

"That We Take All"

BY MICHAEL L. MOWER



The Saints With Us”



IMPOVERISHED SAINTS
AROUND THE WORLD
RECEIVED THE GIFT
OF GATHERING TO
ZION THROUGH THE
CREATION OF THE
PERPETUAL
EMIGRATION
FUND.



THE PERPETUAL EMIGRATION FUND

Brigham Young and early pioneer leaders faced a daunting task in the spring of 1849. While several companies of Latter-day Saint pioneers had arrived in Utah, 14,000 remained in 40 camps in Western Iowa.¹ The conditions faced by those left homeless and hungry since the departure from Nauvoo was heartrending. The Saints were often without adequate shelter and food, and they had little chance to secure better. The most fortunate were able to work as day laborers for Iowa farmers. However, even those with employment could seldom hope to save enough money to make the journey to the Great Salt Lake Valley. Anxious pioneers looked to President Brigham Young for assistance.

On October 6, 1849, at general conference in Salt Lake City, Brigham Young provided an answer: the Perpetual

Emigration Fund (PEF).² The PEF program provided loans to Saints from other parts of the world to travel to Zion. “The theory of the PEF was that voluntary donations would be secured from church members wherever located, and those benefitted by the fund would continually replenish it after their arrival in the Valley.”³

“SHOWER DOWN MEANS”

The impetus for this plan arose from the final general conference of the Church held in Nauvoo in 1845. At that time, the Saints were in the midst of severe trials. Many had been forced from their homes by Illinois mobs, and it was evident they would have to leave Nauvoo. Speaking at conference on October 6, 1845, Elder George A. Smith “observed that a revelation was given in Missouri in regard to the Saints consecrating their property.” He noted the

Embarcation of the Saints at Liverpool in 1851, by Ken Baxter, courtesy of Visual Resource Library;
Photo by Charles W. Carter: The dock at Plymouth, England, 1863; Deseret currency, courtesy LDS Historical Dept., Archives.

the general assembly of the State of Deseret, met in
 at Salt Lake City; when was presented "An Ordinance incorporating
 Emigrating Company" which was discussed, amended and passed, as
 follows:
 Whereas in the fall of 1844, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
 day Saints in this State, did by voluntary donation create a fund, for the laudable
 benevolent purpose of facilitating the migration of the poor to this State; and
 whereas there are many good and worthy people, who would
 gladly emigrate to this State, if they were provided with the means; and
 whereas labor, industry, and economy is wealth, and all kinds
 of Mechanics and laborers are requisite for building up and extending the
 resources of a civilized society, settling the soil, and otherwise developing the
 encouragement, freight, and we consider it a subject worthy of consideration and
 to the national wealth, and extending the area of civilization, but accomplishing the
 still more generous and industrious meet their one reward; where means best
 nature and intelligence can arise and assert their supremacy: the poor and the
 oppressed, whose unremitting toil, owing to their location and associations with
 which they are surrounded, has been insufficient to procure even the most common
 necessities of life, thereby dooming not only themselves, but their children in all
 future generations, to a precarious and bare subsistence, hereby binding the mind
 and the intelligence down to the unmanurable arguments of unrequited labor
 and want; therefore, to encourage and perpetuate this enterprise, **WE**, the general
 assembly of the State of Deseret, do ordain and establish the following Ordinance
 to wit:
An Ordinance Incorporating the Perpetual Emigrating Company.
 Sec. 1. Be it ordained by the general assembly of the State of Deseret, that the general
 or a special conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, to be called

fund.”⁸ Brigham Young’s prophesy began to be fulfilled. A little over two years later, the pioneers arrived in the barren Salt Lake Valley, and they had the means to help provide for less-fortunate church members to move west. “Some \$6,000 was raised that fall, mostly from California returnees.”⁹

AN AGREEMENT TO REPAY

With the PEF established and its initial funding secured, church leaders prepared to bring the poor to Salt Lake Valley. A Salt Lake bishop was appointed agent to use the money collected to purchase the wagons, goods, and livestock needed to transport pioneers. Thanks to the PEF “2,500 persons and an undisclosed value of goods were brought to the Valley from Missouri River camps in the summer of 1850.”¹⁰ The PEF was proving to be a success.

After arriving in the Valley, PEF recipients were expected to try to begin to pay their debts to the fund. Cash was scarce in the Salt Lake Valley. Consequently, many members worked on church service projects, such as Temple Square, irrigation canals, and roads to satisfy their obligations. Often, livestock, timber, produce, or other goods that could be converted to cash were accepted in lieu of cash or labor on church projects. Leaders made it quite clear that PEF assistance were loans, not gifts. These loans were signed by recipients with an agreement to repay. Church leaders felt it was important to establish the principles of hard work and sacrifice for beneficiaries of these funds. Perhaps more critically, repayment of loans would keep the fund “perpetual,” enabling Saints to gather in Zion for years to come.

URGING ON EMIGRATION

In 1851 another 2,500 members were helped to

Saints did not understand what this consecration was, but “the Lord in his providence caused it all to be consecrated, for they were compelled to leave it.”⁴ He then noted that when the Saints left Missouri they “entered into a covenant not to cease their exertions until every saint who wished to go was removed.”⁵ After Elder Smith concluded, “President Brigham Young moved that we take all the saints with us, to the extent of our ability, that is, our influence and property.”⁶ The motion was seconded by Elder Heber C. Kimball and the Saints unanimously agreed. President Young then told the Saints: “If you will be faithful to your covenant, I will now prophesy that the great God will shower down means upon this people, to accomplish it [the resolution] to the very letter.”⁷

Following the 184 general conference, the “Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company” was “duly incorporated and committees were appointed for the purpose of gathering means for this

“URGE ON THE EMIGRATION WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT, TELL THE PEOPLE NOT TO BE AFRAID OF THE PLAINS, BUT TO ENCOUNTER THEM WITH ANY KIND OF CONVENIENCE THAT THEY CAN PROCURE, WITH THEIR HANDCARTS, THEIR WHEEL BARROWS. AND COME ON FOOT, PACK AND ANIMAL, IF THEY HAVE ONE, AND NO OTHER WAY TO COME.”

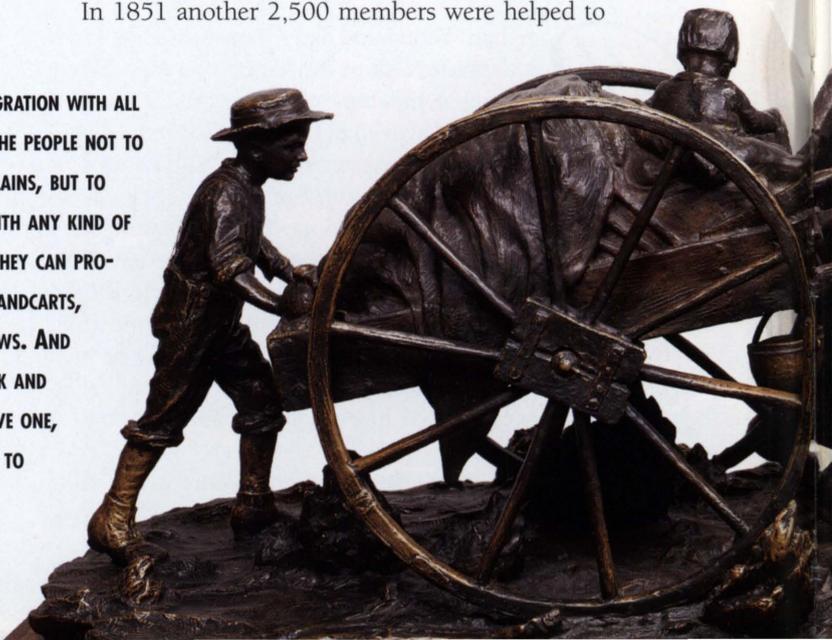


Photo: An ordinance incorporating the “Perpetual Emigrating Company,” 1850, courtesy LDS Historical Dept., Archives. Sculpture: *The Handcart Pioneer*, by Torlei F. Knaphus, courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

Zion with PEF funds. This still left 8,000 Saints in Iowa — along with hundreds of others coming from Europe — to be gathered to the Salt Lake Valley. In the fall of 1851, Ezra T. Benson and Jedediah M. Grant were chosen to bring in the remaining people the next year. “Urge on the emigration with all your might, Tell the people not to be afraid of the plains, but to encounter them with any kind of convenience that they can procure, with their handcarts, their wheel barrows. And come on foot, pack and animal, if they have one, and no other way to come.”¹¹

Benson and Grant’s efforts to bring the rest of the Saints to the new Territory of Deseret proved successful. By 1852 almost all members were removed from the camps in Iowa and were relocated in Zion. A handful of Saints were left in a few settlements to help future emigrants on their way West.

GATHERING THE SAINTS FROM EUROPE

Most of the American Saints who wanted to move to Zion were now there. The focus then shifted to bringing European converts to the Rocky Mountains. In England alone there were an estimated 30,000 Saints.¹² Church leaders in the area were encouraged to use the PEF to help send these members to Zion. They were also asked to help select those with specific skills that could help build Mormon industry and commerce, like mechanics, blacksmiths, potters, textile makers, and metal workers. Saints were asked to bring the tools of their trades with them. These were among the first to use PEF funds to emigrate. “Our true policy is, to do our own work, make our own goods as soon as possible.” It was added: “We hope soon to see the time when this territory will be able to turn out

the finest, most beautiful, and substantial articles of every kind now made in England.”¹³

The hope was that eventually all Saints could be gathered to Zion. For practical purposes, it was expedient to first bring those who could contribute to the growing economy in Deseret, to provide more money to help other Saints emigrate later.

The journey to Deseret for many Saints began in Liverpool, England. There a church agent was assigned to direct PEF emigration efforts. Messages were sent through church publications to Scandinavia, Germany, Switzerland, and France.

Historian Leonard J. Arrington noted that each family head filed an application with a church agent, giving the “name, age, occupation,

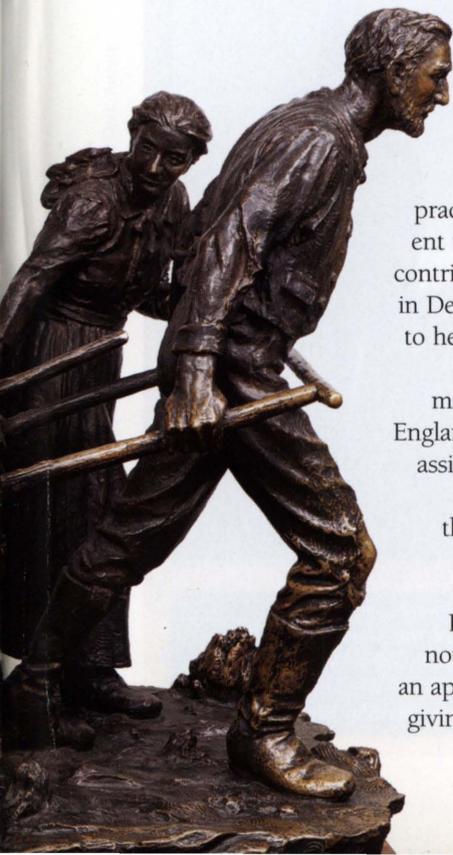
and birthplace of his family, accompanied by one pound sterling.” He added that emigrants were supposed to provide their own bedding and cooking utensils. The PEF provided food for the voyage.

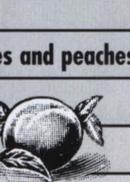
A PEF OUTFIT

Emigrants were divided into three “companies” for the journey to Zion. The division was made by economics. Those who could pay their own way were placed in “cash” companies. Those who could pay a portion of their expenses were placed in L10 companies, and those whose entire expenses had to be met by the PEF were placed in the final company. Along with what emigrants could individually contribute, it was expected the PEF could send them to Zion for L10. Infants under one year could be sent for L5. In 1853, 2,312 people emigrated to Utah under the PEF. Of these, 955 paid their own way, 1,000 traveled in L10 companies, and 400 had all of their expenses met by the PEF.¹⁴

Mormon emigrants left Liverpool and, before 1854, traveled by ship to New Orleans. From there they traveled up the Mississippi River to St. Louis. A riverboat would then take the Saints several hundred miles up the Mississippi River to where they would embark for the overland trip west. PEF agents met the emigrants at each major stop. They would provide housing, take care of those who were ill or unable to travel, and help the companies gather supplies for the next part of their journey. Because many Saints contracted malaria, cholera, or other river diseases, after 1853 ships from Europe were sent to New York, and emigrants traveled by rail to St. Louis or Omaha.

The PEF is a great example of planning and organization. When the emigrants arrived at their first camp, they found their “outfit” of one wagon, two yoke of oxen, two cows, and a tent waiting for them (emigrants helped economize by sewing their own tents). The cost of these “outfits” was between \$250 to \$500 in the 1850s. The PEF also provided food for each wagon of ten emigrants. In 1853 this included:



	1,000 pounds of flour	
	50 pounds of sugar	
	50 pounds of bacon	
	50 pounds of rice	
	30 pounds of beans	
	20 pounds of dried apples and peaches	
	5 pounds of tea	
	1 gallon of vinegar	
	10 bars of soap	
	25 pounds of salt	

Perpetual Emigration Fund Donations.

No. 511

General Tithing Store House,

RECEIVING OFFICE,

Great Salt Lake City

1855

P. E. FUND COMPANY:

This Certifies that *J. S. Highby* has placed to your credit in this Office *2,00* Dollars to apply on account *W. F. Howard Clerk*

...ed from his office must be delivered until his return and taken away from

cards rather than wagons. Thousands traveled to Utah this way at a much lower cost to the PEF. Handcart treks were obviously much more difficult for the Saints, and tragedy befell handcart pioneers, such as the Willie and Martin companies. One pioneer wrote, "A few more men died while we were camped in this place, but I don't know how many."¹⁶ The ten-month journey from Liverpool to Salt Lake could challenge both fortitude and faith.

After the coming of the railroad to Utah in 1869, European PEF emigrants traveled by rail from New York to Salt Lake City, a more expensive trip but one that saved a great deal of time and struggle.

Several thousand emigrants had arrived in Deseret by the mid-1850s thanks to the efforts of the PEF. However, the PEF was not without its problems. In April 1854, President Jedediah M. Grant asked at general conference: "How many of the brethren that are brought here by the Perpetual Emigrating Fund from England and other countries will keep the faith, and stay with the people of God, and do right? I am afraid not more than half."¹⁷ In 1872 Elder George A. Smith noted that the PEF brought apostates to Zion who had been awful, but that was their fault and not the Church's. Also, while many thousands used PEF to get to Utah, many were slow to repay their debt to the PEF — if they ever did.

These provisions were expected to

last the three months it usually took to get to the Salt Lake Valley. At times the emigrants might be able to supplement this diet with milk from their cows and wild game.¹⁵

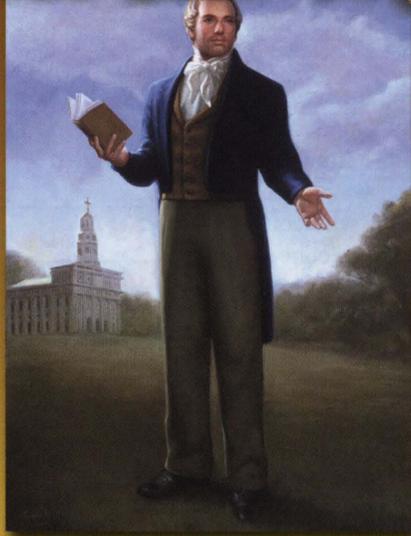
THE PITFALLS OF THE PEF

During the mid-1850s, emigrants were supplied hand-

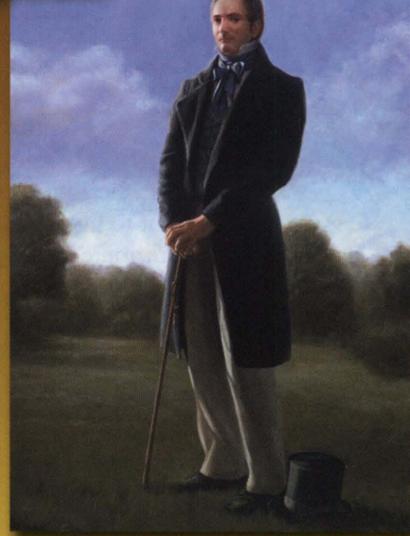
Sons of Utah Pioneers
Nauvoo Art Project



Sister Emma



Brother Joseph

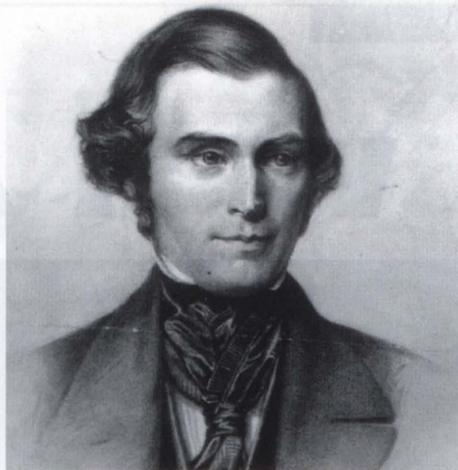


Brother Hyrum

This set of original paintings by LDS artist David Lindsley will be installed in the new Joseph Smith Academy located directly in front of the Nauvoo Temple. Your tax-deductible donation in any amount will help fund this project. For a donation of \$500, you will receive a special matted set of prints along with a numbered certificate recognizing your contribution to the Nauvoo Art Project.

For more information contact:
National Society of The Sons of Utah Pioneers
3301 East 2920 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84109
(801) 484-4441
or visit www.davidlindsley.com

In the October 1854 general conference, several of the Brethren spoke of the need to pay the debts to those who have helped them get to Zion. Elder George A. Smith stated, "There is no doubt but that a feeling of carelessness and indifference [exists among some] to bequeathing their debts to the Perpetual Emigration Fund for the assistance they have received."¹⁸ Elder Orson Pratt reminded Saints their PEF obligations were sacred and added that the PEF was one of the helps to assist Saints in "their weak and imperfect state" and "when the full law of God comes in force, these helps can be dispensed with."¹⁹ Pratt said he had no idea when that would occur but felt it probably wouldn't take place until the Saints were back in Jackson County.



ELDER ORSON PRATT REMINDED SAINTS THEIR PEF OBLIGATIONS WERE SACRED AND ADDED THAT THE PEF WAS ONE OF THE HELPS TO ASSIST SAINTS IN "THEIR WEAK AND IMPERFECT STATE."

A VIBRANT FOUNDATION

Despite challenges, the PEF remained vitally important to the Church. It was the guiding organization that brought tens of thousands of Saints out of impoverished conditions in Europe to help build Zion. As President Heber C. Kimball noted at the October 1854 conference, the PEF must be supported in order to help the poor and suffering in Europe. He quoted his son William, who was serving a mission in Europe: "I feel to weep and mourn and lament, when I behold the poverty of the people: they are starving to death, and there are scores and hundreds of my brethren in the poor houses of the country."²⁰ Interestingly, these comments were made just seven years after the Church arrived in the inhospitable Salt Lake Valley.

During the 40 years it was in operation, church members were often challenged to increase their contributions to the PEF. Debts continued to rise, totaling \$900,000 in 1867, for example. Thousands of Saints still wanted to use the PEF to emigrate to Zion.²¹ In October 1868 conference, at the beginning of one PEF fund-raising drive, Brigham Young told the Saints, "Now sisters, do as you did last year—save the money you usually spend in tea and coffee and ribbons, and let us have it to send for the poor."²² In 1872 Elder George A. Smith asked all missionaries who had served in Europe to give generously each year to help those they had worked with make it to Deseret.

In 1880 the Church celebrated its Jubilee Year. Like ancient Israel of Old, the Church wanted to forgive many of its debtors. That year over \$1,604,000, including interest, was owed the PEF. "At the jubilee conference . . . one

half of the debt was remitted in favor of the most worthy and needy of the assisted emigrants."

By the 1880s, immigration to Zion began to decline. Economic conditions improved in Europe, and there was little available land left to colonize in the American West. Anti-Mormon legislation passed by the United States Congress also thwarted Mormon emigration. The Edmunds-Tucker Act, passed in 1887, abolished the PEF and prohibited the Utah Territorial Legislature from recognizing any corporation that sought to bring any emigrants to Utah. "The Edmunds-Tucker Act administered the coup de grace to the Mormon system of assisted immigration."²³

The PEF, which began in fulfillment of sacred covenants to assist fellow Saints in need, may have had an

ignominious end. However, its impact was profound and its effects everlasting. During its 38-year existence, it helped more than 100,000 people emigrate to Zion. Of those, 87,000 were from England and Northern Europe.²⁴ These Saints greatly assisted in the colonizing of the Great Basin. They provided immeasurable strength and support to the growth of the Church and helped establish a vibrant foundation for Zion. ▼

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- [1] Bruce A. Van Orden, *Building Zion, The Latter Day Saints in Europe*, (Deseret Book, 1996), p. 80.
- [2] Andrew Jensen, "Church Chronology," (*Deseret News*, 1899), p. 38.
- [3] Leonard Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, (University of Lincoln Press, 1966), p. 78.
- [4] B. H. Roberts, *History of the Church VII*, (*Deseret News*, 1932), p. 464.
- [5] *Ibid.*, p. 464.
- [6] *Ibid.*, p. 465.
- [7] *Ibid.*, p. 465.
- [8] Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, (Deseret Book Company, 1922), p. 473.
- [9] Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, (University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 77.
- [10] *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- [11] *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- [12] *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- [13] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- [14] *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- [15] *Ibid.*, pp. 104, 105.
- [16] Lynne Slater Turner, ed. *Emigration Journals of the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies and The Hunt and Hodgett Wagon Trains*, (Turner, 1996), p. 230.
- [17] *Journal of Discourses*, (F.D. Richards, 1855), 2:148.
- [18] *Ibid.*, 7:59.
- [19] *Ibid.*, 2:57.
- [20] *Ibid.*, 7:40.
- [21] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah* (Bookcraft, 1964), p. 416.
- [22] *Ibid.*, 12:300.
- [23] Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, (University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 382.
- [24] *Ibid.*