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A History of the Latter-Day Saints in the Columbia Basin of Central Washington 1850-1972

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A HISTORY OF THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS

IN THE COLUMBIA BASIN OF

CENTRAL WASHINGTON

1850-1972

by

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As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Rick B. Jorgensen in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; and (2) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

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The Columbia Basin of Central Washington has a relatively recent Latter-day Saint history among the regions of the western states. Most of the sparsely populated rural areas in the west that have large concentrations of Latter-day Saints were originally established as "Mormon" settlements. The basin referred to lies between the Snake and Columbia Rivers and now has thousands of Latter-day Saints who have chosen to inhabit this historically barren land and call it their home. A brief visit or casual observance of the area leads many to question what were the major factors and characteristics leading to the twentieth century growth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Columbia Basin of Central Washington?

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Chapter One
Beginnings
1850-1900

Following the War of 1812 colonial America was filled with the cries of spiritual revivalists seeking to convert the souls of the colonists to their particular religious movements. The calls for religious discipleship in early nineteenth century America helped pave the way for the settlement and conquest of the West. As the Bible traversed the continent in the hands of fur trappers and Christian missionaries, settlers followed close behind. An American west story speaks of four Flathead Indians, referred to as "The Wise men from the West," who traveled to St. Louis looking for the great book and its form of worship. They had come to know of the Bible from fur trappers with the Hudson's Bay Company. Reportedly they only received 'gifts and other things that damage the soul' and not the direction they were seeking. They left disappointed and disillusioned after having to bury one of the Indians who died on the journey.[1]

This tale illustrates some of the feelings in the New England region of the United States at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was a time of religious enlightenment, and those informed felt duty bound to share their religious findings with others. At a small one room Presbyterian country church in Wheeler, Steuben County, New York sometime in November of 1834, the Reverend Samuel Parker spoke with great religious zeal of a need for a mission to Old Oregon. Dr. Marcus Whitman and his young wife, Narcissa Prentiss, heard the call and wrote to the American Board of Presbyterians

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[1] Clifford M Drury. Dr. Marcus and Narcissa (Prentiss) Whitman *And the opening of Old Oregon*, vol. 1 of 2, Pacific Northwest National Parks and Forests Association, (1986), 23-30. In this work about Marcus Whitman, one of the earliest Christian missionaries to travel to the Northwest, Drury discusses the religious background for the Northwest seeking to rediscover its earliest origins. The journals and writings associated with this work were given to the Pacific Northwest National Parks and Forest Association.

in Boston 2 December 1834. Dr. Whitman wrote, "I have had an interview with the Rev Samuel Parker upon the subject of missions and have determined to offer myself to the Am. Board to accompany him on his Mission or beyond the Rocky Mountains."[2] The Whitmans helped carry the Bible and Christianity to the Oregon territory and on into the Walla Walla, Washington area, part of the Oregon Territory at that time.

Oregon Country

The history of the Northwestern corner of the United States of America is, in many respects, an extension of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. As the United States and Great Britain battled for the remainder of the North American continent the political maneuvering brought the Oregon Country onto the forefront. In the years preceding the Latter-day Saint exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois, and the great westward migration on the Oregon Trail, the desires of many to make an overland crossing to the Pacific were coupled with fear and reservations. The war for westward expansion and the claiming of Oregon Country was partially fought with written words from newspapers. Writers spoke of America's "Manifest Destiny" and passionately attempted to sway the feelings of the public to their vision and political interests concerning the West. The efforts of those determined to dissuade the overland crossing were drowned out by numerous cries of success. The fears of traveling to the Oregon country subsided as people took courage from reports of thousands traveling to the Pacific with little difficulty.[3] After the Oregon Treaty of 1846 settled the boundary

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[2] This quote comes from Whitman letter #5 as found in Drury, Dr. Marcus Whitman, (1986), 23-30. All quotes are recorded as written. In this instance [Am.] refers to American Board.

[3] John D. Unruh. *The Plains Across, The Overland Emigrants and Trans-Mississippi West. 1840-1860.* University of Illinois Press (1979). 28-61.

between Oregon and what came to be British Columbia, the numbers of oncoming settlers rose dramatically. John D. Unruh has shown that between 1840 and 1860, 53,062 new immigrants poured into the American Northwest.[4]

Significant Political and Religious Events in Shaping the Northwest

- **1792** – In May United States Naval Captain Robert Gray discovers a large river and names it the "Columbia" after his ship. Gray lays the foundation for American claims of the area by depositing a rough chart of the lower river with the Spanish governor at Nootka, thereby notifying European powers of the American discovery.[5]
- **1793** – Alexander Mackenzie, a trader for the North West Fur Company of Montreal, leads expedition that reaches the Pacific Ocean at the Dean Channel on 21 July. He is credited as being the first White man to cross the continent north of Mexico. His exploration in behalf of a British company predates Lewis and Clark's similar feat by ten years.[6]
- **1805** – On 8 December, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark of the U.S. Corps of Discovery direct their men to build fort Clatsop near the present-day Astoria, Oregon.
- **1811** – John Jacob Astor's American Fur Trappers establish Fort Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia River in March. Later they move further inland and establish Fort Okanogan, the first American Structure in the present day state of Washington, not far from the Grand Coulee Dam site. Then they move to the Spokane area and establish Fort Spokane in competition with the North West Company's Spokane House.
- **1811** - David Thompson, explorer for the North West Company of Montreal, while traveling the length of the Columbia River from the north, leaves documents near present-day Pasco in July claiming the area for the British interests. Moving down river Thompson meets Astor's American Fur Trappers at Fort Astoria before they move inward to establish Fort Okanogan and Spokane.
- **1813** – The Astorians, due to the War of 1812 (or the War of the American Invasion according to the Canadians) agree to sell out to the North West Fur Company. Before the sell is final a British warship occupies the fort and renames it Fort George, making it the first British post along the North Pacific coast.[7]
- **1814** – The terms of the Treaty of Ghent restores the American claims to lost territory in the Northwest. The treaty takes effect 20 October 1818, and provides joint occupation between Great Britain and the United States. There is no mechanism for solving disputes except on a diplomatic level.[8]
- **1819** – Spanish claims are drawn at the Oregon – California border.
- **1821** – Violent competition between the North West Fur Company and Hudson's Bay Company leads British Parliament to force a merger between the two companies and George Simpson becomes the regional head of the enlarged Hudson's Bay Company.

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[4] Unruh, *The Plains Across,* 120 see table 2. On 27 April 1846 U.S. Congress authorized President Polk to give Great Britain notice of the termination of the joint occupancy treaty. Great Britain claimed historical precedence from exploration and the U.S. countered with similar claims. The number of U.S. settlers convinced the British to end the disputes in the 1846 Treaty of Washington, commonly called the Oregon Treaty, which placed the U.S.-British boundary at the 49th parallel.

[5] Carlos Arnaldo Schwantes. *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History.* Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, (1996), 50-51.

[6] Collier's Encyclopedia. The Crowell-Collier Publishing Co., vol. 15, (1965), 181.

[7] Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest*, 60-68.

[8] John Phillip Reid. *Contested Empire: Peter Skene Ogden and the Snake River Expedition.* Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, (2002), 4-6.

- **1824** – Peter Skene Ogden leads the Hudson's Bay Company on the Snake River Expedition attempting to trap the animals of the Snake River country to the point of extinction creating a 'fur desert' to keep the Americans out of the Columbia River country.
- **1825** – Most famous British - American confrontation of fur trappers takes place at Ogden's Hole near present-day Huntsville, Utah, between Peter Skene Ogden of Hudson's Bay Company and a party of St. Louis beaver hunters led by Johnson Gardner. Several of Ogden's freemen trappers defect to join the American led trappers.[9]
- **1831** – A delegation of Nez Perce Indians seeks information about the white man's sources of power and requests the Bible for Native Americans in the Oregon Country.[10]
- **1836** – Responding to Indian requests, the American Board of Foreign Missions, which was Presbyterian based, sent Dr. Marcus and Narcissa Whitman to establish a mission at Waiilatpu among the Cayuse, and Henry and Eliza Spalding to Lapwai among the Nez Perce.[11]
- **1838** – Francis Norbet Banchet and Modeste Demers, Franciscan priests, establish an era of Roman Catholic Missions at the request of French-Canadian employees of the Hudson's Bay Company.
- **1840** – Pierre Jean De Smet, a Jesuit missionary from Belgium, is said to have traveled 180,000 miles, including sixteen trips to Europe to promote missions among the Indians.
- **1842** – The American Board orders the closure of the Waiilatpu and Lapwai missions due to reports of feuding among the missionaries. Dr. Whitman rides east in the fall to persuade the Board to reconsider.
- **1843** – The American Board is convinced and Whitman returns with nearly 900 white American settlers, which causes the Indians to become apprehensive and the Whitman massacre results.[12]

Following the Martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith and continued persecutions in Nauvoo, Illinois, the Latter-day Saint leadership began preparing to move west. They studied John C. Fremont's trans-Missouri maps and expeditionary reports of 1842 and 1843 as well as others on the rocky Mountain region. This may have led them to consider seriously the Great Salt Lake Valley but not necessarily decide on it. " . . . [Brigham] Young indicated they would head west of the rocky Mountains to the area of the 'Bay of St. Francisquo' and of Vancouver Island, or, in other words, some where in the vast area of 'Upper California' covering almost all of the west coast."[13] On 19 November 1846 Father Pierre Jean De Smet met with the Quorum of the Twelve at Winter Quarters and reported, "They asked me a thousand questions about the regions I

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[9] Ibid, 11.

[10] *Whitman Mission Brochure* prepared by the National Park Service, and distributed to tourists on site in Walla Walla, Washington during the summer 2002.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest*, 87-96.

[13] Richard E. Bennett. *Mormons at the Missouri, 1846-1852: "And Should We Die..."* Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press (1987), 16.

had explored. . . . and the spot which I have just described to you [the Great Basin] pleased them greatly from the account I gave them of it."[14] The Latter-day Saints kept their options open as they prepared for the westward trek across the plains. In February 1847, "Orson Hyde, Parley P. Pratt, and John Taylor presented a petition bearing 13,000 names to the British House of Commons . . . proposing a plan for Mormon migration to Oregon on Vancouver Island. (See Manuscript History, 8 February 1847)."[15] Whether the Latter-day Saints ever intended to travel all the way to Oregon or not, a letter dated 2 September 1847 from Peter Skene Ogden to Paul Kane, an artist working with a commission from the Hudson's Bay Company, related that "500 Waggons are on their way here and 500 waggons of Mormons have commenced a location at the South side of Great Salt Lake."[16] There the Latter-day Saints stayed while thousands of other immigrants continued on the Oregon Trail towards the Pacific.

The Oregon Treaty of 1846 ended the political dispute over the Oregon Country, and the boundary line between Great Britain and the United States was peaceably settled. Oregon Country became known as Oregon and Washington Territories until Oregon became a state of the Union in 1859 and Washington in 1889.

The Columbia Basin of Central Washington has a relatively recent Latter-day Saint history among the regions of the western states. Most of the sparsely populated rural areas in the West that have large concentrations of Latter-day Saints were originally established as "Mormon" settlements. The Basin referred to lies between the Snake and Columbia Rivers and now has thousands of Latter-day Saints who have chosen to inhabit

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[14] Bennett, Ibid., 148.
[15] Bennett, Ibid., 257-58 n. 45.
[16] Paul Kane. *Paul Kane's Frontier Including Wanderings of An Artist Among the Indians of North America.* ed. J. Russell Harper. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, (1971), 328-29.

this historically barren land and call it their home.[17] A brief visit or casual observance of the area leads many to question what were the major factors and characteristics leading to the twentieth century growth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Columbia Basin of Central Washington?

Early Missionary Efforts of the Latter-day Saints

To more fully appreciate the faith and efforts of the twentieth century pioneers in the growth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Central Washington, we must first look at the missionaries who tried to establish the Church in the Northwest in the 1850's. They and their converts faced serious opposition and persecution, which was often due to erroneous suspicions.

In 1857 four missionaries laboring in San Francisco boarded the steamship *Columbia* on May 5 and headed for the Northwest. Elders Silas G. Higgins, Lorenzo F. Harmon and John H. Winslow, under the leadership of Elder David M. Stuart were officially assigned to serve in the Oregon and Washington territories.[18] Three days later on 8 May 1857 *The Western Standard,* a missionary voice of the Church in California, reported on the departure of the missionaries.

> They left on the steamship "Columbia," on Tuesday morning at ten o'clock, and while we watched the noble vessel as she slowly and proudly cut her way through the deep waters of the ocean, apparently conscious of the precious burden she bore, we could not but reflect on the different hopes, aims desires, feelings and pursuits of the motley crowd that covered her deck, and how utterly unconscious

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[17] The Columbia Basin as referred to in this text refers primarily to the land covered by the Columbia Project, the land that is associated with the Grand Coulee Dam and its connected irrigation project. This is a smaller focus than that defined by others. The Columbia Basin is defined by D.W. Meinig as encompassing most of Central Washington and parts of Idaho, Montana, and Oregon, in addition to running into Canada. See Meinig, D.W., *The Great Columbia Plain - A Historical Geography 1805-1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 268, 327-8.

[18] *Northwestern States Mission Manuscript History,* 5 May 1857. This source was obtained from the Church Archives on six reels of microfilm. Hereafter it will be written as NWSMMH.

they were of the important character and mission of the little band who stood in their midst . . .

This may be regarded as the commencement of the work and the opening of the gospel in Oregon, and with the feelings and determinations which the brethren manifested on their departure, we feel that they will accomplish a good and a great work. That there is a work yet to be done on the Pacific coast is the unmistakable whispering of the Spirit, but whether we shall be the instruments to accomplish it, will, in a great measure, be left to ourselves to decide.[19]

Regarding the missionaries' future, the article underscored that each of the missionaries might be, "sacrificing all his hopes of worldly ease and prosperity, forsaking father and mother and all that the heart naturally holds dear on earth, perhaps enduring their scorn and reproaches, taking his life in his hand, and going forth without purse or scrip to a strange land among strange people."[20] This must have been an anxious time for these four elders. The life of Elder David M. Stuart is a testimony of faithfulness, full of experiences including a mission that brought him to the Northwest.[21]

Landing near Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia River, the missionaries sought divine direction and retired to the woods where they prayed that the Lord would open their way and bless their mission. According to David Stuart, opposition was quick in coming. Mr. Bodwell, whose wife was very bitter towards "Mormons," operated the

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[19] NWSMMH, 5 May 1857.

[20] NWSMMH, 5 May 1857. The entire article is very lengthy and attempts to create emotional and poetic power. A complete reading of the article gives the reader the feeling that they felt very strongly that they were part of a great work and that they were indeed sacrificing to bring the gospel truths to the world despite the opposition which they apparently faced.

[21] Most of the biographical information on David Stuart was found scattered throughout articles he had written for the *Juvenile Instructor*, an early publication for the Church. David Stuart was born in Irvine, Ayrshire, Scotland on 8 March 1826. His father died when he was an infant and his mother moved them to Paisley, Scotland. By the time he was nine years old he was an orphan, living by the knowledge that his "mother had taught him to read and be good." He associated with good people because of his desire to learn and they took him to Sunday School and church. By the time he was sixteen he had decided to join the Presbyterians because it was his mother's church. At this time he prayed to be directed in the right. A subsequent dream warned him not to join that church. At that time according to Stuart, "Mormonism was creating quite an excitement in Scotland." He went to listen to their message and was convinced of its truthfulness and was baptized on 5 May 1842. This was the beginning of Stuart's life long service in the Church, which included his mission to the Oregon country in 1857. Later, while returning from a mission to Europe, Stuart was called to preside on a ship carrying converts bound for Utah. On this

only hotel in town. Mrs. Bodwell spoke of an Elder Hughes who passed through a couple of years before leaving only "Mormon" literature as payment.[22] The foursome tried to appease her by insuring that they always paid their way, though in reality they were penniless, with only their faith that the Lord would provide the way. Their faith was answered when the group of people to which they spoke that evening learned they traveled like the apostles of old without purse or scrip. Many of those present contributed, which provided sufficient money for their needs. The four missionaries felt like the Lord had specifically answered their prayer.[23]

After a short time the traveling elders crossed the Columbia River and moved into the Washington Territory. In Clark County they discovered that an Elder John Hughes had indeed passed through this place in 1855 and had established a branch near the Lewis River, although the membership had not met for over a year due to opposition and Indian wars. The elders recommitted the Saints, reorganized the Lewis River Branch, and set apart Daniel W. Gardener to preside over the small branch. Several people were baptized or rebaptized including Louisa A. John Bozarth.[24] On 13 June 1857 the Elders split into two companionships, Elders Harmon and Winslow remained in Washington, while Elders Stuart and Higgins went south into Oregon.

Louisa A. John Bozarth is closely connected to Latter-day Saint history in the state of Washington during the second half of the nineteenth century. Louisa had a strong

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trip he met the Eccles family and shared stories of his mission to Oregon Country. David Eccles, a young son in the family, would later have great economic influence on the Northwest.

[22] Considerable effort was expended to find more information on the Elder Hughes who may have passed through the region at that time. Searching a published indexed list of members of the Church at that time by Susan E. Black provided multiple people with the name John Hughes, but none of them could have been a missionary in the Northwest at that time.

[23] Stuart, David M. *An account of early missionary work in Oregon and Washington Territories*, NWSMMH, 26 October 1858.

pioneering spirit. She was born in Clinton County, Ohio, in 1826. Through progressively westward moves, before and after her first marriage, Louisa relocated to the Northwestern Territories. She first settled in Portland, Oregon, in the winter of 1852-53. She ran a boarding house there until she moved to establish a hotel near Cascade Rapids at present-day Vancouver, Washington. She was well known among the Gorogean Indians at Cascade Rapids, having learned to speak their native language. While there she married again, this time to John S. Bozarth[25] and together they were some of the earliest settlers on the Lewis River just north of Vancouver.[26]

It was in that first year of 1857 that the missionaries came to the Rapids where Louisa was living. Elder David M. Stuart wrote, "While we were battling away in Oregon for the Gospel's sake, our brethren in Washington were having a hot time. An organized mob headed by priests [ministers] and apostates ran the Elders out of the country at the point of the bayonet and ordered the Saints to renounce Mormonism or leave the country."[27] Louisa was very familiar with the hardships of those early missionaries. On one occasion she wrote of a merchant who donated a large basket of eggs "to the ruination of the Elders appearance."[28]

The negative sentiment towards the Latter-day Saint missionaries in Lewis River culminated with some of the citizens holding a meeting Sunday, August 2, 1857, where

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[24] According to the NWSMMH, Louisa along with unnamed others were rebaptized in order to show their recommitment to the Church since it had been so long since they had regularly met together.

[25] Little is written or known about John Bozarth except that he married Louisa later in life and that he never did embrace her faith or become a member of her Church.

[26] *Deseret News 1997-98 Church Almanac*, Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News, (1996), 275-276. See also Arrington, Leonard J. "History of the Church in the Pacific Northwest," *Task Papers in LDS History*, No. 18, Salt Lake City: Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, (1977), 5-7.

[27] David M. Stuart, "A Mission to Oregon," *Juvenile Instructor*, 18 (1883), 293-326, quoted in Arrington, 4.

[28] Louisa A. Johns Bozarth as quoted by David Stuart in NWSMMH, 26 October 1858.

they drafted several public resolutions concerning their views of the missionaries and their converts. Eight men signed their names to the resolutions and they insisted there were others that had also agreed with the statements. Then they published them in selected Oregon papers on the 8 August 1857. One was written to the *Editor Oregonian*, and appeared in the paper as follows:

Wm. Kinder,	J. Kinder,
John Simmons,	Wm. Irven,
Wm. Miller,	C.H. Fairchild,
R.T. Lockwood,	W. Webb,

and others.

Resolved, that Salt Lake Mormonism is treason; that it authorizes murder, robbery and the breaking open of the United States mails; that every inducement is made to proselyte the less intelligent of our fellow-citizens to its creed.

Resolved, that the confiscation of individual property to Church purposes as practiced by the leaders of this gigantic conspiracy is a vital denial of the essences of the Declaration of American Independence, and looks to the subversion of the basis of civil polity.

Resolved, that Brigham Young and his coadjutors in professing to receive revelation from God, are guilty of the basest blasphemy and the most criminal deception.

Resolved, that we too highly prize the blessings of liberty and too strongly adhere to the laws of our country to be willing that they should be wrested from us who have been reared in the land of the free and the home of the brave by Mormon usurpers and conspirators.

Resolved, that we are opposed to men preaching among us who endorse the outlawry, the tyranny, the blood cruelty of the Mormon leaders, and we therefore civilly invite the Mormon preachers now among us to leave our country, or renounce their connection with the Mormon Church. And that we suggest to those two or three families among us who have been harboring, thereby giving aid and comfort to the enemy, that a sense of propriety requires them to desist this unpatriotic business.

Resolved, that while we are unwilling to employ coercive measures, or use personal violence in executing our determination we shall fully accomplish our object, trying the virtue of severer means when milder fail.

Resolved, that the oath administered to the members in the 'endowment' is treason steeped in blood, and that taken by members entering into the Church but little better.[29]

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[29] A copy of this article in the *Editor Oregonian* was included in the NWSMMH, 8 August 1857.

Elder David Stuart read these articles while he was still laboring in Oregon and began to fear for the safety of his fellow missionaries in Washington. He left Elder Higgins in charge of the Saints and set out to help in what he considered an "unequal strife."[30]

It was at this time that the federal government ordered Johnston's Army to the Utah Territory to put down the "Mormon rebellion" in what came to be called the Utah War.[31] Brigham Young called the missionaries and the Saints in the outlying areas to return home. Most Latter-day Saints in Washington, who remained faithful, returned to the Utah Territory in the spring of 1858, leaving Louisa A. John Bozarth as the only known Church member to have stayed behind. Louisa remained in Washington with her husband who had sympathized with the citizens that desired the Latter-day Saints to leave. Undoubtedly, Louisa had a lot invested in their hotel business on the Lewis River, and was unwilling to leave her husband and family. Being thus involved, she chose to maintain her faith but remain in Washington with her family.

There were at least two major reasons for the opposition. The first was connected to the Utah War. Another piece of false propaganda arose from claims that the "Mormons" had a plan to incite the various Indian tribes of the territories to join with

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[30] David M. Stuart. *An account of early missionary work in Oregon and Washington Territories*, NWSMMH, 26 October 1858.

[31] The Utah War was a conflict that arose out of the political maneuverings of 1854 and occurred from 1857-1858. The national Republican Party supported its first presidential candidate in 1856 which brought the "Mormon" issue into national politics by urging Congress to not allow the twin relics of barbarism, slavery and polygamy in the territories. Problems arose when Utah reapplied for statehood and ran into conflict with disgruntled territorial officials, most notably Associate Judge William W. Drummond. President of the United States James Buchanan ordered troops to Utah to put down the "Mormon rebellion" without investigation of the situation. Troops and supplies were sent west and the Saints responded by uniting in their determination not to be driven out again. Brigham Young immediately began to prepare the Saints to defend themselves and sent delegations to Washington D.C. to explain the situation. The problem was resolved in June of 1858 when Peace Commissioners offered pardon to the Church. Terrible events developed surrounding the conflict, such as Mountain Meadows Massacre. See *Church History In The Fulness of Times*, Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, (1993), 368-79.

them and seek their independence from the United States.[32] These suspicions added to other feelings of opposition that characteristically accompanied the work of the missionaries who preached "a new gospel." They also helped escalate the antagonistic feelings into severe mistrust and hatred, which ultimately led to nearly a universal withdrawal of Latter-day Saints from Washington, as well as other places, as they were invited by Brigham Young to return to Utah. This was the beginning of what was to become known outside the Church as the "Mormon Culture Region" or Utah, southern Idaho, western Wyoming, eastern Nevada, most of Arizona and western New Mexico.[33] It did not include the Northwest. Brigham Young knew that eventually the Salt Lake valley would not be enough room for all the Saints who would desire to settle there. So he encouraged them and even sent them on occasions to establish strongholds throughout the western territories. Though the Saints needed concentrated numbers to build temples and concentrated strength not to be driven out again, they also desired extended growth.

The Utah War temporarily affected the overall spread of the Church. The Northwest was not alone in this; missionaries and members were encouraged to return to Utah from everywhere. Though they were called to return, it was not indefinitely, for Brigham Young demonstrated from the beginning that he did not intend all of the Latter-day Saints to live in the Salt Lake Valley in close proximity to one another. He did gather Saints from out of the nations and bring them to the "Utah Zion" for a time. For this reason he established the Perpetual Emigration Fund.[34] Brigham declared, "We have

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[32] Arrington, *History*, 4. Arrington discusses why those first missionaries were not well received.

[33] Jan Shipps. "The Scattering of the Gathered and the Gathering of the Scattered, The Mormon Diaspora in the Mid-Twentieth Century," St. George, Utah: Juanita Brooks Lecture Series, March 12, 1987 [pamphlet], 4. Jan Shipps' non-LDS point of view provides a valuable balance.

[34] Susan Evans McCloud, *Brigham Young*. American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, (1996), 179.

been gathered to the valleys in these mountains for the express purpose of purifying ourselves, that we may become polished stones in the temple of God. We are here for the purpose of establishing the kingdom of God on the earth. To be prepared for this work it has been necessary to gather us out from the nations and countries of the world."[35] After a season to flourish in the Rocky Mountain valleys there was enough strength to begin the "Mormon Diaspora" and carry the gospel to the four corners of the earth without having to call all the converts to Utah.

Some twenty-five years after her conversion Louisa A. John Bozarth traveled to Utah. On 18 August 1882 Louisa surprised David Stuart with a visit to his home in Ogden, Utah. She had made the journey alone since all of her children had passed away one by one and then her husband last of all. Her desire was to do temple work for herself and also for her family. She requested David Stuart's assistance, deeming him a true friend among the Utah Saints. She followed his counsel and obeyed what was then referred to as the law of gathering to Zion, by being rebaptized and paying a tithing of all she possessed.[36] Louisa received her temple endowment and then returned home to Washington to settle her affairs, expecting to return to Utah and live among the larger body of Saints. For some unknown reason she did not return, but died firm in the faith in 1911 in Woodland, Washington. She had to be buried in secret with her grave dedicated later that night because of the continued persecution and animosity towards the Church.[37] Because she was the only known member of the Church in Washington for nearly 30

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[35] *Discourses of Brigham Young*, arranged by John A. Widstoe, Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press (1925), 186.

[36] David M. Stuart. "My Mission to Oregon." *The Juvenile Instructor,* vol. 18, pp. 293-294, 309-310, 326.

[37] *Deseret News* 1997-1998; *Church Almanac*, 275-76.

years, she is described in the Portland Relief Society historical records as "the queen of the pioneers."[38] In the historical records that are available of Latter-day Saints in the Northwest, Louisa is definitely one of the stalwart Saints from those earliest days of the Church.

Returning to the Northwest

The 1890's are acknowledged in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the decade of good will. During this time continued expansion from the Utah-based Church lead many Saints to settle in areas far away from Utah. Many of the Latter-day Saints that migrated into the Northwest at the end of the nineteenth century came from northern Utah. These were men and women seeking a better way to make a living. Some tried to settle permanently, while others worked temporary jobs planning eventually to return closer to the main body of the Church. Others began to migrate to the Northwest with the promise of employment with different industries started by prominent Latter-day Saint businessmen. These companies attracted small groups of Saints who in turn spoke encouragingly to others still in Utah of good jobs and great opportunities in the Northwest. As a result more Latter-day Saints left their homes in Utah to settle in Oregon. This group helped build the foundation of the Church in the Northwest and was one of the things that lead to the establishment of the Northwestern States Mission in 1897.[39]

Among those who had the greatest influence on the return of the Latter-day Saints to the Northwest was David Eccles, a pioneer industrialist who made his name in the

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[38] Relief Society historical records of Portland Branch, 20 June 1911, in Arrington, History, 7.
[39] Arrington, *History*, 3.

Northwest through numerous business ventures. He helped the gospel spread to the Northwest by establishing these businesses and employing large numbers of Latter-day Saint workers in these trades. To some degree, David owes his great achievements in business throughout the West to the Perpetual Emigration Fund (PEF) established by President Brigham Young. David's father William Eccles received the message of the Latter-day Saint missionaries in 1842 while living in Paisley, Scotland. At David's birth in 1849 William was nearly blind and barely managed a living at his wood lathe. The hope of a better life in America had always seemed impossible for the young family who struggled to survive on the earnings from William's wood lathe and young David's merchandizing journeys. By 1860 William and Sarah had seven children and it seemed as if they would never be able to join the Saints in Utah. Then, in 1863, an advance of $375 dollars came from the PEF. Two days later the Eccles family was on a dock in Liverpool and headed for America.[40]

David Eccles' interest in the Northwest may have occurred during his voyage to the Americas on the *Cynosure,* which was presided over by Elder David Stuart, a missionary returning from Europe. It was the same David Stuart who had also been the first missionary assigned to labor in the Oregon and Washington territories a few years earlier in 1857. Stuart's tales of the beauty and opportunities he had seen during his mission to the Northwest later influenced the Eccles family to move to the Oregon Territory for two years. They went to Oregon City to earn enough money working in the mills to return to what William Eccles had envisioned for his family, a home among the Saints in Zion. After struggling for the first few years in Utah and still not able to provide for the growing family needs, William decided that the Northwest was their

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[40] Arrington, *David Eccles*, 4-17.

answer. The Eccles family lived there only from 1867-1869 before returning to Ogden, Utah, but the impact of the experience on young David would bring him back to the Northwest in his growing business enterprises.

During the next two decades David Eccles worked like a man determined to succeed. He had several serious setbacks but would never give up his dream of becoming a self-made entrepreneur. David became heavily involved in the lumber business, which eventually drew him back to the nearly unprotected resources in the Oregon Territory, where he established five sawmills by 1887.[41]

In 1889, David Eccles and a group of influential Latter-day Saint businessmen also started the Oregon Lumber Company. Eccles, Charles W. Nibley, Joseph A. West and James R. Smurthwaite, along with a few others, opened their lumber business in Sumpter Valley, Oregon with the offices in Baker, Oregon. Following the procedures of the Church in that day, a Sunday School was first organized. Due to the success of the business and a rapid growth in Latter-day Saints who found employment with the Oregon Lumber Company, a branch was organized at Baker in 1893 with John Stoddard as president.[42]

David Eccles' influence on the spread of the Latter-day Saints into the Northwest is matched by his impact on the growth of businesses throughout the west. The knowledge of his death in 1912 brought business to a standstill as flags flew at half mast in five western states and a five minute moment of silence was observed by thousands who owed their livelihood to the industry of this great man. At the time of his death he was considered the wealthiest citizen of Utah and a man well known throughout the

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[41] Arrington, *David Eccles*, 25-45, 211-17.
[42] Listed in the index of important dates in the NWSMMH, under the formation of Baker Branch.

Latter-day Saint Church and among businessmen everywhere. David Eccles was well known as a faithful Latter-day Saint among those not of his faith and was considered the forerunner of Latter-day Saint businessmen to secularize industry for the Saints.[43]

The Northwestern States Mission

The Baker Branch of the Church established the organized presence of the Latter-day Saints throughout the Northwest. In that same year another branch was formed in Anaconda, Montana, and two years later in 1895, another branch was formed in Lima, Montana. These branches were joined to the Oneida Stake far away in Idaho. All this attention led the president of the Oneida Stake, George Parkinson, to believe that missionary work could now be carried on successfully throughout the Northwest. He suggested this to the presiding authorities of the Church and soon afterwards President Edward Stevenson of the First Council of Seventy was appointed to visit the states of Montana, Oregon, and Washington to open up a mission for the Church.[44]

Elder Stevenson selected Matthias F. Cowley, second counselor in the Oneida Stake, to accompany him on his assignment into the Northwest. Set apart for their mission in Salt Lake City 4 June 1896, they then traveled through eastern Idaho and into Montana visiting the small branches making their way to Spokane, Washington. Here they began their labors in the Northwestern States 31 August 1896. Missionary work in

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[43] Arrington, Leonard J. *David Eccles Pioneer Western Industrialist,* Logan, Utah: Utah State University, (1975), 1-2.

[44] This preliminary groundwork from the priesthood set in motion the works that led to the formation of the Northwestern States Mission. This mission provided leadership throughout the Northwest until sufficient numbers of Latter-day Saints were organized into stakes in various areas. See introduction to NWSMMH.

the Northwest was primarily under the jurisdiction of President Parkinson of the Oneida Stake who would establish the Northwestern States Mission in 1897.

> The record states:
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> Wednesday, Aug. 26 Elders Edward Stevenson and Matthias F. Cowley, who had been traveling in the State of Montana since June 16th, 1896, visiting the Saints and hunting up old members, holding meetings and opening up a mission in that State with headquarters in Anaconda, left for Florence, Montana, for Post Falls, Kootenai County Idaho, where they were kindly received by a Mr. Samuel Young, a Methodist, who had formerly lived in Preston, Idaho, and who took them to his home.[45]

Along with meeting new people and sharing the gospel message with them, these visitors shared another purpose, to locate members who had settled in the area, some of whom had become lost or were unknown to the body of the Church. Often these people were glad to see the missionaries and quickly joined themselves to the body of the Saints. However, the separation had led others to move away from the Latter-day Saints, finding fellowship in different places. Elder Cowley recorded one such encounter.

> Tuesday, Sept. 1 Elders Stevenson and Cowley arrived in Palouse City, Washington, where they were met by a Mr. B.R. Turnbull, who had been a member of the Church but had drifted away to the Josephites. Mr. Turnbull took them to his home.[46]

Mr. Turnbull was Benjamin R. Turnbow, a man who had apparently at one time been a Latter-day Saint, and had since affiliated with the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He was a nephew to Samuel Turnbow, a deceased Latter-day Saint familiar to one of the elders. As was characteristic of many of the people that elders Stevenson and Cowley contacted, Mr. Turnbow was very kind to the elders and allowed

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[45] These journal entries begin with an entry from Matthias Cowley from Wednesday 26 August 1896, and are found in the NWSMMH under their journal entry dates.

[46] Elder Cowley in his journal entry apparently refers to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints as Josephites.

them to stay with him for some time. During their visit they discussed many things. Benjamin indicated that farming was so bad that he was ready for the millennial reign, and was sure the signs of the times were an indication that "Matthew 3rd will soon be fulfilled when the Lord will suddenly come to his temple."[47] The Deseret News reported that the elders questioned, "but where is the temple?" As they taught Benjamin and his family, Elder Cowley testified to the Turnbow family and the missionaries felt good would surely come of it.

Elders Cowley and Stevenson spent a lot of their time traveling in September of 1896, surveying their assignment of establishing a mission in the Northwestern states.

> Tuesday, Sept. 15. Elders Stevenson and Cowley took boat down the Snake River to Riparia and thence to Walla Walla, Washington.[48]

During this particular journey the elders would likely have traveled by rail near the borders of what is herein referred to as the Columbia Basin. All they would have seen at that time was a few dry-land farms that sparsely covered the Basin. No Latter-day Saints of record are known to have inhabited the region at that early date.

Just two days later on 17 September 1896, Elder Stevenson experienced great pain and became seriously ill. He recovered sufficiently to leave Walla Walla with Elder Cowley by train for a conference in Baker, Oregon. President Joseph F. Smith, Apostle Heber J. Grant and Elder B. F. Grant arrived on 20 September 1896 at the conference where Elder Stevenson bore testimony in the afternoon meeting. Later that evening he again became very ill. He was administered to and then operated upon two days later, after which he returned to Salt Lake City accompanied by Dr. Charles Wilcox.[49] Elder

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[47] *Deseret News* 53: 534
[48] NWSMMH, under the journal entry date.
[49] Elder Stevenson died within one year of his return to Utah. NWSMMH, 17 August 1897.

Cowley accompanied them as far as Pocatello, Idaho, where he spoke to the Mutual Improvement Association meeting in the evening. Three days later Elder Cowley left for his home in Preston, Idaho.[50] Elders Stevenson and Cowley reopened the work that had briefly taken place nearly half a century before with Elder David Stuart and company in 1857.

Recognizing the opportunity for missionary work, Church leaders called and set apart Elders J. Golightly and Denmark Jensen to labor specifically in the states of Oregon and Washington 8 January 1897. They followed in the footsteps of Elders Stevenson and Cowley and blazed new missionary trails as they followed the railroad into Oregon and Washington. They held meetings in all the towns and cities they could along the railroad until they made their report at the end of March in that same year and were released.[51]

On Sunday, 26 July 1897, at a quarterly conference of the Oneida Stake at Marsh Valley, Oneida County, Idaho, six elders were called to open up a mission in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Elders Lewis S. Pond and Thomas Preston headed for Boise City, Idaho; Elders Denmark Jensen and George Z. Lamb to Baker, Oregon; and Elders Gaston L. Braby and James R. Smurthwaite to Walla Walla, Washington. Since all the states were in the Northwest it seemed appropriate to those that were present to identify it by naming it "The Northwestern States Mission."[52]

The number of Latter-day Saints living in the Northwest continued to increase with immigrating members looking for better opportunities and missionaries finding new converts. By 1900 there were 953 recognized members of the Church in the Northwest.[53]

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[50] NWSMMH entries 17 to 25 September 1896.
[51] From a letter written by Denmark Jensen dated 24 October 1905. NWSMMH, 28 January 1897.
[52] As reported by the *Deseret News*, 56:580. See also NWSMMH, 26 July 1897.
[53] Recorded in a year end summary in the NWSMMH, 31 December 1900.

Chapter Two
The Agricultural Lure of Central Washington
1901-1938

In 1853 Captain George McClellan, who later fought in America's Civil War, was among the first to explore Central Washington. While surveying the upper Columbia Basin he concluded, "no white man can ever make anything of this country." Other Army officers with McClellan shared his sentiments and considered it a "wasteland environment" that should be reserved for the Indians.[1] These were naïve evaluations of the fertile farmland in Central Washington. McClellan and the others did not realize they were standing on deep, rich soil that only needed water. The farmland in the Columbia Basin Project today is filled with high yield crops. The land is now carved with canals that carry plentiful irrigation water changing the once barren landscape. Though irrigation water is plentiful now, ironically half a century ago the abundant water from the Snake and Columbia Rivers flowed nearby but was unattainable for farm use. The inaccessibility of water and the inconsistent rainfall resulted in the parched land changing hands among struggling settlers until midway through the twentieth century.

The talk in Washington D.C. at the turn of the century was about reclamation. At that time the population of the United States was approximately 76 million.[2] During the national elections of 1900 all of the major political party platforms invested some focus on the federal government reclaiming the arid West.[3] The lack of water resources was

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[1] George McClellan and the other army officers are quoted in Robert E. Ficken and Charles P. Lewarne's *Washington A Centennial History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 49-50. This is a well-written centennial history of Washington State and its unique history and potential.

[2] George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi. *America - A Narrative History*. New York, W. W. Norton and Company (1989), Appendix 39.

[3] President Theodore Roosevelt commented on 3 December 1901 that "The forests alone cannot . . .fully regulate and conserve the waters of the arid region. Great storage works are necessary to equalize the flow of streams and to save the floodwaters. Their construction has been conclusively shown to be an

the burden of the farmer, and in a still agriculturally based economy the ticket for the politician. The turn of the century appeared to hold the promise of a new era for water resource development and subsequent expansion of the American dream. People from various professions and walks of life began dedicating some of their best efforts to agricultural development through the advancement of dam construction and water resource management.[4]

In 1901 the United States government passed the Newlands Reclamation Act. This legislation established the Bureau of Reclamation and began the federal role in Western water development.[5] Water resource control was heralded as the ticket to economic development for the arid West. This act of Congress had a significant effect on paving the way for agricultural development, population increase, and economic growth in the West. Eastern Washington farmers remained at the mercy of the sparse yearly rainfall throughout most of the first half of the century. The difficult economic conditions that plagued farmers during the 1890's persisted into the 1900's. With the development of lands throughout what was so recently referred to as the frontier, people

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undertaking too vast for private effort. Nor can it be best accomplished by the individual States acting alone. Far-reaching interstate problems are involved; and the resources of single States would often be inadequate. It is properly a national function, at least in some of its features." *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Edition* XVII, 121-2 or in the *National Edition* XV, 105.

[4] The large number of dams built on the Columbia and Snake Rivers from 1935-1975 is proof of the efforts invested in the Northwest at reclamation through water resource development and the interest in energy source management. Darland, Alvin F. *A Brief Chronological History of the Construction of Grand Coulee Dam.* Power Supervisor, United States Bureau of Reclamation. From "Pioneers to Power" Part I, History of the Grand Coulee Dam Area (1958). Distributed on site through the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

[5] *http://www.usbr.gov/laws/recact02.html* This act authorized the Secretary of the Interior to develop irrigation and hydropower projects in 17 western states. It provides that " . . . the right to the use of water acquired under the provision of this act shall be appurtenant to the land irrigated and beneficial use shall be the basis, the measure, and the limit of the right." The Newlands Reclamation Act was named after Sen. Francis G. Newlands of Nevada. Through this act the proceeds of public land sales in sixteen different states became a large fund for irrigation projects. See also Tindall, *America A Narrative History, 478-485.*

clamored to gain federal attention for their area and bring water to farmlands they believed would flourish with controlled water.

Much Needed Water

In Washington's Yakima County, residents first petitioned the federal government in 1903 for help to utilize the massive Columbia River water source. A private group of investors had considered a plan for a Columbia River irrigation project in 1892 but it was financially unfeasible. In 1904, the Bureau of Reclamation determined that the Columbia River Project was too complex an undertaking for the struggling new agency at that time. In 1906, the Bureau took over a smaller scale project on the Yakima River and became involved in trying to utilize Washington's water resources.[6] With the availability of irrigation water, people began gathering in greater numbers and a town site was identified on the north bank of the Yakima River. The name Benton was first recommended for the new town, but the U. S. Post Office rejected it. The name Richland was accepted due to the desert land being changed to "rich land" from the new irrigation water. The town was created in 1905, and then incorporated in 1910.[7]

A few miles north of Richland two other small towns sprang up in 1907 and 1908. The first was named White Bluffs (for the white clay banks on the east shore of the Columbia River) and the other was called Hanford. Less than 40 years later this area of Washington would become world famous as the site for the Hanford Engineering Works, which contributed to the manufacture of nuclear weapons that helped end World War II.

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[6] W. D. Lyman. *The Columbia River: Its History, Its Myths, Its Scenery, Its Commerce.* New York: 1909, 359.

[7] For information on the naming of Richland see *Tempered by Faith - A Brief History of the Richland Washington Stake.* Compiled by JoAnne K. Wilson. Richland, Washington: July 1997, 4.

Farther down river from Richland the railroad town of Pasco and the ferry landing at Kennewick were steadily growing from their 1884 beginnings.[8]

Concurrent with the Yakima Project, several attempts at irrigation projects had failed in the basin between the Snake and Columbia Rivers, the land of the future site for the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project. Tacoma capitalists had initiated the Palouse Irrigation Project in the Basin in 1892 but later withdrew. It was taken up again in 1904 with a more elaborate plan. The new plan called for water to be diverted from the Palouse River above the falls into a storage reservoir in Washtucna Coulee. A canal would then carry the water south from near Connell to irrigate the land north of Pasco. The federal government did a full study of the scheme and announced in 1906 it would not be funded.[9] There were some initial angry cries of political corruption but soon after the idea was dead.[10] Consequently, the farmland continued to change hands among struggling settlers who remained at the mercy of the wind and the inconsistent rains.

Modest Beginnings for the Latter-day Saints

In the early 1900's, missionary work in eastern Washington was closely tied to the uncertain farming conditions. Missionaries came closer to the Basin area when they began laboring in Walla Walla, Washington in 1898. It was not until 1916 that the first missionaries were officially assigned to the Wenatchee district in Central Washington

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[8] D. W. Meinig. *The Great Columbia Plain - A Historical Geography 1805-1910.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, (1995), 268, 327-8.

[9] The project was determined to be extremely costly without sufficient paybacks. A local newspaper, *The Pasco Express*, vol. 3 Number 36, 29 March 1906, ran the article that announced the end of the Palouse Project. It was a severe disappointment for the locals who had been hopeful of bringing water to the parched Columbia Basin north of Pasco.

[10] Meinig, *The Great Columbia Plain*, 379-380.

under the direction of the Northwestern States Mission.[11] According to the president of the Northwestern States Mission, Melvin J. Ballard, the first branch in the area was formed in Yakima on Sunday, 20 May 1917. A few Latter-day Saints and missionaries gathered together in North Yakima, Washington, and Brother Charles Edwards, superintendent of the proposed Utah-Idaho Sugar Company factory in Yakima, was set apart as the branch president with Horace Wofenden as counselor.[12] A few months later, on 23 October 1917, the Northwestern States Mission secretary, Earl S. Hoyt, reported that during the summer of 1917 "a more thorough and complete canvas has been made of the country districts in the East Washington Conference than ever before in the history of the conference." The reported results indicated that "several Mormon families have been discovered who had moved out from Utah and the Church had lost track of them." Hoyt noted that in many cases the families were more than glad to meet the elders. He also commented that "the fact that many baptisms have been placed on record since last winter shows a constant and substantial growth."[13] The optimistic view of missionary work is easily recognized in his words. The fact that the Church was still relatively sparse in eastern Washington at that time is evident from the lack of multiple organized branches.

Growth in the Church was forthcoming. On 2 June 1918 a branch of the Church was organized 15 to 20 miles south of Yakima at Toppenish, Washington, with James Hood as branch president. The Utah-Idaho Sugar Company planned a processing plant in Toppenish and this brought more Latter-day Saints to the area for employment.[14] With

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[11] Wilson, *Tempered*, 5.
[12] NWSMMH, 20 May 1917.
[13] NWSMMH, 23 October 1917.
[14] From Mission President Melvin Ballard's journal as recorded in the NWSMMH, 2 June 1918.

this growth came opposition and misunderstandings similar to that which preceded the Latter-day Saint exodus from the Northwest at the time of the Utah War. One incident described in the history of the Northwestern States Mission illustrates how the young Latter-day Saints were not spared from the challenges of religious misunderstandings. Charlie J. Edwards, the son of the Yakima Branch president, spoke up to clarify some misrepresentations from a history text and a student presentation in the local public school. A young lady from the class was assigned a report on the history of Utah and the "Mormons." She described Salt Lake City as a nice city that was originally settled by "Mormons." She then proceeded to declare that Brigham Young was a very cruel man and "if anyone joined the church and then wanted to leave they would be killed." Charlie spoke up in defense of his faith declaring to the teacher and class that those things were not true and he knew it, because he was a "Mormon" who had just recently moved from Utah where he had lived all of his life. He also declared that he knew many of the Church leaders personally and they were not cruel men. The next day Charlie was given the opportunity to instruct the class on his perspective of "Mormonism."[15] Misrepresentations were only part of the challenges for the Latter-day Saints seeking to share their faith. The obstacles to membership growth came in different forms.

The great Spanish Flu epidemic that ravaged the entire world following World War I came to Washington. It resulted in a quarantine of the Yakima area in December 1918, canceling a Church conference. But, a local priesthood meeting was still held and President Ballard counseled missionaries to continue on with the work. Elders C. A. Thompson and Edwin C. Brinkerhoff reported good success even during their six weeks

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[15] NWSMMH, 8 June 1918. This story demonstrates the ever-present responsibility of teaching truth. The members as well as the missionaries often had to dispel false myths during the early days.

of quarantine. Shortly thereafter Elder Thompson was assigned with Elder Leroy Harline to labor in Pasco and Kennewick.[16] This is the earliest record found of missionaries being assigned in the area herein referred to as the Basin. Pasco and Kennewick at the time were very small towns located near the confluence of the Columbia and Snake Rivers.

At the beginning of 1919 a major change affected the Northwestern States Mission – the calling of Melvin J. Ballard to the Council of the Twelve Apostles. Bishop Heber C. Iverson was selected to replace him as the president of the Northwestern States Mission. The *Liahona* described him as "a popular Salt Laker."[17] He was highly accomplished and experienced in civic and business responsibilities as well as ecclesiastical assignments.[18] The Latter-day Saints in the Northwest missed President Ballard but were grateful to have him called to the Council of the Twelve, for they considered him one of their own. Like many other areas away from Utah at this time, the Northwest was recognized as potentially fertile ground not only for agriculture, but for missionary work as well.

Volatile Agricultural Conditions

Agriculture as well as industry thrived during the First World War and farmers purchased more land and new equipment. Following World War I farmers experienced a brief agricultural boom as exported commodities brought high prices, but it only lasted into 1920 when foreign farmers began to recover and the price of U.S. farm commodities

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[16] NWSMMH, 17 December 1918.

[17] NWSMMH, 7 January 1919. The *Liahona* was a magazine published for North American missions.

[18] NWSMMH, 15 April 1919. This was reported in the *Liahona* and the *Deseret News* that day.

collapsed. By 1921 the bottom fell out of the grain market and dryland wheat farmers in Central Washington, as well as throughout the United States, experienced the effects of the coming depression eight years before the actual stock market crash.[19] Severe drought conditions caused many crops to fail in consecutive years and farmers began to lose their land. The opportunity to raise a consistent crop became so poor in the Basin that many farmers could not even pay their taxes on the land and sold out for the taxes due. A good portion of the land, much of which had been at least partially improved, was suddenly worthless for crops and good only for light grazing of livestock.

A few sheep herders and cattlemen who owned land in the Basin began to buy up the farmers' land for as little as 50 cents an acre. Drought conditions and the collapse of commodities in 1920 forced many farmers to sell their land to pay taxes on debts due. Following World War I, European farmers resumed high production and in a period of just eighteen months, the price of wheat dropped from $2.50 a bushel to less than $1. This made it impossible for many people in the Basin to continue farming. Farmland sold to ranchers later led to the government's ability to acquire enough land in the coming years to justify the Columbia Basin Project. The overall economy continued to show signs of depression, but optimistic Americans believed there would never be another depression. This unrealistic optimism may have been a factor in the economic freefall that characterized the crash of 1929.[20] The Depression of 1929 affected people across the United States, and the Latter-day Saints in Washington were not exempt.

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[19] Ficken, *Washington*, 100.
[20] Tindall, *America - A Narrative History*, 692-8.

Missionary Work Continues

Despite these difficult conditions, the Church continued to progress in the area. In February of 1924 four Relief Societies were formed in Southeastern Washington. These women's organizations for the Latter-day Saints were established at the time Mary Hansen and Alva Lind came to the area as the first sister missionaries. They were acknowledged for their strength to the Sunday School as well as the Relief Society part of their missionary assignment.[21] In 1926 two additional sister missionaries, Winnifred Cranney and Myrtle Hadley, came to the area and helped establish the Primary auxiliary of the Church. Nearly sixty children were reported attending Primary at the end of 1926.[22] November of the same year was also notable due to the first radio broadcasts that were transmitted from KSL in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the Basin area. For the first time Latter-day Saints living in the Northwest were able to hear inspiring messages from the president of the Church, Heber J. Grant, and from Elder Melvin J. Ballard, whom the Northwestern Saints loved as their former mission president.[23]

On 5 January 1927, when William R. Sloan succeeded Brigham S. Young as mission president there were "82 Elders and Lady missionaries" laboring in the mission.[24] This mission covered not only Washington and Oregon, but also much of Idaho and some of Montana. Even though the area was large, for the membership of the Church it was a significant number of missionaries helping them to establish the Church throughout the Northwest. In May 1927 Albert N. Butler, mission secretary, gave a

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[21] NWSMMH, 16 March 1924. This information was part of a report published in the Liahona under the date of June 17, 1924. Alfred L. Riddle of Yakima is credited for writing it.

[22] NWSMMH, 26 February 1926. Published in the 13 July *Liahona,* written by Orville H. Stanfield.

[23] NWSMMH, 16 November 1926. Reported by the mission secretary, C. Verl Benzley, in the Liahona, vol. 24:261.

[24] NWSMMH, 1 January 1927.

positive report of the Latter-day Saint basketball team from Yakima that made many friends in the area through a local church basketball league. The Latter-day Saint team from Yakima won respect for their "clean sportsmanlike playing." They felt that this helped them break down some of the prejudice manifest against the Latter-day Saints, for which the members were grateful.[25] As the programs of the Church became more public, the example of the Latter-day Saints had a positive impact on the acceptance of the Church and the successes in missionary work. In July 1927, 193 Latter-day Saints from throughout the Northwestern States Mission began a tradition of traveling in a caravan of automobiles to the Cardston, Alberta Temple in Canada. Some had to drive as far as 1600 miles. They typically spent two days in the temple, performing as many as 1,500 ordinances. President William R. Sloan expressed in a mission report that he felt like their temple trip was one of the most potent factors in building the faith of the Saints in that mission. He also believed that the publicity of such a large caravan of people led many people outside the Church to show interest in the growth of the Latter-day Saints and the work that was being done in the temples.[26]

At the 100th anniversary of the organization of the Church in 1830, the Church continued to grow in the small branches that surrounded the future site of the Columbia Basin Project. The Latter-day Saints were involved in member missionary work in the area. During the summer of 1930 the small branch in Walla Walla, Washington, reported 13 convert baptisms without the aid of missionaries.[27] The year 1930 ended with another favorable year end report to the First Presidency in Salt Lake City from the Northwestern

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[25] NWSMMH, 31 May 1927.
[26] NWSMMH, 31 December 1927.
[27] NWSMMH, 25 September 1930.

States Mission.[28] President Sloan reported that 400 people participated in the fourth annual caravan to the Alberta Temple with ordinance work accomplished for 3,600 people. Eighteen families who had never been to the temple also received their temple ordinances as a result of that trip. President Sloan also gratefully reported that though the financial conditions were difficult due to the Depression, tithing was only slightly down from the year before and "in not one case have we found an honest tithe payer deprived of employment."[29] This statement was remarkable, since tens of thousands of people throughout the Northwest were unemployed during that year. Entries such as this in the records of the Northwestern States Mission manuscript history indicate that the Latter-day Saints at that time felt like obedience was an important factor in overcoming the challenges of the Depression. These comments demonstrate the concern they had for strengthening each other in their faith rather than just a preoccupation with financial gain.

The Dam

Perhaps nothing has had a greater impact on agricultural development in the Columbia Basin than the Grand Coulee Dam. According to W. Gale Matthews, a resident of Ephrata, Washington, damming the Columbia at the Grand Coulee site was first suggested at a meeting of friends in the office of attorney William W. Clapp in late spring of 1917. The subject was part of an interest in agricultural development in the region. After hearing an account of a natural blockage that had historically diverted the

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[28] NWSMMH, 31 December 1930. Numerical strength of the Church in the Northwestern States Mission boundaries at the end of 1930 was 4,705 members, 43 High Priests, 38 Seventies, 324 Elders, 161 Priests, 94 Teachers, 270 Deacons, 2944 lay members and 831 children. There were also 86 missionaries, 29 of whom were Sister missionaries.

[29] NWSMMH, 31 December 1930.

river, William Clapp suggested that if nature could block the river, so could man.[30] It was a monumental undertaking and an impossible venture to even consider for a few people from the small town of Ephrata, Washington, but the seeds of future development were planted that day. The idea remained only a local dream for the land developers of the Basin until Rufus Woods, a journalist from Wenatchee, arrived in Ephrata looking for a story. As the publisher of the *Wenatchee Daily World*, Woods brought attention and support to the idea of building a dam on that part of the Columbia in his 18 July 1918 edition.[31]

During the 1920's the United States Bureau of Reclamation conducted preliminary studies to determine the feasibility of damming the Columbia River below the Grand Coulee. It would need to be the largest cement structure in the world, which made it an impossible undertaking for private ventures. In 1931, the Army Corps of Engineers produced a final report that favored the construction of the dam but specified that it should be 200 feet lower than the maximum height allowed by the Canadian border restrictions. Since the headwaters of the Columbia River are in Canada, there were some Canadian concerns over damming up the river. The report determined that the dammed up water could not be backed up so far that it infringed on the flow of the river in Canada. The proposed lower dam design would provide some irrigation and flood control, along with a reduced amount of power generation. It would also be designed so it could be enlarged if power needs in the future necessitated it. The Corps' recommendation was supplemented by another report from the Bureau of Reclamation in January 1932,

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[30] Vaughn L. Downs. *The Mightiest of Them All - Memories of Grand Coulee Dam* (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, [1986], 19).

[31] Downs, *The Mightiest*, 19.

outlining the proposed irrigation project that would be possible with the dam.[32] The combination of irrigation and power made the project economically feasible.

Since the primary focus of the dam initially was agricultural development through new irrigation, the proposal in 1920 for the project fell under the direction of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The Grand Coulee project became part of a bureaucratic debate along with other water projects proposed throughout the Northwest. The Grand Coulee project was further complicated by considerable disagreement among the different governmental agencies and populace groups about the most suitable way to bring irrigation to the Columbia Basin area. Proponents of the development of irrigation for reclaiming the rich Columbia Basin lands were divided into two camps. One group supported the idea of gravity flow from the Clark Fork, the other was in favor of pumping the water from the dam into a large holding reservoir and then into the irrigation project canal system from there.[33] Multiple tests and surveys were conducted but it remained in debate mostly because of the political ramifications of a surplus in hydroelectric power. The Grand Coulee Dam had such a large potential of generating power, at the time people feared the possible surplus could destroy the balance of supply and demand. The debate continued until the Depression and President Roosevelt's "New Deal" projects put the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam on the economic forefront.

The Depression was devastating the United States when President Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1933. He acted with determination to pull a struggling nation

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[32] http://users.owt.com/chubbard/gcdam/html/history.html This Internet history documents that the Army Corps report was presented to the 73rd Congress of the United States as House Document #103.

[33] Darland, *A Brief Chronological History*. Distributed on site at the Grand Coulee Dam through the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. The "Pumpers" won the debate and history has proven their decision to be correct. Today water is pumped from the dam into Banks Lake, named after the project manager F.A. Banks.

from the economic slump caused by the Depression. Roosevelt approved the Grand Coulee Dam as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project that would aid in the overall economic growth and stabilization of the nation.[34] Like many of the WPA programs, the Grand Coulee Dam project was intended to provide thousands of jobs and increase the feeling of national progressiveness, helping to restore public faith in the economy. Though the plan was approved as a WPA project, which promised to bring hydroelectric power and its resulting revenues to the region, as well as additional new jobs, the primary intent of those who originally thought of the dam was to bring water to the arid regions of Central Washington for agricultural development.

After some deliberations President Roosevelt approved 63 million dollars to begin work on the Grand Coulee Dam 16 July 1933.[35] A dedication ceremony in July 1935 marked the beginning of construction on a low dam design. The initiators of the project had originally proposed damming the giant Columbia River to pump the water up into the Grand Coulee Lake, which would then bring irrigation to thousands of acres in Central Washington. The development of the irrigation system and the new blocks of land (the Columbia Basin Project) would be under the direction of the Department of the Interior. In 1934, after construction on the low dam had begun, Elwood Mead, the director of the Bureau of Reclamation, pushed for the project to return to its original high dam design. The high dam would provide sufficient water to irrigate the arid portion of Central

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[34] The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to replace the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. It was headed by Harry L. Hopkins and he was told to provide millions of jobs quickly. As a result, some were seen as make-work projects, but before it ended during WWII, it built many permanent structures such as dams, buildings, bridges, roads, airports, and schools. For a study of the WPA see Bloxom, Marguerite D. *Pickaxe and Pencil: Reference for the Study of the WPA*. Washington, D.C. : Library of Congress [Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O., distributor], 1982.

[35] Ficken, *Washington*, 120. See also Downs, *The Mightiest*, 19.

Washington, and significantly increase the value and usefulness of the land.[36] The government needed enough land to justify the project and the large landholders needed the water. The government's acquisition of lands would allow the sale of thousands of acres of irrigated farmland to help recover construction costs that could not be recouped through power sales alone. In 1935 the original plans for the high dam were approved and the project expenditures tripled to 181 million dollars.[37]

Most of the farmers that remained in the Basin area until 1934 grew wheat on dry-land farms. Much of the remainder of the land was used for grazing by ranchers, who were anxious to bring water to the land and increase its value. In this sense the irrigation water literally meant a "new deal" for the farmer and for the ranchers who had acquired the land at low cost from bankrupt farmers. Most of those with large land holdings supported the dam. In order for the government to fund the project, sufficient lands were needed to build waterways and canals along with the resale of developed farmland to justify expenditures. Some land was purchased very cheaply and other pieces of land were acquired as payment for back taxes. Many with large land holdings were willing to sell their land cheaply or give it to the government in order to secure the project and increase the land value.[38]

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[36] Ficken, *Washington,* 121.

[37] Ficken, *Washington,* 121.

[38] Jim Stoker Interview, 4 July 2002. After the acquisition of county maps pertaining to land ownership from 1919 compared to 1939, analysis indicates that most of the land in the Basin was considered improved and owned by 1919. Then there was a major withdrawal of people during the 1920's, which opened up the door for government improvement of the land through construction of the Grand Coulee Dam and development of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project.

Building the Church

The announcement of the Grand Coulee Dam construction project got the attention of Latter-day Saints, but the actual development of the irrigated land was still nearly twenty years away. In 1937, the Saints in the Northwest were excited about another building program. The Church building program was gaining momentum in the Northwestern States Mission. The president of the mission, Preston Nibley, reported to Church leadership at general conference on 2 April 1937 concerning these building projects. He indicated that new chapels were to be built in Medford, Eugene and Salem, Oregon; in Great Falls and Butte, Montana; in Kellogg, Idaho; and in Wenatchee and Yakima, Washington.[39]

As the Church congregations grew, the boundaries changed to accommodate the members with centrally located branches. In 1937 the Latter-day Saints in Walla Walla, Washington, were taken from the Northwestern States Mission and assigned to the Union Stake. This stake had been established in north central Oregon in 1901, as one of the first stakes established in the West outside of the Mormon core area.[40] The Yakima Branch continued under the direction of the Northwestern States Mission and the Latter-day Saints living in-between Yakima and Walla Walla were in some ways caught between these two Church jurisdictions. There were still relatively few members in this area, but they continued to meet together in small groups located in Kennewick and Pasco. They were not large enough in numbers to be organized as branches, and distance coupled with difficult conditions kept them from meeting regularly with the larger congregations.

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[39] NWSMMH, 2 April 1937.

[40] Richard H. Jackson. ed., *The Mormon Role in the Settlement of the West.* Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, (1978), 135-169.

At this time the ecclesiastical leadership of the Church in the Northwest rested primarily with the mission president of the Northwestern States Mission. Preston Nibley was familiar with the Northwest long before he was assigned as mission president. His father, Charles W. Nibley, had built a sawmill along with David Eccles in 1890, which brought Latter-day Saints to the Northwest for work and helped lead to the establishment of the Baker City Branch of the Church. Young Preston became a member of that branch.[41] President Nibley's membership in the very first branch established in the Northwest influenced his great love for the people and his efforts to build up the Church in the Northwest. The history of the growth of the Church throughout the Northwest, including the settlement of the Basin, is marked by many family relationships and personal connections, which later proved important in the immigration of Latter-day Saints into the area.

Central Washington and the Columbia Basin attracted settlers during the westward migration that brought people to regions throughout the Northwest. The lack of controlled water resources for irrigation purposes coupled with relentless winds made farming conditions in the Basin very difficult. Water meant development. Development meant progress and production. The Depression added to the difficulties and the government's intervention through irrigation projects helped tame the land. Latter-day Saints were among the settlers that sought to develop the land through business and agriculture. Progress was modest and patience imperative, but determined settlers continued to exert their efforts in developing the land in Central Washington.

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[41] NWSMMH, 21 January 1937. This is an interesting link to the past since so much of "Mormon" migration patterns are connected to familial relationships and past experiences.

Chapter Three
Early Settlement Interrupted
1939-1943

Sometimes good things do come out of bad situations. Settlers continued to migrate into Central Washington during the early twentieth century with the availability of affordable land and the improvement of the irrigation systems. The promise of the Grand Coulee Dam and the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project had many hopeful that regulated water would encourage thousands more to settle the land and further develop the Basin. Irrigation and business opportunities were primary factors in drawing people to the Columbia Basin to settle, but nothing led to such a rapid population increase near the Columbia River in Central Washington as did the government sponsored nuclear project at Hanford.[1] Hanford Engineering Works was an extension of the Manhattan Project, the United States' secret nuclear weapons development during WWII, and it suddenly uprooted the people living in the small communities of Richland, White Bluffs and Hanford along the banks of the Columbia River. Recently relocated Cache Valley, Utah, Latter-day Saints were again on the move, this time along with the rest of the settlers who were removed from their lands and left without homes. Their replacement by a large-scale weapons project turned the small peaceful farming communities into a bustling military city.

Before Hanford, the small branches and groups of Latter-day Saints meeting in Central Washington were primarily composed of struggling farmers who had come in search of new opportunities. The good farmland in Utah and Southeastern Idaho was

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[1] Martha Berry Parker. *Tales of Richland, White Bluffs & Hanford 1805-1943, Before the Atomic Reserve*, Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press (1986), 39-51. This historical look at the beginnings of

largely claimed, yet the spirit of pioneering was still strong for many Latter-day Saints who desired to continue the agricultural tradition in their families. There were small groups of Latter-day Saints meeting together in various locations in Central Washington, but the strength of the Church in that area at the time was centered in Yakima where a branch was established in 1932.[2] Latter-day Saints employed with the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company in Yakima provided some of the leadership and supplemented the numerical strength of the branch.

From Cache Valley to the Banks of the Columbia River

The state of Washington supported a Veteran Soldier-Settlement Project following World War I to help stimulate development. The project consisted of 20-acre plots of land that included a house, barn, poultry house and a well. During the 1920's the Hanford – White Bluffs project called for 58 plots and was later expanded to 90. This land, bordered by the Columbia River on the north and east, was heralded as productive fruit growing land as well as choice farmland.[3] Veterans came to the area to try their hands at farming in an economy that was favorable to agriculture following the war. Some were seeking to change occupations and lifestyles and the government-supported project was their chance to get started in agriculture.

Otis and Mary Skelton, a Methodist couple who lived in Doty, Washington, where Otis was a logger, took advantage of the soldier settlement assistance in search of

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the area that is now known throughout the world as the location where the first A-bomb was made is an excellent source for a pictorial perspective and includes many valuable facts.

[2] This date was found from the index of important dates at the beginning of the Northwestern States Mission Manuscript History (NSMMH).

[3] www.hanford.gov/doe/culres *Euro-American Resettlement of the Hanford Site (1805-1943)*, 14.

safer employment. The Skelton family was typical of those responding to the government program to help farmers with a new start. They purchased twenty acres at White Bluffs and in March of 1925 left the logging business in western Washington to settle in treeless Central Washington with their children, Donovan and Dorothy. Dorothy remembers that as the farmers moved in over the next few years, White Bluffs grew to about 500 people with 120 students at the schools. The Skeltons were one of the families that witnessed the rapid turnover in land ownership over the next twenty years. They experienced the growth as veterans moved into the area with the soldier-settlement project at the end of WWI and the decline with the financial failures associated with the Depression. The Skeltons remained and increased their ties to the area when Dorothy met and soon after married David Rawlins, a Latter-day Saint from Richmond, Utah, who moved to White Bluffs to farm with his family in 1941. The Skeltons did not leave but remained in the area long enough to see the influx of Latter-day Saint families that purchased some of the abandoned farms from the soldiers-settlement project and the subsequent removal of all the settlers by the government in 1943.[4]

The Depression was one factor that affected population turnover; however, the Depression had a different timetable on the Hanford-White Bluffs agricultural communities. They did not experience the "crash" of late 1929, which was characteristic of the industrialized parts of the nation. For the farmer at White Bluffs, farm commodity prices actually rose in 1929. The next year railroad competition lowered freight rates in the face of lowered commodity prices. These factors postponed the devastating effects of the Depression until 1932. The reprieve was short-term and by 1934 all Washington

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[4] *Kennewick - A Gathering of Saints*, 95-97. This is a history of the Latter-day Saints in Kennewick, Washington, compiled for the 1997 celebration of "Faith in Every Footstep."

farm goods, except potatoes and wool, were selling at prices below those of 1917.[5] The Federal Land Bank loaned considerable amounts of money to WWI veteran farmers, many of whom did not have a lot of experience farming and did not succeed. Therefore they could not repay their debts. Of the 15,000 acres available in the Priest Rapids Irrigation District, the District recovered 11,000 acres for "the foreclosure of irrigation assessments." Many veterans lost their land and moved from the government irrigated land in the Priest Rapids area. Following this large-scale abandonment of the land, the government was left with partially developed farmlands with outstanding loans on the farms. At this time C. Mark Miller, a real-estate agent, contracted with the District to sell the 11,000 acres along with the abandoned military constructed homes and outbuildings.[6]

In the winter of 1939 Miller traveled to Cache Valley, Utah, to sell farmland in Central Washington to Latter-day Saints looking for new land opportunities. In February of 1939 more than fifteen Latter-day Saint families, most from Cache Valley in Northern Utah, decided to relocate to White Bluffs and farm the government land that was now available due to foreclosures.[7] Many of these Latter-day Saints were experienced Utah farmers, familiar with farming the arid desert conditions, and they welcomed the opportunity to farm their own land. Miller promised irrigated land and this encouraged them to leave their struggles of not having enough irrigation water and Utah farms that

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[5] www.hanford.gov/doe/culres *Euro-American Resettlement of the Hanford Site (1805-1943)*, 15.

[6] Some of the information pertaining to the Latter-day Saints relocating to White Bluffs and taking over abandoned farms was obtained from a copy of an on-the-scene historical video recorded sometime near 1939. An unidentified man is quoted as saying he made a contract with the Priest Rapids Irrigation District to sell the 11,000 acres. That video is part of the Historical Footage of Hanford and Environs, provided by Harry Anderson, Part 1 of 3 in "Hanford's Unique History." In another historical video clip the real-estate agent, C. Mark Miller, is identified. That video is entitled "Something to Win the War; A Hanford Diary," 1988, and is cataloged as "Vid 8" at the "Columbia River Expedition of History, Science and Technology," in Richland, Washington. Miller is said to have came to Cache Valley, Utah, looking for experienced farmers among the Latter-day Saints who desired to settle in White Bluffs.

[7] Wilson, *Tempered,* 5-8.

had been subdivided too many times. Their desire was to grow and gain economic advantage in agriculture by owning larger pieces of land. White Bluffs was a developing area with abundant land nearby to support potential growth. The abandoned soldier-settlement lands at White Bluffs and Hanford were sold on average at twenty-five dollars an acre, which sometimes included old abandoned houses and dilapidated outbuildings or even planted orchards.[8] The prices were reasonable for partially developed land with some buildings, but the appeal came from the desire to relocate to an area with potential to expand.

Among the families that relocated from Cache Valley, Utah, to the White Bluffs area during the winter of 1939 were Roland and Lucy (Hendricks) Holden. Lucy described the events that led up to their decision to move to Central Washington. "That winter people all got to talking about a place called Hanford, Washington where you could rent a farm from the government. A lot of people were talking about going . . . We loaded everything we owned, took what little money we had, and started to Washington."[9] This influx of Latter-day Saint families quickly enabled the Saints at White Bluffs to establish a Sunday School, then a predecessor of an organized branch of the Church. The families all had a variety of different reasons for choosing to move to Washington, but most shared the need for land and the desire for a better life.

Stephen Rawlins described his family's move to White Bluffs in late May of 1939. "Our family . . . packed up everything we owned onto Elmer Hendricks's flatbed truck and headed north . . .We were among about twenty families from Lewiston, Cache

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[8] Video, Part 1 of 3 in "Hanford's Unique History."

[9] "Sketches from the Life of Lucy Hendricks Holden." This is an undated and unpublished personal history, without page numbers. The author has a photocopy of this document in his possession.

County, Utah and vicinity to make this move . . .Elmer Hendricks, who had moved to White Bluffs earlier, came back with his truck to get us."[10] A significant part of their motivation for the move came from the suffering caused by the Depression. His father, Aerial Rawlins, could not find work except for one job, which paid only 30 dollars a month and he was expected to be on duty six days a week, twenty-four hours a day. Aerial Rawlins and his family were looking for something better.[11] Many of the Latter-day Saints from that first group that came to White Bluffs were related to one another.

Stephen remembers riding in the back of the truck with his brothers, Bruce and Claude, all the way from Cache Valley to White Bluffs. They rode with the furniture, Bruce's goat and a calf or two, and everything else they had. To pass the time Stephen found their sewing machine under the canvas cover and worked the pedal making the large wheel go around. He imagined that he was making the truck go as they traveled over 600 miles to their new home from Lewiston, Utah.[12] Stephen's mother, Dorothy Rawlins, gave a woman's perspective of the family's situation at the time of their move:

> Anyway, things were not improving, and one year a salesman came from up here in Washington, and came to our place [Lewiston, Utah]. I guess he thought he could recruit some Mormons to come up here to Washington, called the 'river area'. That's when he talked some of them to coming up here to sort of homestead, I guess. There were some houses that the government had given the soldiers from World War I. They were little houses and they were comfortable places and they had a certain acreage which these soldiers were given. But anyway the soldiers lived there and produced fruit because it was a beautiful fruit raising country. But they didn't stay with it, and so those houses were left empty, and the orchards neglected. I think this Mr. Adams, who came from Washington, said, 'Well, I bet if we get a group of Mormons up here, they'll make it go.' He came down there and talked a lot of them into coming up here to see. In fact, there were seventeen families that moved from Cache Valley at that time. They

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[10] *Memories of White Bluffs: Site of the First Organized LDS Branch on the River.* This chapter is found in *Kennewick-A Gathering of Saints,* 112 and is dedicated to the memories of White Bluffs, which is written by Stephen Rawlins, who was a young boy when his family migrated to White Bluffs.
[11] *Kennewick,* 112.
[12] *Kennewick,* 113.

> were tempted to do something with that White Bluffs area. Of course, Aerial [her husband] was excited about it, too. He came with his friends. I didn't want to come.[13]

Dorothy shared feelings that were common to many of the women who left families and the Church center in Utah to try to settle the land near the Columbia River. Their efforts to adapt to the difficult conditions and succeed are a tribute to the families who settled the area.

Progress in the Northwest

Preston Nibley, president of the Northwestern States Mission, arrived in Salt Lake City on March 30 for April General Conference in 1939. At the conference he reported that the people in the Northwest generally were very friendly toward the Latter-day Saints and that the missionaries had little difficulty teaching the non-member residents. He indicated that the 12,000 Saints living in the mission boundaries were of great assistance in encouraging their friends to come to Church meetings. President Nibley described a constant influx of Latter-day Saints into the Northwest at the rate of approximately 1,500 per year from Idaho, Utah, and Arizona. This migration of Latter-day Saints accounted for a major part of the growth experienced in Central Washington. At that April conference President Nibley also reported concerning the Grand Coulee Dam. He explained in Salt Lake that the completion of the Dam would place a million acres of fertile land in the Columbia Basin of Central Washington under cultivation. This he saw as furnishing "new opportunities for thousands of Mormon people."[14]

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[13] This passage comes from Dorothy Rawlins personal history and can be found in *Kennewick*, 112-113.

[14] NWSMMH, 30 March 1939. It is listed as coming from the *Deseret News* on that same date.

In September of 1940 Preston Nibley was released as president of the Northwestern States Mission and Nicholas G. Smith replaced him.[15] Just over a year later the growing strength of the Church in the Northwest was evident when Desla S. Bennion, a prominent businessman from Spokane, became the president of the Northwestern States Mission. This transfer of authority to someone local was a first for the Northwest and a reflection of the development in the membership of the Church throughout the area. Temple attendance for the Latter-day Saints in Washington was limited to the occasions when they made the trip to visit Utah or an occasional journey to the Alberta Temple. It was appreciated and loved by the Saints from Washington and was well known by them for the beautiful inlaid wood in its interior and its unique exterior design. The long distance to the temple was a reminder of how far they really were from the body of the Church.

The Saints in Central Washington, like some of their 1880 ancestors of Southeastern Idaho, had many hard times and their share of discouragement as they tried to establish a foothold for the Church away from the strength of the Wasatch Front. In 1884 Elders Wilford Woodruff and Heber J. Grant had visited those earlier Saints in Idaho and had given them some encouragement in what would prove to be a prophecy. They spoke of a day in the future when temples would be built in that valley in Idaho where they were trying to establish the Church.[16] The prophecy was fulfilled in March of 1937, when President Heber J. Grant announced the building of the Idaho Falls Temple. The Saints in Central Washington were assigned to the new Idaho Falls temple district.

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[15] The NWSMMH reports that on 27 July 1940 President Nibley received a telegram informing him of his release in the coming September and appointing Nicholas G. Smith to replace him.

[16] Wilford Woodruff quote from temple website on: http://www.ldschurchtemples.com.

Ground was broken and construction began on 19 December 1939. The Idaho Falls Temple was closer for the Saints in the Basin than the temples in either Alberta or Logan, but it was still a considerable journey on the highway system of that time. The new temple signified the growth and expansion of the Church, and the further spread of temples in places outside of Utah.

No More Peace

As the United States was drawn into the Second World War, missionary work and the progress of the Church around the world slowed. The Northwest was no exception. Mission calls were limited everywhere and hopes and plans of growth were sidetracked as nearly all focus and concerns were turned toward the war effort. Lucy Hendricks Holden, one of the young Latter-day Saint mothers who moved in 1939 from northern Utah, was in the middle of raising her family and enjoying life when everything changed.

> We were making plans to plant more garden and flowers, remodel our house, and, oh how happy the future looked. Roland had a good job to supplement our fruit and all was looking very good when one day in December after church a lot of us were having dinner together when we heard that Pearl Harbor had been bombed and war had been declared! About seven of us women were in the kitchen laughing and having a real good time when our bubble broke real fast. All of us had husbands that were eligible for the draft.[17]

Lucy Holden witnessed government officials surveying the area in search of the best location for an extension of the Manhattan Project. The war put everyone on edge.

> We lived in anxiety for the rest of the winter. The latter part of January some fancy cars with well-dressed men started driving through our area. They would slow down and look at every home, drive out by the river and all sorts of strange things.[18]

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[17] "Sketches from the Life of Lucy Hendricks Holden." It is a first hand witness of the inspectors searching the White Bluffs area.

[18] Ibid.

Roland and Lucy Holden and all the other families lived on part of the land being investigated by the government for a possible weapons manufacturing plant. Their simple agricultural life in the White Bluffs area had lasted less than four years.

Government Seizes Land

While searching for the ideal location for the new extension of the Manhattan Project, the military officially described the Columbia River Basin area as mostly "low-grade sage brush grazing land," but it was also home to some 50,000 acres of irrigated land.[19] Some of that acreage was irrigated fruit orchards that take years to develop. The site selectors were instructed to find a remote place with access to plenty of water and electric power. After investigating multiple sites in Montana, Washington, Oregon, California, and Nevada, they flew to the Hanford Site. Franklin T. Matthias, one of the government investigators assigned to identify a location to build a nuclear reactor noted, "I thought the Hanford Site was perfect the first time I saw it."[20] The Hanford Site along the Columbia River provided the needed water and the Grand Coulee Dam was recently completed up the river with plenty of electricity - it was the perfect location. Under the War Powers Act, the federal government had power to acquire or seize the land for the protection of the nation. There was great irony in the confiscation of this land by the government. Less than a hundred years earlier, through a series of treaties, the United States government had forced the nomadic Wanapum Indians or river people, from this very land along the Columbia, in order to allow the settlers to develop the land. One of their great spiritual leaders, Smowhalla, refused to be removed to a reservation. He

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[19] Sanger, *Hanford*, 5.
[20] Sanger, *Hanford*, 6. Taken from Franklin T. Matthias' oral history.

accurately foretold of the "white men that would come to claim the land and river and to force their ways upon his people."[21] The Latter-day Saints, like the Native Americans, became familiar with being displaced from their lands, either because someone else wanted it, or they just didn't want them on it.

On 6 March 1943, the United States government handed out official papers entitled "Declaration of Taking." The quiet little farming communities along the Columbia River received a devastating blow that would drastically change their lives forever.[22] With little or no notice the farmers and small town folks from White Bluffs, Hanford, and Richland were informed that their land had been claimed for the purpose of developing a military facility needed for the war effort. Five days later on 11 March 1943 the weekly *Kennewick Courier-Reporter* carried the headlines "Richland, White Bluffs and Hanford Area to Be Taken Over By Huge War Industry" and "Mass Meeting Called At Richland To Explain The War Projects To Residents."[23] Almost everyone from the area, numbering about one thousand people, attended this mass meeting in Richland to discover the fate of their lands and the reality of the governmental confiscation of their properties. Historical records indicate that it was the largest public gathering ever at that location up to that time.[24] The residents were partially apprised of the situation, but due to the sensitivity of the project and the need for secrecy, many did not understand, and some reportedly became understandably angry.[25]

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[21] Smowhalla is described in some detail in Ferkin, *Washington*, 55,57. The story of his prophecy of the future takeover of the land from the white settlers is taken from Sanger, *Hanford*, 6.

[22] Parker, *Tales*, 375.

[23] 11 March 1943 in the *Kennewick Courier-Reporter* as written in Wilson, *Tempered*, 12.

[24] Wilson, *Tempered*, 12 and Parker, *Tales*, 375.

[25] The landowner's feelings of anger and resentment towards the government stemmed mostly from their lack of information and the government's need to keep things secret to maintain the designed purpose of the project. The end of the war replaced many of the feelings of resentment with relief that the war was finally over. In the interview with Anna Hendricks she indicated that some were angry.

Some harvested their crops before they relocated, while others were expected to leave immediately due to the importance of the military operation. In the midst of the pain of losing their homes, the parents of soldiers that had lands in the confiscated areas were encouraged not to tell their sons serving in the military that they would have no homes to return to. They suggested that this could be very detrimental to the "morale of the troops."[26] In reality the project was so confidential that the government could not risk any talk of a land seizure.

Word reached Mission President Bennion concerning the government's action at White Bluffs and there was an almost immediate response from the Northwestern States Mission. On 16 March 1943, he traveled to White Bluffs to address the problem of the Saints having to leave their homes in that area. They met together to discuss the issue of finding new homes. As part of the discussion it was decided that the White Bluffs Branch would have to be closed. The year end mission report noted that 20 Latter-day Saint families were affected by the government seizure of land.[27] It was a disappointing blow to the close-knit branch, but it was obvious that the government was serious and there was no consideration of fighting the decision.

Hanford Engineering Works

On 22 March 1943 construction began and the Manhattan Project was extended into the state of Washington. The name Hanford Engineering Works (HEW) was chosen to avoid connecting its name to weapons manufacturing and especially with the highly

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[26] Parker, *Tales*, 376.

[27] NWSMMH 16 March 1943. The mission history often speaks of the families that were affected as a group, but no complete list of the families can be found. A substantial number of the Latter-day Saints from the original settlers have been identified in the text. The author has limited information on the others.

classified attempt to develop a nuclear weapon. The top-secret nature of the project only added to the anger and animosity of those who had lost their homes. The farmers did not understand why their land had to be confiscated with little notice or explanation. In total, the Military Corps of Engineers had claimed about 400,000 acres or 625 square miles of land on both sides of the Columbia River encompassing the small towns of White Bluffs, Richland and Hanford.[28]

While the schools were allowed to finish the term, most people in the region were given between two weeks and three months to move. The government offered what was referred to as "fair market value" for the land, though most farmers felt like the assessors were Easterners who did not recognize the value of their farmland. Some fought in court to receive what they considered to be a fair price for their lands. Those who did take their cases to jury court received up to twice as much as the original assessed offer made by the government, but it took up to five years to receive payment. Those that took the initial offer had their money within about ninety days.[29]

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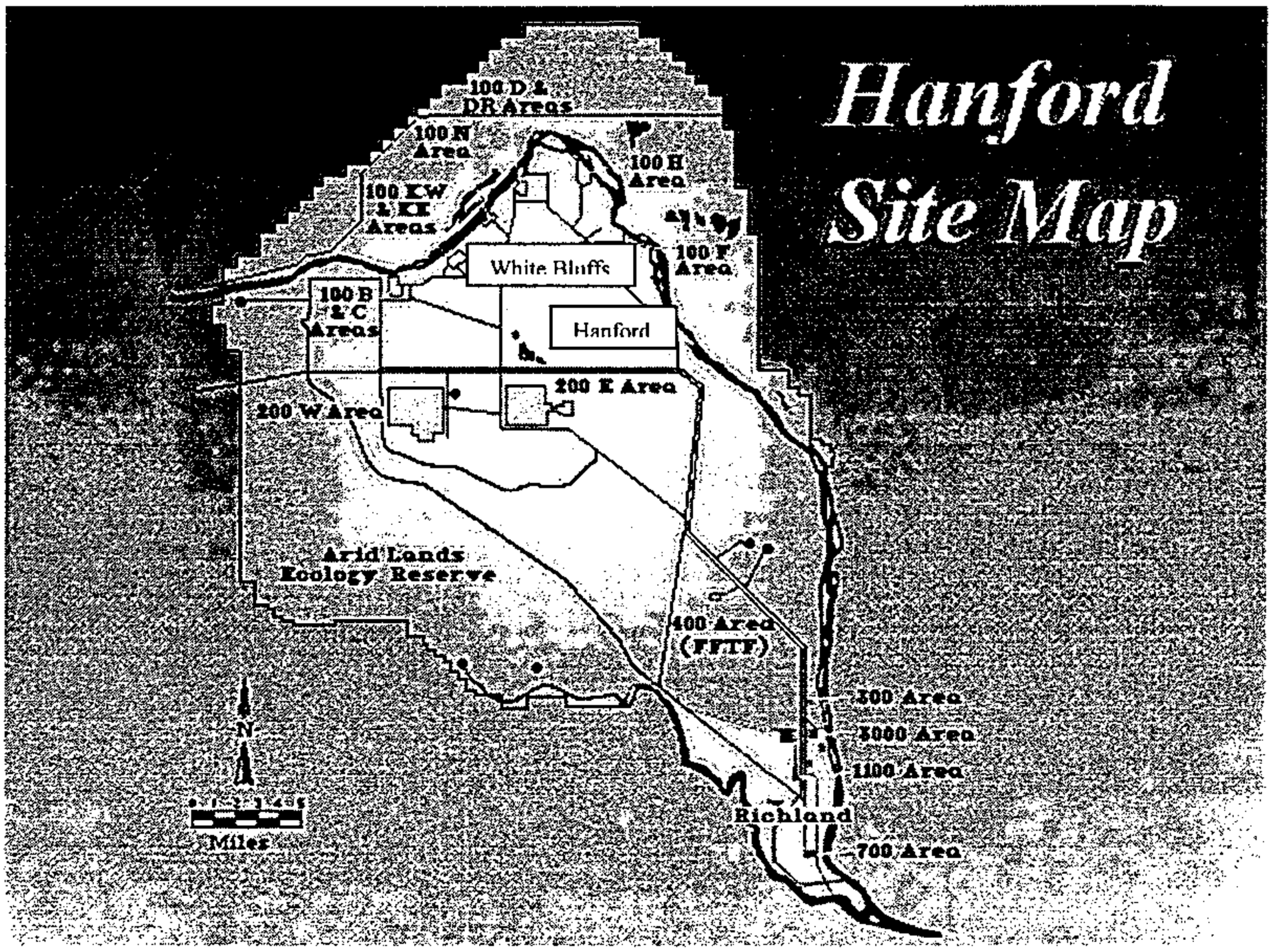
[28] Sanger, *Hanford*, 5. This is a reliable history of the making of an atomic weapon and the effects of the project on the lives of those involved first hand with the project and for those whose lives were severely interrupted due to the building of the most powerful weapon ever made to destroy life.

[29] Parker, *Tales*, 376. This is one of the better secular histories written on the subject of the confiscation of Hanford lands. Well researched, it contains many first-hand accounts of what happened to those that were directly influenced by the government's decision to build the extension of the Manhattan project on the land that so many called their home and were actively farming. Other sources that mentioned these same circumstances were Lucy Holden's Personal History and also Wilson, *Tempered*, 12.



At this time money and cash reserves were especially scarce. People were encouraged to be patriotic and contribute all their "extra" towards the war effort and the defeat of the enemies of the United States in a spirit of rationing and contribution. Giving up everything, including their farmland and homes, seemed unreasonable to some who remained bitter as they left the land. Most recognized there was nothing they could do and simply packed up their belongings and looked for somewhere else to live. David and Dorothy (Skelton) Rawlins, who began their new family in White Bluffs where Dorothy had been raised on a soldier's settlement farm, soon found themselves caught up in the worldwide conflict. In 1943, while Dorothy was expecting their first child, David was drafted into the Army. While David was in the Army the Rawlins and Skelton families were forced to leave White Bluffs. The Skelton family moved to Grandview,

Washington, on Christmas day in 1943 and David's parents moved to Toppenish. When Otis Skelton tried to return to White Bluffs and harvest his crops that year, the FBI came to the orchard to arrest him. The government had it picked for its own use.[30]

Businesses were closed, schools shut, and some old and some newly planted orchards and vineyards were left unattended to die. The government even moved the 177 caskets in the White Bluffs Cemetery to Prosser, Washington, at governmental expense, to sites purchased by the families.[31] The White Bluffs and Hanford Church groups that had struggled to survive during the rationed war times were now disbanded, as Church members pulled out from the confiscated land. Looking back on their eviction from White Bluffs, Dorothy Rawlins wrote the following of her experience.

> So that was a tragic time for all of us; that was really sad, because everybody just had to get out and go. We kept in touch with many of them for a long time. Many of them went to Sunnyside, Yakima and that area; and some to Pasco, and some went back to Cache Valley. John Hyer did. Aerial's [her husband] brother Horace and his wife went back too. Well, I thought about it and I said you know, when we came out here and we were in Walla Walla I said, 'If we ever have to leave White Bluffs, will you promise me we can come back to Walla Walla. Aerial said, 'Sure!' because he had no intention of ever leaving White Bluffs. He was going to live there for the rest of his life. This is what happened, and so I reminded him of his promise. And he said, 'Well, I guess we'd be as well there as anywhere.' [32]

The feeling of being scattered from friends and family was poignant and added heavily to the loss of lands, homes, and orchards.

For some Latter-day Saints the associated feelings were reminiscent of their forbearers' forced removal from Kirtland, Missouri, and Nauvoo. They turned their

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[30] *Kennewick*, 95-96.

[31] Parker, *Tales*, 376.

[32] *Kennewick*, 118. This quote from Dorothy Rawlins is also from the chapter dedicated to the memories of White Bluffs, included by her son Stephen Rawlins in the history. He was a young boy when his family migrated to White Bluffs.

backs on their homes and their lands and walked away. At that time most of them could not have understood the importance the Hanford project would have in bringing about an earlier end to the war. Most of the Latter-day Saints moved to nearby farming communities looking for new farms or land to purchase. Undoubtedly discouraged by the loss of their land, some left Washington to return to Utah or Idaho, while others filtered into the surrounding towns and participated in the rapid change of small town farming to boomtown military population.

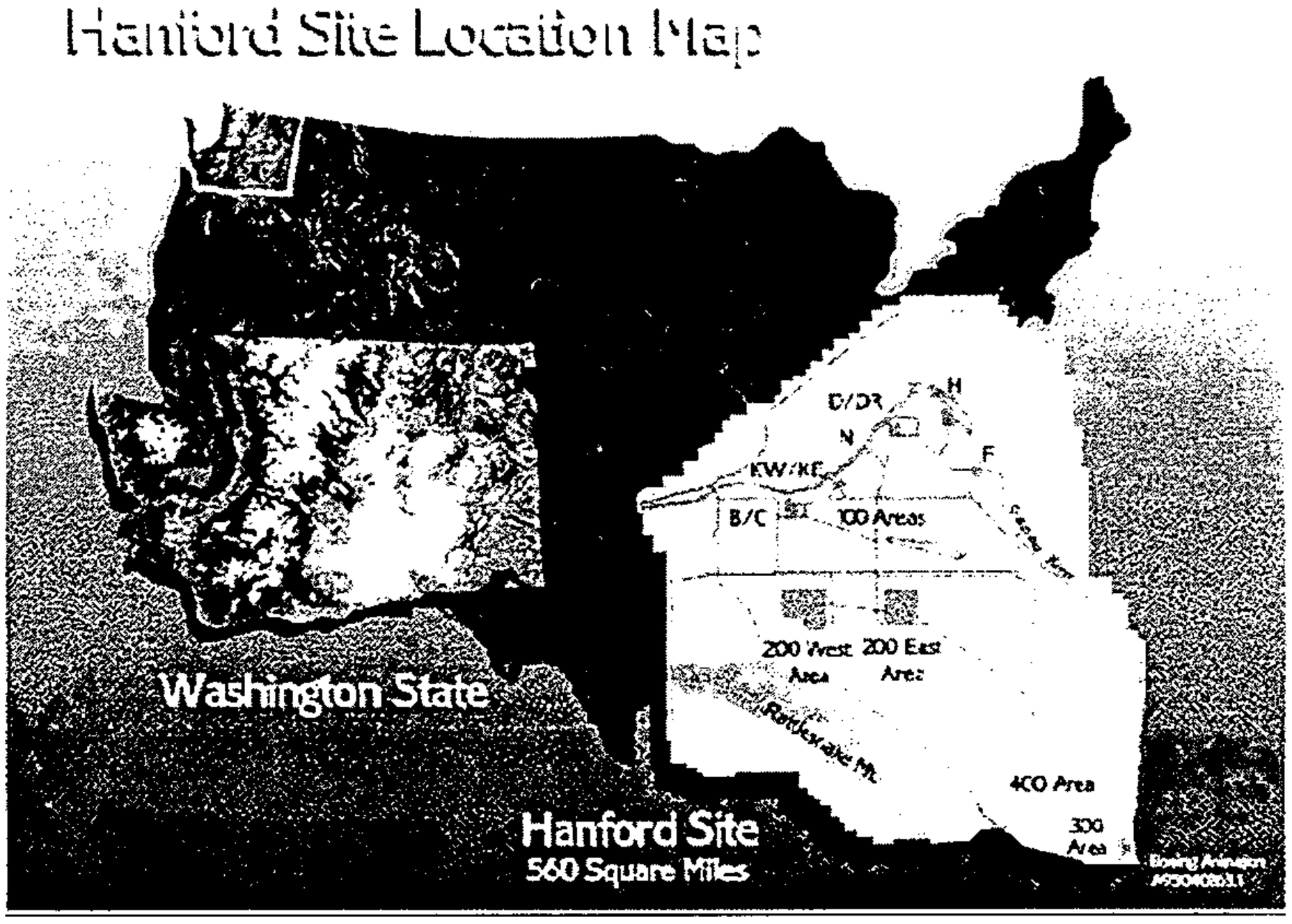
To reiterate, many of the World War I veterans assisted by the soldier-settlement project in Washington suffered great losses and were unable to repay federal loans. They were forced to leave their lands. Some of these abandoned farms were purchased and further developed by Latter-day Saints seeking new opportunities away from the dwindling farmlands of the Utah-based Church. These Latter-day Saint families added significant numbers to the small communities of White Bluffs and Hanford, along the banks of the Columbia River. Their tight knit branch of the Church was a safe haven for the Utah transplants. World War II and Hanford Engineering Works stopped the population growth in these communities with the governmental seizure of land. The Latter-day Saints who had just come to settle the land, along with those who had been there, were soon removed from the land and the farms and orchards were abandoned with the fruits of their labors still hanging on the trees.

Chapter Four
World War II Population Explosion
1943-1945

Science, military, and construction activity converged in an area that was previously a quiet sweeping bend in the Columbia River. Thousands of people gathered from all over the United States to help organize and build the Hanford Engineering Works. It was an instant city and more of everything was needed. Lands surrounding the newly acquired governmental property soared in real-estate value and the government intervened to control rent prices. Due to the secrecy of Hanford Engineering Works, many of those who had long before called the area their home could not understand the sudden interest in their land. Most of those who had previously settled the land had come seeking new opportunities for farming and a place away from other increasing population centers in the West. With an overnight population explosion, many of the settlers who lived in the White Bluffs and Hanford areas moved to nearby farming communities in search of new farms or other employment. Others chose to remain closer to Hanford and found work on diverse parts of the military project or in various trades in the growing community.

Recruitment efforts brought people to Hanford to fulfill specific needs on the project, while others came because of the advertisement of quality employment. Nearly every occupation was necessary due to the enormity of the population increase. A construction camp was established for the workers building the project as well as the sorely needed housing. As construction progressed the scientists, engineers, and technicians arrived who were to develop the project. It was a complete change in the

landscape. A major construction site with a militarized city compound replaced the rural communities with their scattered farms and orchards.



Hanford's Purpose

In 1939 Albert Einstein alerted President Franklin D. Roosevelt of Germany's research on nuclear fission, and soon after President Roosevelt assigned $2 billion for the development of the top-secret Manhattan Project.[1] Hanford Engineering Works was established for one purpose -- to build a nuclear reactor site that could produce plutonium for weapons.

[1] Tindall, *America*, 785.

The process of developing a nuclear bomb began with academic discoveries in nuclear energy before it was ever a military project. On 25 February 1941, nearly ten months before Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor, Glenn Seaborg, a researcher at the University of California Berkeley, discovered that plutonium-239 was more likely to fission than uranium-235. By the end of 1941 when the United States entered World War II, academic and military efforts in the United States were already underway to develop nuclear weapons before Germany did.[2] The arms race was on!

Key Events at Hanford

Date	
August 1942	The United States Corps of Engineers is assigned to be in charge of the Manhattan Project.
12 Nov 1942	The United States Government decides to build plutonium production reactors and separation facilities at the Hanford site.
2 Dec 1942	Enrico Fermi achieves the first nuclear reaction in the Chicago Pile-1 Reactor at the University of Chicago's Staff Field.
21 Dec 1942	Du Pont receives the contract to construct and manage the world's first plutonium production facility.
March 1943	Construction of Hanford Engineering Works (presently named Hanford Site) begins.
April 1945	Construction completed.[3]

Building an Instant City

Word of employment opportunities in Central Washington at a place called Hanford quickly spread. People came by the thousands. A huge construction site, referred to as Camp Hanford, was quickly built near the former town to accommodate

[2] http://www.hanford.gov/docs/rl-97-1047/Chp1, 7.
[3] http://www.hanford.gov/docs.

more than 50,000 people. It consisted of 195 temporary barracks, 912 huts and two trailer communities with 4,300 units. It has been estimated that 137,000 people worked at Hanford from March 1943 to February 1945, with peak construction payroll reaching 45,096 in June 1944.[4] It was a hastily built temporary city, but it did have the usual amenities such as churches, schools, stores, banks and even a swimming pool.

At the beginning of World War II Anna Burke (Hendricks) was living in Lovell, Wyoming. Soon afterwards she moved to Casper, Wyoming, to work for the state in the employment security office. About eighteen months later she was visiting family and friends in Lovell, Wyoming. Military recruiters visited Lovell looking for people who needed work or who wanted an adventure in helping with the war effort. Patriotic pride was strong and many young people wanted to contribute to the war effort. The recruiters offered a one-way train ticket to Pasco, Washington, and a steady job in war related industries. Anna did not feel like she had the disposition to work in the shipyards or other jobs that were starting to use women, but nearly everyone she knew wanted to help win the war. A friend of Anna's heard the recruiters say that Du Pont was building a big plant at Hanford, Washington, and they made gunpowder and would need lots of office help. She convinced Anna to go with her, so they boarded a train and left to find work at Hanford.[5]

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[4] As sited by Sanger, *Hanford*, 48-49.

[5] Anna Burke Hendricks Interview, Connell, Washington, 12 June 2001, audio recording in author's possession. After coming to Hanford, Anna married Dewain Hendricks, who came with the original 15 Latter-day Saint families to settle White Bluffs. Dewain is also the brother of Lucy Hendricks Holden. Anna spoke of the social genre of the times and talked about the women who had to work in the shipping yards riveting the war ships. She also commented at length on her belief that World War II was really the beginning of what she saw as the women's liberation movement. She commented that from her perspective, before that time women either worked as teachers, in offices or sometimes as clerks in stores. Anna commented that during World War II, women were asked to do every job, because most of the men were gone.

Anna Hendricks began working in the payroll offices and clearly remembers the fast-paced life style of Hanford and the high turnover rate of employees. She recalled that the local dust storms were severe with all of the construction and the high winds. These dust storms were called "termination winds" because after one blew through, many people would pack up their belongings, ask for their checks, and leave. This was one reason that the payroll offices remained open twenty-four hours a day. Commenting on this Anna said, "There wasn't a time we were not writing out checks. People were coming and going all of the time!"[6] The high turnover of employees was a burden.

Those in charge of the project tried desperately to make the accommodations as nice as possible. They did what they could to encourage the workers to stay. While meat and fruit were being rationed in the rest of the nation, food was plentiful at Hanford. Menus were planned two months in advance and about 2,700 people ate at each of the eight mess halls during mealtime. During the construction period alone nearly 25,000,000 meals were served at Camp Hanford! A large recreation hall was built in just ten days. It could hold up to 4,000 dancers and the best dance bands in the country came to play there. Five thousand single women workers lived in the barracks but the men still outnumbered the women five to one.[7] With the numerical imbalance opposite of most places in America at that time, the competition for a female dancing partner must have been fierce.

Industry and business in the United States were heavily impacted by the outbreak of World War II. Many companies altered production to include wartime materials to ensure profit, others simply closed. The dynamics of Hanford required rapid construction

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[6] Anna Hendricks, 12 June 2001.
[7] Wilson, *Tempered*, 15.

of the necessities. In addition to the basic needs, businesses capitalized on the situation and provided things such as clothing stores. Mabel Wahlquist, a clothes buyer for the C.C. Anderson department chain, fondly remembers that one of the most interesting stores they ever opened was in Richland, Washington. It was built completely from scratch in a very short time for the benefit of the people who worked on or at the nuclear plant at Hanford. She recalls, "This store was peculiar in every sense of the word. It had complete government priorities." They could buy anything for the Richland store at any quantities they wanted. "If we went to a manufacturer to buy anything for that store, it had a government priority and we would get it." Mabel also related that it was fun to be in a store where "everything was brand, spanking new."[8] All of the privileges did come at a cost. It was a gated city. People were not allowed to come and go as they pleased because security was extremely tight. There were a lot of unknowns and unnecessary questioning was frowned upon. People were expected to do their jobs and do them well, and not inquire about the project with any specifics. Du Pont did not have an exact blueprint for what they were doing, because nothing like it had ever been done before. They knew what they needed to do, just not exactly how to do it.[9] The project remained top secret, which occasionally deterred construction.

The Secrecy

The history of the Hanford Site and its role in the Manhattan project were unknown to the public for nearly fifty years (1943-1990). The Hanford facilities were labeled "classified" for national security reasons and information was purposefully

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[8] *Mabel Wahlquist: Memoirs.* Typed by Marcia Terry Andrews Wahlquist, (1992), 232.
[9] http://www.hanford.gov/docs/rl-97-1047/Chp1.pdf

restricted. Because of the restrictions, secrecy was maintained and the public remained to a large extent in the dark about what exactly was going on in the Hanford compound. Until recently the information has been inaccessible. The time elapsed has made the interest levels drop and there have yet to be significant numbers of studies or histories other than that conducted by the United States Department of Energy.[10] Hanford's initial top-secret classification was important to national security.

Mabel Wahlquist thought she was well informed when she came to Hanford. Before arriving in Hanford she heard a senator in Minnesota give a public speech on the military project at Hanford. She related that he sounded like he knew exactly what was going on.

> I think he thought he did know, and I thought I was very well informed and later discovered that he had it all wrong, and nothing that he said was correct about what was being built. I guess that was one of the best-guarded secrets of the war. I don't know if it could be guarded that well now, the way the press gets hold of everything so quickly. But it just simply was not known, really, anything very definite about the atomic bomb until it landed on Hiroshima.[11]

There were some challenges and strange things about having a store in a militarized zone. For Mabel there was a peculiar sensation in the town. It was the tight security. She wrote, "Not that you would observe it or know, and that was part of the thing that made it so spooky." The girls working in the store that lived in the barracks often commented how they would return to their rooms only to find that someone had searched their rooms and looked through their things during the day.[12]

The project was so secretive that most of the people who came to work had no idea what it was they were coming to work on. They only knew they were being offered

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[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Wahlquist, *Memoirs*, 232.
[12] Wahlquist, *Memoirs*, 232.

a job and since it was wartime, industries connected to the war effort had sprung up in many cities throughout the United States. Those involved in the Hanford project in any way were told to keep quiet. There were signs encouraging secrecy posted all over the town and construction site. With phrases such as "Button Your Lip", "Don't Talk" or simply "SHHHH," to remind everyone of the project's classified nature. Because of such secrecy the rapidly growing city of Richland was not included on any of the maps produced during the war.[13] An unknown satirist described living in Richland during World War II, "In Richland, and nowhere else in the world, have so many people ridden so many buses such a long distance, so consistently and uncomfortably, seen so little and said nothing about it."[14] The idea of a secret military city and project of that size is probably unimaginable in our day of 24-hour news coverage, but the tight security and the strong encouragement worked. Many who worked on the project did not know what they were building until the bomb dropped.

Transplanting and New Growth

With the White Bluffs Branch of Latter-day Saints disbanded due to the governmental takeover of the land, things looked discouraging at that time for the faithful members of the Church who had met together in those areas. Dorothy Rawlins described the branch that had met in White Bluffs before the military takeover.

> We were the closest little Church group you ever saw. We rented the grange hall there, and that's where we used to meet. Believe me, if we got there Sunday morning and somebody wasn't there, someone was right out to see what was the matter with those people; to find out why they weren't there. Everyone felt the need to be there. We loved it. People were so nice. Always in the summer time we'd have a picnic. Some people came from long distances to come to church,

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[13] http://www.hanford.gov/docs/rl-97-1047/Chp1
[14] Wilson, *Tempered* 14-15.

from Hanford, Ringold, and also from Cold Creek, where our branch president, John Hyer lived. We used to all drive in quite a distance, so we'd all bring lunch [so they could stay to enjoy morning and afternoon meetings] and then we'd have a picnic out on the tables at the grange hall. Oh, and that was fun and we had such a close church group . . . Everybody was concerned about everybody else, and everyone was helping everyone else. It was a beautiful situation. I think we were closer to the Lord than we had ever been.[15]

With the branches' closure, it appeared to be the end of organized Church meetings in that area. This was a bad situation for those who had found fellowship and strength from each other and who had grown to be very close friends. Anna Hendricks remembers that her sister-in-law, Lucy, maintained her hope for the future of the Church in that area. Anna related that Lucy, who came to White Bluffs with the original 15 Latter-day Saint families, often spoke of a talk she heard at a church conference in Yakima shortly after the governmental takeover. She could not recall who made the promise, but she remembered that the Saints were told that if they would stay in the area, they would see the time when the Church would be well established again.[16] Most of the Latter-day Saints moved to neighboring communities such as Pasco, Kennewick, or Sunnyside.

The concentrated war effort by the government to build the Hanford Engineering Works brought many Latter-day Saints to Central Washington, which led to tremendous growth in the Church at Richland and in the surrounding towns of Pasco and Kennewick. It was during this time that the Saints started another branch at Hanford.

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[15] *Kennewick,* 115. This quote also comes from the history of Dorothy Rawlins and is found in the chapter entitled "Memories of White Bluffs," and is recorded by her son Stephen Rawlins.

[16] Anna Hendricks Interview, 12 June 2001.

Organization and Growth of the Church at Hanford

Due to the urgency of the Hanford project, crews were working twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.[17] For those Latter-day Saints far from home and accustomed to regular fellowship, the transition to this type of lifestyle was difficult. Anna Hendricks commented that life was very different at Hanford. The customs and cultures of many that first came to Hanford with the construction crews were unfamiliar to Anna, a small town Latter-day Saint young woman.[18] The tendency of Latter-day Saints to congregate soon manifested itself and a few of them found each other and met together to decide how to organize for Sunday meetings. With the unusual wartime circumstances and most of the Saints recent transplants, they improvised to make it work. They decided to get the word out as best as they could to discover any Latter-day Saints who had come to work at Hanford. Early in 1944 invitations were placed on the windshields of cars with Utah license plates and notices were placed on bulletin boards all over the Hanford site to find members and investigate any other interest in starting a branch of the Church.[19]

Records indicate that the first organized Church meeting, with twelve men and one woman in attendance and was conducted by Elder Porter Clark, a missionary from Afton, Wyoming.[20] The Latter-day Saints met together on 20 February 1944 at the Lewis and Clark school to officially establish the Hanford Branch with James V. Thompson as president and Paul E. Lowe and O. David Merrill as counselors. It is believed there were

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[17] Wilson, *Tempered,* 16.

[18] Anna Hendricks, 12 June 2001.

[19] Wilson, *Tempered*, 17-18.

[20] Attending the initial two-hour meeting were: James V. Thompson, O. David Merrill, Paul E. Lowe, Donald D. and Elaine Drake, Thomas A. Morton, Jesse D. McCullough, William H. Timmerman, Owen C. Allred, Woodrow G. Barnett, Sterling Nelson, Richard G. Jones and Ethan L. Hansen.

29 members in attendance. Less than one month later on 12 March 1944, the Sunday school was organized.[21]

One of the greatest challenges for the new Hanford Branch was finding and renting a building in the rapidly growing area in which to hold their meetings. Building space was at a premium and various locations were used as the membership increased so quickly the buildings could not accommodate them. In addition to the Lewis and Clark school, they used the old Protestant Church, the Jefferson School, then the Sacagawea School and eventually they ended up having to rent the newly-constructed Columbia High School. The rental cost was so high that even in those first days of the branch the members began to think about constructing their own meeting house. The government construction crews at Hanford built two church buildings for the largest congregations, but the Latter-day Saints continued to rent.[22]

Anna Hendricks recalls that when she arrived on the train to work on the Hanford project, she quickly found out where the members of the Church were meeting. At that time they would get together at the old Hanford school, used before the government took over the land. Anna had been raised by what she considered less-active parents but remembers that she had always gone to church on her own and now at her new home in the Hanford barracks, the Church became her safe haven. She had never lived among people from all over the country with such different standards than hers. She believes she never would have made it in those army barracks without that first little Church group.[23]

Anna was among the adventurous young people from the Church that came to Hanford

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[21] Wilson, *Tempered*, 17.
[22] Wilson, *Tempered*, 17.
[23] Anna Hendricks, 12 June 2001.

and helped the branch to grow. Her vibrant enthusiasm continued to affect the Basin Saints for over half a century.

Young singles and blue-collar workers were not the only ones that came to Hanford. Du Pont also recruited professionals such as chemists and men with families. Milton Rasmussen was one such person. He came from the same area in Cache Valley as the earlier Latter-day Saints that settled the old White Bluffs area. Milton was born in a log cabin in southern Idaho but raised on a farm in Cache County, Utah. After graduating as valedictorian from South Cache High School in 1936, he served a Latter-day Saint mission and then earned his degree in Chemistry from Utah State. Upon graduation he moved as a young single man to Connecticut for employment with the Remington Arms Company for six months until he was transferred to Lowell, Massachusetts. Not long after his transfer, the Remington Arms Company began closing down many of its plants. Smaller caliber ammunition was not a priority due to the war. Milton married Betty Lyman 25 November 1943. Du Pont offered Milton a trip to Wilmington, Delaware, where he was signed to secrecy before he heard of the Manhattan Project and the construction project at Hanford, Washington. Du Pont hired Milton as a chemist on the Manhattan Project in December of 1943. In preparation for his employment at Hanford, Milton and Betty moved to the University of Chicago for six months, where he received training from the early leaders of the atomic project. Anticipating their move to the newly developing city at Hanford, the young couple purchased three used appliances, a washing machine, a sewing machine and a fan. It was wartime and home appliances were hard to come by, so those first used items were greatly appreciated.

Milton was one of the very first chemists to arrive at the project to help the Du Pont Company operate the chemical separation plants. He arrived at the Hanford Project without Betty in the middle of June 1943. There was no housing for families and everyone lived in gender-segregated barracks. Upon arriving in Washington he was notified of his sister's untimely death and he immediately left for the funeral in Utah. Shortly thereafter he returned to his employment at Hanford. On his first Sunday in Richland he attended church with the newly-formed Latter-day Saint branch where he counted 40 people at Sunday School. Betty joined him a few weeks later. The demands of the project required Milton to work long hours six days a week. The strenuous schedule did not prevent the Rasmussens from becoming very involved in the growing Richland Branch of the Church. Like many of the Latter-day Saints who came during the beginning of the project, they played an integral part in its development and in the early foundation of the Church.[24]

Du Pont's efforts in recruitment brought other Latter-day Saint families to the area as well. In 1943 Larry and Bernice Nelson were living in Salt Lake City, Utah, where Larry was working for a Du Pont arms plant. Many men were being drafted and employers were scrambling for qualified workers. Larry was promised a bonus if he would stay employed until he was drafted. At this time Du Pont advertised for workers to transfer to the Pasco, Washington, area. Larry decided to accept the transfer and then notify the draft board. So he headed for Pasco with a few coworkers and his father-in-law to work at the Hanford Project. Larry did not bring his wife and children with him,

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[24] Milton Rasmussen Interview, 8 August 2002, audio recording in author's possession. Milton, now 84 years old, is still physically very active and stopped in Connell to visit with me on his way to gather wheat north of Ritzville, nearly 100 miles from his home. A brief biographical sketch of Milton and Betty

so he took a second job working in a grocery store at the trailer camp to earn some extra money. Larry soon registered on the housing list to wait for a government house to be built in Richland, while his father-in-law found an old tract house in White Bluffs so he could bring his family to Hanford.[25] Larry followed suit and brought his family sooner to Washington. He located an old vacant home in White Bluffs in pretty bad condition and spent his little spare time getting windows from other vacant houses from the old White Bluffs farms and securing them into his house with plenty of 16 penny nails. This prevented them from being taken and used in another makeshift home. Larry fixed up the house, hooked up electricity, and his family came to Washington. In June 1943 an order came that all the tract houses had to be vacated, so the family moved to government housing in Sunnyside until September of that year when they acquired their government prefabricated home in Richland.[26] It was about making do. People utilized the resources that were available as the rural farm country was turned into a large community. Different people came under various circumstances, but many of the Latter-day Saints that brought their families and came during the wartime project ended up settling in the area long-term.

More Latter-day Saints moved to the Hanford area and the branch continued to grow. The Hanford Branch consisted of Latter-day Saints from all walks of life. The

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Rasmussen is found in *Kennewick a Gathering of Saints,* 91-93. This is where I first learned of Milton and his impact on the Hanford project and the Columbia Basin.

[25] The old Hanford–White Bluffs farm houses were referred to as tract houses. Milton Rasmussen spoke of these tract houses in his interview on 8 August 2002. Some were abandoned houses from years before and others were the homes the recently removed farmers had inhabited. The nicer farmhouses were a highly sought-after commodity, especially while the leaders waited for the new homes that were being constructed in Richland. Milton remembers the officers and project managers taking the nicer tract houses for themselves, since they often had orchards and gardens and they preferred these homes to living in the barracks.

[26] *Kennewick,* 81-83.

diversity of the branch combined to strengthen the members. Nona Kraus Shoemaker moved to the government project at Hanford with her family in 1944. Before that her father was a house painter and would often leave home for long periods of time looking for work in the warmer climates during the winter. In 1943 things changed for the Shoemaker family. Du Pont recruiters were scouring the country looking for workers and Nona's father took her mother with him and went to work on the government project leaving the children to be cared for by their aunt. According to Nona, the government first built barracks for the workers and then started working on providing housing for families. In 1944 Nona's family left a small farm in Butte, Montana, and went to live in an old farmhouse inside the restricted government area. The family all had to show badges in order to come and go from the area. Nona does not know exactly why they let them live there, but believes it was probably because they had such a large family and none of the houses they had built yet were big enough for that many children. They only stayed there for a few months when they had to leave the restricted area. They moved to another farmhouse closer to town and then put their names on a waiting list to have a house built. Eventually they moved into a government made "A" style house, a double story duplex. Nona reflected, "We were not used to having a nice home so this one was heaven to us and we took great care of it."[27] Her gratitude reveals the positive attitude exhibited by many of the Latter-day Saints who brought their families to the area and purchased homes.

With additional members, the various Church auxiliaries provided opportunities for the development of the family within the branch. On 21 May 1944 the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association was established followed by the Relief Society on 9

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[27] Nona Krause Shoemaker Interview, 21 August 2002, audio recording in author's possession.

July. In quick succession came the Primary and the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association on July 16th. The programs were implemented as quickly as they could be organized. A choir was formed in October and the Boy Scouts were organized in November. By the end of 1944, membership in the branch was 315.[28] The branch at Hanford was moved by 31 December 1944 into Richland where the majority of the permanent residences were located.[29] Just one year later at the close of 1945 the Richland Branch had doubled, with 600 members regularly attending Church.[30] The branch grew and continued to provide fellowship and strength for the Latter-day Saints that were in the middle of a worldwide conflict and involved in the war effort through the Hanford project. The Richland Branch would become the foundation of the Church in the entire area for the next 50 years.

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[28] Wilson, *Tempered*, 17-18.

[29] NWSMMH, 31 December 1944. The HNWSM has very few entries for the Hanford Branch or the surrounding area during this time period. Estimates from interviews indicate that everything happened so fast at Hanford that a lot of the information was not recorded while World War II was sorely effecting the missions. Most of the information was kept locally, and rather sporadic at that. The best source seems to be the memory of the Saints that were there at Hanford.

[30] Wilson, *Tempered*, 18-19.

Chapter Five
Stabilization
1945-1950

The world changed on 6 August 1945 when the B-29 bomber the *Enola Gay* dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, destroying four square miles of the city and killing more than 60,000 people. Three days later on 9 August 1945 the B-29 bomber *Bock's Car* dropped a second nuclear bomb named the 'Fat Man' on Nagasaki, Japan, with similar effects. It exploded some 1,600 feet above the city killing another 36,000 people.[1] That night the emperor of Japan urged his cabinet to surrender. Five days later on 14 August 1945 the emperor himself declared their surrender in a radio broadcast and the formal surrender took place 2 September 1945 on board the battleship *Missouri.*[2] These events marked the end of Hanford's role in World War II.[3] The world had entered the atomic age and would never be the same.

Larry Nelson was working in a Hanford store on 6 August 1945 when a man rushed into the store shouting, "An atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan,

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[1] Sanger, *Hanford*, 178. Those involved in its construction because of its immense size and its bulbous appearance reportedly named the second bomb the Fat Man. Death counts listed in Tindall, George Brown and Shi, David E., *America A Narrative History,* (New York, W. W. Norton and Company 1989), 784-788.

[2] Tindall, *America A Narrative History,* 784-788.

[3] Sanger, S. L., *Hanford and the Bomb - An Oral History of World War II,* (Seattle: Living History Press, 1989), 177. The atrocities of war are not the subject of discussion in this research. They are discussed only in a brief extent to try to show how they directly relate to the history of the area and more specifically to the Latter-day Saints and their settlement of Central Washington. The author does not claim to be an expert on wars or the reasons they are fought. A detailed study of World War II would allow the reader the opportunity to make his or her own conclusions concerning whether or not the Hanford project should or should not have been undertaken. There is no doubt that these events caused a conflict of conscience for some of the people who worked at Hanford, including some of the Latter-day Saints that were interviewed for this project. Some would not discuss it at all and others would turn off the recorder before answering. In the coming years, searching questions about the introduction of nuclear weapons into the world will be asked among scholars concerning the Latter-day Saint involvement and their philosophies of war.

wiping it off the map and the stuff for the bomb was made right here at Hanford.'"[4] The secret of Hanford and the Manhattan Project was soon made public. The news that nuclear materials manufactured at Hanford had contributed to the bomb that helped end the war traveled swiftly throughout the surrounding communities. Some employees of Hanford were surprised that they had lived near the manufacturing of such top-secret materials and had not known the nature of the government-backed project and its connection to nuclear weapons. Hanford Engineering Works had fulfilled its mission and the Manhattan Project had been successful in carrying out its mission of making nuclear materials for a bomb.

Milton Rasmussen, who was one of the first Hanford chemists hired by Du Pont, recalls that information pertaining to the confidential government project was compartmentalized. He indicated that throughout the construction and development of Hanford, no one was told anything more than what they needed to know to do their part in working on the project.[5] The impact of the Manhattan Project on ending the war became more apparent as the information concerning the purpose of Hanford became more public. The secret military town of Richland and the Hanford nuclear site, which were not found on the maps made at the time, suddenly became world famous. It was extraordinary that a project of that magnitude could have remained secret for such a long time. The instant fame for the area held a certain irony for the old-timers because just a few years earlier all but a few settlers had considered the whole area too desolate to be

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[4] *Kennewick,* 81-83. This story from Larry Nelson's life is recorded by his daughter, Kathy Nelson Corbaley, of Kennewick. This must have been a story her father told often, about the first time he heard the details of the big secret project that he had worked on for over a year. Kathy was the youngest of five children and still lives in the area.

[5] Milton Rasmussen Interview, 8 August 2002. Audio recording in author's possession.

worth much. The close of the war and the knowledge of Hanford's secret revealed the importance of the government's decision to confiscate the necessary lands. It also gave credit to those in the area for helping to bring about an earlier end to the war.

Following the publicity of the Hanford project, job stability became foremost in the minds of many employees. With the promise of peace, Americans turned their efforts back to business and homeland development. After one of the world's costliest human conflicts in history, many Americans were anxious to bring the soldiers home and to focus on returning to life without war.[6] Those in charge of the Hanford project, as well as the laborers, realized Hanford had fulfilled its intended purpose and now questioned its future. The possibility of Hanford closing and returning to a quiet sagebrush desert seemed probable. Some Hanford workers from the project returned to their previous employment, while others chose to remain in the area and look for work.

Immediately following the war, The Du Pont Company was anxious to separate itself from Hanford and the nuclear project.[7] Knowledge of nuclear energy and its potential benefits increased following World War II. This understanding opened the door for continued growth and development at Hanford. This gave General Electric the opportunity to take the place of Du Pont and assume responsibility for the production of plutonium. Though nuclear energy development soon emerged as a priority, the plutonium was still utilized in the manufacturing of nuclear weapons. Job security stabilized in 1947 when Hanford Engineering Works came under the direction of the

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[6] Tindall, *America*, 784-788.

[7] According to Milton Rasmussen, Du Pont was reluctant to get involved in the first place with nuclear weapons or a secret government project. After the war was over Du Pont did not want the public to think it was only involved in weapons development. For a further study of Du Pont see Kinnane, Adrian. *Du Pont: from the banks of the Brandywine to miracles of science.* Wilmington, Delaware: E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Company. Also a history of Du Pont's larger perspective can be found in Taylor, Graham D.,

newly formed national Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). Under AEC management, the Hanford project was enlarged which resulted in increased construction. The Hanford Site returned to its wartime bustle when the AEC hired 28,000 workers to build five more reactors and two additional chemical processing plants.[8] The added work and the renewed focus at Hanford improved the job market, led to continued population growth, and had a positive economic effect on Richland and the surrounding communities.

The post war growth at Hanford came as a result of an increase in size with the construction of new reactors. This subsequently led to the necessity of another temporary work force for construction purposes but it also increased the potential for permanent employment opportunities. Those who accepted long-term employment at the nuclear project often had families and established themselves in the nearby communities. Some of those that came to work at Hanford, and chose to remain, were Latter-day Saint families who formed a framework for the Church that fostered healthy growth during the next 50 years.

A Family Affair

Many of the Latter-day Saints that chose to settle in Central Washington came for family reasons. Typical of those who chose to settle long term was Milton Rasmussen. Following the war Du Pont offered Milton employment as a chemist in New Jersey, so he and his wife Betty headed east with their new baby. One year later Milton accepted a job

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and Patricia E. Sudnik. *Du Pont and the international chemical Industry.* Boston Massachusetts: Twayne, 1984.

[8] Sanger, *Hanford*, 178. Because Hanford was the largest employer in the region, and remains so today, the threat of it closing down at the end of World War II may have permanently crippled the economy. With the establishment of the AEC, Hanford was recognized as a permanent fixture and no longer viewed as a temporary government project. For more information concerning the AEC see Richard

with the General Electric Company, the new contractor at Hanford, and the young family returned to Washington. Milton had lived in the East before and recognized the benefits for his family to return west. The new offer at Hanford gave him the opportunity to return to the open spaces and what he called "the sweet smell of sagebrush." The Rasmussens had been significantly involved in the initial growth of the Church at Hanford and were anxious to return to familiar friends and places in Washington.[9]

The reported benefits of living in Washington were often spread by word of mouth through family relationships. A case in point is the story of the Stinson family. Leona Hendricks Stinson is the youngest of seven children and the only one still living. Her large family that began in Cache Valley, Utah, ended up having significant impact on the Latter-day Saint community in central Washington. Soon after her High School graduation in 1940, Leona and her parents left Utah to join the rest of the Hendricks siblings who had migrated to central Washington looking for better agricultural opportunities. With most of their adult children already living in the Hanford-White Bluffs areas of Washington, Leona's parents wanted to live closer to their children and grandchildren. Although she had graduated from high school, Leona remembers being terribly disappointed at having to leave her friends and her lifelong home in Lewiston, Utah. This disappointment was tempered, however, by her excitement to be closer to her siblings and their families.[10] Descriptions of the benefits of relocating to Washington

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G. Hewlett. *A History of the United States Atomic Energy Commission.* University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962.

[9] Milton Rasmussen Interview, 8 August 2002. Milton told of scientists working for Du Pont in the east who could smell a bowl full of imported sagebrush that he kept on his fireplace. He truly felt he was drawn to the West and believes that the Washington desert has been a marvelous place for raising his family. He's very grateful he made the move back to work at Hanford.

[10] Leona Hendricks Interview, 6 August 2002, audio recording and notes in the author's possession. Leona is an elderly woman living in an assisted living apartment in the Tri-Cities area of Washington.

from the siblings already residing there, coupled with the obvious advantages to living near family, set the stage for the rest of the family to migrate to Central Washington.

Leona can still remember the fear and excitement of loading their things onto her older brother's old farm truck and making the long drive to Washington on very primitive roads. The trip was uneventful in her memory except for crossing the Blue Mountains heading towards Pendleton, Oregon. Leona and her family made the steep descent down into Pendleton on an evening with limited visibility due to darkness and fog. Her brother, who had come to help them move, stood out on the running board while he was steering so he could see. Her job was to operate the stick brake on his command. It must have been a traumatic experience for Leona. Sixty years later it is her most vivid memory of her move to Washington. Leona says they felt a little like pioneers until they reached White Bluffs. When they arrived at her sister Lucy Holden's house, Leona spoke of the community and her sister's house saying, "It was so much more beautiful than I had anticipated." After a short time in White Bluffs, Leona's parents found a small farm, not far from the Columbia River in Pasco, Washington.[11] All of Leona's siblings ended up staying in Washington, with most of them remaining in or near the Basin. Extended family strength made a significant difference for many Latter-day Saints who remained in the area after World War II ended and the original purpose of the Hanford project was fulfilled. This strength helped develop the Richland Branch and establish the foundation for the Richland Stake.

In the aftermath of World War II, the Tri-Cities area experienced a great deal of turnover. As people moved away from the area, others quickly moved into the vacated

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[11] Leona Hendricks Interview, 6 August 2002.

government homes that had been built for workers on the project. Some wanted to remain in the area but looked for homes in the more rural communities since Richland continued to grow. In 1946 Nona Kraus was getting ready to go to High School when her father decided that city life in Richland was not what he wanted for his family. Nona had eight siblings and her father was concerned that they did not have enough work to keep his children busy and out of trouble while living in Richland, so he purchased a home with acreage in the nearby Kiona-Benton area. Their property was at the river's edge and they had fruit trees to care for as well as acres of grapes and watermelons. The children were again able to stay busy working and father Kraus was happy. Nona's father often said, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop."[12]

The Kraus family enjoyed living in Benton but there was not an organized Latter-day Saint branch nearby. The family would sometimes attend the local Methodist Church in Benton when they could not travel to Richland for meetings. Nona's father initially believed attending any church was better than none at all. He soon decided, however, that it was not good for his children and he did not like the situation. The Church had become so important to him that he felt his family needed to be where there was an organized group of Latter-day Saints, so he put his house up for sale. The home sold so quickly that he had to put up a makeshift tent that summer for his large family until they found a place to rent in town. They lived in the tent until he finished their new home. Her father continued to move often, but being near an organized membership of the

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[12] Nona Kraus Shoemaker Interview, 21 August 2002, audio recording and notes in author's possession. Nona was about twelve when they left Montana to come to the Hanford project. Harold Shoemaker moved to Benton when he was a young boy in 1935. He was baptized as a young man after having met Nona in high school and participating in Family Home Evenings with Nona's family.

Church remained very important to him, as he tried to provide the best circumstances for his children.[13]

Sustained Latter-day Saint Growth

By 1948 in addition to Richland, Pasco-Kennewick also had a branch. These branches were still part of the Yakima district under the direction of the Northwestern States Mission. On 28 January 1948, a Priesthood conference was held in Richland and 232 men attended the meeting from the area branches. The president of the Northwestern States Mission, Joel Richards, and his wife were the principal speakers at the meeting.[14] The records of this meeting indicate that the strength of the membership of the Latter-day Saints in central Washington was shifting to those branches in and around the Richland area. The number of active men was increasing in the area and the potential for priesthood leadership led to development of an elders quorum. Less than three months after that conference, the first elders quorum in the Northwestern States Mission was established in the Richland and Pasco-Kennewick Branches on 13 April 1948. Virgil Stucki was named the president of the newly-formed quorum with thirty elders from Richland and ten from Pasco-Kennewick present at the meeting.[15] Because of sustained growth throughout the region, the Yakima district was divided in September 1948. The territory north of Yakima, including Ellensburg, had recently been included in the newly-formed Wenatchee district.

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[13] Shoemaker Interview, 21 August 2002. Nona did not think she had anything to offer to this research project and then she opened up and started to share great insights into the area.

[14] NWSMMH, 28 January 1948.

[15] NWSMMH, 13 April 1948. This first quorum of elders in the Northwestern States Mission was set up across branch boundaries and is further proof of the rapid growth of the Church in the Richland area during this time. It may not have been unusual Church wide, but in Central Washington the growth was impressive enough to gain the attention of those leading the Northwestern States mission.

Latter-day Saints continued to move to Richland, Kennewick, and Pasco and the surrounding areas. New converts were also helping the branches to grow. By this time Richland had the numerical strength to be organized into a ward, but this could only happen if there were sufficient numbers of Latter-day Saints in the district to form a stake in that part of the Northwestern States Mission. The Richland Branch had become so large that finding a location to hold meetings was proving difficult and expensive. After meeting in a series of smaller buildings, the Richland Branch began to rent the new Columbia High School. These factors combined to motivate the members to begin researching the possibility of a permanent meetinghouse to fill their needs.

A Place To Meet

In 1947 the obvious growth of the Latter-day Saints and their petitions for property to build a meetinghouse, prompted the government to sign a long-term lease to the Latter-day Saints on a piece of land in downtown Richland. The Hanford Project and the town of Richland were still government controlled and property was not sold. Leasing land to build a chapel was a new experience for the Church and this caused some difficulties in securing the deal. The details were worked out, and the branches soon became involved in money-raising projects for the building fund. After five months of fund raising, there was enough money to begin construction on a Latter-day Saint chapel in Richland.[16]

When the Richland Branch exceeded 1000 members, meetings had to be scheduled when facilities were available. With meetings scheduled at different times, it

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[16] Wilson, *Tempered*, 21-24.

was extremely expensive to secure building space on Sundays and throughout the week for the various meetings and activities that were being held. The need for their own building was very apparent to the members of the Church for some time before they actually started building. When the details of land leasing from the government were worked out, the members forged ahead with great enthusiasm to construct their own chapel. Construction of a Latter-day Saint meetinghouse on Jadwin Street was a significant project for the community as the first non-government construction in Richland since the town was unincorporated and militarized. Non-LDS even volunteered labor on the building. Latter-day Saints and their friends of other faiths indicated that the new building was "important to them because it was a sign of stability when everything else seemed temporary."[17]

On Saturday, 5 February 1949, a district conference was held in Richland, Washington, along with the groundbreaking service for the new Jadwin Chapel in Richland. President Richards of the Northwestern States Mission spoke at the meeting and turned the first shovel of dirt.[18] The days of renting buildings for Church meetings were coming to an end. After six years of nearly constant growth, the Richland Branch members would finally have a building they could call their own.

Due to the groundbreaking service and the large number of members from the district living near Richland, the Yakima District conference of 6 February 1949 was held in Richland. With so many members in the area two general sessions were held, with 500 attending the first session and 375 the second. The rapid growth of the branches throughout the area necessitated an additional session held in Kennewick for the

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[17] Wilson, *Tempered*, 21.
[18] NWSMMH, 5 February 1949.

members of the Pasco-Kennewick Branch.[19] At the following district conference held in September of the same year, the number attending had significantly increased. There were 669 people in the first session and 509 who attended the second. At the conference, President J. Carroll Bagley of the Yakima District, reported that the six branches of the district had a Church membership of 2,861.[20] Though there was a considerable number of families that had moved into the area, not all of the growth was from transplanted Latter-day Saints. The Northwestern States Mission reported at the end of 1949 that there had been 1,001 new converts baptized during the year throughout the mission.[21]

New converts and move-ins translated into growth. The rapid increase in Church membership meant that many of the branches besides Richland needed larger places to meet. Numerical growth placed priority in the area on the building program. The Pasco Branch began building a small chapel in 1948. The building effort in those days relied on members to contribute their time, money, and talents in physical labor on the building project. The local membership of the Church was responsible for construction of their facilities. It required using the building fund, composed largely of donations from the members in that area. Leona Hendricks Stinson spoke of that time period of rapid growth and the building fund saying, "It just seemed like the members of the Church would begin working on one building when it was time to start work on another. My husband was always helping on one project or another."[22]

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[19] NWSMMH, 6 February 1949.

[20] NWSMMH, 11 September 1949.

[21] The records do not indicate specifically how many of those converts were baptized in the Yakima District, but a significant portion may have been. HNWSM, 31 December 1949.

[22] Leona Hendricks Stinson indicated that at one time they needed their truck for something, and she told her husband to go get it from the people who were using it to work on one of the buildings. She said he would always reply in the same fashion, "The Church needs it more." Interview, 6 August 2002.

Harold Shoemaker was a young, newly married veteran of World War II looking for work when construction on the Jadwin chapel began. The need for skilled workers to build the chapel allowed Harold to be paid from the building fund to work on the chapel. He worked sixty hours a week, twenty hours a week as a volunteer like so many others and then he was paid for his additional forty hours of work.[23] After laying most of the tile for the Jadwin building and helping to complete the project, Harold was able to find employment with General Electric working at the Hanford project. This allowed him to remain in the area. The construction of more reactors under the direction of the AEC allowed Hanford to remain the leading employer in the area. Harold appreciated this employment opportunity with General Electric; it gave him the option to remain in central Washington without owning a farm. With his previous experience in agriculture, he was first hired to work on the small farm at Hanford, which they used to test sheep and other animals for radiation. Harold was then transferred to an apprentice program where he learned to be a millwright. With these skills he was involved in overhauling the reactors and the river pumps. Harold worked faithfully at Hanford from 1951 until 1988. He remains grateful for his initial opportunity to earn money working on the Richland Stake Center and is proud to have contributed to its beauty.[24]

Throughout the construction period more than 23,000 hours of labor were credited to volunteers. In addition there were another 18,162 hours of paid labor. A man named Leavitt Karren reportedly donated the most volunteer hours with 844. The financial burden on the Saints was great during the construction period, as they were still required

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[23] Nona Shoemaker Interview, 21 August 2002.

[24] Harold Shoemaker Interview, 21 August 2002. Nona Shoemaker indicated during her interview, that her husband had worked at Hanford. A brief recording of Harold answering a few questions is recorded on the same tape, which is in the author's possession.

to rent other meeting places. Due to the high costs of rent, the members began meeting in the unfinished building as early as 27 February 1950. The detailed work on the beautiful chapel and the inlaid scout emblem on the scout room floor were completed in the summer and the building was dedicated the following year on 9 September 1951.[25]

The Richland Stake

With the AEC and the extended mission of Hanford Engineering Works, the Richland Branch of the Church continued to grow, reaching as many as 1,300 members.[26] A large branch coupled with a more stabilized community, set the stage for the formation of the Richland Stake. The completion of the chapel on Jadwin Street in Richland facilitated the formation of the first stake in central Washington, and the third in the state. On Saturday, 24 June 1950, Stephen L Richards, of the First Presidency of the Church, and Harold B. Lee of the Council of the Twelve, met with President Joel Richards of the Northwestern States Mission to discuss the organization of a stake from the Yakima District. Another meeting was held later that day with the district and branch presidents and the other district officers to discuss the formation of the stake.[27]

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[25] From the Dedication Booklet for the Jadwin Building, written by L.M. Becksted, Jr. See Wilson, *Tempered,* 21-26.

[26] Milton Rasmussen Interview, 8 August 2002. When asked why the branch did not split or become a ward, Milton thought not having a building was the biggest factor. He does not remember there being a push to be called a ward as opposed to a branch. The big push was to get their own building so they could stop meeting at Columbia High School. It was very expensive for them to rent, and it was hard to feel like they really had a strong Church group without a place of their own.

[27] Branches are congregations of Latter-day Saints under the direction of a local leader called a branch president. A group of branches forms a district. At this time the districts in Washington were under the direction of the Northwestern States Mission. A ward is typically a larger congregation of Latter-day Saints that is coupled with other wards in an area to form a stake. Bishops oversee their local ward and stake presidents lead the members of the Church living in the group of wards that form a stake.

[28] *Deseret News, Church Almanac 1997-1998.* Salt Lake City, Utah (1998), 276 and Wilson, *Tempered,* 26.

The next day, on Sunday 25 June 1950, the Richland Stake was organized from the Northwestern States Mission as the 180th stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was formed in the newly constructed Jadwin Building in Richland, Washington.[28] The organization of the stake was coupled with the formation of wards from the branches. The newly-formed Richland Stake consisted of two wards in Richland, and one ward each in Pasco-Kennewick, Sunnyside, Toppenish, and Yakima. The Hermiston Branch and the Hepner Sunday School were also taken from the Northwestern States Mission and made part of the newly formed stake. In addition, the Walla Walla Ward was included in the new stake because of its geographical proximity, and moved from Oregon's Union Stake. The total membership of the new Richland Stake at its formation was approximately 3,180.[29] For those first thirteen people who started the branch at the Hanford project just six years earlier in 1944 and those who built up the branch, it was wonderful to have seen the growth and to have witnessed Richland becoming the center of the Church in the entire region.[30]

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[29] NWSMMH, 25 June 1950.
[30] Milton Rasmussen Interview, 8 August 2002.

Chapter Six
Watering the Basin
1951-1972

During and following World War II the Hanford Project was a significant determinant in the growth and development of Central Washington. With the end of the war, the completion of the Columbia Basin Project, in connection with the Grand Coulee Dam, became the economic stimulus that insured continued growth through the development of newly irrigated agricultural areas in the Columbia Basin. Construction on the Grand Coulee Dam began in 1933 during the great Depression and by 1951 the Columbia Basin Project was ready to carry irrigation water to the Basin. The ultimate impact of the dam was a complete change in the agricultural face of the Columbia Basin. The effects of the dam and the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project are evident in the lives of those who transformed the land and with their posterity who have continued the agricultural tradition. Many of those that came to settle the project lands were Latter-day Saints seeking better farming opportunities and a place to raise their children in an agricultural environment.

Controlling the great Columbia River with the Grand Coulee Dam and coupling it with the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project meant new lands for farmers and a new face for Central Washington. Following World War II attention returned to reclamation of the arid West and completion of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project. The irrigation water promised to revive the entire area, enhance farming, and increase the number of productive farms. The ability to control water amounts through irrigation would also mean a larger diversity of crops. This, in turn, would have a domino effect on the whole

economy. It would increase the population, bring new industry, develop more roads, build more towns and continue to attract more people.[1]

The United States Bureau of Reclamation began building the Grand Coulee Dam in 1933. This was the beginning of the Columbia Basin Project. Damming the Columbia at the Grand Coulee was designated as a Public Works Administration project under the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933. The Rivers and Harbors Act of 1935 further supported the project and construction on the dam progressed from 1933-1941. The United States involvement in World War II delayed the reclamation efforts associated with the irrigation project, and the production of electric power became the primary role of the dam. However, in 1943 the Columbia Basin Project Act authorized work to continue on the Columbia Basin project.[2]

Thousands worked around the clock to finish construction on the Grand Coulee Dam by 1942. The much-needed wartime airplane and aluminum industries, as well as atomic energy development, were supported by the cheap source of electricity from Grand Coulee Dam during World War II. Following the war emphasis returned to irrigation. In 1946 construction resumed on the pumping plant that would operate the irrigation project. The key components of the irrigation project were the Grand Coulee Dam and the resultant Franklin D. Roosevelt Lake. It took until 1951 for the pumping plant's six, 65,000 horsepower pumps, to be ready for operation. The plant was designed to pump water into a concrete lined feeder canal that would carry the water to the north

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[1] For a study of the adverse effects of damming the Columbia River see Blaine Harden's *A River Lost – The Life and Death of the Columbia,* New York: W.W. Norton, (1996). The book shows that Americans had good intentions in damming up the Columbia for cheap electricity and increased farmland, but this led to the exploitation of Native Americans, endangered Salmon, and brought nuclear waste to the area.

[2] http://www.scbid.org/history.html

end of Banks Lake, an equalizing reservoir located above the dam. The original canal was completed in 1951, but was later enlarged to accommodate more water. The canal is 1.8 miles in length, 25 feet deep and 80 feet wide.[3] Banks Lake was named after Frank A. Banks, the chief construction engineer of Grand Coulee Dam. Banks Lake is bound by natural canyon-like or coulee walls on the east and west and by earthen dams on the north and south and is 27 miles in length. Water is removed for irrigation from Banks Lake via the 21-mile Main Canal at Coulee City. This system carries the water in a series of channels, tunnels, siphons and other reservoirs that distribute it throughout the Columbia Basin.[4]

President Harry S. Truman dedicated the Grand Coulee Dam on 11 May 1950 and named the reservoir the Franklin D. Roosevelt Lake. The dedication of the dam was preliminary to the opening of the irrigation project, which occurred one year later on 7 May 1951. Young women representing each of the 48 states poured ceremonial water into the feeder canal inaugurating the beginning of water delivery from Grand Coulee Dam for the irrigation of the Columbia Basin Project lands.[5] More than thirty years had passed since the meeting in attorney William Clapp's office in Ephrata, Washington, but the dream of irrigating the Columbia Basin had finally become a reality.

Facts of the Grand Coulee Dam and the Columbia Basin Project

- Primary functions: Electricity, irrigation and flood control.
- Largest concrete dam in North America.
- 3rd largest producer of electricity in the world.
- Dimensions: length 5,223 ft, height above bedrock 550 ft, base 500 ft thick.
- Total concrete in the dam 11,975,521 cubic yards.
- 4 power plants (Bonneville Dam 2 and Hoover Dam 1).
- 33 generators (Bonneville Dam 21 and Hoover Dam 17).
- Franklin D. Roosevelt Reservoir is 150 miles long and Banks Lake is 31 miles long.

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[3] http://users.owt.com/chubbard/gcdam/html/irrigate.html

[4] http://www.efcom.com/wswra/cbpabout.html

[5] Downs, *The Mightiest,* 56. Downs worked as an engineer on the project and gives an excellent first hand account.

Beginning in 1951 with the inaugural pouring of the water, the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project was completed in stages. With each new canal system built, more blocks of land were opened up. This continued for years until the final units of land in Mattawa, Washington, received water in 1985.[6] The irrigation project, originally expecting the creation of nearly 13,000 family-size farms, was just getting under way in 1951.[7] The land that was developed under the Bureau of Reclamation was placed into a lottery system where the available units of land divided up from the larger irrigation blocks were drawn for prospective farmers. Initially veterans had priority to buy the land owned by the government and could apply to have their names in the drawing for up to 160 acres of land.[8] With the project spanning more than half a century, more land was continually being made available, and a steady flow of adventurous and sometimes-desperate farmers came seeking new lands of opportunity and an improved agricultural lifestyle for their families.

Case Studies in Latter-day Saint Migration

With the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project promising new opportunities in farming, it was as if the frontier had opened up again and people were looking for larger pieces of farmland and economic advantages in agriculture. In addition to Hanford and World War II, the Grand Coulee Dam and the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project changed the face of Central Washington. The effective results of bringing irrigation to the

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[6] *Othello Washington Stake - A Legacy of Faith 1950-2000.* Compiled by the Othello Stake History Committee, Jan Walker and Roger Durkee (Pasco, WA: B&B Express Printing, 1999), 53.

[7] *Tri-City Herald,* 5 May 2002, vol. 100, No. 125. In a two-day special report called "Watering the West," Mike Lee reported that only 2,000 farms actually came about because of the incompleteness of the project and the necessary change in the size of the farms.

[8] *The Basin City Ward - A Place To Grow,* compiled by Betty Lou Benson and Jimmie "B" Stoker (Pasco, WA: B&B Express Printing, 1991).

Columbia Basin are demonstrated in the lives of those who claimed the land. The Latter-day Saints were no exceptions to this trend. The following examples of settlers are case studies in the lives of Latter-day Saints who made the decision to pull up stakes and move to Washington because of the dam. These examples are representative of many Latter-day families who came to farm the irrigated lands, joining the Saints in Richland and the surrounding communities in building up The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Basin.

Joseph and Katie Lay represent a portion of the Latter-day Saints who came to the Basin with hopes of having enough to give their children "a start" and keep them close if they had desires to remain in agriculture. They were a Latter-day Saint couple challenged by the opportunity of new development, which prompted them to move to the Columbia Basin late in life. Joe's ancestors had left him a heritage of pioneering that began overseas and stretched all the way across the continent spanning 238 years.[9] He was considered a "Southern Man" since his ancestors had lived for a long time in Mississippi, but he was raised primarily in Escalante, Utah, among the Indians and the outlaws. Joe was familiar with Butch Cassidy, Bill Wilson and the "Wild bunch."[10] Rosie "Katie" Deuel came from wealthy Nauvoo pioneer stock and was young, beautiful, and full of fire that matched her bright red hair.

In 1902 Katie's family set out to move to a healthier climate with rich agricultural opportunities in the Grand Ronde Valley of Eastern Oregon. They joined the growing Latter-day Saint community and newly formed Union Stake. Katie reportedly refused to

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[9] Kohler, Charmaine Lay, *Southern Grace - A Story of the Mississippi Saints* (Boise, ID: The Beagle Creek Press 1995), 95.

[10] Kohler, *Southern Grace*, 90.

go without Joseph Lay. They were soon married in Escalante, and then hurried to Manti, Utah, to be sealed in the temple before following her parents to Oregon. Once there Joe and Katie filed for a 365-acre homestead in the mountains 18 miles from Union.[11]

Joe and Katie had raised ten children and spent forty-one years in their rustic but beautiful mountain home when "Joe's pioneering blood and restless feet got the best of him."[12] In 1943 Joe heard a radio broadcast by the governor of Washington discussing new land and agricultural opportunities in Central Washington due to the Grand Coulee Dam and the Columbia Basin Project. Joe convinced Katie to go look at the land with him. He wanted to have more land for his children, so he could grow old surrounded by his children and grandchildren. He also wanted to be able to provide a start for them, something he had not had. When Joe saw the barren landscape of the Columbia Basin he was inspired by the challenge of new development and he purchased land in the Basin. His excitement was contagious and he ended up working as a salesman for the Big Bend Land Company, selling 30,000 of the total 90,000 acres that the company had available. All of his children owned some of the land, which rose in value as irrigation water and power came to the area.[13]

Some of Joe and Katie's posterity suffered tremendous loss, like so many others who were affected by the delay of the project caused by World War II. Those who came before the project was completed discovered that the wind and harsh conditions would destroy their crops without the plentiful irrigation. Following the opening of the irrigation system for the Basin, Joseph and Katie Lay loaded the last of their possessions

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[11] Kohler, *Southern Grace,* 92.
[12] Kohler, *Southern Grace,* 93-94.
[13] Kohler, *Southern Grace,* 94.

into a truck and moved permanently from their longtime mountain home near Union, Oregon, in 1953. At seventy-two and sixty-nine years old they were starting again on a new pioneering adventure in Warden, Washington. They were near their children and grandchildren, right where they wanted to be.[14] For a couple so advanced in years, farmland for their posterity had to be the primary motivation for moving to the Columbia Basin. Thus, they opened the door of agricultural opportunities for their posterity.

Case Study #2 - Columbia Basin Benefits

The Schwendimans represent Latter-day Saints who came to the Columbia Basin Project primarily to improve their economic conditions in agriculture by owning their own land. They also desired to have enough land nearby to provide opportunities for their posterity. Near the time the idea of the Grand Coulee Dam was being conceived in Ephrata, Washington, Wayne Edwin Schwendiman was born in Newdale, Idaho on 24 December 1916. Like most people from his generation in Idaho, he was raised in a farming family in a small agricultural community. When Wayne was young his family did not have enough land to support themselves as farmers. He disliked the endless battles over irrigation water and working in the cold damp spud cellars to supplement the family's income. Nearby in Twin Groves, Idaho, Verla Winnie Hobbs was born on 8 January 1922. Seventeen years later Wayne and Verla were married on 8 June 1939.[15]

Wayne and Verla Schwendiman began their married life in Newdale and then a

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[14] Kohler, *Southern Grace,* 95.

[15] Wayne and Verla Schwendiman Interview, 2 May 2002. Audio recording of the interview and supplemental notes are in possession of the author. A photocopy of a short personal history written by Wayne Schwendiman is also held by the author. The Schwendimans are one of the oldest remaining couples that still live on their original land acquired from the governmental draw nearly fifty years ago.

year later bought 160 acres of dry farm along with Verla's father who had purchased another 160 acres at Canyon Creek. Wayne and Verla moved into the two room rough-cut log cabin on the 320-acre farm. Living conditions for the young family were primitive with no running water or electricity and life was difficult. After four years when Verla's father realized that his grandchildren were too far from the school, they decided to sell the farm. They bought the farm cheap at the beginning of World War II and then sold in 1944 for three times as much as they had paid for it.[16] The primitive living conditions at Canyon Creek gave them experience for their future challenges in the Columbia Basin.

Wayne and his father-in-law decided to try ranching and for a brief time period they moved to Chester, Idaho, to rent a cattle ranch with the option to buy. They built up a sufficient stock of cattle over the next few years in preparation to buy the land. Wayne felt like things were going well for them when, "Without warning the man who owned the ranch sold it out from under us. He sold it to a neighbor who wanted the land right then and he had the money and we didn't yet." They were forced to leave so they moved back to Newdale. They farmed ground where they could and tried to make ends meet by working at various jobs. In the summer of 1948 Wayne and two of his brothers went to Hamer, Idaho, to grow potatoes. It was at this time that Wayne recalls that he first heard of the Columbia Basin Project. Wayne remembers that he had been working on a spud digger with a hired man who had come from Montana looking for temporary work. On their breaks they would exchange small talk, and the man spoke of traveling south from Spokane, Washington, through a developing irrigation project. He said, "if he was going to stick with farming that would be where he would go rather than hassle with all the problems in Idaho." He further encouraged them saying, "they should go check it out if

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[16] Schwendiman Interview, 2 May 2002.

they ever had the chance."[17] This was Wayne's introduction to the Columbia Basin project lands that would change his life and become his future home.

In 1949 Wayne rented irrigated land near Newdale, Idaho, from Johnny Pratt and returned to farming his own crops. For the next five years the Schwendimans enjoyed farming that land. Life remained reasonably stable until February 1954 when Johnny would not give a definite answer on another year's rent. Once again Wayne was at the mercy of others and he became discouraged with the overall progress he had made in life. He felt like there had to be a better opportunity for him and his family.[18]

A year and a half earlier in the fall of 1952, Wayne and Verla took advantage of an opportunity to see the Columbia Basin on a trip to Seattle to visit family. They traveled with two of Wayne's brothers and their wives along with some friends, Russell and Lois Haws, and Harvey and Bertha Roylance. They stopped in Ephrata where they visited the Bureau of Reclamation office and learned of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project. It was a significant visit for the Haws and Roylance families who moved to the Basin the next year in the spring of 1953 and began farming 80-acre blocks in Mesa, Washington. They wanted their good friends Wayne and Verla to come, but their rental land was profitable in Newdale and Wayne's initial impression of the Columbia Basin had not been good. Verla remembers being very unimpressed: "There was nothing there! And besides all of our family, both of our families were still in Idaho."[19] As a young

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[17] Schwendiman Interview, 2 May 2002. After many questions pertaining to his first recollections of the Basin, Wayne related this experience with the unnamed hired farmhand that was just passing through.

[18] Wayne Schwendiman Personal History, 39. This is a hand-written personal history that is very interesting but somewhat difficult to follow. This history, coupled with the interview and the local Connell Ward History that Verla compiled, gives a reasonably complete picture of their historical motivations in coming to the Columbia Basin to farm when conditions were still so difficult.

[19] Verla Schwendiman Interview, 2 May 2002.

mother the thought of settling that seemingly barren landscape so far from family did not even seem reasonable, let alone profitable.

In July 1953 Keith Stock, Wayne's close friend, asked Wayne to accompany him to investigate the business prospects of land leveling in the Columbia Basin. Since Wayne had been there and he had the time, he agreed to go. Arriving in the Basin, they stayed with the Haws family in Mesa, Washington. On the 4th of July, Russell Haws took Wayne and Keith to Moses Lake to look over the farming conditions. Wayne still remembers, "The crops looked surprisingly good."[20] Their visit was short but convincing for Keith and within four days they were headed back to Idaho so Wayne could put up his hay and Keith could prepare his equipment for a move later that fall.

Many Latter-day Saints like the Keith and Elaine Stock were feeling the pull of opportunity towards the Columbia Basin. For Wayne, his second trip to the Basin had still not convinced him that it was his "right place" to be. Then Wayne's land rental agreement suddenly was not renewed and he no longer had any land to farm. He was finally tired of relying on other people for land and water. At that point he decided that anything was better than what they had in Idaho. Wayne remembers believing that eventually the Columbia Basin would be a good place to farm, but he also knew how truly hard it was going to be to start from scratch and carve himself a farm out of the desert. Wayne wasn't afraid of hard work; he just knew it would be a great sacrifice for his family.[21]

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[20] Schwendiman Interview, 2 May 2002. Wayne's memory is incredible on small details.

[21] Schwendiman Interview, 2 May 2002. During the interview I asked Verla if Wayne had asked her if she wanted to move to the Columbia Basin project lands. Verla scoffed just a little and indicated that Wayne just told her they were moving. Wayne just sat there smiling.

In his personal history Wayne specifically described his decision for moving to Connell in the Columbia Basin:

> I had three good reasons for moving. First to have the opportunity to get a good farm for us and the boys. Second to get away from the need to work in the damp, cold potato cellars to subsidize our living, and third to go where there was enough irrigation water without having to fight for it at the tail end of the Canyon Creek Canal.[22]

Wayne said a few years later that he had looked back on why he had moved and determined that it was due to following inspiration from above. He said, "I could really see the hand of the Lord in my life leading my family in that direction."[23]

Even with the knowledge of the great farming potential and the feeling of support from above, struggles were common and sometimes seemingly insurmountable. It was not easy. Wayne indicated that often he would be out in the field when everything had broken down or gone wrong and he would ask himself audibly sometimes, "what am I doing in this difficult land? Why did I ever come here?"[24] But like so many others, they made it work. Wayne attributes their perseverance, in part, to the challenge of proving to those people that believed they could not do it, that they were wrong. In 1955 Wayne remembers waiting in the Bureau office in Ephrata for an appointment when he heard three men begin speaking of the "Mormons." None of them knew Wayne was a Latter-day Saint. He recalls that one of the men commented that the "Good for nothing Mormons are going to be here for a couple of years and then they'll all go broke and go

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[22] Personal History of Wayne Schwendiman, 39. When asked during the interview about a specific time or single event that was the turning point in his decision to move away from family in Idaho to the barren Columbia Basin, Wayne indicated that all things seemed to just push him in that direction.

[23] Schwendiman Interview, 2 May 2002.

[24] Schwendiman Interview, 2 May 2002.

running back to Utah and Idaho."[25] With a twinkle in his eye Wayne recalled that he enjoyed hearing a few years later in that same office one of those same Bureau men confess that the "Mormons" were there to stay. With the belief that they were "supposed to be there," and the challenge of making something from nothing, it drove the Schwendimans to work hard and develop a productive farm and build a strong posterity. Some of their children continue the farming tradition right there in the Basin.

Case Study #3 - Veterans

The Columbia Basin project gave land priority to veterans. Latter-day Saints with veteran status, interested in farming their own land were potential targets for the government's advertisements of land availability in the Columbia Basin. Don and Anna Laura Montierth are representative of Latter-day Saints who took advantage of veteran priority for the government lands to improve their situation. The Montierth's living arrangements were another primary factor in their decision to move. They were managing a hotel in what Don described as, "a desperate situation in Arizona." He was the son of a farmer and desired to be one himself, but there just was not enough land for him to farm with his father and support his family. They were very active in the Church and Don was extremely concerned about raising his children in the occasionally questionable hotel atmosphere.

In 1950 a friend of Don Montierth, who was in the National Guard, started giving him advertising flyers, which the government had printed to promote lands that were being developed throughout the West. One particular flyer detailed the drawing of units of land in the Columbia Basin of Central Washington. Don was a veteran of World War

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[25] Schwendiman Interview, 2 May 2002, in written notes.

II and was intrigued by the offer. From this same friend he received the application forms for consideration and filled them out. In 1952 Don received an invitation to see the prospective lands with the potential to apply for a block of land. Don took his young family along with his aging parents and drove to Washington to see the lands that were going to be available in the Columbia Basin.[26]

While driving through the small town of Connell, Don read the marquee at the movie theatre. It was playing a movie called "The Man From Arizona." Don and Anna Laura joked about it being a possible meaning or sign: "We have often looked back and laughed about it over the last 50 years." Overall Don was discouraged by what he saw. Having come from the flat lands of Arizona, the land was more rolling than he expected. The potential looked pretty bleak to him and he was not impressed. The land seemed in terrible condition for farming and he returned to Arizona unsure of what he should do.

Don received conflicting counsel from two different priesthood leaders. A member of his bishopric who had worked for the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the Northwest discouraged him saying, "You wouldn't like it, the seasons are too short and it gets too cold." The alternate voice came from a member of his stake presidency in whom he had great confidence. He worked for the government in connection with agriculture and had done some research on the Basin and told Don he thought it had great potential. He encouraged him and supplied him with one of the Bureau of Reclamation's required letters of recommendation.[27]

When Don sat before the screening board he spoke his mind directly and one man acted like he did not think Don belonged. Another man supported him, commenting, "He

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[26] Don Montierth Interview, July 3, 2002. Audio recording in author's possession.
[27] Ibid.

had what it took, that they didn't need a lot of 'yes men' in the Basin." As he thought about it there were some positive things that continued to stand out about the Basin. The backing of the government gave him confidence that this project could work, but the bigger influence came from the abundance of water. His experience with the lack of water in Arizona and the promise of plenty of water from Grand Coulee Dam, coupled with his desperate need for farmland, helped encourage him to claim the unit of land that he had drawn and move his family to the Basin in 1955.[28]

Don got his land but the unit was only 86 acres and not quite large enough to support the family. Things were very difficult for the first three years and Don was ready to return to Arizona. He said he probably would have gone home if it had not been for the Church. He had become heavily involved in the Church in Connell and this friendship base as well as the strength of his wife and her never-give-up attitude prompted him to stay.[29] The Montierth family is one that has thus far survived the economic uncertainty that persists with farming. Their positive influence through local civic and ecclesiastical positions has demonstrated the positive value of Don and Anna Laura's perseverance and decision to stay.

Don believes there are a few reasons why Latter-day Saints specifically came to the Basin when the land was opened to irrigation. He cited the need to have nearly $10,000 in cash or assets and thought that was a lot of money for a 25–30 year old man. He believed that many of the younger people who wanted to come and settle the land did not have that kind of financial base. He thought many of the Latter-day Saints that came had been taught to be frugal and therefore had the money. He also felt that many who

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[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

came shared his sentiments of finding a safe haven in the agriculture environment for raising children and teaching them how to work.[30]

The acreage of irrigated farmland in the Basin continued to increase following the first delivery of water in the early 1950's. By 1969 the irrigated acreage had increased to 480,600 acres and would continue to grow to 622,053 acres. Three primary factors are credited with the increase in irrigated acres. First was the continued development of platted farm units. Next, the Bureau of Reclamation approved an increase in acreage served under water service contracts. Finally the area served by artificially stored groundwater derived from project facilities was increased. Ultimately the issuance of additional water service contracts and ground water licenses was suspended by the Bureau of Reclamation in response to requests from the Northwest Power Planning Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service to stop new irrigation diversions.[31]

Case Study #4 - Preparing the Land for Irrigation

Thousands of people came to the Basin to claim the irrigated lands. Many of the settlers were veterans and not all were experienced farmers. The Bureau of Reclamation tried to screen those who chose to settle the land and provide them assistance so they could succeed. Ken Benson is a Latter-day Saint who represents those who originally came to the Columbia Basin with the promise of a government job. Ken was hired to work for the Bureau of Reclamation and was sent to Ephrata, Washington, to receive six months of training as a Settlers Assistance Agent (SAA) for the new Columbia Basin Irrigation Project. Initially Ken was told he would be sent to Othello, Washington, but

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[30] Ibid.
[31] http://www.efcom.com/wswra/cbpabout.htm

after 4 ½ months of training, another SAA who had spent only three days in Eltopia, an old railroad town south of Othello, had turned in his equipment and quit saying, "he would never go back to that place." So Ken was sent to replace him.[32]

Ken was born in Cache Valley, Utah, in 1929 on a small farm. During the Korean War he was in the service for two years, serving most of his time in Seattle. While traveling home he passed through the Columbia Basin. After seeing the developing farming projects he felt like it was a land with great potential for someone young and just starting out. Ken wanted the rural agricultural lifestyle but could not see the potential of having a farm in Utah. He knew he was really what he called a "farm kid," and that ultimately he would be most happy in that environment.[33]

A Settlers Assistance Agent was a specialized county agent that worked for both federal and state governments with the sole purpose of aiding the new farmers who were coming to develop the land in the Columbia Basin Project. Initially the work of taming a new land was so extremely difficult that some farmers left because the conditions were so unstable. As a Settlers Assistance Agent, Ken's whole purpose was to help the new farmer succeed. Working with the settlers, Ken helped in setting up the land to receive the water. He was involved in surveying the land, planning the layout of the fields, helping to finish leveling the land, and digging the ditches or trenching. Ken remembers working with some farmers for as long as a month.[34]

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[32] Ken Benson Interview, 24 March 2002, audio recording and notes in the author's possession. Legend has it that Eltopia earned its name from a shortened version from the old railroad days when it was referred to as "Hell to Pay," or as they say el-to-pa.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

During this time Ken lived with two other single men in a bachelor apartment in Pasco, Washington. Ken was equipped with a truck and tools and drove out to help the farmers each day. He recalls it being very difficult work and definitely a learning process. Irrigation on this scale was new to the area and went through such a rapid evolution that new and better ways were always being developed. The ditches they dug in the sandy soil would sometimes quickly wash out when the irrigation water was first turned into them. At other times the ground was so dry that it just soaked up the water before it ever came close to its destination. These were frustrating times and were too difficult for some to endure, but most of the people struggled and fought hard to survive without giving up. Ken really enjoyed his job of helping the farmers get started; however, there was heartbreak and some lost everything and had no choice but to give up farming in the Basin and seek work elsewhere.[35]

Cement ditches soon became common in the gravity flow method of surface application. Some of these old cement ditches remain in use decades later. As quickly as one irrigation idea was developed, a new and better one was not far behind. Wheel lines opened up opportunities for land too rough to farm otherwise and center-pivot sprinklers made available even more land and decreased the amount of needed water. The volume of water delivered to each farm is measured at the individual farm turnouts or the headgates. As irrigation techniques improved the amount of water used was reduced by the improved pressurized systems. By 1972, 42% of farmers in the Basin were using sprinkler systems to irrigate their farms.[36]

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[35] Ibid.

[36] http://www.efcom.com/wswra/cbpabout.htm. Wheel lines are lengths of pipe running between large metal wheels like axels that carry water and disperse it through sprinkler heads. The lines are motor driven and make it possible to water ground too bumpy or hilly, too level for gravity flow ditches. Circles

It was a progressive time for farming and Ken enjoyed the work. His job kept him on the front lines of developing the Columbia Basin lands for farming. He understood the process by which the lands were allocated and what it took to succeed in farming the Basin. For a veteran, the process of obtaining a farm in the Basin started with an application. Many of the potential farmers for the southern irrigation district attended an introductory meeting given by Mel McInturf. Those who worked in the irrigation district referred to this meeting in good humor as the "Mel's give'em hell speech." Mel would speak to potential Basin farmers gathered at the public meeting and explain that if they planned to have a new home before they developed the land, "we don't want you, cause you'll never make it."[37] He ensured them that if they wanted to succeed, they needed to develop the land first and put most of their efforts into preparing the land and making the crops grow.

In the administration of dividing up the lands, the process became an important factor. When an application was received, an invitation would subsequently be sent out for the veterans to come and see what was available and find out if they were interested. If the veteran already knew of a particular block or even a specific farm unit they were interested in, they could specify in the application, but then a drawing still had to occur to determine the order in which the farmers selected the land. Once the applicant was preliminarily accepted to come and view the land, a screening board questioned them. There were three members of this board, one representative from the Bureau of Reclamation, one for the veterans and one from the particular irrigation district. The

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are the latest way that farmers can highly regulate water amounts and cover large pieces of ground. They are the most effective and most commonly used irrigation system in the Basin at this time. By 1996 70% of irrigation in the Basin was done by pressurized sprinkler systems.

[37] Benson Interview, 24 March 2002.

screening board's primary purpose was not necessarily to tell someone they could or could not farm, but was to screen out or discourage those they believed could not or would not make it.[38] It was a safety net or sifting board intended to protect the government's investment into the land and the veterans themselves from getting into something they could not handle or ultimately would not succeed at.

The capital assets, which were required as a financial base before a veteran could secure the land, started out at about $4,500 but were soon raised to about $8,500. These assets were intended to be useful in the development of the land unit, or something that could be converted to cash if needed. Once the veteran committed to the land, they were given two years to develop it or get it started. Ken remembered that particular requirement as one that was viewed very liberally. Another requirement that was broadly interpreted was that the farmer was to build a "habitable dwelling." Many lived in tents, cars, trailers, or other makeshift shelters while some even lived in dugouts for a time. It was primitive living, especially for the middle of the twentieth century. Little by little houses sprang up to replace makeshift shelters that often became tool sheds or were utilized for other purposes.[39]

After a few years working as an SAA in the Basin, Ken Benson decided to use his veteran status and apply for his own land. He obtained a good piece of ground that had been forfeited by another man who had originally drawn the land. Ken commented, "It was easier for the Bureau of Reclamation to turn over a forfeited piece of land to another eligible candidate than go through the whole process again." Ken did not give up his employment; he merely wanted to secure his own land as well. In the summer of 1960 he

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

married Betty, a schoolteacher from Kennewick, and six months later on 31 December 1960, they moved "out of town" to live on the farm. Ken continued to work as a SAA for nearly 10 years. Ken still lives in the home he built on his farm unit half a century ago. Though Ken first came to the Basin because of employment with the Bureau of Reclamation, he stayed for many of the same reasons as other Latter-day Saints: because of the Church, family, and the desire to farm.[40]

Case Study #5 - Civilians Coming for the Water

Ray Knight is a man who also came because of the land made available through the building of the Grand Coulee Dam, but he had other motives as well. Ray represents those Latter-day Saints who were not veterans nor those who came to farm after the original pioneering of the land was underway, but became pioneers in their own right. Ray brought his growing family to the Basin because of his interest in farming where there was enough land to expand and include his children in the family agriculture business. He also desired to raise his children where the Church was strong but was still in what he considered the "mission field." Ray was born in St. George, Utah, in 1936 and raised in a Latter-day Saint settlement in Bunkerville and Mesquite, Nevada.[41] His parents moved their family with seven other families to the Boise Valley in Idaho to open up new opportunities in farming and marriage for their children. Ray remembers that they were encouraged by local Church leaders to emigrate since many in Bunkerville were related and it was difficult for the children to marry. According to Knight, they

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Ray Knight, Personal interview while traveling through the Columbia Basin, May 29, 2001. Hard copy notes in author's possession. Ray Knight is still a full time farmer with three of his sons.

even received financial help from the local leaders to help them move.[42] His family moved to Idaho and continued in agriculture. While Ray was a young man he traveled to Washington and worked in the Columbia Basin. As a married man Ray sold his dairy in the Boise Valley, and returned to the Basin moving his family to Connell, Washington. He wanted to be in a place where his children could farm with him if they wanted, so he needed more land. He bought land that was partially improved through the Columbia Basin Project. Many farmers who originally drew units of land through veteran preference did not make it. These farms were sold to families like the Knights who purchased them to try their hand at farming in the Basin and making it work.

Ray Knight recalled that many of the Latter-day Saints who were living there when he came had come for land as war veterans and received first choice of the land according to the G. I. Bill. He remembers a few others who came to buy private lands hoping to provide opportunities for their children. Ray says it was still considered "new country" when he came, and he felt like a pioneer living "way out in the mission field." He liked this idea, and felt like it made his twelve children stronger in the Church and less apathetic about the gospel. He admits that it was very difficult in the beginning, with the dry untamed land and occasional animosity towards the Church. Shortly after moving into the area Ray realized there was a certain animosity between the old-time dry land farmers whose families had been on the land for nearly a century and the new settlers who came because of the irrigation project. Since many of those that came for the Columbia Basin project were Latter-day Saints, some religious tension arose. Shortly after moving to the Basin one man told Ray, "My ancestors ran your people out of

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[42] Ray Knight Interview 29 May 2001.

Missouri and we can run you out of here if we need to."[43] For Ray, it proved worthwhile to establish himself in the Basin. Nearly all of his twelve children now live near him with their own families. His posterity accounts for a large number of faithful Latter-day Saints still living in the Basin.

Conclusion

When the Latter-day Saints began to settle in Central Washington, they had to pay the preliminary costs of all pioneers. They were breaking new ground for the Church and that meant in many respects that they were starting from scratch. There were no Latter-day Saint meetinghouses for worship services or activities. Buildings of any kind were scarce in the area even to rent. It was not until the 1950's that Latter-day Saint Church buildings became common in Central Washington. As Latter-day Saints settled the newly irrigated Columbia Basin Project lands, small branches of the Church were organized throughout the Basin. As these branches grew in number, those members of the Church living in the smaller towns in the southern end of the Columbia Basin were organized under the direction of the Richland Stake. The Saints in the northern half of the Columbia Basin were coupled with the Saints in the Wenatchee District, which continued to be part of the Northwestern States Mission. By 1954 significant congregations had developed in Moses Lake, Ephrata, Ellensburg, Othello, and Quincy, along with Wenatchee and other smaller branches. On Sunday, 18 April 1954 the Wenatchee District was dissolved and the Grand Coulee Stake was formed with its center

[43] Ibid.

in Moses Lake. Elmo J. Bergeson was sustained as the president of the 213th stake of the Church consisting of seven wards and two branches with a total of 2,164 members.[44]

As the membership of the Church continued to increase throughout the Basin, small groups turned into branches and branches into wards. With the increased number of wards in the southern end of the Basin, the Richland Stake became the starting point for multiple stakes of the Church. More Latter-day Saints continued to move into the Basin and coupled with converts, they established a significant number of congregations.

Stakes of the Church in the Columbia Basin of Washington[45]

Stake	Date Organized	Current Number of Members
Richland	25 June 1950	3,637
Grand Coulee (renamed)	18 April 1954	see Moses Lake
Moses Lake	18 April 1954	3,392
Yakima	24 May 1959	2,932
Pasco	21 May 1967	3,724
Kennewick	24 Oct 1976	3,984
Othello	12 Aug 1979	2,402
Ephrata	15 June 1980	2,229
Kennewick East	31 Oct 1982	3,427
Related Stakes not in the Basin		
Wenatchee, Washington	29 Jan 1967	2,714
Walla Walla, Washington	11 March 1979	3,283
Hermiston, Oregon	26 October 1980	2,661

This thesis has described the major factors and characteristics leading to the twentieth century growth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the

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[44] NWSMMH, 18 April 1954. The wards were organized from the existing congregations and included 491 members in Moses Lake 1st ward, 505 in Moses Lake 2nd ward, 245 in Ellensburg ward, 200 in Ephrata ward, 120 in Othello ward, 155 in Quincy ward and 350 in the Wenatchee ward. There were also 60 in Coulee Dam Branch, and 38 in the Bridgeport Branch.

[45] These numbers are courtesy of Karen Blain on 4 November 2002, and they come from the Church Office Building of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They are the most current numbers for these stakes.

Columbia Basin of Central Washington. It has demonstrated why the area has a large concentration of Latter-day Saints despite their relatively recent presence in the area. In contrast to other rural areas among the regions of the western states with large percentages of Latter-day Saints, the Basin was not originally established as a Latter-day Saint settlement. Those members of the Church that came to the Columbia Basin project with the promise of irrigation water have helped make it a plentiful agricultural land that is now home to thousands of Latter-day Saints who are organized into multiple stakes of the Church. The grown children often leave to gain an education only to return with their own families to work the land with their parents and siblings. Many of the Saints who came initially to help with the war effort at Hanford, settled the now more populated areas in the southern end of the Basin. Latter-day Saints have continued to move into the thriving cities of Richland, Pasco, and Kennewick, along with the surrounding rural communities. Though they remain a minority on the whole, the Latter-day Saints have become a significant congregation among the churches in the Basin.[46] The effect of World War II and the Hanford Project, coupled with construction of the Grand Coulee Dam and the Columbia Basin Project on the Latter-day Saints, is demonstrated through the lives of the members and the growth of the Church in Central Washington. Their strength is a tribute to the toil and sacrifices of those that established and continue to build the Church in the Columbia Basin.

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[46] Edwin Scott Gaustad and Philip L. Barlow, *New Historical Atlas of Religion in America.* Oxford University Press 2001, 307. This source documents a map of "Mormon" Predominance: 1990. Specifically noting "Counties in which Mormons are among the three largest denominations." On this map Grant County, which is in the middle of the Columbia Basin, is coded for Latter-day Saints being the largest denomination in the county. Franklin and Benton Counties, also in the Basin, are coded with Latter-day Saints as the second largest denomination in the county.

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