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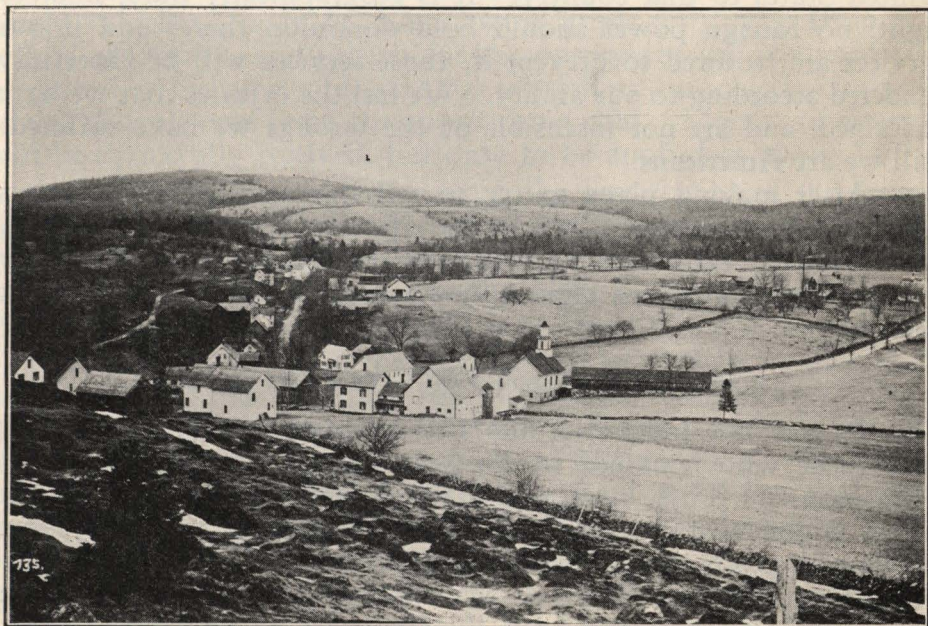


Stories of the Pioneer Trail

BY A. WILLIAM LUND, ASSISTANT CHURCH HISTORIAN

THE BEGINNING OF THE TRAIL

DURING the fall and winter of 1845-1846 great persecution was heaped upon the Saints. President Brigham Young, in behalf of the people, had entered into an agreement with the mob leaders that as soon as possible he and all his followers would remove from Nauvoo. Suggestions were made that the Saints go to Vancouver's Island or to Oregon. Judge Stephen A. Douglas, one of the committee appointed to draw up this agreement, stated that "Vancouver's Island was claimed by the United States, and he felt sure there would be no objection to its settlement or to the settlement of Oregon." Others suggested some place beyond the Rocky Mountains. All agreed that the "Mormons" must leave. This sentiment is shown from a sentence in the committee's letter of October 2, 1846, to President Young: "We are convinced that affairs have reached such a crisis that it has become impossible for your Church to remain in this country." Governor Ford wrote, December 29, 1845, in a letter to Sheriff Backenstos: "I also think



The city of Whittingham, Vermont, birthplace of President Brigham Young

it is very likely that the government at Washington will interfere to prevent the 'Mormons' from going west of the Rocky Mountains. Many intelligent persons sincerely believe that they will join the British, if they go there, and be more trouble than ever, and I think this consideration is likely to influence the government."

In the face of persecution and with the knowledge that the Saints would have to leave their homes, the High Council issued, on January 20, 1846, instructions to all members of the Church that they intended to send in the spring a company of pioneers consisting mostly of young, hardy men to the western country. These pioneers were to find a permanent place to settle and were to take with them all kinds of farming implements, mill irons, grain and seeds. In these instructions, also, we find sentiments which express the highest type of loyal citizenship:

"We also further declare for the satisfaction of some who have concluded that our grievances have alienated us from our country, that our patriotism has not been overcome by fire, by sword, by daylight nor by midnight assassinations which we have endured, neither have they alienated us from the institutions of our country.

"Should hostilities arise between the government of the United States and any other power, in relation to the right of possessing the territory of Oregon, we are on hand to sustain the claim of the United States to that country. It is geographically ours; and, of right, no foreign power should hold dominion there; and if our services are required to prevent it, those services will be cheerfully rendered according to our ability. We feel the injuries that we have sustained, and are not insensible of the wrongs we have suffered: still we are Americans."

After making plans to try to sell their property the Saints commenced, in February, to cross the river and turn their faces westward, ready to encounter the hardships and difficulties of the dreary and almost uninhabited regions in which they were going to make their homes.

A MIRACULOUS FEEDING OF LATTER-DAY ISRAEL

It was not long after the first company left for the West that those who remained in Nauvoo were ill-used by the Anti-"Mormons." These men who had pledged their word that the Saints might have time to dispose of their property and move from Nauvoo in peace, disregarded their agreement and commenced committing various despicable acts against the afflicted people. These disgraceful acts continued until the first part of September, 1846, when the mob issued an ultimatum to the Saints that they must leave

Nauvoo. The mob did not even wait for this command to be fulfilled but came against Nauvoo fully armed and determined to destroy all the residents of that city.

The "Mormons," under Capt. William Anderson, resisted as best they could. Capt. Anderson and his son lost their lives in defense of their homes. Becoming convinced that the mob was determined to destroy them, the Saints entered into another treaty by which they gave up all arms and immediately commenced to leave their homes. They crossed the river and made an encampment on the banks of the Mississippi, opposite Nauvoo.

The St. Louis Weekly Reveille gives the following vivid description of their condition:

CHARITY FOR THE "MORMONS"

"The present condition of the expelled 'Mormons,' opposite Nauvoo, Ill., appeals to humanity in tones not to be resisted. We know their wretched state, not from report, but from eye witness, of misery which is without a parallel in the country. They are literally starving under the open heavens; not even a tent to cover them—women and children, widows and orphans, the bed-ridden, the age-stricken and the toil-worn, the pauper remnant of a large community. Mr. Joseph L. Heywood, one of the trustees left to dispose of the 'Mormon' property—now depreciated as to be nearly valueless,—is in St. Louis, with ample certificates from the mayor of Quincy, and others, for the purpose of soliciting aid for his homeless brethren. He asks for provisions, but chiefly clothing to shield weak ones from the approaching cold. Money, of course, will be thankfully received, but only to be applied as above.

"The 'Mormons' desire to reach the first station of the earlier emigrants, in the west of Iowa, where a crop was planted for them and huts raised. There they will spend the winter. In the name of Christian mercy, let us not be insensible to the miserable hardship of their case. Mr. Heywood is at 'Scott's Hotel.'"

What cared the mob for the suffering of these poor, homeless Saints. What did they care for the women and children whose husbands and fathers were in the United States army? What did they care for these poor people who were without food or clothing? Not a tinker's thimble. Instead, they rejoiced in the fact that they had driven the despised "Mormons" from their own homes.

On the ninth day of October, 1846, when the condition of these poor Saints had reached its most terrible extreme, death and starvation staring them in the face, God, their Father, sent flocks of quail into the camp. They lit upon the wagons, the beds, upon

empty tables and upon the ground. Even the sick were able to catch them. Before partaking of their meal, made from these quail, the whole camp knelt in prayer and thanked their God who had so mercifully saved them.

This great event was seen, not only by Church members, but by others who were in the camp. Even those on board a steamboat, passing by on the river, marveled at this wonderful occurrence. The quail came more than once through this day and followed the camp when it left the river.

The feelings of the Saints in regard to this miracle is well described by the following words, copied from a letter written by the High Council to Elders Orson Hyde and John Taylor, who were on a mission in England:

"Tell ye this to the nations of the earth. Tell it to the kings and nobles and the great ones! Tell ye this to those who believe in that God who fed the children of Israel in the wilderness in the days of Moses, that they may know there is a God in the last days, and that his people are as dear to him now as they were in those days, and that he will feed them when the house of the oppressor is unbearable, and he is acknowledged God of the whole earth and every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus is the Christ."

A STRIKING PROPHECY

Many people have said that President Brigham Young did not utter a prophecy. The inspiration of the Almighty rested, on more than one occasion, upon this great and good man, and he spoke as he was led by the Spirit of the Lord.

During their encampment at Winter Quarters, President Young told the brethren that they would build a temple in the tops of the Rocky Mountains.

What more uninviting setting could a prophecy have had than this? Exiles in an Indian country, weakened in strength and numbers through the enlisting of 500 young and able-bodied men in the army of the United States, depressed because of conditions of their beloved brethren and sisters in Nauvoo, without proper shelter or food and with all their possessions taken from them! Surely, from human reasoning only, this prophecy could never be fulfilled.

He reiterated this statement on the 28th day of July, when, standing upon what is now the Temple Block, he struck his cane into the ground and said: "Here will be the temple of our God." This is, no doubt, the first revelation given in these valleys of the mountains. How did President Young know that the Saints would remain in this valley when they reached here? How did he know that the people would sacrifice of their time and means to build a temple? Only through revelation from God! One can readily imagine the

thoughts which would arise in the minds of the people who had so recently been driven from their homes, and who had seen their beautiful temple at Nauvoo taken from them and desecrated. This land appeared to be a barren waste and every condition seemed most uninviting; yet, in the face of these conditions, President Brigham Young, on the 14th day of February, 1853, turned over the first shovel of dirt for the foundation of the great Salt Lake temple. This temple was built by the sacrifice and faith of the Saints of God so that ordinances of eternal life might be administered to the faithful.

WAY STATIONS—GARDEN GROVE

The exiles who left Nauvoo early in February, 1846, reached the east fork of Grand river, now Weldon creek, Decatur county, Iowa, on April 24. Here they concluded to make a temporary settlement, particularly for the benefit of those who should follow. In the afternoon of that day President Brigham Young and Henry G. Sherwood selected a location for a settlement which Brother Sherwood commenced to survey the next day.

At a meeting held on Sunday, April 26, 1846, it was decided that the brethren should commence immediately to make a home for the exiles. One hundred men were selected to make rails, ten men were appointed to build fences, forty-eight to build houses, twelve to dig wells, ten to build bridges, and the remainder of the three hundred and fifty-nine working men were employed to clear the land and commence plowing and planting.

Next day the brethren named the settlement Garden Grove, and immediately entered upon their labors. Some who could be spared from other duties went into the settlements of Missouri and exchanged horses, feather beds, and other property for cows and provisions. Through this united labor, Garden Grove soon assumed the appearance of a town.

At a meeting held on Sunday, May 3, 1846, President Young impressed upon his hearers the need of united action and pointed out that the Lord had inspired the making of this settlement, and that other similar places should be made farther on. He commended them for their wonderful faith and integrity. President Young worked just as hard as the others in building bridges, etc. During the following week the fence was completed around the field and a number of houses were built.

Again, the next Sunday, a meeting was held. Elder Jedediah M. Grant addressed the people. At this meeting Elder Samuel Bent with Elders Ezra T. Benson and David Fullmer were named as the

presidency of the Garden Grove settlement, and Elder Charles C. Rich was appointed to take some brethren and go west and locate the next temporary settlement.

In the instructions given to Brother Bent, it is interesting to note that he was to divide the land, to see that no man had the use of ground he did not till, to tithe the Saints for the benefit of the sick and the poor, and to see that the crops were cared for.

After making complete plans for this settlement, President Young and most of the exiles started their march westward to the next location.

MT. PISGAH

After about five days travel from Garden Grove, President Young and company arrived on the middle fork of Grand river, at the place Parley P. Pratt had called Mt. Pisgah.

Brother Parley P. Pratt in his autobiography writes the following:

"After assisting to fence this farm and build some log houses, I was dispatched ahead by the Presidency with a small company to try to find another location. Crossing this branch of Grand river, I now steered through the vast and fertile prairies and groves without a track or anything but a compass to guide me—the country being entirely wild and without inhabitants. Our course was west, a little north. We crossed small streams daily, which, on account of deep beds and miry banks, as well as on account of their being swollen by the rains, we had to bridge. After journeying thus for several days, and while lying encamped on a small stream which we had bridged, I took my horse and rode ahead some three miles in search of one of the main forks of Grand river, which we had expected to find for some time. Riding about three or four miles through beautiful prairies, I came suddenly to some round and sloping hills, grassy and crowned with beautiful groves of timber; while alternate open groves and forests seemed blended in all the beauty and harmony of an English park, while beneath and beyond, on the west, rolled a main branch of Grand river, with its rich bottoms of alternate forest and prairie. As I approached this lovely scenery several deer and wolves, being startled at the sight of me, abandoned the place and bounded away till lost from my sight amid the groves.

"Being pleased and excited at the varied beauty before me, I cried out, 'This is Mount Pisgah.' I returned to my camp, with the report of having found the long-sought river, and we soon moved on and encamped under the shade of these beautiful groves. It was now late in May, and we halted here to await the arrival of the President and Council. In a few days they arrived and formed a general encampment here, and finally formed a settlement, and surveyed and enclosed another farm of several thousand acres. This became a town and resting place for the Saints for years, and is now known on the map of Iowa as a village and postoffice named 'Pisga.' "

At a meeting held in front of President Young's tent, it was decided that William Huntington be made president of the settlement at Mt. Pisgah and that the brethren should fence a farm of about 500 to 1000 acres, which should be divided by lot after the fencing

was completed. Brother Robert Campbell was appointed postmaster and clerk of Mt. Pisgah, and the decision was made that the land be surveyed into five, ten and twenty-acre lots.

Elder Noah Rogers, who had lately returned from a mission to the Society Islands, became very ill and died. He was the first of the Saints to be buried at Mt. Pisgah.

While encamped at Mt. Pisgah, Col. James Allen came into the settlement with the historic call for 500 volunteers to help the United States in the war against Mexico.

After leaving definite instructions how to carry on all affairs at Mt. Pisgah, President Young and many of the exiles moved westward.

WINTER QUARTERS

President Young and the other pioneers had fully determined to reach the Rocky Mountains in 1846, but when the call came from the government for 500 men to serve in the war, it was decided that this would be impossible. So the exiles, after raising the 500 men, later known as the "Mormon Battalion," moved across the Missouri river and established themselves at a place about two miles farther west, called Cutler's Park. Soon, however, they moved to the west bank of the river and established a settlement, called Winter Quarters.

Here, as at Garden Grove and Mount Pisgah, the brethren arranged for sheltering and caring for their brethren and sisters through the coming winter.

The people were called together and twenty-two wards organized with a bishop over each ward. These bishops were instructed in their duties, and special stress was laid upon the necessity of looking after the poor and sick and the families of those who had gone into the war.

In council with the brethren, President Young decided that the best way to keep peace with the Indians was to build a house for them; and Reynolds Cahoon, Ira Eldredge and Stephen Markham were appointed a committee to take fifty men and construct this house for the Omaha Indians.

The Saints built a flour mill, a council house, an octagon building where Willard Richards directed "The Church Historian's Office." Other houses for meetings and dwellings were also erected. Strict admonitions were given against the use of profanity and breaking of the Sabbath. All were admonished to lead pure and consistent lives.

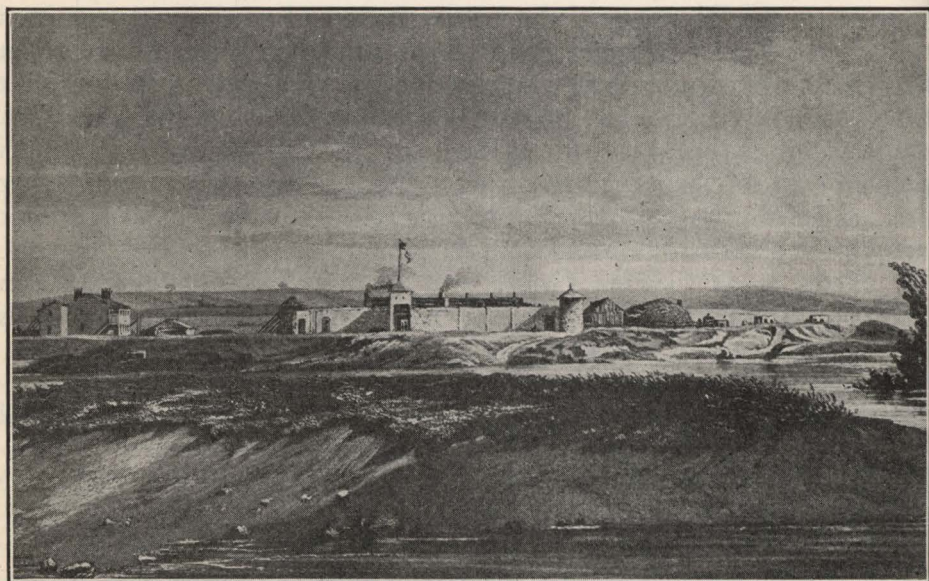
Christmas day was celebrated in a very quiet, yet appropriate, manner. At the close of 1846 the exiles had built 538 log houses and 83 sod houses.

The Saints numbered 3,483 souls, of whom 334 were sick. They also had 814 wagons, 145 horses, 29 mules, 388 yoke of oxen and 463 cows.

It was from this place that the pioneers set out for the Rocky Mountains in April of 1847. Here thousands of Saints fitted out their teams for the long "trek" to the valleys of the mountains.

THE MEETING WITH JIM BRIDGER AND OTHERS

In the spring of 1847, the pioneers left the camp at Winter Quarters and commenced their journey westward. After passing through many hardships, incident to pioneer travel, they came to Fort Laramie, and about 175 miles farther on reached a splendid stopping place called Pacific Spring! Here they met a trapper by



For Laramie, Wyoming, where President Brigham Young and company camped, June 1, 1847

the name of Moses Harris, or Blask Harris, as he was called by the trappers. He gave the pioneers a very unfavorable report concerning the founding of a colony in the country known as the "Great Basin."

When the pioneers reached the Little Sandy, they met Jim Bridger, a noted scout and frontiersman. He, too, made a most unfavorable report concerning the valley of the Great Basin, and thought it very imprudent to bring a large population into that region, stating that he would give \$1,000 for the knowledge that corn could be raised in the Basin. Many have doubted that Bridger

made a statement of this kind. As for me, I believe implicitly in the word of President Young on the subject.

In Salt Lake City, in a sermon delivered by President Young on Sunday, July 8, 1849, the original minutes of which are on file in the Historian's Office, he said: "The mountaineers never thought we could raise grain here. Mr. Bridger said he would give one thousand dollars if he only knew we could raise an ear of corn. I knew in the temple of Nauvoo that we could raise grain here."

In a speech delivered on the floor of the Senate, July 8, 1850, on the bill, "To admit California into the Union; to establish territorial governments for Utah and New Mexico; making proposals to Texas for the establishment of the western and northern boundaries," Senator Truman Smith of Connecticut quoted a letter written to him, by Erastus Snow, which was dated at Washington City, March 15, 1850. In this letter occurs the following: "Captain Bridger and Vasques, who have a trading post at one of the most eligible trading points on Black's fork of the Green river, where several unsuccessful attempts at agriculture had been made, remarked to me, in the spring of 1847, that he would give one thousand dollars to know whether an ear of Indian corn could be raised in Great Salt Lake valley."

Surely the statements made, within three years of their coming into the valley, by these two men, who devoted their whole lives to the making of this great state and for the development of their fellow-men, ought to be taken as proof that Jim Bridger did make this offer concerning the raising of corn.

THE END OF THE TRAIL

When the carriage in which he was riding reached the summit of Big Mountain, President Young asked the driver to stop and turn the carriage around. Here the eyes of the Prophet leader beheld the Great Salt Lake valley—this valley which he had already seen in vision—the valley too, that Joseph the Prophet had likewise beheld and to which he had prophesied, five years previously, the Saints would be driven.

The Spirit of Light rested upon the sick and toil-worn body of the Prophet Brigham, and also hovered over the valley, and he knew they had reached the end of the trail and that the Saints would here find protection and safety.