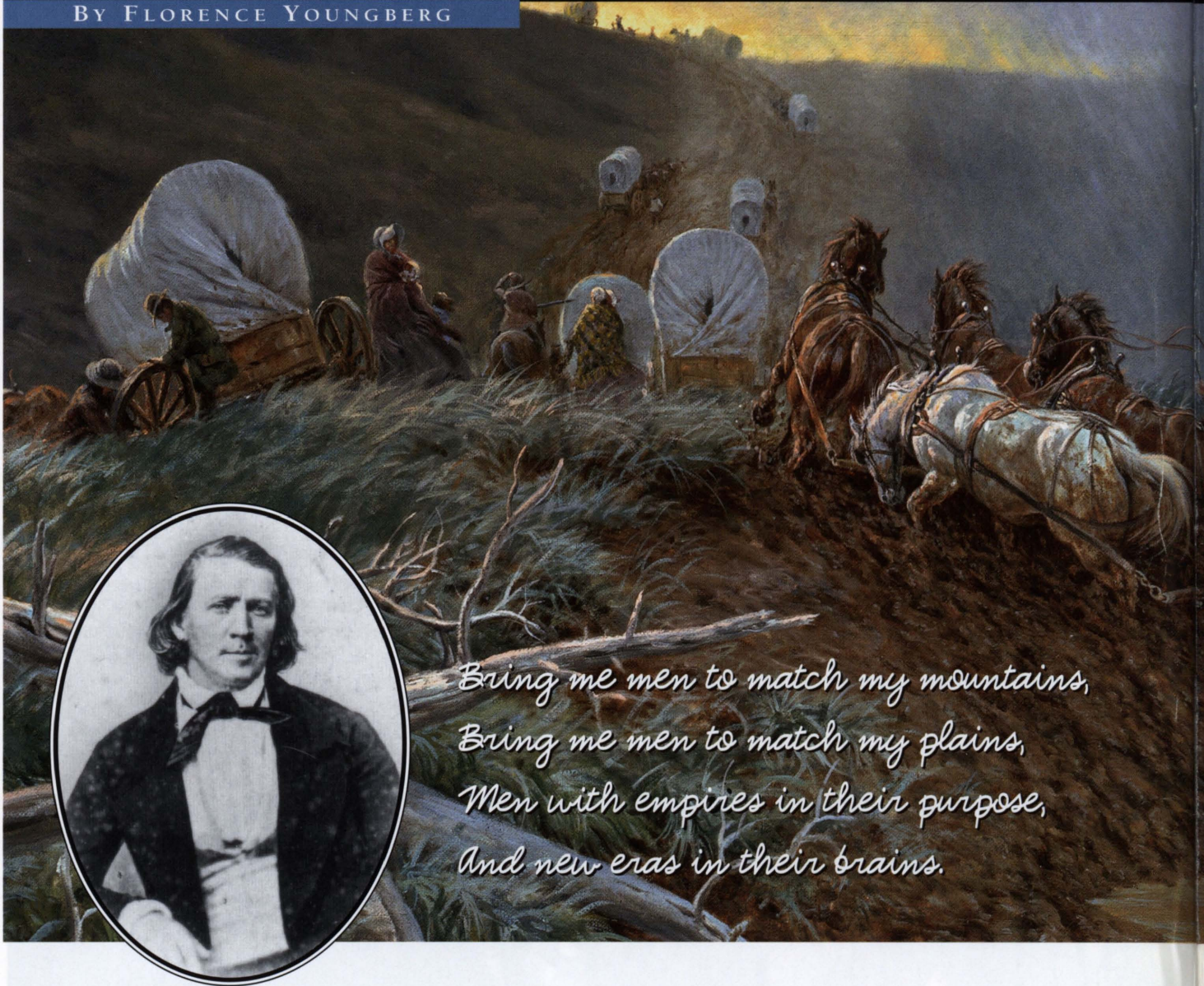


Westward

BY FLORENCE YOUNGBERG



*Bring me men to match my mountains,
Bring me men to match my plains,
Men with empires in their purpose,
And new eras in their brains.*

Picture in your mind Brigham Young as a young man of about 45 years of age, standing on the banks of the great Mississippi River gazing west. What thoughts went through his mind as he contemplated what he knew for a certainty was about to be started.

What would your thoughts have been in a similar circumstance? He had never been west of the Missouri River and knew very little of the country out west. He knew what he had heard from travelers and mountain men and explorers, but there was only the maps which John C. Fremont had made in his travels and the journal of Escalante. The general consensus of opinion of the world

at that time is best expressed by Daniel Webster in 1830:

"What do we want with this vast worthless area, this region of savages and wild beasts, of desert, of shifting sands, and whirlwinds of dust, of cactus and prairie dogs? To what use could we ever hope to put these great deserts or these endless mountain ranges, impenetrable and covered to their bases with eternal snow? I will never vote one cent from the Public Treasury to place the Pacific Coast one inch nearer to Boston than it now is."

Very few people who had gone west and come back had anything very good to say about the area west of the Missouri River. They described it as being mostly desert

Ho!



and high mountains with extremes of heat and cold, storms and lack of ground that could be cultivated or water to irrigate with. It didn't sound promising. Yet Brigham Young knew that somewhere out there was a valley that he would lead his people to where they, hopefully, would be safe from the influences, persecutions, and condemnations of the world. A place where they could build up their "Zion" according to God's commandments and their own hard work.

The road that would be followed would be rough and in some places they might have to make new roads. There would be rivers to cross, some of them deep and swift.

Which kinds of wagons would be the easiest to travel with? Would oxen, horses or mules be best to pull the wagon. How much food would they need? Each family had to carry their own. It was finally decided that a suggested amount was 1,000 pounds of flour, 50 each of sugar, bacon, and rice, 30 of beans and 25 of salt, 20 of dried fruit, 5 of tea, plus a gallon of vinegar and 10 bars of soap. Of course they would have to hunt for their meat on the way.

What of those who became sick? What of babies who would undoubtedly be born on the way? Could the people cope with the sickness and deaths which would most certainly occur with that many inexperienced people on that kind of trek? How steep were the mountain passes? Would they be able to find water at camping places? How about feed for the animals? What about those who wouldn't be able to get the necessary equipment to leave with them. What would happen to them?

These and many other questions faced this gallant leader as he looked toward the west. He studied every bit of information he could get hold of and I am sure he interviewed everyone he could find that had been and returned from the west. The Lord had directed him to take his people west and he would! It mattered not how difficult the way would be.

Finally, Brigham Young knew it was time to start. He had instructed his people how best to prepare for the journey. Some were ready, many were not. Money was hard to come by and without money they could not get the equipment they needed. Some had been able to sell their properties but many had not been so fortunate. When the scheduled day came, they crossed the Mississippi River under difficult circumstances of cold, snow and ice. There was sickness and many of the people were ill prepared for the journey.

We have heard many stories and read many books about the journey west and the problems they faced. It has been suggested that upward of 84,000 pioneers reached the valley while 6,000 plus were left in graves along the way. It was not an easy journey, but when they reached the valley, they were determined not to falter but to carry on with what they had started.

The first thing upon reaching the valley was to find a place to camp. Brigham told them that as soon as they were set up, some of the men should start plowing. Knowing what we do now about the length of the growing season here, it is a wonder that anything grew, but they did get a crop of sorts. When they first entered the valley, there were no trees but there was an abundance of oak brush, sage brush and tall grass. There were 5 main creeks which flowed from the Wasatch Mountains to the east and all that was needed was to irrigate the land. There was much feed for the cattle. In Thomas Bullock's journal he wrote:

"As we progressed down the valley, small clumps of dwarf oak and willows appeared; the grass grown six or

Shall We Not Go On In So Great a Cause, by Clark Kelley Price, courtesy Visual Resource Library.

seven feet high, many different kinds of grass appeared, some being ten or twelve feet high. After wading through thick grass for some distance, we found a place bare enough for a camp ground, the grass being only knee deep but very thick."

Mr. Bullock may have exaggerated some on the height of the grass but the land was not barren as we have so often been led to believe. It wasn't until 10 years later in some of the saints' journals that they called the land barren.

Thus was the settling of the valley commenced. This great leader with his vision of the future immediately marked out the valley as he knew it should be laid out and instructed the people to build good strong houses which would weather the elements. They were instructed to put in gardens and prepare for the coming winter.

Brigham sent out word with the missionaries that he wanted people who had special talents such as cobblers, carpenters, tanners, builders, mill workers, etc. to come west and bring with them as far as possible, the equipment of their trade. His idea was to make the people in the valley self-sufficient so they would have little or no cause to purchase their needs from outside the valley. Not long ago in the paper was an article which stated that it has been determined that if a high wall were built clear around the entire state of Utah, that we would be able to take care of all our needs without help from the outside.

Brigham Young said: "We have been kicked out of the frying pan into the fire and out of the fire into the middle of the floor and here we are and here we will stay. We shall build a city like no other in the world and a temple to the most High God in this forsaken place."

There was much to be done in this desert community. Let me suggest some of the goals and problems that Brigham faced now that he was finally here.

First, the people needed homes. Many were still living in wagons, dugouts, log cabins. Roads were needed so they could get to the timber in the mountains. They had to construct bridges along with the roads. Fields had to be plowed and gardens planted. Meat for the coming winter had to be hunted and prepared so it would keep.

Brigham knew they needed a place to meet until churches could be built. There were stores to be put up, schools to be reared. He knew they needed protection from the Indians and other sources, so walls and forts needed to be constructed.

Next Brigham had to form some sort of a judicial sys-

tem to handle the many problems that arose from so many people living together. This entailed some type of political system. The church system of government was fine but as more people settled this valley, many of them not of our church, there would have to be some form of government along with the church.

Third, he knew the need for good entertainment and what would happen if he didn't see that the right kind of entertainment was there for his people before the usual bar rooms and gambling houses that followed the new towns west were made a part of his city.

Fourth, he knew they would grow so he had to look toward the expansion into other towns near and far so that his people would be somewhat protected from other "undesirable" people forming towns which would create more of the kind of trouble they had come so far to get away from.

Brigham soon found that it was expedient that a type of welfare program be established to help those in need.

There were mills to be built, tanneries, iron foundries, blacksmith shops, and many other kinds of business establishments

that needed to be brought into the valley. At one time he had the machinery purchased in France and brought over here for a sugar mill which is where Sugar House got its name.

What is the result of his planning and dreaming?

A beautiful city, temple, homes, businesses, schools, and churches. Talents abound here.

It didn't matter whether it was doctors, lawyers, nurses, seamstresses, iron workers, pottery makers, match makers, tanners, show makers, you name it, Brigham saw that we had it. People learned to work. They learned to develop their talents, then learned to use them.

Many of you may not be aware that Brigham and the city fathers had dreams of a valley wide transportation system after the railroad came that would go from one end of the valley to the other. He tried to think of and anticipate everything. We all know of the tremendous influence the old Salt Lake Theater had on entertainment. Some of the finest talent in the country played there at various times. It left a legacy that has been followed down to today for good entertainment.

We have a state we can be proud of. Our universities are some of the finest. President Young said, "Show me your faith by your work and actions." He believed it was sacrilegious to call on God for help without also putting forth all possible effort towards gaining the objective. ▼

This article is reprinted from a previous Pioneer Magazine.



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