
CUTLER'S CAMP AT THE BIG GROVE ON SILVER CREEK: A MORMON SETTLEMENT IN IOWA, 1847-1853¹

Danny L. Jorgensen

Introduction

Sometime in the fall of 1847, a temporary Mormon camp was established along a creek and against a hillside grove at a now-obscure location in what was then Pottawattamie County, Iowa.² This place in southwestern Iowa eventually came to be known as Alpheus "Cutler's Camp at the Big Grove on Silver Creek."³ It is located in present-day Mills County, Iowa, approximately twenty miles southeast of Council Bluffs, around four to five miles southwest of Silver City, and about three miles northeast of Malvern in the northern portion of Silver Creek Township (see map). The Silver Creek camp remains unmarked today. What little is known about this site and its Mormon inhabitants exists mostly in a few surviving documents and in the memories of the inhabitants' descendants as preserved by oral tradition.

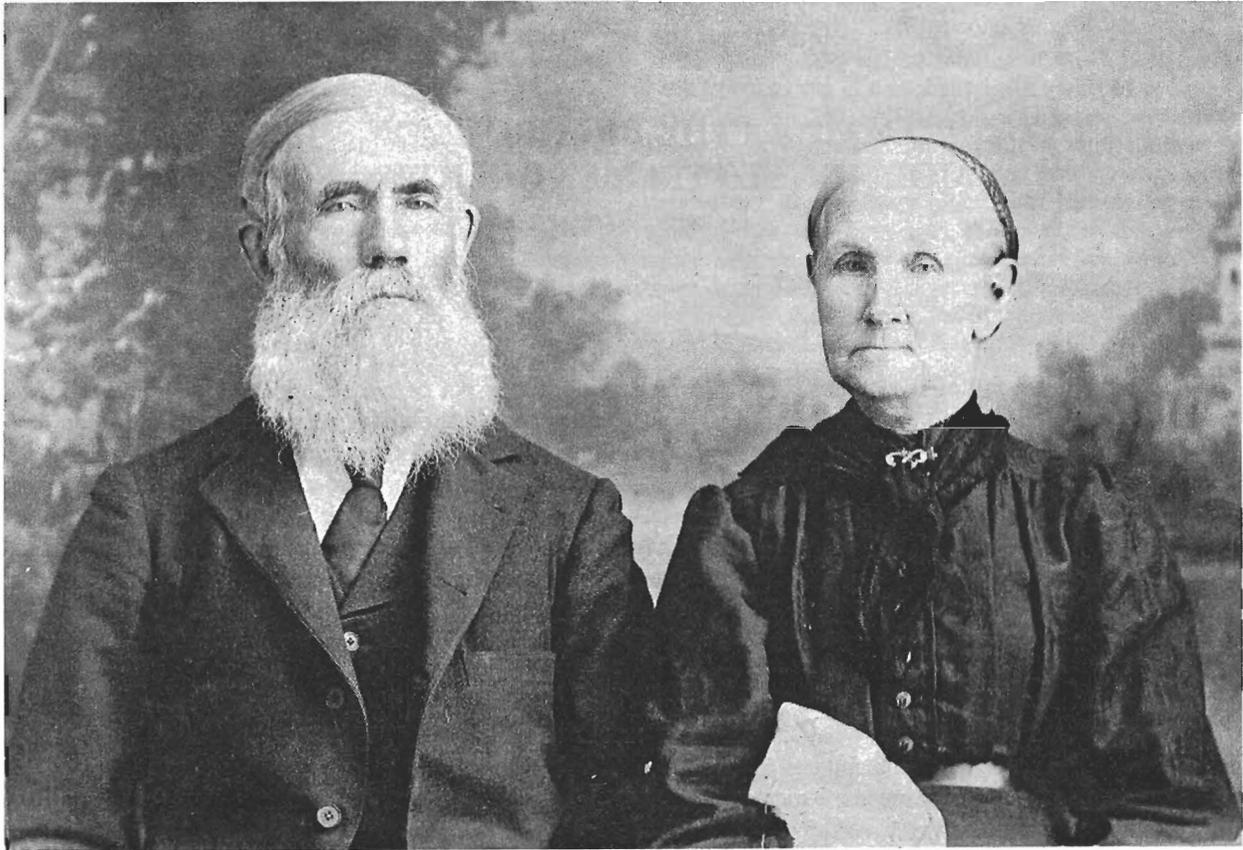
This essay considers the significance of place for historical understanding. Why and for what reasons are some places recognized, recalled, and celebrated as historically important while other places are neglected or even forgotten entirely? A description of the human geography of the Silver Creek site and related events serves as a case in point for these considerations. This description of Cutler's Camp at the Big Grove on Silver Creek also contributes to an enhanced understanding of this almost-unknown place as well as to the largely neglected story of Mormon encampments along the Missouri River in Iowa during the late 1840s and early 1850s.

The Significance of Place

It may not be readily apparent why anyone should care about historic sites, particularly when little to nothing remains of whatever happened there. Yet human narratives necessarily require some mention of **place** as well as time to be understandable. This is the case even when the time and place are entirely imaginary (as in fantasy or science-fiction literature) and is as vague as "once upon a time in a strange place" or "long ago and far way." Put differently, humanly significant events always transpire at some time and in some place and never at no time and nowhere.⁴ Place matters; and without it, humanly important happenings are incomprehensible. Once place is supplied, however, people commonly forget, or simply take for granted, that place is a necessary feature of any perspective for decoding what is humanly meaningful. People simply go on making sense without attending to exactly how and why place matters or without thoughtfully describing what it entails.

Places become significant for a variety of reasons, most of them deriving from human efforts to socially identify and concretely locate their very selves as socially meaningful. The Silver Creek Camp is a very special, almost sacred, place to me. This feeling is so, I admit, substantially because most of the Mormon settlers there are my ancestors or relatives.⁵ I wonder if Francis Lewis Whiting, my great-great-grandfather, hunted the predecessors of the deer I once observed in the grove. I wonder where and, therefore, how my great-great-grandpar-

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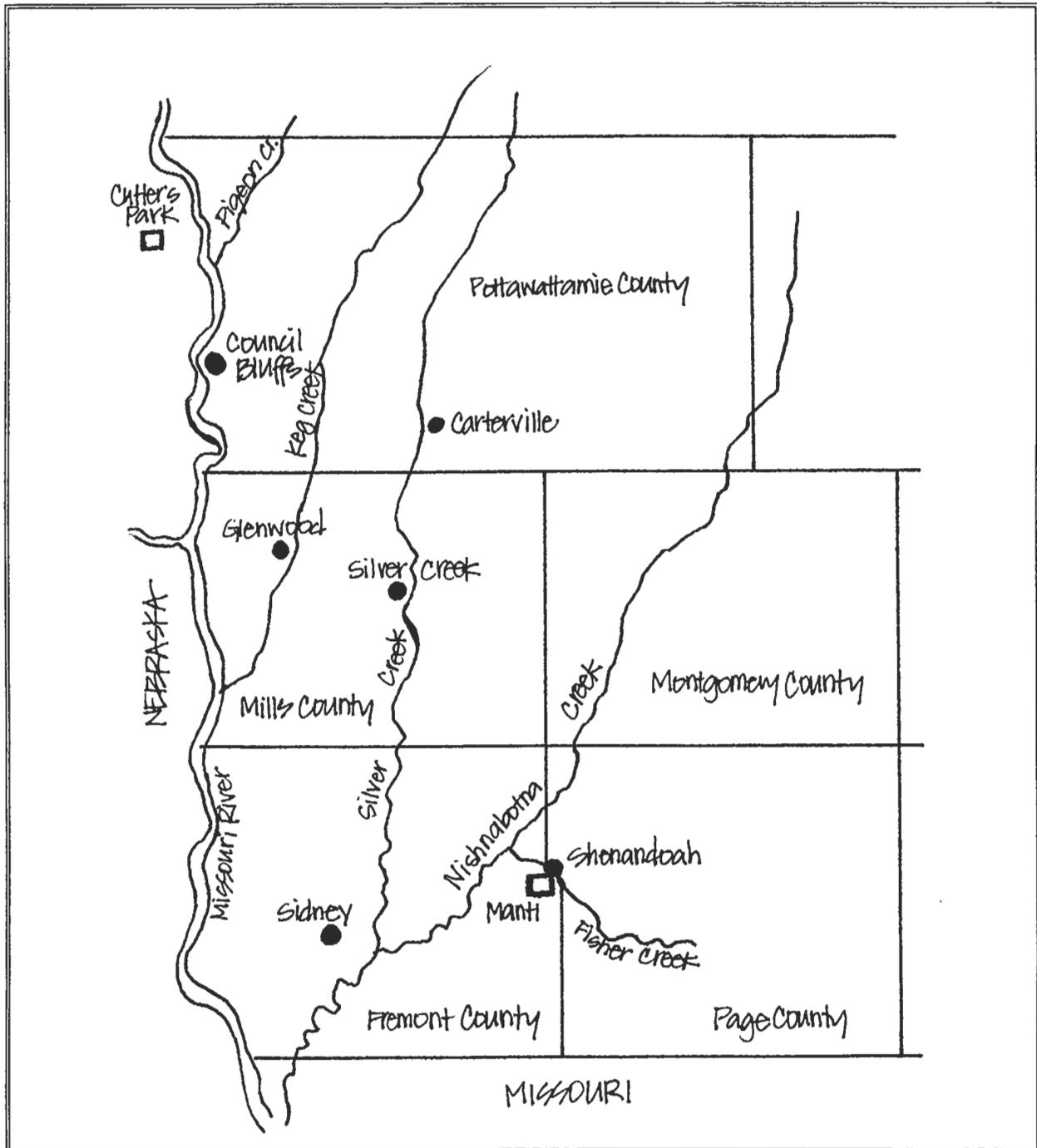
*Francis Lewis Whiting and Ann Janette Burdick Whiting
courtesy of Danny L. Jorgensen*

ents, Hiram and Rachel (Kelsey) Murdock, lived when they returned there from Winter Quarters in 1848 immediately after Brigham Young performed their marriage. I wonder if this is where the teenage Ann Janette Burdick, my great-great-grandmother, fell in love with her lifelong husband (the deer hunter mentioned above) and what it must have felt like for my people to watch their kinfolk depart this place for the West while my ancestors remained in Iowa. Perhaps my ancestors suspected, but they certainly did not know they would never see their kinfolk in this life again.

A few other people also care about this obscure and little-known Mormon site in southwestern Iowa for similar reasons.⁶ Some of them are descendants of those who made it to Utah.⁷ Clare Christensen, for instance, devoted the last years of his life to lovingly preserving the story of these Mormon families.⁸ For them, like me, this place is personal and almost sacred. It is a matter of situating and defining our very selves in cultural time and space. Other people have been attracted to the his-

tory of Cutler's Camp at Silver Creek as part of the Latter-day Saints' story or that of Iowa and the region.⁹ For them, this is not a matter of kinship identity. Rather, the story of this place and its people is a source of self-definition and social identification in terms of religious ethnicity and human geography.¹⁰

The Silver Creek story is not a big part of American, Midwestern, frontier, or Iowa history; nor is the story a major facet of Mormon history, the Saints' epic migration to the West, the Mormon trek across Iowa, or even Latter-day Saint settlements along the Missouri in the late 1840s.¹¹ Yet it is a part, no matter how small, of all these concerns. I do not claim that this gathering on Silver Creek is typical or representative of these Mormon encampments. Certain features of the story are rather extraordinary, while other aspects of it provide a glimpse of more ordinary, mundane, everyday life affairs. It is, however, a story of a certain place and people. Their story—the meaning of their existence and whatever significance it may have for Mormon history—is enhanced



Map showing location of Silver Creek, Iowa

The map is an adaptation of one found in the book Before and After Mt. Pisgah: Cox, Hulet, Losee, Morley, Tuttle, Winget, Whiting and Related Families. It is used here with permission of the author, Clare B. Christensen

if we know something about this place where it all happened.

The Silver Creek Saints

The Silver Creek settlers mostly were early converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the new American religion organized by Joseph Smith Jr. in 1830. All of them probably were participants in the Mormon "Kingdom on the Mississippi" at Nauvoo, Illinois.¹² Following the founding prophet's martyrdom in 1844, they remained with the largest unified collection of Nauvoo Saints under Apostle Brigham Young's leadership. Joining the exodus from Nauvoo, beginning in 1846, they trekked westward across Iowa with what the Mormons called the "Camps of Israel." Mary Cox Whiting subsequently recalled:

Our teams were the patient oxen. We were strung along clear across Iowa, and such roads, from one rod to a mile in width on those bottomless prairies. When the turf would hold the wagons up, it was OK, but there might be a dozen or more all sunk in the mud at once, a short distance apart.¹³

Many of the subsequent Silver Creek settlers already had helped establish Mormon way stations and encampments at Garden Grove, Mt. Pisgah, and other Iowa locations. Their dead were buried along the trail and into Indian Territory across the Missouri River at the Latter-day Saints' Winter Quarters (present-day Florence, Nebraska).¹⁴

Alpheus Cutler, their principal leader, had been a member of the Mormon prophet's elite inner circle.¹⁵ Called "Father" Cutler out of respect, Alpheus was a Mormon high priest. He had been a member of the Nauvoo High Council; supervisor of the temple's construction; and one of the first Saints to be selected by Joseph Smith for membership on the secretive, parapolitical Council of Fifty. Most significantly, Cutler was part of the Mormon prophet's exclusive, covert, Anointed Quorum. He helped organized the Saints' exodus from Nauvoo, and he captained an advance party of the Camps of Israel across Iowa.

Arriving west of the Missouri River in Indian Territory in June 1846, Cutler founded the first Euro-American town.¹⁶ Located just north of what would become Omaha, Nebraska, Apostle Young named it

"Cutler's Park" in Alpheus' honor.¹⁷ Father Cutler subsequently helped select the site of Winter Quarters, where he assumed the high council presidency. While Brigham Young and the other apostles directed the activities of the entire Church, Cutler presided over the day-to-day activities of the Mormons camped on the west bank of the Missouri.

At Winter Quarters in November 1847, Cutler encountered some New York Indians.¹⁸ The incident apparently reminded him of a Council of Fifty commission from Joseph Smith to Lamanite (Indian) ministries. In early December, Cutler and James W. Cummings, another Council of Fifty member, journeyed south to a few miles west of Ft. Leavenworth. There, they investigated the prospects of a mission.¹⁹ Upon reporting back to Church leaders in late December 1847, Cutler received approval for the Indian venture.²⁰ Federal permission for the Latter-day Saints' intrusion onto Indian lands in Nebraska expired in 1848. The Mormons, therefore, departed the west banks of the Missouri River that spring and continued west or returned to Iowa.²¹

In March 1848, Father Cutler rejoined family and friends at Silver Creek as president of a branch of the Church. He also was eager to pursue Lamanite ministries. Cutler and a few followers had established an Indian mission in Kansas on the Grasshopper (now Delaware) River, a few miles north of where it emptied into the Kaw (now Kansas) River.²² The mission consisted of a few cabins, farms, and a mill. Several families remained at the mission while Cutler and other followers moved back and forth between Silver Creek and the Delaware Indian Reservation. In the fall of 1848, rumors about Cutler's activities disturbed the high council at Kanesville (now Council Bluffs), Iowa. Their investigation resulted in a prolonged and bitter dispute with some of Cutler's followers.²³

The high council viewed the teachings and claims of Cutler's more-zealous followers as heretical. Efforts to extract obedience failed. After the council was unable to coerce them into moving west, some of the "Cutlerites" (as they had come to be known) were disfellowshipped. The council also suspended Cutler's Lamanite mission.²⁴ Plans for the mission mostly went unrealized.²⁵ In pursuit of Lamanite ministries, Father Cutler had ignored the high council's demand to appear before them and make account of his activities. Convinced that he had no



Frederick Walter Cox
courtesy of Danny L. Jorgensen



Cordelia Morley Cox
daughter of Bishop Isaac Morley and
second wife of F. Walter Cox
courtesy of Danny L. Jorgensen

intention of moving west, they excommunicated him in April 1851.²⁶ Cutler and some of his followers acquiesced to being cut off from Utah Mormonism.²⁷ Forsaking the Kansas mission sometime in late 1851 or early 1852, they rejoined the community at Silver Creek.

Calculating exactly how many people lived at the Silver Creek camp from 1847 to 1852/3 is difficult. The bits and pieces of available information suggest that no more than about twenty families resided there at any one time.²⁸ Some of the Silver Creek Saints remained in Iowa, but some of them eventually continued west. Those who went on to the Salt Lake Valley sometimes spent a few weeks or months living in wagons or tents at the camp. A few families, however, resided at Silver Creek for a year or more before resuming the westward journey. F. Walter Cox and his plural families, for example, lived at the camp for nearly two years before continuing on to the Rockies.²⁹

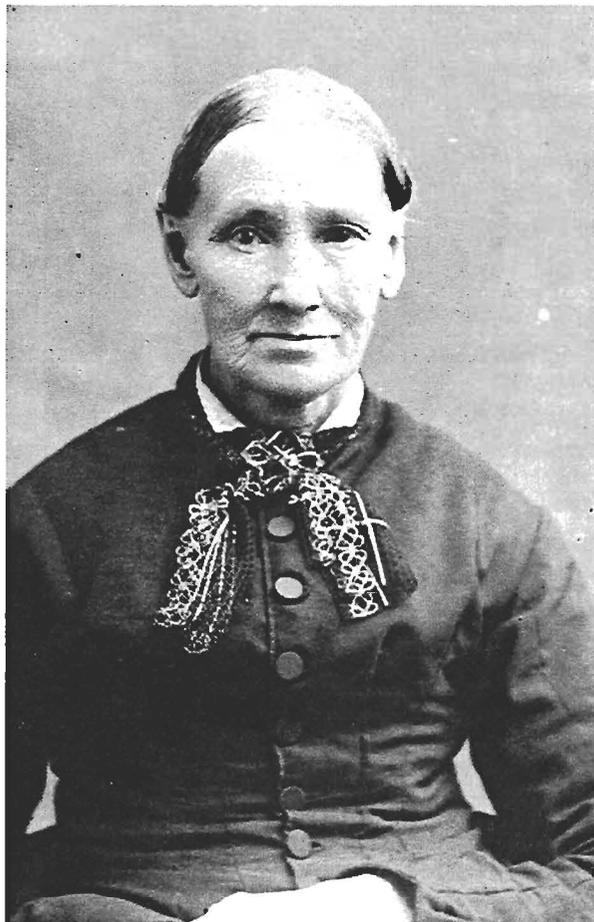
The Silver Creek Settlement

Today, Silver Creek flows north to south without too many twists and turns. (It reportedly was straightened by the United States Army Corps of Engineers sometime in the 1920s.) The water presently is about twenty-five to thirty feet across, less than two feet deep in most places, and fairly slow moving. An 1848 observer, however, recorded that the creek was a block wide and deep enough to float a raft loaded with grain that was poled down the stream.³⁰ This report indicates that the Mormons were able to grow a surplus of grain on the Iowa prairie. It also verifies that they used the local creeks and streams for transportation and commerce.

When the raft was secured to the banks, the Mormon boys sometimes swam from this landing, leading to one near drowning in deep water.³¹ The creek bed here is muddy, although there are sandy and rocky places. The banks are composed of soil that is covered with weeds,

brushy shrubs, and small trees that are not very deeply rooted in most places. Rather, they extend up gradually about ten to twenty feet from the water to the surrounding countryside.

The terrain along the creek is moderately hilly. What are today neatly terraced, cultivated fields of



*Sallie Emeline Whiting Cox
First wife of Frederick Walter Cox
G. E. Anderson Collection #2789
courtesy of Photographic Archives
Harold B. Lee Library
Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah*

beans, corn, and other grains no doubt were mostly rolling hills and open prairie grasslands when the Mormons arrived in 1847. The land east of the creek gradually inclines to a substantial hillside. It is covered by large trees dense enough to screen out much of the sunlight during the summer. Even today, the grove sup-

ports plenty of wildlife, including many varieties of birds, small mammals, snakes, and a herd of large, healthy-looking deer. This miniature forest on the hill extends along the creek for a considerable distance, embracing it at some points and encompassing an area of perhaps forty acres. The grove no doubt provided the Mormons with valuable supplies of food, fuel, and building materials. The countryside beyond the grove to the north, east, and south rolls on to other hills, most of which do not support more than a few trees today.

The campsite was located in a somewhat protected area between the creek's east bank and hillside. This plot of about twenty acres eventually contained a "community [that] consisted of a number of log cabins, a store or two, a blacksmith shop and a mill."³² A cabin, resembling the ones built here, is described in the settlers' oral tradition as "not more than fourteen feet square."³³ The cabins were "shingled with split timber about three feet long" and included "one four light window." The furnishings typically included handmade chairs, tables, and bunk beds with "split timber for slats upon which they put . . . straw mattresses." This small space sometimes was divided in half by extending "a pole across the room with a crotched stick." When affordable, a wood-burning stove was used to heat the cabin.

In spite of the Silver Creek site's limitations, it also sustained gardening and farming in small fields. The Mormons raised potatoes, squash, sweet corn, and other vegetables, sometimes in sufficient quantity to trade for other provisions.³⁴ William Arthur Cox observed: "During the summer of 1848, they . . . ate [squash] until their faces turned yellow, and their neighbors thought they had yellow jaundice."³⁵ When more extensive farming was attempted, it necessarily was located beyond the grove on the prairie. Plowing the prairie sod reportedly took considerable effort. Once the sod was turned, the farmer would "strike each sod with an ax, and into it the hole so made," a helper would drop corn seed.³⁶ The surrounding grass lands provided more than ample grazing as well as hay. The Saints' livestock probably included horses, oxen, cattle, chickens, and possibly sheep.

The Silver Creek Saints eventually constructed a gristmill on the creek.³⁷ It most likely was erected in 1849 or 1850, only after some of them had decided to remain in Iowa. According to a local journalist, Allen

Wortman, "A mill was built to utilize the power furnished by the waters of Silver Creek and the Mormons stayed for several years, planting crops, and preparing for the continuation of their migration."³⁸ Cordelia Morley Cox reported that the first mill was constructed by "hollowing out a [tree] stump [and] arranging a spring pole, so that in a kind of mortar and pestle fashion [they] could pound up enough coarse meal to do the family all day." She further noted that they "usually had pancakes for breakfast, cornbread for dinner, with plenty of milk, butter and eggs."³⁹

Certain features of the Silver Creek site, such as the creek, woods, hill, and surrounding grasslands, were critically important for creating and sustaining even a temporary settlement. Out of the timber in the grove, F. Walter Cox and Edwin Whiting probably constructed some of the wagons that carried their families to Utah. Cox and some of the Whiting brothers, especially Almon, also may have used these same materials for making primitive Shaker-style furniture (a craft that subsequently would bring Almon considerable notoriety).⁴⁰ The men bartered the surplus chairs in Missouri for provisions. The women sometimes took in the laundry of "gold diggers" headed for California in exchange for much-needed cash money.

Religion was, by all accounts, a central feature of daily life at Silver Creek. Yet there is no indication that the Mormon settlers constructed a church building. They most likely held services in a cabin, a tent, or simply out of doors. Cutlerite history maintains that "Regularly, church services were held and faith renewed as they studied and prayed together seeking to learn God's will for them."⁴¹ Because the Cutlerites had concluded that the original Mormon Church was "rejected," this report persists, they discontinued "baptisms, blessings, and ordinations" at this time.⁴²

A cemetery, eventually composed of perhaps a dozen graves, was established east of the Big Grove.⁴³ It was located on high ground about halfway up the next hill, although no sign of it is readily apparent today. The contemporary inhabitants of the area told me that the remains were reburied in an existing cemetery at the top of the next hill across from a small Protestant church.⁴⁴ The relocated graves reportedly were marked, but I have not been able to identify them.

The entire Silver Creek community picked up and moved shortly after the Kansas missionaries returned to Iowa.⁴⁵ A variety of factors probably contributed to this decision. The creek may have been too small, unpredictable, or otherwise unsuitable as a mill site. The hilly, surrounding countryside most likely presented farming difficulties greater than could be solved by existing technology. The settlers' kinfolk, friends, and other Mormons had either continued west or remained scattered near more-desirable locations in southwestern Iowa. And they had sound reasons for anticipating conflict with government officials and neighbors. Local Gentile (civil) authorities arrested Alpheus Cutler and at least one other Silver Creek Saint in 1851 for practicing plural marriage.⁴⁶ Cutler resolved the problem by "putting aside" his remaining plural wives.⁴⁷ F. Walter Cox complied with the court by temporarily moving two of his three wives to another jurisdiction (near Carterville, Pottawattamie County) and leaving for the Salt Lake Valley in 1852.

Summary and Conclusions

For about five years, from 1847 until 1852/3, Cutler's Camp at the Big Grove on Silver Creek served as a temporary encampment and way station for Mormons headed west. It also was the location of an increasingly dissident branch of the Church and was the operational base for a little-known Mormon mission to native Americans in Kansas. Although some of the Silver Creek Saints continued west, others became disaffected. After being cut off from Utah Mormonism, they elected to remain in Iowa. Very romantically and rather ironically, the Cutlerites' history, based on oral tradition, subsequently concluded that:

The years of calm and quiet experienced in Mills County was a happy time for the little band who had suffered so much. The rich Iowa soil produced crops and foods in abundance and they were once more free to build homes and things needed to furnish them. From time to time families joined them here, usually relatives or acquaintances.⁴⁸

In 1852, a party of Silver Creek Saints scouted the location of a new settlement about thirty miles southeast in Fremont County, Iowa.⁴⁹ Given the Book of Mormon name of "Manti," it quickly developed into a thriving frontier village. Manti also served as headquarters for the Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerite) from its 1853 for-

mation until 1865.⁵⁰

Sometime after the Mormons departed Silver Creek in 1852/3, their cabins reportedly were moved to other locations and used as temporary shelters by later farmers.⁵¹ Some of the cabins were dragged halfway up an adjoining hillside northeast of the Big Grove—forming the basis for a Gentile settlement called “Wall Street” that existed until sometime after the turn of the century. At the Silver Creek site today, visitors will find a straightened creek meandering slowly through the hilly countryside; the grove on the hill with an abundance of wildlife; fields of grain (many of them neatly terraced); gravel lanes and roads; a few dwellings and farm buildings; and, atop the next hill, a little whitewashed country church across the road from a cemetery.⁵²

There is no readily discernible sign today that, for five years in the middle of the last century, this was the site of a Mormon encampment. Few people recall that Silver Creek was the temporary home of devoutly religious Americans and part of the Camps of Israel. It is easy to forget that they were fleeing the United States for the foreign Rocky Mountains and that they found this necessary to exercise the freedom to build the theocratic kingdom of God on earth and its peculiar culture and community.

Nothing remaining visible at Silver Creek today will tell visitors about the conflict in the Camps of Israel; the resulting schism; the disastrous Lamanite mission; or the terminal, intensely painful division and separation of family, kinfolk, and other loved ones. Yet it is here at the Big Grove on Silver Creek in the rich garden of what became the American heartland that a small collection of Mormon people fashioned a temporary encampment in the wilderness. This is the place where they parked their wagons, pitched their tents, erected log cabins, and furnished them. This is where they watched the seasons change; endured the elements; hunted and gathered food from the wilds; tended livestock, planted gardens, and farmed virgin fields; constructed a gristmill; and drew water from, washed in, rafted down, and played in the stream. Here, on Silver Creek at the Big Grove, is where they made monumentally important life decisions; encountered legal difficulties with civil authorities for practicing their religion; laughed and cried; fell in love and married; birthed, taught, and raised their children; became ill, sometimes recovered, and died; as well as

buried their dead. This is where they prayed, sang, and worshiped—all while defining themselves and conducting their daily lives in terms of a new, uniquely American religion. This, then, is the mostly forgotten place of Cutler’s Camp at the Big Grove on Silver Creek.

Many people may not find the site worth remembering. Mormonism, however, consistently has sustained a powerful sense of place as part of its sacred story or history. Certain places, commonly those associated mostly with extraordinary people and events (presidential residences, battlefields, and cemeteries, for example), are celebrated as significant in American history generally. Almost no place in early Mormon history has been viewed as too unimportant for recollection. Many of early Mormonism’s historic sites are little more than open spaces today, except perhaps for more recent markers and memorials to the past. Although most Americans know something about the Mormons’ epic westward trek, many of the places along this painful trail only now are being recalled and rediscovered. It very well may be that those who endured the hardships, suffering, and death of the Iowa trek found all of this too traumatic for any kind of memorial celebration of these particular places, perhaps leaving this task for subsequent generations. For personal and scholarly reasons, I find these people, places, and events worthy of recollection and celebration. It therefore is hoped that this account of Cutler’s Camp at the Big Grove on Silver Creek enhances our understanding of Mormon and American history.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this essay was presented at the Mormon History Association’s annual meetings in Omaha, Nebraska, 23 May 1997.

2. The exact date of the Mormons’ arrival at this site is uncertain. Many of the eventual settlers initially crossed the Missouri River into Indian Territory (now Nebraska) and stopped at Cutler’s Park and Winter Quarters (now the north Omaha suburb of Florence). The Silver Creek Camp’s founders reportedly included Frederick Walter Cox, Amos Cox, Chauncey Whiting, Sylvester Whiting, Almon Whiting, Edmond Whiting, and Francis Lewis Whiting. In addition to these people and the Cutler family, other Latter-day Saint families living at Silver Creek or nearby included the Bakers, Fishers, Follets, Davises, Shermans, Murdocks, and Pattens, among others. See Clare B. Christensen, *Before and After Mt. Pisgah: Cox, Hulet, Losee, Morley, Tuttle, Winget, Whiting and*

Related Families (Salt Lake City, privately published, 1979), 129-66, 175-216; hereafter cited as *Mt. Pisgah*). In the spring of 1848, all the Saints west of the Missouri either continued west or returned to Iowa. Most accounts of the Silver Creek settlement, as cited elsewhere in this essay, strongly suggest those returning to Iowa rejoined family and friends at an already established encampment. It is, therefore, most likely that a Mormon camp was established on this site sometime in 1847. This also is the date given in Mills County History Book Committee, *Mills County, Iowa* (Dallas, Texas: Taylor, 1985), 92, hereafter cited as *Mills County*.

3. This designation apparently derives from the Mormon settlers' leader, Alpheus Cutler; the large stand of timber on the hill; and the stream that probably was named "Sliver Creek" after Cutler's New York state home town. Since this site was not marked (until very recently), I initially spent some time locating it. After numerous inquiries in Malvern, I eventually found a local librarian who was able to direct me to the general location on Silver Creek. Driving around and even walking the creek in search of the mill site proved useless. I started knocking on farmhouse doors and eventually found someone to take me to the site. He and his spouse also knew that another local farmer had found a mill stone while plowing a field at this point on the creek. They kindly took me back to Malvern where I was able to see and photograph the stone. It probably was from a later mill constructed on this site, since the Cutlerite mill described below was even more primitive than one using a simple stone. Subsequently, I found the several published mentions (cited here) of Cutler's Silver Creek Camp, thereby confirming the location described here.

4. This contention may be tested by reading any story while eliminating all references to place. The account will make little to no sense without some reference to place. Even an expression like "out in the middle of nowhere" provides a frame of reference for socially defining space. A reference to "nowhere" specifies place by indicating that, while it has not been identified exactly, we need not worry about this; otherwise, of course, we would need to know "where" what was being described happened. My thinking about the social construction of space or place is indebted to the phenomenology of Alfred Schutz (Maurice Natanson, ed.), *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967). I find Schutz's thinking about the "natural attitude" toward everyday life especially significant.

5. Danny L. Jorgensen, "Some Implications of Postmodernism for Sociological Participant Observation," paper presented to the Gregory Stone Symbolic Interaction Symposium, St. Petersburg Beach, Florida, January 1990.

6. Other accounts of the Silver Creek site and its people, deriving substantially from personal interests based on kinship and/or religion, include Rupert J. Fletcher and Daisy Whiting

Fletcher, *Alpheus Cutler and the Church of Jesus Christ* (Independence, Missouri: The Church of Jesus Christ, privately published, 1974), 44-46, hereafter cited as *Alpheus Cutler*; Hallie Gould, *Old Clitherall's Story Book* (Fergus Falls, Minnesota: Otter Tail County Historical Society, 1919); Emma L. (Whiting) Anderson, "Autobiography" (Independence, Missouri: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Archives-Library); and Anderson, "History of the Cutlerite Faction of the Latter Day Saints," *Journal of History* (1895): 454-57.

7. See, for example, Stanley B. Kimball, "Finding a Great-Great Grandmother: Clarissa Cutler Kimball" (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Archives, unpublished paper, 1979), hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives; A. J. Simmonds, "John Noah and the Hulets: A Study of Charisma in the Early Church," paper presented to the Mormon History Association, Lamoni, Iowa, May 1979; and Simmonds, "'Thou and All Thy House': Three Case Studies of Clan and Charisma in the Early Church," *The Nauvoo Journal* (Hyrum, Utah: The Nauvoo Journal, 1995), 7:1.48-55.

8. Christensen, *Mt. Pisgah*.

9. Allen Wortman, *Ghost Towns of Mills County, Iowa* (Malvern, Iowa: privately published, 1975), hereafter cited as *Ghost Towns*; Art Johnson, "Three Find Long-Lost Mormon Camp," *Omaha World Herald* (date, issues, and pages unknown); *Mills County*, 514, as quoted in Charles Fry, "History of Fremont (Iowa) District," *Journal of History* 2 (3 July 1909), 346-7; D. C. Bloomer, "Notes on the History of Pottawattamie County," *Annals of Iowa* 9 (1871): 522-33; Homer H. Field and Joseph R. Reed, *History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa* (Chicago: S. J. Clark, 1907); *Mills County*.

10. See William James, *Psychology* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1915); and George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934). What I mean by this is that human beings commonly define themselves by way of religion, which for Latter-day Saints also is a form of ethnicity, and in terms of place or the interconnections between geography and the people who inhabit the land. In other words, the human "self" always is situated; and place, implicitly and explicitly, is a situational component.

11. See Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 95-105; Lawrence Coates, "Refugees Meet: The Mormons and Indians in Iowa," *Brigham Young University Studies* 1:491-514; Maureen U. Beecher (ed.), "The Iowa Journal of Lorenzo Snow," *Brigham Young University Studies* 24 (1984): 261-74; Charles H. Babbitt, *Early Days at Council Bluffs* (Washington, D.C.: Bryon S. Adams, 1916); Ruth S. Beitz, "Where the Saints Have Trod," *The Iowan* (Winter 1962): 18-23; Richard Bennett, "Eastward to Eden: The

Nauvoo Rescue Mission," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19 (Winter 1986): 100-8; Reed C. Durham Jr., "The Iowa Experience: A Blessing in Disguise," *Brigham Young University Studies* 21 (Fall 1981): 453-54; Susan W. Easton, "Suffering and Death on the Plains of Iowa," *Brigham Young University Studies* 21 (Fall 1981): 431-39; Leland H. Gentry, "The Mormon Way Stations: Garden Grove and Mount Pisgah," *Brigham Young University Studies* 21 (Fall 1981): 445-61; Lida L. Green, "Markers for Remembrance: The Mormon Trail," *Annals of Iowa* 40 (Winter 1970): 190-93; R. E. Harvey, "The Mormon Trek Across Iowa Territory," *Annals of Iowa* 10 (July 1946): 36-60; Gail G. Holmes, "The LDS Legacy in Southwestern Iowa," *The Ensign* (August 1988): 54-57; William J. Peterson, "Mormon Trails in Iowa," *The Palimpsest* 47 (1966): 3

12. Danny L. Jorgensen, "The Social Backgrounds and Characteristics of Those People Who Founded the Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerite)," paper presented to the Mormon History Association, Quincy, Illinois, 1989. Brief summaries of these data also are contained in Jorgensen, "The Fiery Darts of the Adversary: An Interpretation of Early Cutlerism," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 10 (1990): 67-83; and Jorgensen, "Conflict in the Camps of Israel: The 1853 Cutlerite Schism," *Journal of Mormon History* 21 (Spring 1995): 24-62. Also see D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1994), especially 149-228, 242. Most of the Silver Creek Saints (and the other founding Cutlerites) were among the first several thousand converts to Mormonism. Predominantly New Englanders, they were literate, Victorian farmers and tradesmen of middling economic status. They were typical of the people who followed Smith from Ohio to Missouri and, after their expulsion, from Missouri to Illinois. Most of them participated fully in the Nauvoo, Illinois, Church. Many of them were instructed in the radically innovative temple theology and received basic endowments; and a few of them were initiated into the most sacred, secretive rites, including celestial marriage and family relations. The men were ordained to the priesthood, and more than a few of them performed significant leadership roles. Through marriage and kinship, the eventual Cutlerites also were related to such prominent early Mormon families as the Youngs, Kimballs, Richardses, Partridges, Pattens, Pratts, Morleys, Shermans, Rockwells, and others. This included Emily Haws (one of Brigham Young's plural wives) as well as Clarissa and Emily Cutler (both plural wives of Heber Kimball).

13. Mary Cox Whiting as reported to Howard R. Driggs in Christensen, *Mt. Pisgah*, 131.

14. See Stanley B. Kimball, "The Mormon Trail Network in Iowa, 1838-68," *Brigham Young University Studies* 21 (Fall 1981): 417-30; Kimball, *Historic Sites and Markers Along the Mormon and Other Great Western Trails* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); and Kimball, *Historic Resource Study:*

Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail (Washington, D. C.: United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service, 1991). Mary Cox Whiting (in Christensen, *Mt. Pisgah*, 135) about *Mt. Pisgah* recalled:

We had pretty gardens which helped us for food and should have done very well if it had not been for the dreadful sickness. When I think of that time, it gives me the heartache—those two sweet little girls of Emeline's [Whiting Cox] and one of Elizabeth's [Whiting] laid away in that old graveyard. Emeline was lying at the point of death at the time. When she called me to her in the morning and told me how she wanted to fix some of her burying clothes after the little girls death, it seemed as though there was no use in trying to live. Just that same day, someone at Garden Grove sent a dose of quinine, which saved her life. When the dear little Eliza [Cox] died there was not well ones enough to wait on the sick. Walter [Cox] made her coffin and carried her to the grave and I think, buried her alone.

Like Alpheus Cutler, many of those who eventually resided at Silver Creek initially crossed the Missouri and remained there for more or less extended periods of time before returning to this Iowa camp.

15. Danny L. Jorgensen, "The Old Fox: Alpheus Cutler," in Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher (eds.), *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History* (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press), 312-58; Jorgensen, "Conflict in the Camps of Israel," 28-34; D. Michael Quinn, "The Mormon Succession Crisis of 1844," *Brigham Young University Studies* 16 (1976): 187-234; Quinn, "The Council of Fifty and Its Members, 1844 to 1945," *Brigham Young University Studies* 20 (1980): 163-97; Quinn, "Latter-day Saint Prayer Circles," *Brigham Young University Studies* 19 (1978): 79-105; Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1994), 203-9; Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question," M.A. Thesis, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1981; and Ehat, "'It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth': Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God," *Brigham Young University Studies* 21 (1980): 253-79.

16. Jorgensen, "Conflict in the Camps of Israel," 31.

17. A small memorial marks this site about two and a half miles northwest of Winter Quarters.

18. Danny L. Jorgensen, "Building the Kingdom of God: Alpheus Cutler and the Second Mormon Mission to the Indians 1846-1853," *Kansas History* 15 (Autumn 1992): 192-209; and Jorgensen, "Conflict in the Camps of Israel," 34-38.

19. James Willard Cummings, "Papers," 1839-1852, LDS Church Archives. With Brigham Young's blessing, according to James Willard Cummings, he and Cutler traveled south to a

point near the confluence of the Grasshopper (Delaware) and Kaw (Kansas) Rivers, where they joined Mormon Elder Lewis Denna, an Oneida Indian and another Council of Fifty member (thereby making him the highest-ranking "Lamanite" in the Mormon Church). They formulated a plan for securing a homeland for New York Indians on the Delaware Reservation, permission for a mission, and contracts with federal agents. Elder Denna stayed to work out the details, while Cutler and Cummings returned to Winter Quarters, arriving Christmas night 1847, where the Mormon leadership approved the Indian mission.

20. Jorgensen, "Conflict in the Camps of Israel," 34-38; Jorgensen, "Building the Kingdom of God," 200-1; Richard E. Bennett, "Lamanism, Lymanism, and Cornfields," *Journal of Mormon History* 13 (1986-87): 45-59; and, Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri, 1846-1852* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987). Over the next few days, Cutler participated in a series of meetings with ranking Mormon authorities. He was enthused about the possibilities of a mission and suggested to Brigham Young that the Mormons form an alliance with the Indians. A large, organized, armed force, he argued, would prevent interference from their enemies, and it might be used to vindicate long-standing grievances with the Missourians, perhaps including taking Ft. Leavenworth by force! Young and the council approved Cutler's Indian ministries. Brigham Young knew that armed resistance might become necessary, but he cautioned that such an alliance also might provoke rather than prevent violence.

21. Jorgensen, "Conflict in the Camps of Israel," 36-38. After establishing a settlement in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake, Young returned to Winter Quarters. He directed the Saints at the Missouri to continue west or to return to Iowa while making further preparations. Young returned to the Valley; and Orson Hyde, the new president of the Twelve, and a reconstituted high council at Kaneshville (Council Bluffs) assumed administrative authority for the remaining Saints.

22. Jorgensen, "Building the Kingdom of God," 201-7; A. T. Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), 499-500; and Elmer L. Brown, "Early History of Thompsonville" (Perry, Kansas: unpublished, 1966).

23. Orson Hyde, George A. Smith, and Erza T. Benson (representing the Kaneshville High Council), "Report to Brigham Young and Council of Twelve," 15 March to 5 April 1849, LDS Church Archives; and Bennett, "Lamanism, Lymanism, and Cornfields," 47-49. The prime objective of Hyde and the Mormon Council was to complete the removal of the Saints to the Valley. Their task was full of problems: thousands of Mormons were scattered from Nauvoo and other middle western locations to the Rocky Mountains, particularly across Iowa and along the Missouri, in wagon trains, temporary encampments, and way stations; they were weary, impover-

ished, diseased, and dying; the innovative temple theology and related practices, especially plural marriage, remained secretive, highly controversial, and uninstitutionalized; the organizational structure of the movement was confusing and ambiguous, in spite of Young's reorganization; and heresy, apostasy, rival claims to leadership, and organizational fragmentation were perceived as serious problems.

24. Orson Hyde (ed.), "Minutes of the Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints held at Kaneshville, Pottawattamie County, Iowa," *The Frontier Guardian*, 30 October 1850, 3.

25. Jorgensen, "Building the Kingdom of God," 203-7. Only a few bands of the hoped-for New York Indians emigrated. Following conflict with the Delawares and their agents, poverty, disease, and considerable suffering, most of the New York Indians who had relocated to the Delaware Reservation became discouraged and returned to the East. The Cutlerites made no lasting Indian converts; they had trouble with the mill and conflict with federal agents; they were unable to secure title to farms and other improvements on Indian lands; they suffered from extreme poverty; and, by 1851, hardships and disease had taken the lives of several women and children. The dead included Henrietta Clarinda Miller, Father Cutler's youngest plural wife, and probably her child, as well as two of his daughters, Clarissa and Emily, both of whom had been plural wives of Heber C. Kimball until their monogamous remarriages within the previous three years. Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 243-44, 308; Kimball (ed.), *On the Potter's Wheel: The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1987), 133; Abraham Kimball, *Finding a Father: Gems for the Young Folks* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1881); and A. Kimball, "Reminiscences and Journal, 1877-1889," LDS Church Archives.

26. Alpheus Cutler to Brigham Young, 23 April 1848, LDS Church Archives; Cutler to Young, 13 June 1850, LDS Church Archives. Cutler appealed his disfellowshipment directly to Brigham Young in the Valley. Young's several communications were warm, affectionate, and clearly acknowledged exceptionally powerful, intimate bonds between these old friends. He reassured Cutler that his continued participation in Utah Mormonism was valued highly; and he counseled Cutler to bring his family and followers west as soon as possible, but he did not revoke the high council's sanctions.

27. Jorgensen, "Conflict in the Camps of Israel," 46-58. Father Cutler, like many of the Indian missionaries and other followers, was in poor health and impoverished. They were weary from years of pioneering and religious persecution. Cutler had become increasingly committed to a band of zealots and felt responsible for them. They were fully committed to a

mostly orthodox form of Nauvoo Mormonism, including substantial portions of the temple theology, but through prolonged conflict with the high council, they had formulated somewhat distinctive claims and doctrines. Few of the Cutlerites, unlike their leader, participated in plural marriage; yet most of them were intimately familiar with its practice by close friends and other family members (brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, cousins, and so on), and increasingly they found it revolting. The Cutlerites experienced the directives of the Iowa High Council as tyrannical. They had become disdainful of its legitimacy and the larger "Brighamite" movement.

28. This location served Alpheus Cutler, his families, and some of his followers as a more or less permanent home. Cutler and a few brethren moved back and forth between Silver Creek and the Kansas Indian Mission from 1848 to about 1851. Some of the missionaries, like Lewis Denna, lived at the mission constantly, while others spent a few weeks, months, or perhaps a year there. Many of Cutler's subsequent followers were scattered near and far among other Mormon settlements along the Missouri.

29. Christensen, *Mt. Pisgah*, 182-86, 213-14. F. Walter Cox, like other Mormons—such as Edwin Whiting—who stopped at Silver Creek and then continued to the Valley, was interrelated by kinship with the Cutlerites. Unlike their Cutlerites kinfolk, Cox and Whiting had plural wives, a fact that propelled them to the West.

30. William Arthur Cox, "Biography," 179-80, in Christensen, *Mt. Pisgah*.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Mills County*, 92.

33. Christensen, *Mt. Pisgah*, 184.

34. Cordelia Morley Cox, as quoted in Christensen, *Mt. Pisgah*, 182.

35. William Arthur Cox, "Biography," in Christensen, *Mt. Pisgah*, 179.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Mills County*, 92, reports that "Cutler built the first flour mill to utilize the water power of Silver Creek." Whether this is the mill described by Cordelia Morley Cox below or a later mill built by the Saints on this site is not clear. Later, in 1856, Aaron Lewis dammed Silver Creek at this approximate location and built the "Rock Ford Mill." It subsequently was updated by George Patrick, renamed after him, and used until it was torn down in 1912.

38. Wortman, *Ghost Towns*, 26.

39. Cordelia Morley Cox, as quoted in Christensen, *Mt. Pisgah*, 182.

40. Christensen, *Mt. Pisgah*, 179-86. Also, see Scott Stevens, "Almon Whiting: Rural Chairmaker," *Otter Tail Record* (Fergus Falls, Minnesota: Otter Tail County Historical Society) 8 (Summer 1987): 4 pages.

41. Fletcher and Fletcher, *Alpheus Cutler*, 44.

42. Also see Pliny Fisher, *Book of Patriarchal Blessings, 1849-1859* (Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Library-Archives); and Jorgensen, "The Fiery Darts of the Adversary," 67-83. Alpheus Cutler ordained Pliny Fisher to the office of patriarch in 1849. Although this appears to contradict the Fletchers' history, it is entirely likely that Cutler conducted this ordination as a Mormon high priest. The Cutlerite Church was not formally organized until 19 September 1853.

43. Several babies, including newborn Edward Warren Cox, were buried here. See Christensen, *Mt. Pisgah*, 183.

44. *Mills County*, 5, 92-3. This cemetery is called "East Liberty" today. According to this report, "In 1847 a Mormon village was established one-half mile west and south of the present cemetery. Several died the first winter and were buried about 1/4 mile south and 1/4 west of the present cemetery." Some of the unmarked graves, thought to be Mormon, are located "in the north central area of the cemetery," while others were "discovered northwest to southeast . . . just over the fence directly south of the main door of the church."

45. Jorgensen, "Conflict in the Camps of Israel," 56-58; Fletcher and Fletcher, *Alpheus Cutler*, 46-48.

46. Christensen, *Mt. Pisgah*, 183-84.

47. Jorgensen, "Conflict in the Camps of Israel," 60-61. What this means, exactly, is not clear. Luana Hart Beebe Rockwell, one of his wives, and her children (including two, Jacob and Olive, by Cutler) resided among the Cutlerites for many years thereafter. The present-day Cutlerites deny that Alpheus Cutler ever participated in plural marriage. However, referring to those who remained at Silver Creek, Fletcher and Fletcher, *Alpheus Cutler*, 44, revealed that: "The first task was to eradicate any taint of plural marriage. Few families had escaped the embarrassment and humility of having daughters espoused as plural wives to leading men of the church, or suffered the shame of seeing sons, brothers, or fathers participate in the practice."

48. Fletcher and Fletcher, *Alpheus Cutler*, 46.

49. Fletcher and Fletcher, *Alpheus Cutler*, 55-63; Danny L. Jorgensen, "The Cutlerites of Iowa, 1846-1865: A Mormon Schism on the American Frontier," paper presented to the John Whitmer Historical Association, Shenandoah, Iowa, 25 September 1992; and Jorgensen, "The Scattered Saints of Southwestern Iowa: Cutlerite-Josephite Conflict and Rivalry, 1855-1865," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 13 (1993): 80-97.

50. Jorgensen, "The Scattered Saints of Southwestern Iowa," 80-97; Jorgensen, "The Cutlerites of Iowa, 1846-1865"; and Jorgensen, "North from Zion: The Minnesota Cutlerites, 1864-1964," paper presented to the Mormon History Association, St. George, Utah, May 1992. The Cutlerite Church at Manti attracted Mormons and former Mormons who remained scattered along the Missouri and over Iowa, including most of the Saints at Farm Creek (three miles east of present-day Henderson, Mills County, Iowa). By 1859, nearly five hundred people, most of them former Mormons, were members or affiliates of the Cutlerite Church. During the late 1850s, the Cutlerites established a short-lived colony on the Platte River in Taylor County about thirty miles east of Manti. Known locally as "Mormontown," it was superseded by the current town of Blockton. Although Alpheus Cutler rejected the overtures of former Mormons in the Midwest to join a reorganization of the Church, by 1860, when Joseph Smith III assumed

leadership, at least half of the people belonging to or affiliating with the Cutlerites, including most of the Farm Creek Saints, had joined the rival "Josephites" (what became the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints). Following Alpheus Cutler's death in August 1864, the Iowa Cutlerites splintered again. About 125 of the remaining members (about one-half of the movement) moved five hundred miles north, founding the town of Clitherall and becoming the first permanent white settlers of Otter Tail County, Minnesota. The Cutlerites who remained in Iowa joined the Josephites (or Reorganization), became inactive, or in a few instances affiliated with the Protestants. The railroad passed by Manti, leading to its decline and eventual replacement by the present-day town of Shenandoah.

51. *Mills County*, 5, 92. According to this report: "Quite a community arose around the mill." The report continues: "George Patrick, Lee Adams, and some others living up the Silver Creek were talking of laying out a new town in the vicinity of the Patrick Mill and 'making a pull for the county seat.'"

52. *Mills County*, 5, 92-93. Called the "East Liberty Church," it was founded in 1857. The current building, known as the "Liberty Methodist Church of the Silver Creek Circuit," was dedicated in 1875.