Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History

Arizona

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Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah
1989
Settlements in Arizona

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- Lee's Ferry
- Navajo Springs
- Willow Springs
- Tuba City
- Moenkopi
- Kingman
- Flagstaff
- Brigham City (Winslow)
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TRAVELING THE HONEYMOON TRAIL: AN ACT OF FAITH AND LOVE

by H. Dean Garrett

History is the product of human events, events represented by struggles, pain, sorrow, and sacrifices, as well as happiness and joy. The uniqueness of the history of the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Arizona, however, lies in the courage and the faith that it took to keep all of God’s commandments, including eternal marriage. The Arizona Saints desired to do whatever was needed, risking life if necessary, in order to be married in the Lord’s temple.

The settling of Arizona put the Saints in an area of isolation. Most of the settlers were young and energetic. Yet they and their children were isolated from the opportunity of eternal marriage. In 1877, the ordinances of the temple were brought closer to Arizona with the dedication of the St. George Temple.

The first trip to the temple took place in the fall of 1881. A diary account states:

That fall these mules were on their way to Utah, drawing one of five wagons making the trip over Lee’s Ferry. This was the first wedding party from Arizona to go north to a Utah Temple, but so many future ones were taken across this ferry that the road was dubbed by Will C. Barnes, "The Honeymoon Trail."2

Adolf Larsen (who married May Hunt) was captain of the first group, which also included Emma Larsen and Jessie N. Smith. During most of their twenty-day trip to St. George,
they enjoyed fair weather. Adolf and May were married on 26 October 1881, and they were back in Snowflake by 5 December 1881.

This trip was the first of many. The motivation of each participant was the same: to keep the commandment of God. An examination of the struggles and difficulties faced by those who traveled the Honeymoon Trail gives insight into the faith and dedication of the Mormon settlers in Arizona.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The colonization of Arizona was among the last planned and carried out by Brigham Young. Jacob Hamblin had been sent to northern Arizona by Brigham Young to work with the Indians, giving him the opportunity to travel through the Arizona strip on the Little Colorado River Plateau several times. His reports to Brigham Young were quite favorable. He thought that the Mormon community should be developed around the San Francisco Mountain area. In the early months of 1873, Brigham Young sent Bishop Lorenzo W. Roundy to Arizona with an exploring party. His report, however, was pessimistic, indicating that the land was too desolate to settle.

In spite of Bishop Roundy’s report, Horton D. Haight, with another substantial company, was sent to Arizona in April 1873. They crossed the Colorado River at Lee’s Ferry and proceeded along the Little Colorado Plateau. They were extremely surprised at the barrenness of the land and the lack of water. His report to Brigham Young was also negative. At one point of the trip he said,

> We see nothing better ahead of us. The river closes in again above the upper bottom, the hills are red and bare, we have had heavy winds nearly every day, at times enveloping us in Storms of Sand. With the poor feed and bad water, our animals are failing . . . passing, we noticed the water failing; at the upper falls there was but little. At the lower or black falls it had stopped running.
The Haight party decided to report to Brigham Young the dreariness of the land and the difficulty they would face in settling it, for, as one of them said, "From the first we struck the Little Colorado, up 150 miles, it is the seam thing all the way, no fit place for a human to dwell upon. . . . The most desert lukkin place that ever I saw, Amen." 

Eventually, the decision was made by Haight and his people to return to Salt Lake and report the problems they had encountered on their mission. Their decision caused considerable controversy with leaders of the church. Brigham Young still wanted Arizona colonized.

Other attempts were made, but they were unsuccessful because of Indian problems and other struggles. However, "Brigham Young was not to be denied his colonial venture in Arizona. Though his knowledge of the area might be inconclusive, he knew that there was a large body of land beyond the Colorado, and he felt there must be favorable places for settlement if they could be located and he could find the right leaders." He finally chose a man by the name of James S. Brown, to whom he gave the right to choose whom he wanted to go to Arizona with him, but he gave him very explicit directions not to choose "any babies." Eventually fourteen men were chosen; they made their trip in November 1875, reaching the Little Colorado Plateau, Moenkopi, on 3 December 1875, where they established a fort at Tuba City. With four others, Brown explored the Little Colorado. They saw the land quite differently than the others before them. For instance, about twenty-two miles above Sunset Crossing, Brown reported that

we still find the water increased and Quality Improved so with the extent of land and all things considered we thaut we could recommend the Country for Settlement; and not withstanding our desire to see the country hire up Still the whisperings of the Spirit said return, so we started back. 

Brown returned to Salt Lake City in January 1876 and reported to Brigham Young his findings. At that point, Brigham Young made the decision to settle the Little
Colorado, and he appointed James S. Brown the leader of the Little Colorado expedition.

It is important to recognize that those called to the Little Colorado River Settlement viewed themselves as missionaries. Their purpose in going was two-fold: (1) to do work among the Lamanites, and (2) to establish Mormon settlements in the Arizona Territory. It therefore came as a surprise to many to receive the call, but the response was always a faithful yes. C. L. Christensen responded in this way when he heard his name read by the bishop:

Preparations were made in a hurry, I did not even know the direction to go but trusted that it was some good place where we would become one and do all things as the Lord had revealed; this was my only desire and thought.\(^\text{10}\)

The distance to the Little Colorado settlement was over six hundred miles. The first part of the trip was over good roads, from Salt Lake, through Lehi and Payson, continuing through Richfield and Panguitch, and then passing through Orderville and Kanab. From that point on, travel became very difficult. The road to Sunset was not an easy trail. Many of them traveled over to Johnson’s Valley, then down to House Rock Springs, traveling along the Vermilion Cliffs, to and across the Colorado River, up the Hog’s Back to the plateau, then down across to Bitter Springs and Limestone Tanks. They proceeded to Willow Springs, and then to Moenkopi, where they made connections with the Little Colorado River. They followed the Little Colorado River from Black Falls to Grand Falls and continued on across the plateau to what is today called Winslow.

Many of the Saints continued their travels into Sunset, Brigham City, Allen’s Camp, and Joseph City. There they made their camps and established their homes. Not long after these settlements were established, the Saints moved into Snowflake, Taylor, and Show Low and established homesteads there.\(^\text{11}\) The settlement of Arizona continued into the
areas of St. John, Springerville, across the Mogollon Rim into the Gila Valley, where Thatcher and Pima became major Mormon settlements.

BACK TO THE TEMPLE

Not long after the Saints had established themselves in Arizona, the St. George Temple was completed (1877). This temple gave the Saints the opportunity to be married for time and all eternity. It meant, however, that they had to travel back up over the trail to St. George, a long journey that took as much as six weeks. Yet it was one that many of them made willingly and gladly. A review of some of the journals of travelers who passed through this area helps us understand the challenges faced in traveling up the Honeymoon Trail to the temple.

If a couple in Snowflake decided that they were going to be married and wanted a temple marriage, they prepared themselves to travel that long, hard journey. They procured a wagon and a good team of mules or horses. They were either married civilly and then made the trip to St. George, or they took members of their family with them as chaperons and traveled to the temple and were married. They passed through Holbrook to Joseph City, where they possibly spent a day or two visiting with the Saints. From Joseph City, they passed Brigham City and Sunset and continued northward up the Little Colorado, where they soon arrived at Grand Falls, a spectacular sight on the Little Colorado River. One traveler described them as "the greatest perpendicular fall, ...about eighty feet." They saw several ruins in the vicinity of these falls. Some of the walls are two feet thick and stand ten or twelve feet high. They are built of rock. The old broken earthen ware scattered about the ruins still retains its bright colors and give evidence of people more enlightened than the present occupants of the country who once lived and flourished here. Their mark is found in many places in Arizona and show that portions of the territory were densely populated at some past time.
The biggest problem in traveling through this country was water. When there was water in the Little Colorado River, it was usually not fit to drink. As one traveler found, "The water in the river was very muddy we filled a 7 gallon kettle to settle over night and in the morning there was only an inch of clear water so we had to make the best of it."\(^{13}\)

The windstorms and sand were also a problem that had to be contended with as people traveled up along the Little Colorado. There was little grass to feed the animals; and if there was rain or snow, it could be a very muddy, hard trip. In July 1879, one traveler described this area as follows:

We found but little Grass and no water to speak of, occasionally there was a little in holes along the bed of the river but it was so salty that it could not be used. We dug near the mouth of some of the large washers that came in where we found some water that was a little better. . . . At the crossing of the river we found a little in a hole but it was very salty. On the 30th we found enough at Grand Falls to fill a ten gallon Keg. At Black Falls we found a little but it was not fit to use as the fish had died in it and it smelt very bad, like carrion.\(^{14}\)

As the couple traveled on up the Little Colorado, they came to what they called Black Falls. From this falls, they veered off the Little Colorado, climbing onto the plateau to Moenkopi, an interesting little area. Although dry, it had been inhabited and maintained by Mormon settlers. In September of 1878, Jesse N. Smith described Moenkopi this way:

The wash showed signs of a recent heavy freshet. We left Mowabby a few miles on our left hand. We could see a patch of green near the sandstone hills from Willow Springs. We came upon a region of veritable bad lands. The Moenkopi village comprised a few missionaries to the Indians with their families. It was situated on a southern slope of a hill and they got water from a spring in a ravine, where some gardening was done. A Moqui Indian named Tuba owned the place. He was a member of the Church and with his wife had received his endowments in the temple.\(^{15}\)

After a brief visit with the Saints in Moenkopi, they continued their journey through some very desolate country to Willow Springs. At Willow Springs, one of the major stop-
ping points along this route, they usually found water with some grass. As they explored the rocks around the springs, they found the names of previous travelers carved in the rocks. Perhaps they took the time to carve their own names and their destination for others to read.

Wilford Woodruff described the country as

a strange country of a barren desert of rocks, sand hills, mounds, gravel beds, and many curious rocks. . . . The hills are of thin slate in a decayed state, rocks are in every shape of men, women, children, and palaces. The country is without water, grass, or soil.16

Sixteen miles up the road, they arrived at a place called Bitter Springs, described by one traveler as a place where "we did not find enough water for our stock and what little there was was very bad and not fit for use."17

They continued their travels to Navajo Springs, where again they procured water for their stock and personal use. Then came the most difficult part of the whole journey. They had to somehow cross the Colorado River. The leadership of the Church very early recognized the need for passage across the Colorado River if they were going to colonize Arizona. When Jacob Hamblin was exploring this country, he took a boat with him by wagon from St. George and looked at various places along the Colorado for crossings. He crossed at Pierce’s Ferry on what is today the Arizona-Nevada line. Then he tried to cross the Colorado at the place where the Paria River flows into it, as well as at other places. It was not until 1864 that he crossed at what today is called Lee’s Ferry. After he had made a second crossing at Lee’s Ferry in 1869, the leaders of the Church sent a party of men to establish a fort there in 1870. In October 1871, a regular ferry service was operating to take care of the Saints as they traveled into Arizona. In 1872, John D. Lee settled in the area and became the owner and operator of the ferry service. He ran the ferry for many years until the time of his death. His fee was $1 per wagon and 25 cents per head of cattle to cross on the ferry.
Those going to the temple had a challenge opposite that of those going to an Arizona settlement—that is, getting down to the river. They had to travel a very steep, difficult hill from the top of the plateau down to the river basin. Jesse N. Smith described Lee's hill, or Lee's backbone, as follows: "The ascent was bad and the descent difficult and dangerous, the worse road I ever saw traveled with vehicles." 18

Wilford Woodruff, who visited this area several times, in his diary described the backbone as

The worst hill Ridge or Mountain that I Ever attempted to Cross with a team and waggon on Earth. We had 4 Horses on a waggon of 1,500 lb. weight and for two rods we Could ownly gain from 4 inches to 24 with all the power of the horses & two men rolling at the hind wheels and going Down on the other side was still more Steep rocky and sandy which would make it much worse than going up on the North side. 19

The trip down the backbone and across the river tested one's resolve to continue the trip. As one weary traveler observed,

If Mr. Lee had a backbone as bad as that I surely pity him. It didn't seem possible for the horses to pull the wagons up as the road was so steep and the boulders so big, and it was just as bad on the dugway on the other side. Everyone who ever came over that piece of road had great cause for thankfulness they were not killed. 20

Once at the river, the wagon and the animals were loaded into the ferry, and they carefully proceeded across the river. Very few accidents occurred on the river. There is, however, one account of a fatality taking place. John Bushman recorded that while crossing on the big ferry boat, the boat dipped water and their buggies, men and all were swept off the boat. Brother Roundy was drowned and Pres. Wells and L. H. Hatch had a narrow escape. 21

One journal account also shows that the river froze over. In January of 1878, Erastus Snow told of crossing the Colorado River:
The Colorado River, the Little Colorado and all the springs and watering places were frozen over. Many of the springs and tanks were entirely frozen up, so that we were compelled to melt snow and ice for our teams. We (that is J. W. Young and I), crossed our team and wagon on the ice over the Colorado. I assure you it was quite a novelty to me, to cross such a stream of water on ice; many other heavily loaded wagons did the same, some with 2500 pounds on. One party did a very foolish trick which resulted in the loss of an ox; they attempted to cross three head of large cattle all yoked and chained together, and one of the wheelers stepped on a chain that was dragging behind, tripped and fell, pulling his mate with him, thereby bringing such a heft on the ice that it broke through, letting the whole into the water; but the ice being sufficiently strong they could stand on it and pull them out one at a time. One got under the ice and was drowned, the live one swimming some length of time holding the dead one up by the yoke.

On that same trip Antione Ivins recited the episode that a herd of cattle was taken across the ice by "throwing each animal, tying its legs and dragging it across. One man could drag a grown cow over the smooth ice." The happy travelers then continued their journey along the Vermillion Cliffs. The trip from there to House Rock took them through some very dry country. Fortunately, there were springs about a day's travel apart that provided water and food for their teams. When they arrived at House Rock Springs, they were reminded how fragile life was and the sorrows of parenthood. Off to the side of the road was a small grave containing the body of a year-old baby who died on her mother's lap as they journeyed down the Buckskin Mountains on their way to settle in the Little Colorado Plateau. Fellow travelers helped the mother prepare the body for burial, while others built the casket and dug the grave. After a short but faithful service, the child was buried and the company moved on. As those going to the temple passed that little grave, they were reminded of the cost of settling that land.

The next challenge they faced was the climb at the Buckskin Mountains. Following the climb, they traveled to Jacob's Lake, then turned north toward Kanab. After resting at Kanab, the next major stop was Pipe Springs, where they
found a well-fortified oasis, it having been established as early as 1863 by Dr. James M. Whitmore. Dr. Whitmore was killed by Indians in 1866, and the land was purchased by President Brigham Young. It became the headquarters for the Winsor Castle Stock Growing Company. A fort was built, and the springs and surrounding land were developed for the use of those assigned to tend the cattle and for the care of weary travelers. It was a station of the Deseret Telegraph, the first telegraph in Arizona. 25

The naming of Pipe Springs has a colorful tradition. It is purported that on 3 October 1858 Jacob Hamblin and a company of explorers camped on the site of the springs. "William Hamblin, Jacob’s brother, was a member of the band and often bragged of his skill with a rifle. Some of his companions decided to play a trick on him using his pride as a marksman for bait. Tradition has it that a silk handkerchief was hung from a limb of a tree." 26 After several attempts to hit the silk handkerchief, William Hamblin realized that he had been set up and became intent on showing what he could do.

He took a pipe from one of the instigators, stepped off fifty paces, set the pipe down, and returned to his original position. He drew a bead and fired. One version of the story relates how William Hamblin shot out the bottom of the pipe bowl without touching the sides. In this humorous way, Pipe Springs got its name. 27

The next morning the travelers were on their way again. St. George was now just a little more than a day’s travel. After they had been to the temple and been married, most of the couples spent time visiting friends and relatives in the southern Utah area. 28 Then after three or four weeks, they packed up and began the long journey home. They tried to get to Arizona in time to plant the spring crops and organize a home.
EXPERIENCES ON THE HONEYMOON TRAIL

The trip to the temple at times included a great deal of excitement. In addition to the difficult terrain, there was always the danger of Indians and bandits, plus other man-made and man-caused adventures. Journals and other records reveal some fascinating experiences by the happy travelers.

Silas Smith went to the temple in November of 1886 to marry Maria Bushman. Because of the crackdown on polygamy, the trip had to be taken in secrecy. The roads were wet and muddy with stormy weather, and traveling was slow, but they were finally married on 10 November 1886. On their way back home, their horse became lame, and they had to administer to it to heal it. They were also made very nervous by two heavily armed men who followed them for a day. The next day when they woke up the men were gone.29

Margaret Ellen Cheney and Joseph Lewis Brewer had a very difficult time getting to the temple:

After a courtship of approximately two years, they were married in Pinedale by Bp. Peterson, and early next morning, this couple in company with Adam Brewer and Jesse Kay and Jesse Kay’s wife, left by team and wagon for St. George Temple. It took three weeks to make the trip because the Jesse Kay team kept wandering back toward home each night they camped out.30

Wilmirth Greer and Elijah Reeves Devot had an unusual experience with their horses. They were married in the Temple on 31 December 1980, then with another couple began their return trip to Springerville. It was an uneventful trip until they had the misfortune of two of their horses being killed by a train, one horse out of each team. No account was given of how the accident happened. They put the two remaining horses on one wagon, leaving the other wagon. Mr. Dewitt went back later to retrieve the other.31

Wild animals were also challenging and produced fond memories of the honeymoon trip. Loretta Ellsworth Hansen and Hans Hansen, Jr., had an experience with wolves as they
traveled with her brother, Frank, and his fiancee. Loretta related the experience.

One morning, way out on the desert, the boys were greasing the rear wagon, we girls, at the other washing dishes, found ourselves completely surrounded by large prairie wolves. We lost no time climbing into our wagon and the boys killed wolves as long as their ammunition lasted. It was a thrilling sight to see about fifty large wolves lined up like soldiers. At the sound of the gun they would jump back a few paces still facing us, then they would step forward again. The howling of the wounded, and the firing of guns finally frightened them away.32

A review of the journals reveals very few troubles with the Indians, but when hostile contact did take place, it was frightening. Avis LaVern Leavitt Rogers and George Samuel Rogers were married in January of 1896. In August 1897, they traveled to St. George by team and wagon. It was described as a hard seven-week trip. On their return trip, they had problems crossing the Colorado River due to high waters. They were eventually able to travel through Flagstaff and camped about five miles out of town in the pines. Aris Rogers told of their experience:

We had had our evening meal and were prepared for bed. While we were kneeling in prayer we heard this terrible whooping and yelling and thundering of horses hooves. The temptation was just too great and I couldn’t resist taking a peak. I turned my head just enough so I could look out the corner of my eye--my heart beat about three times faster than it should--three Indian braves, all painted up, were riding in on us just as hard as they could ride. How he did it, I will never know, but George not even hesitating to take a peek just kept right on praying and asking Heavenly Father to protect us from these Indians. They rode right to the wagons before they reigned up. They were so close we could almost feel the breath of the horses as they sat down on their hind legs to stop. The Indians looked in and saw George praying, they gave a whoop, whirled their horses around and left. We could hear them yelling as they rode away. Needless to say, we had a great deal to be thankful for that night.33

Indians also created some memories for Julia Ellsworth West and Ezra West, who traveled in a light wagon, most of the time alone. When they reached the Colorado River they
Traveling the Honeymoon Trail

had to take their wagon apart in order to cross the river. During that crossing they nearly drowned in a whirlpool but were saved by the ferryman. Years later, the ferryman himself was drowned in a whirlpool. Julia related the experience as follows:

Part of the way we had company. One time when we were alone, Ezra had to go quite a way to find the horses. He left his six-shooter in the seat for my protection. Not long after he was out of sight a band of Indians, on horseback, surrounded the wagon, and poor little, trembling sixteen-year-old Julia had to face all that war paint alone. They asked for something to eat and I showed them the almost empty lunch box, and after a while, they decided to leave, much to my relief, but being used to Indians I was not as frightened as I otherwise might have been.

Sometimes there was an opportunity to assist other travelers as they made the trip. Eliza Ella Parkinson and Henry Martin Tanner, on the way home after they were married on 25 January 1877, one morning saw a team of stray horses. After determining that the horses belonged to a wagon company a few days ahead of them, they decided that Henry would take the horses to their owners.

Eliza had to drive the team that day, tho the wind was blowing a perfect gale. Trees were uprooted and were falling all around. One fell across the trail that served as a road, right in front of her team. This greatly frightened the horses but she managed to control them and drove around the tree and back into the road. When she reached camp she had to go to bed at once with a sick headache and said that was the hardest day she had spent.

The practice of polygamy caused some unique situations for those going to the temple. David K. Udall started on a second wedding trip on 6 May 1882:

It was in another covered wagon, but this time it was to increase not to begin my family circle. Ella [his first wife] showed her good sportsmanship by complying with my urgent request that she go with us to the St. George Temple in Southern Utah were Ida and I were to be married. It was an unusual trip. The girls read several books aloud as we jogged slowly over the desert. Baby Pearl was talking and proved to be
our safety valve in conversation. At night in my roll of camp bedding I slept on the ground guarding the wagon in which my precious ones were sleeping. In contemplating the future, as I lay there under the stars, I realized that I was placing myself in the crucible to be tested for better or for worse. 36

Examples of those who had to travel to the temple in secret so as to prevent arrest were Lucy Jane Flake Wood and Peter Wood. Because of persecution, Lucy accompanied her mother and brother on a trip to Beaver, Utah. On the way back they stopped in St. George, where Peter sneaked into the temple, and he and Lucy Jane were married 17 November 1887. Then they separated again at the gate; each returned home separately. Peter rode to St. George (and home again to Snowflake) on a horse. 37

Even after they arrived at the temple, they faced some of the same problems that excited newlyweds face today. Ellen Johann Larsen Smith recorded the following experience:

I left there (Snowflake) 27 September, 1886 on my wedding trip to the St. George Temple. After arriving in St. George we waited for my recommend to arrive. It was suggested we have a civil marriage, but we both felt that as we had come so far to be married in the temple we would wait. On 10 December 1886 I became the wife of Silas Derryfiled Smith. 38

However, one couple observed a great advantage in being able to go to the temple in a wagon pulled by well-trained stock. On 4 October 1886, William Ellis Stratton and Minnie Kartchner began the trip to St. George to be married. Both of them had fond memories of this trip. Brother Stratton observed: "One thing about it, I didn't have to keep one hand on the wheel as I would have to do with modern travel." 39

SUMMARY

The necessity for trips to the St. George Temple arose from the deep faith of the Mormon pioneers in the eternal nature of marriage and the sealing power of the priesthood. They knew within their hearts that the act of marrying had tremen-
dous implications in their own lives, as well as in the lives of their descendants. Thus they were willing to make the long, grueling trip to the temple. The trials they experienced, the memories they gained, and the happiness they anticipated only added to the stories they told of it. They knew that it was the right thing to do. Thus their descendants could echo what the daughter of one traveler reported: "She always told us what a wonderful trip it was." 40

Notes

4. Ibid., 11.
5. Ibid., 12.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 13.
8. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 18.
12. Diary of Joseph Fish, typescript, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, 94 (hereafter cited as BYU Library).
16. Matthias Cowley, ed., Wilford Woodruff, Fourth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: History of His Life and Labors, as recorded in his daily journals (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News, 1916), 513.
17. Diary of Joseph Fish, 93.


23. Ibid.


27. Ibid.


31. Ibid., 112.

32. Ibid., 209.

33. Ibid., 519.

34. Ibid., 652-53.

35. Ibid., 614.


38. Ibid., 581.
