

# The IMPROVEMENT ERA



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#### MONUMENT INSCRIPTION

THAT THE STRUGGLES, THE SACRIFICES AND THE SUFFERINGS OF THE FAITHFUL PIONEERS AND THE CAUSE THEY REPRESENTED SHALL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN, THIS MONUMENT IS GRATEFULLY ERECTED AND DEDICATED

BY THE

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS.

FIRST PRESIDENCY: HEBER J. GRANT, J. REUBEN CLARK, JR., DAVID O. MCKAY.

SCULPTOR, AVARD FAIRBANKS, A DESCENDANT OF PIONEERS BURIED HERE.

ON September 20, 1936, thousands of members and non-members of the Church gathered at Florence, Nebraska, to participate in the dedication at "Winter Quarters" cemetery of the heroic monument which will immortalize in stone the sacrifice of the men and women who gave life itself for their right to believe and worship according to the Gospel of the Master.

The Winter Quarters monument commemorates one of the most remarkable chapters in American pioneer history and in the history of the world—the fifteen-hundred mile trek between 1846 and 1869, across the then poorly known West, by tens of thousands of people, some driven from their homes, all seeking the right and freedom to worship God

according to the dictates of their conscience.

Six thousand of these emigrants died en route from exposure and travel hardships, nearly six hundred of whom lie buried in the Pioneer cemetery at Florence, Nebraska. To honor and to keep alive the memory of these courageous souls who suffered and died in the cause of religious devotion this monument has been erected.

The monument itself, pictured herewith, is the work of Avard Fairbanks, native-born Utah artist, who is a descendant of Pioneers buried in the Florence Cemetery, and who is now with the Division of Fine Arts, University of Michigan.

The figures on the monument represent a father and mother who have just laid away a beloved child

By DR. JOHN A. WIDTSOE

Of the Council of the Twelve

# "WINTER QUARTERS"

IS

## IMMORTALIZED IN STONE

THOUSANDS OF MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS GATHER WITH THE LEADERS OF THE CHURCH, AT FLORENCE, NEBRASKA, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1936, TO COMMEMORATE THE EPIC STORY OF RELIGIOUS DEVOTION IN WHICH A COURAGEOUS PEOPLE SACRIFICED LIFE ITSELF FOR THE BUILDING OF A WESTERN EMPIRE WHEREIN THEY COULD ASSURE TO THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN AND THEIR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN THE RIGHT TO WORSHIP AND THE RIGHT TO LIVE PEACEABLY.

in a prairie grave. They must continue the journey, perhaps to face more hardships; the grave with its memories must be left behind. They stand by the fresh grave, together, looking into eternity.

And now the representatives of Church and State from Nebraska and surrounding states and from the far west have gathered to honor the memory of the men and women who were once ejected by religious intolerance, and radio told the story to America as the National Broadcasting Company released a part of the sacred dedicatory services.

Appearing at the "Winter Quarters" dedication, in addition to the First Presidency and most of the General Authorities of the Church, were Governor R. L. Cochran of Nebraska, Mayor Dan Butler of Omaha, and President Carl R. Gray of the Union Pacific System, each of whom delivered an address. Dedicatory services also included addresses by President Heber J. Grant, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., and President David O. McKay. Music was provided by a chorus of one



hundred twenty-five voices composed of P. T. A. units, a railway express chorus, and members of the Western States Mission of the Church, and by a male quartet composed of Earl Martin, Burdett Brimley, Edward O. Platt, and Alvin Keddington, under the direction of B. F. Pulham, sent from Salt Lake City.

Frank W. Asper, Tabernacle organist, presided at the organ, and Richard L. Evans, Church radio announcer, produced and announced the thirty minute broadcast for the National Broadcasting Company, 11:30 to 12:00 o'clock noon, current New York time. This nationwide broadcast was preliminary to the main service, which was not broadcast.

Arrangements for this service, were completed with the approval of the First Presidency by a committee of the Council of the Twelve composed of George Albert Smith, chairman, with Stephen L. Richards and John A. Widtsoe, who were assisted by President Joseph J. Daynes of the Western States Mission.

On Sunday evening, following the morning service at Florence, the scene of activity moved to Omaha, where an L. D. S. meeting was held in the beautiful Joslyn Memorial.

### THE STORY OF THE TREK

THE EPIC story of religious devotion commemorated by this monument follows a fifteen hundred mile trail beaten into prairie, desert and mountain, from the Mississippi river to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. The trail which became a road under the greatest exodus of modern times, crossed the then sparsely settled plains of Iowa and Nebraska, and pushed into the wild, unoccupied highlands and forbidding mountain passes of Wyoming and Utah.

The trek of the Latter-day Saints over this road, by ox team and handcart or on foot, began in 1846 and ended with the advent of the railroad in 1869. The twenty-three years of the story are filled with episodes of unsurpassed human heroism and courage made possible, and sacrifice, suffering and sorrow made endurable, by the living fire of faith.

### The Flight From Nauvoo

The city of Nauvoo—meaning the beautiful city—was built, beginning in 1839, by the Latter-day Saints on the east bank of the Mississippi river, in Illinois. It was then

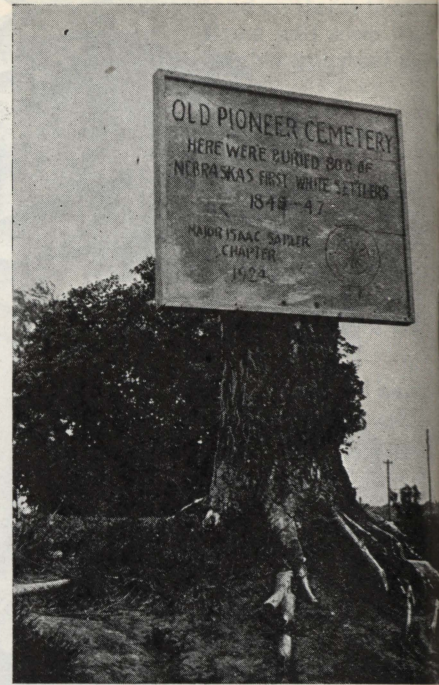
the largest city in the State. Homes of fine New England architecture, surrounded by gardens and orchards, crept up the slopes from the river. Higher up, overlooking city and river, stood a magnificent temple, perhaps the most pretentious building in the state, dedicated to the worship of Almighty God. Outward from the city the plain was fertile with fields of grain and grass. Peace, order and education, industry, morality and love of God ruled the people. It was a smiling land and city, and a happy people.

Then, senseless persecution, suffered earlier in Ohio and Missouri, broke out anew. Through the perspective of time, it appears to have been the old demon of religious intolerance, coupled with jealousy of those who prosper by their thrift. The leaders of the Latter-day Saints, the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother the Patriarch, Hyrum Smith, were brutally murdered in 1844 by a mob with painted faces from neighboring communities. The exulting rabble added cruelty to murder and invasion to threat. It became evident that the Latter-day Saints, free Americans, could no longer dwell in safety in their own city, upon their own lands. The people must evacuate the city and seek elsewhere an abiding place where they might worship God in peace. The Saints sold all they could, much they gave away, and more was left for the thieving invaders. Things of earth the Saints might lose, but their faith they could not surrender.

### The Trek Across Iowa

So began the migration of 20,000 men, women and children from their beloved city through strange and partly unknown territory to face hardships and deprivations never exceeded in the annals of history. Where they were going they knew not, except that Joseph Smith the Prophet had predicted in 1842 that the Saints after suffering much persecution would become a mighty people in the Rocky Mountains.

The first company of refugees left Nauvoo on the westward march on February 4, 1846, followed by successive companies—"camps of Israel"—throughout the winter and spring months, until only a remnant, unable to undertake the hazardous journey, remained in the city. The season proved to be hard; the temperature often fell near the zero point; ice covered the Mississippi; snow and rain, thawing and freez-



THE INSCRIPTION ON THIS CRUDE, TEMPORARY MARKER AT THE OLD CEMETERY AT "WINTER QUARTERS" TELLS A STORY OF TRAGEDY SCARCELY PARALLELED IN AMERICAN HISTORY. IT READS: "OLD PIONEER CEMETERY. HERE WERE BURIED 600 OF NEBRASKA'S FIRST WHITE SETTLERS, 1846-47. MAJOR ISAAC SADLER CHAPTER, DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, 1924."

THE "FIRST WHITE SETTLERS" WERE LATTER-DAY SAINTS WHO HAD BEEN DRIVEN FROM THEIR HOMES THE YEAR BEFORE.

Photograph by John D. Giles.

ing, alternated along the route. The overcrowded covered wagons, the improvised tents and huts, were scant shelter against the rigors of climate. Mothers of delicate and refined rearing gave birth to children in wagon or tent; strong men sickened under the toil and exposure; the weaker ones died; anguished parents left beloved children behind in prairie graves. The misery of the journey was appalling.

Despite such adversities, the caravans moved steadily westward, toward the dreamed-of haven. Their leader, Brigham Young, had organized well the succession of companies. Care was given the sick; the poor were fed; courage was instilled into the fearful; all were kept employed. Around the campfires there were song and story; a brass band played enlivening music; faith in their righteous cause assured them of victory. Sorrowfully they laid away those who perished by the way; but looking heavenward they praised the Lord for the truth and power of His Gospel. They knew that they were divinely guided. One of the travelers, William Clayton.



wrote on the prairie an immortal hymn of hope and cheer, a challenge to fate, known as "All Is Well," which embodies the spirit of these camps of Israel.

The migrating people were obliged to secure life's necessities as they traveled. With money brought from Nauvoo, supplies were bought from the settlers of Iowa, or labor for a few days was given in exchange for grain and meat. Wild game added to their larder; and once large flocks of quail were driven by the wind into camp. At convenient intervals they plowed land and planted grain to be harvested by later companies.

### A "City Built Over Night"

Council Bluffs on the east bank of the Missouri river was reached on June 14, 1846. The succeeding companies arrived during the summer and early fall. It was then too late to enter the poorly charted West to find the ultimate destination of the people. Consequently a temporary encampment, called Winter Quarters, (now Florence, Nebraska) was built across the river and some miles north of Council Bluffs. Here a thousand log houses with the necessary mills, workshops and other buildings were erected before January, 1847. In this "city" and its neighborhood were settled for a period most of the Saints, with their wagons and herds of cattle, horses, mules and flocks of sheep, which had migrated from Nauvoo. Schools and churches were provided. Over night, as it were, a city appeared on the prairie. It seemed a miracle!

### The Tragedy at Winter Quarters

During the fall and winter of 1846-47 hundreds of the weary, underfed refugees, reduced in physical resistance, were taken ill by a scourging sickness. The conditions of the march had made it difficult to preserve full health. More than six hundred died in and about Winter Quarters, most of whom lie buried

in the cemetery marked by the memorial group.

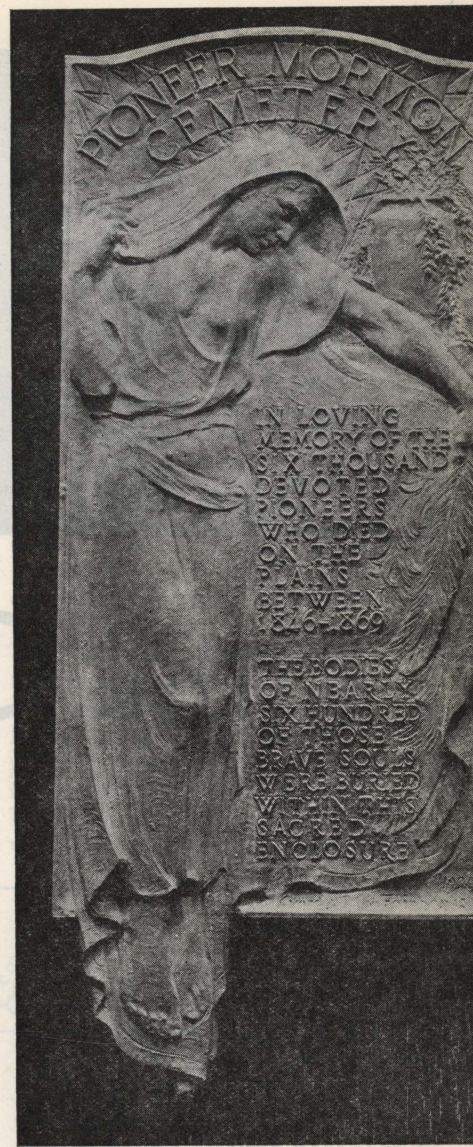
### Pushing into the Western Desert

Early the next spring, on April 5, 1847, Brigham Young, with a company of 143 men, 3 women and 2 children, led a pioneer company into the West to locate a permanent home for his persecuted people. On July 24, 1847, he entered the Salt Lake Valley, and declared "This Is The Place!" How the Latter-day Saints built an empire in the heart of the great American Desert is now a commonplace of historical knowledge.

### The Migration Across the Plains

In the wake of the pioneer group, the people at Winter Quarters moved westward, company by company, a weary, thousand miles over the desert, into the desert, to establish a civilization and to find freedom for the spirit of man. On this last lap of the journey, also, many a faithful but toil-worn soul was laid in a desert grave, now long since forgotten. These also are held in remembrance by this monument.

Scarcely had the Saints begun to wrest an empire from the age-old desert in the Great Basin of North America, before they sent out missionaries to preach the Gospel to all the world. They, themselves, had found the truth; others must hear it; that was their faith! So from eastern United States, from the lands of Europe, from distant regions of earth, came tens of thousands of converts to "gather" with the Saints in the "valleys of the mountains." Dainty, sheltered women, city bred mechanics, teachers and business men, aflame with zeal for the new-found Gospel, came up the Mississippi, outfitted with ox teams, if they could afford it, with handcarts if they could not, and traversed the silent, often dangerous desert, to their land of promise. Extra hard was the journey to these believers from great cities and old civilizations; many sickened and died on the way, some were killed by Indians, all came through the journey sobered by their experiences. The deep wheel ruts of the covered wagons may still be seen on the hills of Nebraska. Pathetic are the brief entries in the diaries kept by many of the emigrants: Brother Brown died tonight; we buried him by moonlight. Sister Smith died this morning; the camp halted while we buried her. Brother



LEFT PANEL ON THE PILLAR AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE CEMETERY

and Sister Jones laid away their baby today. Yet, these companies, like those that fled from Nauvoo, were buoyed up by a faith in God which left peace in their hearts and enabled them to go on rejoicing.

### They are in the Keeping of God

Along the "Mormon" trail, from Nauvoo to Salt Lake valley, during the years 1846 to 1869, more than 6,000 emigrants were laid to rest. In their memory and to their honor this monument has been erected. Mortal man can do little more to honor the dead. They are now in the keeping of God. They crossed prairie and desert, toiled and suffered, and laid down their lives, not to win land or gold, but to possess and use eternal truth. Their reward, in the everlasting hereafter, will be exceedingly great.

