

# Parley P. Pratt in Winter Quarters and the Trail West



# Parley P. Pratt in Winter Quarters and the Trail West

Stephen F. Pratt

Much has been written about the Mormon pioneer company that went to the Great Basin in 1847. Little has been written about the large immigration group that followed, organized principally by Parley P. Pratt. Returning from England in April 1847, Apostle Pratt, together with John Taylor and Orson Hyde, successfully closed the Joint Stock Company, an ill-fated English trading company started by Reuben Hedlock, Thomas Ward, and Wilford Woodruff.<sup>1</sup> Arriving in Winter Quarters just when Brigham Young and the pioneers were leaving for the West, Parley, and to a lesser extent John Taylor, reorganized and enlarged the companies for emigration west, negotiated with the Omaha and Otoe Indians and the U.S. government Indian agents to protect the Mormons' cattle from Indian attack, and tried to make Winter Quarters more economically efficient. They also dealt with difficult problems concerning plural marriage and wrestled with the question of leadership and authority in the absence of Brigham Young.

## The Indian Problem

When Parley arrived at Winter Quarters on 8 April 1847, he found the Mormons in conflict with the Omaha and Otoe Indians and the Indian agents. The Mormons had received permission from the government to stay on Potawatomi lands on the east side of the Missouri River but had failed to gain government permission to stay on Omaha lands on the west side.<sup>2</sup> The Mormons had entered into agreements with the Indians themselves to haul corn to the Indians and to provide protection in exchange for the use of their land. But, because there was a land dispute between the Omaha and Otoe, the Mormons were not sure which group they should deal with. In addition, the Indian agent wanted the Mormons out of the area because of the precarious situation of the Omaha, who had been reduced to poverty by attacks from the Sioux, by a lack of timber and game, and by the impact of Mormons living on Omaha land. In truth, the Omaha were killing the Mormons' cattle to keep from starving, but this caused agitated feelings on both sides. Brigham had told the Saints in Winter Quarters not to kill any Indians stealing the Mormons' cattle but to whip those they caught.<sup>3</sup>

On 4 April 1847, Brigham sent a letter to John Miller, the Indian agent, asking him to come to the 6 April general conference to encourage the Omaha to help themselves “by farming the present season, so that they may have sustenance and the necessities of life; and prevent the necessity of their plundering to sustain themselves.”<sup>4</sup> Miller replied he could not attend the meeting or enter into agreement with the Mormons without authority from the Department of Indian Affairs. He further said that he felt a farm would be useless as the land was in dispute between the Omaha and the Otoe and that the government was planning to erect forts to protect the Omaha and Otoe from the Sioux. He then stated his views on the Mormons occupying Omaha and Otoe lands:

I will respectfully suggest, as the Council Bluffs agent to you & your people that the best service you can render the Omaha’s in my opinion, will be as soon as practicable to leave the Indian country, as you are well aware that the longer your people remain here the greater will be the destruction of timber, Range Game & C which to the Indians is a serious loss, & their chiefs complain to the agent on all these points and are further aware that the Indians in all probability will still continue their depredation on your stock & C.<sup>5</sup>

Brigham, who joined the pioneer group on the Elk Horn on 14 April 1847, wanted the Indians’ depredations against the Mormons’ cattle to stop but otherwise did not want to follow John Miller’s advice. Brigham sent a letter dated 16 April 1847 with Jesse Little and Porter Rockwell advising the Mormons to increase the guards on the cattle and to herd them together for protection.<sup>6</sup> When the letter was received by Parley P. Pratt, John Taylor, and the High Council, they called a meeting on 18 April in John Taylor’s house. After reading Brigham’s letter, Parley helped form a committee to negotiate a treaty with Big Elk, the Omaha chief, so that the depredations could end.<sup>7</sup> This discussion came just in time; that night some Omaha attacked the cattle again, causing several men to go to Parley’s house to complain about the situation. Parley spent the whole night consoling the men and promised that he was going to stop the problem and that he would hold another council the following day for that purpose.<sup>8</sup>

On 19 April 1847, Parley P. Pratt, John Taylor, John Smith, W. W. Phelps, and the High Council met in Samuel Russell’s house to discuss the Indian problem. Parley began the meeting by stating that the Mormons would face starvation unless the Indians stopped their malicious attacks. He reported that when he had talked to John Miller about the agent’s 4 April letter, Miller had said his letter was not to be construed as harsh but that it expressed his concern the Mormons would face more depredations from the Indians unless the Saints left as soon as possible. Agent Miller, according to Parley, knew the Mormons could not leave immediately. The Indians, meanwhile, were actually afraid the Mormons were going to leave without fulfilling

their commitment to the Indians to haul corn, build schools, and make other improvements.<sup>9</sup>

The High Council now appointed Alpheus Cutler, Daniel Spencer, W. W. Phelps, and Cornelius P. Lott as the committee to talk to the Omaha chiefs. Parley instructed them not to beg but to refuse to haul corn unless the Mormons' cattle were returned. If the Omaha continued their depredations, the Mormons would put the "whip to them."<sup>10</sup> John Taylor then advised the committee to take a count of all stray cattle the Indians had taken and have a minute book kept of their meeting with Big Elk. Several others in the High Council felt they had paid the Omaha enough for timber and game with the cattle already stolen, and they did not want to do anything more for the Indians. This feeling was not countenanced by Parley nor the other leaders.<sup>11</sup>

One of the problems the Saints faced was control of their cattle. The High Council decided to involve the bishops, notifying them to meet with the leaders on 20 April. At the meeting, Parley told the bishops that the cattle needed to be herded, tended, guarded, and counted, the count to include those lost. W. W. Phelps then proposed that Hosea Stout be authorized to appoint ten men to bring back the stray cattle. Immediately after the council meeting, Hosea Stout left with his men but was unsuccessful in returning any stray cattle.<sup>12</sup>

Early on 21 April, Alpheus Cutler, W. W. Phelps, Daniel Spencer, and Cornelius P. Lott headed for the Omaha camp on the Papillon River. After meeting with John Miller, they entered the Omaha camp. Once the council was called, Daniel Spencer spoke thirty minutes on the Mormons' grievances. Old Elk, the Omaha chief, responded for one hour. He admitted the young braves had killed the Mormons' cattle but felt that the Mormons were not keeping their promise of protection and that they had destroyed the Omaha's timber: "You can't raise up our timber, can't raise up our dead men; so, you are the aggressors," the chief said. Old Elk continued with his fear that the Mormons had no intention of leaving but were putting up permanent settlements. Daniel Spencer responded that the government call for five hundred men for the Mormon Battalion had forced the Mormons to stay longer than they had planned, but Old Elk angrily retorted: "If your father the great president employ 500 men to fight his battle let him appropriate your lands. We don't pay his debts." John Miller then told the Mormons that their settlements were hindering the sale of Indian lands. He advised the Omaha that when the Mormons did not deliver the corn they had promised, the Omaha were within their rights to kill the Mormons' cattle. After this, the Indians said that the Mormons could stay if they hauled corn to them and that Old Elk would stop his braves from stealing the stock. The Indians felt there was plenty of land close by on which the Mormons could settle without settling on Omaha land.<sup>13</sup>

At the High Council meeting the next day Parley asked the members, "Will we haul the corn or not?" Given no answer, he informed the group their cattle were still left unattended and vulnerable to attack. Parley wanted a more effective herding procedure for the cattle and a peaceful solution to the Omaha question, if possible. If not, harsh measures would be needed.

At this point, a group of Otoe chiefs met with the Saints, saying that they were upset over the Omaha situation, that the Mormons had some rights as the land in question was really Otoe land. After the Otoe left, the High Council discussed the options. Most members felt they should haul corn to the Omaha. Hosea Stout closed the meeting with the thought that if the lands belonged to the Otoe the Mormons should deal with them, not the Omaha; but the majority wanted to wait and counsel with John Miller before making a final decision.<sup>14</sup>

Two days later, three Otoe Indians made their way down the streets of Winter Quarters and on to the Council House. They brought two letters, one to Parley and the other to Daniel Spencer. Robert Campbell, the clerk, carried the letters to each man. Once the meeting began, Big Caw, the Otoe chief, stated that the Omaha were deceiving the Mormons, that the land was Otoe land. Big Caw wanted to know how long the Mormons were going to remain on the land. Daniel Spencer, appointed by Parley as a spokesman, told the Otoe that the Saints could not leave as soon as they had planned and that the Omaha had been killing the Mormons' cattle. Spencer explained to the chief that the Omaha corn-hauling proposal was to keep the depredations from continuing and asked Big Caw how the Saints could stay in peace for a while longer. Big Caw responded that as the land was actually Otoe land the Mormons should give the Omaha a good whipping to solve the problem. If the Mormons hauled corn to the Otoe in twelve days, the Mormons could stay as long as they pleased. Parley P. Pratt and Daniel Spencer felt that they would go along with the Otoe claims but told the chief the Mormons would have to counsel together that night and give a decision the next morning. After the chief left, the group voted to haul corn to both the Otoe and the Omaha, agreeing that "\$60 to \$80 is nothing to get peace for we lose that amount in two or three days by their killing our cattle!!"<sup>15</sup>

The following morning Parley and the High Council met with Big Caw and told him that the Mormons would haul the corn but that they needed to meet with John Miller to receive permission to make the arrangements. The High Council then voted to send Agent Miller a letter telling of the conflicting claims to the land and informing him of the Mormons' decision to defer action until Miller returned with an answer. After the meeting, John Taylor presented the Indians with some calicoes, and Daniel Spencer gave them a sack of crackers. The Otoe departed satisfied.<sup>16</sup>

On 25 April 1847, Parley addressed the Saints, telling them of the Indians' conflicting claims of land ownership. He also reported the decision of the High Council the day before, advising the Saints that if the Omaha attacked their cattle to "whip the Indians with a hickory but don't kill them." Parley told them that he did not want the corn to be hauled only to have the depredations continued. He said those who were able should go west.<sup>17</sup>

Part of the reason Parley was concerned with the Indian problem was that many Mormons were panicking and scattering across the Missouri River to settle in farms in Missouri and Iowa and not preparing to go west.<sup>18</sup> Others joined major dissenters such as George Miller, James J. Strang, Lyman Wight, or McGarvey, the Indian prophet.<sup>19</sup> The Mormon leaders had to find a way to hold the people together while making sure the Indians did not kill the remaining cattle. Parley pled for unity:

The Lord had called us to gather & not scatter all the time except when counselled to do this is the object of God. He would have gathered his ancient people but they would not, but he does not say to us he would not. But in effect says he will if he should take a few Omahas to do it or some body else. We have Bro going West as Pioneers, we have soldiers West and we are also Westward bound & if I have crossed the River to go West I will rather perish on the plains Westward if I know my own heart than cross the River without Council. Ye who want to scatter go and scatter to the four winds for the Lord can do without you and the church can do without you for we want the pure in heart to go with us over the mountains. If people want to follow Strang go. . . . follow a new thing hatch it up for we have only the old thing. It was old in Adams day it was old in Mormons day & hid up in the earth & it was old in 1830 when we first began to preach it. Strain every nerve to go on in the Spring. Wake up & go if you possibly can. Those who remain dont farm one here & one there, for union is needed & we are weak having so many men drawn from among us. So be united & my cattle should go to the mountains this year rather than have them killed off rather than have this and theirs or sell them to my Brethren & buy again when we go, for we dont need many here & I would have none to stay here but who were absolutely needed here, and a few cows for our support other than this have them over the mountains.<sup>20</sup>

To slow down the flight from Winter Quarters Parley ordered that all must get a certificate from Isaac Morley or they could not cross on the ferry. The enforcement was being carried out by Hosea Stout and the police, who counselled the ferryman not to allow any to cross without the needed certificates. This seems to have been effective, for the majority rallied behind the leadership of Parley P. Pratt and John Taylor and stayed in the Mormon settlement.<sup>21</sup>

By early May, Parley was again pleading with the Saints to protect their cattle and to prepare to go west by 25 May.<sup>22</sup> This warning came when the Indians again committed depredations on the Mormons' cattle. On 7 May,

the Omaha attacked seven or eight head; the Saints seemed not to be following Parley's herding policies. That night, at 10:00 P.M., word came to Winter Quarters that the Omaha were on the river bottom near town. Hosea Stout ordered the bishops to raise men to guard the south end of town against the Omaha's approach. No disturbance happened that night.<sup>23</sup>

Still, the Mormon position was precarious. Even though the Mormons had agreed to haul corn to the Indians, the superintendent of Indian Affairs felt the Mormon presence was causing problems.<sup>24</sup> Thomas Kane tried to plead the Mormon cause to the superintendent and the War Department, but government officials feared that the Mormons were setting up a permanent way station and wanted them out as soon as possible.<sup>25</sup> Parley tried to relieve the government of their fears by having as many Saints as possible go to the Rocky Mountains that spring.

On 9 May, Parley spoke, expressing his feeling that full agreement between the Mormons and the Indians was being prevented by the agents. Parley explained his frustration:

I'll tell you what is the law of man. There is no man in the states of America to compel me to lay still & be robbed or authorize anybody to rob me—but the law is that no emigrants shall stay & settle on Indian lands on their journey Westward. The frontier settlers would overrun & oppress the Indians were it not that agencies were established on the frontier & it was a wise thing & I thank God for it. If we were farther Westward we could keep the Indians perhaps, at bay & make them do right but here we have to hold still for there is [a] third power to act. But Westward if an Indian come upon you to rob you or murder you you can resist him on equal terms for there is no third party.<sup>26</sup>

Parley went on to criticize the Saints for not resisting the Indians who took cattle the previous Thursday.

In the days that followed, the Otoe came to town on more than one occasion; the Saints fed them. Mormon leaders took these occasions to encourage the Otoe and to convey a message to the Omaha that the Mormons were guarding the cattle and would resist if attacked.<sup>27</sup> Parley's program was being fully implemented to repel the Omaha threat.

Parley now began to adopt measures to insure the future of the Winter Quarters settlement. First, he sent Alpheus Cutler to talk to John Miller to obtain a firm answer on the Mormons' request to stay.<sup>28</sup> We have no direct account of the reply, but we do know the agent did not want them to stay; however, he did not force them to leave.<sup>29</sup> Next, Parley told the Mormons that harsh measures would have to be taken against the Omaha because the Indians were still taking cattle. He forbade any Omaha from entering the town, feeling they were doing so only to learn the location of the expanding Mormon herds.<sup>30</sup>

This policy was tested when the Omaha made overtures of peace to the Mormons, asking for a feast in exchange for the return of some stray horses.



Once the Indians arrived, Hosea Stout disobeyed Parley's orders and brought Big Elk's son, Young Elk, and six other braves into town. When Hosea approached Parley and reported to him of the Indians' desire to present offers of peace and live more friendly with the Mormons, Parley became angry, telling Stout he would have nothing to do with the situation. He advised Stout to consult the local leaders to obtain an answer to the Omaha proposals. Stout consulted John Taylor and Cornelius Lott with little success. Finally, after John Smith was consulted, a meeting with the Omaha was arranged for outside of town. Cornelius Lott, a reluctant spokesman for the Mormons, angrily told the Indians they had not kept their promises. Young Elk responded with a conciliatory tone, saying they wanted peace with the Mormons as evidenced by their returning of the stray horses. He then appealed to the Mormon sense of guilt by saying, "If the 'Big Red headed' chief [Brigham] had been here," this would not have happened. The tactic worked, and Lott mellowed, telling the young chief the High Council would give him an answer as soon as possible.<sup>31</sup>

On 30 May, Parley addressed the Saints and denounced "the Guard & those who owned horses held by the Omahas [who] were to meet the Omahas & not let them come in here, but they obeyed my council so far they brought some chiefs here but I did not shake their hands nor go near them."<sup>32</sup>

This did not dissuade Hosea Stout and C. W. Langley from going to Bellevue to give Young Elk the answer that the Mormons wanted peace.<sup>33</sup> Parley felt contented to let Orson Hyde and the local leaders handle the problem as they were not following his advice in the matter anyway. Parley left for the West on 5 June.<sup>34</sup> Later, the local leaders changed their minds and sent a posse after the Omaha when a group of them killed Francis Weatherby, a Mormon.<sup>35</sup> The problems continued until January 1848 when the Mormons left Winter Quarters.<sup>36</sup>

Parley's Indian policy was shaped largely by his fear that the U.S. government would attempt to force the Mormons from the land. At that time, such action was not practical for the government; the nation was at war with Mexico and it would have been politically embarrassing to force the Mormons off Indian land. Parley felt his hands were tied by the Indian agents. He decided to take the matter into his own hands. The Omaha depredations on the Mormons' cattle, coupled with the dissenter problem, delayed the move west and even threatened the future of Winter Quarters. When negotiations failed to stop the killing of cattle, Parley called for harsh measures. The local leaders did not fully heed his policies, trying several times to gain a peaceful solution. Even this failed, and eventually the Mormons abandoned the settlement.

## Reorganization of the Divisions

When Brigham Young took the pioneer group to the Great Basin in 1847, he left explicit instructions as to how the Saints in the subsequent emigration should proceed:

It is our wish and council that the emigration company now formed shall follow the Pioneers as soon as the grass is sufficient to support the teams and the presidents and captains will examine and know that every soul that goes in said company is provided with from 3 to 500 lbs of bread stuff or a year and half and as much more as he can get, for we know not whether we can raise corn this summer, as we anticipate, at the place of location. Let the first emigration company take with them as many of the sisters where husbands are in the army as can fit themselves out or can be conveniently fitted out.

It is wisdom that all the men in the emigration company shall be organized into a military body, under their respective captains of Tens, Fifties and Hundreds with Chas C. Rich as their commander in chief, who will see that every man is properly armed and ready to meet any savage encountered at a moments warning, taking care that caps and priming of all fire locks are so secured as to admit of no accidents; that John Scott supervise the artillery under Charles C. Rich. Horace S. Eldredge be marshall. Hosea Stout captain of the guard on the journey and that the guard watch during the night and sleep as they have need during the day.

The first company will carry the Temple bell, with fixtures for hanging at a moments notice, which will be rung at day light or a proper time and call all who are able to arise to pray, after which ringing of bell and breakfast, or ringing of bell and departure in 15 minutes, to secure the cool of the day, till breakfast time, etc, the Bell may be needed, particularly in the night, if Indians are hovering around, to let them know you are at your duty and if any member acts disorderly punish him severely.

Whenever a company of 75 men who do not belong to the present organized company shall be organized so as to carry out the principles of the Word and Will of the Lord and these instructions according to the pattern, with or without families, and provisions enough for to sustain each other 18 months they may come on till the 1st of July; but in all cases the brethren must run their own risk for food, and not depend on the Pioneers, or any company in advance for support in the least, either for their teams or themselves or families for we are credibly informed that thirty Saints of the original emigrants perished in the mountains with hunger the last season, and 100 bushels of corn can easier be raised near Winter Quarters, than 50 bu. at the foot of the mountains.

If a man of the first emigration company, who is going to stop at this place for the time being should go forget his covenant in the Temple and his more recent obligation and agreements as to retain his wagon or team from the necessities of the Journey it will be the duty of the presidents to instruct the captains to take the same and apply it where necessity requires, and thus compel the owner to do what he has previously agreed to for as some were compelled to come in ancient days, others must be compelled to remain in the latter days, and men who are taken at their word have no reason to find fault.

For the Council

Brigham Young, president  
Pioneer camp of Israel<sup>37</sup>

Brigham Young gave careful instruction as to how the body of Saints should be organized under priesthood authority.<sup>38</sup> Brigham envisioned all members of the second group of migrants being formed into “adoption” families where the Saints were to migrate and settle in the Great Basin in “family” units.<sup>39</sup> Brigham had asked John D. Lee, an adopted son, to stay behind in Winter Quarters to supervise his farm. Isaac Morley, the leader of Brigham’s family emigration division, was to come that season to the mountains with part of Brigham’s adopted family.<sup>40</sup>

But implementation of Brigham’s adoptive family program became difficult for Parley P. Pratt and John Taylor as their large emigration group took shape, because several designated leaders of the divisions were not prepared to go that season.<sup>41</sup> Parley felt that he could make changes in Brigham’s plans since he believed he held equal authority with Brigham when Brigham was not physically present. John Taylor agreed, explaining to a group of Saints on 6 June 1847:

That when the Twelve are present they lead. Every man ought to respect another man’s authority. Here is the High Council, you must respect their authority & Elder Hyde must be respected by you & by the High Council. Elder Young, some say, said so & so. But I tell you Bro. Young never set up stakes that cannot be drawn up according to circumstances. When Elder Hyde is here he is Elder Young. If Bro Pratt is here he would be Elder Young. If 2 or 3 of the Twelve were here the oldest would preside. But are all one and the Lord Jesus acknowledged the same Savior of the others. If the Twelve assembled, sent an Epistle here & council the people they would be bound to receive it & Elder Hyde would be governed by it & so would all the councils & when Elder Young comes back he will be Elder Young. Well, let Israel rejoice & respect the authorities. Don’t let us falter in the race but let us go on & we will rejoice & shout Hosanna, Hosanna to our God.<sup>42</sup>

This concept of Parley P. Pratt, John Taylor, Orson Pratt, and others of the Twelve stemmed from Joseph Smith’s organization of the Twelve in 1835 wherein all members of the Quorum held equal authority. The oldest or longest-serving member was president, and presiding was sometimes designated on a rotational basis.<sup>43</sup> With the expanded authority of the Quorum during the Nauvoo days, once a Quorum member was placed over a certain area such as England or the eastern states, he held jurisdiction to make policy subject to the direction of the majority of the Quorum or the First Presidency. After Joseph’s death, the Quorum’s role was expanded because of the lack of a First Presidency. The Quorum took over the presidency of the Church, and Brigham Young by virtue of his position as President of the Quorum became President of the Church.<sup>44</sup> During the

period from July 1844 to December 1847, many questions arose concerning the authority of the Quorum. Some of the questions were—Who calls the Quorum of the Twelve members to account, the majority or the President? Could the majority of the Quorum of the Twelve overrule the decision of the President? Based on circumstances, could one or two members change decisions of the Quorum? For example, in England in November 1846 Orson Hyde rebuked Parley P. Pratt for teaching plural marriage when he was specifically told not to by Brigham prior to leaving Winter Quarters. Parley responded to Orson Hyde, even though the latter was his superior in the Quorum:

You, Elder Hyde, do not hold the keys of siting in Judgment upon my head, by your dreams, visions, whisperings of the Spirit, doubts or fears, or by any other means. This belongs to a united quorum and they can only do it by testimony according to the laws of the Kingdom.<sup>45</sup>

Parley elaborated on his view of priesthood authority:

They come to me to ask who is the President & his two councillors—for some of this people have a little Strangism and a little Rigdonism in their hearts. I don't know anything about 3 except those dead, but I do know about 12 men who hold the keys of this kingdom & are President & one of them by reason of age is the President of the Quorum and of the church, but I know of no 3 save those who are dead. I never said anything about Rigdonism or Strangism; I left Bro Hyde & others who are good at it to do it. God may govern this church by 3 men or 12 men or seventy men & the reason I never said anything about it is because I saw this in the Covenants that there was 3 quorums in the Church who are equal & whose decisions were an end of controversey on the matter of church government in heaven & on earth. All the 12 are alike in keys, power, might, majesty and dominion and the Seventy are equal, every one in his place, and so are all who have the fulness of the Priesthood, they are entitled to your faith & prayers and there is no middle nor higher nor lower family than those are who have the fulness of the Priesthood. Some say I will go into Bro Taylor's family or some a little higher into Woodruffs or Hebers or Orson Hydies. There is no Rigdonism, Strangism & every other ism. We are one, we are equal so far as our conduct is equal. You are not higher nor lower in one family than another. My mind is Brigham's mind and my mind is the same as Hebers.<sup>46</sup>

Parley P. Pratt and John Taylor at this time were of the opinion that in appropriate circumstances they could change the decisions of the President or the majority of the Twelve without seeking approval.<sup>47</sup>

As the Saints prepared from April to June 1847 to go to the West, Parley began organizing the 1,561 people somewhat differently from the model proposed by Brigham Young on 15 June 1847. Instead of maintaining the two divisions along adopted family lines, Parley set up, under his and Taylor's direction, a president and two counselors over temporal affairs and one leader over spiritual affairs supervising each division of five hundred.<sup>48</sup>

When questioned on the changes, Parley spoke on the circumstances with which the companies were surrounded:

Captains of hundreds, of fifties &c appointed last winter, are not here, some coming on, some on. Now I think it is best to act according to our circumstances. Or shall we stay here and theorize and alter for a week or two & copy again & again to get the captain of hundred or captain of fifties in this or that place. J. M. Grant was capt'n of 1st hundred. Now I council not think to wait any longer & proceeded to complete the organization of the 1st hundred. But because Bro Grant was not here I have appointed a Captain [which was Daniel Spencer]. Some say there are not 2 grand Divisions, which division are we in? The time is now when we have to go & the theory is not what we will see now so much as the practical. Now if you belong to Heber or Brigham, shall you not belong to them if you do not go in certain Divisions. Uncle John may be in Heber's family & I may be in Brighams, but because we both go in the same company or the same fifty will that alter us any? I have not horns in my head nor corns on my feet so I shant hook or kick him, neither will he abuse me. Now act in cooperation & union with us & we will deliver you up to those whom you belong. You will not be hurt any nor loose any rights of yours. I want the boys to be organized. Every man who is not older than 50 & no boy younger than 12. I don't want the fifties & hundreds to be scrupulous when we change the places of the fifties but the 1st hundred will be known and designated the 1st hundred whether they are first last or in the middle & with the fifties the same. I want the fifties & hundreds to be governed by the Priesthood, and not by their number. But if we have to go in 2 grand Divisions, it will not hurt you if Heber's are put beside Brigham's for a little while. You will still be Brighams or Hebers.<sup>49</sup>

John Taylor supported Parley in this view, saying:

Some people seems to be ignorant of church government & confound family government with church matters. Some connected to various families, & some think they are not bound to the council of any but those unto whose family they may be attached. In what relationship does a man stand to a family? He is a son. In what relationship does a man stand to the church when he is a member? He is subject to the councils of the church. Uncle John has two sons; are his sons only subject to him? No, if they are in the 70's they subject to the 70's council, High Priests to High Priests council, if The Twelve to the councils of the Twelve, & they are subject to the authorities of the church. Some throw this mantle over them & say they have chosen such a man to be their councillor, & their council they would obey. If this mantle is the only cover they have they will find it torne off & they will be bare. Is this so, Bro Pratt? PPP: Yes, it is, Father Morley. Yes, with this exception that if their father told them to plant corn &c they have to do it. John Taylor: I will go farther & maintain my opinion if a man was councilled to plant corn by his father & the council say Go to England & preach, he would have to do it.<sup>50</sup>

Once the groups were fully organized, they departed on 21–22 June. While some administrative difficulties arose, by September 1847 the large five hundred wagon company was well on its way to the Salt Lake Valley, spread over a hundred-mile radius from the first group to the last.<sup>51</sup>

On 4 September, when the returning Brigham Young and the Quorum met the Pratt-Taylor group, Brigham said he was not satisfied. Wilford Woodruff related Brigham's negative reaction, saying

that Brother Parley P. Pratt & J Taylor had been to England & done a good work, had returned to Winter Quarters, & there done wrongly disorganizing the two divisions & companies that the quorum of the Twelve had spent the whole winter in organizing & which was also governed by revelation. Br. Parley took the lead in the matter & entirely disregarded our organisations & mixed the companies all up. Br. Young chastized him for his course & taught us principle. Said that when we set apart one or more of the Twelve to go & do a certain piece of work they would be blessed doing that & the quorum would back up what they did. But when one or more of the quorum interfere with the work of the majority of the quorum they burn their fingers & do wrong. When the majority of the quorum of the 12 plant stakes of Zion & establish a President over the stake & appoint a High Council there, has the minority of the Twelve, one or more, any right to go & interfere with those councils? Not unless they should get corrupt & do wrong. Then it would be the duty of any one of the quorum of the Twelve to show them their error & teach them what was right. And should the majority of those councils get corrupt & try to lead astray the people it would then be the duty of any one of the Twelve to disannul thos councils & call upon the people to sustain him & appoint a new one. But while the councils are trying to do right it would be the duty of the Twelve who might be with them to assist them in carrying out those views that the majority of the Twelve had established.<sup>52</sup>

The Quorum members voted unanimously that Parley had committed an error in carrying out his organization. Parley was at first angry but then mellowed, "confessing his fault." Brigham stated he would "chastize Br. Parley or any one of the quorum as much as he pleased when they were out of the way & they could not help themselves. But he done it for their good & only done it when constrained to do it by the power of God." Brigham felt that the Quorum held the best men on earth but that they must be chastened to maintain their loyalty.<sup>53</sup>

As Brigham traveled among the various companies he became more convinced that Parley especially was out of line and reinforced this in talking to John Taylor on 7 September and Jedediah Grant on 8 September.<sup>54</sup> Later, when Brigham arrived in Winter Quarters and meetings were called to set up a First Presidency in November—December 1847, he became adamant that Parley P. Pratt and John Taylor had made grave errors, that when mistakes were made he had the right to call Quorum members to account and thus to regulate the Quorum. Orson Pratt on that occasion felt at first that a majority could overrule the decision of the President, but Brigham quickly countered him, saying that there needed to be one head, not seven heads, of the Church to avoid confusion, and since Joseph had vested in Brigham the keys to sealing power, Brigham had jurisdiction over the Twelve by revelation. Most of the questions were resolved during the

one month of meetings with the Quorum wherein Brigham Young, Willard Richards, and Heber C. Kimball were sustained as the First Presidency.<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

Parley P. Pratt's role in Winter Quarters was one of organizing the largest group to depart from Winter Quarters and successfully leading them across the Great Plains. The Indian and dissenter problem produced a larger group than anticipated, but Parley was able to keep the large majority of Mormons together. Coming into conflict with Brigham's policies and with no clear definition of authority within the Quorum of the Twelve when Brigham was absent, both Parley P. Pratt and John Taylor felt justified in making changes in Quorum policies when circumstances dictated. This confusion was resolved by Brigham in a series of meetings. Even though Parley P. Pratt and John Taylor were not present at these meetings, they supported Brigham Young once the "final" decisions were made.

---

A descendant of Parley P. Pratt, Stephen Pratt is in Germany with the U.S. Armed Forces.

1. Parley P. Pratt, Speeches, 8 and 11 April 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes, in Library-Archives, Historical Division, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives.

2. Robert A. Trennert, Jr., "The Mormons and the Office of Indian Affairs: The Conflict over Winter Quarters, 1846–1848," *Nebraska History* 53 (Fall 1972): 381–400.

3. John D. Lee, *Journals of John D. Lee, 1846–47 and 1859*, ed. Charles Kelly (Salt Lake City: Western Printing Company, 1938), 43–57.

4. Brigham Young to John Miller, 4 April 1847, National Archives and Records Service, Record Group 75, Letters Received, Office of Indian Affairs, Council Bluffs Agency (microfilm, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah); hereafter cited as Office of Indian Affairs, Council Bluffs.

5. John Miller to Brigham Young, 4 April 1847, Office of Indian Affairs, Council Bluffs.

6. Brigham Young to the Brethren at Winter Quarters, 16 April 1847, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives; Robert Campbell, Journal, 14 April 1847, LDS Church Archives; Hosea Stout, *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844–1866*, ed. Juanita Brooks, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 2:547; *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1846–1847*, 15 April 1847, ed. Eldon Watson (Salt Lake City: Published by author, 1971), 548.

7. Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 247–50; Campbell, Journal, 18 April 1847.

8. Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 250–51; Campbell, Journal, 19–21 April 1847.

9. Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 250–51; Campbell, Journal, 19–21 April 1847; Meeting, 19 April 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes.

10. Meeting, 19 April 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Meeting, 20 April 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes; Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 251; Campbell, Journal, 20 April 1847.
13. Minutes of Council, 22 April 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes.
14. Ibid.
15. Campbell, Journal, 24 April 1847; Meeting of Council, 24–25 April 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes; Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 252.
16. Ibid.
17. Meeting at the Stand, 25 April 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes; Campbell, Journal, 25 April 1847; Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 252.
18. Ibid.
19. Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 27 April 1847 to 1 May 1847, 252–53; Lee, *Journals of John D. Lee*, 7 May 1847, 162.
20. Meeting at the Stand, 25 April 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes. I have introduced minimal punctuation and capitalization.
21. Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 252–53; Lee, *Journals of John D. Lee*, 7 May 1847, 162.
22. Meeting, 2 May 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes; Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 2 May 1847, 253; Campbell, Journal, 2 May 1847; Mary Haskin Parker Richards, Journal, 2 May 1847, LDS Church Archives.
23. Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 7 May 1847, 253–54.
24. Thomas H. Harvey to William Medill, 17 May 1847, Letters Received, Office of Indian Affairs, 1824–81, St. Louis Superintendency (microfilm, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University), hereafter cited as Office of Indian Affairs, St. Louis; John Miller to Thomas H. Harvey, 10 September 1847, Office of Indian Affairs. Council Bluffs.
25. Thomas L. Kane to William Marcy, 20 April 1847; Kane to Medill, 21 April 1847; Medill to Marcy, 24 April 1847; Kane to Medill, 24 April 1847; all in Office of Indian Affairs, St. Louis.
26. Meeting, 9 May 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes; Campbell, Journal, 9 May 1847; Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 9 May 1847, 254; Mary Haskin Parker Richards, Journal, 9 May 1847. Minimal punctuation introduced.
27. Ibid.
28. Thomas H. Harvey to William Medill, 17 May 1847, Office of Indian Affairs, St. Louis; John Miller to Thomas H. Harvey, 10 September 1847, Office of Indian Affairs, Council Bluffs.
29. Medill to Marcy, 24 April 1847, Office of Indian Affairs, St. Louis.
30. Meeting, 20 and 23 May 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes.
31. Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 25 May 1847, 256–58; Campbell, Journal, 25 May 1847.
32. Meeting, 30 May 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes.
33. Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1 June 1847, 258.
34. Campbell, Journal, 5 June 1847; Ann Agatha Walker Pratt, *Reminiscences; Peregrine Sessions*, Journal, 40; Patty Sessions, Journal, 5 June 1847; all in LDS Church Archives.
35. Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 19–25 June 1847, 261–64; Campbell, Journal, 19–25 June 1847.
36. Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, January 1848, 290–300.
37. Brigham Young to Brethren at Winter Quarters, 16 April 1847, Brigham Young Papers.
38. Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 502–24; *The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus



Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1966), 254–56; Stout, *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 14 June 1847, 227–29; Lee, *Journals of John D. Lee*, 44–57.

39. Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 503–31; Lee, *Journals of John D. Lee*, 75–103; Gordon Irving, “The Law of Adoption: One Phase of the Development of the Mormon Concept of Salvation, 1830–1900,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, 14 (Spring 1974): 291–314.

40. Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 538–43; Lee, *Journals of John D. Lee*, 130–36.

41. Campbell, Journal, 15 June 1847.

42. Minutes, 6 June 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes. Minimal punctuation introduced.

43. Kirtland High Council Minute Record, January–March 1835, LDS Church Archives; Minutes of Quorum of Twelve, 1835, Miscellaneous Minutes of Quorum of Twelve, LDS Church Archives.

44. D. Michael Quinn, “The Evolution of the Presiding Quorums of the LDS Church,” *Journal of Mormon History* 1 (1974): 21–38; D. Michael Quinn, “The Mormon Succession Crisis of 1844,” *BYU Studies*, 16 (Winter 1976): 187–233; Ronald K. Esplin, “Joseph, Brigham and the Twelve: A Succession of Continuity,” *BYU Studies* 21 (Summer 1981): 301–41; James B. Allen and Malcolm R. Thorp, “The Mission of the Twelve to England, 1840–41: Mormon Apostles and the Working Classes,” *BYU Studies* 15 (Summer 1975): 499–526; *Millennial Star*, vols. 1–9; *The Prophet*, ed. Parley P. Pratt; *New York Messenger*; William Smith to Brigham Young, August 1844, Brigham Young Papers.

45. Parley P. Pratt to Orson Hyde, 9 November 1846, Parley P. Pratt Papers, LDS Church Archives.

46. Meeting, 23 May 1847, Minutes, Miscellaneous Minutes. Minimal punctuation introduced.

47. Campbell, Journal, 15 June 1847.

48. Fred Douglas Duehlmeier, “The 1847 Mormon Migration” (Master’s thesis, University of Utah, 1977); Campbell, Journal, 15 June 1847.

49. Campbell, Journal, 15 June 1847. Minimal punctuation introduced and brief-hand expanded.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Meeting, 24 June 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes; Jacob Gates, Journal, 20 June–23 October 1847; Patty Sessions, Journal, June–October 1847; George B. Wallace, Journal, June–October 1847; Charles C. Rich, Journal, June–October 1847; William C. Staines, Journal, June–October 1847; Leonora Cannon Taylor, Journal, June–October 1847; Eliza R. Snow, Journal, June–October 1847; Jesse W. Crosby, Journal, June–October 1847; John Smith, Journal, June–October 1847; all in LDS Church Archives.

52. Wilford Woodruff, Journal, 4 September 1847, LDS Church Archives. Minimal punctuation added.

53. *Ibid.*; Thomas Bullock, Journal, 4 September 1847, LDS Church Archives; Horace K. Whitney, Journal, 4 September 1847, LDS Church Archives.

54. Woodruff, Journal, 5–8 September 1847; Whitney, Journal, 5–8 September 1847.

55. Meetings, 16 November–3 December 1847, Miscellaneous Minutes of Quorum of the Twelve, Brigham Young Papers.