Brigham Young University
BYU ScholarsArchive

All Theses and Dissertations

1953

History of Winter Quarters, Nebraska, 1846-1848

Ernest Widtsoe Shumway
Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd

Part of the Cultural History Commons, and the Mormon Studies Commons

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
Shumway, Ernest Widtsoe, "History of Winter Quarters, Nebraska, 1846-1848" (1953). *All Theses and Dissertations*. 5106.
https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/5106

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

BYU
378.2
Sh72

HISTORY OF WINTER QUARTERS, NEBRASKA

1846-1848

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

In partial fulfillment

of the requirement for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Ernest Widtsoe Shumway

June, 1953

180397

This Thesis by Ernest Widtsoe Shumway is accepted in its present form by the Department of History as satisfying the Thesis requirement for the degree Master of Science.

Date

Committee Chairman

Committee Member

Committee Member

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Not as a matter of form but of sincere appreciation the author renders acknowledgement to the following persons: To the Chairman of the Thesis Committee, Dr. Richard D. Poll, for the unstinted direction and valuable advice; to Mrs. Diane B. Shumway for typing and proofreading the final draft; to Miss Barbara Clark for typing the manuscript; and to the librarians and staff of Brigham Young University and the Latter-day Saint Church Historian's Office, especially Preston Nibley, Church Historian, who kindly helped direct research.

All have made a singular contribution, without which this study could not have been successfully completed.

Ernest Widtsoe Shumway

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Nauvoo, Illinois to Council Bluffs, Iowa Settlement at Council Bluffs Across the Missouri River to Cutler's Park	
II.	WINTER QUARTERS ESTABLISHED	14
	Site and geographical conditions Dispute over occupying Indian Lands Growth and Development of the Township Trade and commercial pursuits	
III.	ASPECTS OF CAMP LIFE.	29
	Food The Great Sickness Recreation Religious Activity Character of the People Family Life	
IV.	INDIAN TROUBLES AND TREATMENT	43
	Indian Policy Depradations and other Problems	
V.	SPRING AND WESTWARD HO!	48
	Preparation "Word and Will of the Lord" Departure of first Company	
VI.	SUBSEQUENT EVENTS OF 1847-48.	56
	Additional Companies Westward Abandonment of Winter Quarters	
BIBLIOGRAPHY.		62

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Indian agent, the trapper, or the citizens of small Iowa townships were undoubtedly startled to see such a large movement of people and wagons across the state of Iowa. It was the winter and early spring of 1846. The onlooker would have seen men, women, and children muffled against the wintry blast, walking or riding in covered wagons and lesser vehicles. Somehow these people were different from the occasional companies bound for points West. Many were ill equipped. Many had a look of gentility, or as the frontiersman might say, a "citified look." They kept to themselves and often withdrew from outside influences as if they expected trouble to fall upon them from some source. Indeed, they seemed "peculiar."

And "peculiar" they were. These were the Mormons, a people who had just been driven from their homes and city of Nauvoo, Illinois. They were now beginning an historic trek that would end some 2,000 miles later in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake.

This was not the first time the Mormons, or more properly, the Latter-day Saints, had been expelled by their neighbors. Expulsion seemed to be a heritage that these people could not leave behind. Three previous times they had left hearth and home to seek more congenial surroundings, and each time they had found condemnation and violence. New York, Ohio, Missouri, and now Illinois had in turn found them a "loathsome cancer on

the body politic," and had proceeded to remove them before pollution occurred.[1]

Nauvoo, the Beautiful, had been the home of these people for six relatively comfortable years, and a city of refinement and lovely homes had been built by the fifteen to twenty thousand inhabitants. However, peace and contentment were not to be their lot. Anarchial terrorism in the form of mob action soon disrupted the tranquil existence. Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, while ostensibly under the protection of the law, was shot and killed June 27, 1844, and the fury of mob action soon forcibly evicted the Mormons. On February 4, 1846, the first wagons moved westward across the Mississippi River on barges.[2] Later the river froze across and long lines of wagons made their way across on the ice. A new era had begun: an era of hardship, toil, death, and discovery.

Across the river, the Saints gathered at Sugar Creek, Iowa, and there they remained until order and regrouping for the long journey ahead could be accomplished. Severe weather provided further hardship to these exiles who had left their homes only with what provisions they could carry in their various conveyances. Tents and wagons were the only shelter in temperatures that seldom rose above freezing.[3]

---

[1]B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), IV, 222. Stephen A. Douglas spoke of the Mormons using similar language in 1857.

[2]Preston Nibley, Exodus to Greatness (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1947), 109.

[3]Roberts, Op. cit., III, 40.
The thermometer registered as follows:
February 26, at 6 p.m., 10° above zero.
February 27, at 6 a.m., 5° above zero.
February 27, at 6 p.m., 21° above zero.
February 28, at 6 a.m., 20° above zero.
February 28, at 6 p.m., 26° above zero.

Order gradually replaced chaos and a definite system of march was established under the leadership of Brigham Young. Traveling companies were formed with one hundred families to each company. These were divided into two sub-companies of fifty families, who in turn were divided into five groups of ten families each. The captains of tens were responsible to the captains of fifties, who were subordinate to the captain of the hundred. This semi-military arrangement of pyramidal responsibility was then presided over by President Brigham Young and the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. Thus, the travel order was established that was to be utilized throughout the westward trek of these pioneers.[4]

Sunday morning, March 1, 1846, dawned clear and cold at the camp on Sugar Creek. Three or four inches of snow covered the ground and the thermometer registered 21° above zero. Early that morning the camp was astir for this was the day designated for departure westward. After a brief Sunday morning meeting, a group of four or five hundred wagons gathered at 2 p.m. and the march began.[5]

At times the cold was intense. The keen edge of the northwest winds that sweep south over the bald prairie from the ice bound regions of Slave Lake and Lake of the Woods in Canada multiplied the sharpness of the low temperatures. Frozen faces and hands were somewhat common, as were rheumatics and catarrhal infections, nevertheless the health of the camp was considered generally good.[6] However, despite the frequent reports of general good

---

[4]Nibley, op. cit., 119-120, 143.

[5]Ibid, 126-27.

[6]Ibid, 136.

health, the days of fatigue, followed by nights which they spent in wet blankets and freezing winds soon tended to impoverish systems. These weakened constitutions were soon to succumb to sickness and disease. The few who were laid to rest in tree bark coffins on the bleak Iowa prairie were only presages of a greater calamity to befall these pioneers.[7]

The spring came at last. It found the Mormons in the Sac and Fox country, still on the naked prairie, not yet half way over the trail they were following between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. Travel was made most difficult by the early spring thaw, late snows and rain. Swollen streams and the thick, deep mud of the prairie combined to slow the caravan to five or six miles per day. It was a trying time for animals as well as men. Eliza R. Snow records the following in her diary:

> We were traveling in the season significantly termed "between hay and grass," and the teams feeding mostly on browse, wasted in flesh, and had but little strength; and it was painful at times, to see the poor creatures straining every joint and ligament, doing their utmost, and looking the very picture of discouragement. When crossing the low lands, where spring rains had soaked the mellow soil, they frequently stalled on level ground, and we could move only by coupling teams, which made very slow progress.[8]

Occasionally a town or settlement was passed and supplies of food and equipment were bartered for or purchased. Money was rather a scarce commodity among the Saints. If they had been lucky enough to sell their property at Nauvoo it was done so for a mere pittance. Hence, feather mattresses, household furnishings, and labor took the place of specie payment. One of the stops made was at Richardson's Point, about fifty-five

---

[7]Thomas L. Kane, "The Mormons, a Discourse Delivered before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania," (Philadelphia: King and Baird Publishers, 1850), 16-17.

[8]Nibley, op. cit., 138.

miles northwest of Nauvoo. Here the Saints replenished their supplies. Brigham Young gives an interesting report of prices:

> Corn is plentiful at this point and has fallen since our arrival from 18 3/4 and 20 cents to 12 1/2 and 14 cents per bushel, and can be had in great abundance for making rails, roofing houses, building barns, etc., in which the brethren are daily engaged. Oats cost 12 1/2 cents per bushel, meal 25 cents, potatoes 20, timothy hay $4 per ton, fresh pork $2.50 per cwt., and bacon from 4 to 6 cents per pound. Twenty miles west corn is 20 cents and thirty miles west 25 cents.[9]

The company was delayed at Richardson's Point for a full week by the prairie quagmire. Moving on, the Saints fought the mud and storms past Chariton River, Shoal Creek, Locust Creek, and a few isolated farms. Communities and settlements were being left behind and food and supplies became increasingly difficult to obtain. Western Iowa was still Indian lands when the Mormons passed through, thus white communities were restricted to Indian agencies and poacher farms.[10]

It was at this time, when the Saints were nearing the east fork of Grand River, half way across the state of Iowa, that William Clayton, a member of the company, sat in his wagon and forged from musical symbols and poetic words a song that henceforth inspired the Mormon people. He wrote the following immortal lines:

> Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear,
> But with joy wend your way;
> Tho' hard to you this journey may appear,
> Grace shall be as your day.
> 'Tis better far for us to strive
> Our useless cares from us to drive;
> Do this, and joy your hearts will swell--
> All is well! All is well!

---

[9] Ibid., 136.

[10] Leroy R. Hafen and Carl C. Rister, Western America, (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), 358. As was usually the case with a newly opened territory, most of the Iowa population of 43,000 people in 1840 were located in the eastern half of the state.

. . . . . .
And should we die before our journey's through,
Happy day! All is well!
We then are free from toil and sorrow too;
With the just we shall dwell.
But if our lives are spared again,
To see the Saints their rest obtain,
Oh how we'll make the chorus swell—
All is well! All is well![11]

It was here on a stream called Weldon River that encampment was made on April 25, 1846. The place was called Garden Grove and was situated 144 miles from Nauvoo. Here a previously discussed plan was to be put into effect, viz., to fence and put in a crop of large acreage, leaving it for other camps to harvest as they later made their way westward. The company under Brigham Young was but a small part of the Mormon population. Thousands were yet to gather upon the plains from all parts of the earth, and there were still a considerable number behind this advance company along the trail and even in Nauvoo. All these people to follow could take advantage of this farsighted planning. Garden Grove, and later Mount Pisgah and Winter Quarters, were to be replenishing depots for those short of grain and food.

The pioneers fell to work the same day they arrived at Garden Grove. Three hundred fifty-nine bodied men were divided into a labor force. One hundred were to split rails; ten were appointed to build fences; forty-eight to build houses; twelve to dig wells; ten to build bridges; and the remainder were directed to clear land, plow, and plant. There was no place for idlers, and George Q. Cannon says, "the camp was like a hive of bees."[12]

Elder Samuel Bent was appointed to preside over this semi-permanent settlement with Aaron Johnson and David Fullmer as Councilors. Enough

---

[11]Nibley, op. cit., 151-52.

[12]Roberts, op. cit., III, 54.

families were left behind to carry on the work of caring for the crops planted. The major portion of the camp under President Young moved westward toward the Missouri River on May 13, 1846.[13]

Five days later and about thirty-five miles farther west the main body stopped at Grand River and set up the second replenishing settlement called Mount Pisgah. The beauty of the surrounding hills and rolling grasslands was spoken of frequently by the Saints. Here, again, the same plan was carried out as had been instituted at Garden Grove. Eventually, "several thousand acres" were enclosed and planted.[14] William Huntington was chosen to preside and Ezra T. Benson and Charles Rich were to be his Councilors. Again the major part of the company moved on toward the Missouri River.

It is difficult to estimate the number of Saints on the plains at this time. However, an estimate can be ventured by referring to reports given by travelers and the pioneers themselves. It would probably be safe to assume that there were in excess of five thousand Saints, in varying stages of progress between Nauvoo and President Young's advance company.[15] This number was soon to swell to over ten thousand.

After a relatively comfortable journey of a little over 100 miles, the Young company viewed the bluffs of the Missouri rising from the sluggish stream on June 14, 1846. This first stage of the larger journey to the Great Basin of the Rocky Mountains had been completed.

Reports and information available indicate that the name Council Bluffs, at this time, designated more a geographical situation than a settlement. The Lewis and Clark expedition had stopped here in 1804 and held a

---

[13]Nibley, op. cit., 165.

[14]Roberts, op. cit., III, 55.

[15]Nibley, op. cit., 172, 197.

council with the Indians inhabiting the area. Due to the prominence of the hills overlooking the Missouri River, Council-hills or Council Bluffs was the name applied to this place by these early explorers.[16] There seems to be no evidence that there was a settlement or trading post in the immediate vicinity of Council Bluffs where the Saints stopped, but Indian villages and fur traders frequented the area and at least two trading posts were within a few miles of the Bluffs. Six miles to the south was Sarpy's Trading Post at Council Point, while across the river a trading post had been set up since 1825 in the region of the later established city of Omaha.[17]

Camp was set up with the dispatch born of the wayfarer. Soon the white canvas of their wagons and tents was plumed with the smoke of campfires. The bluffs of the high prairie crowded in upon the river at this point, even overhanging it, thus representing an unusual and commanding elevation. A description of the camp is offered by Colonel Thomas L. Kane, a great friend of the Mormons, who visited the camp about a month after the first wagons arrived. Other wagon trains had swelled the numbers of the camp in the meantime; hence, his description involves a larger group.

> This landing, (a flat alluvial plateau between the bluffs and the river), and the large flat or bottom on the east side of the river, were crowded with covered carts and wagons; and each one of the Council Bluff hills opposite was crowded with its own great camp, gay with bright canvas and alive with the busy stir of swarming occupants. In the clear blue morning air the smoke streamed up from more than a thousand cooking fires. Countless roads and bypaths checkered all manner of geometric figures on the hill sides. Herd boys were dozing upon the slopes; sheep and horses, cows and oxen, were feeding around them, and other herds in the luxuriant meadow of the swollen river. From a single point I counted four thousand head of cattle in view at one time.

---

[16] "Council Bluffs," Encyclopedia Britannica, 1950, IV, 591.

[17] Nibley, op. cit., 216-17;
"Omaha," Encyclopedia Britannica, 1950 XVI, 785.

Then he adds a comment that viewers of Mormon life have always held as a singular peculiarity of these people: "As I approached the camp, it seemed to me that the children there were to prove still more numerous."[18]

It was Brigham Young's intention to proceed to the Rocky Mountains, and there settle in the valleys of Utah.[19] This journey was to be prosecuted as swiftly as possible. While resting and replenishing at Council Bluffs, plans were being formulated to send a company to the mountains even at this late season. Originally, Young had planned to form the Council of Twelve Apostles and a number of others into an advance company and with all haste leave Nauvoo and head for the Rocky Mountains. This forerunning group could then put in crops to sustain the coming deluge of exiles. However, due to the unpreparedness of many of the people, who pressed forward so as not to be left behind, the advance company were obliged to share their year's provisions with their less provident brethren.[20] This depletion of supplies had slowed the advance group considerably because of the necessity of obtaining new stores from Missouri settlements.

This delay made obvious the problems attached to the sending of an initial company to the Rocky Mountains for the purpose of planting crops this year, for the season had already progressed into summer. Nevertheless, President Young was still desirous of leading a group to the mountains to choose a site, put in seed and build a settlement. With this purpose in mind, he had asked for volunteers to leave their families at Council Bluffs and go west with the Twelve Apostles. The journey was prepared for and

---

[18]Kane, op. cit., 25-26.

[19]Nibley, op. cit., 131, 190.

[20]Ibid., 170.

Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Willard Richards had even moved their wagons down to the river preparatory to crossing.[21] However, that afternoon, Monday, June 29, 1846, a messenger rode into camp bearing a message that was to completely alter pending plans. The message had been relayed from Mount Pisgah where Captain James Allen of the United States Army had arrived to raise a considerable force of Mormon men for the war with Mexico which had recently erupted.[22]

Before further considering Captain Allen's mission, some background for this unusual circumstance should be mentioned. As early as January 26, 1846, while still in Nauvoo, President Young had instructed Jesse C. Little, President of the Church's Eastern States Mission, in these words: "If our Government should offer any facilities for emigrating to the western coast, embrace those facilities, if possible."[23] What "facilities" the church head had in mind is indicated by the proclamation of the Nauvoo High Council, January 20, 1846, wherein mention is made of President James K. Polk's message to Congress urging the building of block houses and stockade forts on the line of travel to Oregon. It is also significantly stated in the church document that the Saints would fight to help the United States maintain its title to the land of the Columbia. Therefore, it is rather evident that the Saints were hoping to secure government contracts to carry freight and build military installations on the Oregon Trail. The money thus earned would greatly facilitate the movement of these destitute people. The Oregon issue between Great Britain and the United States had caused considerable friction

---

[21] Ibid., 191.

[22] Roberts, op. cit., 65.

[23] Andrew L. Neff, History of Utah (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1940), 59.

and all eyes had turned to that theatre. However, the situation was amicably settled by the Buchanan-Pakenham Treaty which obviated the necessity of immediate military preparations in the Pacific Northwest.[24]

Nevertheless, on April 25, 1846, the Mexican War opened and Little sought to negotiate further and fulfill his original instructions. He called on President Polk and other dignitaries attempting to achieve some opportune arrangement to help his people. The eventual upshot of this negotiating was that the government agreed to enlist four or five companies of Mormon men as army volunteers to march west and secure California.[25]

The first word that Brigham Young received about these arrangements came through the messenger who had just arrived at Council Bluffs to interrupt the advance journey west. Captain Allen arrived the next day, June 30, 1846. On the following day he met with the authorities of the Church showing his authority for raising five hundred volunteers from the camps of the Saints. The same day President Young and Captain Allen addressed the brethren who had assembled, and the general Council voted unanimously to comply with the requisition from the government.[26]

It was a rather difficult time for these people to give up such a large group of their men. At a time when families were so much in need of a strong hand at the helm and mothers so dependent on the strength of their boys, over five hundred fathers and sons signed the rolls of what became known as the Mormon Battalion. After gathering supplies and equipment and receiving a brief taste of army life, the Battalion, on July 20, 1846, left families, teams and wagons standing on the prairie not expecting to meet or

---

[24]Ibid., 59-61.

[25]Ibid., 64-66.

[26]Andrew Jensen (compiler), Church Chronology (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1899), 30.

see them again for one or two years.[27] The thoughts of Sergeant William Hyde will suffice to illustrate the feelings of most of his companions:

> The thoughts of leaving my family at this critical time are indescribable. They were far from the land of their nativity, situated on a lonely prairie, with no dwelling but a wagon and the scorching sun beating upon them, with the prospect of the cold winds of December finding them in the same bleak and dreary place.
>
> My family consisted of a wife and two small children, who were left in company of a brother and aged mother and father. The most of the Battalion left families, some in care of the Church, some in care of relatives and some in their own care.[28]

Despite the disadvantages of giving up the men-folk and delaying the journey of the advance company until next season, there were some definite advantages accrued. First, it secured for the Saints the right of squatting on Indian lands for the winter. Second, the pay of the soldiers helped to outfit many of their families for the trek to the mountains. Third, charges of disloyalty to the Union leveled at the Mormons by some of their enemies were dispelled by this action. Fourth, friendly relations had been established with the Polk administration.[29] Thus, this phase of Mormon history had considerable affect on future courses and events.

With the Battalion gone, the futility of further advancement west at this late season was especially manifest. Hence, a place to which most of the Saints in Iowa could be gathered was sought. Scouts were sent north on both sides of the Missouri to survey the possibilities for winter encampment. There seemed to be more forage for the thousands of animals in camp on the west side, therefore, the pioneers moved across the river from Council Bluffs to a grove named Cutler's Park. Here a settlement was made until

---

[27]Roberts, op. cit., III, 84.

[28]Nibley, op. cit., 204.

[29]Neff, op. cit., 69.

further intelligence concerning a winter stopping place could be had.

It would be enlightening to stop for a moment and consider an over-all picture of the Saints at this time. A census taken at Cutler's Park on August 13, 1846, showed the following: 552 men and boys over ten years of age; wagons, 589; horses, 229; oxen, 2,005; mules, 49; cows, 1,168; sheep, 660. Through this information it may be gathered that the bulk of the Saints who had left Nauvoo were still at Garden Grove, Mount Pisgah, Council Bluffs, or on the road between these settlements. An exact count of these exiles is hard to approach, but they may have numbered between nine and ten thousand. By winter at least half of these people had crossed to the western side of the Missouri and joined President Young's camp.[30] Thus were the exiles arrayed just prior to the establishment of Winter Quarters.

---

[30]Nibley, op. cit., 220.

CHAPTER II

WINTER QUARTERS ESTABLISHED

On Tuesday, September 8, 1846, at Cutler's Park, a committee made up of Alanson Eldridge, Alpheus Cutler, Albert P. Rockwood, Jedediah M. Grant and Ezra Chase was chosen to select a location for Winter Quarters.[31] Through information supplied by the scouting parties that had been sent out a spot was chosen only a few miles north of Cutler's Park on the west side of the river. Here a rich growth of wild pea vines and rushes growing on both sides of the river afforded fine winter pasturage for the animals. The town itself was to be located on a high plateau overlooking the river. The selected site was some five or six miles above the present city of Omaha, Nebraska, and three or four miles north and across the river from Council Bluffs, Iowa. The land that was to be occupied was beautiful, consisting of alternating stretches of prairie and woodlands, and disected in multiple by the streams that wound their way to the river. The great Missouri, meandering between sharp, irregular bluffs, afforded stretches of scenery along its bottom lands that were unsurpassed in beauty.[32]

One of the pioneers, Parley P. Pratt recorded his description of the land surrounding the new site:

> The land sloped up from the immediate banks of the river sufficiently high to be secure from high water, and then

---

[31] Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Office), September 8, 1846.

[32] Roberts, op. cit., III, 131-32.

stretched away in an unbroken plain to the hills, which swelled up at less than half a mile distant in beautiful rounded grassy points, or in rising benches, one above another.[33]

Hosea Stout, another of the Saints, speaks of the townsite itself:

The city, for so it was laid out, was situated on a level flat on the second bluff from the river, and about fifty or sixty feet above the watter [sic] and was quite narrow at the North End of the city. The third Bluff comeing [sic] near to the river. As you go south the river seems to retreat from this bluff leaving this flat or city ground wider as you go south. The city is one mile from South to North and bounded at each end by two brooks of good running water. . . . This was a most beautiful and delightful situation for a city and I was well pleased with this my first view of it.[34]

President Young and a council of the leading brethren met on Wednesday, September 16, 1846, approved the location, and voted that the people have the privilege of moving to their new lots and building as soon as they pleased.[35]

One week later, on September 23, the camp began to move to the new location of Winter Quarters. Tents came down and the camp, resembling a great serpent unwinding, made its way the short distance to the new location.[36] The Sunday following saw the Saints holding their first public meeting at their new homesite.[37]

There was considerable controversy at this time regarding the legality of the Saints' occupying this land as it belonged to the Omaha and Pottawatamie Indians. The question came to a head when Major H. M. Harvey, superintendent of Indian Affairs, called on President Young at Winter

---

[33]Parley P. Pratt, editor, Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1950), 344.

[34]Hosea Stout, Diary of Hosea Stout, Mss., (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University), III, 1.

[35]Andrew Jensen (compiler), "Winter Quarters", Nebraska Settlements (Salt Lake City: Historian's Office, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), September 11, 1846. This volume is found in the Manuscript History.

[36]Jensen, Church Chronology, op. cit., 31

[37]Ibid., 31.

Quarters on November 1. The major wished the camp to remove from the lands belonging to the Indians and complained of the Saints burning the Indian's wood. He claimed that he had received letters from the Department of Indian Affairs on the subject, and that his instructions were that no white person should be permitted to settle on the lands of the Indians without the authority of the government. President Young explained to him that their delay had been occasioned by the demand that had been made on them by the government to furnish troops. The most efficient men of the camp had gone as soldiers to Mexico in the service of the United States, and their families were left destitute and dependent on their friends in the camp, who could not proceed without leaving them to suffer.[38] President Young left no doubt as to his intent when he added that "they would not move from either side of the river" until they were ready to pursue their journey westward.[39]

Perhaps, Major Harvey had been only fulfilling his duties in coming to the Saints. However, some of the brethren, at the end of their patience, felt that it was a further attempt to persecute them. Willard Richards wrote a letter to Thomas L. Kane in which he gives vent to his feelings and closes with: "But enough of this for the present, only to give you a conjecture, how little petty officers are carrying sail in the west."[40]

Matters soon cleared up, however, as the Federal Department of Indian Affairs was not quite as anxious for the Saints' removal as Major Harvey represented. Colonel James Allen, who had recruited the Mormon Battalion had given the Mormons written permission to occupy the Indian lands.

---

[38]Andrew Jensen (compiler), Historical Record (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1882-1890) VIII, 891.

[39]Nibley, op. cit., 265.

[40]Ibid., 271.

Also, the Indians themselves gave their written consent for the Mormon people "to tarry upon our lands for two years or more . . . [and] the privilege of using all the wood and timber that they shall require . . . ."[41] The paper was signed by Big Elk, Standing Elk, and Little Chief of the Omaha Nation. Colonel Kane also interceded in the Saints' behalf and did much to get the Department of Indian Affairs finally to grant permission for them to remain on the lands. An excerpt from a letter sent by the Office of Indian Affairs to Major Harvey illustrates the government's viewpoint:

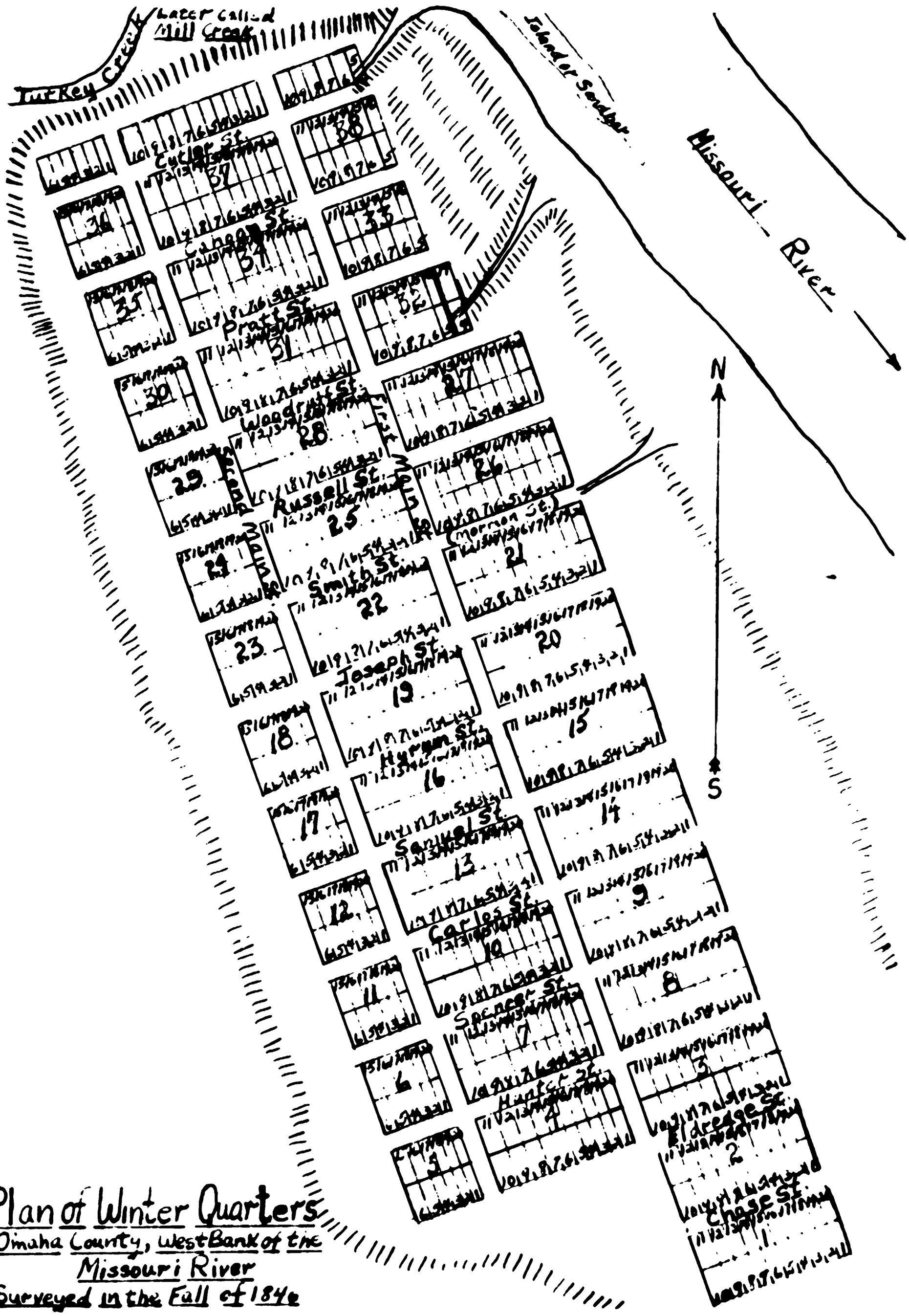
> . . . If their continuance is really to be temporary and for such length of time only as will enable them to supply their wants and procure the necessary means for proceeding on their journey, the government will interpose no objections.
>
> The want of provisions and the near approach of winter, which will have set in before they can reach their proposed destination, would necessarily expose them to much suffering, if not to starvation and death; while on the other hand, a location and continuance for any very considerable length of time near Council Bluffs, would interfere with the removal of the Indians, an object of much interest to the people of that region of country, delay the survey and sales of the lands in question, and thus in all probability bring about a difficulty between Iowa, now about to come into the union as a state, and the general government. Both these extremes, in the opinion of the president, should be avoided. The rights and interests of Iowa, now that the Indian title has been extinguished, may not be jeopardized, while the laws of humanity and the rights of hospitality should not be disregarded.[42]

No sooner had the people begun to arrive at Winter Quarters than the greatest activity prevailed. This was to be a planned city. It was laid off into forty-one blocks and 820 lots. Streets and byways were regularly constructed, and the spacing of buildings properly supervised. Labor forces were organized. The men were divided into groups to build fences, houses, and bridges, to dig wells, split rails, clear land, plow, and plant.

---

[41]Roberts, op. cit., III, 146.

[42]Ibid., 139.



Plan of Winter Quarters
Omaha County, West Bank of the Missouri River
Surveyed in the Fall of 1846

There was no place for the idler; indeed, idleness was considered just cause for disfellowship. The heavy air over the slow-moving Missouri resounded with the sharp bite of the axe and the shouts of men. The lowlands where the cottonwood tree grows were full of men and teams cutting and drawing logs to the river for houses. Their industry was of a cooperative nature. Neighbor helped neighbor until each had a shelter over his head.

Homes were first to be planned and erected. Each full block was to contain twenty lots. Young proposed that the brethren build their homes on the outside of these blocks leaving the inner area for yards and gardens. Five wells to a block were deemed sufficient and were so constructed.[43] There were two types of dwellings that predominated: the log house and the dugout. Of the two, the log house became the chief type of shelter. These buildings were generally of logs from 12 to 18 feet long made from oak and cottonwood timber. Many of the roofs were made by splitting oak timber into boards, called shakes, about 3 feet long and 6 inches wide, and kept in place by weights and poles. Other roofs were made of willows, straw, and earth, about a foot thick. Most of the walls were daubed with clay, not only for the purpose of stopping the holes but to make the wall smooth in appearance. Many of these cabins had no floors, but the hard, foot tamped ground was made to serve the purpose. The dugouts were situated on the sidehills, and were constructed by the method the name implies. Using the earth as much as possible to perform the function of walls, these dugouts were usually roofed with straw and dirt supported by a ridge-pole held up by two uprights in the center. The structure would be very similar in construction to our present potato storage bins.[44]

---

[43]Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit., October 18, 1846.

[44]Ibid., December 31, 1846.

Both types of dwellings usually had a door made of shakes, with wooden hinges and string latches. As to furnishings, a few had stoves, but the majority made their cooking facilities from clay and brick which they manufactured themselves. Helen Mar Whitney, one of the women, gives a picture of her one room log house which was probably typical of others:

> This, like the majority of houses, was covered with sod, and the chimneys were built of the same. The house had one door and one window, with four panes of glass, but no floor. . . . Our floor we managed to cover with canvas, or pieces of carpeting which had outlived the storms, and the wear and tear while journeying from the States. We made curtains serve as a partition to divide the bedrooms from the kitchen. Most of our furniture we had made to order, such as cupboards and bedsteads, they being attached to the house; also, tables, chairs, stools, and an occasional rocking chair, relics of other days, graced our ingleside.[45]

These were relatively comfortable abodes, except when a heavy storm arose and the water began to seep through the sod roofs. Eliza Lyman's diary dated October 15, 1846, tells of her experience:

> We have taken possession of our log house today. The first house my babe was ever in. I feel extremely thankful for the privilege of sitting by a fire where the wind cannot blow it in every direction and where I can warm one side without freezing the other. Our house is minus floor and many other comforts but the walls protect us from the wind if the sod roof does not from the rain.[46]

Small conveniences loomed large to the Saints. A roof overhead was seemingly all they needed to make a home where children could smile and older folks could relax from the daily rigors. Hosea Stout gives us an insight into this feeling and condition which was so typical of many:

> Today I was employed in moving into my little house now partly finished it being 12 feet square on the outside. . . . Tonight myself and family had the pleasure of once more

---

[45] Ibid., November 8, 1846.

[46] Eliza Lyman, Autobiography and Diary of Eliza Marie Partridge (Smith) Lyman (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1945), 27.

sleeping in our own house for the first time since we left Nauvoo on the 9th day of last February, making nine months and fifteen days that we lived without a house. During which time we have undere went almost every change of fortune that could be imagined. One half of my family so dear to me has been consigned to the silent grave and we who yet remain have often been brought to the verge of death often in storms and rains have I stood to hold my tent from uncovering the sick family expecting every moment to see them exposed to the rain and wind which would have been certain death. Often have I lain and contemplated my own sickness and feeble situation, without anything for myself and family to eat with death staring me in the face and could only contemplate what would become of them in case I was called away.

And worse yet how often have I beheld my family one by one yielding up the Ghost and bereaving me of every earthly prospect with the melancholy reflection that there was yet more soon to follow. How often in sorrow and anguish have I said in my heart. When shall my trials and tribulations end. But amid all these adverse changes, these heart wrending trials not once yet have I ever regreted that I set out to follow the council of the people of God and to obey the voice of the spirit to flee from the land of the Gentiles.

But to return home again. We did not enjoy much comfort tonight for my house was yet open. Neither door nor windows not even but few of the craks was yet stoped and a hard north wind blowing. We were exposed to it all & could not sleep but little tonight but lay shivering in the cold all night. The only thing that was any satisfaction to us was that we were out of the tent for if we had been there in addition to our troubles & cold we would have been expecting the tent to blow down every moment, and thus left to the 'mercilous blast,' which to be delivered from was even a great satisfaction. This day was the first day that my only living child now 7 months & 2 days old ever was in a house, being born in the wild rude and uninhabited prairies and remained so till now a perfect child of nature! So much for my 'new house or more properly speaking my little Shanty'.[47]

This picture was not out of proportion but, indeed, was indicative of what the majority had to face. Whatever faults or virtues the Mormons may have possessed, one prerequisite was a stout heart.

---

[47]Stout, op. cit., III, 25. Punctuation and spelling as in the manuscript.

In a relatively short time a "miracle" city with pattern and form stood in the wilderness. John D. Lee wrote in his diary his impression of the fruits of their labors.

> . . . I was astonished when I looked arround [sic] and saw what serious enterprize and industry had brought to pass within 6 weeks past. A city of at least 400 houses had been erected in that short space of time, through the ingenuity of the Saints.[48]

In three months time about 700 houses had been erected, and eventually in the spring of 1847 one thousand homes overlooked the Missouri.[49]

Raising homes was not the only kind of building activity. It was the aim of Brigham Young and the other presiding elders to devise continual means of employment throughout the dreary winter to come, lest idleness lead to unhappiness and discontent. Worthy and needful projects were thus embarked upon. The village was enclosed with a stockade. Some crude fortifications and a blockhouse were erected as precautions against the thieving Omaha and warlike Sioux Indians. A meeting house for council and public worship was built. It measured 32 feet by 32 feet, which was large enough for socials, dances, and other forms of recreation that were held periodically. Indeed, the Council House became somewhat the center of social activities for the town.[50]

Workshops of various kinds were added as the need arose. Down on the river could be seen the beginnings of a water-powered grist mill; it was worked on all winter and finished the following spring. Hosea Stout's diary for March 20th records its first operation: "It runs beautifully grand and does a good business."[51]

---

[48]John D. Lee, Journals of John D. Lee (Salt Lake City: Western Printing Company, 1938), 17.

[49]E. Cecil McGavin, The Mormon Pioneers (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, 1947), 135.

[50]Jensen, op. cit., December 22, 1846. [51]Stout, op. cit., III, 85.

The mill proved a considerable boon to the pioneers for they no longer had to grind their corn and grain with a mortar and pestle or in their small hand mills, which required much time and strength. The flour and meal was also of a finer texture, which the ladies must have appreciated.

There was a peculiar city government established. It was of a theocratic nature with, of course, their Prophet and leader, Brigham Young at the head of the organization. A high council was selected, which was in this case authorized to exercise the functions both of an ecclesiastical high council, and also a civic or municipal council. The duties of this high council were to oversee and guard the conduct of the Saints, and counsel them that the laws of God and good order might not be infringed upon.[52]

The city was then divided into 13 wards; later it was increased to 22. These wards were specified areas, usually with from 100 to 300 inhabitants, who were presided over by a Bishop and two Councilors. The Bishops were to look after both the spiritual and temporal welfare of the people, to suggest industrial activities, look to the maintenance of sanitary conditions, care for the poor and sick, and, in general, see that the Saints attended to their duties.

The community had self-imposed laws and regulations. These laws usually took the form of edicts or pronouncements from the councils of their wisest men. There was need of law enforcement to prevent people from trespassing upon each other, keep livestock from running at large in gardens and camp grounds, to guard the camp from the intrusion of strangers, to keep watch on the Indians who had a strong propensity for stealing and in

---

[52]Roberts, op. cit., III, 149-50. Brigham Young was presiding as president of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, as his elevation to the First Presidency did not come until late in 1847.

general, to preserve the peace. Hence, a city guard or police force was established, with Stephen Markham as Colonel and Commanding Officer and Hosea Stout as Lieutenant Colonel. The duties of the force are recorded in Stout's diary:

> Firstly, the guard must be put on duty at or before 8 o'clock in the evening and not released untill [sic] the people are generally up in the morning.
> Secondly, to keep on duty 4 men at a time, each man to remain on duty one half of the night.
> Thirdly, to post two men on the north and two on the south of the public or council lot.
> Fourthly, their duty shall be to guard the city against fires or any accident which may happen to occur to interrupt the peace or destroy the property of the citizens.[53]

Stout reports that there was some objection to the formation of a police force. Apparently the "police tax" that was levied to support the force was the chief complaint of the disgruntled objectors, a few of whom left Winter Quarters rather than pay it.[54]

One other civic function was organized: an independent mail service for all the camps between Nauvoo and Winter Quarters. This did much to facilitate the forwarding of news and information, and it bound the people together in mutual sympathies and helpfulness.[55]

A considerable amount of trade and commercial activity sprang up, for procuring food and supplies for such a large number of people was a major problem. There were two main sources from which the people could supply themselves: (1) trading posts, such as Sarpy's at Council Point; and, (2) Missouri and Iowa settlements.

It seems that the trading posts were resorted to when buying in small amounts or when a family had cash to pay, for payment in cash was the

---

[53]Stout, op. cit., III, 6.

[54]Ibid, 42-43.

[55]Roberts, op. cit., III, 131.

usual means of carrying on business at these establishments. The prices were also higher as you got farther from civilization, and this axiom held true in these outposts of the Indian country.

Lacking the cash needed to purchase at the trading posts, most of the Saints found it easier, or at least more expedient, to trade labor and personal belongings in Missouri and Iowa to the farmers and settlements. Probably the major trading area was opened up in upper Missouri from 60 to 100 miles distant. Accounts of trips into this region, as recorded in the annals of the pioneers, are many and varied. Perhaps, the account left by Appleton M. Harmon will suffice to illustrate the problems and goals of these Missouri trips, as well as the literary shortcomings of some of the Saints:

> January, 1847. By this time our store of provisions was runing low and I started in Company with Briant Strigam to Missouri with an ox team to sell a waggon to git money to replenish our stock of eatables. In this trip I suffered greatly with coald my clothes, were worn rather thin and the Howling blasts of the bald prairies was pearcing as we had to go at the tardy ox pace. We went 150 miles into the State of Mo. Sold the waggon and got a load of corn pork Groceries and the like and started for home.[56]

Wagons, horses, harness, articles of furniture, cash, labor, personal articles such as Orson Pratt's "fifteen shooter" and William Clayton's gold watch were all sacrificed in order to get what the pioneers needed in the way of food and supplies.[57]

Two of the more ingenious pioneers, evidently preferring not to split rails at 50 cents a hundred, devised another method of raising money. Priddy Meeks and his brother went to Wilkensen, Missouri, where they

---

[56]Appleton M. Harmon, Diary of Appleton M. Harmon, Mss., (Provo, Utah: copied by Brigham Young University, 1940), 8-9. His mother and sister died before he got back, within ten days of each other.

[57]Nibley, op. cit., 187.

gathered chickasaw plums and elderberries on the hills. They then proceeded to make 80 gallons of wine which they later sold for a "badly needed outfit."[58]

Prices varied with the season, but reports indicate that sugar by the barrel could be had for 13 cents a pound; coffee, 12 1/2 cents a pound; salt, $1.25 a bushel; molasses, 63 to 75 cents per gallon; white beans, 50 cents a bushel; pork, from 2 to 4 cents a pound; corn, from 20 to 50 cents a bushel; wheat, from 31 to 50 cents a bushel; butter, 10 cents a pound; and potatoes went from 50 cents to as high as $1 per bushel.[59]

The Indians were of only small consequence in trading activities. The Omahas were a poor and needy tribe with only enough to sustain themselves. However they did come to the camp occasionally with beef to sell. Horace Whitney commented that it was "no doubt relics of some of our cattle."[60]

While the "city was a building" and trading activities were being carried on, other tasks and vocations required time and effort. Some of the Saints were organized for the purpose of breaking up lands and putting in the next year's crop. Others were assigned to herd the great droves of cattle on the rush bottoms of the river, to construct stock shelters and to gather hay for winter.[61] Caring for the animals must have been a herculean task, for some estimates of their number reach as high as 30,000.[62] These large herds of cattle, horses, mules, sheep, etc., found ample forage among the rushes which grew in great profusion along the river. However, great

---

[58]Mabel Harmer, The Story of the Mormon Pioneers (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1943), 44.

[59]Lee, op. cit., December 15, 1846.
Stout, op. cit., III, 42.

[60]Nibley, op. cit., 256.

[61]Roberts, op. cit., III, 149.

[62]Ibid., III, 140.

care had to be exercised, for if the rush was eaten too freely or if eaten when the weather was cold enough to freeze the water contained in the head then the rush could prove dangerous and sometimes would kill the animals that ate them.[63]

Furniture had to be made. Due to the bulky nature of these articles, much was left behind at Nauvoo, while a great quantity more had been traded for food and supplies. Chairs of willows and tables of wagon seats and split logs graced the interior of the cabins. Oak boards, roughly hewn, supplied a bed frame which occasionally cradled a feather mattress, but probably more often supported a bed tick filled with grass and leaves. Much of this activity required the use of boards, scantling, rails, posts, etc., and men were continually felling trees and splitting the trunks as readily as the most expert backwoodsmen of their day.[64]

Another activity took the form of a vocation for twenty or thirty persons who had no other means of making a living. A factory to manufacture willow baskets was established by the Seventies Quorum. Washboards and half-bushel measures were also produced. Such wares they hoped to be able to sell in the settlements of Missouri.[65]

The women carried a work load that rivaled that of the men. Family needs were supplied through ingenious methods of reusage and invention. With many husbands and sons gone with the Battalion, women often accomplished the work usually assigned to the male household member. Perhaps a cross-section of the women's chores could be had by referring to Eliza Lyman's

---

[63]Jensen, Historical Record, VIII, 891.

[64]H. H. Bancroft, History of Utah (San Francisco, Bancroft and Co., 1890), 247-248.

[65]Stout, op. cit., III, 42-43.
Jensen, Historical Record, VIII, 894.

diary. Her husband, Amasa Lyman, was one of the Twelve Apostles, and his duties often required him to be elsewhere. Hence, the responsibilities attendant to keeping hearth and home in correct order were left to her alone. One day she hunted for a lost cow. Following days found her spinning wool, working in the garden, carding wool, making clothes, making a cheese, digging potatoes, doing housework, building part of a log cabin, building the fire place and chimney, and quilting. These duties were supplemented by others, and the endless repetition of the daily tasks peculiar to the household added to the burden.[66]

Village activity soon lost its feverish pitch and settled down to a more leisurely routine. The frost of fall was in the air, and winter lay just ahead. Homes were made as comfortable as possible and incidents attendant to family life were carried out with regularity and dispatch. H. H. Bancroft, in words as picturesque as the lives of these pioneers, portrays a scene from their daily existence that strikes a nostalgic chord:

> As evening approached, the tinkling of cattle bells announced the return of the men, when the women went forth to meet them, and welcome them back to their log hut and frugal meal. Then, a little later all sounds were hushed, save that on the still night arose the strains of the evening hymn and the murmur of the evening prayer, the day closing, as it had commenced, with a supplication for the blessing of the Almighty, and with heartfelt thanksgiving that He had been pleased to deliver His people from the hands of their persecutors.[67]

---

[66]Eliza P. Lyman, Autobiography and Diary of Eliza Marie Partridge Lyman (Provo, Utah: copied by Brigham Young University, 1945), May, June, 1847.

[67]Bancroft, op. cit., 250.

180397

CHAPTER III

ASPECTS OF CAMP LIFE

On Thursday, December 24, 1846, the following report was given at a Bishop's meeting. It gives a numerical tabulation of the circumstances of the village.

> . . . there is now in the city 3,483 inhabitants. 75 widows. 386 sick - 502 well men 117 sick men 138 absent men 814 waggons [sic], 84½ days tithing done 83 3/4 cords of wood drawn for tithing 561 1/4 days work done on the mill race. 145 horses - 29 mules. 388½ yoke of oxen and 463 cows in camp. 53 women whose husbands are in the army.[68]

There had been a considerable influx of Saints over the past several weeks, and the number of wards was increased from the original thirteen to twenty-two.

At times, the food situation proved rather desperate. By sharing with one another what they had, none died outright from starvation except those who had fallen in out-of-the-way places that the hand of brotherhood could not reach.[69]

Thomas Kane observed the situation at first hand:

> If but a part of a group was supplied with provision the only result was that the whole went on half or quarter ration, according to the sufficiency that there was among them: and this so ungrudgingly and contentedly, that till some crisis of trial to their strength, they were themselves unaware that their health was sinking, and their vital forces impaired.[70]

---

[68]Stout, op. cit. III 38. Also, Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit. December 20, 1841.

[69]Kane, op. cit., 18. The investigations of the author of this thesis have failed to reveal any documented cases of starvation.

[70]Ibid., 18.

Much charity was manifested by the sharing of food at a time when food was a scarcity. Colonel Kane had this to say of the Mormon people after his visit with them:

> Wherever I was compelled to tarry, I was certain to find shelter and hospitality, scant, indeed, but never stinted, and always honest and kind, after a recent unavoidable association with the border inhabitants of Western Missouri and Iowa, the vile scum which our own society, to apply the words of an admirable gentleman and eminent divine, "like the great ocean washes upon its frontier shores." I can scarcely describe the gratification I felt in associating again with persons who were almost all of Eastern American origin--persons of refined and cleanly habits and decent language, and in observing their peculiar and interesting mode of life; while everyday seemed to bring with it its own special incident, fruitful in the illustration of habits and character.[71]

The postulate, "share and share alike," seemed to be a universal characteristic of the Saints. There were a number of poor people, widows, and families whose fathers had left with the Mormon Battalion. These were cared for in all diligence. At a High Council meeting President Young moved that each able-bodied man be taxed every tenth day, which was to be used in getting wood and doing other necessary tasks for the poor.[72] He also instructed the Bishops to have houses constructed immediately for all the widows, and that these sisters were to stop paying out what money they had for buildings.[73] During the winter several large feasts were held by the Bishops for those who were poor and had been unable to attend any of the other parties of the city.

So it was that the more unfortunate were cared for along with the rest.

---

[71]Kane, op. cit., 27.

[72]Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit., November 25, 1846.

[73]Lee, op. cit., 29.

They suffered not so much from the lack of food as from the absence of a diversified diet. Corn bread and pork were the principal foods to be found in the wooden and pewter bowls.[74] Helen Mar Kimball tells of the situation:

> Many of the brethren have gone down into Missouri to work, or to trade, for provisions, which consisted mostly of corn and bacon; the latter, with corn meal cakes, was our main subsistence during the winter. Vegetables, and many of the necessaries of life were not obtainable. Indian meal cake and puddings we considered very nice when used as rarities, as we were accustomed to doing in the East; but when we had little or no change, they became somewhat nauseous, particularly to the sick and delicate.[75]

Corn flour, corn grits, hominy, and whole kernels of boiled wheat were alternated as to make one meal seem different from another. Milk and its by-products were quite prevalent.[76] Vegetables were absent from the tables of most for a whole year.[77] Herein lies the cause of one of the scourging sicknesses that swept the camp. It was a considerable problem to transport fresh vegetables for 150 miles from Missouri at the slow pace of the ox cart, even when they were obtainable. Thus, staples, such as corn and wheat, that could be preserved and stored over a period of time were the main items purchased.

Other means of procuring food were exercised. There was some game available, and occasionally a deer or prairie chicken was provided for the family table. Scavenging the country side for hazel nuts, grapes, elderberries, wild honey, etc., produced a welcome addition to the diet during the season. Fishing was quite a common activity. A committee was formed

---

[74]Jensen, Historical Record, VIII, 892-93.

[75]Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit., November 12, 1846.

[76]Bancroft, op. cit., 250.

[77]Jensen, Historical Record, VIII, 101.

under Phineas Richards to supply the camp with fish. A seine four yards wide and forty yards long was constructed and taken up the river about twenty miles to a small lake that offered excellent fishing. Many loads of fish were extracted and distributed among the people.[78]

Shortly after the Saints' arrival in the Missouri River country in the summer of 1846, their annals and diaries began hinting of the scourges that were shortly to come to pass. Excerpts such as these became more regular and common: "At home. Had the sick headache."[79] "I was uncommonly sick today and lame in the hip, somewhat rheumatic."[80] The sickness made a slow start, but soon it raged and claimed victims from nearly every family. The scurvy (it was also called blackleg or canker by the Saints) and the fever (probably typhoid and diptheria) claimed victim after victim. Colonel Kane arrived in camp during this trying time and reports the conditions:

> In the camp nearest us on the west, which was that of the bridging party near the Corne, . . . I found as early as the 31st of July, that 37 percent of its inhabitants were down with the fever, and a sort of strange scorbutic disease, frequently fatal, which they named the Black Canker. The camps to the East of us which were all on the eastern side of the Missouri, were yet worse fated.[81]

The scurvy or "blackleg" was caused by the want of vegetable food and living so long on salt meat without it. The disease would commence with dark streaks and pains in the ends of the fingers and toes, which increased and spread until the limbs were inflamed and became almost black, causing intense agony.[82]

---

[78]Harmer, op. cit., 47.

[79]Stout, op. cit., III, 7.

[80]Ibid., III, 60.

[81]Kane, op. cit., 48.

[82]Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit., March 14, 1847.

Helen Mar Kimball contracted the disease and gives a vivid picture of its effects:

> Before I was able to sit up the scurvy laid hold of me commencing at the tips of the fingers of my left hand with black streaks running up the nails, with inflammation, and the most intense pain which increased until it had reached my shoulder. Poultices of scraped potatoes, the best thing it was considered to reduce the inflammation would turn black as soon as applied, and for all they were changed every few minutes for fresh things, it was all to no effect.[83]

A young boy, George Bean, who had been gone for sometime, returned to Winter Quarters to find his family in a pitiable state as a result of the "blackleg:"

> I found my folks in a very unsatisfactory condition. Father was off in Missouri one hundred miles away seeking for bread and other provisions. Mother was sick, Casper had gone with the Mormon Battallion [sic], his wife and child were sick, my brother James A., and sister Mary Elizabeth, aged ten years, were sick in bed, and my youngest sister had died two months before, aged seven years. . . . Nancy, the eldest, was the only one well enough to wait upon them. To make matters worse, they had nothing whatever for sick people to eat or for medicine. Dozens of neighbors had died with scurvy and blackleg because of no vegetables or decent food, and the sight of my loved ones being in this condition with nothing but corn, pounded in a mortar, for food, and no one strong enough to pound it, was pitiful. I was strong and fat and had some little cash left, so I swung the pestle in the mortar to good advantage for immediate needs and next day went on horseback to Sarpee Trading Post, ten miles away, where I got some white flour, dried fruit, sugar, teas, rice, etc., things that the half starved people could use. Father had been obliged to sell his sheep, though most of them were lost during sickness--no one to care for them. He also sold the mare, last of our horses, also the feather beds, plows, etc., for food, medicine, etc.[84]

The experiences and suffering of this disease were thus multiplied and undergone by many of the Saints. As long as they were at Winter Quarters the scurvy was never completely overcome, but it was arrested considerably

---

[83] Ibid., May 6, 1847.

[84] F. D. B. Horne, editor, Autobiography of George W. Bean (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Company, 1945), 30-31.

by potatoes brought from Missouri. Some potato seed was obtained and a small quantity was grown at the settlement. They also found some horse-radish growing in an old abandoned fort a few miles above town which had an excellent effect in checking the disease.

The chills and fever, spoken of so frequently in the journals and death lists, was the greatest single cause of death and suffering experienced by the pioneers. The swampy, miasmatic conditions of the Missouri bottom land undoubtedly contributed to this sickness. Colonel Kane described the region:

> During a considerable part of summer and autumn, the climate of the "Missouri Bottom" is singularly pestiferous. Its rich soil, resembling a compost heap, is continually the repository of the decaying, lush vegetation that grows along the river. Streams and creeks freely water the surrounding land giving it a swampy nature. In the season of drought these streams and the river dry down till they run impure as open sewers, exposing foul broad flats interspersed here and there by limbs of half-burried carrion tree-trunks, or by occasional yellow pools of tepid water; all together steaming up thick vapors redolent of the diseases of the swamp.[85]

It was under these conditions that the Indians, who had inhabited the "Bottoms" the year previously (1845), lost one-ninth of their number in two months.[86] The Mormons were likewise scourged severly. Long continued endurance of want and hardship had undoubtedly reduced their systems to a low state, which tends to explain the high rate of mortality.

The chills and fever seemed to take the heaviest toll during the late summer and autumn months. The victims would be prostrated for weeks at a time enduring alternately a burning fever and a cold, clammy sweat. When the fever had subsided, if it did not end in death, the victims were

---

[85]Kane, op. cit., 48-49.

[86]Ibid., 51.

often plagued with sores and various infections.[87]

Colonel Kane graphically portrays a distressing scene:

> In some of these [the various camps] the fever prevailed to such an extent that hardly any escaped it. They let their cows go unmilked. They wanted for voices to raise the psalm on Sundays. The few who were able to keep their feet, went about among the tents and wagons with food and water, like nurses through the wards of an infirmary. Here at one time the digging got behind hand; burials were slow and you might see women sitting in the open tents keeping the flies off their dead children, some time after decomposition had set in.[88]

Dropsy, dysentery, colic, etc., added their occasional victim to the hillside cemetery. Winter Quarters had turned into a city of pain and sickness. One man, Hosea Stout, who had lost a wife and child on the same day, wrote in his diary: "There is only four of us left and whose turn will be next God only knows."[89]

The following entries in the "List of the Deaths and Burials in the Camps of Israel," tell the heart wrending experience of Stillman Pond, one of the pioneers:

> Laura Jane Pond, age 14, daughter of Stillman and Almira, died December 2, 1846 of chills and fever.
> Harriet M. Pond, age 11, daughter of Stillman and Almira, died December 4, 1846 of chills.
> Abigail A. Pond, age 18, daughter of Stillman and Almira, died December 7, 1846 of chills.
> Lyman Pond, age 6, son of Stillman and Almira, died January 15, 1847 of chills.
> Almira Pond, age 34, wife of Stillman, died May 17, 1847 of consumption.[90]

---

[87]Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit., May 6, 1847. Also, McGavin, op. cit., 140.

[88]Kane, op. cit., 50.

[89]Stout, op. cit., III, 3.

[90]Jensen, "List of the Deaths and Burials in the camps of Israel," Nebraska Settlements (Salt Lake City: Historians Office, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), 4, 5, 7. This volume is found in the Manuscript History.

Thus, in a matter of a month's time he lost his four children, and shortly thereafter, his wife joined them, leaving him alone. It was not uncommon for a family to lose more than one member to the castigating diseases.

Following is a list of the three most prevalent causes of death from September 14, 1846 to January 30, 1848, and the number of victims claimed by each. This is an incomplete tabulation for of the 361 names mentioned in the records, only 259 had cause of death listed. Hence, of those recorded, the following tabulation results.

Month	Year	Chills and Fever	Canker or Scurvy	Consumption
September, October	1846	17	2	0
November	1846	8	4	2
December	1846	12	6	1
January.	1847	7	3	1
February, March.	1847	3	4	5
March, April	1847	2	12	2
April, May, June	1847	4	8	5
July, August	1847	8	2	7
August, September.	1847	12	6	2
September, October, November . .	1847	5	6	1
November, December, January. . .	1847-48	6	5	5
Totals		84	58	31
Percent of Listed Causes		32%	22%	12%

Therefore of those 259 recorded causes, 66 percent were due to the above three ailments.[91]

However, the sickness was finally checked to some degree. The addition of vegetable food helped curtail the scurvy, while the coming of winter reduced the number of chill and fever cases. By the first of the

---

[91]Jensen, "List of the Deaths and Burials in the Camps of Israel," op. cit., 1-12.

year (1847) general health was restored to a fairly normal state. But about 600 graves were accounted for when the Saints left Winter Quarters.[92]

Nevertheless, despite the suffering and hardships, there was a much lighter side to the lives of these people. Their religion was not austere to the point of crowding out and excluding the joys of living. They could make fun and frolic of their trials and often turn sharp suffering into full, round laughter against themselves. Colonel Kane records that he "heard more jests and 'Joe Miller' . . . than I am likely to hear in all the remainder of my days. This, too, was at a time of serious affliction".[93]

Sparkling merriment and intellectual playfulness took the form of games, dances, family gatherings and song fests. The lively strains of the violin or the round, hollow notes of the horn livened the evenings after the long day's work.

Dancing seemed to be one of the main diversions. Reels, waltzes, and foxtrots must have been exploited fully. The Council House, after its completion, was the scene of a dedicatory dance. Straw was placed upon the floor, and the walls were draped with sheets. Lighted candles, hung from wall and ceiling.[94] The people gathered and the dance was ready to proceed.

> President Brigham Young sent for the 12 (Council of 12 Apostles) and band who were on hand to execute his will and pleasure. The band was seated in the south part of the house. Pres. B. Young, after some brief though striking instructions, took the council of 12 and seventies, placed them on the floor in a dancing attitude (said, addressing himself to the multitude) I have as much interest in this house as any man so far as building is concerned, therefore I will take the liberty of showing you how to dance before the Lord. Having thus spoken requested the multitude to uncover their heads,

---

[92]Andrew Jensen, Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Company, 1941), 957.

[93]Kane, op. cit., 48.

[94]Bancroft, op. cit., 247.

> then bowed before the Lord, dedicated the hall to Him and asked Him to accept of their offerings this evening, after which the band struck up a lively tune and in a moment the whole house appeared to me to be filled with the melodious sounds of the inspired harps of Heaven. Pres. B. Young led and went forth in the dance of praise before the Lord. About 10 Pres. B. Young retired and about 11 the music ceased.[95]

There was even a "dancing school" established so that the people could learn to enjoy themselves. At one time 440 pupils were enrolled under Hiram Gates.[96]

The band that has been spoken of was the group of musicians that had formed to entertain the people in Nauvoo. It was a great source of pleasure to the Saints, now, for there was very little else to suggest musical and cultural refinement on the frontier. Horace K. Whitney wrote of one circumstance involving the band:

> Monday, March 1, 1847. Beautiful weather. Ellis Eames, a player of the violin, came up from the Point (Sarpy's Point). A number of the band, including him and myself went around in a sleigh this evening, Porter driving, and serenaded several places in Winter Quarters. . . . by invitation by Bro. Kimball we went to his house where we spent some time in dancing.[97]

The journals and diaries of the Saints are uniform in their praise of the band and its services.

There was also a serious side of these people's lives that manifested itself in the form of their religious activities. Without endeavoring to explain fully the religious tenets of this people, several peculiar or typical phrases of their beliefs should be pointed out.

---

[95]Lee, op. cit., January 23, 1847.

[96]Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit., March 14, 1848.

[97]Ibid., March 1, 1847.

There was a startling practicality to the sermons of the Mormons. Besides the usual religious subjects, one might hear a discussion of government, or a book review, or even instructions on wintering cattle. At one time Brigham Young delivered the following message:

> . . . you Sisters, if you expect to call me Bro. Brigham I want you to be cleanly, keep your faces and hands and skin clean from head to foot, your clothes, dishes, and houses clean and nice, also your children and learn them manners, and when you mix up bread don't have a dozen flies in your tray and when you make your butter, do keep the hairs and flies on a separate dish. . . .
>
> Now I don't want the brethren from my remarks to abuse their wives but treat them kindly, do their heavy lugging but don't wash their dishes as some do.[98]

The more hallowed side of the Mormon faith was exemplified by the sermons on the principles of the gospel and the common occurrences of spiritual manifestations. Healings, prophecies, revelations, and speaking in tongues are spoken of in the records of the Saints.[99]

Meetings were often held. President Young and the other leaders used these occasions to improve the moral and spiritual fibre of the people, for future trials awaited them in a strange land, and they felt that the guidance of God would be indispensable. At one time President Young reproved the Bishops "sharply for their negligence in not attending to the duty of their office and for working on the Sabath [sic] . . . . He stated that he wanted the Twelve, the Council, and Bishops to search this place as with a lighted candle in their hands and put down all iniquity, etc."[100]

That there was some need for reproof and correction among the Saints can hardly be denied. There were some men in the settlement who were selling "ardent spirits," thus taking from some the means which was needed to

---

[98]Lee, op. cit., February 16, 1847.

[99]Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit., March 17 and 29, 1847.

[100]Stout, op. cit., III, 33-34.

buy bread. A remedy was shortly forthcoming. All those who had "ardent spirits" to sell were to deliver the same to the Bishops of their wards who were then to sell these spirits, and the net proceeds after paying the owner would be applied to the poor. Anyone bringing any into camp for sale without consent of the council would forfeit it to the use of the poor. This action was concurred in by an unanimous vote of a large congregation.[101]

One other example of iniquity is spoken of in the diary of Hosea Stout:

> I have heard of no report of adultery in this place since the affair last fall or summer with the three young men. Spoken of at the time so effectual was the lesson give them on that subject.

He also adds:

> There is peace in this place and the Saints seem willing to abide council notwithstanding some dissent and escape and find fault with every move that is made for even now the transgressor in Zion begins to tremble.[102]

Some lesser sins were also referred to and correction was suggested. On the afternoon of Sunday, December 20, 1846, President Young preached at the stand and chastized some of the Saints "for working on the Sabbath day and for using profane language."[103]

Nevertheless, despite these breaches of conduct, a general high level of morality and gentility was encouraged and established. One trait that seemed to be ingrained into these people was that of prayer. Sermons and discussions seldom miss referral to it. Morning and night, and often between times this institution appeared to be religiously performed.

---

[101] *Ibid.*, III, 39-40.

[102] *Ibid.*, III, 43.

[103] Jensen, "Winter Quarters," *op. cit.*, December 20, 1846.

> Every day closed as every day began, with an invocation of the Divine favor; without which, indeed, no Mormon seemed to dare to lay down to rest. With the first shining of the stars, laughter and loud talk hushed, the neighbor went his way, you heard the last hymn sung, and then the thousand-voiced murmur of prayer was heard, like babbling water falling down the hills.[104]

An effort was made to provide education for the people. One of the frequently quoted axioms of the Mormon faith, "The glory of God is intelligence," was referred to often, and an attempt to further this aim was instituted. The Journal History reports on December 31, 1846: "Several schools for children have been started in camp within the last ten days."[105]

Brigham Young wrote to an Elder Appleby at Philadelphia at one time, requesting him to procure and forward twenty German spelling books, a like number of German grammars and some English-German dictionaries. These were to be used to prepare the Elders to speak and write that language.[106]

There was also a Seventies school established. Philosophy, languages and other scholastic studies were investigated along with gospel subjects.[107] Thus, the intellectual pursuits were not wholly neglected by the pioneers.

Undoubtedly, no treatise on Mormon life would be complete without some mention of polygamy, considered by most persons the outstanding peculiarity of that people. There is noticeably little recorded in the journals and records of the Saints at Winter Quarters regarding the practice. This dearth of information is probably due to at least two factors: (1) polygamy was not practiced widely, and was mostly confined to the leading brethren; and, (2) the practice was still kept fairly secretive. Nevertheless, enough information can be gleaned from their records to establish that polygamy

---

[104] Kane, Op. cit., 47.

[105] Journal History, December 31, 1846.

[106] Ibid., January 14, 1848.

[107] Ibid., January 23, 1848.

did exist at this time and that a prolific progeny was developing. The following is recorded in the Manuscript History under the date of Tuesday, February 9, 1847:

> The same evening Horace K. Whitney makes mention of Heber C. Kimball calling his wives together who had infants, for the purpose of blessing them, which was done in Vilate Kimball's room, by Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and Bishop Whitney; Dr. Richards acted as clerk. Their were seven in number [children]. . . . The names of those mothers were Sarah Peek, Clarissa Cutler, Emily Cutler, Sarah Ann Whitney, and Lucy Walker. The two latter were the wives of the Prophet Joseph whom father had taken for time only.[108]

Later, it is recorded that Heber C. Kimball called his private family together to the number of thirty-six, and blessed them.[109]

Helen Mar Kimball, daughter of Heber C. Kimball, records the living conditions of a polygamous family:

> My brother William and family lived in one room, my mother, her four little boys, three or four young men and two young women, who had been adopted and two of father's wives occupied the rest.[110]

Brigham Young, as well as some of the other leading brethren also had more than one wife, but little is said concerning these marriages.

So it was, that the Saints lived and died at Winter Quarters. They were a peculiar people in the eyes of the world, and they seemed to revel in that fact, but in many of the problems and desires they were not very different from their contemporaries on the American frontier.

---

[108] Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit., February 9, 1847.

[109] Ibid., March 21, 1847.

[110] Ibid., November 8, 1846.

CHAPTER IV

INDIAN TROUBLES AND TREATMENT

Situated as they were in Indian country, the Mormons were faced with a considerable problem. Omahas, Sioux, and Iowas by the hundreds scavenged the countryside in pursuit of game and enemies. A war might have been easily provoked if the Saints had been a little less disposed to friendship. But President Young went to great lengths to instruct the people in just and proper treatment toward the red-man. He no doubt formulated his Indian policy here which he so successfully effected later in Utah. "It is cheaper to feed the Indians than to fight them."[111]

Great efforts were made to cultivate a spirit of friendship with the Omahas, as they were the tribe nearest to Winter Quarters. Due to the ravages of the smallpox and the warlike Sioux, the Omahas were now a wretched remnant of a once powerful tribe. Their band was made up of little more than a hundred families, and these were so poor and ill-fed that they resembled a tribe of comsumptives.[112] Buffalo and other game had resorted to other ranges, and the trifling annuities from the United States left the Omahas in a pitiful state. They had planted some corn in awkward Indian fashion but through fear of ambush dared not venture out to harvest it. Thus, they were reduced to spoilation of their neighbors: the prairie field mice and the Mormons. The field mice provided small underground

---

[111]Roberts, op. cit., III, 15.

[112]Thomas L. Kane, Millennial Star, XIII, 165. This volume to be found in the Latter-day Saint Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

cellars filled with the nutritious little beans of the wood pea vine, which the Indian would search out and rob for the sake of his stomach.[113]

Inasmuch as it was cheaper to help the Indians feed themselves than to allow them to live off Mormon cattle, the Saints proceeded to provide help and direction to their hapless neighbors. Eight or ten men were appointed by President Young to go and raise a crop for the Omahas. This was done not only for the purpose of aiding the Indians but also to keep them away from the town where thieving had occupied most of their time.[114] Arrangements were also made to help them gather their crop of maize, to assist them in building houses, to enclose their fields, and to teach them husbandry. Some blacksmithing was done for them also.

At one time Young suggested that some of the Indians be hired to watch the cattle during the winter.[115] However, he was soon to learn that they did not have sufficient intelligence and trustworthiness to accomplish this important work.

All this was done to insure friendship between the two peoples and to make payment to the Indians for the use of their lands.

The Omahas reciprocated by granting privileges to the Mormons. The whites had been given written permission to remain on the lands for two or more years and to use all the wood and timber they might require. Furthermore, the Indians agreed, "that we will not molest or take from them (the Mormons) their cattle, horses, sheep or any other property."[116]

---

[113] Ibid., XIII, 165.

[114] Stout, op. cit., 91.

[115] Journal History, August 20, 1846.

[116] Roberts, op. cit., III, 146.

But it was soon evident that the thieving propensities of the more adventuresome Omahas were not to be deterred by a mere scrap of paper. The fat cattle in the rush bottoms were too great a temptation. All precautions were taken to prevent such depredations, for, at times, two or three oxen a day disappeared or were killed by the marauding Indians.[117] Nevertheless, Brigham Young was of a tolerant nature in this regard. He felt that it was wrong to indulge in feelings of hostility and bloodshed towards the Indians for killing cattle, for to them the deer, the buffalo, or the fruit tree were all free for the taking. It was their mode of living to kill and eat. He added: "If the Omahas persist in robbing and stealing, after being warned not to do so, whip them."[118] This policy was somewhat more lenient that the usual rule of killing the "worthless red-skin" for much less offense.

Further regulations to curb the Indians were adopted. The Saints, individually, were not to give them anything to eat or to be sociable with them. With this rule, the Indian's interpreter and teacher readily agreed. The people were also advised not to sell their dogs, for the Indians were buying them to get them out of camp so that they could more easily pilfer.[119] The stockade work which had languished was stimulated, and the pioneers were encouraged to build their homes within the specified blocks. A guard of ten men was appointed to watch for and check any stealing of livestock. The group was to be mounted, and for their services they received one dollar per day.[120]

---

[117]Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit., October 15, 1846.

[118]Journal History, March 26, 1847.

[119]Stout, op. cit., III, 9.

[120]Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit., May 27, 1847.

Eventually, the stock killing and stealing became so prevalent that President Young wrote to Big Elk, chief of the Omahas, requesting him to restrain his people from their marauding actions. Some presents were also sent to induce prompt action. In answer to the letter, Big Elk paid the white leader a visit. He apologized for the depredations committed by the few unruly young men of his tribe, expressed his gratitude for the presents sent him and promised to try to restrain his subjects. He said that there were some which he could not control and could not prevent from stealing when the cattle were all around them. He tried to excuse these by saying that whites who had visited his people had told them of the wickedness of the Mormons. This statement led the Saints to believe that "the Indians were prompted by white men to steal from and probably make a violent outbreak upon them."[121]

The nearest thing to an Indian war occurred not between the Mormons and the red-men but between the Indians themselves. This event was one of several that made the Saints wary in their dealings with surrounding tribes. The incident is described by Hosea Stout, a leader of the city police:

> Wednesday December 9th, 1846.
> This morning about three o'clock I was called by S. A. Dunn one of the police then on guard. He said that there was a difficulty amongst the Omahas camped North of town and some had been shot. And I was wanted at President Young's so I went there and called up some more of the police and some others as I went. When I got there I found his house crouded [sic] full of the Omahas who had fled there for shelter. One squaw had been shot through the arm which was shattered to atoms and an old Indian picking out the little bones with his fingers, her arm was cut off the next day by Dr. Cannon.
> Old Big Head a chief was shot in the head arm and had his thumb shot off. He was badly wounded some were missing and supposed to be dead.

---

[121]Jensen, Historical Record, VIII, 891-92.

> The utmost confusion reighned [sic] with them and they appeared frightened badly. I here learned that they had been attacted [sic] by a party of the Iowas who came to their lodges at this dead hour of the night and fired upon them and then fled. I in company with a party of the police and some others went with some of the Indians to their lodges to see if any thing more was done, and to hunt for the missing. Their lodges were in a gore of blood but could not find any one. However after a long while one of the old Indians raised a howling yell and was answered not far off where we found the one supposed to be dead. He was at Charles Patten's he was badly wounded a ball passing in near the left eye. The ball was started out of its socket. I did not think he would live.
>
> We then went back and after seeing that all was put to right came home and yet it was not day. While at their lodges we could hear the Iowas howling on the other side of the river.
>
> About the middle of the forenoon I went up again to see how matters were going on. I found the wounded Indians located in a sod house where they had been put by order of President Young and doing as well as could be expected.[122]

Furthermore, an Omaha hunting party had left the day before, and on December 12, 1846, word came that the entire party had been wiped out by the Sioux, with the exception of one man. Estimates of how many were killed range from fifty to seventy-eight.[123] The attack was made in the dead of the night, and many of the victims, shot through the head, had failed to move from their blankets. The Sioux then proceeded to cut off the noses of the dead as a token of spite and contempt toward the Omahas then silently stole away in the darkness.[124]

These and other harrowing experiences kept the Saints continually in anxiety over the possibility of Indian attacks. But to their relief none came, and they were spared a misfortune that was terribly common among the settlers of the West.

---

[122]Stout, op. cit., III, 30-32.

[123]Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit., December 12, 1846.

[124]Harmon, op. cit., 10.

CHAPTER V

SPRING AND WESTWARD HO!

The winter of 1846-47 seemed to pass quickly despite the miserable cold that prevailed. It was not uncommon for the thermometer to register below zero degrees, and on January 17, 1847, seventeen and one-half degrees below zero was recorded.[125] However, the people were too busy in their preparation for the spring exodus to the West to allow the weather to interrupt making ready. The blacksmith's anvil filled the sharp winter air as wagon wheel bands were hammered out with hasty precision. Lumber was seasoned and prepared for building wagons. Farm tools and seed were purchased to serve in the new land. In February two large rawhide boats were fashioned to aid in crossing streams. Indeed, there was no idleness in the town but rather a spirit of anticipation that spurred the people on to industry and greater effort.

That the Great Basin of the Rocky Mountains was to be the eventual goal of the Saints has been previously mentioned.[126] Of course, that area included an extensive territory that covers a large part of the Rocky Mountain regions. It appears that as time progressed Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders, through further acquisition of information and intelligence concerning that country, became more and more sure and restrictive of a definite locality in which to settle. Every available source of information

---

[125]Lee, op. cit., January 17, 1847.

[126]Journal History, March 8, 1846.

regarding the Rocky Mountain destination was eagerly perused. The encouraging reports of John C. Fremont, who had explored that area, were read. The Catholic priest Pierre Jean De Smet, who had lived in the trans-Missouri west since 1839, passed through the Mormon camp in the fall of 1846 and reports that "they asked a thousand questions about the regions I had explored and the spot which I have just described to you [the basin of the Great Salt Lake] pleased them greatly from the account I gave of it."[127] An American Fur Company trader, Justin Grosclande, and a Mr. Cardinal appeared at Winter Quarters on November 24, 1846. They offered to guide the Saints over the mountains for two hundred dollars. The offer was declined, but these men gave freely of their information concerning the Great Basin.[128] Existing maps of the West were obtained and diligently studied.

Hence, the Mormons were not entirely ignorant of the land they hoped to journey to. However, there were questions of great importance about which there was still uncertainty. For instance, would the resources there sustain a considerable population? Was it a practicable location from the point of view of agriculture, or would want and starvation overtake them? The settling of a large population there partook of the nature of an experiment, which no people previous to the Mormons had had the inclination or temerity to make. All in all the Great Basin enjoyed the reputation of being a Godforsaken country.[129]

As early as December 26, 1846 definite plans for departure to the Utah region were being formulated. At that date Young met with Elders Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, Willard Richards, Amasa M. Lyman, George A.

---

[127]Neff, op. cit., 76.

[128]Journal History, November 24, 1846.

[129]Neff, op. cit., 75.

Smith, Newell K. Whitney, Peter Haws, Albert P. Rockwood, Ezra T. Benson, Joseph Young, George D. Grant, Wilford Woodruff, and P. H. Young.

> They conversed on the organization of the camp of Israel and our contemplated journey, concerning which several important questions were asked and discussed. President Young considered that the pioneers should find a location to put in crops this season, and described the order of building in forts for safety. . . .[130]

On Thursday, January 14, 1847, President Young, acting in his capacity as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, gave forth a proclamation said to be from the mouth of God. This revelation had to do with instructing the people in regard to their conduct and their future trek into the wilderness. The document follows in full:

> The word and will of the Lord concerning the Camp of Israel in their journeyings to the West: Let all the people of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and those who journey with them, be organized into companies, with a covenant and promise to keep all the commandments and statutes of the Lord our God.
>
> Let the companies be organized with captains of hundreds, captains of fifties and captains of tens, with a president and his two counselors at their head, under the direction of the Twelve Apostles.
>
> And this shall be our covenant--that we will walk in all the ordinances of the Lord.
>
> Let each company provide themselves with all the teams, wagons, provisions, clothing and other necessaries for the journey that they can. When the companies are organized, let them go to with their might, to prepare for those who are to tarry. Let each company, with their captains and presidents, decide how many can go next spring; then choose out a sufficient number of able-bodied and expert men to take teams, seeds and farming utensils, to go as pioneers to prepare for putting in spring crops. Let each company bear an equal proportion, according to the dividend of their property, in taking the poor, the widows, the fatherless and the families of those who have gone into the army, that the cries of the widows and the fatherless come not up into the ears of the Lord against this people. Let each company prepare houses and fields for raising grain, for those who are to remain behind this season; and this is the will of the Lord concerning this people.

---

[130] Journal History, December 26, 1846.

Let every man use all his influence and property to remove this people to the place where the Lord shall locate a stake of Zion. And if ye do this with a pure heart, in all faithfulness, ye shall be blessed; you shall be blessed in your flocks and in your herds, and in your fields and in your houses and in your families.

Let my servants Ezra T. Benson and Erastus Snow organize a company. And let my servants Orson Pratt and Wilford Woodruff organize a company. And let my servants Amasa Lyman and George A. Smith organize a company. And appoint presidents and captains of hundreds and of fifties and of tens.

And let my servants, that have been appointed, go and teach this my will to the Saints, that they may be ready to go to a land of peace.

Go thy way and do as I have told you and fear not thine enemies, for they shall not have power to stop my work. Zion shall be redeemed in my own due time.

And if any man shall seek to build up himself, and seeketh not my counsel, he shall have no power, and his folly shall be made manifest. Seek ye; and keep all of your pledges, one with another, and covet not that which is thy brother's.

Keep yourselves from evil to take the name of the Lord in vain, for I am the Lord your God, even the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.

I am he who led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; and my arm is stretched out in the last days to save my people Israel.

Cease drunkenness; and let your words tend to edifying one another.

Cease to contend one with another; cease to speak evil of one another.

If thou borrowest of thy neighbor, thou shalt restore that which thou has borrowed; and if thou canst not repay then go straightway and tell thy neighbor, lest he condemn thee.

If thou shalt find that which thy neighbor has lost, thou shalt make diligent search till thou shalt deliver it to him again.

Thou shalt be diligent in preserving what thou hast, that thou mayest be a wise steward; for it is the free gift of the Lord thy God, and thou art his steward.

If thou art merry, praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

If thou art sorrowful, call on the Lord thy God with supplication, that your souls may be joyful.

Fear not thine enemies, for they are in mine hands and I will do my pleasure with them.

My people must be tried in all things, that they may be prepared to receive the glory that I have for them, even the glory of Zion; and he that will not bear chastisement is not worthy of my kingdom.

Let him that is ignorant learn wisdom by humbling himself and calling upon the Lord his God, that his eyes may be opened that he may see, and his ears opened that he may hear;

For my Spirit is sent forth into the world to enlighten the humble and contrite, and to the condemnation of the ungodly.

Thy brethren have rejected you and your testimony, even the nation that has driven you out;

And now cometh the day of their calamity, even the days of sorrow, like a woman that is taken in travail; and their sorrow shall be great unless they speedily repent, yea, very speedily.

For they killed the prophets, and them that were sent unto them; and they have shed innocent blood, which crieth from the ground against them.

Therefore, marvel not at these things, for ye are not yet pure; ye can not yet bear my glory; but ye shall behold it if ye are faithful in keeping all my words that I have given you, from the days of Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Jesus and his Apostles, and from Jesus and his apostles to Joseph Smith, whom I did call upon by mine angels, my ministering servants, and by mine own voice out of the heavens, to bring forth my work;

Which foundation he did lay, and was faithful; and I took him to myself.

Many have marveled because of his death; but it was needful that he should seal his testimony with his blood, that he might be honored and the wicked might be condemned.

Have I not delivered you from your enemies, only in that I have left a witness of my name?

Now, therefore, hearken, O ye people of my church; and ye elders listen together; you have received my kingdom.

Be diligent in keeping all my commandments, lest judgments come upon you, and your faith fail you, and your enemies triumph over you. So no more at present. Amen and Amen.[131]

Hosea Stout's comment on this revelation suggests that it may have been intended as much to quiet dissension among the Saints as to give substantial information on their projected migration.

Such was the "Word and Will" of the Lord at this time, which was to me a source of much joy and gratification to be present on such an occasion and my feeling can be better felt than described for this will put silence to the wild bickering and opposing the proper council. They will now have to come to this standard or come out in open rebellion to the Will of the Lord which will plainly manifest them to the people and then they can have no influence.[132]

Subsequent meetings contributed to the traveling plan, and work was begun in organizing the people into companies. The overall plan was to

---

[131] Ibid., January 19, 1847.

[132] Stout, op. cit., III, 58.

send forth a "pioneer company," preceding the main body of the Saints early enough in the spring so that seed could be planted at their destination. This initial group was to make the trek to the Rocky Mountains and there prepare homes and crops for the coming of the rest of the people. Having reached their destination, some of the men and wagons were then to return to Winter Quarters to assist additional groups in their journey. By pursuing this system of cooperation, all the Saints, including the widows, destitute and fatherless, could be assisted across the plains without having cause to feel that even the poorest of them were neglected.[133]

The details as to travel order and provisions were also determined. The same system for travel as previously used in their flight from Nauvoo was again instituted: groups of hundreds, fifties and tens, each presided over by a captain. Provisions and equipment required of the members of the "pioneer company" rather restricted the number who were to go with it. An eighteen months' supply of food was requisite, hence, only a relatively few who had the means could be among the first to go. Every man of this first company was also instructed to take "one bushel of seed corn, one bushel of potatoes, a half bushel of oats, and all the garden seeds that could be procurred."[134] These supplies were to produce the crops needed to sustain the later companies of Saints. White beans, corn meal, white flour, bacon and pork, salt, and occasionally dried fruit were added to the list of needs to sustain the people en route.

By the first week of March, 1847, a group of volunteers made up mostly of young and able-bodied men were selected to constitute the "pioneer

---

[133]Jensen, Historical Record, 875.

[134]William Clayton, Journal of William Clayton (Mss., L.D.S. Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah), April 16, 1847.

company."[135] Brigham Young was to act as lieutenant-general in command; Stephen Markham as colonel; John Pack, major; and fourteen captains. One hundred forty-eight persons were selected to make up this company. Three of this number were women and two were children. Ellen Sanders Kimball, wife of Heber C. Kimball had contracted malaria and had been ordered by her doctor to leave the Missouri region. The other two women, Clarissa Decker Young and Harriet Page Young, wives of Brigham Young and Lorenzo D. Young respectively, were chosen by Mrs. Kimball to accompany her on the trip. The two children were both sons of Harriet Page Young.

Monday, April 5, 1847, dawned rather cloudy, but the afternoon was clear and fair. On this day six teams drawing four wagons, all belonging to Heber C. Kimball, moved leisurely out of Winter Quarters and traveled about three miles westward to the "hay stacks" where they awaited others of the "pioneer company" to arrive and form into the traveling order.[136]

The following day, Tuesday, April 6, was the sixteenth anniversary of the organization of the Church. A conference was held, and all the people gathered for a final meeting. After a number of sermons by the leading brethren, the authorities of the church were sustained by the congregation. President Brigham Young was confirmed as President of the Twelve Apostles. Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Willard Richards, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, George A. Smith, Amasa M. Lyman, and Ezra T. Benson were upheld as members of the quorum of Twelve Apostles. Newell K. Whitney was sustained as Presiding Bishop.[137]

---

[135] Journal History, March 8, 1847.

[136] Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit., April 5, 1847.

[137] Journal History, April 6, 1847.

These were the men who bore the major burden of responsibility in directing the destinies of the Mormon people.

On Wednesday, April 7, when the first green began to appear upon the prairie, the "pioneer company" assembled west of town to begin their epic journey.[138] Besides the one hundred forty-eight people, the company included: "72 wagons (besides the boat wagon), 93 horses, 52 mules, 66 oxen, 19 cows, 17 dogs, and some chickens."[139] Order was established and the wagons began to move. Farewells were shouted, children ran alongside of their fathers, and a crowd of the remaining Saints gathered in a group to wave a final goodbye. The great adventure was thus begun and company after company were soon to follow these first pioneers.

---

[138]Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit., April 7, 1847.

[139]Journal History, April 16, 1847.
The "boat wagon" spoken of was a leather covered framework in the shape of a boat which was used to ferry streams. After a stream was crossed the boat was placed on a wagon carriage and used in the capacity of a wagon. Oxen were the better beasts of burden for traveling on the plains, but a greater number of horses were taken at this time because the grass was so short that the oxen with their poor dental equipment could not nibble it as well as the horses could.

CHAPTER VI

SUBSEQUENT EVENTS, 1847-48

While the advance company was continuing toward the Platte River, Brigham Young had occasion to return to Winter Quarters twice. The first time was to meet Parley P. Pratt, who had just arrived there from presiding over the British Mission. Pratt brought not only news of the mission but also 469 gold sovereigns donated by the British Saints to help the pioneers.[140] The second return was for the purpose of greeting another of the missionaries, John Taylor, who brought with him about five hundred dollars worth of astronomical and other instruments. Included among these articles were two artificial horizons, one circle of reflection, two sextants, two barometers and one telescope.[141] These instruments undoubtedly greatly aided the pioneers in their travels.

After leaving the city for the third time, Young wrote the Saints when he was eleven days to the West. This letter fixed the destiny of Winter Quarters. An excerpt follows:

> The business of the Saints at Winter Quarters is to journey west, until further instructions, and while some will have the means to go forward at the springing of the grass, others will have to stop and raise grain to carry with them; and while some will come here prepared, others will have to stop and prepare for their journey, and in either case all preparation and organization is for journeying, and not for permanent location at Winter Quarters.[142]

---

[140] Ibid., April 12, 1847.

[141] Ibid., April 13, 1847.

[142] Journal History, April 16, 1847.
Stout, op. cit., III, 97.

The admonition to leave for the mountains as soon as expediency allowed, was readily observed by the anxious Saints. On June 5, 1847, a second company was formed and started west, and during 1847, eight others crossed the plains.[143]

During the summer months of that year, the remaining people worked hard to raise enough food crops to sustain themselves in the journey to the mountains. Orson Hyde, one of the presiding elders at Winter Quarters, reported in a letter to the English Saints that crops were "surprisingly good . . . great . . . and extensive. The land fairly groans under the burthen of corn and other products that wave over its surface by the western breezes."[144]

The Indian problem became worse and continued so until the Saints left in 1848. The Omahas being the chief offenders were committing numerous depredations by driving off the cattle. Stout reports:

> They will lay around in the grass and groves untill [sic] an opportunity offers and then sally forth and drive all the cattle in their power, even some times they will rush in among the herds, when there is no men present and attempt to drive them off before our eyes or they will appear on horse back and run all the cattle that stray off, away. The amount of cattle killed by them the past winter and spring is incredible.[145]

In the meantime, the "pioneer company" reached the Salt Lake Valley, and Brigham Young and a number of others, including most of the apostles, made the trip back to Winter Quarters in order to lead other groups to the mountains. This returning company arrived in the city Sunday, October 31, 1847.[146]

---

[143] Journal History, June 5, 1847. Jensen, "Winter Quarters," op. cit. 1.

[144] Millenial Star, September 15, 1847, 273.

[145] Stout, op. cit., III, 101.

[146] Journal History, October 31, 1847.

No sooner had the apostles arrived at Winter Quarters than they began to hold council meetings almost daily. There was much to be done. Instructions were given that all the Church records should be gathered and prepared for removal to the Salt Lake Valley. At a meeting of the apostles on November 8, 1847, it was decided to vacate Winter Quarters in the spring of 1848 and go westward.[147] A public meeting was held the following week. Young spoke and outlined the future course for the Saints to follow. He referred to the healthy locality in the mountains and suggested that those who could not go west next spring should vacate Winter Quarters and return to the east side of the river.[148]

It seems that there had been some agitation on the part of the Indian Agent during this time for the Saints to remove from the Indian lands. In order to promote friendly feelings and insure full cooperation, Young wrote Major Miller, the Agent, the following letter:

> Winter Quarters, Camp of Israel,
> Omaha Nation, November 19, 1847.
>
> Major Miller,
> Dear Sir:
> On our return to Winter Quarters from the mountains we received an intimation that it is the desire of the Government of the United States that the Latter-day Saints should vacate the lands on the Western side of the Missouri River, where we have taken up our temporary abode until a place can be found where we may be able to dwell in peace and safety.
> Therefore, we drop you this line to request you would favor us with your views and opinions on the subject of our vacating our Winter Quarters on the Omaha lands and also of our moving such portion of our houses and fences which our people have cut and brought from the East side of the river, over the river again to the State of Iowa. . . .

---

[147] *Ibid.*, November 8, 1847.

[148] *Ibid.*, November 14, 1847.

We remain, dear sir,
In behalf of the Council
Brigham Young
President

P.S. It is our anxious wish that the Omahas should have the benefit of our labors, and we feel that if the whites do not take possession of our vacated houses and farms immediately after our vacation, that the Sioux will come down and burn the houses and drive away the poor Omahas.[149]

A meeting of great importance to the Saints took place on December 5, 1847. Until this time, since the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, there had been no First Presidency of the Church. The Twelve Apostles, with Brigham Young at their head as President of the Quorum, had been the guiding body. Therefore, on the above date the apostles met at the home of Orson Hyde on the east bank of the Missouri River and discussed reorganizing the First Presidency. Present at this meeting were: Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Orson Pratt, Willard Richards, Wilford Woodruff, George A. Smith, Amasa M. Lyman, and Ezra T. Benson. After each of the brethren present expressed his views, Elder Orson Hyde moved that Brigham Young be sustained as President of the Church with the authority to nominate his two counselors. The affirming vote was unanimous.[150] Young chose Heber C. Kimball as his first and Willard Richards as his second counselor. On December 27, 1847, at a general conference held on the Iowa side of the river, the new Presidency was sustained by a unanimous vote of the people.[151]

One other item of interest occurred at this time. A general epistle was issued by the apostles to all the members of the Church throughout the world. All of those Saints who had been driven from their homes were

---

[149] Ibid., November 19, 1847.

[150] Joseph Fielding Smith, Essentials in Church History (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1950), 463.

[151] Ibid., 464.

instructed to gather to the Salt Lake Valley. Others in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain were likewise counseled to gather, as circumstances would permit. They were to bring with them seeds of every kind--"everything that grows upon the face of the whole earth that will please the eye, gladden the heart, or cheer the soul of man." They were also to bring "the best stock of beasts, birds, and fowl," and tools of every kind.[152]

As the spring of 1848 approached, the people were gradually vacating Winter Quarters and moving to the east side of the river. Those who were planning to journey to the mountains were preparing with all dispatch for the trip. By the month of May preparations had been completed, and so on the 9th of that month the first company, led by Brigham Young, left for the mountains. This group consisted of 1,229 souls, 397 wagons, 74 horses, 19 mules, 1,275 oxen, 699 cows, 184 loose cattle, 411 sheep, 141 pigs, 605 chickens, 37 cats, 82 dogs, 3 goats, 10 geese, 2 hives of bees, 8 doves, and 1 crow, the latter owned by Judge Phelps.[153]

Another company of 662 souls led by Heber C. Kimball left soon after. Those of the pioneers who failed to leave with these last two companies moved to the east side of the river. Winter Quarters was thus abandoned as the headquarters for future company preparations.

> After Presidents Young and Kimball's companies left Winter Quarters, the place presented a desolate aspect. A terrific thunderstorm passed over, accompanied by a hurricane, which tore wagon covers to shreds and whistled fearfully through the empty dwellings. A few straggling Indians camped in the vacated houses and subsisted upon the cattle which had died of poverty, and upon such other articles of food as they could pick up.[154]

---

[152] Journal History, December 23, 1847.

[153] Jensen, Historical Record, 902.

[154] Ibid., 902-03.

Apostle George A. Smith, writing from Kanesville, the new settlement of the Saints on the east side of the river, gave another description of the abondoned city as of October 20, 1848:

> Winter Quarters looks pretty much as it did, except the roofs and floors which had been brought to this side of the river. The Indians visited it of late and feasted on the potatoes that grew in the old cellars, and also upon the Indian corn and the volunteer squash and such other vegetables as grew without culture. . . . Winter Quarters afforded more flies and fleas than anything less than a star-gazer could well estimate.[155]

Thus only skeletal remains stood to remind one of the past enterprise that occurred there. An occasional Indian was the only sign of life left in the once bustling city. Bleached canvas flapped unheard in the evening breeze. Tall grass and stalked weeds became the sole occupants of the streets.

In the year 1854, the Florence Land Company was organized to build up a city on the old site of Winter Quarters. The new city was initiated and named Florence, Nebraska.[156] But three silent sentinels still stand to remind the new of the old. A building used by the Saints as a bank, said to be the first one west of the Missouri, is still intact. In the middle of town stands a huge, gnarled apple tree, supposedly planted by Brigham Young. And at the edge of town on the slope of a hill, lies the old cemetery with nearly six hundred simple gravestones standing askew amid the well-kept lawns. A "peculiar" people had lived and died here in the town of Winter Quarters.

---

[155] Journal History, October 20, 1848.

[156] Andrew Jensen, "Florence, Nebraska," Nebraska Settlements, (L.D.S. Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah), 1.
"In 1854 a number of men organized a company (Florence Land Company) for the purpose of building up a new town on the old site of Winter Quarters which had been left vacant so far as white settlers were concerned since it was vacated by the Latter-day Saints in 1848."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Bancroft, History of Utah, San Francisco: Bancroft and Company, 1890.

Hafen, Leroy, and Rister, Carl C., Western America, New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950.

Harmer, Mabel, The Story of the Mormon Pioneers, Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1943.

Horne, F. D. B. (ed.), Autobiography of George W. Bean, Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Company, 1943.

Jensen, Andrew (compiler), Church Chronology, Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1899.

_____, Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Company, 1941.

_____, Historical Record, Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1882-1890.

Lee, John D., Journals of John D. Lee, Salt Lake City: Western Printing Company, 1938.

McGavin, Cecil M., The Mormon Pioneers, Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, 1947.

Neff, Andrew L., History of Utah, Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1940.

Nibley, Preston, Exodus to Greatness, Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1947.

Pratt, Parley P., Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1950.

Roberts, B. H., A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930.

Smith, Joseph Fielding, Essentials in Church History, Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1950.

Reports

Kane, Thomas L., The Mormons, a Discourse Delivered Before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia: King and Baird Printers, 1850.

Articles

Encyclopaedia Britannica. 1950, Volume IV. Article, "Council Bluffs."

Encyclopaedia Britannica. 1950, Volume XVI. Article, "Omaha."

Kane, Thomas L., "The Mormons," Millenial Star, XIII, June 1, 1851.

Unpublished Material

Clayton, William, "Journal of William Clayton," L. D. S. Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.

Harmon, Appleton M., "Diary of Appleton M. Harmon," Mss. copied by Brigham Young University, 1940.

Jensen, Andrew, "List of the Deaths and Burials in the Camps of Israel," Manuscript History of the Church, L. D. S. Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.

_____. "Winter Quarters," Nebraska Settlements, L. D. S. Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.

Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, L. D. S. Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.

Lyman, Eliza, "Autobiography and Diary of Eliza Marie Partridge (Smith) Lyman," Mss. copied by Brigham Young University, 1943.

Stout, Hosea, "Diary of Hosea Stout," Mss. copied by Brigham Young University, 9 volumes, 1941-43.