

# The Great Florence Fitout of 1861

William G. Hartley

Despite what historical markers, history books, and local Saints say, the story of Mormonism in Florence, Nebraska, does not end by 1860. Most versions of the trek west emphasize the Winter Quarters experience—and overemphasize the tragic elements; a quick postscript usually adds that after 1852 the area had but slight importance to the Saints, being only a place Latter-day Saint emigrants, including the handcart pioneers, passed through on their way west. But a large chapter is missing, a chapter which might be called the Florence story, as opposed to the Winter Quarters story. The Florence story covers the years 1859–63, when Florence became a busy outfitting center each May, June, and July for crowds of LDS travelers. The Florence story involves nearly ten thousand Saints, thousands of tons of supplies, at least fifty-five skillfully organized wagon companies, one thousand wagons, thousands of cattle, corrals, LDS boweries, stores, storage buildings, river docks, and steamboat arrivals. In contrast to the troubled Winter Quarters story, the Florence story speaks positively of careful planning and successful LDS ventures. The following account of the 1861 outfittings should demonstrate that the Florence story deserves mention in tourist literature and history books, as well as its own markers and monuments.

## FLORENCE

On 30 April 1861, a fifty-year-old Vermonter, Elder Jacob Gates, stepped down the gangplank from the riverboat *Westwind* at Omaha, Nebraska Territory. Elder Gates, four months earlier, had received written orders while in England to sail to the United States and go to Florence, Nebraska, to supervise the frontier outfittings for the 1861 LDS emigration season. By early February Elder Nathaniel V. Jones,

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assigned to be LDS emigration agent in New York City, and Jacob Gates reached New York. By March they had negotiated railroad contracts with the New York and Erie Railroad to carry LDS passengers that spring to Florence. Jacob Gates left Nathaniel Jones and traveled to Chicago, where he called on Peter Schuttler, a wagon manufacturer who had supplied Mormons with wagons in previous seasons, and ordered 111 Schuttler wagons for \$7300, or about \$65 per wagon. Then he contracted with the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad to freight the wagons, unassembled, from Chicago to Florence. Gates then rode to Omaha by train and riverboat. Without home, office, or clerk, he walked into Omaha, intent on creating an outfitting camp at Florence, six miles upriver, from which thousands of Latter-day Saint emigrants could load into hundreds of covered wagons and depart for Utah Territory in May, June, and July.<sup>1</sup>

During his first two weeks in Nebraska, Gates shuttled between Omaha, Florence, and Bluff City (Council Bluffs, Iowa) making arrangements to purchase supplies. On 13 April, he interrupted his errands to pay a heart-hurting visit to a special spot in Florence where fourteen years before he had buried his wife Caroline and daughter Mary Elizabeth—two of hundreds of Mormons who died there in early 1847.

Since those dark Winter Quarters days when the bluffs and shorelands had buzzed with Mormon activities, the place had not prospered. A ghost town soon after Mormons moved out in 1848, Winter Quarters in 1856 had received new energy and a new name—in honor of Florence Kilbourn, niece of a land promoter—when land speculators had sought in vain to have the tiny village named Nebraska's capital city and the terminal city for the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad. During the late 1850s, only Mormon immigration had pumped seasonal summer life into the town. Handcart companies had rested and repaired carts there in 1856. Florence was the main LDS outfitting point from 1857 to 1863. Census takers in 1860 counted 1,158 Florentines, many of them Mormons waiting to move west. Omaha City, with 1,883 residents, was barely bigger. Elder Gates probably saw in Florence four stores, the Florence House and the Willard House hotels, the post office, and the doctor, lawyer, and druggist offices which, records tell, the town claimed in the late 1850s. More apparent to Gates, however, were several deserted

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<sup>1</sup>Jacob Gates, *Diary*, microfilm of holograph, entries for late 1860 and early 1861, Library-Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives.



buildings with broken windows—roofs which could shelter many travelers without cost.<sup>2</sup>

Much more vibrant than Florence was Bluff City, a ferryboat ride east seven hundred feet across the churning, muddy Missouri River. The 1859 Pikes Peak gold rush had funneled approximately fifteen thousand people through Bluff City, triggering a boom in hotel and business openings. In 1860, steamboat traffic had increased, bringing nearly one thousand immigrants per week to the city, from which about fifty wagons per day pulled out and crossed the Missouri on two steam ferries—each of which often hauled twelve wagon outfits per trip during twenty to thirty trips a day. Gates soon discovered as 1861 progressed that the 1860 Bluff City traffic patterns resumed. Stores there would receive much business that season from Gates and other LDS outfitters.<sup>3</sup>

Florence replaced Iowa City, outfitting site for the 1856 handcart companies, because, LDS agents discovered, travel by train across Missouri and by boat upriver to Florence was easier than traveling overland from Iowa City. That 275-mile stretch of Iowa “in point of toil and hardship, was by far the worst part of the journey, owing to its being a low wet country, that in the opening of the year was subject to heavy and continued rains” that made clay soil and roads “almost impassable.”<sup>4</sup>

Gates, while looking east for immigrants to arrive and west for Utah wagon trains, looked southeast at growing war clouds and worried. With the election of Abraham Lincoln as United States president the previous November, southern states seceded from the Union. Lincoln’s inauguration in March escalated Southern belligerence, until on 14 April South Carolinian forces captured federal Fort Sumter—the shooting war had started. Gates, who heard about Fort Sumter’s fall while he was in Missouri on his way to Omaha, carried a copy of Joseph Smith’s 1832 prophecy about a civil war starting in South Carolina. Gates had read that prophecy to a Wall Street lawyer friend on 9 February while in New York City. But he wondered if the prophecy’s promise about “war being poured forth upon all nations”

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<sup>2</sup>Arthur C. Wakeley, ed., *Omaha: The Gate City and Douglas County, Nebraska, a Record of Settlement, Organization, Progress, and Achievement* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1917), 1:417–18; Addison E. Sheldon, ed., *Nebraska Blue Book and Historical Register* (Lincoln: State Journal Co., 1915), 613; Donald F. Danker, “The Nebraska Winter Quarters Company and Florence,” *Nebraska History* 37 (March 1956): 49; Samuel A. Woolley, Diary, holograph, LDS Church Archives (Woolley stayed at the Willard House Hotel on 1 July 1861). Also, Andrew Jenson, “Florence,” *Encyclopedic History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Co., 1941), 252.

<sup>3</sup>Walker D. Wyman, “Council Bluffs and the Westward Movement,” *Iowa Journal of History* 47 (1949): 114–18.

<sup>4</sup>Andrew Jenson, “Church Emigration, III: 1860,” typescript, LDS Church Archives.



might occur while LDS immigrants were trying to reach Florence during the ensuing weeks.<sup>5</sup>

War news helped Elder Gates and William Martindale and James Wareham, two Utah elders working in the Bluff City area, warm up local Mormons to the idea of "fleeing to safety" in Utah. "I have been quite astonished to find so many people who once belonged to the church," Gates wrote to Utah friends on 12 April. The two elders, he noted, "have gathered up the remnants, which has been left from England, Scotland, Wales, Denmark, Sweden, and from almost every other place," and "have organized several branches of the church, forming a conference numbering several hundred souls, who are anxious to gather to the valleys of Utah."<sup>6</sup>

Among the "remnants" were Mercy and Charles G. Keetch, newlyweds in December 1860. She had emigrated from England in 1860 but stopped to winter in Florence.<sup>7</sup> Edwin Stratford, who had dropped out of the 1856 handcart companies, became a woodchopper and the branch president in Iowa City. He joined the 1861 emigration. Rebecca Sanderson, another 1856 emigrant, had stopped in Florence while her husband filled a mission. He had returned in 1859, but they were too poor to travel on to Utah. He worked in St. Louis until the spring of 1861. She continued to work at the Pacific House Hotel in Bluff City, as did her daughters.<sup>8</sup>

William E. Jones, who had worked in the area since 1855 and was president of the Crescent City Branch, wrote in his diary before joining the 1861 migration to Utah:

I hope to go to the valley this year. I shall have to go with the Church teams as I have none of my own. I have a wagon and a cow and flour enough to last me across the plains. I have been trying for many years to get a team to go on my own means but I am tired of waiting although it seems very probable that by waiting another year I might be able to go, but I do not like to risk it as I have been disappointed so often.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Joseph Smith, while pondering the troubles America was having regarding slavery in the southern states, received a vocal revelation "concerning the war that will shortly come to pass," beginning with a rebellion in South Carolina, after which "Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States." War would cause "the deaths and misery of many souls," so Saints were warned to "stand in holy places." Not contained in early editions of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants (now section 87), the revelation circulated in handwritten copy form until printed in England in 1851. Joseph Smith reiterated the prophecy just before his death in 1844 (see Gates Diary, 9 February 1861).

<sup>6</sup>Gates to Editors of *Deseret News*, 12 April 1861, copy in Journal History, entry that date, MS, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>7</sup>"They Came in 1861," *Our Pioneer Heritage* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1962), 5:32-33.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>William Ellis Jones, Diary, 28 June 1861, typescript, Utah Historical Society, Salt Lake City.



## THE "DOWN AND BACK" PLAN

In 1860 Brigham Young decided to create a new, less expensive method for moving people and freight to Utah. That year, as an experiment, he sent his nephew, Joseph W. Young, with Utah wagons and oxen down to Florence to pick up passengers and freight and bring them back to Utah. Joseph's trip proved that Utah oxen could make the round trip "down and back" without difficulty and that they hauled better on the return trip to Utah than did Missouri oxen unused to trail travel. In June 1860 Brigham told Utah bishops the "down and back" idea "promises to be very beneficial."<sup>10</sup> That August he predicted the plan would be a "good policy" for 1861 emigration.<sup>11</sup> When the year 1861 opened, Brigham called Utah Territory legislators into a meeting at his new schoolhouse and explained the detailed workings of the plan.<sup>12</sup> Then, in February, in order to launch Utah trains by April, he sent a detailed printed circular letter to all LDS bishops.<sup>13</sup>

Three related problems produced this innovation, each caused by Utah's cash-poor situation: the high cash cost of annual immigration, the high cash cost of buying imported necessities from gentile merchandisers, and a surplus of Utah cattle that could not be turned into cash locally. The "down and back" wagon trains, therefore, had three purposes: (1) to bring west poor immigrants at low cost, (2) to bring west goods purchased cheaply in the East, and (3) to move surplus Utah oxen and flour east to Florence to be sold or traded for goods.<sup>14</sup>

Since Nauvoo days, Church leaders had labored to fulfill a promise made in the temple that they would "not cease our operations until we gathered the [poor] Saints." To aid the poor, a revolving loan fund—the Perpetual Emigrating Fund (PEF)—had been created in 1849. Then, lacking loan funds by the mid-1850s, leaders had created a handcart scheme as a cheap way to move people to Utah. By 1860, however, the PEF was still low, and the handcart method had unpopular drawbacks. Lacking wagons, the handcart pioneers could not bring many cherished belongings with them; handcart pullers and walkers

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<sup>10</sup>Brigham Young to Edward Hunter and Utah Bishops, June 1860, Brigham Young Letterbook, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>11</sup>Brigham Young to John Van Cott, 9 August 1860, Brigham Young Letterbooks.

<sup>12</sup>Brigham Young Talk, 14 January 1861, Brigham Young Sermons, typescript, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>13</sup>First Presidency to Bishop Hunter and Utah Bishops, February 1861, Circular Letter, Brigham Young Letterbooks.

<sup>14</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 205–11.



who became weak suffered unnecessarily by not being able to ride; and the handcart people lacked sufficient food, clothing, and shelter. But to purchase wagons, oxen, and food near the Missouri was too costly for the Church. The average cash cost per emigrant head from Liverpool to New York, Brigham Young told Utah legislators early in 1861, was \$20; from New York to Florence, \$15; and “the transportation from Florence involves the cash outlay of \$50 per person for cattle, wagon, and outfit.”<sup>15</sup>

In the new plan, “down and back” wagons would be provided at practically no cash cost to the Church. Wards in Utah would raise the outfits—wagons, teamsters and their provisions, yokes, oxen, chains—and “loan” them to the Church for a down-and-back trip to Florence. In return, wards would receive tithing labor credits of about \$450 per outfit. The wagons would not travel “down” empty; instead, they would haul sacks of flour to be deposited at storage cabins on the way down and then picked up on the way back to feed the immigrants. The flour, too, would be donated by Utah wards in return for tithing credits. To balance out the loss of tithing revenue thus credited, poor immigrants would be charged a small fee for the trip to Utah, on credit as a loan from the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company.<sup>16</sup> President Young felt the new plan would move the poor from Liverpool to Salt Lake City “for about one half the usual cash outlay.” The plan, he said, would “increase our immigration” and “place most of the burden here [in Utah] to the great relief of the poor Saints abroad.” Being a realist, he doubted the poor would repay their debts once in Utah. “I do not suppose we have gathered one cent to a thousand dollars in money that we have paid out,” he said, referring to previous PEF loans; “it is almost impossible to get anything back.” However, tithing credit rates for Utah outfits did not overly concern him: “Our object is to gather the people together, and establish the Kingdom of God, we do not care how it works.”<sup>17</sup>

“If all who are able, who are generally the great majority, will walk across the plains,” Brigham predicted, “each wagon can haul the bedding, groceries, meat, clothing, and other requisite articles, for from 8 to 10 persons, to the amount of from 150 to 200 pounds to each person, exclusive of bread stuff except sufficient to last from station to station, as it is contemplated to forward flour by the train

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<sup>15</sup>Brigham Young Talk, 14 January 1861.

<sup>16</sup>Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company, Church Team Accounts, 1861, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>17</sup>Brigham Young to Nathaniel V. Jones and Jacob Gates, 20 December 1860, Brigham Young Letter-books; Brigham Young to John Van Cott, 9 August 1860; Brigham Young Talk, 14 January 1861.



on its way down, to be deposited at the most suitable safe points on the route.”<sup>18</sup> No longer would emigrants “idly tarry” on the frontier for lack of teams to reach Utah, unless unwilling to do “leg service.”<sup>19</sup>

Besides transporting the poor, the Utah trains, as a second purpose, would provide a low-cost freighting system for importing machinery and products purchased at cheaper, eastern prices. Brigham listed for Utah bishops some cost differences between items purchased in St. Louis and in Salt Lake City. Rice, he said, was ten times more expensive in Utah, sugar three times, lard oil six to eight times, linseed oil eight to eleven times, soap six to ten times, stoves eight times, factory cloth three times, and other goods “in like proportion.”<sup>20</sup> While wagons loaned by wards for the “down and back” trip would haul passengers, President Young urged wards and individuals to send extra outfits loaded with flour or accompanied by oxen to sell, the proceeds of which could purchase low-cost goods to import. Such goods, even with transportation costs tacked on, would require no cash outlay by cash-poor Utahns and would arrive at cheaper costs—no gentile retail markup added.

In addition to transporting immigrants and eastern goods, the Utah trains, as a third purpose, would allow Utah cattle to be herded with the trains and sold in the Florence area. Knowing many, if not most, immigrants would travel with their own outfits in “independent” LDS companies—not Utah trains—leaders worried about the high costs in cash to obtain enough cattle for the independents. For Jacob Gates and others to purchase wagons for them ahead of time or when they arrived would be expensive enough—some cash as well as credit was required by Schuttler and others. But one good ox cost almost as much as one wagon, so four oxen per wagon was a sizable cash outlay. If Utah could not send down cash for agents to use to buy cattle, surplus Utah cattle could be herded to Florence and sold to immigrants wanting to purchase teams. In this way Utahns could turn their cattle into cash and buy articles at reasonable rates and freight them to Utah—using four unsold oxen and a wagon purchased by proceeds from the sale of surplus oxen. Brigham Young expected Utahns could sell ten to thirty thousand dollars’ worth of stock at Florence in 1861. “People can gather to themselves mines of wealth, if they will do it,” he promised.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Brigham Young to Hunter and Bishops, June 1860.

<sup>19</sup>Brigham Young to Erastus Snow, 21 March 1861, Brigham Young Letterbooks.

<sup>20</sup>Brigham Young to Hunter and Bishops, June 1860.

<sup>21</sup>Brigham Young to Hunter and Bishops, February 1861.



President Young liked the new plan and what it promised to accomplish. It was the best possible system, he said, "at least until money is much plentier in our hands, for which we see no immediate prospect." "More of the poor and more machinery and other useful articles can be brought from the frontiers, with a given amount of money, by this method than by any other now within our reach." Overall the endeavor "is easy on the whole of us," even if immigrants failed to pay their loans back. Sensing bishops, to whom he explained the plan, liked it as much as he did, he asked them: "Does it feel soft to their gizzards or does it grind on them and give them pain?" The plan, he told bishops, was "fraught, in our judgment, with general benefit."<sup>22</sup>

The February 1861 circular letter contained very specific instructions to bishops.<sup>23</sup> Regarding wagons, it called for "the best Chicago make," with two-inch iron axletrees, bows, and good covers. Oxen should be unshod but sent with eight thin ox shoes per team and the requisite number of nails. Each of the four projected companies needed four mounted men to manage, graze, and water the unyoked animals. Teamsters should be skilled men responsible for a ward's outfit—the Church would not be responsible for it. For hauling flour, wards would receive \$10 per hundred pounds to Florence and \$15 from Florence. To be properly outfitted, the circular continued, ward teams should have for each wagon a tar can, one gallon of grease, a five- or ten-gallon water keg, and two good whips. Teamsters should be supplied with two hundred and fifty pounds flour, forty pounds bacon, forty pounds dried beef, ten pounds sugar, four pounds coffee, one pound tea, some butter, four quarts beans, one bar of soap, four pounds yeast cake, salt, a good buffalo robe, two good blankets, one gallon vinegar in a stone jug, pickles, two good pairs of boots or shoes plus boot grease, three pairs good pants, six shirts, five pairs socks, three overshirts, coats as needed, needles and thread, and a good gun—preferably a double-barreled shotgun—with sufficient powder, balls, and shot. For each wagon, wards were told to give \$10 to the train captain for "necessities" at Florence and for ferriage fees.

To set a proper example, Brigham Young volunteered ten teams himself. He told Salt Lakers in February: "I want this city to raise fifty wagons with four yoke of oxen to each."<sup>24</sup> In March he praised

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<sup>22</sup>Brigham Young to Hunter and Bishops, June 1860; Brigham Young Talk, 14 January 1861; Brigham Young to Hunter and Bishops, February 1861.

<sup>23</sup>Brigham Young to Hunter and Bishops, February 1861.

<sup>24</sup>Brigham Young Talk, 3 February 1861, Brigham Young Sermons, typescript, LDS Church Archives.



city Saints: “We got all we asked for and more.” He also cautioned that “if you grudgingly put forth your means to help gather the Saints, it will be a curse to you.”<sup>25</sup>

By 16 April, ward teams began to arrive in Salt Lake City—four teams from Parowan and Tocquerville came that day. Some wagons carried wheat for city mills to grind into flour for the trip. On 20 April, ox teams from Ogden and Grantsville started for the rendezvous point at the mouth of Parley’s Canyon. The next day, a Sunday—the day when news reached Utah of the fall of Fort Sumter and the outbreak of the Civil War—Brigham Young instructed local bishops to send repair crews into Parley’s Canyon to improve the road for the ox trains. On 22 April, several teams from city wards joined the encampment.<sup>26</sup> “The town has been alive for a few days with wagons and teams neatly and substantially fitted up,” a leader noted on 23 April.<sup>27</sup> The “cheerfulness, liberality, and alacrity with which so many teams are furnished and so many men sent forth” pleased the First Presidency.<sup>28</sup>

On 23 April, the Presidency visited the encampment, installing four wagon train captains: Joseph W. Young, Joseph Horne, Ira Eldredge, and John R. Murdock. These were seasoned trail men, “leaders of the right stripe . . . men who had crossed the Plains, understand camp life and the Indians, and are not afraid of the devils.”<sup>29</sup> Young, age thirty-two, had led the experimental “down and back” ox train the year before; Horne, forty-nine, was an 1847 pioneer and experienced colonizer; Eldredge, forty-one, had been an 1847 pioneer; Murdock, thirty-four, was a Mormon Battalion veteran who had carried mail for the Brigham Young express company to Missouri in the 1850s and helped with the handcart rescues in 1856. The four trains began their trek “down” to Florence that afternoon.<sup>30</sup>

After the outfitting dust settled, the First Presidency received the following figures concerning the four trains:<sup>31</sup>

Companies	4	Public teamsters	194
Public wagons	183	Private teamsters	23
Private wagons	20	Guards	16–18
Public oxen	1,575	Flour for deposit	136,000 lbs.
Private oxen	124	Flour for expenses or sale	34,348 lbs.

<sup>25</sup>3 March 1861, Journal History.

<sup>26</sup>20, 21, and 22 April 1861 entries, Journal History.

<sup>27</sup>George A. Smith to John Smith, 23 April 1861, Historian’s Office Letterbook, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>28</sup>First Presidency to W. H. Hooper, 18 April 1861, Brigham Young Letterbooks.

<sup>29</sup>John D. T. McAllister Statement, Journal History, 30 July 1861.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Brigham Young to George Q. Cannon, 9 May 1861, Brigham Young Letterbooks.

A different total, 185 teams rather than 183, comes from the Perpetual Emigrating Fund tithing credit ledgers for 1861, which name each teamster sent by each ward. Table 1 (on page 351) shows that seventy-five communities sent at least one team—nearly every ward in the Church.<sup>32</sup> The list proves what historian Richard Jensen observed concerning the “down and back” system: “For the first time, the Mormon community as a whole became effectively involved in promoting immigration from Europe.”<sup>33</sup>

The First Presidency gave the four captains letters of instructions which set rules for their companies. Swearing, drunkenness, gambling, contention, and unreasonable whipping or abuse of cattle were not to be allowed. Troublemakers should be “turned out of the company.” Guards should be provided with sleeping facilities in wagons during the day, and their riding animals should not be ridden during daytime except for “necessity.” The four companies should stay within a few hours’ distance for mutual security. At Florence the companies should camp on high ground three or four miles above the Missouri River and near good running water. Teamsters were required to give their captains receipts detailing kind and weight of freight loaded into their wagons at Florence. All men in the companies should keep their guns and ammunition “in good conditions for use at a moment’s notice.”<sup>34</sup>

Through some rain, snow, and mud, the companies rolled through Utah and Wyoming mountains eastward towards Florence. Instructed to select “three or four safe places” to deposit flour between South Pass and Wood River in Nebraska, the companies unloaded flour sacks at or near Rocky Ridge Station, the North Platte Bridge (present Casper), and Deer Creek, all in Wyoming, and at Wind River Center in Nebraska.<sup>35</sup>

#### EUROPEAN EMIGRATION

The year 1861 was the twenty-first emigration season for European Latter-day Saints. Saints there were taught in late 1860, and earlier, “that emigration should directly follow faith, repentance, baptism, the laying on of hands, and tithing, so soon as the way consistently

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<sup>32</sup>PEF, Church Team Accounts, 1861.

<sup>33</sup>Richard L. Jensen, “The Financing of Mormon Emigration in the Nineteenth Century,” unpublished paper in the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History files, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

<sup>34</sup>First Presidency to Joseph W. Young, 15 April 1861, Brigham Young Letterbooks.

<sup>35</sup>Flour drop points are identified in 1861 entries in the following diaries at the LDS Church Archives: Samuel A. Woolley, Thomas Griggs (Horne Company), Frederick W. Blake (Eldredge Company) and Zebulon Jacobs (Young Company).



TABLE ONE  
UTAH AND IDAHO WARDS AND NUMBER OF WAGONS SENT FOR 1861 EMIGRANTS

SOUTHERN UTAH	8	Provo Valley	2	Herriman	1	WEBER-DAVIS COUNTIES	30
Beaver	4	Santaquin	1	Millcreek	4	Centerville	4
Cedar City	1	Spanish Fork	3	South Cottonwood	1	East Weber	1
Harmony	1	Springville	4	Sugarhouse	2	Farmington	4
Parowan	2	SALT LAKE VALLEY	48	Union	1	Kaysville	2
CENTRAL UTAH	27	First Ward	2	West Jordan	2	Ogden	11
Ephraim	4	Second Ward	1			North Canyon	4
Fillmore	5	Third Ward	1	TOOELE-GRANTSVILLE	8	North Ogden	1
Manti	4	Fourth Ward	1	Grantsville	4	North Willowcreek	1
Mt. Pleasant	3	Sixth Ward	1	Tooele	4	South Willowcreek	1
Moroni	4	Seventh Ward	1			Weber Valley	1
Nephi	6	Eighth Ward	2				
Springtown	1	Ninth Ward	2	NORTHERN UTAH	26		
UTAH COUNTY	38	Tenth Ward	1	Box Elder	4	GRAND TOTAL	185
Alpine	1	Eleventh Ward	1	Franklin (Idaho)	1		
American Fork	4	Twelfth Ward	2	Hyde Park	1		
Battle Creek	1	Thirteenth Ward	5	Hyrum	1		
Cedar Fort	1	Fourteenth Ward	4	Logan	5		
Goshen	2	Fifteenth Ward	2	Mendon	1		
Lehi	5	Sixteenth Ward	2	Paradise	1		
Payson	4	Seventeenth Ward	2	Providence	2		
Pleasant Grove	1	Eighteenth Ward	1	Richmond	3		
Pondtown	1	Nineteenth Ward	3	Smithfield	2		
Provo	8	Twentieth Ward	2	Wellsville	3		
		Big Cottonwood	1	Willard	2		

Source: PEF 1861 Tithing Credit Accounts,  
LDS Church Archives.

opens.” Some converts, like William Jefferies, felt “a burning in my very bones” that they should emigrate in 1861. Charles Penrose, who penned the hymn “O Ye Mountains High” in 1854 despite never having seen Utah, in 1861 very much “longed to your bosom to flee,” and did. Others longed to leave but could not afford the trip. “Many have been quite a number of years in the Church and are weary to go home to Zion,” George Teasdale said regarding Scottish Saints in February 1861, but were too “poor in their circumstances.” In England, a leader noted that “the poor are in quite straightened circumstances on account of being more or less thrown out of employment through the stringency of the times.”<sup>36</sup>

During the winter of 1860–61, hundreds in the British Isles, Scandinavia, and on the continent signed LDS emigration lists and deposited ticket money hoping to emigrate that season. They expected to pay their own fares to Utah. “Down and back” teams, they had heard, were possible, but certain word the teams were coming did not reach Europe in time for many to make plans to use that aid.

Three LDS chartered emigrant companies sailed in April and May from Liverpool in 1861:

CHARTERED EMIGRANT COMPANIES

Ship	Est. LDS Passengers	Leave Liverpool	Arrive New York
<i>Manchester</i>	380	16 April	15 May
<i>Underwriter</i>	624	23 April	22 May
<i>Monarch of the Sea</i>	<u>955</u>	16 May	19 June
Total	1959		

An analysis of 1,779 of the passengers on which there is data shows that 53 percent were females and that 59 percent were age twenty or older.

	M	% Total	F	% Total age Total	% Group	% Total
Age 20 plus	482	27%	568	32%	1050	59%
Age 10–19	167	9%	166	10%	333	19%
Age 1–9	156	9%	164	9%	320	18%
Infants	35	2%	41	2%	76	4%
Totals	840	47%	939	53%	1779	100%

<sup>36</sup>Brigham Young to Amasa Lyman, et al., 25 September 1860, Brigham Young Letterbooks; William Jefferies, Journal, reminiscences of 1860, typescript, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University; British Mission, Manuscript History, 20 February 1861, LDS Church Archives; Brigham Young to Walter M. Gibson, 2 April 1861, Brigham Young Letterbooks.



LDS agents in Liverpool tried to schedule the three vessels so the companies could reach New York in time to travel to Florence to meet the Utah wagons. The *Monarch*, delayed because 580 Scandinavian Saints were late leaving Copenhagen, docked in New York almost too late to allow the Saints to meet the Florence schedule.<sup>37</sup>

#### EASTERN UNITED STATES EMIGRANTS

During the winter of 1860–61, Apostles Erastus Snow and Orson Pratt labored in the eastern United States to fire up lukewarm members. They baptized “probably a couple hundred or more,” most of whom “are old hangers on, children of Saints and apostates returning to the fold, a few fresh recruits from Babylon and they, chiefly foreigners, resident in the States.” The preaching helped, Elder Snow said, “though by far the loudest sermon is being preached by Him who long ago said He would come forth from His hiding place to vex the nation”—referring to the eruption of the Civil War.<sup>38</sup>

Diary entries by Lucius Scovil, a missionary in the New York area, tell how he and others reacted to day-by-day news about the outbreak of war. On 15 April, he “learned that the Confederate States had taken Fort Sumter by bombardment” and that President Lincoln had “ordered out 75,000 troops to defend the country great excitement prevails here.” Pondering how literally this event fulfilled Joseph Smith’s 1832 prophecy, he tucked a copy of that prophecy into letters he wrote to non-LDS relatives. On 25 April, amid news reports of ship sinkings and casualties, he wrote: “The utmost consternation prevails throughout the country here. War! War and blood is the cry.” The next day he recorded that an anonymous letter with threats against the Saints prompted Elders Pratt and Snow to cancel public LDS meetings in the New York City area. Elder Scovil advised local Saints on 28 April “to wind up their business and leave Babylon, which they all intend to do this spring.”<sup>39</sup>

In the New York City area, Prussian-born Bernhard Schettler, baptized in 1860, converted a cluster of German families—the Bitters, Schlesselmans, Bluemells, Schneiders and others. Schettler then prepared his flock to emigrate to Utah that season.<sup>40</sup> In Philadelphia,

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<sup>37</sup>Typescripts of the three vessels’ passenger lists are in the British Mission, Manuscript History, 1861 entries.

<sup>38</sup>Erastus Snow to George A. Smith, 26 June 1861, Journal History.

<sup>39</sup>Lucius Scovil, Diary, 28 April 1861, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>40</sup>Bernhard Schettler, Memorandum Book, photocopy of holograph, entries for 1860 and 1861, LDS Church Archives.

the conference president, John D. T. McAllister, also readied several hundred Saints for the upcoming emigration.<sup>41</sup>

The Apostles instructed eastern Saints to join into one emigration company. On 11 June, a rainy day, about sixty Boston Saints reached Manhattan and spent the day crossing the Hudson River on steam tugs. New York Saints also ferried over to the Jersey City depot of the New York and Erie Railroad. About 10:00 P.M. nearly seven hundred eastern Saints began their ten-day train trip towards Florence.<sup>42</sup> At Elmira, New York, the next day, Elder McAllister and about three hundred Pennsylvania Saints joined the Eastern Company.<sup>43</sup>

Theirs was the third of four large train companies of Saints that season. Previously the *Manchester* and *Underwriter* companies had traveled the same New York to Quincy, Illinois, tracks. Later, on 20 June, nearly nine hundred Europeans, the *Monarch* Company, would follow the same route. According to Apostle Snow, the Eastern Company's departure left branches in the East as "but skeletons of what they were a few weeks ago."<sup>44</sup>

#### OVERLAND AND UPRIVER

Thomas Griggs, an England-born teenager from Boston, kept a detailed diary of the Eastern Company's trip to Florence. He described well both the inconveniences of the travels and the evidences of war which the train travelers found.<sup>45</sup> During the first night, he wrote, friction caused wheels on the fast-rolling train to catch fire, and several fires were bucketed out. The next night, near Hornellville, New York, a Brother Slack from Boston wrestled with a man disturbing Sister Slack, and both men fell from the train. Brother Slack later died from head injuries. At Dunkirk, near Cleveland, Ohio, the Eastern Company split up. One group loaded into fifteen cars and left. The other group waited overnight for another train. Both groups reunited at Toledo and headed for Chicago on a train of two engines, eight freight cars, and twenty passenger cars. At Chicago they put their luggage in a large warehouse for a short layover. In the Illinois countryside, the company's travel stopped suddenly when the train engine malfunctioned. The next day at Quincy, Illinois, the train tracks ended, stopped by the broad Mississippi River. Travelers

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<sup>41</sup>John D. T. McAllister, Journal, microfilm, 1860–61 entries, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>42</sup>Thomas C. Griggs, Diary, 11 June 1861, typescript, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>43</sup>McAllister Journal, 12 June 1861.

<sup>44</sup>Erastus Snow to George A. Smith, 26 June 1861, Journal History.

<sup>45</sup>Griggs Diary; a condensed and revised version of his diary is found in Journal History, 13 September 1861.



boarded the river steamer *Black Hawk* and floated down twenty miles and across to Hannibal, Missouri.

While waiting for a Missouri train, the company rested, bathed, and straightened out ticket and money problems. Some passengers, short of funds, received loans from Church agents. Missouri was a war zone, and in Hannibal, young Griggs saw home guards protecting a cannon captured from local secessionists. He learned that a secessionist leader was locked in the train depot. He heard troubling reports about Confederate troops in the countryside firing into trains and burning railroad bridges.

Despite war dangers, the company boarded a train and rolled due west for St. Joseph, on Missouri's west border. Griggs said they passed many towns, nearly all guarded. Main bridges had guards, too. At Chillicothe, Missouri, they stopped. "The place presented the appearance of a captured city, all business being entirely suspended and the street patrolled by armed men of every conceivable character of drunkenness. Profanity and obscene songs seemed to be the order of the day." The Missouri ride, Griggs reported, was "over one of the roughest railroads I believe in existence. The jolting almost caused some to strike their heads against the roof of the cars, and causing the boxes to move around in the liveliest manner imaginable." At St. Joseph, the Eastern Company transferred to the river wharf and saw the Missouri River, "a large deep dirty swift running stream carrying along a great number of old trees, logs and brush!" In St. Joseph, "the spirit of secession was prevalent, and a great spirit of distress, suspicion and antagonism seemed uppermost." Secessionist and American flags, Griggs said, took turns going up and down a flagpole there.

From St. Joseph, the Mormons journeyed for two days and two nights up the Missouri River on the *Omaha*, one of the few boats still running despite the war dangers. "The boat was densely crowded and every available spot was occupied by men, women, children, and baggage." One evening a storm forced them to tie up to the shore. On Friday, 21 June, the *Omaha's* paddles churned to a halt at Florence, and the weary eastern Saints looked for places to lodge for a few days in the busy Mormon wagon-and-tent village.

#### FLORENCE OUTFITTINGS: JUNE AND JULY

Meanwhile, in Florence, while Utah trains were rolling east and European Saints traveling west, Jacob Gates prepared for their

arrivals. On 10 April, he contracted with an Omaha merchant named Rodgers for stoves and tinware. On 14 April, he surveyed possible campsites north of Florence. On 24 April, in Omaha, he saw soldiers from Fort Kearney, Nebraska, heading east. "The war spirit is up," he noted; "the people seem anxious and a fear seemes to creap over the nation and a dread of something to come."<sup>46</sup>

In early May, Gates learned about the *Manchester* Saints arriving in New York. He sent David H. Cannon—brother of Apostle George Q. Cannon, newly arrived from England, and soon to be a wagon train captain—down to St. Joseph to shepherd the *Manchester* group to Florence. On 4 May, Gates contacted a Brother Bird to repair the Church corral in Florence.<sup>47</sup> That day he received a letter dated 11 April from Brigham Young informing him to expect two hundred wagons from Utah in late June and instructing him not to buy cattle: "Presume there will be enough driven [from Utah] to nearly, if not quite, supply the demand. Of course, yokes, chains, and wagons will have to be bought for the extra cattle sent for sale."<sup>48</sup> On 11 May, Gates contracted with a Bluff City supplier for 426 sacks of flour and 7,000 pounds of bacon.<sup>49</sup>

On 24 May, Gates's first emigrant group arrived by riverboat—the three hundred Mormons from the *Manchester*, led by Elder Claudius V. Spencer.

Among the English was William Jefferies, whose clerking skills Elder Gates needed and whose diary describes the June outfitting days at Florence. Jefferies wrote that his company reached Florence about noon and "some houses [were] hired for the accommodation of the company. We got our luggage to houses." The next day, 25 May, he collected firewood and bought provisions. Elder Gates hired him that day to be a clerk in Gates's outfitting store, which was stocked with "some hams, bacon, flour, etc. to sell to the Saints."<sup>50</sup>

Elder Gates received a request from Mr. J. J. Creighton, desperate to complete construction of his telegraph lines to Utah in 1861, to hire seventy-five men. Gates contracted to supply the men, who would receive half salaries in advance to aid the men's families and half in November in Utah.<sup>51</sup> (After the Florence outfittings, LDS

<sup>46</sup>Gates Diary, April 1861 entries.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., May entries.

<sup>48</sup>Brigham Young to Jacob Gates, 11 April 1861, Brigham Young Letterbooks.

<sup>49</sup>Gates Diary, 11 May 1861.

<sup>50</sup>Jefferies Journal.

<sup>51</sup>In *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 5:32. The western stretch of the telegraph reached Salt Lake City on 24 October, and Creighton's eastern line on 18 October.



wagon trains rolling west across Nebraska and Wyoming passed telegraph construction crews, some with LDS men who eagerly visited friends in the passing wagons.)

With the arrival of the *Manchester* Saints on 24 May, Gates's workload increased. On 25 May, he made purchases in Omaha, on the twenty-sixth he conducted Sunday meetings, and on the twenty-seventh he spent his day purchasing and "answering a thousand and one questions." Wanting to forward those immigrants who could afford their own teams, Gates organized them into a wagon company on 29 May, appointed David H. Cannon as captain, and selected four captains of ten, a sergeant of the guards, a chaplain and a clerk. On 30 May, the Cannon train—225 people in fifty-seven wagons—moved about two miles from Florence to be clear of the general outfitting grounds.<sup>52</sup>

In the Cannon train, Brother S. A. Wilcox had ninety loose cattle, some of which the local sheriff claimed were stolen. When the sheriff confiscated the animals in question, Brother Wilcox demanded a trial. So on 31 May, Wilcox and several witnesses trooped into Florence for a hearing. The accuser reduced his claim to just one heifer and then dropped the charges. By 1 June, the cow was back in the Cannon camp—"She knows her owner quite as well as the law," company clerk Bartlett Tripp noted. The Cannon train, joined by a few additional wagons, did not start west until 6 June.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, on 3 June, Elder Milo Andrus led his company of 629 Saints, the *Underwriter* passengers, to the Florence outfitting grounds. At dusk the riverboat docked at Florence. One of the new arrivals, William Blake, recorded that "a host were on shore prepared to greet old friends." Blake, the company's clerk, counted up the passengers and found that seven had not obtained tickets. "Darkness came on quickly," so most luggage was left on the ground and guarded. Wagons—probably Schuttler wagons from Chicago that Gates and Florence campers had assembled—conveyed the new arrivals to tents or to hotels ("at least such they were called," Blake wrote).

Before sunrise Blake began to sort baggage. When rains struck, some newcomers stood under umbrellas, some rushed to tents, and others picked through luggage piles unprotected. Later Blake went "to town" where he bought bacon and eggs. He searched for a baker's shop and found one, but it had no bread. He moved into the

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<sup>52</sup>Gates Diary, May 1861 entries; D. H. Cannon, Camp Journal, 1861, holograph (kept by Bartlett Tripp, company clerk), LDS Church Archives.

<sup>53</sup>Cannon Camp Journal, 6 June 1861.



Florence Hotel—evidently one of the empty buildings without glass in its windows—where rains that night nearly flooded the occupants.

On 4 June, Blake, like William Jefferies, became a store clerk for Gates. He posted accounts that morning and then he joined a 2:00 P.M. meeting in Gates's tent where the poverty of the Saints was discussed and temporary bishops appointed to look after the poor. In subsequent days Blake was busy approving orders for wagons, supplying wagons with chains and other equipment, and endorsing orders for provisions.

On 7 June, Captain Job Pingree led his train of thirty-three wagons and three carriages from the Florence campsite, with perhaps two hundred Saints, mostly from St. Louis. On 8 June, the steamer *Omaha* brought Schuttler wagons, so Blake spent most of the day landing, checking, and assembling parts of wagons.

At a 9 June church meeting "on the green" behind the store, Blake learned that Florence was sacred to Mormons' memory because it was the site of Winter Quarters and of the calling of the Mormon Battalion. On 10 June, Blake dealt out wagons and covers. He spent 14 June weighing boxes at the store and packing. A steamboat, the *Sunshine*, arrived that day, bringing about thirty Saints, most from Pittsburgh and St. Louis. They bedded for the night in covered wagons.<sup>54</sup>

Captain Joseph W. Young rode into the Florence camp from Utah on 16 June, several days ahead of the "down and back" wagons. With his arrival, the outfitting work mushroomed in size and complexity. Elder Gates continued to supervise the outfittings of the independent wagon companies and passengers, and Captain Young took charge of the "poor Saints" camped at Florence, preparing them for the Utah wagons. Wanting the four Utah trains to spend a minimum of time in Florence before heading back, he labored hard to have provisions and passengers ready for them. Apparently he quickly realized that emigrant numbers were higher than had been expected. He therefore required that people intending to travel in Church teams donate all their cash to the general fund. Englishman William Jefferies handed over "every cent I possessed, and the Saints, generally, I believe, did the same. I was collector." New York German Traugott Bitter surrendered his last \$40. Perhaps many could not donate because they were like Dane Lars Larsen, who reached Florence with "only

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<sup>54</sup>F. W. Blake, Diary, holograph, June 1861 entries, LDS Church Archives; and Job Pingree summary, Journal History, 31 December 1861, Supplement. The Mormon Battalion was enlisted in 1846 across the river at Council Bluffs, not at the Florence site.



about ten cents in his purse, Danish coin.” More important than small donations, however, Captain Young received during the next several days large sums forwarded from the eastern branches’ tithing funds.<sup>55</sup>

Because credit was at the heart of the “down and back” system, Captain Young had to keep detailed, accurate account books. To help, he retained William Jefferies, Gates’s former store clerk, as chief accountant. Young’s “Frontier Account Books” tell with numbers a complex story of interaction between people, equipment, commodities, and credit.<sup>56</sup>

Captain Young, probably operating out of Gates’s store, first opened a “sundries” account. His ledgers list several hundred small credits—less than a dollar to six dollars—for individuals needing food every few days. Jefferies, for example, received what most of the others did—five pounds of sugar at ten cents per pound, 1.25 pounds of coffee at twenty cents per pound, and 2.5 pounds of apples at eight cents per pound, for an initial “sundries” debt of ninety-five cents. Charles Penrose, for his large family that included in-laws, received on 24 June about seventy pounds of flour, fifteen pounds of bacon, seven pounds of sugar, two pounds of coffee, one pound of tea, and four pounds of apples, for \$6.07 credit. Nearly daily, from 16 June until early July, Young’s staff issued such commodities on credit.

Using cash and credit, Captain Young sent agents on purchasing trips to Bluff City, Omaha, and the countryside to buy provisions. One aide, Milo Andrus—unaware that he soon would be a wagon train leader—described on 19 June how busy he was with “the hurrying and incessant labour that always exists at an outfitting point.”<sup>57</sup>

Mass quantities of provisions had to be obtained to supply the campers and to load into the Utah wagon trains. Young’s ledgers show the immensity of the supplies effort—both receiving and apportioning. For example, he procured for the four companies no less than the following quantities:

sugar	13,000 lbs.	hams	3,300 lbs.
apples	3,186 lbs.	bacon	15,121 lbs.
coffee	3,707 lbs.	side meat	6,700 lbs.
tent cloth	6,155 yds.	shoulder meat	2,900 lbs.

Smaller quantities of a variety of items had to be obtained, too. Ledgers list expenditures for such things as bar soap, candles, kegs of

<sup>55</sup>Wilhelmina Bitter, Biographical Sketch, typescript, copy in author’s possession; Jefferies Journal; Lars Larsen, Autobiography, typescript, 6, LDS Church Archives.  
<sup>56</sup>PEF Frontier Account Book, General Accounts and Personal Accounts, LDS Church Archives.  
<sup>57</sup>Milo Andrus to Bro. Cannon, 19 June 1861, Journal History.

pickles, baking powder, lubricants, corn, rice, yeast, bed ticking, rope, twine, needles, thread, and tobacco. Other miscellaneous expenses involved “ferriage when going to the Bluffs after bacon,” hotel bills, clothes and boots for teamsters, a funeral, and damages to a local cornfield.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, Jacob Gates procured similar quantities for the independent companies. To procure, warehouse, and distribute the mountain of provisions, Gates and Young must have recruited dozens of men to assist them.

Hardly noticed by the Florence campers, on 20 June Peter Ranck led a twenty-wagon train with Mormon immigrants through Florence. It outfitted in Iowa, crossed by steam ferry from Bluff City to Omaha, rolled into Florence, and camped a mile west. It continued towards Utah the next day.<sup>59</sup>

Also on 20 June, the Eastern Company stepped ashore at Florence from the *Omaha*, nearly doubling the town’s population. Diarist Thomas Griggs noted his reaction to the outfitting scene that greeted him and to the many “deserted and unfurnished houses” in the vicinity:

Landed, found large numbers of church teams from the valley, into which we put our traps and removed to a fine well ventilated mansion at the summit of a hill commanding a view of Florence, and from where you could obtain a sight of a number of airy looking buildings similar to our own, and which were of the greatest convenience to travellers in our situation, and the liberal minded owners had not even ticketed them as being “To let.”<sup>60</sup>

(A few days later Griggs was less enamored by his free lodgings; on 27 June a thunderstorm drove him into a building with glass in its windows.)

Griggs spent a full day in Florence buying provisions. The next day was a Sunday, 23 June, so to attend church he changed his clothes—for the first time since he left Boston thirteen days before. The next day, like others wanting to use Church teams, he visited the bowery and surrendered his last cash.<sup>61</sup>

On 25 June, the Homer Duncan independent wagon train took 264 Saints on their first day’s journey towards Utah. Duncan, 46, was a returning missionary. He had led a wagon company to Utah in 1857, including 1,300 head of cattle. Except for 44 United States citizens, the Duncan train was filled with *Underwriter* emigrants—

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<sup>58</sup>PEF Frontier Account Book, General Accounts and Personal Accounts.

<sup>59</sup>Summary of Peter Ranck Train, Journal History, 31 December 1861, Supplement.

<sup>60</sup>Griggs Diary, 23 June 1861.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.



32 from Africa, 119 from England, 18 from Scotland, and 49 from Wales.<sup>62</sup>

Thomas Griggs's summary of the last week of June captures well the essence of daily life in Florence.<sup>63</sup> He wrote that the days were "spent by the emigrants, teamsters, and presiding officers in arranging the details of the company organization, purchasing supplies, oxen, wagons, manufacturing tents, breaking in cattle, collecting such cash from the emigrants that they could advance to purchase needed groceries, bacon, &c." He added he hiked two miles for firewood and found the "country very destitute of wood of any kind"—evidently picked clean by hundreds of wood gatherers like himself.

Griggs reported that some Utah wagons had reached Florence by 20 June. On 27 and 29 June, the last "down and back" trains arrived. All four camped a mile or two outside of Florence and created temporary corrals for their cattle. On 1 and 2 July, the last company of emigrants reached Florence—the nine hundred or more Saints who crossed the Atlantic on the *Monarch of the Sea*—led by Apostle Erastus Snow. At that point, Florence—a tent-and-wagon city with a few permanent buildings—held its largest population of the year, exceeding 2,500 Mormons. They were a rich mix—Germans, Swiss, Italians, Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, Scots, Welsh, English, Irish, Canadians—new converts like the Bitters, old-guard Mormons like Jacob Gates who had known Joseph Smith, and youthful teamsters reared in Utah. At least one European, Englishman Frederick W. Blake, was poorly impressed by the Utah boys after hearing them address a church gathering: "The American Boys evidently have had no practice in speaking and seem deficient of thought upon the facts of Mormonism, a few simple anecdotes are related by them about their chat with leading men, but for the control of a people and for the enlightenment of mind they are far behind the times."<sup>64</sup>

During early July, four independent trains and the four "down and back" trains were fitted out. The fitout routine for the Eldredge, Horne, Murdock, and Young trains from Utah was the same. First, people waiting in Florence received wagon assignments, a half-dozen people per wagon. As much as possible, the outfitters tried to group nationalities in the same trains and in shared wagons. Then, people took their baggage to the bowery where a "weighing machine" told them how much extra baggage they had. Costs for the overage, at

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<sup>62</sup>Homer Duncan, Journal, 1861, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>63</sup>Griggs Diary and also Griggs summary, Journal History, 13 September 1861.

<sup>64</sup>Blake Diary, 7 July 1861.



twenty cents per pound, were added to their PEF loan accounts. Fares for the Utah trip, also charged, were \$41 for adults and \$20.50 for children under eight. Adults could take fifty pounds of baggage free, and children half that.<sup>65</sup>

Following weigh-in, the Utah boys brought company wagons from the camps outside Florence into town so that assigned passengers could load their baggage. "Loading wagons efficiently," an expert has explained, "demanded both experience and patience. Everything had to be packed tightly and secured to minimize jostling and breakage on the trail."<sup>66</sup> A carelessly packed, top-heavy wagon was particularly dangerous. Wilhelmina Bitter, a New York German who joined the Joseph Young train, described how her wagon was loaded. Items not used daily, she wrote, "were stacked up in the middle of a wagon, as high as the bows. They made two departments in the wagons." Two families were assigned to the front of her wagon and two to the back. "One tent for two wagons," she continued, and "the necessary camp kettles were tied under the wagons." Her husband, Traugott, drove the wagon every other day, apparently spelling off the Utah-sent teamster—or else they received a wagon which Captain Young had to purchase in Florence to accommodate extra passengers.<sup>67</sup>

The baggage loaded, teamsters drove passengers and packed wagons back to the company camps outside of Florence. There the emigrants received "their first lesson in camp life, such as getting water, fuel, and cooking with camp fires." They also became accustomed to nature's whims. July heat and Missouri River valley humidity generated three consecutive evening thunderstorms which proved that tents were not "hurricane-" or waterproof.<sup>68</sup>

Captain Ira Eldredge's was the first Church train to load up and move to Florence's outskirts. Organized on 2 July with the usual officers—chaplain, clerk, sergeant of the guards, and captains over ten wagons each—the train stopped at Spring Creek, about 1.5 miles from Florence. The next day it rolled eight miles west to Big Papillion Creek. For the next nine days it hardly moved. Captain Eldredge waited for the other three Church trains to outfit and also for needed kettles. During the halt, diarrhea plagued some passengers, forcing Captain Eldredge to move camp one-quarter mile on 7 July to solve sanitation problems.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>65</sup>Jefferies Journal, 26 July 1861.

<sup>66</sup>William E. Lass, *From the Missouri to the Great Salt Lake: An Account of Overland Freighting* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society Publications, 1972), 36:14.

<sup>67</sup>Bitter, Biographical Sketch.

<sup>68</sup>Both Griggs accounts; Zebulon Jacobs, Diary, July 1861 entries, Journal History, 22 September 1861.

<sup>69</sup>Blake Diary, July 1861 entries.



Information about the outfitting of the Samuel A. Woolley train, an independent company, comes from passenger Peder Nielsen's diary and from Captain Woolley's own diary.<sup>70</sup> On 3 July, Samuel Woolley was appointed captain, to his surprise, and was told his train would carry mostly Danes. That day Peder Nielsen "drew lots" for a wagon assignment and then was appointed a captain over ten wagons. New to America, and not speaking English, he did his amateur best to organize the ten wagons under his care. One day he "tried to get everything in order, but it takes long time for the agent." The next day he went "down to receive oxen; the day passed by yoking and marking them." Two days later he received oxen for his wagon and drove it outside of Florence to the Woolley camp. A new driver, he had to learn how to make oxen go, stop, and turn, and also how to yoke and unyoke them. As one oxen expert put it, hitching even well-broken cattle could be "casual or hellish."<sup>71</sup> In camp on 8 July, Nielsen wrote down a roster of his ten wagons' passengers, turned in a list of needed provisions to his superior, and then "had a lot to do to arrange all the necessary details for our trip."<sup>72</sup>

Meanwhile, Captain Woolley tried to finish his train's outfitting and his own. On 3 July, he bought a wagon for \$85. The next day he went to Omaha for another wagon. "Business" occupied him for two days. On 7 July, he was "at work fixing out the Danish company with oxen, afternoon fixing my wagons." The next day he ferried over to Bluff City to buy a span of mules but found none large enough. The next day he bought a pair of mules for \$300 and then worked to load his wagons. On the tenth he finished loading and moved out to his company's camp. He returned to Omaha the next day to trade horse collars for mule collars. On the twelfth he led his Danes on their first travel day on the trail, to "the springs" eight miles out. The next day he moved the company across Little Papillion Creek, and he then returned to Florence to buy a yoke of oxen for \$60. Marking time waiting permission to move west, he welcomed Apostle Snow into camp on 15 July. The Apostle completed the company's organization and sent it on its way.<sup>73</sup>

While the Church trains and Samuel Woolley's company outfitted, two independent trains left Florence; information about them is lacking. Captain Milo Andrus's train of sixty-four wagons and 620 passengers,

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<sup>70</sup>Pedar Nielsen, Diary, trans. Orson B. West, typescript, July 1846 entries, Utah Historical Society; and Woolley Diary, July 1846 entries.

<sup>71</sup>Nielsen Diary, July 1846 entries; Lass, *From the Missouri to the Great Salt Lake*, 9.

<sup>72</sup>Nielsen Diary, 8 July 1846.

<sup>73</sup>Woolley Diary, July 1861 entries.



which seems to have included Captain William Martindale's company of twenty-eight wagons, left on 3 July. Captain Thomas Woolley, apparently not related to Samuel, led a small party of about thirty wagons and 186 people from Florence on 8 July.<sup>74</sup>

In Florence and the wagon camps, the emigrants celebrated the Fourth of July, probably with serious thoughts about the future of the threatened republic. In the Eldredge camp, according to diarist Frederick Blake, at daybreak guns were fired and then the Utah boys roused people in their tents and wagons. At midday they organized a dance but, the weather being extremely hot, they could not entice the girls to dance.<sup>75</sup> At Florence, diarist Thomas Griggs wrote that cannons fired to honor the day, and at night there was "a prairie ball in camp."<sup>76</sup>

Captain Horne's Church train left on 9 July and traveled ten miles. They camped near "Reed's ranch" and waited for Captain Young's train. Evidently Captain Murdock's train stayed near and kept the same schedule as the Horne Company.

Zebulon Jacobs, a teenage teamster in the Young train, detailed his outfitting labors. According to his diary, on 5 July he left the train's camp on Mill Creek and drove two miles to Florence "after a load of Saints." During the next two days, he made similar trips. While in Florence on 6 July, he "saw a number of emigrants stowed away in every nook and corner." Two days later he "drove up cattle, and we moved the camp a short distance" and then picked up more emigrants in Florence. On 10 July, he "hailed up another waggon and prepared for starting westward." The next day "we got everything redy and moved half a mile westward, and got the waggons in shape for starting the next morning. That night we had the first death in camp. It was one of the sisters."<sup>77</sup>

By mid-July the Church team trains had started on the "back" trip to Utah. Murdock's company started on 8 or 9 July, the Horne train on the ninth, and the Eldredge and Young wagons on the twelfth—the same day Samuel Woolley's independent train started. Church trains could have started sooner, but they lacked some cooking utensils. Young's PEF ledgers show as last transactions in Florence the assigning of kettles to the four trains. Eldredge received twenty-seven, Murdock twenty-eight, and Young twenty-one. Captain Horne's order included

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<sup>74</sup>Historian's Office Journal, 14 September 1861 entry, says that Wm. Martindale arrived in Utah the day before in charge of a division of the Andrus company.

<sup>75</sup>Blake Diary, 4 July 1861.

<sup>76</sup>Griggs Diary, 4 July 1861.

<sup>77</sup>Zebulon Jacobs, Diary, July 1861 entries, LDS Church Archives.



twenty camp kettles, a dozen fry pans, and ten- and six-quart pans, as well as a dozen cups, six coffee pots, eighteen dozen plates, eighteen dozen spoons, one chamber pot, one scoop, one skillet, one wash pan, and a set of knives and forks.<sup>78</sup>

A few days after the Church trains left, the last Mormon wagon company left Florence—Sixtus Johnson’s independent train of fifty-four wagons and two hundred people, mostly “European and Swiss” people.<sup>79</sup>

Several Mormon freight companies also outfitted at or near Florence in 1861, but details about them are unavailable. The identified trains are<sup>80</sup>

Captain Asper	11 wagons	Captain Tanner	11 wagons
Bishop Miller	11 wagons	Godbe, Wright	20 wagons
Captain Reid	20 wagons	Livingston,	
		Bell, Kimball	26 wagons

Captain Young’s Church train was part freight train, carrying much material for Brigham Young and other leaders. Among other items, the train hauled two dozen stoves, twenty-eight number three ovens, twenty-two number two ovens, and six number one ovens. One of the freight companies hauled \$14,000’s worth of goods, which Henry Lawrence had purchased in St. Louis for the First Presidency. Someone also hauled 100 feet of “8 x 10 German glass” on Utah orders.<sup>81</sup>

On 17 July, one day after the Johnson wagon train took the last of the emigrants from Florence, Jacob Gates, his store empty and his account books brought current, left Florence with Claudius V. Spencer and Nathaniel V. Jones, the New York emigration agent. Meanwhile, New York missionary Lucius Scovil and his traveling companion, Apostle Orson Pratt, tried to reach Florence before the last wagons left but found their way blocked. At the Mississippi River they learned that secessionists in Missouri had burned railroad bridges, unspiked tracks, and undermined track timbers. The two thought of going to St. Louis and boarding a riverboat there for Florence but were told that militia were firing into riverboats. So, with little other choice, on 15 July, they boarded stagecoaches, Orson Pratt for Bluff City and Lucius Scovil for Nebraska City. On 19 July, Scovil outfitted himself for a trip across the Plains, shod his mule team, visited Florence to

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<sup>78</sup>Information about the Murdock train is found in several entries of diarists in other wagon trains.  
<sup>79</sup>Journal History, 31 December 1861, Supplement.  
<sup>80</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>81</sup>PEF, Frontier Account Book, Personal Accounts.

pick up a trunk, and then rolled west at the fast pace of about forty-five miles per day to overtake the emigrating Saints.<sup>82</sup>

With Scovil's departure, Florence's 1861 Mormon outfitting days were over. Its empty, open-windowed houses on the hill once more fell silent, until another emigration season would bring visitors who needed them again.<sup>83</sup>

#### ASSESSMENT

The 1861 LDS emigrating season was unusual because it occurred against a backdrop of the outbreak of the Civil War and because it inaugurated the new "down and back" method for moving poor Saints west. Both developments worked together to make 1861 emigration numbers larger than Church leaders had predicted earlier that year. Evidently, many Saints living in the United States worried about the war's impact on their lives and jobs, and decided they had waited long enough to move to Utah. The war encouraged some to emigrate, and so did the availability of the "down and back" wagons for those unable to afford the trip across the Plains.

How many Mormons emigrated to Utah in 1861? No precise answer is possible. For the twelve wagon companies, only two full passenger rosters and two partials have been found. William Jefferies, chief clerk for Utah train outfittings in Florence, carefully wrote out rosters for the four trains and sent them by mail coach to Utah. Those lists, which perhaps never even reached Utah, have disappeared. For most trains, however, contemporaries noted wagon totals, passenger totals, or both. The *Deseret News*, on 2 October 1861, estimated that between four thousand and five thousand emigrants came that year.<sup>84</sup>

A conservative estimate, based on available records, is that 3,924 Latter-day Saints emigrated from Florence to Utah in the twelve 1861 companies, as shown in Table 2 (on page 367). Approximately 2,900 of those emigrants—1,900 from Europe and 1,000 from the eastern United States—reached Florence in organized LDS companies on chartered trains and riverboats. Another 1,000 reached Florence on their own.<sup>85</sup>

The major purpose for the "down and back" trains was to assist poor Saints to reach Utah from Florence. The plan succeeded well. "Every Saint who reached Florence and desired to go home this

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<sup>82</sup>Gates Diary, 17 June 1861.

<sup>83</sup>Scovil Diary, July 1861 entries.

<sup>84</sup>Jefferies Journal, 26 July 1861.

<sup>85</sup>Erastus Snow to George A. Smith, 26 June 1861, Journal History.



TABLE TWO: LDS EMIGRANT WAGON COMPANIES IN 1861

DEPART FLORENCE	ARRIVE S.L.C.	DAYS	COMPANY	TYPE OF COMPANY	WAGONS	PASSENGERS	SOURCE OF PASSENGERS	DIARY ACCOUNTS	ROSTER OF PASSENGERS
29 May	16 August	79	David H. Cannon	Independent	68	265	England (ship, <i>Manchester</i> )	Bartlett Tripp	Partial in Tripp Journal
7 June	2 September	87	Job Pingree	Independent	33	204*	St. Louis		Partial in Journal History, 8/24/61
20 June	8 September	80	Peter Ranck	Independent	20 est.	124*	Outfitted at Iowa City		None
25 June	13 September	80	Homer Duncan	Independent	47	268	England (ship, <i>Underwriter</i> )	Company Journal	In Company Journal and Journal History, 9/13/61
3 July	12 September	71	Milo Andrus, and Wm. Martindale	Independent	38 28	620	England ( <i>Underwriter</i> ) and misc.	Andrus Company Journal; Geo. Ottinger	
8 July	15 September	69	Thomas Woolley	Independent	30	186*			
8 July	12 September	66	John R. Murdock	Church Team	63	460**	Europe (ship, <i>Monarch of the Sea</i> )		
9 July	15 September	68	Ira Eldredge	Church Team	70	514		Company Journal; F. W. Blake	Partial in Company Journal
9 July	13 September	65	Joseph Horne	Church Team	62	453**		Thomas Griggs	
12 July	23 September	73	Joseph W. Young (split—Ansel Harmon and Heber P. Kimball)	Church Team	80	292***		Zebulon Jacobs; Wm. Jefferies	
13 July	22 September	71	Samuel A. Woolley (and Joseph Porter)	Independent	61	338	Europe (ship, <i>Monarch of the Sea</i> )	S. A. Woolley; Peter Nielsen	In Journal History, 9/22/61
16 July	27 September	73	Sixtus Johnson	Independent	54	200	Some Swiss	George Teasdale	
Totals		73	(averaged)		624	3924			

\*Estimate based on 6.2 passengers average in other independent companies.  
\*\*Estimate based on 7.3 passengers average in Eldredge Church team.  
\*\*\*Same as \*\* but cut 50% due to being a freight company, too.

season,” Elder McAllister reported on 30 July, “has had the privilege. The sending down of waggons from Utah to Florence is a grand scheme.”<sup>86</sup> Of Scandinavians who came to Florence, according to Niels Wilhelmsen, “not one soul of Danes was left there.”<sup>87</sup>

Apostle Snow estimated that perhaps one hundred out of two thousand European Saints who reached America in 1861 on the three LDS charter ships stayed behind in New York. But many other Saints who thought they would have to stop at New York City were helped west to the Florence outfittings by others. “A general willingness to divide and help each other seems to prevail among all,” Snow said after leaving New York. Utah’s Congressional delegate, William H. Hooper, as one benefactor, “donated \$150 to help forward the poor of a previous company who landed at New York while he was there.”<sup>88</sup>

More “poor” Saints showed up at Florence than leaders had expected. In late June, a few days before reaching Florence, Apostle Snow estimated that perhaps three hundred wagons would handle the season’s emigration, of which one hundred fifty would be provided by emigrants themselves. He misjudged by three hundred wagons. Also, his estimate of emigrant numbers was five hundred short. Nevertheless, Jacob Gates and Captain Young, the outfitting supervisors at Florence, found enough wagons for the extra arrivals. To the four “down and back” trains they added more than seventy-five wagons in Florence, wagons perhaps part of Gates’s purchase of 111 wagons from the Schuttler firm in Chicago.<sup>89</sup>

Perpetual Emigrating Fund accounts show that, prior to reaching Florence, hundreds of emigrants paid their own rail fares in four Church-organized companies.<sup>90</sup> The equivalent of 1,917 adults (two children equalled one adult) paid LDS agents \$25,995.14 for tickets. The tickets, however, cost only \$23,895.92, generating a surplus of \$2099.22 which became income the Church counted on, according to Apostle Snow:

There will be some funds saved by sale of surplus provisions from the several ships, a small profit on transportation between New York and Florence, and on teams and outfits which will go far towards supplying that which is lacking for sustenance and outfits for the poor. This you perceive is but an indirect way of taxing those who have means for the benefit of those who lack and in a way that is not felt by many.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>John D. T. McAllister to George Q. Cannon, 30 July 1861, Journal History.

<sup>87</sup>Niels Wilhelmsen to John Van Cott, 19 August 1861, *Skandinaviens Stjerne* 11 (October 1861): 9–10.

<sup>88</sup>Erastus Snow to George A. Smith, 26 June 1861, Journal History.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid; also see Table 2.

<sup>90</sup>PEF, Frontier Account Book, Personal Accounts.

<sup>91</sup>Erastus Snow to George A. Smith, 26 June 1861, Journal History.



Without the wagons, teamsters, and flour provided by Utahns, the cash outlay for 1861 emigration would have been prohibitive for the Church. While the Utah donations were “free” in the sense they did not cost the Church any sizable cash payments for services rendered, nevertheless, on paper at least, labor tithing credits “paid” by the Church were sizable. Those Utah men whose daily work involved wagons and teams were expected to donate one working day in ten for the Church—labor tithing—using their wagons and teams. Therefore, if men chose to donate their labor, teams and wagons for the “down and back” trip, they could receive labor tithing credits that freed them from labor tithing obligations in the near future. Ledgers show that nearly two hundred Utah teamsters received an average of about \$450 in credits each, as payment for hauling freight and passengers and to reimburse them for such trip expenses as rations, ferriage fees, wagon grease, and tobacco. Tithing credits for the teamsters alone amounted to more than \$80,000. In addition, the Church credited wards and ward members for 136,095 pounds of flour donated for the “down and back” trips; at six cents per pound the flour “cost” the Church about \$8,000 in credits. About sixteen Utahns served as guards for the four trains, for which they received about \$100 credit each.<sup>92</sup>

Loan obligations incurred by emigrants who used the “down and back” wagons and provisions fell short of the repaying of the labor tithing credits extended by the Church. When the Young, Horne, Eldredge, and Murdock trains approached Salt Lake City, Church agents stopped them so that passengers could sign loan notes. Diarist Thomas Griggs wrote on 12 September that family heads were called into a tent where agents “took our notes. Mother and I signed something for some amount of which I had but little conception.”<sup>93</sup> The promissory notes, ranging from \$.76 to \$390, committed the signers to repay the loan amount plus ten percent interest from the date of signing. Of the 1861 notes in the LDS Archives—apparently many are missing—337 borrowers agreed to repay \$38,285.39, an average of \$113.62 each, to cover their wagon and food expenses at Florence and on the Mormon Trail.<sup>94</sup>

But, as Brigham Young predicted, much of the 1861 debt was not repaid by the emigrants who incurred it. In 1877 the Church published a list of debtors who had not repaid their loans to the

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<sup>92</sup>PEF, Church Team Accounts, 1861.

<sup>93</sup>Griggs Diary, 12 September 1861.

<sup>94</sup>PEF, Promissory Notes, 1861, LDS Church Archives.

Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company. A tally of the 1861 borrowers shows that 597 had not paid off their promissory notes fifteen years after agreeing to do so.<sup>95</sup>

Although the “down and back” account showed a large deficit, it was a paper loss more than a cash loss. The primary purpose of the “down and back” scheme was to save the Church from cash outlays, and it achieved that purpose. Besides bringing emigrants cheaply to Utah, the scheme had two other purposes. One was to freight cheaper eastern goods into Utah in Utah wagons. Except for Church leaders, however, few Utahns sent extra wagons down to Florence to haul back commodities purchased there. Only twenty private wagons accompanied the Utah trains to Florence. However, it is possible that the six freight companies might have included some wagon loads of goods sent for by Utah citizens who were not merchants. The third purpose, to sell surplus Utah cattle at Florence, likewise fell short. Utahns sent only 124 surplus oxen to Florence with the “down and back” trains. Possibly some private cattle herds, now lost to history, followed them to Florence. However, Elder Gates did not have enough Utah oxen to supply the emigrants’ needs and had to purchase no less than forty-one oxen for \$2,522 cash—cash that could have gone into the hands of Utah cattle owners had they sent down more oxen.<sup>96</sup>

LDS emigration in 1861 was a smooth and successful process. The ship, train, and wagon companies were well managed and supplied. Illness, death, and misfortunes were minimal. The Utah oxen plodded down and back in good condition and within a time frame that brought the emigrants to Salt Lake City well before the snow season. “This season’s immigration has been signally blest all the time from their departure from their former homes to their new homes in our peaceful vallies,” Brigham Young pronounced that fall.<sup>97</sup>

“Down and back,” because of its 1861 success, was repeated during six of the next eight emigration seasons, involving 1,956 Utah teams, for an average of 326 wagons per year.<sup>98</sup>

Florence proved to be an acceptable outfitting point because of its access to Missouri River steamboats; its nearby streams, grasses, and woods that allowed for wagon camps, corrals, and pastures; its easy access to the Mormon Trail; its proximity to merchandisers in

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<sup>95</sup>*Names of Persons and Sureties Indebted to the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company from 1850 to 1877* (Salt Lake City: Star Book and Job Printing Office, 1877).

<sup>96</sup>PEF, *Frontier Account Book, General Account*, 1861.

<sup>97</sup>Brigham Young to George Q. Cannon, 18 September 1861, Brigham Young Letterbooks.

<sup>98</sup>Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 208.



Bluff City and Omaha; and its location far enough north and west so that Civil War actions did not cut off all routes to it from the East.

Florence enjoyed two more outfitting seasons in the Mormon sun, 1862 and 1863. In 1864, because transcontinental railroad tracks had pushed west from the Missouri River, the outfitting site changed to Wyoming, Nebraska, for the 1864, 1865, and 1866 seasons. In 1867 LDS companies started from North Platte, Nebraska, which was the rail terminal that year, and in 1868 Laramie and Ft. Benton outfitted the Mormons. After serving Mormon emigrants as an outfitting center for seven years, 1857 to 1863, Florence reverted to being a town that never boomed. The 1870 census taker counted but 395 Florentines—800 less than he found there in 1860.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Wakeley, *Omaha and Douglas County, Nebraska*, 1:395.