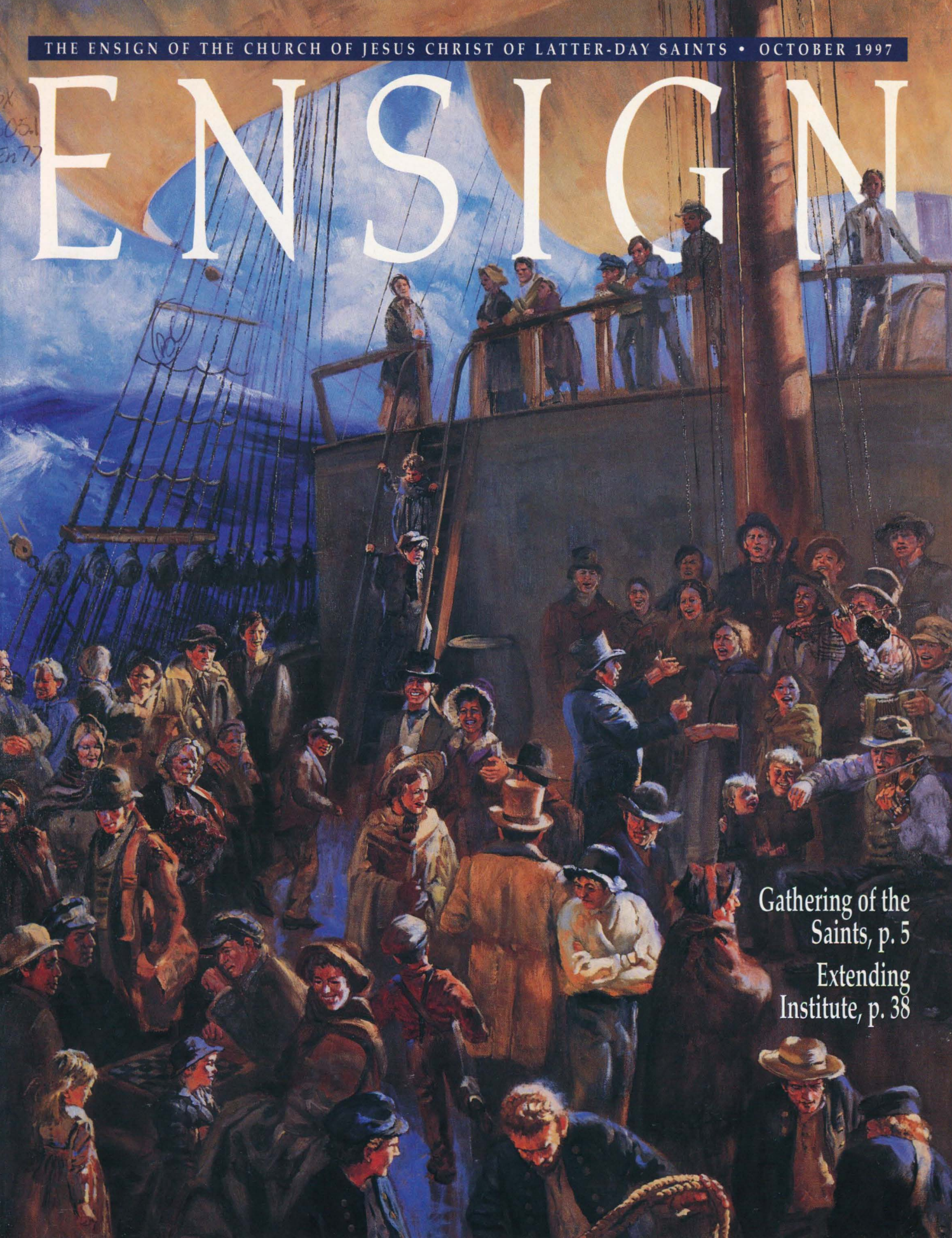


# ENSIGN



Gathering of the  
Saints, p. 5

Extending  
Institute, p. 38



# "HOW SHALL I GATHER?"

BY WILLIAM G. HARTLEY

CHURCH LEADERS AND  
MEMBERS COVENANTED  
TO GATHER "ALL THE SAINTS  
WITH US, TO THE EXTENT OF  
OUR ABILITY, . . . INFLUENCE  
AND PROPERTY."

**W**idow Elizabeth Gilbert wrote to President Brigham Young on 13 August 1846, saying she wanted to go west but had no means to do it. "How shall I gather?" she asked him.<sup>1</sup> Sister Gilbert was typical of hundreds of faithful Latter-day Saints who turned to their Church leaders for help emigrating. President Young met the challenge. Though history calls him "Brigham Young, the Colonizer," this title

should be paired with another title, "Brigham Young, the Emigration Director." He, with the Brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and later of the First Presidency, orchestrated one of history's greatest planned emigrations—a process that included recruiting emigrants, organizing and implementing effective transportation methods, and providing places for them to make a living after they arrived.



*Above: Among the Latter-day Saint poor who left due to oppression were those who were driven out of Jackson County, Missouri, in 1833. Right: Over a decade later, in 1846, Saints driven from Nauvoo trekked across Iowa and found refuge in Winter Quarters, Nebraska, and western Iowa.*

Estimates are that some 80,000 Latter-day Saints traveled to Utah while President Young presided over the Church, almost all of whom came in Church-organized wagon trains, sailing ships, riverboats, or trains. Behind this massive movement of people, one primary concern shaped and directed President Young—his absolute, bedrock-solid insistence that the Church must help the poor Saints gather to Zion.

## THE MISSOURI COVENANT

President Young and other Church leaders knew well and accepted the Lord's oft-stated commandment that the Church assist its poor and needy members. Throughout the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord makes clear the Church's responsibility: "Look to the poor and needy, and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer" (D&C 38:35) and "Thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support" (D&C 42:30).<sup>2</sup>

However, Brigham Young's passion to remember the

poor intensified in 1838 when Missouri governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued his infamous Extermination Order. In late 1838, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith were imprisoned on false charges designed to frustrate the work of the Church. In leading the Saints out of Missouri, Brigham Young and other members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were adamant that the Church not leave behind any who lacked wagons and teams.

Concerned about the stranded poor, LDS leaders and members met on 26 January 1839 to discuss the best course to take to move everyone from the state of Missouri. Several said it was impossible to comply with the order of the governor because of the extreme poverty of many. The conference chose a committee of seven, including Brigham Young, to find ways to remove the poor. Still fresh in their minds was the evacuation of Saints from Kirtland, Ohio, just four months earlier, when a Seventies quorum had created the "Kirtland Camp" wagon company

and assisted scores of poor members to Missouri.<sup>3</sup>

Brigham Young's Missouri committee appealed to Missouri towns and cities for help to move the LDS poor, and some donations came in. The committee surveyed the Saints and reported on how many families were "destitute of means for their removal." Then, the conference officially voted that "it is the duty of those who have, to assist those who have not." A few days later, Brigham Young proposed a covenant that the Saints "stand by and assist each other to the utmost of our abilities in removing from this state, and that we will never desert the poor who are worthy, till they shall be out of the reach of the exterminating order."<sup>4</sup>

A clerk drafted the covenant and 214 signed their names to it. This covenant and its purposes became the central core for LDS emigration programs for the next four decades.

## EVACUATING MORLEY'S SETTLEMENT

The same spirit that surrounded the evacuation of the Saints from Missouri was drawn upon again in September 1845 when arsonists torched Morley's Settlement, 27 miles south of Nauvoo. Amid flames and smoke, hundreds of Saints quickly became homeless. It had been 15 months since the Prophet Joseph Smith's martyrdom, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was directing the Church. Brigham Young, as President of the Twelve, sent word for the people to desert Morley's Settlement. He then called for Nauvoo volunteers "to aid in removing the saints to this place." In response, 134 teams and empty wagons hurried south and helped move the Morley's Settlement people, belongings, and grain to the city.<sup>5</sup>

When local citizens' committees pressed the Church to leave Illinois in the spring, Church leaders agreed, but appealed for nearby citizens to "use their influence and exertions, to help us to sell or rent our properties, so as to get means enough that we can help the widow, the fatherless and destitute to remove with us."<sup>6</sup>

## THE NAUVOO COVENANT

Elder George A. Smith of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles asked October conference attendees in the Nauvoo Temple to unite to help the poor to move. He specifically recalled and reinstituted the Missouri Covenant when he said: "When we were to leave Missouri the saints entered into a covenant not to cease their exertions until every saint who wished to go was removed, which was done." It was time, he said, to make a similar covenant.

After his remarks, President Young put the idea to a vote of the conference. He "moved that we take all the saints with us, to the extent of our ability, that is, our influence and property." The motion carried unanimously. He then promised: "If you will be faithful to your covenant, I will now prophesy that the great God will shower down means upon this people, to accomplish it [the resolution] to the very letter."<sup>7</sup> This covenant became a guiding star for President Young from then until his death in 1877.

In February 1846, President Young led the first big company of Saints, the Camp of Israel, from Nauvoo. In the spring months of April, May, and June, the main exodus took place, when about 11,000 departed in small clusters. They crossed Iowa and caught up with the Camp of Israel. By August, Nauvoo was almost emptied of Saints, except for 600 to 1,000 who lacked the means to leave or were too ill to head west. Many were new arrivals who had counted on the Church in Nauvoo to resupply them and found Nauvoo all but deserted. Church clerk Thomas Bullock, lacking a team and wagon, wrote to Elder Willard Richards of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on 10 September that he and his family "have not the least idea where our next meal is to come from." Many wanted to go west, he reported, but were "literally dying from want."<sup>8</sup>

In mid-September, in what became known as the Battle of Nauvoo, armed men invaded Nauvoo and forced hundreds of LDS men, women, and children, some too sick to travel, across the river. There the refugees set up scattered camps for two miles along the river banks above the town of Montrose, Iowa (later known as the poor camps). Few had tents or wagons or adequate food.



## RESCUE OF THE NAUVOO POOR SAINTS

Farther west in the main LDS encampments by the Missouri River, leaders made plans to send back wagons to help people still in Nauvoo. This was two weeks before news reached them about the Battle of Nauvoo and the poor camps.

Orville M. Allen was made captain of a small wagon train, which included 9 other men and 20 wagons. They headed out on 14 September, picking up men and provisions along the way. Most men in the rescue train had relatives they hoped to find and bring west.

On the way they met the wagon company that included Mary Fielding Smith, which had just come from Nauvoo. She gave Captain Allen \$15 and 60 pounds of flour to help the poor. Allen's company reached Montrose on 6 October. That day, if not earlier, Bishop Newel K. Whitney was in the Iowa village of Bonaparte, a day's journey away from the poor camps, buying flour



to distribute in the camps.<sup>9</sup>

Numbers of the poor Saints, as they could, had been moving away from the river camps to nearby villages or farms. When easterner Thomas L. Kane visited the poor camps in late September, he found "not more than 640" Saints there, languishing in awful conditions. "Almost all of them," he said, were "crippled victims of disease." They were unable to take care of their sick, and had no bread to feed their children. "Mothers and babes, daughters and grandparents, all of them alike, were bivouacked in tatters," and even the sick lacked blankets.<sup>10</sup> Three days before Captain Allen's company reached them, Thomas Bullock had counted 17 tents and 8 wagons and thought the people still there were "the poorest of the Saints." He found "not a tent or Wagon but sickness in it." Few of the desperate campers knew how they could ever catch up with the main body of the Saints.<sup>11</sup> Captain Allen informed the camps that President Young "said he would [provide] horse teams and ox teams until they had got every man West of the U.S."<sup>12</sup>

*Above and right: When flocks of quail landed in the poor camps on 9 October 1846, the hungry Saints compared this to the Lord's providing quail and manna for the ancient Israelites (see Ex. 16:13-14).*

The Lord sent assistance to these poor people on 9 October, when food was in short supply. Quail flocks flew near the camps and flopped onto the ground in the morning and afternoon. Like ancient Israel, modern Israel picked up quail in their hands and soon had as much cooked quail as they wanted to eat. This event is known in Church history as the "miracle of the quail."

At 3:00 P.M. on the day of the quail miracle, Church trustees working in Nauvoo to sell Church properties brought and gave to the needy Saints shoes, clothing, molasses, salt pork, and salt. To aid the poor Saints, the trustees had solicited funds from towns along the Mississippi River and on one trip raised \$100. At 4:30 P.M., Captain Allen started his return trek. He took in two crippled men, Brothers Whitehead and Campbell. He loaded into the wagons those he had been sent to assist and allowed several other families, not on the list, to go along. His return group included 157 people and 28 wagons.<sup>13</sup>

When news of the Battle of Nauvoo finally reached

Winter Quarters, Church leaders wanted Saints to volunteer to go back and "bring a load of the poor from Nauvoo." To motivate the rescuers, President Young said, "Let the fire of the covenant which you made in the House of the Lord, burn in your hearts, like flame unquenchable."<sup>14</sup> As a result, in early October the Pottawattamie High Council across the river from Winter Quarters sent off a second rescue company, led by James Murdock and Allen Taylor. They pushed quickly east and reached the poor camps near the end of October. Details about this company are lacking, but apparently they transported anyone still in the poor camps who needed assistance.

In total, the rescue teams helped move some 275 to 300 poor Saints to Winter Quarters, Nebraska.

## PERPETUAL EMIGRATING FUND

In December 1847 the Twelve issued a general epistle to the Church at home and abroad, wherein they alluded to the Nauvoo Covenant and said, "It is the duty of the rich Saints every where, to assist the poor, according to their ability, to gather."<sup>15</sup> Ten months later, in October 1848, from his residence in the Great Salt Lake Valley, President Young sought counsel from three of the Twelve Apostles then back at Kanesville, Iowa, about "bringing the poor to this place." He asked these men, "What method, or what means, do you suggest to be the most beneficial, or what will operate to the greatest good in removing those Saints who are poor?" He admitted it might take the Church a year or two to develop some kind of assistance program because their "united strength" had to be used to build up the Salt Lake Valley and when that was done, their efforts and property could be "devoted to assist the emigration."<sup>16</sup>

In 1849, capitalizing on a money infusion produced by Gold Rush travelers in Utah, the First Presidency created the Perpetual Emigrating Company "to promote, facilitate, and accomplish the Emigration of the Poor." The company created the Perpetual Emigrating Fund (PEF), a revolving loan fund to help needy Saints emigrate. Attendees at October 1849 conference gave their approval when leaders proposed the PEF idea and posed this question: "Shall we fulfill the covenant, or shall we not?"<sup>17</sup>

Then, as now, the Church helped people help themselves always valuing individual responsibility and self-reliance. Hence the PEF Company's charter stated that everyone receiving assistance from the fund would

reimburse it as soon as their circumstances allowed. Emigrants signed agreements to repay.

When announcing the PEF program on 12 October 1849, the First Presidency sent the following encouragement and caution: "Ye poor and meek of the earth, lift up your heads and rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, for your redemption draweth nigh; but in your rejoicings be patient, for though your turn to emigrate may not be the first year, or even the second, it will come, and its tarryings will be short, if all the Saints who have, will be as liberal as those in the valley."<sup>18</sup>

Donations came in that winter of 1849–50, such that the Church organized its first PEF wagon company in 1850. Bishop Edward Hunter took the first year's funds of \$5,000 to Kanesville, Iowa, bought livestock, and captained the first PEF wagon train company back to Utah. Then, following the established plan, the PEF livestock were sold and the money taken back to Kanesville to repeat the process. By that fall, after just one year in operation, the PEF had nearly \$20,000.<sup>19</sup> Refugees still stuck in Iowa, too poor to move west, had to be helped first.

Among those refugees was Lydia Knight, whose husband, Newell, had died in 1847. She had waited patiently for help to go west. After Newell's death, she loaned her three yoke of oxen and two wagons for others to use. Then she moved east across the Missouri River from Winter Quarters, Nebraska, to the Kanesville, Iowa, area. To provide for her seven children, Lydia earned money by sewing and washing, and in 1849 she grew a wheat crop, which other Church members helped her to harvest. Finally, in 1850, her wagons returned from Utah, in broken-down condition. She managed to piece together one good wagon from the two and then went west in the Church's first PEF company.<sup>20</sup>

In a 22 September 1851 general epistle to the Church, the First Presidency explained that "the funds for the emigration of the poor are continually increasing, by the exertion of the Saints in the Valley; and it is the duty of Saints in the States, and other places, to add to those funds according to their ability."<sup>21</sup> One northern Utah community tells how they solicited funds: "After the block teachers had visited each family in the ward, the report shows contributions to the P.E.F. to have included \$66.00 in cash, \$58.00 in produce, \$50.00 in 'store pay,' \$2.50 in corn, 26 bushels of wheat, 10 dozen eggs, and 3 3/4 pounds of butter. Four families would give nothing, of which two were 'too poor.'"<sup>22</sup>



The First Presidency asked Saints halted near the Missouri River to close down their farms and settlements and come west in 1852. Some 10,000 Saints reached Utah that year—Nauvoo exiles as well as European converts. By late 1852 “all the exiles from Nauvoo who wished to come had been removed to Zion,” which meant that “the obligations of the Nauvoo pledge of 1846 had been faithfully discharged.”<sup>23</sup>

## GATHERING THE EUROPEAN SAINTS

To close the Nauvoo door, however, was to open the European one. By 1852, some 30,000 Saints living in the British Isles were waiting to emigrate. From 1852 to 1856, PEF expended £125,000 (\$625,000 in 1856 currency) in emigrating the “poor saints” from Europe to the Salt Lake Valley.<sup>24</sup>

## “WAS IT NOT A REVELATION FROM GOD?”

### HOW INSPIRATION HELPED THE JULIA ANN SURVIVORS

**M**any members have heard the dramatic story of the *Julia Ann*, a sailing vessel shipwrecked in 1855 while transporting Latter-day Saints and others from Australia to California. Less well known are details of how inspiration guided the vessel’s survivors.

Early in the afternoon of 7 September 1855, the *Julia Ann* set sail with a total of 56 people on board, 28 being members of the Church gathering to the United States. Undoubtedly fear and anxiety mingled with anticipation in their hearts, for many had sailed from the British Isles to Australia and were already familiar with the rigors of sea travel. Few, however, could have imagined the harrowing experience that awaited them.

After almost one month at sea, disaster struck. On the evening of 4 October 1855, the ship smashed into a coral reef, and five Saints lost their lives in the bedlam that followed. After hours of struggle, the other 51 emigrants, led by Captain B. F. Pond, were able to reach a small, uninhabited island. There they remained for almost two months, subsisting primarily on shellfish, coconuts, turtle meat, and turtle eggs, before Captain Pond was sufficiently prepared to attempt to seek help.

The captain was faced with two options: by using a small boat salvaged from the

wreckage, he could sail 1,500 miles westward to the Navigator Islands or 300–500 miles eastward to Tahiti. Despite the vast difference in distance, the captain determined that sailing 1,500 miles westward was the most logical choice, for strong winds had been blowing continuously in that direction for weeks.

Captain Pond, not a member of the Church, prefaced his account of the “peculiar episode” that followed with these words: “I can simply vouch for the facts, without any attempt to argue, or explain” (see Benjamin Franklin Pond, “Autobiography of Captain B. F. Pond” [1895], 129).

As the captain and his crew members were readying themselves for the westward journey, one of the Church members—apparently John McCarthy, a missionary who had been serving in Australia—reported what Captain Pond called “a dream or vision” in which “he saw the boat successfully launched upon her long voyage” but then “floating bottom up, and the drowned bodies of her crew floating around her” (“Autobiography,” 129). Alarmed, Captain Pond’s men refused to accompany him on the voyage.

The disgruntled captain was forced to change his plans and prepare to sail east. He “then gave strict orders that there should be no more visions told in public unless they were favorable ones, and first submitted to me for my approval.” After several days the missionary approached Captain Pond again,

reporting that he had seen another vision. “I asked him if it was a good one,” wrote the captain. “Yes, [the missionary said,] a very good one. He saw the boat depart with a crew of ten men, bound to the eastward; after three days of rowing, they reached a friendly island where a vessel was obtained and all hands safely brought to Tahiti” (“Autobiography,” 129–30).

The nine-member crew still lacked one man. Said the captain, “I looked [the missionary] over. He was a fine, athletic fellow, and [I] asked him if he believed his vision. ‘Yes, indeed, [he said,] was it not a revelation from God?’ I then suggested that [he could] prove his faith by volunteering for the boat. ‘Of course,’ [he said,] and he did with alacrity” (“Autobiography,” 130).

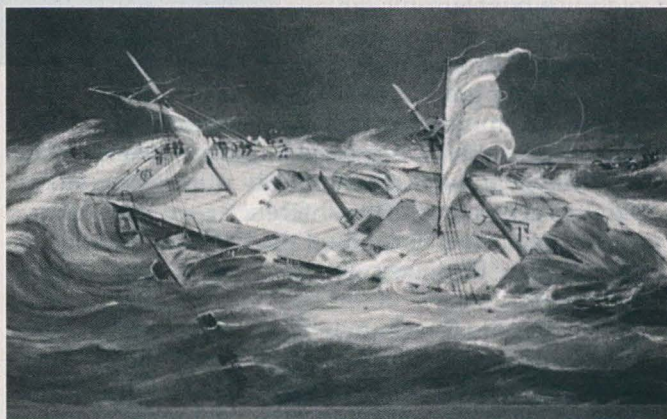
Remarkably, on the morning of the men’s departure, the winds reversed and began to blow in the very direction that Captain Pond now intended to go.

The captain and his crew spent three long days laboring at their oars and fighting sickness in the battered boat. Finally a

welcome cry was raised: “Land ahead!” Captain Pond expressed the joy they felt at the occasion: “Oh, how the cry, the thought, the reality thrilled our every nerve, and our anxious longing eyes gazing at the dim, cloud like outline of a far distant island, gradually lit with renewed fire, and hope again shone out, bright and clear” (“Autobiography,” 128).

But the struggle was not yet over. For a time the distant island disappeared from view, and crew members were forced to contend with a violent sea. Finally, after many exhausting, discouraging hours, the little boat reached the shore. The bedraggled crew were met by wary natives who initially suspected the sailors to be pirates but were persuaded to provide help. Eventually a schooner was obtained from a nearby island and all the *Julia Ann*’s survivors were rescued. Thus the missionary’s dream, as the captain described it, was “fulfilled against every probability” (“Autobiography,” 130). □

*Gospel topics: faith, inspiration, protection*



THE JULIA ANN, BY HARRIET POND, COURTESY OF MEG RASMUSSEN

"The cry from our poor brethren in foreign countries for deliverance is great, the hand of the oppressor is heavy upon them, and they have no other prospect on earth through which they can hope for assistance," said the Presidency. "The P. E. Fund is designed to deliver the honest poor, the pauper, if you please, from the thralldom [i.e., bondage] of ages, from localities where poverty is a crime and beggary an offense against the law, where every avenue to rise in the scale of being to any degree of respectable joyous existence is forever closed, and place them in a land where honest labor and industry meet a suitable reward, where the higher walks of life are open to the humblest and poorest, and where they can lay a foundation for indissolubly uniting themselves and their children in the progressive scale of human existence."<sup>25</sup>

The gathering of the poor was, however, the Church's most expensive program, and it needed loan repayments to stay viable. European Saints were expected to contribute to PEF accounts. The PEF was not designed to benefit the idlers, they reminded, for "we have no use for them in the valley."<sup>26</sup> But few could afford to repay the PEF because making a basic living in pioneer Utah was such a challenge. By early 1855, the fund was out of money, with about \$57,000 owed to it. Leaders reminded those owing that payment would "assist many thousands to come, who are looking and praying for deliverance through this source."<sup>27</sup>

Also that year, 1855, widespread drought and famine withered the Utah Saints' resources, causing donations to the PEF to dry up. Desperate, the First Presidency issued a Churchwide, passionate appeal for PEF donations. Although the letter did not generate a good response, given the Saints' destitution, it underscores clearly the Presidency's ironclad commitment to help the poor to emigrate. Their letter reports that "the aid of the P. E. Fund company has this year been extended to some thirteen hundred



*Left: Emigrant ship, the Julia Ann, which was shipwrecked in 1855. Above: Handcarts provided low-cost transportation for healthy people who could not afford high-priced wagons and teams.*

persons, nearly a fourth of this season's immigration."<sup>28</sup>

## THE HANDCART SOLUTION

With available resources stretched to the maximum, some type of low-cost transportation was badly needed so as not to require suspension of the emigration operations. As a solution, President Young proposed that carts pulled by people replace expensive wagons pulled by expensive teams of oxen. Savings would be enormous. A choice became clear: create handcart brigades or suspend operations. President Young refused to halt the emigration. Therefore, the First Presidency announced the new

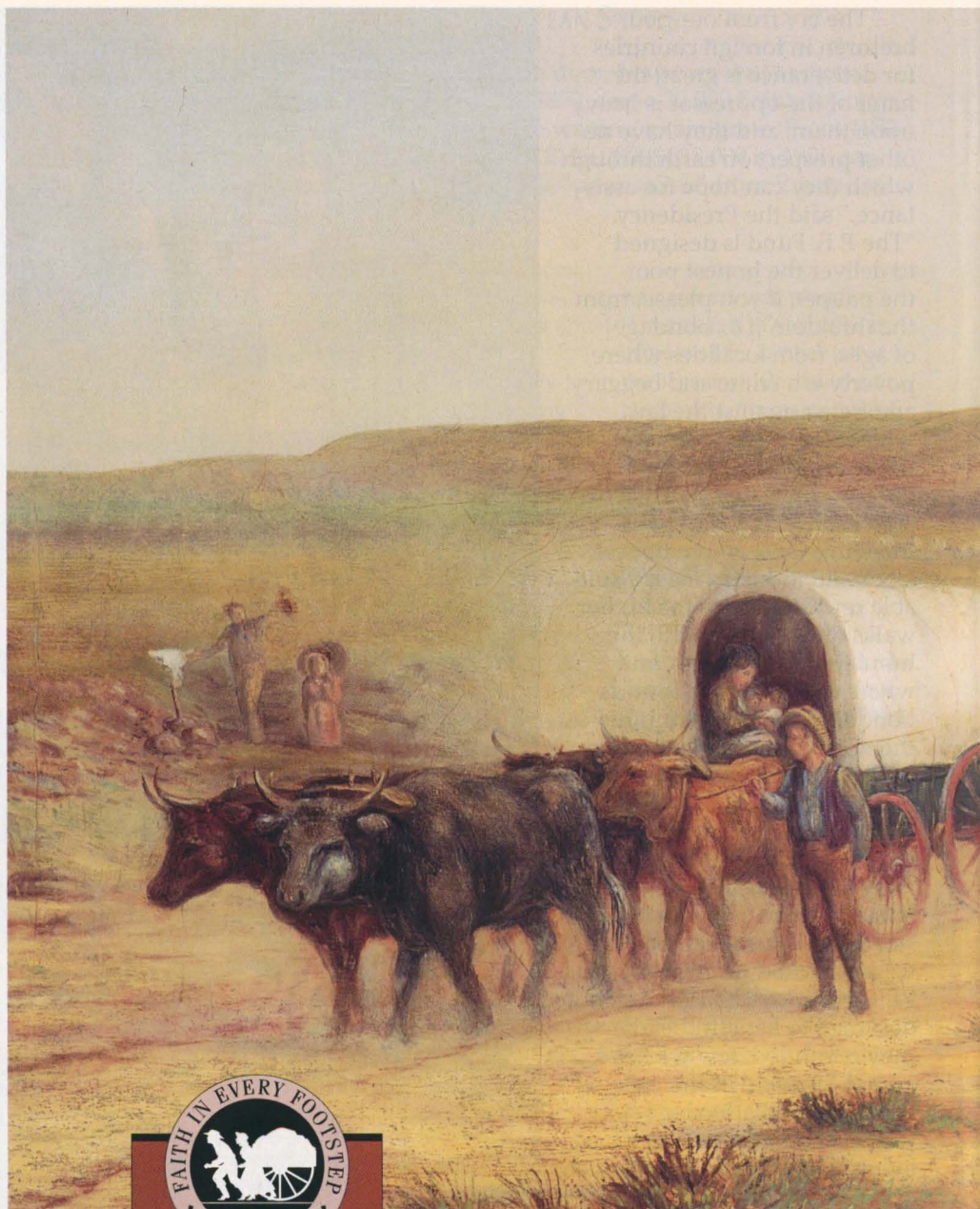
handcart system in an official epistle to the Church. "Let them come on foot, with hand-carts or wheelbarrows" was the emigration program for 1856; "let them gird up their loins and walk through, and nothing shall hinder or stay them."<sup>29</sup>

During 1856, five separate handcart companies reached Utah. The last two, the Martin and Willie Companies, suffered many deaths due to traveling too late in the season, taking double the number of people they should have, and being caught by heavy blizzards in Wyoming.

Immediately after rescue teams brought in the last two handcart companies, the First Presidency issued its 14th general epistle, dated 10 December 1856. They observed that the handcart mode of travel, except for the last two companies who started too late in the season, was a successful experiment. Saints who came west in the first three companies had "been healthier, more contented and happier, and [had] encountered less trouble and vexation than those with teams." After the year's experiment the First Presidency reported, "The enterprise, having proved so eminently successful, will in the future enter largely into all our emigrating operations," but with several adjustments and improvements.<sup>30</sup>

Handcart pioneer Priscilla Evans said of her journey, "People made fun of us as we walked, pulling our handcarts, but the weather was fine and the roads were excellent. [We] thought it was a glorious way to go to Zion."<sup>31</sup>

Between 1857 and 1860, LDS agents sent another five handcart companies west. Altogether, the 10 handcart brigades moved some 3,000 Saints to Utah; simultaneously, about 5,200 Saints traveled west in wagon trains. In theory and practice, to have people pull handcarts to Zion was a workable system, tailored to provide low-cost transportation for healthy people who could not afford high-priced wagons and teams.



*From 1861 until the railroad came to Utah in 1869, "down-and-back" wagon trains left Salt Lake City and went to the Midwest to pick up Latter-day Saint emigrants waiting there, bringing them back to the Salt Lake Valley.*

## THE 1860s: "DOWN-AND-BACK" CHURCH TEAMS

By 1860 the Church faced a major turning point with regard to helping the poor to emigrate. For three years, Utah War problems<sup>32</sup> had caused the Church to all but halt the movement of new Saints to Utah, so, like a dam ready to burst, increasing numbers of European Saints anxiously sought some way to emigrate. By then the PEF accounts were drained, the handcart method was losing support, and the average cash cost for covered wagon transportation from Florence, Nebraska, to Salt Lake City, Utah, was \$50 per person (not per



EMIGRANT TRAIN. BY GEORGE M. OTTINGER. COURTESY OF THE SPRINGVILLE MUSEUM OF ART

family) for cattle, wagon, and outfit. Poor Saints could not afford this amount nor could the Church afford to buy outfits for them even if the emigrants signed promissory notes to pay for the outfits later. What could the Church do? President Young, knowing Utah was cash poor but cattle rich, was inspired to create a brilliant new transportation system that proved to be highly successful—a system whereby Utahns sent wagons down to the Missouri River valley to pick up needy emigrants and bring them back to Utah—"down-and-back" wagon companies.

In 1859 and 1860, two Utah freight wagon trains had made such round-trips, proving that Utah oxen could make the 2,000-mile, six-month journey in good condition; so in February 1861, President Young announced

the new system. He asked every bishop to have his ward loan one or more wagon outfits that spring for the round-trip journey in exchange for tithing credits for those lending materials or manpower. Instructions spelled out what kinds of wagons to send and how to equip them and the ox teams.<sup>33</sup> While telling bishops about the new plan, President Young bore testimony about the plan's connection to the Nauvoo Covenant and said he "intended to send ten teams himself and Heber C. Kimball four, and if it was necessary, he would cheerfully sell the whole of his property in exchange for teams, and send them back to emigrate the poor saints. He had made a covenant while in Nauvoo never to slacken his efforts until all were gathered, which he intended to carry out."<sup>34</sup>

Seventy-five wards, nearly every ward in Utah, each donated a fully outfitted wagon and two yokes of oxen, and most wards sent more. Wards provided drivers, usually young men, and tons of flour. On 23 April 1861, the wagons were grouped into 4 wagon companies, totaling 203 wagons, 217 teamsters, 1,699 oxen, and some 18 guards. Together they transported 136,000 pounds of Utah flour, which they unloaded at four stations along the trail for use on the trip back.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, nearly 4,000 Latter-day Saints in Scandinavia, England, and the United States made plans to emigrate. LDS agents in the States and abroad chartered trains, boats, and ships to meet a clockwork schedule designed to put emigrants at Florence, Nebraska, in time to meet the Utah down-and-back wagon companies there.

During May, June, and July, four large LDS groups—three from Europe and one from the States—converged at Florence, as did the four Utah trains. For three months LDS agents operated the bustling Florence outfitting camp, which included a provisions store, a warehouse, campsites, corrals, and a weighing machine. Saints able to buy wagons and teams joined one of eight independent wagon trains. Those who could not afford outfits signed up to travel in one of the Church's down-and-back wagons.<sup>36</sup>

When he first began his trip west, English emigrant F. W. Blake didn't think too highly of the "Utah boys" who were teamsters on his down-and-back wagon train. But within a month he wrote: "Had to pass some very

Zion. The Utah wagons moved about 1,700 passengers—or 44 percent of the total. A campground report to President Young stated that "every Saint who reached Florence, and desired to go home this season, had had the privilege. The sending down of wagons from Utah to Florence is a grand scheme."<sup>39</sup>

For LDS emigrants that year, the Mormon Trail trek was routine and rather unexciting—no major hardships or tragedies. Perhaps having the earlier handcart pioneers in mind, 1861 emigrant James H. Lindford pointed out that even with wagons, "all of the able bodied emigrants walked from Florence to Utah."<sup>40</sup> The 1861 companies rolled into Salt Lake Valley in August and September, and the borrowed wagons and teams were returned to their owners.

President Young liked how well the down-and-back system had worked. Utah wagons and oxen had saved the Church thousands of dollars that would have been spent to buy outfits at Florence. The oxen sent from Utah "suffered far less loss by deaths and looked much better, as a general thing than those purchased in the states." And, he reported, "this season's emigration has been signally blessed all the time from their departure from their former homes to their new homes in our peaceful valley."<sup>41</sup>

Such success meant that down-and-back trains became the Church's established system for helping needy Saints move to Utah until 1869 when the railroad reached Utah. Gradually the only LDS wagon companies were the down-and-back Church team trains. As the railroad terminal pushed ever farther west, the LDS outfitting point moved west with it, so Utah wagon trains had ever-reducing distances to travel. The outfitting places were Florence, Nebraska, 1861–63; the town known as Wyoming, Nebraska, 1864 and 1866; and Laramie, Wyoming, 1868.<sup>42</sup>

One example of how local members contributed to the down-and-back system is the Harmony Branch of Washington County, Utah. On 16 March 1863 a messenger arrived with a letter "requesting Harmony Branch to

uneven passes, which would perhaps blanch the cheek of an English teamster to go over; but our mountain boys went along full of boldness and without accident."<sup>37</sup>

Church Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company ledger books show that some 600 heads of families signed loan notes, agreeing to pay later for food, supplies, and wagon fares. Agents assigned 6 to 12 people to each Utah wagon. Fares were \$14 for adults and half-fares for children under eight. Each passenger could take 50 pounds of baggage free but could load in extra at 20 cents per pound.<sup>38</sup>

Four Church trains and eight independent trains, at least 624 wagons, transported just over 3,900 Saints to

furnish three outfits of wagons with four yoke of cattle to each to go down to Florence and assist in bringing out the poor." Each wagon needed to be outfitted for a six-month journey and loaded with 1,000 pounds of flour to feed the poor on the way back. At a 25 March meeting, "William, James, Harvey, and Wilson D. Pace agreed to raise one team, wagon and outfit. George W. Sevy, Lemuel H. Redd, and George Hill agreed to raise another team. Benjamin J. Redd, a young man, volunteered to drive a team across the plains. M. H. Darrow agreed to drive another team. Richard Woolsey turned out the only yoke of oxen he had for the third team.



THE JOURNEY BEGINS BY GLEN S. HOPKINSON



LATTER-DAY SAINT EMIGRANTS AT CASTLE GARDEN, AS SHOWN IN FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER. COURTESY OF MUSEUM OF CHURCH HISTORY AND ART

Thomas Woolsey furnished an old wagon cover, one sack [of flour] and a small keg. T. A. Woolsey furnished a sack. H. Woolsey, a sack and helped to run out some tar. John H. Lee, two whips value \$4.00. John D. Lee furnished a good Chicago wagon and cover, one pair of pants, one pair of shoes, three overshirts, and flour, bacon and molasses, rifle and ammunition to the amount of \$122.50.<sup>43</sup>

The three teams that the Harmony Branch sent were said to be the best rigs in Washington County. M. H. Darrow, George Woolsey, and Benjamin J. Redd were sustained by vote to make the trek and were formally blessed and set apart for their mission.

Down-and-back trips to assist the poor were memorialized in a song written in 1864 and sung around a campfire in at least one Utah company:

*In 1864 we started out to meet the poor,  
We left our families and our friends  
To help to gather Israel in  
Four yoke of cattle to each team  
But some of them were rather lean  
Our teams did number fifty-three  
And on we rolled so merrily.<sup>44</sup>*



*Left: For many European converts the exhausting ocean voyage began on the docks of England and ended in New York customs houses (above).*

During the Church team train period, 1861–68, available statistics indicate that no less than 20,000 Saints came west in down-and-back wagon trains. (Due to the Civil War and to Utah Indian troubles, no teams went out in 1865 and 1867.) At least 2,000 Utah teams, or an average of about 330 wagons per year, helped gather the needy.<sup>45</sup> In cash equivalents, total expenditures by the Church for the down-and-back wagon trains in the 1860s reached \$2,400,000, almost all of which involved voluntary dona-

tions of labor, teams, supplies, and provisions—and very little money.

LDS emigration during the 1860s was carefully planned and orchestrated, and highly successful. It provided a literal grand finale to President Young's unwavering labors to find ways to fulfill the covenant he and the Church made to help gather the poor Saints.

## CONTINUING COMMITMENT

By 1869 steamships and railroads had replaced sailing ships and wagon trains, thus ending the Mormon Trail era. Nevertheless, the Church continued to encourage repayment to the PEF so it could be used to help needy converts reach the Great Basin. In 1872, for

example, the First Presidency reminded Utah bishops and stake presidents that “little had been donated . . . that can be used to emigrate the old and faithful members of the Church, whom we feel it our bounden duty to aid in gathering home to Zion.”<sup>46</sup>

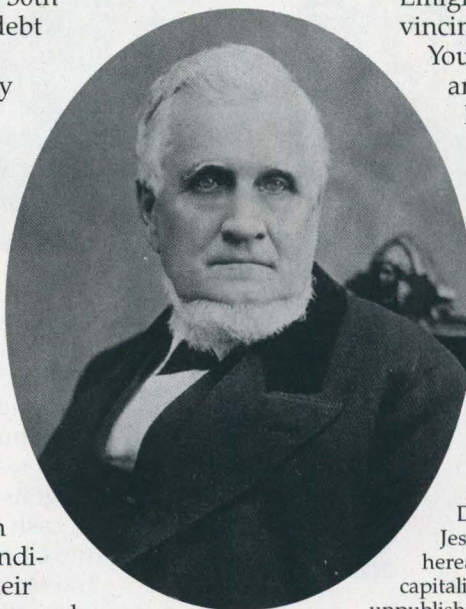
Four years later, similar instructions went out. Then again, in early 1876, the First Presidency reminded the Saints: “It is the duty of all . . . who have the means to assist in the gathering of those of their brethren and sisters who are still scattered in Babylon.”<sup>47</sup>

Over time, the PEF debts mounted and grew, mostly due to the annual interest each loan carried. The amount owing increased from more than \$100,000 in 1856 to \$700,000 by 1872, and exceeded \$1,000,000 in 1877, the year President Young died. Unpaid PEF loans produced some public tongue-lashings from Church leaders, but in practice the PEF promissory note was “a very merciful instrument.”<sup>48</sup> Compassion prevailed.

## THE JUBILEE: BLESSING THE WORTHY POOR

In 1880 the Church celebrated its 50th birthday. By then, the original PEF debt plus interest stood at \$1,600,400.<sup>49</sup> Seeking to collect some of the money owed, President John Taylor sent names of 19,000 debtors to bishops throughout the Church and asked them to collect “consistent with the ability of the debtors to pay, without distressing the poor, the widow, the aged, or the infirm.”<sup>50</sup> The debts averaged \$82 per person.

Then, to give meaning to the Church’s half-century anniversary, President Taylor declared 1880 to be a “Jubilee Year,” wherein the Church adopted an ancient Hebrew practice of canceling certain debts owed it. And he encouraged individual Saints to do the same with their debtors. This action was taken to bless and benefit the worthy poor. At April conference, he announced that the Church would cancel half of the PEF debts still owing. To help people who weren’t sure if they had paid everything they owed, the Church published the names of those who had paid their PEF debts in full. Then, at President Taylor’s request, bishops determined who among their “worthy poor” members should receive a cancellation of debt and sent those names to Church headquarters—apparently about 9,000 Saints total. At the same time, those whose debts were not waived were urged to pay their obligations, or, if they were deceased, their families were to pay the debt.<sup>51</sup> Seven years later, by 1887, one-third of the emigrants had paid their debt in full, one-third in part, and one-third had paid nothing.<sup>52</sup>



William G. Hartley, an associate professor of history and research professor at BYU’s Joseph Fielding Smith Institute, teaches Sunday School in the Riverside Third Ward, Murray Utah North Stake.

Gospel topics: compassion, covenants, pioneers  
NOTES

1. Elizabeth Gilbert to Brigham Young, 13 Aug. 1846, Brigham Young Papers; Historical Department, Archives Division, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives. Spelling and capitalization have been modernized in the unpublished sources cited.
2. See also D&C 38:16; 42:31, 34, 39; 44:6; 52:40; 83:6; 84:112; 104:18; 105:3.
3. *Church History in the Fulness of Times* (Church Educational System manual; 1989), 178–79.
4. *History of the Church*, 3:250.
5. *History of the Church*, 7:443.
6. In James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency* (1965), 1:278.
7. *History of the Church*, 7:465.
8. Thomas Bullock to Willard Richards, 10 Sept. 1846, Thomas Bullock Collected Papers, LDS Church Archives.
9. Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6 Oct. 1846.
10. Thomas L. Kane, *The Mormons: A Discourse Delivered before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania: March 26, 1850* (1850), 8–11.
11. Thomas Bullock Journal, 4 Oct. 1846, LDS Church Archives.
12. O. M. Allen to Brigham Young, 15 Nov. 1846, Brigham Young Papers.
13. Thomas Bullock Journal, 9 and 22 Oct. 1846.
14. Journal History, 28 Sept. 1846.

## COVENANTS KEPT

The late 1880s marked the end of the Perpetual Emigrating Company and PEF, thus ending a benevolent operation that for decades assisted the poor and needy. During its 38-year existence, the Perpetual Emigrating Company helped more than 100,000 persons, most of whom came from England and northern Europe. About 40,000 to 50,000 received financial assistance from the PEF. It is estimated that the Church expended approximately \$12,500,000 through the PEF, which was half of the total expense of all LDS emigration during that period.<sup>53</sup> Who could have known back in Missouri, when Saints covenanted to help the poor leave the state, or in the Nauvoo Temple, when they covenanted to help the poor move west, that their pledges would produce one of the most impressive emigration systems that has ever operated? By donations of money, wagons, manpower, equipment, and food, and through dedicated leadership and wise transactions by LDS agents worldwide, tens of thousands of Saints who could not afford to emigrate were able to do so.

Emigrant numbers and ledger books convincingly show that President Brigham Young, members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, local Church leaders, and the pioneer-era Saints fulfilled in a remarkable way the solemn covenant made in the Nauvoo Temple to assist God’s worthy poor to gather to Zion. □



**Left: President John Taylor declared 1880 a "Jubilee Year" and canceled many debts owed to the Church's Perpetual Emigrating Fund. Above: Joy and relief surrounded the arrival of Latter-day emigrants to the Salt Lake Valley.**

15. In Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 1:332.
16. In Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 1:346.
17. *Journal History*, 6 Oct. 1849.
18. In Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:35.
19. In Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:61.
20. William G. Hartley, "They Are My Friends": A History of the Joseph Knight Family, 1825-1850 (1986), 185-86.
21. In Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:87-88.
22. Quoted in Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom* (1966), 100.
23. Gustive O. Larson, *Prelude to the Kingdom: Mormon Desert Conquest* (1947), 113.
24. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 97, 99.
25. In Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:181-82.
26. In Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:38-39; see also 198.
27. In Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:168.
28. In Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:181.
29. In Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:186.
30. In Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:199.
31. Quoted in Gaylen K. Bunker, *The Annotated Edward Bunker* (1992), 77-78.
32. See James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (1976), 298-99, 306-7.
33. First Presidency to Bishop [Edward Hunter] and Utah Bishops, Feb. 1861, Circular Letter, Brigham Young Letterbooks, LDS Church Archives.
34. Presiding Bishop's Meeting with Bishops, Minutes, 31 Jan. 1861, LDS Church Archives.

35. Brigham Young to George Q. Cannon, 9 May 1861, Brigham Young Letterbooks, LDS Church Archives.
36. William G. Hartley, "The Great Florence Fit-out of 1861," *BYU Studies* 24 (summer 1984), 341-71.
37. F. W. Blake Diary, 21 Aug. 1861, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
38. William Jeffries Journal, summary entry before entry for 23 Sept. 1861, LDS Church Archives.
39. *Journal History*, 30 July 1861.
40. *An Autobiography of James Henry Lindford, Sr.* (1947), 24.
41. *Journal History*, 31 Dec. 1861.
42. John K. Hulmston, "Mormon Immigration in the 1860s: The Story of the Church Trains," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 58 (winter 1990), 32-48.
43. Larson, *Prelude to the Kingdom*, 219-20.
44. Larson, *Prelude to the Kingdom*, 222.
45. Stanley B. Kimball, *Historic Resource Study: Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail* (1991), 136-50.
46. In Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:248.
47. In Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:276.
48. Larson, *Prelude to the Kingdom*, 230.
49. Larson, *Prelude to the Kingdom*, 233.
50. William Mulder, *Homeward to Zion: The Mormon Migration from Scandinavia* (1957), 146.
51. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 355.
52. Richard L. Jensen and William G. Hartley, "Immigration and Emigration," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (1992), 2:674.
53. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 382.