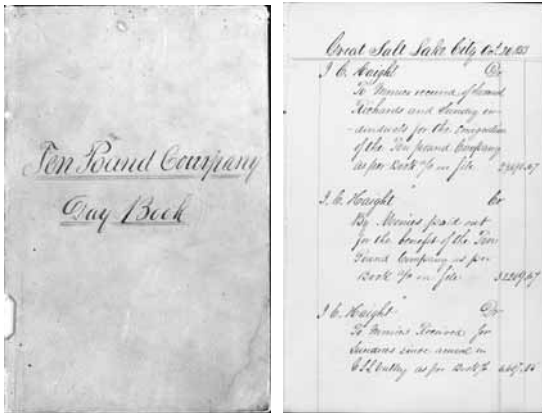
⁷³ Ririe, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 9:356–57; Forsdick, "On the Oregon Trail to Zion," 47.

⁷⁴ D&C 136:31 reads, "My people must be tried in all things, that they may be prepared to receive the glory...of Zion; and he that will not bear chastisement is not worthy of my kingdom."

⁷⁵ Davis, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 24; Morris, *Journal History*, October 10, 1853, 3.

⁷⁶ Shelmerdine to her parents, October 29, 1853; Ririe, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 9:357–58; Ten Pound Company Account Book, Journal, "PEF Co. Financial Accounts, 1849–1855," CR 376 2, reel 19, fldr 70, 9–30, LDS Archives. I am indebted to Ronald G. Watt of the LDS Archives for helping me interpret these accounts.

⁷⁷ Davis, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 13–14, 27–28. Charles Derry also complained about the way the sale of the animals belonging to the £13 companies was handled: "When they arrived there [Salt Lake City] and each individual expected to receive his portion, instead of this being the case, the church brand was put on every animal and the name of the church (B.Y.) put on the wagons, and even if some poor man had found a stray ox, cow, or horse on the plains, the captain of his company would claim it on behalf of the church. But the poor man must be content if he gets there free of debt, without ever thinking of having what, in his simplicity, he supposed was his right"; see Derry, *Autobiography*, 513.



Account book for the £10 company in 1853. First page of the £10 company account book.

found. Frederick Andrew wrote to Samuel Richards from Stockport, near Manchester, England, in early January that year. Having heard from Marie Shelmerdine and others, he asked Richards's advice about how his family should emigrate.

"We are still determined to go," he wrote, "but we see no necessity of punishing ourselves when it can be avoided. Nearly all the letters that has [sic] come from the Saints that went from Stockport last spring advise the Saints not to go by the ten pound company as they are so much punished and short of provisions." In her letter, Marie Shelmerdine had recommended that he wait, even if it meant several years, until he could afford to start the trek with eight to a wagon and three yoke of oxen, and then "you could come comfortable without fear." Samuel Richards must have written a persuasive response to Andrew, for Andrew ignored Shelmerdine's advice, donated altogether £50 to the PEF, and then emigrated under its auspices (the "donation and loan" plan).⁷⁸

The 1854 season saw problems similar to those of 1853 and others as well. First, there were fewer ships available in Liverpool because of the demand created by the Crimean War, which resulted in sailing delays and higher prices.⁷⁹ Fares had risen for the steamboats from New Orleans to St. Louis, from \$2.50 per adult in 1853 to \$3.00 or \$3.50 in 1854.⁸⁰ A yoke of oxen went from \$65 in 1853 to between \$75 and \$110. In addition, difficulty in procuring wagons delayed the start of the companies across the plains by three weeks.⁸¹

Worries about rising costs in 1854 suddenly seemed unimportant when the emigrants, especially the Scandinavians who arrived first, were struck by cholera on the rivers and at the outfitting ground at Westport, Missouri. Those who died on the rivers were swiftly buried in its soft banks when the steamboat stopped to take on wood; family and friends were all the more grief-stricken at having to quickly leave their loved ones behind in unmarked graves in the wilderness. William Empey, the outfitting agent

⁷⁸ Frederick Andrew to S. Richards, January 10, 1854, Frederick Chadwick Andrew, Diary, MS 1864, LDS Archives; Shelmerdine to her parents, October 29, 1853. For Andrew's donation, see passenger list for *John M. Wood*, sailed March 12, 1854, "Emigration Records from the Liverpool Office," LDS Archives.

⁷⁹ Appendix 1 in Piercy, *Route from Liverpool*, 130; *Millennial Star*, May 13, 1854.

⁸⁰ *Millennial Star*, April 30, 1853, April 22, 1854, June 10, 1854.

⁸¹ Haight, Journal, 53; *Millennial Star*, July 29, 1854.

that year, lamented in his diary in March, "It is awful to behold to see them taken & are dead in a few hours, turning black blue & to see the sufferings that they under go & to see the patience that they manifest & say all is well & pass off." However, when writing to Samuel Richards three months later, he saw meaning in those losses: "Truly the word of the Lord, through the Prophet Joseph, is receiving a more extensive fulfillment. The Destroyer rideth upon the waters, and the day is at hand when none shall go up to Zion except the pure in heart."⁸² Although the emigrants believed they would be tested to prove their worthiness, church historian Andrew Jenson, from his perspective of the 1890s, saw the tragedy for what it was: "In the whole history of the Latter-day Saints emigration, scarcely any thing is met with that is more heart-rending than some of the scenes of 1854, with the exception of the hand-cart experiences two years later."⁸³

The 1854 emigrant company led by Horace Eldredge suffered from lack of animals even after they started, finding they needed another twelve or fifteen yoke of lead oxen to move all the wagons at once. While men went back to buy more stock, the company struggled on by moving as many wagons forward as possible and then taking the oxen back to bring up the remaining ones, making some of the animals cover the same ground three times. With still two hundred miles to go before they even reached the halfway mark of Fort Laramie, their troubles were compounded when their stock stampeded. In a letter to Brigham Young, Eldredge wrote, "They broke away with a terrific rush and roar, and fled into the desert southwards, and amid the continuous sand-hills and buffaloes about 120 head were irrecoverably lost." After four days of searching, the company yoked up the cows and all the loose stock to move on slowly, while Eldredge went ahead, hoping to get assistance from other Mormon companies or to buy more oxen at Fort Laramie.⁸⁴ In the same letter to Young, Horace Eldredge and the others with him requested help. "The meat in our camp will soon be gone. We have flour enough to do us until we reach the South Pass [in southwest Wyoming]. We do not need many wagons sent from the valley, but we want plenty of teams. A very few horses and mules... would not be amiss, as we are now very destitute."⁸⁵

An appeal for aid for all the companies was published in the *Deseret News* at the end of August 1854. The Mormons were exhorted to respond not just from brotherly kindness but because "We are all one temporally as well as spiritually, literally as well as figuratively, or we are not what we profess to be...."⁸⁶ The calls from Brigham Young, the bishops, and the newspaper

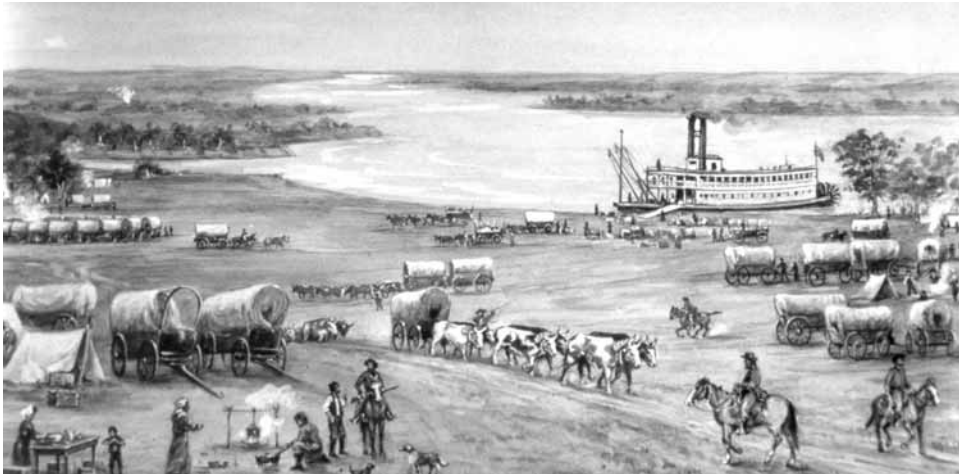
⁸² Empey, *Diary*, 110; *Millennial Star*, July 29, 1854. The concept of gathering the "pure in heart" comes from D&C 97:21.

⁸³ *Contributor* 13 (Sep 1892): 512.

⁸⁴ *Deseret News*, August 31, 1854, as quoted in *Journal History*, August 8, 1854, 2-4; *Millennial Star*, October 28, 1854.

⁸⁵ *Deseret News*, August 31, 1854.

⁸⁶ *Deseret News*, August 31, 1854, as quoted in *Journal History*, August 26, 1854, 1.



COURTESY OF NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE SCOTTS BLUFF

resulted in substantial help. In his letter of instructions to those charged with taking the food and teams back, Young laid out how it was to be handled: The items must be paid for or arrangements made for future payment; the price of flour was to be six cents a pound plus one or two cents more for each hundred miles it was transported; and for the £13 company members, the transactions must be carried out between the captain of the company and the captain of the wagons bringing help so that proper accounting could be made.⁸⁷

*Westport, Missouri, where the
Mormons outfitted in 1854.
Painting by William Henry
Jackson.*

No diaries or reminiscences by the £13 emigrants of 1854 have come to light, but undoubtedly the stories would have been similar to those of 1853. One reason for the paucity of accounts is that in 1853 there were 957 emigrants in the £10 companies, whereas in 1854 there were only eighty-six in the £13 companies. The cause for the dramatic drop was a new twist on the plan that Samuel Richards had devised: "I took upon myself the responsibility of emigrating all who could raise £10, and of making them responsible to the [PEF] Company for the remainder, and this I considered much better than allowing them to stay in the old country another year to raise the other £3, for in so doing they would lose one year.... All felt desirous to embrace this opportunity and hence the greatest portion of the emigration was the past season under the regulations of the Fund Company." Thus, many of those who were actually £13 emigrants were not listed as such but were listed in the PEF records. In addition, Brigham Young made more funds available for the PEF in 1854, increasing the Saints' interest in emigrating under its means.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Record of Robert Campbell's company, written by Thomas Sutherland, clerk, *Journal History*, October 28, 1854, 25–26.

⁸⁸ "Discourse by S. W. Richards," 6; *Millennial Star*, October 22, 1853.

Richards's move eventually led to the demise of the £10/£13 plan. On January 13, 1855, the *Millennial Star* announced that because of price increases the new plan would now cost £15. But a week later the paper reported that the £15 plan would be subsumed by the PEF. Franklin Richards, Samuel's brother and the new president of the British Mission, explained, "We fully anticipate that this arrangement will produce not only a more effective accomplishment of the overland journey, but of the sea and river passages. The Saints will also feel more satisfied in committing the entire control of their emigration to the systematized operations of the P. E. F. Company."⁸⁹ From an accounting standpoint as well, it made sense to eliminate the £15 plan; moving it into the PEF simplified bookkeeping and, as Brigham Young expressed it, "will save much perplexity to our agents."⁹⁰ Unfortunately, the rise in prices that influenced the termination of the £10/£13 scheme along with the drought and grasshopper plagues of 1855 in Utah stressed the financing of the PEF, and this led directly to the development of the handcart plan for the 1856 emigration.⁹¹

Although short-lived, the £10 and £13 companies played a significant role in gathering the poor to Utah. In 1853 more than 41 percent of the emigrants came through its auspices, equal to the percent that came independently. Over the two years, 1,043 emigrants came this way, a fourth of the total. Desiring to gather the Saints before the "last days" and to build up the population of Utah quickly, Brigham Young had whipped up emigration fever among the converts, but it remained for the twenty-eight-year-old British Mission president, Samuel W. Richards, to find a way to effect the nearly impossible. His efforts started the peak period of Mormon emigration. It is somewhat ironic that the same church leaders who received high praise for the manner in which they shipped emigrants out of Great Britain fell short in planning the overland portion. By 1853 the Mormons had had six years of experience in crossing the plains, but moving emigrants West still proved to be a much more complicated task than arranging the sea voyages. Richards deserves credit for his creativity but, along with the others who participated in the planning, also bears responsibility for faulty calculations. The problems of too much enthusiasm, too little food, and too many people to a wagon were compounded by factors out of Mormon control, particularly the spectacular rise in the price of livestock. The £10/£13 company plan was based on reducing everything to a minimum, leaving no room for the unforeseen.

Taking place during the first years in which the Mormons moved large numbers of poor members from Great Britain all the way through to Utah,

⁸⁹ *Millennial Star*, January 20, 1855. Leonard Arrington, in *Great Basin Kingdom: Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 99, states that there was a £15 company for 1855, but that is not strictly the case.

⁹⁰ *Millennial Star*, August 11, 1855.

⁹¹ William W. Slaughter and Michael Landon, *Trail of Hope: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, 1997), 114-17.

the emigration was still a remarkable feat of organization. Horace Eldredge, the St. Louis agent, summarized its accomplishment: "In the spring of 1853, our emigration from Europe amounted to about three thousand souls and required over three hundred wagons and nearly two thousand head of cattle. It required an immense labor to deliver these at the overland starting point, besides purchasing the provisions, outfits and all the necessaries for a three or more months' camp life."⁹² Wallace Stegner recognized the unique organization: "These were not groups of young and reckless adventurers, nor were they isolated families or groups of families. They were literally villages on the march, villages of a sobriety, solidarity, and discipline unheard of anywhere else on the western trails...."⁹³

The Mormons—leaders and emigrants—were convinced the time was short before God would scorch the earth, destroying all who had not fled to Zion. They also believed God would try them on the way and that only if they endured the hardships, persevered, and proved worthy would they succeed. And many did. But in spite of the zeal, the creative plan, and the remarkable organization, perhaps a half-starved £10 emigrant who responded to Brigham Young's alluring words and suffered from the high prices and short provisions should have the last word. As James Ririe saw it, "It was a rough journey, taking it all in all."⁹⁴

⁹² Quoted in Edward W. Tullidge, *The History of Salt Lake City and Its Founders* (Salt Lake City: Edward W. Tullidge, 1886), 666.

⁹³ Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (Salt Lake City: Westwater Press, 1981), 11.

⁹⁴ Ririe, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 9:358.