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## The Contributions of George A. Smith to the Establishment of the Mormon Society in the Territory of Utah

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THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF GEORGE A. SMITH TO THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MORMON SOCIETY IN THE  
TERRITORY OF UTAH

A Dissertation  
Presented to the  
Department of Church History and Doctrine  
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

by

C. Kent Dunford

August 1970

This dissertation, by C. Kent Dunford, is accepted in its present form by the Department of Church History and Doctrine in the College of Religious Instruction of Brigham Young University as satisfying the dissertation requirements for the degree of Doctor of History of Religion.

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Typed by Hermine B. Horman

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

George A. Smith (1817-1875) was one of Brigham Young's chief lieutenants and made significant contributions to the building of the Mormon commonwealth in the Territory of Utah. He was a prominent Church leader, missionary, preacher, colonizer, historian, and politician. This dissertation is a study of his multi-phased life, and more particularly, his career in the Utah Territory. In a strict sense, this is not a biography of George A. Smith but an attempt to accurately describe and appraise his contributions in each of the above areas of his life for the Utah period.

Ordinarily, historians when writing of the Utah Territorial period of Mormon history have focused on the accomplishments of Brigham Young and have made only brief mention of his faithful assistants. Most of the latter gave unstintingly of their lives and talents to build a sturdy society in the isolated valleys of the Great Basin, and their efforts should not become lost to history. How incomplete a history of the American Civil War would be if only the achievements of a Lincoln or Grant were considered, or a history of the Protestant Reformation that dealt with only the contributions of Luther and Calvin. Likewise, the story of the Mormon people in the Utah Territory will be incomplete until the lives of all important persons have been analyzed. Among the many talented Mormon leaders of the time, it may someday be recognized that George A. Smith made a contribution to his people second only to

that of their great colonizer and prophet, Brigham Young. At least one prominent biographer of President Young suggested that George A. Smith, "perhaps more than any other," assisted the Mormon leader in carrying the burdens of the "kingdom."<sup>1</sup> This is one reason why a substantial study of this man is long overdue.

Another justification for this project is the large amount of historical source material left by George A. Smith which heretofore has not been considered as a whole in an endeavor to illuminate his life and times. The immense personal correspondence of George A. found in his personal papers, letter books, and Church periodicals was the single most important source of information for this paper. Other major sources such as Church periodicals, ward and stake histories, the "Manuscript History of Brigham Young," the "Journal History of the Church," and the collection of sermons entitled the Journal of Discourses, were used extensively in accumulating the data for the dissertation. Journals, especially those of George A. Smith, John D. Lee, James Godson Bleak, and the Church Historian's Office, were useful in uncovering many of the lesser known activities of his life.

Two previous attempts have been made at writing a biography of George A. Smith. Preston Nibley, former assistant Church Historian, produced an uncompleted biography which appeared serially in the Church News section of the Deseret News from January 4, 1950, to October 18, 1952. This sketchy "life" is often more eulogy than history and makes no extensive use of the primary sources mentioned above. Mr. Nibley

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<sup>1</sup>Preston Nibley, Brigham Young, The Man and His Work (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1960), p. 517.

ended the last article of the series with the statement that he intended to continue the research and publish a book on the subject. Apparently the press of other responsibilities prevented him from accomplishing this objective. In 1962, a family genealogical biography entitled Ancestry, Biography, and Family of George A. Smith was published. This work by Zora Smith Jarvis, a granddaughter of George A., contains valuable information about George A. Smith's ancestors, family, and descendants, but also leaves major sources untouched and makes little analysis or interpretation of those it does use. Mrs. Jarvis seems to rely principally on George A.'s personal journal, Preston Nibley's biography, and family genealogies for her information. It is hoped that this dissertation improves on some of these inadequacies.

There are several limitations to this study, however, which should be noted. Due to the abundance of historical material on George A. Smith, it was felt that a complete treatment of his life would be too broad in scope for a paper of this type. Consequently, the Utah period of his life was selected as the major area of concentration. United States and Mormon history of the nineteenth century have been considered only insofar as was thought necessary to see George A. in his historical context. The history, goals, and theology of the Church were significant in forming his thinking, aspirations, and approach to historical writing, but these subjects as well were mentioned only when considered applicable to the central thesis. Caution has been taken to avoid making judgments on the special religious claims of the Latter-day Saint Church.

As will be pointed out in the dissertation, the difficulty of

assessing George A.'s contributions fully and accurately is frequently acute. The Mormon people were great believers in the importance of "counsel" and cooperative effort, and consequently most policy decisions and administrative functions were carried out by groups. As a Church leader, George A. seldom acted alone. As a historian he was aided by a competent staff, and it is not always easy to determine what he accomplished independent of their assistance. The same problem applies to his work as a colonizer and politician.

No attempt will be made to find substitutes for certain key words of Mormon terminology. The term "Prophet" is used in reference to Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are designated "Mormons," "Saints," and "Latter-day Saints," while non-Mormons are often referred to as "gentiles." The Mormon Church itself is often denominated "the Church." These terms are not meant to convey a positive or derogatory judgment by the writer.

In outline, chapters two through four of the dissertation are essentially introductory to the major body of the study. The historical milieu of early nineteenth century America is briefly examined in order to review some of the major forces that shaped the life-style of persons living in those times. Chapter three is a short personal portrait of George A. Smith with the purpose of introducing the reader to the man himself. Chapter four is an overview of his early life and experiences in the LDS Church with emphasis on some of the most important formative incidents as revealed in his own autobiography and journals. The remainder of the dissertation is a detailed historical



account of his labors in the areas and events indicated in the chapter headings. A rough chronology has been maintained throughout the study, but was sometimes difficult when George A. was pursuing several careers simultaneously. The last chapter, in addition to investigating the labors of George A.'s later years, sums up the major conclusions of the dissertation.

Libraries of the Brigham Young University, University of Utah, Utah State Historical Society, LDS Church Historian's Office, and Salt Lake City Public Library have been the chief places of research, and thanks is extended to those who staff these institutions for their help and suggestions.

## CHAPTER II

### THE TIMES

Early nineteenth century could be considered the idealistic, adolescent period of America's growth. There existed ferment and change in virtually every phase of society. Her newly won independence, a vast unexploited frontier, a burgeoning democracy, the beginnings of the industrial revolution, the exhilarating ideas of the Enlightenment and turbulent religious reform, all lent their effect in creating a national spirit characterized by idealism, faith in progress, openness to change, and optimism. If Americans of the time agreed on one idea, "it was probably the perfectibility of man and the prospect of his future progress."<sup>1</sup> Many conceived their new nation's mission to be that of leading the world to a more glorious future and of setting an example of man's capacity to govern himself. Intellectual, spiritual, economic, and physical frontiers were heady wine that beckoned Americans to transform their visions into concrete reality. "The Peace of Paris," writes Russel Blaine Nye, "gave Americans the opportunity to wipe the slate clean, to create on their side of the Atlantic a model of that free, rational, orderly, dignified society toward which the eighteenth century believed men were destined to move."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Russel Blaine Nye, The Cultural Life of the New Nation, 1776-1830 (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

The nation was undergoing a period of rapid growth. Troubles in Europe brought thousands of discontented to a land of greater freedom and opportunity. During the fifty year period from 1790 to 1840, the population increased approximately four and a half times.<sup>3</sup> This, added to the factors of improving transportation facilities, the lure of inexpensive western land, the spirit of "manifest destiny," the greater freedom and economic prospects of the west, caused a mass migration of Americans to the frontier. By the year 1829, nine of the eleven new states were located west of the Alleghenies and boasted a population of approximately three and one-half million, more than a third of the nation's total.<sup>4</sup> George A. Smith's parents joined the tide of migrating New Englanders who were escaping urbanization, high prices, economic failure, and rigid Calvinism. George A.'s father, John Smith, settled in St. Lawrence County, New York, while Joseph Smith Senior, his brother, took his family to Palmyra in Wayne County. Whitney Cross states that whole communities of New Englanders often emigrated together--"Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties were the new Vermont," Oneida County, the new Connecticut, and so forth.<sup>5</sup>

Frontier life with its leveling effect on social distinctions, its rugged individualism, its optimistic and adventurous spirit, its lack of established traditions and customs, was a potent force in

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<sup>3</sup>H. Shelton Smith, et. al., American Christianity (2 vols., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), II, 6.

<sup>4</sup>Clifton E. Olmstead, History of Religion in the United States (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), 239; Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 15.

<sup>5</sup>Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-over District (New York: Harper and Row, 1950), p. 6.

developing the contemporary American philosophy. "Equality of condition was a fact, not a theory, on the frontier; station, education, refinement, and even wealth mattered little."<sup>6</sup>

Politically, this new American spirit led in the direction of a greater democratization of American institutions. Few of the Founding Fathers were believers in a total democracy; they sought to create a government that would be controlled by the educated, wealthy, and propertied classes. With this aim in mind, they limited the suffrage, the right to hold public office, and the selection of officers so that the influence of the common people would be minimal. After the American Revolution, however, democracy advanced more than many intended. Both national and state governments succumbed to these democratic pressures. The Jeffersonian Revolution of 1800, and the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828, meant the victory of a more radical democracy than had previously governed America.

Intellectual agitation in the country brought about an unprecedented quest for truth. Traditional ways and beliefs were challenged; there was a dissatisfaction with the status quo. Religionists were looking for the millennium, revelation, or a restoration of ancient Christianity. Theories abounded concerning what constituted the perfect societal organization. Two great systems of thought--those of the Enlightenment and Calvinism--were colliding, and the resultant friction sent vibrations throughout the entire society. The naturalistic, mechanistic world-view of the Enlightenment, its protest against

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<sup>6</sup>Tyler, op. cit., p. 18.

religious and secular authority, and its positive concept of man, were some of the notions that jolted the traditional thought patterns of Puritan America. Emerging from this ferment of ideas were scores of movements that ran the gamut from Deism to Christian fundamentalism, from communitarianism to American nativism. Agencies arose to disseminate these ideas. Book publishing increased; low-priced newspapers with wide circulation became common. In 1810, 376 newspapers were published and by 1828 the number rose to almost 900.<sup>7</sup> By "1828 the annual circulation of newspapers was about six for each individual in the country; in 1850 it was approximately twenty-two."<sup>8</sup> The American Tract Society, organized in 1825, the American Home Missionary Society, begun a year later, and the American Sunday School Union, were three important institutions that vigorously propagated religious ideas.

Socially, the country was awash with new ideas and experiments. It was the age of the reformer says Tyler: "Education, temperance, universal peace, prison reform, the rights of women, the evils of slavery, the dangers of Catholicism, all were legitimate fields of his efforts."<sup>9</sup> Across the nation organizations sprang up to advocate some humane cause or some institutional reform. Churches and secular groups united to eradicate private and social ills. Horace Mann led the reform of education; Lucretia Mott fought for women's rights;

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<sup>7</sup>Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (3rd edition, New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 209.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 287.

<sup>9</sup>Tyler, op. cit., p. 3.

Samuel Gridley Howe transformed treatment for the blind; Timothy Flint attacked gambling; and William Ellery Channing advocated the abolition of war. There were societies dedicated to prison reform and societies to aid the poor, the orphan, the insane, and others.

The temperance crusade was one of the most important reforms. Churches and the American Tract Society gave their support in fighting "demon rum," tobacco, and unhealthy foods. Dr. Benjamin Rush's pamphlet Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits upon the Human Body and Mind, published in 1787, had over 170,000 copies in circulation by 1850.<sup>10</sup> In 1830, approximately 2,000 temperance societies existed in the United States and by the mid-1850's every northern state except New Jersey had enacted a prohibition law.<sup>11</sup>

Religious and non-religious orders established utopian communal societies throughout the land ranging in character from Brook Farm of the Transcendentalists to the Shaker communities. These orders were usually led by a zealous religious leader who often claimed direct communication with God, such as Jemima Wilkinson, Mother Ann Lee, George Rapp, or Christian Metz. Most of these communal groups were very millennium-conscious, some believing the millennium was imminent and others maintaining that it had already arrived. Peculiar doctrines of marriage and sex were often manifest. The Shaker and Harmonist

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<sup>10</sup>Edwin Scott Gaustad, A Religious History of America (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 179.

<sup>11</sup>Milton V. Backman, Jr., American Religions and the Rise of Mormonism (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1965), p. 305.

experiments advocated celibacy; the Inspirationists of Christian Metz held that the single state was preferable to marriage; the Mormons practiced polygamy, while the Oneida community of John Humphrey Noyes practiced a system called "complex marriage," a program whereby community leaders decided when, how many, and by what couples offspring would be produced. Many groups adopted a health code, and nearly all had some form of communal ownership of property and possessions.<sup>12</sup>

As the Civil War neared, the issue of slavery became the leading moral question and eclipsed all other reform movements in importance. William Lloyd Garrison's radical abolitionist newspaper, the Liberator, began in 1831, as the most outspoken voice for emancipation of the slaves. The New England Anti-Slavery Society came into existence the same year to be followed by numerous others. Many abolitionists called for immediate and complete abolition of slavery; and as they became more demanding and uncompromising, secessionists and apologists reacted with opposing arguments.

In religion, the new American spirit manifested itself in a great spiritual revival called the "Second Great Awakening." After a lull in religious fervor following the Revolutionary War, this awakening stimulated interest to an all-time high. Revivals and camp meetings reached a peak in 1799 and 1800. Excitement diminished after 1800, rose again in 1807-08, slumped during the War of 1812, and then flared up again. Another low point followed briefly after 1820, and then

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 232-237.

crescendod to a climax especially in western New York, between the years 1825 and 1837.<sup>13</sup> Despite the influence of eighteenth-century rationalism, America was still a religious-minded nation. It was that penetrating French observer of American life, Alexis de Tocqueville, who said there was "no country in the world in which the Christian religion retains a greater hold over the souls of men than in America . . . . Religion is the foremost of the institutions of the country."<sup>14</sup>

Religious enthusiasm, advancing democracy, and humanitarian zeal complemented each other, each aiding and abetting the other. Tyler writes, "Indeed, the great revival was the fountain of energy from which came much of the impetus for the various reform movements."<sup>15</sup> The Second Great Awakening, she says in another context, exerted a "tremendous influence upon the social history of the nation throughout the following century."<sup>16</sup> Many reform movements used religious arguments to promote their cause. "No one," declares Merle Curti, "can read widely in the reform literature without being profoundly impressed with the religious character of the arguments that filled the tracts, periodicals, lectures, and private correspondence of the crusaders."<sup>17</sup> On the other hand the political and intellectual

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<sup>13</sup>Cross, op. cit., pp. 9-13.

<sup>14</sup>Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, ed. Phillips Bradley (New York: 1948), I, 303-04.

<sup>15</sup>Tyler, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>17</sup>Curti, op. cit., p. 371.



climate had its impact on religion. The Revolutionary War and Constitutional Period effectively brought to an end the union of church and state that had prevailed in many colonies. The Bill of Rights prohibited Congress from passing a law that would abridge one's right to worship as he pleased. Calvinism, no longer enforced by the state, could hardly appeal to the equalitarianism, freedom, and "rights of man" doctrines that were so much a part of young America.

The intellectual impact of the Enlightenment had a great effect on the liberalization of American religion. Calvinism, the predominant theology of colonial America, encountered forces beginning with the Great Awakening of the 1740's that gradually undermined its hold on the colonial mind. The naturalism, anti-authoritarianism, and rationalism of the Enlightenment militated against such strong Calvinist doctrines as the sovereignty of God, predestination, election, and the depravity of man. Deism, Unitarianism, and Universalism were three religious movements resulting from a mixture of eighteenth century rationalism and Christianity. They challenged numerous doctrines of traditional Evangelical Christianity, including the infallible inspiration of the Bible, the trinity concept of God, the concepts of sin, salvation, and the after-life. Arminianism, the theology fathered by the Dutch churchman Jacob Arminius, made inroads into various religions, especially Methodism. Arminianism was essentially a revolt against the Calvinistic notions of unconditional election and irresistible grace, and emphasized man's free agency and participation in the salvation process.

The battle began in earnest when Henry Ware, a young minister

with unitarian ideas, was appointed professor of divinity at Harvard in 1805. Three years later a group of conservative ministers left Harvard to establish Andover Theological Seminary to advocate the Calvinism that had been smothered at Harvard. A pamphlet war began in 1815 with the publication of Englishman Thomas Belsham's American Unitarianism. William Ellery Channing, a Boston pastor, entered the arena as the major spokesman for Unitarianism. He and others formed a separate Church--the American Unitarian Association in 1826. The Free Will Baptist schism was another move away from Calvinism as was the theology of Charles Grandison Finney and the hundreds of similar revivalist preachers that followed his lead. These new religious ideas led to a multiplication of new, even bizarre, sects and a fragmentation of old ones.

Important to the student of Mormonism is the fact that the area of Mormonism's birth was one of the most intensely reform-conscious and evangelized areas in the country. Western New York in early nineteenth century America was so scorched with the fires of evangelistic and crusading zeal that it has been named the "Burned-over District."<sup>18</sup> It was here that Charles Finney's emotional revivals had their beginning in 1824. It was here that the Second Awakening made its most effective and lasting conquests, greatly

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<sup>18</sup>Cross, op. cit., p. 4, says the term "Burned-over District" became a "hallmark of upstate New York" and that "No exact geographical sense can be assigned to the phrase. It simply meant the place where enthusiasts flourished. But convenience dictates an arbitrary boundary located to include the major expressions of the spirit identified by the term. For my purposes I have defined the Burned-over District as that portion of New York State lying west of the Catskill and Adirondack Mountains."

exceeding the effect it had on the rest of New England. "From the time of settlement the region was characterized by unusual deviations from doctrinal orthodoxy, clerical exhibitionism, egregious conduct, and frequent change of denominational affiliation."<sup>19</sup> Revivalism and emotionalism reached their height in the district after 1825, and "the products were anti-Masonry, millennialism, spiritualism, Mormonism, and a score of fervent and often rabid causes which brought on inter-denominational conflict and almost constant debate between enthusiasts and conservatives within a given communion."<sup>20</sup>

By the time the Smith family moved to western New York (somewhere around 1815 or 1816), it was well past its frontier era. The Congregational and Presbyterian Churches had by far the most adherents, but the most successful frontier churches--the Baptists and Methodists--were making significant gains in membership.<sup>21</sup> The Presbyterians, being strict Calvinists, refused to adopt their doctrine and policy to capitalize on the changing needs of the frontier, and as a consequence, the Baptists with their lay farmer-preachers and the Methodists with their far-reaching circuit riders soon eclipsed them in influence.<sup>22</sup>

Revival religion was part of the youthful environment of Joseph

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<sup>19</sup>Olmstead, op. cit., p. 335.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>George Shepherd Tanner, "The Religious Environment in Which Mormonism Arose" (unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Chicago, 1931), p. 21.

<sup>22</sup>See Backman, op. cit., pp. 277, 291.

Smith and his younger cousin, George Albert Smith. The Smiths were products of New England, having lived there since their early American forebears migrated from England in 1638. George A. and Joseph Smith had the same grandfather, the colorful Asael Smith (1744-1830). After raising his family in Massachusetts and Vermont, Asael Smith moved to Stockholm, St. Lawrence County, New York. His son, Joseph Sr. settled in Palmyra, Wayne County, and his son, John, moved to Potsdam, twelve miles southwest of Stockholm. The three children of John and Clarissa Lyman Smith were born in Potsdam--George Albert on June 26, 1817, Caroline on June 6, 1820, and John Lyman on November 17, 1828.

George A. was raised in the pervasive religious atmosphere of the Burned-over District and a devout Congregationalist home. He described his youth as a time of "great religious excitement, when revivals and protracted meetings were common all over the country, and the souls of many were stirred to the very core, as it were, by the idea, then so strongly advocated, of the punishment and misery which were to be eternally inflicted upon all those who were finally impenitent."<sup>23</sup> George A. had heard of only one man in Potsdam, during the entirety of his younger years, who did not believe in the Bible.<sup>24</sup> George A.'s parents were always devout Christians. He records in his journal that they "spared no pains to impress my mind, from my infancy, with the importance of living a life of obedience to the principles

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<sup>23</sup>G. D. Watt and others (reporters), Journal of Discourses (26 vols.; London: LDS Book Depot, 1854-86), XV, 95, hereafter cited as J.D.

<sup>24</sup>J.D., XIII, 38.

of the religion of heaven, which they taught to me as well as they understood it."<sup>25</sup> George A. attended some camp meetings in his boyhood, the results of which will be detailed in the following chapter.<sup>26</sup>

Such were the time and place which provided a fertile seed bed for the birth of Mormonism,<sup>27</sup> and the John Smith family was among its earliest and most important converts. "Uncle John Smith," as he was endearingly called, held many important positions in the Church including President of four different stakes, a Patriarch in Nauvoo, and finally, in 1847, becoming Patriarch to the whole Church. His son, George Albert Smith, was to become one of the most influential Mormon leaders of his generation.

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<sup>25</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, 1827, located in the LDS Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah. It is impossible to learn just when George A. wrote all the parts of his journal. His journal prior to the year 1840 was apparently written years after the events they describe. He kept a daily journal as early as 1840, and a rather thorough account of his life from 1843 to 1847, then follows a gap until the iron mission journal in 1852. The only remaining journal materials are sketchy items for the years 1870, 71, 72, and 74. There was very little journal material for the period covered by this dissertation. The Church Historian's Office has one large typescript copy of George A. Smith's Journals. This was compared by the writer with the originals in the First Presidency's vault and found to be without any significant change.

<sup>26</sup>J.D., XIV, 216.

<sup>27</sup>Hyrum Andrus, "The Second American Revolution: Era of Preparation," BYU Studies, I (Autumn and Winter, 1959-60) is an interesting article interpreting the milieu of early Mormonism as just the type of preparation needed before the restoration of the Gospel could take place. Other writers such as Fawn Brodie, No Man Knows My History: the Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1945) believe that Mormonism is largely the product of its environment.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MAN

The first thing one would notice about George Albert Smith was his size. He stood five feet ten inches tall and usually weighed in the neighborhood of 250 pounds. Fitz Hugh Ludlow, a youthful traveler from New York, described him in 1870 as a man of "good height" who "had had no quarrel with his cook."<sup>1</sup> Even as a youth George A. described himself as being as large as boys three or four years his senior. Being awkward and the "underling in strength among the boys of the neighborhood," he was abused by some of the village bullies. Finally he asserted his strength and was able to "master the school" and gain the respect of his peers.<sup>2</sup>

Another conspicuous quality which George A. possessed was his warm congeniality and sense of humor which enabled him to laugh at himself and win the friendship of others. An English traveler named Justin McCarthy described this characteristic in his Reminiscences:

George A. Smith was a huge, burly man, with a Friar Tuck joviality of paunch and visage, and a roll in his bright eye which, in some odd, undefined sort of way, suggested cakes and ale. He talked well, in a deep rolling voice, and with a dash of humour in his words and tone--he it was who irrever-

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<sup>1</sup>Fitz Hugh Ludlow, The Heart of the Continent: A Record of Travel Across the Plains and in Oregon, with an Examination of the Mormon Principle (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1870), p. 514.

<sup>2</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, 1832, located in LDS Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

ently but accurately likened the Tabernacle to a land turtle.<sup>3</sup>

George A. supplemented his rugged appearance with a few appurtenances, namely, a full wig, false teeth, and glasses. William Palmer writes that he "sometimes astounded the Indians by slowly removing all these appendages before them, and he came to be called by the natives, 'Non-choko-wicher' which means, takes himself apart."<sup>4</sup> He could laugh about these as well as his obesity. On one occasion he described his appearance to a cousin in New York. He mentioned his age, height, weight and added, "and when my wig is off there is scarcely a hair between me and Heaven."<sup>5</sup>

The man's mind cannot be understood apart from Mormonism. Converting to this new American faith at an early age, its goals thereafter became his goals, its philosophy his philosophy, its triumphs his triumphs, and its hardships his hardships. He stated it thus in an 1861 sermon:

The priesthood which the Lord has conferred upon my head through his servant, and which in his abundant mercy he has enabled me thus far to magnify, is my joy, my theme, and the thoughts and reflections of my soul are how and by what means I may in the best possible manner make honorable all those blessings and ordinations which have been conferred upon my head. It is and ever has been, since I entered into this

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<sup>3</sup>Justin McCarthy, Reminiscences (New York and London, 1889), I, 258.

<sup>4</sup>William Palmer, "Pioneers of Southern Utah," Instructor LXXIX (January, 1944), p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Hanah Butler, December 13, 1868, Church Historian's Office Letter Book, No. 6, p. 732.

church, my desire to be found among those who are valiant for the truth.<sup>6</sup>

His speaking talent, organizational and leadership ability, and political sagacity were given untiringly to the service of his Church. He was a model Latter-day Saint; a good man possessed in large measure with friendliness, integrity, optimism, and unswerving loyalty to his leaders. One is inclined to believe him when he referred to an act of petty theft as the "meanest act of my life." The incident occurred while returning from a mission in 1838. He and ten other passengers had been stalled on a river steamer for three days, ninety miles below St. Louis. Discovering a colored servant baking potatoes in a stove, he offered to purchase a few for his hungry companions but was refused. When the servant left his potatoes unattended George A. helped himself to them, buried some large coals in their place, and distributed them among the grateful passengers. They were quickly consumed before the servant's return. Though "that potatoe and a little parched corn" were all that George A. had eaten in three days, he nevertheless felt guilty for some time thereafter.<sup>7</sup>

With regard to his integrity, it appears that George A. never undertook an obligation of any kind without exerting great energy in the discharge of his duty. One interesting example was his serious

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<sup>6</sup>Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, October 20, 1861, located in LDS Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter this collection will be referred to as the Journal History.

<sup>7</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, October, 1838.



endeavor to clear up all indebtedness incurred in procuring the wagons and equipment necessary to leave Nauvoo. George A. spent little time in economic pursuits and consequently seldom had anything beyond the basic necessities. In June, 1859, he received \$100.00 from wheat sales to the army by the operators of the Parowan grist mill of which he was part owner. He promptly sent the sum to a Moses Deming for a debt that had been outstanding for thirteen years. "I owe several more liabilities of the same kind," he wrote, "and I am determined to exercise faith until every farthing is paid."<sup>8</sup>

Those unacquainted with the difficulty of colonizing the desert regions of southern Utah can little appreciate the drive, optimism, and faith in God needed for the pioneers to make a success of the venture. This was George A.'s area of responsibility, and his leadership was often the decisive factor that brought success out of threatening defeat. Time after time setbacks and discouragement plagued the southern saints and may have caused a lesser man to falter. John Taylor once spoke of the problems facing George A. in his efforts to build up stable communities in the area:

I remember the struggles Brother George A. used to have. He labored under difficulties, being so very heavy, and not as active as most men; but he was a man of great energy. He would come down here and bring a few men, and would settle them down and go back again. By and by he would bring some more down, all that he could pick up that would volunteer. By the time he came down again, he would find half of the others had gone. They did not want to stop. They thought the land was set up on edge and had never been finished, and they had all kinds of notions. Then he would return to the city, and drum up a few more recruits, and take them down; and

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<sup>8</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Zilpha Smith, June 18, 1859, Church Historian's Office Letter Book, 1859-69, p. 124.

by the time he got here he would find that a good many of those he left had also gone. Finally, they became weeded out and left, until he got a lot of folks who, if they had considered it a duty to go on to a barren rock and stay there until they should be instructed to leave, would have done it. It needed just such an element to come to this country.<sup>9</sup>

George A. never slackened in his devotion to duty. President Brigham

Young once paid him the following tribute:

Joseph [Smith] never asked him to do a thing that he did not try his best to do; he never required any labor of him that he did not use his best ability to perform. Neither have I. I have never made known to him his duty, manifested to me by the Spirit of the Lord, but what he did his best to perform it in the best possible manner. This is saying a great deal, but it is true. . . .<sup>10</sup>

The chief motivating force behind George A.'s lifetime of labor was his genuine belief in the temporal and spiritual mission of the Church. He was extremely proud of the marvelous transformation that had come to the desert wastes of Utah through the industry of the saints. This labor of building the society of Zion was to him and his colleagues a preparation for that heavenly Jerusalem to come. It was a great work of anticipation for that day when they would return to Jackson County to build the city of Zion. This dream would never see fruition, George A. admonished, without thorough preparation:

Who is there that is prepared for this movement back to the centre stake of Zion, and where are the architects amongst us that are qualified to erect this temple and the city that will surround it? We have to learn a great many things, in

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<sup>9</sup>G. D. Watt and others (reporters), Journal of Discourses (26 vols.; London: LDS Book Depot, 1854-86), XXIII, 13-14; hereafter cited as J.D.

<sup>10</sup>Journal History, September 5, 1875.

my opinion before we are prepared to return to that holy land; we have to learn to practice the principles that we have been taught; we have to study to fill up every hour of our time in industrial pursuits and the acquisition of knowledge, and by economy and patience prepare ourselves as good and skillful workmen, as builders in the great building which our Father has prepared. And let me remind you that it is predicted that this generation shall not pass away till a temple shall be built, and the glory of the Lord rest upon it, according to the promises.<sup>11</sup>

Another reason for his dedication was his personal respect and loyalty to Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Esteem for the Prophet Joseph began from their first meeting and never waned. George A. lived on "terms of friendship with him as were enjoyed but by few others."<sup>12</sup> With one exception, when George A. was given a "little chastisement" for not stepping forward into plural marriage, their relationship was harmonious, almost approaching adulation at times on George A.'s part. Bathsheba, George A.'s first wife, recorded in her reminiscences that they often "met and mingled with the Prophet and his wife in a social way . . . . We would often go and have dinner with them, and they would come to my little house and have dinner with us. I believe George A. was a favorite cousin, and the Prophet had great confidence in him and we had great faith and confidence in the Prophet."<sup>13</sup> One would search in vain to find any reservation in the heart of George A. in regard to the Prophet's divine calling. They

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<sup>11</sup>J.D. IX, 71.

<sup>12</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Joseph Smith III, October 9, 1869, Church Historian's Office Letter Book, No. 6., p. 891.

<sup>13</sup>Zora Smith Jarvis, Ancestry, Biography, and Family of George A. Smith (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1962), p. 273.

shared a few special experiences which the youthful devotee never forgot. He was the Prophet's armor bearer on the march of Zion's Camp and heard him utter many memorable things. There was the occasion when the Prophet hugged him and said that he loved him as he did his own life. "I felt so affected," wrote George A., "I could hardly speak, but replied, 'I hope, Brother Joseph, that my whole life and actions will ever prove my feelings, and the depth of my affection toward you.'"<sup>14</sup> And he would always remember the time, while suffering from a severe case of rheumatism, when the Prophet advised him never to be discouraged, then buoyed him up with these courageous words: "If I was sunk in the lowest pit of Nova Scotia and all the Rocky Mountains piled in on top of me, I ought not to be discouraged but hang on, exercise faith and keep up good courage and I should come out on the top of the heap."<sup>15</sup> His support of President Brigham Young seemed to be equally firm. Voicing his loyalty to President Young in a conference address, he declared:

I once heard a person say, 'O, I do wish brother Brigham was as good a man as Joseph was.' Now let me tell you, brethren, that if brother Brigham was one particle better man than he is, he could not stay among us, he would have to leave us; he is just as good a man as we are at present worthy of having in our midst. The Lord in mercy to us has given us a great Prophet and a wise Ruler in Israel, that we may exert our powers, influence, and wisdom, under his direction, to prepare for the revelation of the law of exaltation which has been so long promised."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Joseph Smith, History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts (2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1959-60), V, 390-91; hereafter cited as DHC.

<sup>15</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, 1835.

<sup>16</sup>J.D., II, 218.

These two great Church leaders had inspired George A. Smith to become like them. Their teachings became his guiding philosophy. He entertained no doubt that God was at the helm directing His latter-day work. Trials and failures were God's way of strengthening and trying his people. The death of his son, George A. Jr.; the grasshopper plague of 1855; the gentile persecutions--George A. was able to see God's inscrutable will working in all such events for the ultimate good of his people! Of those harrowing months in the summer of 1855, when famine threatened their mountain-bound colonies, he wrote:

. . . the hand of God is plainly manifested in the matter as much so as when he fed the people with Quails and Mana [sic] from heaven. And I have no doubt but it will result in much good and will prove a greater blessing to this community than would a bountiful harvest; it will be the means of preventing a great number of our enemies from coming to this place to consume all our surplus products, and not only this but to practice their abominations and whoredoms, and use every means to seduce and corrupt this people. This is not all, the drought will have a tendency, to cleanse and purge out the dross, and remove the faithless and disaffected to their own place. Thus the Lord will continue to deal with his people until they acknowledge his hand in all things and be sanctified before Him.<sup>17</sup>

Mormonism's strength derived from committed men such as this, men who would face any challenge for their beliefs. George A. meant these words: "to toil and labor for Zion has been my highest ambition," and "every effort and exertion of my life has been to build it up."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Joseph F. Smith, July 27, 1855, George A. Smith Papers, located in LDS Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.

<sup>18</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to James Harvey Smith, October 2, 1862, Church Historian's Office Letter Book, No. 6, n.p.

George A. was a peacemaker. His temperament was ideal for carrying out Brigham's benevolent policy toward the Indians. So insistent was he that amiable relations be maintained with the red man that his opponents once accused him of cowardice. Among the saints, he seemed to be constantly settling some feud. In speaking of this quality, J. H. Faust had this to say: "He believed in arbitration. In traveling through the Territory with him I have known him to sit as arbitrator and settle difficulties that would have kept a court running for days, and cost hundreds of dollars for lawyer's fees. I never knew of one that was ever appealed either. The saints loved him and he loved the saints."<sup>19</sup> E. D. Wolley described him to be "as free from enemies as any man we could select in the kingdom of God."<sup>20</sup>

As a preacher, George A. was one of the most popular to saint and non-Mormon alike. John Codman, another adventurer and writer, said of him:

Mr. Smith was my favorite Apostle. We had often heard him preach at the Tabernacle in Salt Lake. His views were more liberal than those advocated by many of his co-religionists, and his plain, practical teachings were instructive to Gentiles as well as to Mormons. He was fifty-seven years of age, of tall, portly figure, with a face of infinite jollity and expressive humor. This cropped out so frequently that the audience always expected to be entertained when 'Brother George A.' held forth.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>J. H. Faust, "Modern Aarons," Millennial Star, LVI (April 30, 1894), pp. 278-79.

<sup>20</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], October 4, 1875.

<sup>21</sup>John Codman, The Round Trip by Way of Panama through California, Oregon, Nevada, Utah, Idaho and Colorado . . . (New York, 1879), p. 230.

Hugh Fitz Ludlow, also a non-Mormon, made this interesting observation after listening to George A. speak:

Mr. Smith spoke very well. I don't know how much inspiration is claimed for the Apostles who speak on Sunday, but if he was not inspired he did not seem to miss it, for much that goes by the name is inferior to his sermon in good sense and interest. He reviewed the Mormon past in a vigorous sketchy way, contrasting it with the present, to show how manifestly the Saints had been the peculiar care of Providence, and how much cause they had for encouragement regarding the future. His references to the early persecution of the sect were remarkably temperate. . . His mood was humorous and hopeful, and when he concluded his speech his audience were all smiles and cheerfulness.<sup>22</sup>

George A. Smith's sermons were a considerable contrast to those of the doctrinaire Orson Pratt, or the fiery Heber C. Kimball. His preachments usually had a sunny, buoyant, and practical quality. It was rare indeed to find him speculating about the so-called mysteries of the faith. Church history themes and practical affairs, such as territorial economics, were his favorite topics.

Two factors that added appeal to his sermons were his subtle intellectuality and sense of humor. George A. had a reputation among the saints for being a learned historian. Brigham Young called him a "cabinet of history," and Orson F. Whitney described him as "a walking encyclopedia of general information."<sup>23</sup> With only a modicum of formal schooling, George A., nevertheless, possessed an inquisitive nature and enjoyed reading even as a youth. When fourteen years of age his grandfather spoke of him as "a rather singular boy, [since]

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<sup>22</sup>Ludlow, op. cit., p. 514.

<sup>23</sup>Orson F. Whitney, History of Utah (Salt Lake City, 1892), I, 531.

when he comes here, instead of going to play as the rest of my grandchildren do, he comes into my room and asks me questions about what occurred seventy or eighty years ago."<sup>24</sup> George A. could be found reading while crossing the plains in a wagon, as he journeyed to colonize the empty regions of southern Utah, and during long hours in the Historian's Office. William Palmer, in describing this aspect of his personality, wrote:

He avidly read every printed page that came within his reach no matter what the subject. He read 'romances' (novels were taboo) for relaxation and if his eyes were tired or sore he called some brother to read a romance aloud for him. A month after the arrival in Parowan he thirsted so much for news of the outside world that he sent Anson Call with eight men to Salt Lake City for newspapers, books and letters from his family and from President Brigham Young.<sup>25</sup>

As Church Historian he regularly perused over two dozen eastern magazines and newspapers that were subscribed to by his office. His retentive memory was almost proverbial among those who knew him. He attributed this ability to a habit of studying the Bible developed in his early missionary experiences.

. . . I would read over a verse, ponder upon it, and sometimes forgetting a word, would have to look again in the book, but I never gave it up until I could repeat it perfectly a day or two after learning it; in this way I found my memory becoming strong, and attribute whatever I have attained in that respect to the habit I then adopted--of sticking to a subject until I had learned it so that it would stay learned, more than to any natural endowment.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>J.D., XV, 97.

<sup>25</sup>William Palmer, "Pioneers of Southern Utah," Instructor (December, 1943), p. 45.

<sup>26</sup>"George A. Smith," The Contributor, IV (January, 1883), p. 121.



Though an intelligent and well-read historian, George A. would not be considered an inventive thinker or writer. Inventiveness and originality were not greatly prized in the highly centralized Church organization of Brigham Young's time. A premium was placed on faithfulness to the Gospel, and this was largely measured by one's fidelity to the directions and thinking of the Prophet and leader of the Church. George A. was always submissive to his ecclesiastical superiors. Even in his capacity as a Church leader in Kanesville, when hundreds of miles separated him from Brigham Young, most major decisions were written to the President for his approval, and any alteration made by him was immediately and unquestionably accepted. George A.'s accomplishments, therefore, must be judged by the limits imposed by his environment. The range of his thinking and actions were circumscribed by the dictates of President Young, and this was necessary for him to be considered a faithful member of the Church.

While admitting the foregoing, some would maintain that George A. had not fully risen above the biases, superstition, and credulity so characteristic of his day. It was his firm belief, for example, that the high desert country of Utah would scarcely bear food before the coming of the saints. Since their arrival "the genial influence of the Spirit of the Almighty has softened the rigor of the climate" enabling the ground to bring forth fruits and vegetables bountifully.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, said he, go to any of the places the saints have

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<sup>27</sup>J.D., XI, 178.

lived "and ask for apples and peaches, and you will find them few and far between. . . . This condition of things was very general. It is so wherever the saints have lived and been driven away--their glory has departed to return no more, until the land is dedicated and consecrated to God and occupied by the Saints."<sup>28</sup> George A., like many of his contemporaries, would often interpret his dreams and get from them some divine warning or message. On one overnight stay at Orrin Porter Rockwell's he dreamed he had died and was so heavy that the pallbearers dropped and broke the coffin, exposing his "much mutilated" body. George A. gave this (apparently serious) interpretation of the dream: "Upon waking I accounted for the dream in this wise. I thought there had been so much wickedness committed in that house while the gentiles occupied it, that foul spirits haunted my sleep."<sup>29</sup>

George A.'s keen sense of humor enriched his sermons, his personal relationships, and his own psychological well-being. He was a popular lecturer and conversationalist. One night Hosea Stout rolled into Provo and "found Elder George A. Smith with whom I tarried all night well entertained with his agreeable social yarnings."<sup>30</sup> A similar circumstance occurred while on a preaching tour of Weber County. Encountering a severe snow storm near Ogden, they turned in at Brother Parker's where George A. "entertained the brethren. . . with heathen

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Brigham Young's Manuscript History, October 20, 1860, Church Historian's Office, p. 354.

<sup>30</sup>Juanita Brooks (ed.), On the Mormon Frontier, The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844-1861 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), II, 498.

mythological yarns."<sup>31</sup> A sample of his humor happened when exhorting the brethren doing missionary work to use plain words, without ostentation. Those who are so full of pride not to listen to common conversation are, he said,

like the young gentleman who had just come from college and was desirous of making a considerable show, so when he stopped at a country hotel, he gave the following orders to the ostler-- 'You will extricate the quadruped from the vehicle, stabulate him, donate him an adequate supply of nutritious aliment, and when the Aurora of man shall illumine the celestial horizon I will award thee a pecuniary compensation.'

The lad went into the house to the old man, crying-- 'Landlord, there is a Dutchman out here; I can't understand a word he says, do come and talk to him yourself.'<sup>32</sup>

He made no secret of his deficiencies and often told jokes about himself. He was once called a "coward" when his precautionary measures during the Walker Indian War were mistaken for timidity. He subsequently made good-humored fun of his "cowardess" in several sermons, the most notable of which was his fiery discourse before Buchanan's peace commissioners in 1858, quoted in chapter nine. He made funny puns about his corpulence and bald head. Apparently, in response to a hint that he needed some protection for his exposed dome, some fifty donors pledged sums ranging from \$.25 to \$2.00 to purchase him a wig.<sup>33</sup> Sometimes while speaking on a windy day there was concern that it might not stay in place. Heber C. Kimball cautioned him on one occasion to watch that his hair did not blow off. On reaching the podium, George A.

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<sup>31</sup>Journal History, February 5, 1864.

<sup>32</sup>J.D., III, 24-25.

<sup>33</sup>George A. Smith Papers, May 6, 1854.

replied:

I shall exercise as much care and caution as possible on the subject; but if it should actually come off, I have very few friends here today in this numerous audience but what know very well how my head looks perfectly bare, and consequently I should not feel as though I was subject to any particular disgrace.<sup>34</sup>

On a trip to Bear Lake Valley in 1864, the brethren had a good laugh at George A.'s difficulty in making it through the mountains.

Solomon Kimball, Heber's son, related this amusing story:

The last hard pull for the oxen was over the mountain into Bear Lake Valley. Several yokes were hitched to Brother George A. Smith's wagon, and he was hauled up the mountain, but before he reached the summit his wagon was so badly broken that he was compelled to abandon it. Everybody had a good laugh over the incident, it being the second vehicle broken down under his weight that day . . . .

President Young, who was in the lead, made another start, and had not gone far when one of the horsemen brought word that Brother George A. Smith's horse had given out and that they were obliged to build a scaffold in order to get him onto another one. This amusing story caused the Authorities to have another laughing spell at Brother Smith's expense.<sup>35</sup>

George A. was a devoted family man even though his busy life left much for his faithful wives to accomplish by themselves. He met his first wife, Bathsheba W. Bigler, while on a mission in West Virginia in 1837. They were married in 1841, and before leaving Nauvoo he took five more to wife: Lucy Meserve, Nancy Clements, Zilpha Stark, Sarah Ann Libby, and Hannah Maria Libby. His wives adapted ideally to plural marriage. Bathsheba made the following comment about their home

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<sup>34</sup>J.D., II, 360.

<sup>35</sup>Quoted in Zora Smith Jarvis, op. cit., p. 232.

in Nauvoo: "They all had their home with us, being proud of their husband and loving him very much, knowing him to be a man of God and believing he would not love them less because he loved me more."<sup>36</sup>

In 1857, George A. married his seventh and last wife, Susan West. He had previously lost two wives: Nancy Clements died of scurvy at Winter Quarters in 1847, and Sarah Ann Libby was taken by consumption in 1851. Salt Lake City was the home of Bathsheba and Susan, Lucy and Hannah usually lived together in Provo, and Zilpha resided in Parowan. Despite this arrangement, which isolated Zilpha from her husband most of the time, almost perfect harmony prevailed in the family. The amazing Bathsheba, who later became president of the Relief Society, left this account of family relationships:

My husband had of necessity to be away from us much of his time. My hope and joy centered in my children as well as in their father. I loved my husband dearly. I believe but few in the wide world have been as happy as we have been. We have no differences, always agree on all points, our religion and our future hopes and expectations are the same. . . .

I have a great respect for my husband's wives. They have all lived with me. We have worked and toiled together and have had joy in our labors and have had our recreations and have taken comfort in each other's company.<sup>37</sup>

George A. once wrote that "two sisters never loved each other more" than Bathsheba and Susan, and he added that his married life had been "in every sense of the word agreeable."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>"Autobiography of Bathsheba W. Smith," in George A. Smith's Letter Book, 1871-75, located in LDS Church Historian's Office, p. 154.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>38</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to "Dear Cousin," May 12, 1869, Church Historian's Office Letter Book, No. 6.

His wives bore him twenty children, a few of which died in infancy. Undoubtedly the greatest tragedy of his life was the murder of his idealistic son, George A. Jr., by the Moquis Indians. His personal correspondence with his children manifests a tender concern for their welfare. The following excerpt is an example of the advice he often gave them, and also provides meaningful insight into his own personality:

My Dear Son:--As the falling snow drives me into my wagon, I take my pen to give a few words of advice to you, my dear child, from whose society I am by duty called. Leaving you, at a time when you much need a father's watchful care, to the charge of your mother, in your ninth year, you are, no doubt, beset by many temptations, and as you are now forming your character for life, you must remember the value of time, and give every possible attention to the acquirement of knowledge; remember, my son, thy Creator in childhood; and every Sabbath day be sure to attend the church, and hear the instructions there given; be careful to conduct yourself well, and remember as much of the preaching as you can. Never indulge in swearing or profane language; keep out of the company of such boys as use vile language of any kind. Study always to know what is right before you act, and then go ahead, and in this way you will seldom do wrong. In thy heart pray to the Lord in all sincerity at all times, to direct thy ways in wisdom; and never do anything that will be displeasing to the Lord or your parents in the secret place or openly. When school is done go directly home, and do not play by the way or loiter your time away. Make the best improvement of your time at school, for you will soon be a man, then you will have use for all you can learn; and if you squander away your time at school you will always be sorry for the loss of what you cannot regain: take all the pains in your power to make your mother comfortable, and never go and leave her without her knowledge and consent, and when you come back tell her where you have been and what you have been doing in your absence. . . . Make a practice of going to bed early and get up early in the morning, and your mind will be clear and you can learn faster than by sitting up late. . . .

Make yourself as intimate with your little brothers as you can, and cultivate the most affectionate feelings with them, for by so doing you can do them much good in time to come; impressions formed in the cradle are often lasting and very valuable, and they will be apt to follow your example. And I pray God to preserve you in the path of virtue and honor all the days of your life,

and make you an ornament to society.<sup>39</sup>

George A.'s bonds of love extended beyond his immediate family to his cousins. He continually corresponded with them to learn of family news and to gather genealogical information.

This was the man destined to become one of the foremost contributors to the Mormon society in Utah, the subject which will be explored in succeeding chapters.

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<sup>39</sup>Deseret News [Salt Lake City], May 31, 1851.

## CHAPTER IV

### YOUTH AND EARLY ADULTHOOD

Being rather precocious and living in the supercharged religious atmosphere of the Burned-over District, George A. Smith was troubled with theological questions, even at an early age. Like his more famous cousin, the Mormon Prophet, he was confused with the claims and counter-claims of the various Christian denominations. He recalled having a conversation with his father, when approximately ten years old, concerning the origin of the principle churches. The discussion, he said, "opened my eyes and I saw that all these religious notions were mere matters of opinion."<sup>1</sup>

A year later the John Smith family received word from grandfather Asael that his grandson, Joseph Smith Jr., had been the recipient of "several remarkable visions." George A. says his grandfather responded to the letter by saying, "he always knew that God was going to raise up some branch of his family to be a great benefit to mankind."<sup>2</sup> The John Smith family soon received a letter from the young Joseph declaring "that the sword of vengeance of the Almighty hung over this generation, and that except they repented and obeyed the Gospel, and turned from their wicked ways, humbling themselves before

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<sup>1</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, 1827, located in LDS Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1828.



the Lord, it would fall upon the wicked and sweep them from the earth as with the besom of destruction."<sup>3</sup> The letter made a "deep impression" upon the mind of George A., and his father was impelled to say that Joseph "wrote like a prophet."

Soon after the establishment of the Church, Joseph Smith Sr. and his youngest son, Don Carlos, made the 250 mile trip to visit their relatives in St. Lawrence County. Being joined by John Smith in Potsdam, they went directly to confront their father with the news of the restoration of the Gospel. George A., meanwhile, perused the curious "Golden Bible" they had left behind. Neighbors gathered and began making objections to the book, and to his surprise, George A. so effectively confounded their arguments that they went away mumbling, "You was always a smart boy."<sup>4</sup> When his father returned, George A. had many questions to ask his uncle Joseph, all of which were answered to his full satisfaction.

In 1831, two Mormon Elders, Solomon Humphrey and Joseph H. Wakefield, visited Potsdam and were successful in baptizing several of the Smiths before their labors were completed. Those baptized included George A.'s grandmother, two uncles, his mother in September, 1831, his father on January 9, 1832, and finally George A. on September 10, 1832. Grandfather Asael died a fervent believer in the Book of Mormon but was too feeble to be baptized. Even before the missionaries arrived, George A. had been investigating his inherited faith--the

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1830.

Congregational Church. He attended several of their "protracted meetings" held for the conversion of sinners. George A. recalled that he remained in the gallery while "hundreds were moaning for their sins on the anxious benches."<sup>5</sup> His hesitancy angered the minister and, in total, he sealed young George up to damnation "nine times." George A.'s reaction, as he recorded it years later, was as follows: "I concluded if the minister had any authority then my fate was sealed, and if he had none I was foolish for going to his meetings, and this led me to investigate and learn to my satisfaction that the sectarian churches had lost the true Priesthood."<sup>6</sup> Pressure was exerted upon the Smiths to prevent them from joining the Mormons. George A. wrote that a wealthy Presbyterian offered him seven years of free education to dissuade him, but was promptly refused.<sup>7</sup> It is interesting that George A. was baptized considerably later than his parents. It may be indicative that they considered him sufficiently mature to make his own decisions in the matter. For a youth in his mid-teens, he obviously made a mature and lengthy investigation before submitting to baptism. His journal indicates some of his spiritual strivings just previous to becoming a member--experiences not greatly unlike those of Joseph Smith at a similar age:

I had continued to retire to a secret place daily and pray to my Heavenly Father with all my heart to direct me in the right way and give me a true knowledge of the things of His kingdom, that I might not be led into any of the fooleries which were so common in the world. My mind was wrought upon

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

by two spirits, the one of darkness and the other of light. Many times when I would kneel to pray, I would imagine that I heard myself surrounded by a herd of wild cattle as the place I retired to was near a grain field. I could hear them destroying the grain. The shock was at times so sudden that I turned my head sharply to look at them. This kind of annoyance continued until I made up my mind to be baptized.<sup>8</sup>

Being Mormons made the Smith's unpopular with their neighbors. John Smith had lost no time in proclaiming his new faith to all who would listen. He had a few unpleasant encounters with Protestant ministers which helped him decide to "leave this land of confusion and strive to go to the city of the Great King."<sup>9</sup> Arriving in Kirtland, Ohio, on May 25, 1833, they rejoiced when "Cousin Joseph, the Prophet" greeted them with a hearty welcome. They were quickly assimilated into the little Mormon community. George A. spent the first summer and fall quarrying and hauling rock, tending mason, and performing other labors on the construction of the Kirtland Temple. He and a Brother Harvey Stanley hauled the first two loads of rock to the temple grounds.<sup>10</sup> Since Church leaders were under "constant threats" from their enemies, George A. and others took their turn standing guard in order to prevent any mishap.

Disaster hit the infant Church in the fall of 1833 when hundreds were mercilessly driven from Jackson County, Missouri, by hostile

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>John Smith's Journal, p. 10, located in University of Utah Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>10</sup>"George A. Smith," The Contributor, IV (November, 1882), p. 43. A series giving sketches of biographical information on George A. Smith appears monthly in The Contributor from October, 1882, to May, 1883.

enemies. Filled with consternation, the Kirtland saints reacted by sending a volunteer "army" to Missouri in the hopes of "redeeming Zion." Being only seventeen years old, George A. was one of the youngest members of "Zion's Camp," as it was called. Armed with a musket, a knapsack of assorted homespun clothes, and a fierce determination to serve the Lord, he commenced the thousand-mile journey. George A. considered himself fortunate when selected by the Prophet to be part of his mess crew. At night, he slept at the Prophet's feet and "heard many of his counsels and instructions to the officers of the Camp."<sup>11</sup> After the first day's travel, George A.'s feet were blistered from his new boots. "Joseph," he said, "gave me a pair of his own, which were a great relief to me."<sup>12</sup>

Scanty provisions, sore feet, and fatigue had their detrimental effect on camp morale. The Prophet predicted they would meet with misfortune as a result of "giving way to such a spirit." The next morning, according to George A.'s narrative, the horses had "foundered" so badly they could scarcely be led to water. The Prophet declared that God's hand was manifest in the incident, and if they humbled themselves before God the horses would be restored to health. As Joseph predicted, wrote George A., "by noon the same day, the horses were as nimble as ever, with the exception of one of Sylvester Smith's [the chief trouble-maker] which soon afterwards died."<sup>13</sup> Young and

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<sup>11</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, 1834.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., May, 1834.

impressionable, George A. had great admiration for this man he considered to be God's mouth-piece on earth.

The Camp made many efforts to disguise their real identity from curious onlookers. George A. was invited by the Prophet to place himself in a position where he would be approached by visitors. With his "striped bed-ticked pantaloons" and mashed straw hat, George A. says he was naturally singled out by inquisitive strangers "on the principle that children and fools always tell the truth."<sup>14</sup> On June 3rd, young George heard the Prophet make a doleful prophecy. Because of the murmuring, fault-finding, and lack of humility in the Camp, the Lord would smite them with a severe scourge. George A. said of his feelings at the time:

This prophecy struck me to the heart; I thought we should probably get into a battle with the mob and some of us get killed. Little thought I that within four weeks a dozen of my brethren would be laid in the ground without coffins by the fell hand of the plague. But so it was, and I learned ever after to heed the counsels of the Prophet and not murmur at the dispensations of providence.<sup>15</sup>

As they neared their destination and heard rumors of Missouri-ans amassing for battle, they took additional precautions. Joseph Smith appointed his armour-bearer for the remainder of the journey; his arms, said George A., consisted of a "brace of fine silver-mounted, brass-barrelled horse pistols. . . a rifle, also a sword. . . ."

Zion's Camp encountered many problems that prevented them from accomplishing their principle objective: internal dissension and

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., June, 1834.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

cholera in the Camp, threatening mob hostility, and above all the refusal of Governor Dunklin to fulfill an earlier promise by reinstating the saints upon their lands. Joseph Smith then announced a revelation that it was the Lord's will that they not fight. This caused further murmuring since several did not want to relinquish their land without a fight.

The Prophet began his return trip to Kirtland on the ninth of July; George A. accompanied him most of the way. Arriving home in early August, George A. returned four of the eight dollars the Prophet had given him for expenses. Shortly after his return he contracted a severe case of fever and ague which kept him bedfast for nearly six months. During his convalescence he read the "Works of Josephus."

The march of Zion's Camp was an important formative experience in the early life of George A. Smith. He had demonstrated his strength of character in being one of the few who never complained of the hardships. His respect for the Prophet had profoundly increased. He wrote later of the latter's admirable conduct:

The Prophet Joseph took a full share of the fatigues of the entire journey. In addition to the care of providing for the Camp and presiding over it, he walked most of the time and had a full proportion of blistered bloody and sore feet, which was the natural result of walking from 25 to 40 miles a day in a hot season of the year. But during the entire trip he never uttered a murmur or complaint, while most of the men in the Camp complained to him of sore toes, blistered feet, long drives, scanty supply of provisions, poor quality of bread, bad corn dodger, frouzey butter, strong honey, maggotty bacon and cheese, etc., even a dog could not bark at some men without their murmuring at Joseph. If they had to camp with bad water it would nearly cause rebellion, yet we were the Camp of Zion, and many of us were prayerless, thoughtless, careless, heedless, foolish or devilish and yet we did not know it. Joseph had to bear with us and tutor us, like children.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

In the spring of 1835, when the Quorum of Twelve Apostles and First Quorum of Seventy were chosen, the men selected for these positions were those who had been faithful on the march of Zion's Camp. George A. was ordained the junior member of the First Quorum of Seventy.

Though in indigent circumstances, he commenced his first proselyting mission for the Church. Brigham Young gave him a pair of shoes; Hyrum Smith gave some cloth to make a coat and pants; and Father Smith and the Prophet gave their advice. "Preach short sermons," the latter suggested, "make short prayers and deliver your sermons with a prayerful heart." George A. always referred to this advice as his "college education."<sup>17</sup>

The mission took them through Ohio and as far east as New York. George A. was still seventeen years old and his companion, Lyman Smith, his second cousin, was twenty. They were timid and full of apprehension. Elder Lyman Smith spoke ten minutes at their first meeting then turned the meeting over to George A. "It was an awful moment," he wrote of this first preaching experience. "Suffice it to say I talked about fifteen minutes and it seemed to me that I told everything I had ever heard taught by the Elders, and much that I never thought of before. At least I hinted at every principle which I understood, and bore a strong testimony of the truth of the work, and sat down confused."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., May 30, 1835.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., June 6, 1835.

Traveling without purse or script, they spent a good deal of their time trying to obtain lodging and food. Their proselyting technique was, in all probability, typical of the early Mormon elders. They attempted to set up a preaching appointment at some home, church, or other building. They then advertised the meeting in various ways. Lacking success in one village, they would go to another. Though frightened much of the time, they did not try to conceal their identity. "We were determined to stay with no person without they fully understood who we were," wrote George A., "as we really felt that we had rather lay out of doors or go hungry than eat with a man who would not entertain a Latter-day Saint."<sup>19</sup>

Like other missionary accounts, miracles were not uncommon occurrences. A Mr. Thatcher near "Andover Corners" refused them food and six weeks later, while passing through the neighborhood again, they learned "that a streak of frost about a quarter of mile wide had completely killed all the corn and other grain on Thatcher's farm, leaving the rest of the neighborhood untouched." A little boy precariously clung to life in a town called Wood Hall and the elders were requested to administer a blessing. The neighborhood had gathered to "see the miracle, or ridicule our failure." After prayer, they rebuked the sickness and the boy was immediately healed.<sup>20</sup>

After trying unsuccessfully to convert Elder Lyman's relatives in Oneida County, New York, they returned to Kirtland having traveled

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., June 16, 1835.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., July, 1835.



on foot 1,850 miles, held 75 meetings, and baptized eight persons.<sup>21</sup> George A. suffered greatly on the return journey. He had, according to his narrative, "blisters on all my toes and one on the ball of each foot and one of my heels was one complete blister." He speaks of stopping at a tavern, buying a pint of rum, and pouring it into his shoes to relieve the pain. "All my toenails except two came off," George A. said. He urged his companion to stop, but Elder Lyman Smith had scheduled a date for his marriage and needed to make haste to be there on time.<sup>22</sup>

That winter, George A. attended the School of the Prophets but was forced to withdraw on account of sickness. He was finally healed through the Prophet Joseph Smith's blessing. In the spring, he was present at that great pentecostal outpouring of the spirit which came at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. The Prophet Joseph gave the following description of this phenomenon at an evening priesthood meeting.

Brother George A. Smith arose and began to prophesy, when a noise was heard like the sound of a rushing, mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions, and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels, which fact I declared to the congregation.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Preston Nibley, "Youngest Modern Apostle," Deseret News (March 12, 1950), p. 16. This uncompleted biography of George A. Smith appeared serially in the Church News from January 4, 1950, to October 18, 1952.

<sup>22</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, 1835.

<sup>23</sup>Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts (2nd ed. rev., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1959-60), IV, 428; hereafter cited as DHC.

In 1836, another mission and more schooling in Kirtland was helping to mold the nineteen-year old elder into a capable missionary and a competent leader. His "knees never quaked," nor did his "heart faint" when apostasy threatened the Church after the failure of the "Kirtland Safety Society" Bank. There was a powerful conspiracy to overthrow the Prophet, but through it all, says George A., "I was always Joseph's friend; and his enemies were my enemies."<sup>24</sup> In the midst of these dark days George A. was called on another mission to the eastern states. It was while laboring in Harrison County, Virginia, that he struck up "an agreeable acquaintance" with his future wife, Bathsheba W. Bigler. Returning to Kirtland in the spring of 1838, after a ten-month absence and a journey of approximately 3,000 miles, George A. found the Kirtland Stake in a disorganized condition with the apostasy still raging.<sup>25</sup> Most of the faithful had fled to join the Missouri saints and the Smith family followed suit, arriving at the small Mormon community of Adam-ondi-Ahman on June 27, 1838. They cooperated in throwing together some houses; George A. helped his father erect a two-story residence and aided others "to raise 25 log houses in 25 days."<sup>26</sup>

Even in the process of establishing a new home, mob threats made it unlikely that they would stay for long. As mobs continued to

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<sup>24</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, 1837.

<sup>25</sup>Zora Smith Jarvis, Ancestry, Biography, and Family of George A. Smith (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1962), p. 57.

<sup>26</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, June, 1838.

gather, George A. joined others who were organizing to defend their homes. He "rode five days and five nights watching their movements, with scarcely five hours' rest the whole time." Mobs were driven off and, a few days later, the brethren stood by in readiness as Joseph, Hyrum, and Lyman Wight were being tried before Judge King in Daviess County. Returning home, they ran their horses to elude a mob. George A.'s horse stumbled, throwing him to the ground. Though badly bruised, he remounted and rode off slowly, figuring he was "in less danger from the rifles of the mob than the falling of my horse."<sup>27</sup>

Accepting another mission call, George A. accompanied Don Carlos Smith on a tour of scattered branches in the east in an attempt to raise enough money to buy the property of the Daviess County mobbers. Their effort proved to be too little and too late. On the return trip they learned from Orson Pratt in St. Louis that Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, were imprisoned and David Patten had been killed. They arrived in Daviess County to find their families driven from their homes, half frozen, and with food supplies nearly gone. This necessitated George A. making several clandestine trips to Daviess in order to obtain corn, livestock, and other of their possessions. Far West proved to be an unsafe refuge and shortly the saints found themselves driven again before the unruly mob. After visiting the Prophet and other prisoners in Liberty Jail and learning of his appointment to the apostleship, George A. hastened back to aid in the Mormon evacuation of Missouri. Hundreds of saints were without essential provisions

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

and shelter and to George A. "It was heart-rending to see the suffering of thousands driven from their homes."<sup>28</sup> John Smith's family settled twenty-eight miles north of Quincy, Illinois, and George A. obtained a temporary job splitting rails at seventy-five cents a hundred which provided the family with scanty sustenance during this time of trial.

The Prophet, once again a free man, assumed leadership of his scattered flock in the spring of 1839. The riverside town of Commerce (re-named Nauvoo) was designated as the new gathering place, though to George A. it seemed to be the "sickliest place in the world."<sup>29</sup>

To read of the circumstances under which the Mormon apostles departed for their mission to England in the fall of 1839, is to receive some insight into the depth of their religious conviction.<sup>30</sup> Prostrate with illness and leaving their families in a near-destitute condition, they nevertheless were determined not to delay their assignment. In a single year the missionaries achieved phenomenal success. Brigham Young, at the time of departure, recorded this summary note in his journal:

It truly seems a miracle to look upon the contrast between our landing and departing from Liverpool. We landed in the spring of 1840, as strangers in a strange land, and penniless, but through the mercy of God we have gained many friends, established churches in almost every noted town and city of

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., February, 1839.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., July, 1839.

<sup>30</sup>See B.H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (6 vols., Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), II, 23-25.

Great Britain, baptized between seven and eight thousand souls, printed 5,000 Books of Mormon, 3,000 hymn books, 2,500 volumes of The Millennial Star, and 50,000 tracts, emigrated to Zion 1,000 souls, establishing a permanent shipping agency, which will be a great blessing to the Saints, and have left sown in the hearts of many thousands the seed of eternal life. . . .<sup>31</sup>

George A. Smith labored in London and in the counties of Lancaster, Chester, Stafford, Warwick, Worcester, Hereford, Gloucester, Essex and Middlesex. Judging from his journal, at times he seemed overworked to the point of exhaustion. "For the last twenty days," he wrote on one occasion, "I have been so busy with preaching, counseling, baptizing, confirming, and teaching the people that I had not time to journalize any; and have seldom gone to bed before 2 o'clock in the morning, as people were constantly in my room enquiring about the work of the Lord."<sup>32</sup> Though incurring an injury to his left lung, which troubled him the remainder of his life, George A. said of his experiences: I never enjoyed myself better in the discharge of my duty, than I have on this mission."<sup>33</sup>

George A. married Bathsheba Bigler soon after his return to Nauvoo. After living with his parents for awhile, they procured a small cabin, and upon entering it for the first time together, knelt in prayer and dedicated their lives to God.<sup>34</sup> In January, 1842, a decision was made to move across the river to Nauvoo to enable George A.

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<sup>31</sup>William E. Berrett and Alma P. Burton, Readings in LDS Church History (2 vols., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1953), I, 390-91.

<sup>32</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, June, 1840.

<sup>33</sup>DHC, pp. 343-44.

<sup>34</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, August, 1841.

to be closer to his Church work. He had little time to pursue a personal vocation since his services were needed in community and Church affairs. In May, he became a member of the Nauvoo City Council, probably his first introduction to political work. He also served on a committee to settle arriving immigrants.

When the apostate, John C. Bennett, published his slanderous news articles and book, it had the effect of increassing the ill-will and prejudice that already existed toward the Church. The Prophet Joseph, in a counter-measure, dispatched missionaries to preach the gospel and refute Bennett's charges. George A. and Amasa Lyman held meetings in many of the principle cities of Illinois with some apparent success.<sup>35</sup>

In the next few years, George A. was appointed to several positions of responsibility including city alderman, Quarter-master General of the Nauvoo Legion, and a trustee of the Nauvoo House Association. He also fulfilled at least three more brief missions. On July 7, 1843, he and a few companions departed for the East with the intention of collecting money for the Nauvoo House and Temple. Their travels took them to many of the largest eastern cities but the results were discouraging. George A. wrote from Cincinnati saying, "Those who are active are not wholehearted in the work, and the poor cannot give." But, he added, "We are not discouraged, and feel like going ahead, come

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<sup>35</sup>Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, September 9, 1842.

what will."<sup>36</sup>

In January, 1844, George A. attended a meeting and heard the announcement that Joseph Smith would become a candidate for the President of the United States. Mormon and non-Mormon relations were again badly disintegrating and possibly Joseph was making a bold move in hopes of preventing a recurrence of their Missouri troubles. He also could not honestly vote for any of the prospective candidates--Martin Van Buren, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, Lewis Cass. Three had replied to the Prophet's letters by refusing to pledge themselves to help the Mormons in the event of new persecutions. A convention was held, a party platform formulated, and all the available manpower in the Church sent out to campaign. George A., with Wilford Woodruff and Jedediah Grant, left Nauvoo in early May, 1844, to do their electioneering in Indiana and Michigan. They were still active when word reached them on July 13th that the Prophet and his brother had been murdered. They could not believe this tragic news and considered it a hoax until the next day when the report was confirmed. "Deep sorrow filled all the Saints' hearts," wrote George A., "and many gave themselves up to weeping."<sup>37</sup> With heavy hearts they returned to Nauvoo to offer their strength in support of Church leadership against such claimants to the dead Prophet's position as James Emmett, Sidney Rigdon, William Smith, and James Strang.

Another problem had been growing like an ominous storm cloud--

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<sup>36</sup>Quoted in Jarvis, op. cit., p. 88.

<sup>37</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, July 13, 1844.

the danger of renewed mob violence. As opposition mounted, the saints hastened their efforts to complete the Temple, and on May 24, 1845, when the last stone was laid on the walls, they celebrated with stirring sermons and the hosanna shout. George A.'s feelings on that occasion were so bestirred that he "could not suppress a flood of tears."<sup>38</sup>

Completion was sufficient in December to begin endowment work. As the opposition grew bolder, Church leaders occasionally were forced to hide from attempts to arrest them. Plans were made for the westward migration; all the worthy saints who desired received their endowments in the Temple. On February 8, 1846, the Twelve knelt in the upper story of the Temple; George A. Smith was present and left this record: "Kneeling around the altar we dedicated the room to the Most High and asked his blessing on our intended move to the West, and asked him to enable us some day to finish the lower part of the Temple. . . , and asked him to preserve the building as a monument to Joseph Smith. We then left it."<sup>39</sup> During this meeting George A.'s father was moving his family and friends across the Mississippi River in preparation for the westward march. The following day George A. took his wife and children over the river, and with others, commenced their "exodus to greatness."

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<sup>38</sup>Preston Nibley, op. cit., (January 10, 1951), p. 16.

<sup>39</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, February 8, 1846.



## CHAPTER V

### THE WESTWARD MIGRATION

During those last anxious days at Nauvoo, George A. Smith and the other Church leaders were kept busy making the necessary preparations for their imminent departure. George A. was still a young man in his late twenties but had already made sizeable contributions to the Church through his proselyting activities and the faithful discharge of his leadership responsibilities. A new phase of his life was about to begin, a period that would see him become one of the most significant contributors to the vigorous new Mormon society soon to flourish in the barren lands of the Great Basin. He helped pioneer the way to this new home and became one of the first to enter and explore the Salt Lake Valley. He then returned to Council Bluffs to give aid to others who were preparing for the exodus.

Joseph Smith had been the first to look to the far west as a possible home for his beleaguered people. He studied maps and journals and at the time of his death, was intending to send an exploring party to locate a homesite. On March 11, 1844, he organized from his most trusted followers the nucleus of the political kingdom of God and assigned them the task of supervising the westward migration. Though this was the immediate objective of the political kingdom, the theoretical implications of this move were far more pretentious. It was the Mormon belief that as the governments of the world disintegrate in the troubled times preceding the millennium, the Latter-day Saints would be

under the necessity of setting up their own government that would continue through the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth. This organization, variously called the Council of Fifty, the General Council, or the kingdom of God, was the nucleus of this future government.

George A. Smith, a member of this Council, was enthusiastic to do his part. He attended their many meetings where plans were prepared for the exodus. He and other members of the Council were in the East campaigning for the Prophet's presidential candidacy at the time of the martyrdom. The confusing void left by Joseph Smith's death was soon filled by the strong leadership of Brigham Young. Under his guiding genius, the Council of Fifty was revitalized to continue the task assigned it by the Prophet.

In February, 1845, George A. was released as an alderman on the city council--a position he had held for two years--and was soon thereafter called on a financial mission to collect funds for the construction of the temple. The erection of the temple and Nauvoo House were two priority projects with the leaders. George A. was appointed as a trustee of the Nauvoo House Association and spent considerable time during the summer tending to Nauvoo House affairs. In September he wrote, "I spent the whole of last week in active operations on the Nauvoo House. It engages my attention both night and day. There are about three hundred hands employed in the different departments of business in the Nauvoo House. The brick work on the first story is finished."<sup>1</sup> This project was never completed since the

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<sup>1</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, September 6, 1845, located in LDS Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

mobbing began that same month, and all workers were needed in an accelerated effort to finish the temple.

On September 15, 1845, George A. penned in his journal that "forty-four houses and out-houses" had already been burned. Church leaders were doing all they could to prevent trouble. On the 24th of the month they replied to the demand that they leave the state by agreeing to depart in the spring provided they were assisted in the disposal of their property, that molestations would cease, and that they would not be hampered with lawsuits. The Quincy Committee who had made the demands refused to commit themselves to any promises, and an uneasy peace prevailed in Hancock County during that winter.

The first saints left Nauvoo to camp on the west bank of the river in early February, 1846. This premature departure was occasioned by rumors that the federal government might try to prevent the Mormons from leaving and fears that Church leaders were in danger of being arrested. On February 9th, George A. took his family across the Mississippi. His father, John Smith, recorded that the weather was cold and "large quantities of ice [were] running in the river."<sup>2</sup> "Thus we left a comfortable home, the accumulation and labors of four years," reflected Bathsheba, George A.'s wife, "taking with us but a few things, such as clothing, bedding and provisions, leaving everything else to our enemies."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>John Smith's Journal, February 10, 1846, located in University of Utah Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>3</sup>Edward W. Tullidge, Women of Mormondom (New York, 1877), p. 321.

The inclement weather created many hardships at the temporary camp at Sugar Creek. The wind blew constantly, snow fell to the depth of seven inches,<sup>4</sup> and on the night of February 24th, the temperature dropped to twelve degrees below zero. George A. wrote of the snowfall in these graphic words:

Snow began to fall early this morning in great quantities, and lasted all day. Everything looked gloomy. My health being poor it is much harder on me than the women and children. The wind blew so strong from the northwest, it uncovered our tent. The boys turned out and with considerable merriment put it up. It still continues to snow.<sup>5</sup>

The Council of Fifty met frequently during the early stages of the exodus to perfect their organization, decide on the best travel route, and solve a multitude of other problems. On March 1st, everything was ready and approximately five hundred wagons broke camp and headed West. The trek across Iowa was probably the most difficult part of the entire westward journey. George A. described the roads as "exceedingly miry," and frequently their wagons would be "up to the hubs in mud" so that several yoke of oxen were required to pull them out. "It seemed as though the bottom of the road "had fallen out," he wrote under the date of April 8, "for wagons sunk in the mud up to their beds," and the women and children stood in the rain so that their teams could "pull the wagons through the mud."<sup>6</sup> Food was scarce and the Council of Fifty often sent companies of men to the nearest

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<sup>4</sup>Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, February 19, 1846; hereafter cited as Journal History.

<sup>5</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, February 18, 1846.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., April 8, 9, 1846.

settlements to trade or work for needed provisions. Crops were planted on the Iowa plains to be used by those coming later.

By the close of summer, 1846, some twelve or thirteen thousand Mormons were camped in the Missouri Valley. Mormon industry soon transformed the city of tents into log buildings and dugouts. Moving across the river in September, the John and George A. Smith families proceeded to build three cabins for winter occupancy. The third house, which was for George A., his wife, and two children, was not finished until December 28th.

During the cold winter, George A. attended the meetings of the Council of Fifty and helped to formulate plans for the spring migration. Nearly all Latter-day Saints sought to acquire the necessary equipment and supplies stipulated by the Council. On January 14, 1847, President Young received a revelation referred to as the "word and will of the Lord" (Doctrine and Covenants 136) outlining emigration procedures and organization and appointing the apostles to form companies. In addition to this assignment, George A. and Amasa Lyman were sent to the east side of the river to instruct the saints in their preparations. They traveled to Mormon encampments in Iowa reading the "word and will of the Lord" and asking the saints if they were willing to be governed by the revelation. George A. commented that in comparison to the brethren at Winter Quarters, these saints were in a "cold and indifferent state."<sup>7</sup>

On the 8th of April, George A. joined the pioneer company that

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<sup>7</sup>Journal History, January 30, 1847.

was assembling west of Winter Quarters for the migration. His departure was made in the midst of personal sorrow. The winter had been hard and food scarce. Father John Smith described it as "the coldest winter I ever experienced, or at least it seems so to me."<sup>8</sup> Before it was over nearly six hundred saints had died, a great many from scurvy. George A. was instrumental in finding a remedy to this dread sickness. He fed potatoes to some of his sick family and they quickly recovered. So insistent did George A. become in planting potatoes and preaching their curative powers that he became known as the "Potato Saint."

The cure came too late; the winter scourges had taken his third wife, Nancy Clement Smith, and four of his children, two in early April. George A., as always, bore his hardships stoically, bade farewell to his families, and rejoined the pioneer company.

Some aspects of the journey were enjoyable. At times George A. would ride with Brigham Young and others at the head of the camp "to point out the way for the train." Being an avid reader, he sought opportunities to study the books he had cached in his wagon. On April 28, 1847, he recorded that "Yesterday and today I read a book of 219 pages, as I rode along in my wagon. I read without my glasses, it being more than I have read without them for some length of time, since I left Missouri."<sup>9</sup>

As they came in sight of Fort Laramie, George A. wrote his wife,

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<sup>8</sup>John Smith's Journal, March 18, 1847.

<sup>9</sup>Deseret News, Church News [Salt Lake City], March 21, 1951.

Bathsheba, saying the nights were cold and the elevation near 4,000 feet. He added, "I have spent a considerable part of my leisure time since I left you in reading Dr. Lardner's popular lectures on Arts and Sciences, which afforded me much amusement as well as good instruction."<sup>10</sup> Bathsheba, writing to him on the same day, mentioned her loneliness, "I want to see you so badly, if it is only to come to the door and say, 'Bathsheba, I am going to Council now.'"<sup>11</sup>

George A. was a keen observer. His journal is full of descriptions of the land through which they passed, of camp duties, and of the flora and fauna. On May 8 through 10, they traveled by huge herds of bison. Their dung covered the ground so thickly that, to George A., it "appeared as a barnyard." On June 11, he wrote that he and Albert Carrington examined a coal bed and "concluded that it could be worked from eight to ten feet. From where we could see it was of excellent quality."<sup>12</sup> Years later he mentioned that they were also keeping their eyes open for the most feasible route to build a railroad.

At the Bear River, Brigham Young became sick with mountain fever. He sent Orson Pratt with twenty-three wagons and forty-two men ahead to follow the Donner Trail into the Salt Lake Valley. On July 17, at the Weber River, the president's health declined so Brigham Young remained behind temporarily while Willard Richards, George A. and others proceeded toward their destination. On the 21st this group came within a half mile of Pratt's company. Richards and George A.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., March 28, 1951.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

wrote a letter and sent it by "express" to Pratt saying:

We left Brother Young day before yesterday, a little above the ford on the Weber river. . . . Pres. Young gave us his views concerning a stopping place in the basin, by saying that he felt inclined for the present not to crowd upon the Utes until we have a chance to get acquainted with them, and that it would be better to bear toward the region of the Salt Lake rather than the Utah Lake and find some good place for our seeds and deposit them as speedily as possible, regardless of a future location.<sup>13</sup>

On receiving this letter, Orson Pratt rode back to consult with Richards and George A. It was decided that Pratt, George A., and others would proceed into the valley and look for a place to plant while Richards would return to Brigham Young's group and lead them into the valley.

On July 22, George A. entered the valley with an advanced group and explored its northern edge. In the evening Thomas Bullock, the camp historian, recorded the following, "Many of the brethren met in the evening around the camp fires to hear the report of Orson Pratt, George A. Smith and several others who had been out on an expedition

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<sup>13</sup>Letter of George A. Smith and Willard Richards to Orson Pratt, Journal History, July 21, 1847. Years later George A. and others taught that their place of destination had been revealed to President Young. In an 1869 sermon George A. relates that following the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, President Young "sought the Lord to know what they should do and where they should lead the people for safety, and while they were fasting and praying daily on this subject, President Young had a vision of Joseph Smith, who showed him the mountain that we now call Ensign Peak, immediately north of Salt Lake City, and there was an ensign fell upon that peak and Joseph said, 'Build under the point where the colors fell and you will prosper and have peace.' . . . . When they entered it (the valley) President Young pointed to that peak and said he, 'I want to go there.' He went up the the point and said 'This is Ensign Peak. Now brethren organize your exploring parties, so as to be safe from Indians; go and explore where you will, and you will come back every time and say this is the best place.'" Quoted in Brigham Young's Manuscript History, June 20, 1869, pp. 544-55.



on horseback having traveled about 20 miles . . . . Elders Pratt and Smith have picked out a place for a permanent camp ground."<sup>14</sup> The next day they ploughed two and a half acres, planted seeds and then dispatched a letter to Brigham Young's company camped in Emigration Canyon. The letter, signed by Orson Pratt, Willard Richards and George A., described the valley, told of their explorations, apologized for not making a better road into the valley and then added a touch of humor. In their explorations they had "passed through an extensive forest of cedar, the tallest of which they were enabled to see without the help of glasses and the best computation they would make without instruments was six inches high." They went on to conclude that "timber can hardly be said to be scarce in this region for there is scarcely enough of it to be named and sage is as scarce as timber, so that if you want to raise sage and greasewood here you had better bring the seed with you from the mountain."<sup>15</sup>

Brigham Young entered the valley on July 24, 1847. Wilford Woodruff, who accompanied him, later recorded his feelings as follows: "We gazed in wonder and admiration upon the vast valley before us, with the waters of the Great Salt Lake glistening in the sun, mountains towering to the skies, and streams of pure water running through the beautiful valley. It was the grandest scene that we had ever beheld till this moment."<sup>16</sup> This, he said, was "the land of promise, held

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<sup>14</sup>Journal History, July 22, 1847.

<sup>15</sup>Letter of Orson Pratt, Willard Richards and George A. Smith to Brigham Young, Journal History, July 22, 1847.

<sup>16</sup>Quoted in Journal History, July 24, 1847.

in reserve by God, as a resting place for His saints." George A.'s journal entry on this day was the shortest he had made in weeks. He said, "Potatoes all planted. I planted first. At about two the President and his company came up all better. Water let on the ground. Towards evening a slight shower."<sup>17</sup> July 25 was Sunday, and George A. was called on to speak--the first of the pioneers to give a sermon in the Salt Lake Valley.

In the month which George A. spent in the valley, he helped make further explorations but applied his efforts mostly toward the construction of two cabins for his parents and in-laws upon their arrival. The cabins were located in the Old Fort and were "8 by 9 feet high and 14 feet wide and 16 feet long. The roof was made of poles and willows and dirt covered it."<sup>18</sup> One of George A.'s first explorations took him and Captain James Brown, of the Mormon Battalion, north of their camping site to the hot springs area. Brown reported that George A. dismounted, examined the hot water, and exclaimed, "hell was not one mile from the place."<sup>19</sup>

On August 16, the ox team company started back to Winter Quarters to be followed ten days later by the horse teams. George A. wrote the following summary of their accomplishments thus far:

The pioneers, with the aid of the detachment and families from Pueblo broke, watered, planted and sowed upwards of one hundred acres with various kinds of seeds; nearly stockaded

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<sup>17</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, July 24, 1847.

<sup>18</sup>Church News, April 25, 1951.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Journal History, July 29, 1847.

with adobies one public square (ten acres); explored the country north to Fort Hall, 216 miles, west, along the southern shore of the Salt Lake, from 30 to 40 miles; south, to Utah Lake, 40 miles, and ascended with barometer and highest mountain peak in the neighborhood of City Valley, and explored much of the neighboring hills, mountains and canyons, and building one line of log cabins in stockade. George A. Smith built two of them.<sup>20</sup>

Just beyond the Little Sandy, George A. met his parents and relatives on their way to the valley. President Young here appointed John Smith to be the ranking authority in the Salt Lake Valley during his absence. Under John Smith's leadership a tremendous effort was exerted in building the new community. In early October, Father Smith wrote to his son George:

At present all is confusion, but we intend to organize tomorrow, though the council are not all at the City. . . . Our city has a very lively appearance, as all hands are employed in building, fencing, herding and trading cattle, sawing lumber, making brick, etc. I do not believe there is more business done in any city in the world according to the population than in the Great City of Salt Lake.<sup>21</sup>

Early in 1848 it was decided that three apostles would stay in Iowa to provide leadership and assistance for the saints there. Orson Hyde was to be the presiding authority with George A. Smith and Ezra T. Benson as his assistants. Though eager to get to their new mountain home, George A. accepted his new assignment with characteristic determination, as indicated in a letter written to President Young soon after the latter had departed. George A. wrote: "We feel that a great responsibility now rests upon us in our present situation,

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<sup>20</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, August 26, 1847.

<sup>21</sup>Letter of John Smith to George A. Smith, Journal History, October 2, 1847.

and shall do all in our power to influence the Saints to do right."<sup>22</sup>  
 This letter was written two days after George A.'s thirty-first birthday. On that day he had written his parents of his longing to be with them. Said he, "Dear Mother, I have been to the store and got you a birthday present of a satin dress and trimmings. . . . I am ashamed that I do so little . . . . I want to see you my dear mother, very much and Father, and all of the family . . . Little George A. and Bathsheba are well and talk about you."<sup>23</sup>

The Pottawattamie lands of southwestern Iowa were unsettled when the saints arrived. Now, in the spring of 1848, there were some 1,500 Church members in the area plus almost a thousand more in the temporary settlements of Mount Pisgah, 130 miles to the east, and Garden Grove, 27 miles beyond Pisgah.<sup>24</sup> By contrast, President Brigham

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<sup>22</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Brigham Young, Journal History, June 28, 1848.

<sup>23</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to his mother, Clarissa Lyman Smith, June 26, 1848, located in George A. Smith's Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>24</sup>Lynn Robert Webb, "The Contributions of the Temporary Settlements Garden Grove, Mount Pisgah, and Kaneshville, Iowa, to Mormon Emigration, 1846-1852" (unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1954), p. 121. Another study makes this report of the Mormon population in Iowa: "A year after the last company left Winter Quarters for Utah, the church had thirty-eight branches in Pottawattamie and Mills Counties. The census from 1849 to 1853 gives Pottawattamie County a population varying from 5,758 to 7,828, reaching the maximum in 1850 and showing a loss of 2,500 from 1852 to 1854, the years of final Mormon exodus." See Clyde B. Aitchison, "The Mormon Settlements in the Missouri Valley," Quarterly of Oregon Historical Society, VIII, (1970), p. 54.

Young was presiding over 5,000 members in the Salt Lake Valley. A General Epistle of the Twelve was sent to Saints in England, Europe, and the eastern states requesting them to gather at Council Bluffs. This bustling community became, until the saints left in 1853, one of the major outfitting centers on the American frontier, a way-station on the road to Zion. It was the responsibility of the presidency there to administrate Church affairs and to aid the saints in their preparations to migrate.

Orson Hyde's leadership of the Pottawattamie saints actually began in December, 1847. He wrote a letter to George A. at Winter Quarters saying that he would be absent until spring but for him to exhort the saints to prepare their wagons, enlarge their farms, and plant their crops as soon as possible. He wrote at length of the kind of vegetables, fruits and animals that should be raised so that they could "fill the country with good things, that the thousands who may flock here may have enough to eat while resting for a season on their way to the valley." George A., concluded Hyde, "you are just the man to start this excitement."<sup>25</sup>

After President Young and 2,500 saints left Winter Quarters on May 26, 1848, the saints who remained on the west side of the Missouri River were forced to evacuate to the east bank. The land on the west side still belonged to the Indians, and they had complained of the Mormons killing the game and using too much timber. The move was made

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<sup>25</sup>Letter of Orson Hyde to George A. Smith, December 8, 1847, located in Orson Hyde's Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

quickly and efficiently, and in July, George A. wrote his father that Winter Quarters was "a perfect desolation for a place once so thickly inhabited. Flies, fleas, bugs, mice, and lots of other vermin, about in the ruins," whereas Kaneshville, by contrast, was "quite a humming place of business."<sup>26</sup>

Hyde's departure had been postponed until June. There were problems in Pottawattamie that required his stern leadership. There was "disaffection in the various branches," in addition to individual apostasies, theft, and troublesome Indian agents. After settling the most pressing problems, Hyde left for the East, leaving George A. in charge. The most urgent problem facing him was to assist the remaining saints in moving to the east side of the river. In late June he reported to President Young that "all the poor that were known of when you left have been situated, most of them in such a manner as to earn their own livelihood, at least in part." He pledged their efforts to "do all in our power to influence the saints to do right," and asked for the prayers of the presidency that they might be able to "gather this mighty people from the midst of confusion and corruption to the mountain of the Lord's House."<sup>27</sup>

On July 3, George A. and Ezra T. Benson assisted Willard Richards in making last minute preparations and then watched as the

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<sup>26</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to his father, John Smith, Journal History, July 3, 1848.

<sup>27</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Brigham Young, Journal History, June 28, 1848.

last group from Winter Quarters rolled toward the western horizon. A few months later, in a letter to Brigham Young, George A. quipped, "Since Dr. Richards went away I am decidedly the fattest man in the country. I weigh 238 pounds, and can say with propriety that the motto is correct: 'Greatness has its inconveniences.'"<sup>28</sup>

The summer was a busy one for George A. and Ezra T. Benson-- there were new emigrants to be located and educated in the ways of the frontier; many saints needed help with their "fit-outs;" scattered branches and individual problems called for their administrative skills; there was the matter of Church indebtedness left for them to pay by the First Presidency; there were crops to plant and their own families to care for. George A. wrote President Young in the fall saying, "You may rest assured that it takes greater exertions to control a people scattered as we are here than it would if we were in a city, and we would like to ask council of you many times if we had the opportunity." He added that they had had no success as yet in paying the debts but assured him they were "not disheartened but have the same courage as ever."<sup>29</sup> Others commended the labors of these men. Evan Greene told President Young in a letter that they had devoted "considerable time" to visiting the branches and "stirring up the people to renewed diligence. . . It has had a good effect," he concluded.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Quoted in Church News, May 30, 1951.

<sup>29</sup>Letter of George A. Smith and E. T. Benson to Brigham Young, October 11, 1848. George A. Smith's Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>30</sup>Letter of Evan Greene to Brigham Young, Journal History, October 7, 1848.

Yet there were still further problems to concern them. One of the most troublesome was the political embroilments of the saints which came near to resembling the politically explosive situation they had faced in Nauvoo. Pottawattamie County was organized in early 1848, and in March a group of Whigs arrived seeking Mormon support. They manifested great sympathy for the troubles the saints had faced. George A. was appointed to a committee of Church leaders who gave them an answer to their enquiries. They pledged to "unite their votes with the Whigs of Iowa at the elections of the current year, and that they would correspond with the Whigs as solicited" on condition that the Whigs would exert all their power to suppress mobocracy, insurrection, and violence that might arise against the saints "even to the sacrifice of all their property and their lives if need be." The answer also stipulated that the saints would receive their share of county, district and state offices.<sup>31</sup>

Orson Hyde left Kaneshville on June 24, and on his way East consulted with Whig leaders in Burlington, Iowa. Hyde thereafter gave loyal support to the Whigs and later used his Frontier Guardian newspaper to promote their interests. He communicated his sentiments to George A. in a July 8 letter:

I have come to the conclusion that it will be for our interests and for the interests of the country to vote the Whig ticket generally. You had better say nothing about this except to a few leading men among us until about the time of the election; then make your rally. The Whigs can certainly do no worse

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Journal History, March 27, 1848.



for us than the Democrats have, and they may do better.  
I think it best that we try them once at least.<sup>32</sup>

He said in a later letter that the Whigs "assured me" that if they obtained political control they would allow the saints in Salt Lake to have a governor of their choice. The Democratic press soon circulated the story that Hyde had been bribed by the Whigs. Tempers became hotter when Daniel F. Miller, a Whig and Mormon, defeated Locofoco William Thompson only after the temporarily "lost" Kaneshville votes were "found" thus giving Miller the edge.<sup>33</sup> Thompson raised complaints and charged that the Kaneshville votes were illegal. Another source of friction came from fellow churchman Almon W. Babbitt, a staunch Democrat. Babbitt attacked Hyde in the Iowa Statesman and for this was disfellowshipped. George A. tried to reconcile these two men. Hyde was willing but Babbitt remained adamant.<sup>34</sup> George A., by contrast, was loyal to his ecclesiastical superiors and consequently appeared to have no problem following Hyde's advice and leadership. After the Democrats failed in their attempt to disorganize Pottawattamie County, the political conflict subsided.

George A. apparently exerted a moderating influence upon the fiery Hyde. George A. had described the latter's leadership as a

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<sup>32</sup>Letter of Orson Hyde to George A. Smith, July 8, 1848. Orson Hyde's Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>33</sup>Belle Palmer, "The Sojourn of the Mormons at Kaneshville, Pottawattamie County, Iowa, 1846-1852" (unpublished Master's thesis, Colorado State College of Education, Greeley, Colorado, 1936), pp. 47-48.

<sup>34</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to his father, John Smith, May 21, 1849. George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

"terror to evil-doers, and a comfort to the Saints." Many of the saints probably appreciated the benevolent and patient methods of George A. On one occasion it was reported to President Young that Hyde had lost faith in a disobedient branch, "but Bro. George A. gives them a lecture occasionally."<sup>35</sup>

But even the genial young apostle had nothing good to say about apostates. Some of Lyman Wight's emissaries were in the area calling all the saints to his standard. Some who followed them were said by George A. to be "under the influence of the spirit (alias corn whiskey)."<sup>36</sup> Wight was disfellowshipped and later excommunicated for his apostasy despite Brigham Young's reluctance to do so. Two Elders, Preston Thomas and William Martindale, had been sent to Texas to visit Wight. They reported that "he was alienated in feeling entirely from his quorum and the Church, pronouncing them all Apostates." They further said: "In all our interviews with Elder Wight, he never expressed any good feelings towards any of the Church except Elder George A. Smith."<sup>37</sup>

One highlight of George A.'s labors in Pottawattamie was the return of Oliver Cowdery to the Church after an eleven year absence. George A. wrote that his testimony to the truthfulness of the Book of

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<sup>35</sup>Letter of Silas Richards to Brigham Young, Journal History, October 10, 1848.

<sup>36</sup>Letter of George A. Smith, E. T. Benson, and Joseph Young to Brigham Young and Council, Journal History, October 2, 1848.

<sup>37</sup>Letter of Preston Thomas and William Martindale to Orson Hyde, Journal History, March 14, 1849.

Mormon caused "quite a sensation" among the non-members present and was gratefully received by the saints. In meeting with Cowdery, George A. and Orson Hyde were told that "he had come to listen to our counsel and would do as we told him" and that he did not expect to be a leader but a member only.<sup>38</sup>

Another interesting note in an October letter shows the extent to which George A. and the other leaders went in the performance of their duty. To President Young they wrote, "We have done all in our power" to stir up the saints to do their duty. "The calls upon us have been continual, hardly giving us time to rest or sleep."<sup>39</sup> They were hoping to prepare their own outfits for the migration but said at year's end, "We have exerted ourselves to the uttermost to help away our brethren, and are destitute of the necessary means to help ourselves, and cannot go unless God or his saints help us away."<sup>40</sup>

Despite a severe winter, efforts were not slackened to get as many ready for the spring migration as possible. Orson Hyde's paper, the Frontier Guardian, proved to be an effective means of keeping the saints informed. Since Hyde was so occupied with the affairs of the paper, he again asked his able counselors to assume the responsibility of leadership in handling the problems of the migration. George A. was concerned for the poor. He made an appeal through the February

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<sup>38</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Orson Pratt, Journal History, October 20, 1848.

<sup>39</sup>Letter of George A. Smith, E. T. Benson, and Joseph Young to Brigham Young, Journal History, October 2, 1848.

<sup>40</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], February 15, 1849.

Guardian for church members to bring their money, food and clothes for tithing and donate every tenth day in obtaining firewood. The article ended with this admonishment: "Let the Saints stir themselves to diligence and faithfulness on this important subject, for as the Lord liveth, if this people forget the poor and neglect their tithes and offerings according to the law, He will forget them in the day of trouble."<sup>41</sup> In early March, a letter was sent to the "saints in Iowa" declaring that all the worthy who needed help to emigrate would receive it. The letter gave detailed instructions about necessary equipment and supplies. Those who could not go were urged to give aid to those who were going and those making the trip were counseled to plant crops to be used by the Church in Pottawattamie. If their property could not be sold, they were to leave it for the poor and new emigrants. The letter closed with Smith and Benson offering themselves to give any counsel or information to anyone who needed it.<sup>42</sup>

Supplies were needed to build the kingdom. The 1847 "general epistles" counseled saints everywhere to bring seeds, tools, books, and every needful thing for the good of Zion. The Church leaders in Kaneshville promoted this policy. They even asked Brother Wheelock in England to obtain music books and gave a lengthy list of desired musical works. Periodically they shipped a wagon load to the valley. On May 7, for example, they packed an important load of materials which

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<sup>41</sup> Frontier Guardian [Kaneshville, Iowa], February 21, 1849.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., March 21, 1849.

included a carding machine, printing press, type, glue, stationery, printing ink, and 872 bundles of paper. Meanwhile in Pottawattamie supplies became scarce while the demand increased. With spring came hordes of gold seekers. So numerous did they become that George A. exclaimed, "The world is perfectly crazy after gold." Hyde complained in a letter that "the emigrants that have means bring a whole lot of poor people into this country and leave them on our hands to be fed when they do not know how to make a hill of corn or potatoes; and those who brought them get their fitout here and go on with their gold."<sup>43</sup> Cholera threatened the lives of those arriving by boat. George A. tells of three boats landing in May and fifty-six Welsh saints on one boat had died. In a letter to Willard Richards he declared, "I have been very busy taking care of the sick and illegible word brethren who just arrived here . . . . The most of my life is like I had an Indian chasing me with a tomahawk, for I am in a hurry all the time . . . . One call after another calls me away, and I am obliged to close."<sup>44</sup>

George A.'s labors in western Iowa had come to an end. On July 25, 1849, the last wagons left Winter Quarters and began winding their way westward to Zion. The company of 118 wagons led by George A. and Ezra T. Benson was composed of Englishmen, Welshmen, Scotchmen, Yankees, and Norwegians; yet, according to George A., they were

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<sup>43</sup>Letter of Orson Hyde to Willard Richards, June 1, 1849. Orson Hyde Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>44</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Willard Richards, May 21, 1849. George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

united as one. While camped at Cedar Bluffs, located 259 miles west of Winter Quarters, they wrote to President Young indicating that gold diggers had purchased all the good cattle around Kaneshville and they had to be contented with what they could get. Their teams were a motley collection of weak and strong, young and old, cows and bulls. They were loaded heavily with "considerable Church property" plus extra provisions to supplant lean supplies in the Valley.<sup>45</sup>

Due to the rain, travel was slow and difficult. "Indeed it has been shower after shower of wind, rain, thunder, lightning, and hail," wrote George A. His usefulness to the Iowa saints did not end with his departure. He wrote them several letters, giving advice to future emigrants. The most pressing need, he noted, was to tie the cattle up at night to prevent them from stampeding. "There were two or three stampedes among our cattle until we adopted the plan," he declared. In central Wyoming they cited nineteen wagons, eighty-two yoke of oxen, and twenty-seven teamsters sent by prearrangement, from the Valley to bring them aid. The arrival of fresh supplies caused a "time of rejoicing" in the camp.

On August 23, Almon W. Babbitt rode into camp bringing letters from the saints in Salt Lake Valley. The reading of the July 24th celebration held in the Valley "drew a tear from many an eye." George A. sent a letter back mentioning their good fortune. In an exultant mood he wrote, "Surely the angel of the Covenant has gone before us,

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<sup>45</sup> Church News [Salt Lake City], June 6, 1951.

and mercy and protection have hovered over us, been in our midst, and around the Camps of Israel, and for all these blessings we feel to lift our voices and expand our hearts in prayer and thanksgiving to Joseph's God, the God of our Fathers."<sup>46</sup>

Their good luck did not last. On October 2nd, near South Pass, they were beseiged by a "violent snow storm." "For thirty-six hours," wrote George A., "it continued to howl around us, unceasingly, blowing nearly a hurricane, drifting the snow in every direction and freezing fast to whatever it touched." About sixty of our cattle perished, others were scattered, fires could not be kept burning, and they had to stay in the beds of the wagons part of the time to keep from freezing.<sup>47</sup> As a consequence of the near disaster, an effort was made the following year to start the trains earlier.

George A.'s company arrived in the Valley on October 27, their pilgrimage to Zion completed. The journey had taken one hundred five days. During that summer, five companies of saints came across the plains numbering about 500 wagons and 1,400 souls. George A. was penniless and had to live in his wagons for a time. He nevertheless was eager to "take the field of labour" as soon as he could make his families comfortable.

Meanwhile, Orson Hyde had a tremendous burden administering the affairs in Pottawattamie by himself. He missed his assistants,

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<sup>46</sup>Letter of George A. Smith and E. T. Benson to the First Presidency, August 23, 1849. George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>47</sup>Frontier Guardian [Kanesville, Iowa], December 26, 1849.

especially George A. In a letter of April, 1850, he requested Brigham Young to send his former assistant back to Iowa.

I could do extremely well with Bro. George A. Smith back here to assist. It is too much for one man to do; and yet it is not one man, but the whole High Council; yet they cannot devote themselves entirely to the cause as Bro. George would, if here. Bro. George is wise and good in council, and so are they all. But I have been more associated with him than with any other, and if he would come back here and help me, I should be greatly relieved. Will you send him?<sup>48</sup>

Hyde was not the only one who thought highly of George A. Smith's leadership. In the fall of 1848, a Josiah Merritt had written President Young commending George A.'s ability. Among other things he said, "He is a man of God and very capable of managing the affairs of this Kingdom."<sup>49</sup> William Snow, president of the High Council in Kanesville, also wrote at this time: "Brother Geo. A. has been with us in almost all of our councils since you left . . . Bro. Hyde was with us until he went east. It is surprising to see the spirit of the council with which Bro. George A. is possessed and the wisdom that characterizes all his moves. Brother Benson is with him in all things."<sup>50</sup>

President Young, however, had other tasks for his young apostle. Hyde continued to perform capably but did not push the saints to Zion quickly enough to please the presidency. Consequently, a

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<sup>48</sup>Letter of Orson Hyde to Brigham Young, April 27, 1850. Orson Hyde Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>49</sup>Letter of Josiah Merritt to Brigham Young, Journal History, October 5, 1848.

<sup>50</sup>Letter of William Snow to Brigham Young, Journal History, October 2, 1848.



particularly insistent "epistle" was sent in 1851, saying that Ezra T. Benson and Jedediah M. Grant were being sent to assist them and that they must "come to this place with them next season; and fail not."

Needless to say, all good saints responded and Kaneshville was abandoned with the final exodus in the spring of 1853.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE COLONIZER

Brigham Young had immense expectations for the Saints' new intermountain kingdom. He envisioned an expansive domain of roughly 265,000 miles, an area which included present Utah, all of Nevada, sections of Idaho, Wyoming, New Mexico, and parts of California and Arizona. As soon as the pioneers entered the Salt Lake Valley, plans were laid for the colonization of this vast inland territory. Exploring parties were dispatched to find the most promising sites. Within eight years Brigham Young had established an "outer cordon" of forts on the periphery of his proposed kingdom. This spacious area was to be gradually filled in by the many converts pouring into Salt Lake Valley from England, Europe, and eastern United States. Brigham Young's plans included a seaport for the purpose of debarking emigrants and supplies; in 1851 the settlement of San Bernardino and, three years later, that of Las Vegas was established in pursuit of this "corridor to the sea."

In the fall of 1849, Captain Jefferson Hunt of the Mormon Battalion discovered iron in southern Utah as he led a company of gold seekers to southern California. This was exciting news! Brigham knew the importance of iron in building the kingdom. "Iron we need, and iron we must have," he had recently sermonized. "We cannot well do without it, and have it we must, if we have to send to England

for it."<sup>1</sup> Events now proceeded rapidly to make this area of Southern Utah an iron manufacturing center. In November, 1849, the "Southern Exploring Company," led by Parley P. Pratt, was commissioned by the provisional government of Deseret to explore the country south of Salt Lake City for the purpose of locating places for settlement. They traveled through Utah, Juab, Sanpete, and Sevier valleys before reaching Little Salt Lake Valley on December 21. Here they left their exhausted wagon teams while Pratt and twenty horsemen proceeded to Center Creek (present Parowan). Taking note of this good location with adequate resources, they proceeded to Cedar Valley and camped on Muddy Creek (present Cedar City). A description of their discovery is preserved in the "Journal History of the Church."

On the southwestern borders of this valley are thousands of acres of cedar, constituting an inexhaustible supply of fuel, which makes excellent coal. In the center of these forests rises a hill of the richest iron ore. The water, soil, fuel, timber and mineral wealth of this and Little Salt Lake Valley, it is judged, were capable of sustaining and employing from 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants, all of which would have these resources more conveniently situated than any other settlements the company had seen west of the states.<sup>2</sup>

Encouraged by the findings of Pratt's company, Brigham Young soon had a colonizing expedition on its way to the area. George A. Smith was the man selected to lead the mission.

George A. had been busily occupied in the year since he had

<sup>1</sup>G. D. Watt and others (reporters), Journal of Discourses (26 vols.; London: LDS Book Depot, 1854-86), II, 282.

<sup>2</sup>Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, December 28, 1849; hereafter cited as Journal History.

entered the Valley. In addition to trying to get his families settled in suitable quarters, he was involved in several other important projects. He served on a committee for selecting, dividing, and distributing lands west of the Jordan River, and when the legislature appropriated \$3,000 for the building of a dam on the river, he and Ezra T. Benson were appointed to supervise the construction of the dam. He became a member of the General Assembly of Deseret and spent many hours during the winter discussing politics and helping to draft the new constitution. Much of his efforts were spent in perfecting the judiciary of Deseret. On January 5, 1850, George A. met with a few others and "drew up a bill to regulate the judiciary; they continued in session until nearly midnight."<sup>3</sup> By the end of the month he had written a territorial criminal code that was presented to President Young for approval.<sup>4</sup>

At April conference George A. told the saints of his enthusiasm for their new home. What a contrast the city was to its appearance in July, 1847. "Ancient history," he observed, "has no parallel to such an undertaking as we have accomplished, and it is something more than human nature alone could accomplish. God has guided us, and sustained and guarded us to the present time."<sup>5</sup> George was eager to serve, testifying that as soon as he could provide a reasonable subsistence for his families, he was prepared to accept a call to preach

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., January 5, 1850.

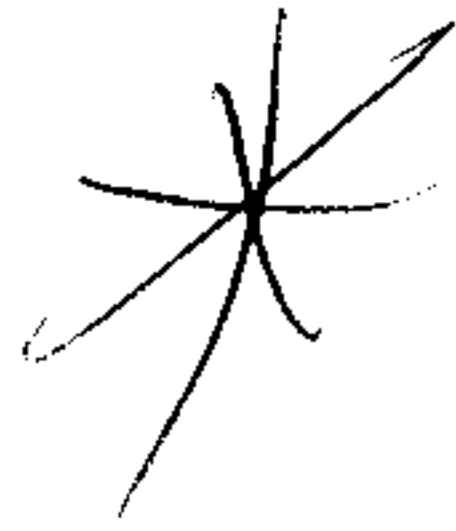
<sup>4</sup>Ibid., January 23, 1850.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., April 7, 1850.

the gospel to the nations of the world. The young apostle was never again to travel abroad on a preaching mission, however; his services were required in Zion.

Iron County was to become the fifth major area of Mormon settlement in the Great Basin. Communities were already emerging in Salt Lake, Utah, Weber, and Sanpete Valleys. The following call for volunteers appeared in the Deseret News for July 27, 1850:

Brethren of Great Salt Lake City and vicinity who are full of faith and good works; who have been blessed with means; who want more means and are willing to labor and toil to obtain those means, are informed by the Presidency of the Church, that a colony is wanted at Little Salt Lake this fall; that 50 or more good effective men with teams and wagons, provisions, and clothing, are wanted for one year. Seed, grain in abundance and tools in all their variety for a new colony are wanted to start from this place immediately after the fall conference, to repair to the valley of the Little Salt Lake without delay; there to sow, build, and fence; erect a saw and grist mill, establish an iron foundry as speedily as possible and do all other acts and things necessary for the preservation and safety of an infant settlement.<sup>6</sup>

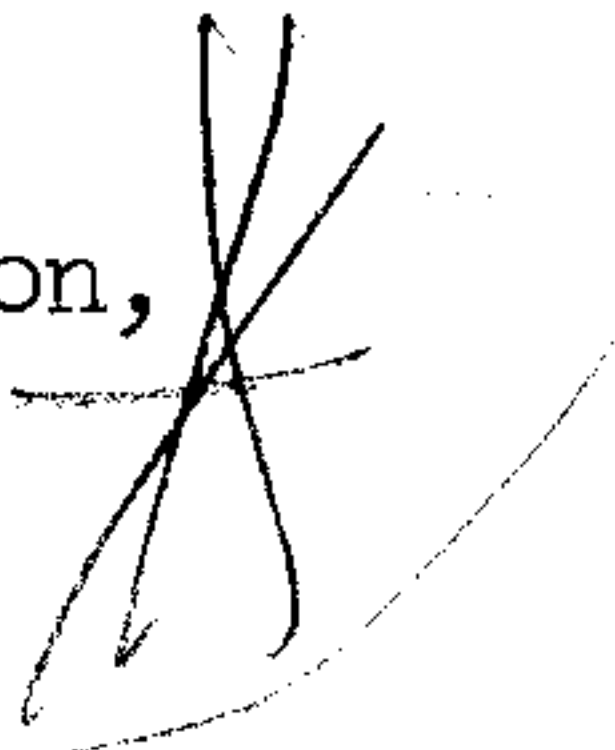


Since few responded to the call, George A. was forced to do some recruiting. As late as November 16, the Deseret News named fifty who were going and made a call for fifty more. John D. Lee, one of the reluctant ones, told President Young "that he was willing to help build up Zion in any way that the Lord wished but to go to the Little Salt [Lake] was revolting to his feelings and could he do as much good by paying \$2,000 of his possessions he would cheerfully do it sooner than go this fall."<sup>7</sup> Brigham persisted, saying: "Bro. George wants

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<sup>6</sup>Deseret News [Salt Lake City], July 27, 1850.

<sup>7</sup>Gustave O. Larson (ed.), "Journal of the Iron County Mission, John D. Lee, Clerk," Utah Historical Quarterly, XX (April and July, 1952), p. 113.



to have you go with him and so do I." He offered to settle some of Lee's business, and the latter finally relented.

George A. departed from Salt Lake City on the cold and frosty morning of December 7. In Lehi he met John D. Lee and two of his wives who grumbled: "Nothing but the Love of God would induce them to endure the sufferings and hardships. . . to leave their comfortable Firesides of the Society of wives and children to go and Penetrate the vallies of the mountains in the midst of Snow Storms, exposed to the inclemency of the weather."<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly, a blessing given by his father just before departing steeled George A.'s resolve for the task ahead. "No accident shall befall you," the patriarch had promised, "Thou shalt succeed in building up and enlarging the borders of Zion . . . . Your name shall be great among the nations of the earth."<sup>9</sup>

On Sunday evening at Fort Utah the men gathered around the camp fire and were addressed by their leader. He named their project the "Iron County Mission," emphasizing that the colonizers were as much on a mission as though we were sent to Preach the Gospel." After asking the men if they sustained him as their leader and receiving a unanimous "aye," he stipulated that only men of God were desired for the mission. "We do not want a mean man to settle in Iron County," he stressed. There was to be no swearing, gambling, breaking the Sabbath, neglect of prayers, or disunity.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>9</sup>George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>10</sup>Andrew Jenson, Parowan Ward Record, LDS Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah, p. 9.

The camp was organized in typical Mormon fashion, into two "fifties" with Anson Call selected as leader of the first "fifty" and Simon Baker captain of the second. ¶ John D. Lee's inventory of the camp included 101 wagons, 2 carriages, 119 men over 14 years of age, 100 horses, 12 mules, 368 oxen, 20 3/4 beef cattle, 146 milch cows, 30 women over age 14, and a total of 167 persons.<sup>11</sup> In addition, they possessed ample arms and ammunition, tools, and food supplies. ¶ Before leaving Provo, George A. attempted to persuade a dozen more men to accompany them but was only successful in acquiring an Indian interpreter. As the company rolled southward, George A. penned this interesting portrait of the scene: "I assure you it was a sight to behold, to see this number of wagons winding along the hills and mountains, with each wagon having a stove pipe smoking--it looked like a line of steam boats, the ground being at various depths covered with snow."<sup>12</sup> Traveling from Spanish Fork to Fort Peteetneet (present Payson), they found the land so marshy that "some wagons required nine yokes of oxen to get them through the sloughs." After breaking camp at Fort Peteetneet, the last settlement on the way to Iron County, they relied on the expertise of their pilot, Joseph Horn, who had been with Pratt's explorers the previous year.

While the head company waited for others to reach Peteetneet, George A. organized the "Iron County Battalion" as a precaution against possible Indian dangers. It consisted of four companies: one cavalry,

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<sup>11</sup>Gustive O. Larson, op. cit., December 19, 1850.

<sup>12</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to F. D. Richards, January 28, 1851, published in Millennial Star, XIII (March, 1851), p. 239.

two infantry, and one artillery--a total, with officers, of 118 men. With an eye ever attentive to possible territorial improvements, George A. drew up three petitions for the legislature. One asked for a \$500 appropriation to build a bridge across the Spanish Fork River and to make the road passable through the slough between there and Peteetneet. Another petition asked for the "control of the Timber in Lofers Kanyan & for the liberty of turning out the waters of Summit & center for machinery & mill purposes when not needed for Irrigation." The third sought to divide Utah County and form a new one by the name of "Pleasant County," making Fort Peteetneet the county seat.<sup>13</sup> George A. also busied himself by writing nine letters. One to President Young requested that more families be sent to Peteetneet; another to Orson Spencer outlined the need for schools in the infant settlement; a third was in answer to his wife's concern over the fall in the river. Bathsheba had written: "George told me to pray for you to write to me for he did not like to see me cry, and this morning he asked me if I prayed for you last night I tould him yes he said he new [sic] you would write now."<sup>14</sup> George A.'s answer manifests his belief that duty to the kingdom came even before his love of family.

I was not so near being drowned as you heard I only got my feet wet and not otherwise much disordered. . . . It truly would be a pleasure to me if I could enjoy the company of my family and fulfill the duties devolving upon me abroad

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<sup>13</sup>Gustive O. Larson, op. cit., December 19, 1850.

<sup>14</sup>Letter of Bathsheba Smith to George A. Smith, December 15, 1850, George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.



but this cannot be. I am unavoidably called to separate myself from those I hold dear and thereby fulfill the calling placed upon me.<sup>15</sup>

Before leaving Peteetneet, Goerge A. organized a Branch of the Church with James Pace as president and exhorted them to live the gospel, cultivate all the land they fence, and make their fort more secure. The camp departed on December 20, but George A., with John D. Lee and Henry Lunt, his camp recorders, stayed behind a day to finish their reports. A letter from President Young had instructed George A. to stop short of their destination, if the winter became too severe. He suggested Salt Creek or Beaver Creek as alternative areas for settlement, with the understanding that the following spring most of the camp would continue to Iron County. One last letter was written quickly to the Deseret News, recommending Ft. Peteetneet as a desirable place to settle.

Snow of varying depths was encountered on their journey. George A.'s journal recorded "about three feet of snow" on the ground for December 23. The temperature was twelve degrees below zero as they waited on Christmas day at the Sevier River for the rear company to catch up. After George A. ate Christmas dinner with his wife, Zilpha, and John D. Lee and his wives, he spent the evening reading a novel written upon the "Narrative of Capt. Blakely 2 Mexican Ladies their two Brothers & the treachery of Capt. Goren etc."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Bathsheba Smith, December 19, 1850. George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>16</sup>Gustive O. Larson, op. cit., December 25, 1850.

As they were preparing to break camp the next morning, it was discovered that three oxen were missing. When a hunt returned with the news that two of George A.'s oxen had been shot with arrows, one being dead, the other badly wounded, some of the men pursued the culprits and caught two Indian brothers, one a boy only twelve years old. George A. said:

The oxen were favorites with our family and had been in our service ever since we left Nauvoo and had traveled the road from there to the Great Salt Lake valley three times over. . . . I had formed an attachment for them that is hardly conceivable to exist between man and beast. And when Old Balley goaded with eleven wounds came to my wagon tongue and lay down, groaning with pain and looking so wishfully to me for help, myself and wife could not refrain from shedding tears.<sup>17</sup>

They treated his wounds, fed, and covered him with a buffalo robe, yet, George A.'s anger quickly abated as he caught sight of the two wretched Indians. He remarked that he "could inflict almost any punishment on the head of his savage enemies, but when I came to see them two-thirds naked (thermometer below zero) half starved and more than a third scared to death, first thing I did was to give them some bread to eat, and place them under guard until morning."<sup>18</sup> John D. Lee was so impressed with this kind gesture that he wrote: "When the naked wretched creatures were brought before his Excellency his sympathies were touched with Pity and compassion & was the first to hand the young starving savage some bread out of his own hands."<sup>19</sup> The following

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<sup>17</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, December 26, 1850.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Gustive O. Larson, op. cit., December 26, 1850.

morning, the ox was in such misery that George A. ordered him to be "knocked in the head." He made a deal with the older Indian that he would keep his younger brother to pay for the dead animal and that he might have the oxen to eat in the bargain. The older Indian consented and was allowed to depart with a warning that if any more cattle were killed, his whole tribe would be destroyed. A Brother Empey asked for the privilege of raising the boy and his request was granted.

Following this incident they were more careful to post an adequate guard. The Indians were always an unknown factor, and the anticipation of what might happen nearly always was worse than the actuality.

Mud and snow, especially through the mountain passes, made traveling arduous. Troubles were numerous: the cold, wagon wheels breaking, lack of feed for animals, mountain ranges to cross, etc. Sometimes they would have to melt snow to water their weak oxen.

While resting in the Pahvant Valley on the sabbath day, George A. observed:

Our camp in this snowy desert presents quite a lively appearance. A number of Camp fires made of dry cedar surrounded by companies, variously engaged. Some listening to violins, accordians, hymn, relating anecdotes, calling of guard, etc. all serves to create a pleasant variety. The perfect good humor which prevails and good health in the Company, notwithstanding the severe cold and deep snows which we have had to encounter whilst passing over high mountains which would be no small obstacle even in summer, is really remarkable.<sup>20</sup>

That evening he addressed the camp and expressed his satisfaction with their conduct and added that he was probably the only one

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<sup>20</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, December 29, 1850.

that needed confession due to his irritation with a man caught mistreating his animals. He apologized for injuring the man's feelings but urged all to treat their animals kindly. Since his eyes were so badly sunburned, he asked John D. Lee to read to his family that night. Lee stated that George A. required some activity, "his mind being too active to be idle."<sup>21</sup>

George A. was a conscientious leader. He would go to considerable lengths to preserve peace. Lee says he would be out of his wagon at nearly every stop enquiring into everyone's welfare, and at bad places he could always be found giving assistance to others. His eagerness to help others is exemplified by his giving his only extra pair of shoes to a Frenchman who was almost barefoot. He was quick to admit and make right any personal wrongs. For instance, he apologized to the foreign emigrants of the camp for "causing National feelings by speaking of great battles that had been fought by the Americans. I hope never again to excite that kind of National Feelings all governments on earth but one are corrupt & that is the government of God."<sup>22</sup> On arriving in Little Salt Lake Valley, George A. commended his men for not having had a single fight. This was partly due to his skillful leadership. William Palmer, prominent Utah historian, relates the following case in point. Somewhere between the present

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<sup>21</sup>Gustive O. Larson, op. cit., December 31, 1850.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. Information in this paragraph is taken from the following entries in Lee's Journal: January 5, 6, and 11, 1851.

Kanosh and Cove Fort, Simon Baker found a pass through the mountains while Anson Call went over the rough mountain summit. Baker's "fifty" thereby assumed and maintained the lead much to the displeasure of Anson Call. George A. dropped back to Call's group, as did other weak outfits, as Baker seemed to be running a race to the valley. When Baker entered the valley of the Little Salt Lake two days before Call's company and word was brought to George A. that Baker's men were scouring the area to find the best farm sites for themselves, George A. sent word for them to wait for the others at Red Creek. When they were all together again he "tactfully squelched the rivalry and recalled them to their missions." For the remaining five miles to their destination at Parley Pratt's liberty pole, he proposed that the companies march in the order that had been established in the beginning. Palmer concludes the story by saying: "Not one word of criticism had been spoken but the racers and the would-be grabbers felt now ashamed."<sup>23</sup>

The journals of these pioneers are full of vivid reports of the country they were traversing; they too were looking for town sites and resources. A sample entry shows George A.'s considerable descriptive ability:

My legs are sore tonight, the result of my attempt at a geological survey on which I made myself weary examining large masses of trap senite horn blend, scattered rudely as if by some dreadful convulsion of nature, huge masses of rocks bearing evident signs of igneous action had been born from their primitive beds and standing edgeways in vertical strata.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>William Palmer, "Pioneers of Southern Utah," The Instructor, LXXVIII (December, 1943), p. 616.

<sup>24</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, January 10, 1851.

Their passage over the last of five mountain ranges was rugged. Teams had to be doubled in ascending some steep and rocky grades; timber and rocks had to be cleared away; wheels had to be locked, sometimes for one-half mile at a time, while heavy wagons slid down the steep slopes; wagon bows were broken, their covers torn, and some animals injured.<sup>25</sup> To John D. Lee, and doubtless others, the Little Salt Lake Valley was a disappointment. It seemed "rather forbidding to a farmer especially," he observed. "Scarce anything to be seen but sage and greasewood. Mountains moderate height rough especially to the north & but little timber. . . . We encamped in the northeast end of the valley. No wood but dwarf sage. No water but snow--Smawl bunch grass among the sage."<sup>26</sup> The pioneers entered the valley in three separate groups, the last of which performed a little military display by firing the cannon and small arms, followed by three cheers for Iron County and three for the governor. The noise produced an alarm in the camps ahead and among the curious natives. Both of the lead camps sent men galloping back to see if it were an Indian attack.

On January 12, they camped on the present site of Paragonah. Although it was Sunday, the men were scattered in every direction, some hunting, some exploring. When a few of the other brethren started to follow, George A. "remarked cautiously" that if they should see any Bishops and Elders of Israel on their way to remind them to return

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<sup>25</sup>Andrew Jenson, op. cit., p. 13. Quoted from Henry Lunt's Journal.

<sup>26</sup>Gustive O. Larson, op. cit., January 10, 1851.

and keep the Sabbath.<sup>27</sup> The next day they moved on to Center Creek, just above the present site of Parowan, and commenced to build a city.

The technique of community building in Mormon settlements followed a uniform pattern based on Joseph Smith's Model City of Zion. The initial settlement was a half-mile to a mile square fort which contained temporary living quarters, barns, corrals, and a multi-purpose meeting house. Farming was usually done in one large enclosed field, and individual plots were later parcelled out by the simple method of drawing lots. While these projects were being carried out a town was surveyed and made ready for the construction of more permanent homes. There was a tremendous amount of work to be done--building roads, lumbering activities, erecting fences, tending livestock, hunting, farming, and constructing corrals, bridges, and various other buildings.

George A. began exploring operations the day after the company's arrival. He took some books and candles along and while traveling had his clerk read to him from Comstock's Geology.<sup>28</sup> They were surprised to meet Captain Jefferson Hunt and party returning from California whom they invited to explore with them. Proceeding to the Little Muddy River (later the area of Cedar City) and camping, they examined the creek and soil and ascended a hill to study "large quantities of ore." Seven Indians visited them, one of whom was Peteetneet. John D. Lee said they were friendly and seemed glad the pioneers were settling in the valley.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., January 12, 1851.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., January 14, 1851.

George A., who had been appointed chief justice by the Legislative Assembly of Deseret with authority to organize Iron County, decided that action should be taken forthwith. A committee was selected and nominations for county officers were made and approved. The election was set for January 17 at Center Creek. The day of the election was a somewhat festive occasion for their desert setting with a "public dinner" being held prior to the opening of the polls. There were toasts, speeches, and a dance in the evening. Thus Iron County became an existing entity while Parowan city was not officially established for four more months. George A. spent the evening writing letters to send with Captain Hunt who departed the next morning. Among his letters were four petitions to the legislature:

one for a state road from Peteetneet to the Iron Shrines, one for an exploration to find a new route from Toohilly County to this place, via Sevier Lake, one for a railroad from the Gt. Salt Lake City to the Iron Springs, one from myself asking for the control of the timber and water in Center Creek Canyon for Mill purposes.<sup>29</sup>

George A.'s letter to President Young reported that all were in good health with the exception of a little homesickness. Only one man had returned to Salt Lake City. He "could not leave off swearing and chose to go where he could exercise his liberty." Some disliked the soil, he continued, "it is so 'bloody' red; timber so scarce, grazing scarce." He said they had explored the iron regions and found it of "fine quality." He referred to the meeting with Captain Hunt and the information he gave of President Young's appointment to be governor of the Utah Territory; "Not wishing to be behind we have proceeded

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<sup>29</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, January 18, 1851.



to organize Iron County."<sup>30</sup>

On January 18, the encampment moved about three-fourths of a mile down Center Creek and "formed a corral." The succeeding day being Sunday, George A. dealt at length with some minor problems. He could be firm and forceful if the occasion required, such as informing the brethren that some in camp had a disposition to build up themselves "independent of the common interest of this Mission." He emphasized that their purpose was not to build up the fortunes or advantage of any man but to work for the good of the kingdom alone. There was some dissatisfaction with their townsite and George A. admitted there was better farming country at the Little Muddy but that it was not safe enough from the threat of Indians. He closed his sermon with an expression of love for every man and stressed that his only object was to fulfill his mission and work for the general good. Before dismissal they decided to construct a compact fort, build a multi-purpose public house, a road to the canyon, and keep their present organization with the bishops as leaders rather than the military captains. Because some were opposed to building the fort, George A. had to be firm on this point--"It is unpleasant, I know," he said, "but it is also unpleasant to have one's back stuck full of arrows." After discussing the subject of trade with the Indians, George A. advised the pioneers to keep a proper distance from the natives, trade through an agent, and never give them anything without requiring pay or work for what they

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<sup>30</sup>Deseret News [Salt Lake City], February 8, 1851.

received.<sup>31</sup>

One principle reason for Mormon colonizing success was the motivating force of religious conviction behind their toil and sacrifice. This motivation, however, had to be constantly rekindled and intelligently and patiently directed; such was the task George A. Smith did so well. Lee makes an interesting entry in his journal that indicates George A.'s persistent efforts to maintain the morale of his brethren: "At 8 o'clock the Pres. arround in camp from one camp fire to another as usual consulting the feelings of the brethren of different subjects & was scarcely ever known to leave without first reminding in some way or other of the object of their mission."<sup>32</sup>

A site was selected for their fort that commanded a view of three-fourths of the valley and the men worked vigorously to complete this first stage of their new community. After a week of productive activity George A. commended his men saying what they had accomplished was "almost a miracle." On the morning of January 25, about forty men rode out to find a location for "the big field" and returned highly gratified with the farming prospects. A warm argument ensued, however, as to which land would be best, the grassland near the lake or the upland near the fort. George A. was concerned about the field being so far away as to put them at a disadvantage defensively. The upland

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<sup>31</sup>Andrew Jenson, op. cit., January 19, 1851; Gustive O. Larson, op. cit., January 19, 1851.

<sup>32</sup>Gustive O. Larson, op. cit., January 22, 1851.

property was chosen. A liberty pole was raised "on the southeast corner of the public carrall." We "dedicated it with our land, cattle and ourselves to the Lord, the God of Liberty who controls the destinies of men,"<sup>33</sup> wrote George A.

Despite all this activity, George A. still found some time to read and write. During January he read at least two books, one entitled "Napolean and his Marshalls" and a life of Benjamin Franklin by Holley. On Sunday, February 16, he recorded having just finished reading "Willard's Universal History." One of his letters was addressed to the Postmaster General in Washington asking for a post office in the Little Salt Lake Valley. All through his life George A. tried to influence government officials in every way that would benefit the Territory of Utah. A few weeks later he wrote two letters to President Fillmore requesting the establishment of a military post in the valley for the protection of emigrants and recommending that he urge congress to grant "free soil to all the inhabitants of Utah Territory, 160 acres apiece to each actual settler as a consideration for their services in making the roads in these desolate regions."<sup>34</sup> Another letter to his father said, "The Lord has blessed me very much all the time my Counsel is Sought all the time and my Wisdom which God has given me is sufficient for the Present time."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Deseret News [Salt Lake City], February 22, 1851.

<sup>34</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, February 19 and 22, 1851.

<sup>35</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to his father, John Smith, January 28, 1851. George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

On the last day in January, George A. informed the men that the ground was now ready for plowing and planting and that public work would stop for the present freeing them to work on their own homes. A "regular stampede for the canyon ensued," he wrote, and "every accessible tree that would make a house log within 4 miles stood a slim chance today."<sup>36</sup> George A. began building two houses for himself. He was then living in a "wicky-up" that he described as being "composed of brush, a few slabs and 3 wagons. A fire [was situated] in the center and a lot of milking stools, benches and logs placed around, two of which are cushioned with buffalo robes. It answers for various purposes, kitchen, school house, dining room, meeting house, council house, sitting room, reading room, store room."<sup>37</sup> Ever mindful of the educational needs of his people, George A. commenced a grammar school in his modest home in mid-February and was gratified at the enthusiasm shown by his students. On February 27, with the temperature at seven degrees, he wrote in his journal: "The day was cold and the cattle hovered around the camp hungry. My scholars assembled round the camp fire, freezing on one side and roasting on the other, listened earnestly to my lecture on English Grammar."<sup>38</sup>

By late March, 400 acres of wheat had been planted with intentions of sowing 600 more. Their community had been organized into four wards and had been given the name of "Fort Louisa," after Louisa

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<sup>36</sup>George A. Smith Journal, January 31, 1851.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., February 27, 1851.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., February 22, 1851.

Beaman, one of the first women to practice plural marriage in the Church. The name was later changed by President Young to "Parowan," the Indian name for Little Salt Lake. Among other projects, some exploring was being done to find coal and iron deposits and locate a town site at Coal Creek. George A. wrote his wife that he had never seen a place where there was so much work to do--"All is hurry and Bustle."

A plethora of minor problems taxed George A.'s judgment and patients. On one occasion he lost his temper--a very rare thing--and felt sorry for it afterwards. As cabins were being moved to the town-site a few brethren were reluctant to make the effort. One evening about forty men went to move the house of such a brother "onto the line." A youth of eighteen, Joseph Millet, aroused the owners who came with rifles and threatened to shoot the first man who touched the building. George A., who had retired for the night, awoke and came to the scene demanding to know the cause of the excitement. In the commotion that followed, George A. took young Millet by the collar, reprimanded him, and threw him to the ground saying that he did not want to hear any such threats again. Wrote George A. afterwards: "I hurt him more than I intended." It is significant to note that George A. went logging with Millet and a man named Wheeler the next day, probably in an attempt to soothe their feelings.<sup>39</sup>

There were times when George A. had to settle disputes among the brethren. In a letter to Bathsheba, he wrote: "I am like a

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., February 18, 1851.

Father of a Big family here for all Call on me for advice and I give it. I am sometimes fractious and get irritated and then I repent."<sup>40</sup>

In April he was disappointed that some left for the gold fields of California while others wanted to return to their families in Salt Lake City. "Some of our men Plead Baby and want to go home," he asserted, "I am determined to do my duty with all my might and I pray my Father in the Heaven above to give me grace to endure all trials."<sup>41</sup>

Adding to his problems was his concern for the welfare of his family whom he had left without adequate lodging and provisions. In late June, some wagons arrived at Parowan bearing the sad news that his wife, Sarah Ann had died of consumption. His tender concern for his wives and children is reflected in the following letter:

I feel much anxiety about you. I left you so unpleasantly situated. . . nearly four months has worn away without the Pleasure of hearing the first line or word from one I love so dearly. It is like being in Prison. I have sent this Express with instructions to be here again in 30 days with News from you. I have written a letter to Geo. A. Jr. I hope you will read it to him. I want he should be a good Boy. Try and keep him in school as much as you can . . . I wish I had the means to send for you and all the family to come hence in the first company that leaves. But I shall be at home to the Sept conference the Lord willing.<sup>42</sup>

On May 10, President Young and company arrived at Center Creek and were given the finest military reception the colony was capable of giving. The president's party stayed nearly a week in which time they paid a visit to the mill, the farms, the town site at Coal

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<sup>40</sup> Letter of George A. Smith to Bathsheba Smith, March 18, 1851. George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Creek, and gave instructions on various topics. Pleased with their efforts, President Young had nothing but praise for their accomplishments.<sup>43</sup>

George A. asked if he might return to Salt Lake City for conference but President Young wanted him to stay. Approximately thirty pioneers, however, did return with the company either to quit the mission or return to get their families. This threw an additional burden on those who stayed in caring for the crops. The summer was dry and a canal had to be dug seven miles to turn the waters of Red Creek onto their fields. "This has been quite a job," commented George A., "and had not the colony been weakened by the return of a party this would have been completed one month earlier, and thousands of bushels of grain thereby been saved. The amount of labor done seems almost incredible, and yet much is before us, and every man is straining every nerve to accomplish the task before him."<sup>44</sup>

Pioneer Day, July 24th, was celebrated in grand style complete with the "thundering of artillery, waving of flags, rattling of drums and shouts of the inhabitants." The Iron Battalion passed in review. A procession of the mayor, city council, Bishops, band, choir, President Smith with his military escort, and the citizenry marched to the Council House where songs were sung, orations given, and toasts presented. When George A. spoke of the past travels and troubles of the

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., letter of May 17, 1851.

<sup>44</sup> Letter of George A. Smith to Editor of Deseret News. Quoted in Parowan Ward Record, July 2, 1851.

Mormon people, the clerk recorded: "The heart of every good man did rejoice while our president portrayed the past, and the prospects of the future, to those who were willing to keep the commandments of God and obey the counsels of our rulers."<sup>45</sup> George A. had reason to be grateful for one particular blessing. Two days after the celebration he wrote that he finished the roof and floor of his house and was able to sleep on a bedstead for the first time since leaving Salt Lake City.<sup>46</sup>

In August, a lump of coal was discovered in the Little Muddy and George A. accordingly renamed the stream Coal Creek. With coal, limestone, and iron deposits all located within a radius of a few miles, George A. journeyed to conference in Salt Lake City with optimistic hopes for the future.

At conference he made a plea for more colonists for the southern settlements. It was also proposed that John D. Lee start a community at the junction of the Rio Virgen and Santa Clara streams where cotton, figs, dates, and fruits could be grown.

It was in early October that the Territorial Legislature passed an act creating Millard County and designating Fillmore as the seat of government for the Territory. Hunter says George A.'s report on the valley, written the previous January, had much influence in causing this to be selected as the capital city.<sup>47</sup> George A. was one

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., July 24, 1851.

<sup>46</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, July 26, 1851.

<sup>47</sup>Milton R. Hunter, Brigham Young the Colonizer (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1940), p. 49.



of the committee chosen to proceed to the area and locate a specific site and lay out a city. From here he journeyed to Parowan, then to Coal Creek. Here with Elisha Groves, Matthew Carruthers, and his brother, John Lyman Smith, a site was chosen for a fort, corral, and town, and surveying was commenced. George A. dedicated it to "the service of God in the manufacture of iron, machinery, etc., that the necessities of the Saints might be supplied and the Territory of Utah be built up."<sup>48</sup> Returning to Parowan a company was quickly chosen to proceed to the site and commence operations. The company was composed "mostly of English, Scotch and Welsh miners and iron manufacturers" under the leadership of Henry Lunt. During the next eight years an epic chapter in Mormon history was enacted by this courageous band of iron manufacturers. On September 30, 1852, the furnace was tapped and the first iron manufactured east of the Mississippi River flowed out amidst shouts of "Hosannah, Hosannah, Glory to God and the Lamb forever." But failure followed failure as they doggedly toiled to provide the kingdom with this much-needed resource. Finally the iron industry was written off as impractical. William Palmer writes: "Subsequent history reveals that building an iron industry is not a job for poor men without cash capital in great quantity whether it be in Utah or in Pittsburg. Things were expected from this little band of Iron Missionaries that were humanly impossible without capital."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>History of Cedar Stake, November 5, 1851, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>49</sup>William Palmer, "Pioneers of Southern Utah," The Instructor, LXXIX (January, 1944), p. 22.

George A. was on his way home to Salt Lake City as the colonists moved on to the site of Cedar City and began to build. Before leaving he sent a letter to the Deseret News that contained his parting reflections. We have come to think of our city as "second to none in the Territory, except the city of Great Salt Lake," he declared. "When we reflect that the first blow of civilized man, towards improvement, was made here on the 22nd of January last, the mark that has been made is, we think, without a parallel, considering the few that have been engaged."<sup>50</sup> George A. had reason to be proud--his accomplishments were significant for Utah's future growth. From this point in time until 1861, George A. had only supervisory responsibilities over the southern colonies. In 1861, he and Erastus Snow founded the city of St. George, and the leadership of southern Utah passed into the capable hands of this man. George A. would still make two or three trips a year to southern Utah giving advice and preaching his popular sermons. On one occasion when some mischievous children were caught in Parowan for stealing fruit, George A. advised the town leaders to plant two thousand public fruit trees on the town square so their children and the poor could obtain fruit without stealing. George A.'s influence with the southern colonies still continued through his voluminous correspondence as well as from his visits. He had much to do with the setting up of the Indian Mission which established headquarters at Fort Harmony in 1854 and from there founded communities in Santa Clara, Pinto, and Las Vegas.

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<sup>50</sup>Deseret News [Salt Lake City], November 5, 1851.

Mention should be made of George A.'s humane and wise handling of the Indian problem in southern Utah. The American Indian is of special theological significance to the Mormons since they are considered to be a surviving "remnant" of the Book of Mormon peoples. Brigham Young wanted to redeem them from their degenerate state, but for practical purposes established a policy of limited intercourse. Said he: "Stockade your fort and attend to your affairs, and let the Indians attend to theirs." The more familiar you are with them, he said, the more familiar and bothersome they will become. "You cannot exalt them by this process. If they consider that they are your equals, you cannot raise them up to you."<sup>51</sup>

George A. went to great lengths to avoid angering the Indians. Ten days after the arrival of the Iron Mission pioneers, for example, Peteetneet, a chief of the Utah tribe, entered their camp with about forty others wanting to trade buckskins for ammunition. They decided to give them some ammunition lest their livestock be endangered and the Indians become more hostile. After making this risky decision, George A. advised John D. Lee to buy a seven-year old Piede boy that the Utes had taken prisoner. Lee gave a good rifle and powder for the boy and "thereby saved his life."<sup>52</sup> This became a rather common practice among the saints. When President Young visited Parowan in May, he "advised them to buy up the Lamanite children, as fast as they could

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<sup>51</sup>Journal History, October 18, 1849.

<sup>52</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Brigham Young, January 23, 1851. George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

and educate them and teach them the Gospel, so that not many generations would pass ere they would become a white and delightsome people." It was his conviction that this was an ideal place to accomplish the "redemption of the Lamanites."<sup>53</sup>

In early February, while George A. was ploughing and sowing wheat, Ammon, the brother of Chief Walker, came to help with the work insisting he wanted to live like the Mormons. But as the sun became hot and fatigue set in, he changed his mind indicating his preference for hunting. It was probably in this month that George A. wrote the following important letter to Chief Walker:

President Young wants us to be at peace, and friends with you. He prays to the Great Spirit every day for your good and welfare. If you want to come here to plough, and make corn and wheat, my men will show you how. But we have got but little provisions for ourselves and none to spare till we make more . . . . We want you to keep your men from molesting our cattle or horses, and from running into our wagons and houses and be good friends, and I will do the same with my men.<sup>54</sup>

Walker responded favorably indicating he desired to live near and be friends. He and George A. had an extended talk on March 3, 1851, mostly with signs and guess work since there was no interpreter present. He told his new white brother that he wanted to build a house and teach his children to work. George A. was so impressed he recorded this compliment of Walker in his journal: "He appeared very much intelligent Indian I ever saw. [sic] No doubt the master spirit of the

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<sup>53</sup>Journal History, May 12, 1851.

<sup>54</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Chief Walker, 1851. George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

Utah nation."<sup>55</sup> A few days later Walker even "drilled" his troops in imitating the actions of his white friends. George A. invited him to walk along with him as he reviewed the troops. Walker and Peteetneet made many expressions of friendship. George A. wrote in March:

Walker, Peteetneet and the Pihede Captain took breakfast with me. Walker preached a Mormon sermon to the Pihede Captain, told him he must be honest, must not steal anything, must not disturb a brute belonging to us. He must go and get buckskins and bring them here and trade for knives, shirts, etc., but not for powder. When the weather got warmer he must be baptised and he would be good all the time, and that he must tell all the Pihede far and near that they must be honest and not steal anything from us.<sup>56</sup>

Despite these professions of good will, it was not long before some Indians were stealing and causing anxiety among the saints. George A. wrote for President Young's advice and was told to continue his current policy. Before leaving Parowan in November, George A. had a "huge dinner" prepared for Chief Walker and his braves, and promised them another one in twelve months if they behaved.

George A. Smith's amicable policy toward his red-skinned brothers established significant precedent of rapport with the Indians that undoubtedly saved countless lives and expense in the future of southern Utah.

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<sup>55</sup>George A. Smith Journal, February 7, 1851.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., March 21, 1851.

## CHAPTER VII

### FATHER OF THE SOUTHERN UTAH SETTLEMENTS

Before completing his colonizing mission in southern Utah, George A. had managed to find time to study law and was admitted to the bar on October 7, 1851. Within a week he argued his first and most important case--the celebrated Egan murder case.

Howard Egan was one of the saints who had entered the Salt Lake Valley with the first pioneers in 1847. Returning in the spring of 1850 from guiding a company of forty-niners to California, he heard news that one of his wives was willingly seduced by James Monroe and had given birth to an illegitimate child. Egan rode to meet Monroe who was returning from the east with a load of merchandise. It was in September, 1851, when Egan intercepted him near the Bear River. He approached Monroe in a friendly manner and after talking to him for some time drew a pistol and shot him in the face. Egan then told the others of the company that since Monroe had seduced his wife and "destroyed his peace on earth," he had killed him in the "name of the Lord." On October 17, Egan was arraigned in the U. S. District Court for the Territory of Utah with Judge Zerrubabel Snow presiding. Seth M. Blair acted for the prosecution and George A. Smith and W. W. Phelps for the defense. Not only was it George A.'s first trial, but it was called in such "haste" that he had no time to prepare himself adequately. Consequently, he announced that he would talk plainly and aim at the "simple truth." He stressed throughout his plea that

"common mountain law" was more suited to this case than the technicalities of criminal law. He quoted a phrase from the organic law of the territory which said laws of the United States were to be enforced only insofar as they were applicable. He argued that a new territory needed new laws and cited instances from history to prove that laws of old established countries were often unjust in new countries. His principle argument, therefore, was "that in this territory it is a principle of mountain common law, that no man can seduce the wife of another without endangering his own life. . . . Does a civil suit for damages answer the purpose?" he asked. "No, it does not! The principle, the only one that beats and throbs through the heart of the entire inhabitants of this Territory is simply this: The man who seduces his neighbor's wife must die, and her nearest relative must kill him!" When the news of Mrs. Egan's seduction reached Iron County, he continued, all were of the opinion that Monroe must die and if Howard Egan had not performed the act "he would have been damned by the community forever, and could not have lived peaceably, without the frown of every man." He closed his defense by citing two cases from U. S. law books where a brother killed the seducer of his sister and was set free.<sup>1</sup> George A.'s eloquent defense of Egan had the desired effect; a verdict of not guilty was returned by the jury. The Mormon community was of the opinion that justice had been served. The Deseret News, in reporting the case, said it should "prove a sufficient warning to all unchaste reprobates . . . [and] may be the means of saving

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<sup>1</sup>G. D. Watt and others (reporters), Journal of Discourses (26 vols.; London: LDS Book Depot, 1854-86), I, 95-97; hereafter cited as J.D.

some from a similar fate."<sup>2</sup> Hosea Stout wrote that the case might become a "precedent for any one who has his wife, sister, or daughter seduced to take the law into his own hands and slay the seducer."<sup>3</sup> The following year the Territorial Legislature enacted the Justifiable Homicide Act, which seems to have been a direct outgrowth of this case.<sup>4</sup>

His appetite whetted by this success, George A. wrote to F. D. Richards in late November saying, "My mission this winter is to read law; wonder what I shall do next!"<sup>5</sup> A new assignment was not long in coming.

George A. Smith not only aided in the founding of many southern Utah settlements, but did much to nurture them in their early stages of growth. Many of these new communities were populated by new converts from Europe and Great Britain who missed the old country, who knew little about agriculture, and who were disappointed at the barrenness of their new home. These people, as well as others, needed encouragement and guidance. It is probably difficult to over-estimate the value of strong Church leadership as a factor in building the healthy society that Mormonism became.

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<sup>2</sup>Deseret News [Salt Lake City], November 15, 1851.

<sup>3</sup>Juanita Brooks (ed.), On the Mormon Frontier, The Diary of Hosea Stout 1844-1861 (2 vols., Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press), II, 408.

<sup>4</sup>Clair Kilts, "A History of the Federal and Territorial Court Conflicts in Utah, 1851-1874" (unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1959), p. 48 f.

<sup>5</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], March 15, 1852.



Though no longer living in Iron County, George A. kept abreast of developments there and constantly wrote his encouragement and advice. The southern saints often sought his assistance as well. Typical is a February letter from his brother, John Lyman Smith, who wrote from Parowan asking his opinion on a couple of problems and requesting that another blacksmith be sent since one could not handle all the work.<sup>6</sup>

In the spring of 1852, George A., with Brigham Young and others, visited all the settlements south of Salt Lake City for the purpose of "exploring the country; ascertaining the situation of the Indians; making roads; building bridges; preaching the Gospel and doing and performing all other acts and things needing to be done, as they may be led by the good spirit."<sup>7</sup> On the return trip President Young presented George A. with the additional assignment of presiding over the saints in Utah County. In early May, 126 petitioners from Utah Stake had written President Young confessing that under their present regulations they were at a "dead stand" and that they had not the "encouragement necessary to build public buildings or even private ones, for we consider that those who should be foremost in building up the place, have deserted us and moved out of the city." They therefore asked President Young "to take into consideration our circumstances, and if it is consistent we would be heartily glad if Bro. George A. Smith could be appointed to take the lead of matters here,

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<sup>6</sup> Letter of John Lyman Smith to George A. Smith, Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, February 2, 1852; hereafter cited as Journal History.

<sup>7</sup> Deseret News [Salt Lake City], May 1, 1852.

and if so, we feel sanguine in the belief that it would meet with a universal approbation."<sup>8</sup>

From the first, the Mormons had looked upon Utah Valley as a promising area for settlement. The major deterrent was a concentration of Pah-Ute Indians in the area who were "lazy, quarrelsome and deceitful." When the first Mormon colonists approached the area in March of 1849, their path was blocked by Indians who demanded they turn back. It took the interpreter, Dimick B. Huntington, a full hour to convince them that the Indians and whites could live together peaceably. They built their first fort just south of the Provo River about a mile and a half east of the lake. In the fall a town site was selected about two miles east of the fort. The Indians were only an occasional nuisance until the foolish killing of an Indian called "old Bishop" brought them into open hostility. The militia was called out and a two-day battle left twenty to thirty Indians dead. In the spring of 1850, while building a new fort on the land now known as North Park or Sowiette Park, Walker, the Ute Chief, was making plans to massacre the Mormons but was stopped by the stern resistance of Chief Sowiette who threatened to join sides with the Mormons.

The city was laid out and the following spring the colonists began to arrive. By the end of the year 1851, Provo had become a thriving community with adobe houses, a grist mill, store, carding mill, and by early 1852, a pottery factory, tannery, and cabinet shop had been added. One writer estimates the population to have been near a thousand when George A. Smith arrived there in July.

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<sup>8</sup>Journal History, May 19, 1852.

On entering the town, George A. reportedly passed the ball field, saw it in full use at midday, and immediately ordered a meeting to be held in their rough-hewn and uncompleted assembly hall. His sermon was stern, sarcastic, and humorous, one they were not likely to forget for some time. Because it is a good example of George A.'s pleasurable humor, it will be given in detail:

I have traveled in the United States and in old England; but for its size and the number of its inhabitants, I would suppose Provo to be the richest town I have ever visited; or I have never seen a town that could afford as many loafers to play ball from early morn until late at night, as Provo can; and, as a matter of course, it is because you can afford it and have nothing else to do. This must be the case, seeing you have a good and well-finished meeting house . . . . I thought to suggest a few ideas, just to hint at a few small jobs that you might be doing just to make you a little variety, along with the intelligent and exhilarating game of ball, until other jobs or other work turn up or develop themselves . . . .

First, said he, you might begin by improving your streets a little "so that a man can get along without 'doubling teams' when he is on foot." He then suggested they do some work on bridges and widen them an inch or an inch and a half so a man can get the four wheels of his wagon over at once. "It is very disagreeable, very disagreeable," he continued, "to a man to try to cross a bridge and only get two of the wheels over and have to turn back after the other two; besides; it is bad for the wagon." As to water ditches, he advised, "you might enlarge them a little so that, at least, one man at a time could water; and then, perhaps, there would be no need of a man dam(n)ing himself as well as the ditch."

When Provo was first settled, he went on, some Nauvoo fishermen wanted to come here to build a fishery and they coaxed Brigham

Young to let them. He relented on the condition they would build a fort. They agreed. "They came here and built a something--I suppose they called it a fort; but as for myself I never could find a name adapted to it in either the animal, vegetable or mineral kingdoms. They lived in that nondescript a short time and then wanted to move out." The bishop decided he wanted to move up the river to build a mill. He built something, said George A., "and I suppose he called it a mill; but as for myself I always considered it one of the mysteries of the kingdom." He concluded on this humorous note:

President Young called on me to come to Provo and told me I could do more good here than elsewhere. It was a long time before I could understand this until I heard of the sugar works being located here in Provo, then it was perfectly clear to me.

I will tell you how I came to understand it: Now you see, in the Eastern States, in the Spring of the year, the making of maple sugar is a great job. They have their troughs, and buckets, and their great iron kettles in which to boil the sap. These kettles have quite a tendency to boil over. In order to prevent that we used to make a piece of fat meat, run a stick through it and lay it across the kettle. When the sap boiled up until it touched the fat meat it would go back and not boil over. ~~As I am the fattest man in the quorum of the Twelve the~~ President sent me here to Provo to keep the pot from boiling over, which through the help of God, I hope to do. Amen.

The local resident, who recorded the sermon, says its effect, together with the opening of spring, "stopped our ball playing and started us about our work, which was plenty at that time."<sup>9</sup>

George A.'s summer was a miscellany of feverish activities.

He wrote to Samuel Richards that he had "traveled through Utah County something like a Methodist circuit rider most of the season."<sup>10</sup> Though

<sup>9</sup>J. W., "Recollections of Early Friends," Juvenile Instructor, XX (June 1, 1865), pp. 173-74.

<sup>10</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], December 26, 1852.

most of his time was given to Utah County, he did manage to make two trips south to Iron County traveling each time about 700 miles and preaching in every hamlet.

George A. was instrumental in helping establish and develop many of Utah's prominent towns. In a summary of his affairs in 1852, he mentions selecting the site of Palmyra and "designing the plan of its survey;" he also located the site of Mountainville (Alpine) and directed its survey; he was responsible for superintending the survey of American Fork, and, the following year, of locating a place for the town of Pleasant Grove. In October, after conference, President Young sent him south to "put things in order there." Before going he helped recruit a company of emigrants to strengthen the Iron Mission and counseled them in regard to their needs, route of travel, and destination. Prior to leaving Utah County he "directed an addition to be made to the city Plot of Provo." While in Iron County he selected a location for Cedar City "with a public square of 20 acres, two school house squares and 200 lots to begin with;" he submitted a plan for the enlargement of Parowan and directed its survey; from there he went to Harmony where he dedicated the ground for a fort; and finally, he devised a plan and directed the survey of Paragonah.<sup>11</sup> On a visit to Parowan in 1856, George A. also selected colonists to settle a new community to be named Beaver.

George A.'s interest, of course, was not confined to spreading the borders of Zion through establishing new communities. He gave

<sup>11</sup> Report of George A. Smith to Wilford Woodruff, April 26, 1854, giving summary of his labors from 1850 to 1854. George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

what time and skill he possessed to aid those new habitations in developing every needful institution. He gave advice on anything and everything that would build up Zion. In the summer of 1853, he complained of a severe nervous headache "caused by over exertion of the brain in answering questions for counsel which were constantly asked."<sup>12</sup> A conference sermon in Provo in 1852 shows how varied were his concerns: his remarks exhorted members to care for the families of those elders on missions, to lend a helping hand to build the Provo meeting house, to build their houses in the prescribed way, to kindly receive new emigrants, to cease wasting timber, to keep the commandments of God, and to settle in Iron County if that is where they had been called.

Poor educational facilities were a problem in most communities, so George A. was concerned with promoting better schools. He wrote that he "used every exertion" in urging the brethren to build good schools. In August of 1852, he attended two days of meetings in Springville and "counciled the brethren to build a large schoolhouse and quit all their disputes."<sup>13</sup> He even turned back to the citizens of Provo a large two-story building known as the "Seminary" to be used as a school house. It had originally been built for him as a private residence. With so much to be done in a pioneer community, some dragged their feet with regard to education. In 1854, he reported that

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<sup>12</sup>Brigham Young's Manuscript History, July, 1853.

<sup>13</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, August 20, 1852; located in LDS Church Historian's Office.

good schools were available in most central Utah towns, but that Provo was lagging behind. Said he, "The people of Provo need their energies stirred on the subject. . . . although a town of 2,500 inhabitants, its school facilities are behind any other in the Territory."<sup>14</sup> Provo did have a small library and efforts were being made to establish similar institutions in other small communities. So George A. wrote to the Millennial Star stating that any music, books, plays, etc., that could be contributed by the English Saints would be gratefully received.<sup>15</sup> He ordered a full set of "Harper's Family Library" for Provo, Parowan, and Cedar, but was disappointed to learn that only forty volumes could be obtained in consequence of the burning of Harper's buildings. He thanked Congressional Representative, John Bernhisel, for sending some books and reports and added that it was their objective to acquire libraries of as much general information as possible for the least expense.<sup>16</sup> George A. also did some teaching but found his life was too active for that stable profession. One writer says he taught the first graded school in Provo and, at the same time, a night school two evenings a week.<sup>17</sup>

Another constant concern of the Church leadership was the

<sup>14</sup> Deseret News [Salt Lake City], November 30, 1854.

<sup>15</sup> Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], February 28, 1854.

<sup>16</sup> Letter of George A. Smith to Dr. John Bernhisel, Journal History, June 29, 1854.

<sup>17</sup> J. Marinus Jensen, History of Provo (Provo: n.p., 1924), p. 338.

goals, means, and priorities of territorial economics. At least one prominent authority believes the Mormon economic program would have been more sound and successful had the Church left its development to private enterprise.<sup>18</sup> But that was not the Mormon way of doing things. Since virtually all aspects of territorial life were under the management of the Church hierarchy, George A. found his tasks having as much to do with the secular as the religious. His sermons and letters are evidence of this. He continued to encourage the iron missionaries; he advocated economic self-sufficiency and home industry. He often engaged in distributing lots to newcomers and lending his judgment for the settling of various economic and property disputes. His own economic advancement took second place. It was not until the spring of 1853, when his Provo families moved from their "miserable log hovel, roofed with dirt" into a comfortable one story dwelling donated by the local brethren. Only a few months previous he had been putting the finishing touches on his home in Salt Lake City.

This harmonious union of Church and state is demonstrated in the leadership positions George A. held in Utah County. He was the ecclesiastical leader with Dominicus Carter and Isaac Higbee as counselors; he was a member of the board of the Provo Manufacturing Company, and in February of 1853, became a member of the City Council. As the ranking religious officer he, upon arriving, organized Provo into five wards. Continuing his responsibilities in this office he ordained Ward leaders, blessed the sick, dedicated chapels, preached, and gave

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<sup>18</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 129 f.



counsel. As a member of the City Council he helped make political decisions and policies. Said one resident of his contribution:

"George A. Smith in matters of government knew more than perhaps any other man in Utah; and he might with profit to the cities, been a member of more than one City Council."<sup>19</sup>

As a member of the Territorial Legislature from Iron County he could be found sponsoring bills for the benefit of his constituents. In the 1853 session he sponsored two bills: one asking for a \$3,000 appropriation for the iron industry and the second being an act to incorporate the Deseret Iron Company. Both passed. He also served on a committee that drafted a memorial to Congress urging the construction of a transcontinental railroad. The memorial suggested the most feasible route and told of its great need to the people of the territory.

One of George A.'s principle concerns, at this time, was for the safety of the communities under his charge. It was difficult to get many of the saints to consider their safety above supposed economic needs. Many who were called to Iron County would see more desirable land in Utah County or elsewhere and settle on some isolated farm thus exposing themselves to Indian dangers. Some would argue that they could make a better living on a farm than in town. This was his sharp answer to this attitude:

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<sup>19</sup> John E. Booth, History of Provo Fourth Ward, MS. Quoted in Provo Pioneer Mormon City, compiled by workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration for Utah (American Guide Series. Portland, Oregon: Binfords and Mort, 1942), p. 64.

It appears probable to me, you might make more by going to parts of California, or Australia, than you can make even out on a farm in this country. If your object is to make as much earthly gain as possible, why not go where you can get the most of it? This business of having one hand in the golden honeypots of heaven, and the other in the dark regions of hell, undertaking to serve both God and mammon at once, will not answer.<sup>20</sup>

He declared further that almost every time he visited Iron County some malcontents would ask him if they could move away from the town to a farm. He said they would be allowed to do so as soon as the settlements were strong enough to secure their protection. Despite using all the influence he could, some still moved from town and established cattle ranches and farms only to abandon them during the Walker Indian War.

In Provo, the saints began vacating the old fort in early 1852. Most settled on city lots but others moved throughout the valley on isolated farms. The Deseret News reported in 1853 that Provo was the only settlement south of Big Cottonwood that was not "forting up." It was the Walker War that motivated them to make a significant beginning. Moreover, as George A. said, it was not until "Walker spoke" that the scattered brethren came "bundling back into town." On March 7, 1854, a meeting of town leaders was called and a plan proposed. It was decided that every citizen would build a rod of wall for every lot he owned or forfeit his lot. Their plan called for an adobe wall with a rock foundation to be approximately four miles in circumference, ten feet high that would taper to two feet in width at

the top.<sup>21</sup> The war threat had subsided and the Provo saints consequently showed a "want of energy in the matter." The wall, like so many others, was never completed.

The greatest threat to Mormon safety, to date, came in the form of an Indian uprising in the summer of 1853. Chief Walkara's (called Walker by the Mormons) Ute Indians had, by this time, become quite hostile despite Walker's earlier friendliness and despite the fact that he was then an Elder in the Mormon Church. In talks with Brigham Young, he had invited the saints to colonize in Sanpete and Little Salt Lake Valley. But Mormon occupation of choice Indian lands, causing scarcity of game, occasional clashes between the races, and interference with the Indian slave trade brought on their resistance. Trading parties from New Mexico would supply the Utes with guns and ammunition in exchange for Indian children who would subsequently be sold as slaves. The Utes would regularly raid the weaker tribes, such as the Paiutes, for the purpose of capturing the children for trade. The Mormons, pursuing their humane and friendly policy, passed a law on March 7, 1852, allowing probate judges to take these child prisoners from the traders and place them in Mormon homes.<sup>22</sup> In April of the following year, Governor Young issued a proclamation to the effect that any party of suspicious Mexicans could be arrested. With these sources of irritation, all that was needed to bring on a war was some overtly

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<sup>21</sup>Provo Branch Record, 1850-1852, located in LDS Church Historian's Office, pp. 16-17.

<sup>22</sup>Nels Anderson, Desert Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), pp. 124-25.

hostile act. This came on July 17, 1853, when an Indian, attempting to trade some fish for flour at James Ivie's cabin in north Springville, started an altercation that resulted in his death. Messengers were hurriedly sent to Walker's encampment in Spanish Fork canyon in a vain attempt to placate the surly chief. The next day a Mormon guard was shot and killed at Fort Payson, to be followed by sporadic strikes over a wide area stretching from central Utah to Sanpete and Iron Counties. Mormon fortifications and quick action by militiamen prevented serious losses. Before the war was over, however, it had become the second most costly Indian war in the history of the Territory. Bancroft gives the casualties as twelve Mormon deaths and a number wounded, approximately 400 cattle and horses stolen, and the expenses incurred in building forts and removing settlements ran in the neighborhood of \$200,000.<sup>23</sup>

Just prior to the war, George A. had traveled through the settlements in Sanpete and Utah Counties preaching, among other things, that the saints fortify or well in their communities. He was in Nephi, on his way south, when hostilities began. Being the ranking officer in the Iron County militia, he sent orders to the southern villages to take immediate measures for their safety. He raised ten volunteers to hurry to Hambleton's settlement in Sanpete where they arrived just in time to save the little community from the Indians. Returning to Payson, he "gave a plan for a fort" and journeyed to Provo where

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<sup>23</sup>Cited in Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of Utah (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Inc., 1964), p. 474.

he found the citizens destitute of arms and ammunition. He organized a campaign to remedy this situation and then went to Salt Lake City where he was appointed commander of all the military districts in the territory south of Great Salt Lake County. His orders, signed by Governor Young and General Daniel H. Wells, directed that all settlers assemble in forts or behind walls, all surplus stock must be driven to Salt Lake and put in charge of the Presiding Bishop, and that every effort be made to pursue a pacific policy.

In two days Colonels George A. Smith and William H. Kimball, eldest son of Heber C. Kimball, had recruited thirty-six men and started south to carry out their orders. At Nephi they found the settlers on guard and assigned ten men to assist the people in securing their fort and food supplies. Fillmore was in a poor state of defense and fifteen were assigned to help them improve fortifications. In Iron County they continued their policy of removing smaller settlements to the security of larger towns. Settlers at Red Creek and Paragonah moved to Parowan, and Shirt's settlement, Harmony, and Ft. Johnson were abandoned for Cedar City.

Two California emigrants, E. H. Beale and G. H. Heap, were passing through the towns in Iron County at this time, and the latter has left us some interesting observations about the state of affairs there. Says Heap in writing about the removal from Paragonah:

It was to us a strange sight to witness the alacrity with which these people obeyed an order which compelled them to destroy in an instant, the fruits of two years' labor; and no time was lost in commencing the work of destruction. Their houses were demolished, the doors, windows, and all portable woodwork being reserved for future dwellings; and wagons were soon on the road to Parowan, loaded with their furniture

and other property.<sup>24</sup>

Traveling to Parowan "over an excellent wagon-road, made and kept in repair and bridged in many places, by the Mormons," Heap described an attractive town of approximately 100 houses arranged in a square facing inwards. He wrote that the houses were ornamented with attractive flower gardens and shade trees. Outside the town was a "four hundred acre" field that was in a "high state of cultivation" with wheat and corn "as fine as any we had seen in the States." While in Parowan the Californians were cordially invited to stay with George A. who gave them "much interesting information" about the geography of the country, the mining prospects, and the origin of the southern settlements. During their stay George A. received a letter from Chief Walker calling the Mormons "damned fools" for abandoning their homes since he did not intend to molest them but was only interested in their cattle. Moving on to Cedar City Heap's Company found the place "crowded with the people of the surrounding country seeking refuge from the Indians, and its square was blocked up with wagons, furniture, tents, farming implements, etc., in the midst of which were men, women, and children, together with every description of cattle, creating a scene of confusion difficult to describe."<sup>25</sup>

George A. had several talks with Onwonup, the Piede Chief. The Piedades were so frightened of the Utes that they gathered close to

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<sup>24</sup>Gwinn Harris Heap, Central Route to the Pacific, From the Valley of the Mississippi to California . . . (Philadelphia: n.p., 1854), p. 90.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 93-95.

the Mormons during the war which resulted in the conversion of several to the Church.

Returning to Salt Lake City in August, he reported that all the communities south of the city were "either in excellent conditions for defense, or rapidly urging on the completion of their fortifications; and that the inhabitants are using all exertion to secure their crops, and preserve their crops, and preserve their stock and other property."<sup>26</sup> In a conference talk that fall, George A. expressed his regrets that the saints had been so slow to follow the counsel of the Church leaders who had been preaching for years for them to build forts. If the advice of President Young had been observed, he declared, not a man would have lost his life by an Indian and many thousands of dollars in expense would have been saved. The saints would not obey the President, he continued, but "when a man by the name of Walker felt he would see if the people would obey him, and by his course of operations, in one week got over 300 houses removed; he actually had more influence than the Presidency had."<sup>27</sup> George A. went on to mention that many saints were not only reluctant to follow counsel, but were openly critical of their peaceful policy toward the Indians. George A. was called a "coward" by some who thought his efforts more a result of fear than genuine safety measures. He always took this insinuation in good humor. He jokingly told the saints in the same conference that he had a guaranteed solution to the war. Said he: "Walker himself

<sup>26</sup> Deseret News [Salt Lake City], August 25, 1853.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., November 24, 1853.

has teased me for a white wife; and if any of the sisters will volunteer to marry him, I believe I can close the war forthwith." George A. endeared the saints to him with his ability to laugh even in a time of tension. Dan Jones tells of an incident that happened during the war which discloses even more clearly this becoming side of his personality. He and a man named Barney Ward were given the responsibility of guarding 1,200 head of Provo cattle to protect them from the Indians. After three sleepless days, they expectantly waited for relief which George A. was supposed to send. Finally, hearing that Col. Smith was in town, Jones went to see him, but was told by three other brethren that George A. was still in bed. Murmuring some kind of name, Jones went to get some breakfast. After eating, he returned to George A.'s home and found him talking to the three men that had spoken to him earlier. Col. Smith shook hands and said, "I understand you called me a big lazy lout." Jones admitted that he had and told him the reason he was so ill-natured. Brother Smith turned to the other men and told them to get relief to guard the cattle immediately. He then told Jones to go get some sleep and he would feel better. Said Jones, "I felt ashamed for Bro. Smith manifested no anger."<sup>28</sup> That afternoon, when he awoke, he went to ask George A.'s pardon. The latter, said Jones, "took me by the hand, laughing heartily, asking me if I felt any better, and talking in a very pleasant manner, giving me no chance to apologize. . . . I relate this to show the nobility of his character, being above small prejudice."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup>J.D., V, 107.

<sup>29</sup>Daniel W. Jones, Forty Years Among the Indians (Salt Lake City, 1890), pp. 59-60.



After conference George A. kept busy helping Erastus Snow and Franklin D. Richards gather one hundred new colonists to strengthen Iron and Millard Counties. With the adjournment of the legislature, he and Ezra T. Benson, were on their way south again inspecting the defenses of the communities. The Walker War had subsided over the winter but, with the coming of spring, there was fear that the redman would strike again. Apostles Smith and Benson urged the saints to continue improving their defenses, performed miscellaneous Church work, and sat as judges over a land dispute between Palmyra and Springville. After listening to the arguments from both sides they rendered a decision that was satisfactory to all.

In May, George A. traveled south again, this time with President Young and company. One of the purposes of the trip was to visit Chief Walker and make an official peace. Walker's tribe was camped on Chicken Creek, about seventeen miles below Nephi. When President Young, George A. and others requested to see him he was sullen over the illness of his daughter and would not leave his tent. The following morning, being refused audience the second time, Brigham Young and George A. stepped inside his tent and gave his daughter a blessing. They presented the old warrior with guns, food and blankets and finally succeeded in making peace. That fall, the Utes became angry with the Mormons for not helping them fight the Snake Indians. They rustled and killed some cattle to show their displeasure. Rumor had it that they were threatening to kill George A. Smith, George Bean, and Isaac Higbee and "dance around their scalps" because these men

had befriended the Snakes.<sup>30</sup>

In April conference of 1854, George A. was given a new assignment that was to change his manner of life considerably. The appointment was to assume the office of "Church Historian and General Church Recorder" to take the place of the recently deceased Willard Richards. This call released him from the presidency of the southern settlements but not from all responsibilities to these communities. He still made two or three southern trips annually throughout the rest of his life. George A. could feel proud of his efforts; he had earned the title often given him by Church leaders and writers--"Father of the Southern Settlements," and had played a major role in building and protecting these young villages. The "Eleventh General Epistle" sent to Church members by the First Presidency commended his leadership during the Walker conflict: "During the Indian troubles of the past season, Elder George A. Smith has been very active; and to his influence and untiring exertions may be attributed the execution of those prompt and energetic measures which so suddenly placed the settlements in a comparative state of security.<sup>31</sup> These efforts had been made in the midst of personal difficulties. Not only was George A. plagued with a "severe headache" during much of the time, but he suffered considerable anxiety over the health of his parents who both died in the early months of 1854. His beloved father, wrote George A., felt that his work was done and wanted to die. The venerable patriarch even wrote to the

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<sup>30</sup>Journal History, September 26, 1854.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., April 10, 1854.

prayer circles in the city requesting them not to pray for his recovery.<sup>32</sup>

George A. welcomed his new assignment. The prospect of living a more quiet life of study and research seemed, at the time, very appealing. He wrote these sentiments to Franklin D. Richards:

You will no doubt discover that the burden of presiding over the southern country in this territory was rolled off my back at Conference. And I can assure you that I felt something like John Bunyan's Christian is supposed to have done when he got rid of the burden of his sins, although my shoulders were immediately provided with another load, not less weighty in its proportion, but of a very different character, as you will see.<sup>33</sup>

During their first decade in the Utah Territory, the Mormons founded nearly one hundred new colonies, many of which were south of Salt Lake City along the "Mormon Corridor." George A. Smith, probably more than any other leader, deserves recognition as the foremost community builder in the southern communities during this period. Unlike other frontier settlements, Utah towns were colonized in an orderly three-stage sequence: exploring constituted the first phase, next came a colonizing company to build a stockade and temporary community, and finally, came all activities needed to erect a permanent community.<sup>34</sup> In this chapter we have seen the myriad problems calling for strong leadership during the third phase, and how eminently qualified was George A. Smith in fulfilling this role for central and southern Utah.

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<sup>32</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Dr. John Bernhisel, Journal History, June 29, 1854.

<sup>33</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], September 16, 1854.

<sup>34</sup>Arrington, op. cit., p. 88.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CHURCH HISTORIAN

It would be unfair to appraise George A. Smith's historical work by the standards and techniques of modern historiography. We must see him in historical context before a proper evaluation can be made. History as the somewhat critical and objective discipline it is today had not yet come of age in mid-nineteenth century America. It was not until after George A.'s death that the influence of Leopold Von Ranke and the German school of "scientific" history began making an impact in the United States. American historians who were contemporary with George A. Smith are often referred to as "literary" historians as opposed to the "scientific" historians who started to appear in the 1880's. Few American historians previous to this time could properly be called "objective" and "non-partisan."

The microcosm of George A.'s environment was Mormonism. As a Mormon apostle, he was committed to a point of view--LDS theology, and it naturally colored everything he said and wrote. His view of history was inextricably mixed with theology and prophecy; it was not greatly unlike that of the ancient Hebrews. God, he believed, was guiding history toward its ultimate consummation and often intervened to bring about His purposes. The saints were being gathered out of "Babylon," the wicked world, which would continue to deteriorate while Zion would grow in strength as it prepared for the imminent return of Jesus Christ. This was the Mormon world-view and it,

of course, had a great effect on George A.'s historical interpretations. In a Independence Day speech in 1854, for example, he contended that the American Revolution "had its beginning behind the veil." It was God working behind the scenes "to lay a foundation, and prepare a people, with a system of government, among whom His work of the last days could be commenced upon this earth."<sup>1</sup> Another sample is his oft-repeated claim that God had tempered the elements of the Great Basin to make it habitable for the saints.

Aside from these apparent and understandable limitations, it must be admitted that George A. Smith did make a sizable contribution to his Church's history and that he possessed several skills of a good historian. He had keen powers of observation, an excellent memory, some critical acumen, and a lively, even sometimes erudite, writing style. Though self taught, his knowledge of history appears to have been extensive for his time. One is impressed, for example, with the great amount of historical detail in his sermons and with the large fund of information he wrote home from his European travels in relating the historical facts pertaining to monuments, buildings, and places that came under his observation. Unquestionably, George A.'s greatest contribution as a historian was the work expended in collecting documents and writing part of the multi-volume work known as the documentary "History of the Church." He also published countless letters, an occasional article in Church newspapers, and a sketchy forty-nine page pamphlet on Church history from the death of Joseph Smith entitled

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<sup>1</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], October 21, 1854.

The Rise, Progress and Travels of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

George A. Smith held the office of Church Historian and General Recorder from the time of his appointment in April, 1854, until October, 1870. The office of Church Recorder had been designated by revelation on the day the Church was organized, April 6, 1830. Oliver Cowdery first held the position until a year later when John Whitmer, one of the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon, was appointed historian for the Church. Whitmer and his next few successors wrote only short sketches of Church history and it was not until Joseph Smith began recording his history, with the help of scribes, that the Church began to get a substantial history. Willard Richards held the office at the death of the Prophet, and at the October, 1845, conference of the Church was sustained in the double office of "Church Historian and General Recorder" which office has continued to the present.

George A. Smith was the logical choice to succeed Willard Richards. He was one of the best historians in the Church at that time. Brigham Young later called him a "cabinet of history." "From my childhood," said George A. in 1857, "history has been a favourite theme. I have loved to read historical works; and for the little time I have been enabled to devote to reading in my younger days I acquired some general knowledge of what is termed 'profane history,' but only a limited knowledge of what is termed 'ecclesiastical history.'"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>G. D. Watt and others (reporters), Journal of Discourses (26 vols.; London: LDS Book Depot, 1854-86), VI, 84; hereafter cited as J.D.

Despite a busy life and poor eyesight, he managed to find time to read. On his trips across the plains or his jaunts through the settlements, he usually packed his wagon with reading materials. As Church Historian he subscribed to numerous national periodicals and became impatient when erratic mail service made tardy deliveries. His mail for April 1861, for example, consisted of twenty-four separate publications including the New York Times, Harper's Weekly, New York Herald, Congressional Globe, Washington Star, Godey magazine, and various farm publications.<sup>3</sup> Though these periodicals were for the Historian's Office, there is evidence from his sermons and letters that George A. read these publications regularly. The new historian was always a popular lecturer on historical subjects as well as a favorite speaker for Pioneer and Independence Day celebrations. One of his preferred topics was Mohammedanism. After giving one lecture on the subject he said, "I would like to inspire in the minds of the youth a disposition to study oriental history, because a great deal of human nature is learned therein."<sup>4</sup> The Deseret News, reporting on one of his Seventies Hall Lectures on Islam describes it as "one of thrilling interest" that was delivered in the speaker's "usual happy style." So large was the crowd,<sup>5</sup> the article continued, that scores were unable

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<sup>3</sup>Booklet containing register of mail received by George A. Smith from 1858 to 1864. George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>4</sup>J.D., III, 35.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, November 18, 1862; hereafter cited as Journal History.

to gain admission.

George A. contributed to the history of the Church before being appointed to the office of Church Historian. In 1845, especially, there are many entries in his journal which mention his labors with Willard Richards and others in revising the documentary history of Joseph Smith. On April 1, 1845, notation says they "revised 140 pages of the history of Joseph Smith."<sup>6</sup> He also states that he did some collecting for the history and allowed the clerks to use his journals and letters as source material.<sup>7</sup>

The "History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" which was begun by Joseph Smith and continued by later Church historians includes three principal parts: the "History of Joseph Smith," biographies of the original Twelve Apostles of the Church, and the "Manuscript History of Brigham Young." After the history of Brigham Young was concluded, the "History of the Church" became a mere collection of newspaper clippings about the Mormons. Joseph Smith completed some work on his history during the early years of the Church's existence. No one knows, however, how much he accomplished. The first known attempt of the Prophet to write his history occurred between June and November of 1832. Not only did he begin a journal with the intent of keeping "a minute account of all things" that come under his observation, but also a letter book.<sup>8</sup> Despite interrupting circumstances, Joseph was able to collect a sizable amount of

<sup>6</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, April 1, 1845, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., June 20, 1845 and March 11, 1845.

<sup>8</sup>See Dean C. Jessee, "The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," BYU Studies, IX (Spring, 1969), p. 277.



documentary material which later served as sources for his "official" history. On December 11, 1841, the Prophet lamented that the problem of a hectic life had not allowed him sufficient time to work on his history. Still, said he, "I have continued to keep up a journal in the best manner my circumstances would allow, and dictate for my history from time to time, as I have had opportunity. . . ."<sup>9</sup> Finally, in 1838, Joseph commenced dictating his official history. He was attempting to combine his sketchy journal, letters, and other sources into a detailed "documentary history" strung together by his own brief narration of events. A series of misfortunes and changes in scribes delayed the history and in December, 1841, when Willard Richards was appointed clerk, the manuscript was only 157 pages in length.<sup>10</sup> By the time of Willard Richard's death the documentary "History of Joseph Smith" had been written up to February 28, 1843.<sup>11</sup> Due to the exigencies of pioneer life, Richards accomplished little on the history after the Nauvoo period.

On assuming his new responsibilities as Church Historian, George A. Smith began moving the historical papers to the upper story of the Council House and arranging them by date. He deeply regretted the fact that Richards had been unable to finish the history through the martyrdom, since he felt that no living person could have written it as well as he. This was probably true since Richards had not only

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<sup>9</sup>Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts (7 vols., 2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1959-60), IV, 470.

<sup>10</sup>Dean C. Jessee, op. cit., p. 276.

<sup>11</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], September 16, 1854.

been the Church Historian but was with the Prophet at the time of his death. George A.'s original staff consisted of Thomas Bullock, Jonathan Grimshaw, Leo Hawkins and Robert Campbell. While organizing the mass of documents, George A. learned, among other things, that the records for vicarious baptisms were "almost entirely destitute of anything correct or reliable." He proceeded to search everything he could find with regard to this doctrine, presumably with the aim of helping free it from the confusion that had surrounded its practice.<sup>12</sup>

One of the major responsibilities of the historian's staff was to collect records that would be of importance to the Church. During his long tenure as historian, George A. manifested great zeal for this task. During his first month in office, he had bound a full set of the Nauvoo Neighbor and two volumes of the Frontier Guardian; seven books of his father's patriarchal blessings (561 blessings) were acquired. In addition, he wrote letters to Willard Snow asking for his biography, to a Major Bedell for information concerning the martyrdom, to Anson Call and Chester Loveland for items of history, to an anonymous person for the "Pottawattomie papers," and to F. D. Richards in England requesting "the works, papers and publications necessary to keep a chain of history." He also asked Richards for "Lyon's and Snow's poems," newspapers, and any articles dealing with the Church.<sup>13</sup> In April, he penned a note to John Bernhisel expressing

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<sup>12</sup>Statement of George A. Smith to Deseret News in George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>13</sup>Historian's Office Journal 1854-55, April, 1854, LDS Church Historian's Office.

his desire to "obtain every species of information regarding the world whether past or present." The letter asked that he sent to the Historian's Office "Captain Stansbury's report," "Lieut. Gunnison's work," and news clippings of every description that would be of interest to the saints.<sup>14</sup> There are several large scrapbooks in the Historian's Library compiled during George A.'s term in office composed primarily of newspaper articles on Mormonism.

George A.'s staff was not only anxious to obtain as much information as possible concerning the early history of the Church, but facts of contemporary Church history as well. Efforts were made, for example, to obtain accurate statistical records from wards, missions, and stakes. This endeavor often included the improving of past records. Exemplary of this was George A.'s request that Albert Carrington "fill up dates in High Council minutes taken in 1847, 48, 49. Bro. Carrington took the books for the purpose of making the entires."<sup>15</sup> Missionaries were encouraged to keep a thorough record of their labors and of ordinances performed. Wilford Woodruff, assistant Church Historian, represented the attitude of the Office when in 1856 he exhorted the missionaries to

keep a record of their ministry every day of their lives . . . .  
 make a record of every official act of your life. . . . We are  
 living in one of the most important generations that man ever  
 lived on earth, and we should write an account of those important  
 transactions which are taking place before our eyes in ful-

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<sup>14</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to John Bernhisel. George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>15</sup>Journal History, June 5, 1854.

fillment of the prophecies and the revelations of God. . . .  
 I am in the Historian's Office and I find it very difficult  
 to get or find a record of events as they pass along. . . .  
 We want to make a history, but if the Elders will take pains  
 to write their official acts so the historian can get hold  
 of them it will be a benefit to the Church. The history of  
 this Church will remain through time and eternity.<sup>16</sup>

George A. was constantly writing Church members and leaders asking for biographical information; in fact, the office had a regular form they used for such requests.

A continual stream of letters left the Historian's Office requesting more and better material. M. J. Sheldon was asked by George A. in 1858 to continue sending his informative letters on Indian life and history.<sup>17</sup> In 1859, while compiling items pertaining to the Iowa phase of Church history, he wrote to several asking for information about the Mormon Battalion. One letter to a Brother Merrill told of having several journals from the "rank and file" but none from officers.<sup>18</sup> Another sample of their investigations occurred in the sixties when polygamy was becoming a national issue. George A. engaged in research for President Young on the practice of polygamy by other societies in the history of mankind. When the sons of Joseph Smith appeared in town trying to win followers for the newly founded Reorganized Church, George A., and especially staff member Joseph F. Smith, labored diligently to collect "affidavits of all those who have a knowledge of the facts in relation to plurality of wives, during the

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<sup>16</sup>Wilford Woodruff's Journal, September 6, 1856, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>17</sup>Church Historian's Office Letter Book 1854-61, p. 660.

lifetime of the Prophet." "We wish," wrote George A., "the affidavit of every person who was by him sealed in plurality, or witnessed such a sealing with time and place as near as can be."<sup>19</sup>

On June 7, 1854, George A. Smith commenced dictating the history of Joseph Smith where Richards had left it years before. The method of producing this history was approximately as follows: the staff, including George A., would assimilate all the reliable source material they could locate on the period under consideration. After a thorough study of this material, a rough-draft of the period would be written or dictated. Apparently George A. did most of this writing. The rough draft would be reworked and revised and then read to President Young. There are penciled notes appearing frequently in the margins of the original draft indicating what date the manuscript was read to Brigham Young. After receiving the President's approval a final copy would be written.

The staff encountered difficulties in their efforts to acquire reliable information on the martyrdom. Accounts in their possession were filled with contradictions, hearsay, and emotionalism. George A. wrote Dr. John Bernhisel in Washington recalling that he had once boarded in the Prophet's home, enjoyed his confidence, attended many of the most important councils, and had perhaps kept a journal. Unfortunately, Bernhisel wrote back saying he had no journal and knew nothing that was not common to the saints.<sup>20</sup> George A. tried other

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<sup>19</sup>Church Historian's Office Letter Book. no. 6, p. 875.

<sup>20</sup>Letter exchange between George A. Smith and John Bernhisel, Journal History, June 29, 1854 and September 11, 1854.

methods. In August of 1854, he and his clerks traveled through Utah County in search for information. He conversed with several who had known the Prophet. In late September, he conducted further interviews when they were working on an account of "Joseph's arrest in Dixon." The subject was consuming his attention and interest. While attending sessions of the legislature, his office work accumulated and he found himself wanting to return to his desk. After the adjournment of the assembly, he again plunged into the history, saying to a friend, "I turn my whole attention to the History which takes up my time. . . . I am determined to do justice to Jos. Smith's History cost what it will."<sup>21</sup> Being so engrossed in the project, he declined social invitations that threatened to occupy his time. In a letter excusing himself from a Mormon Battalion party, he penned this interesting note of their activities:

It seems as though all the contrivances that the devil could invent had been brought to bear from the day of Joseph and Hyrums death to prevent their history being compiled. I have six clerks engaged in the office and it keeps my brain in a perfect whirl to keep track of them or they of me and not get the cart before the horse. Many records are nearly obliterated by time damp and dirt. Other lost Some half worked into mouse nests, and many important events were never written except in the hearts of those who were concerned. Joseph said it would be impossible for any man ever to write his history. I am doing the best I can towards it and I feel the Spirit of it as much as I ever did to preach so do the clerks in the office.<sup>22</sup>

Interruptions continued to take him from his work. In February,

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<sup>21</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to R. Benson, January 30, 1855. George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>22</sup>Church Historian's Office Letter Book 1854-61, pp. 106-07.

1855, President Young asked him to write a brief history of the Church for the editors of the People's Journal, a work published in Lebanon, Ohio. With the article he mailed a letter asking the editors either to publish the history "entire and unaltered" or return it. Although George A. was writing the article for a "gentile" audience, it is nevertheless indicative of his approach to the history of the Church. In this history, the persecutions of the saints were given excessive space and emphasis, and there is nothing to suggest that the Church had encountered internal problems. For example, there is no mention of the bank failure and apostasy in Kirtland, of plural marriage in Nauvoo, or of the trouble and confusion that followed the death of Joseph Smith. It ends with the following eulogy: "The unparalleled progress of this people in the face of so much opposition and persecution and in so dreary a country, shows clearly that the power of the almighty is exerted in a miraculous manner to spread his diamond truth to reclaim the nations."<sup>23</sup> It may be exaggerating to say this article is a fair sample of the type of history that appears in the documentary "History of the Church." It must be admitted, however, that while it may be incorrect to brand this important history as an apology, it is essentially a selection of documents and narrative favorable to the Mormon faith. There are, to be sure, several good reasons for this. First of all, it was the Mormon people that experienced their history and consequently their written materials were more detailed, on-the-scene accounts than anything left by non-Mormon witnesses. Secondly,

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<sup>23</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to the People's Journal, March 20, 1855. Church Historian's Office Letter Book 1854-61.

there were few non-Mormon writers of the nineteenth century that treated Mormon history with a reasonable degree of fairness or accuracy. The great bulk of nineteenth century non-Mormon literature about the Church is scurrilous, sensational, "exposé" literature. George A. and other Mormon historians could hardly be expected to consider these writings seriously, especially since they conflicted so drastically with their view of the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith and the divine mission of the Church. The "official" history of the Church would naturally be in harmony with the Church's concept of itself and its avowed mission. Little, if anything, could be included which detracted from this image. Illustrating this approach is an example found in volume seven of the History of the Church. George A. and Wilford Woodruff ended their lengthy excerpt from Governor Ford's History of Illinois right in the middle of a sentence that was defamatory of Joseph Smith. According to B. H. Roberts, they ended their chapter at that point "because they were unwilling, doubtless, to include the vicious assault upon the character of the Prophet with which the sentence ends."<sup>24</sup> Since this was the dominating characteristic of non-Mormon literature, the usual Mormon response was to react defensively and produce history that tended to see themselves through no eyes but their own and indicated a reluctance to admit personal or corporate faults.

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<sup>24</sup> Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts (7 vols., 2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1959-60), VII, xxi.



George A. Smith's emotional attachment to the Church--his memory of persecutions, injustices, and the martyrdom--made the Mormon past too much a part of his subjective experience to allow him to be very "objective" in his historical approach. An example of his subjective involvement occurred in March, 1856, while he was working on the period of Joseph Smith's imprisonment in Carthage. He had received letters from those who had been incarcerated with the Prophet, namely John Taylor, Dan Jones, John S. Fullmer, Cyrus H. Wheelock, Stephen Markham and others. While studying these and other materials, his feelings became so roused that he described it as "the most affecting piece of business I have ever undertaken. . . . It makes me feel like swearing and all that restrains me is that I am not philologist enough to command words as fervent as I could wish to do justice to my feelings."<sup>25</sup>

All this is not to say that George A. Smith was totally uncritical of the documentary sources of Mormon history or that the "History of the Church" is too biased to be of value. Within his frame of reference, George A. exhibited a great desire to produce a true and accurate history. Mention has been made of his challenge of putting together a correct account of Joseph Smith's martyrdom. He accumulated many conflicting and emotion-charged reports that required careful evaluation. Like any good historian he sought for and placed most credence in the eyewitness statements of John Taylor and others. There were other times when George A. questioned and even rejected

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<sup>25</sup>The Mormon [New York, New York], May 17, 1856.

historical reports by fellow Mormons. His rather critical revision of Lucy Mack Smith's history of her son Joseph, discussed later, is a good case in point.

The documentary "History of the Church," properly understood and accepted for what it is, can truly be considered a monumental achievement of Church historiography. It is not a thoroughgoing objective and interpretative history in the modern sense, it is more accurately described as annals than history--a chronological collection of minutes, letters, and other important documents with only a minimum of evaluation, interpretation, and subsequent revising.<sup>26</sup> A modern interpretative historian might consider such a collection only the beginning of written history. After gathering sources about the external events of a period, he might submit his data to criticism in an attempt to ascertain their truth content and significance. It can be seen, therefore, that the "History of the Church" is a precious compilation of sources illuminating the Mormon view of their history which can be used by the modern historian, when tempered by the non-Mormon view, to make his evaluation of what really occurred in LDS

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<sup>26</sup>Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Changes in Joseph Smith's History (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., n.d.); LaMar Petersen, Problems in Mormon Text (Salt Lake City, n.n., 1957). These are two studies noting changes made in the History of the Church from what was written in the original history. The significance of these changes has been exaggerated in these works and the opinion of many Mormon scholars is that "corrections in the published version [are] based on hard evidence. The negative connotation of 'edit' cannot be generalized." [See Truman G. Madsen, "Guest Editor's Prologue," BYU Studies, IX (Spring, 1969), 238]. Another prominent Mormon scholar, after many years of intensive research, concludes that the historical sources preserved by the Church are reliable and usually accurate. [See Leonard J. Arrington, "The Search for Truth and Meaning in Mormon History," Dialogue, a Journal of Mormon Thought, III (Summer, 1968), 60-61].

Church history.

In March, 1855, George A. wrote Cyrus Wheelock that he was finding the history of Joseph "difficult to collate," and that it was "a long, tedious and difficult task, as his papers, many of them have been badly kept, and seriously damaged during our migratory movements since his death."<sup>27</sup> He discovered that other activities were becoming a welcome break from his tiring office duties. After confining himself two or three weeks at his desk, being in the office sometimes past midnight, he would journey to the settlements and become involved with their problems. He was never exclusively an historian, but continued active as a church leader and politician. During 1855, for example, he made eight such trips, four to Utah County, one to the towns west of the Jordan River, one to Centerville and Sessions Settlement (Bountiful), one to southern Utah, and in December, one to Fillmore to attend the legislature.

In March, 1856, a constitutional convention was held in Salt Lake City and George A. Smith and John Taylor were elected as delegates to make another try for statehood. The principle good that came from his trip was a full statement by John Taylor on the martyrdom, which enabled them to finally bring the "History of Joseph Smith" to a close. John Taylor did not spend much time in Washington due to illness and heavy responsibilities in New York as the editor-in-chief of The Mormon. While in Washington, D. C., George A. received two letters from his staff members urging him not to leave for home until he

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<sup>27</sup>Letter of Thomas Bullock to George A. Smith, June 30, 1856. George A. Smith Papers.

procured Elder Taylor's account. Thomas Bullock's letter said they were "almost daily getting new statements from men who were directly or indirectly connected with the scenes of the last four days of the lives of the Prophet and Patriarch, and many of these accounts are in direct opposition to each other."<sup>28</sup> George A. wrote from New York in September that he had remained in the city for an extra month to help Elder Taylor complete the task. Said the letter:

He is so busy that it has been with difficulty that he has been able to bring his mind to the task and remain at it. I am, however, extremely satisfied with the prospects of accomplishing the work. He thinks Dan Jones' statements of the dream ought to be considered reliable. From many conversations I have had with Bro. Markham in relation to the subject I have formed the opinion that his memory is so treacherous that he would unwittingly mix other circumstances with those attending Joseph's assassination. His statements would therefore require criticism.<sup>29</sup>

Later, George A. expressed the opinion that John Taylor might never have completed the account had he not been there to help keep his mind on the subject. Elder Taylor admitted this was true.<sup>30</sup> So important has Elder Taylor's treatise been to Church Historians, that it has been included with little alteration in volume seven of the History of the Church.

When George A. Smith and his assistant, Wilford Woodruff, finally completed their publication of the "History of Joseph Smith" in the Millennial Star and Deseret News they made this confident

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<sup>28</sup>Letter of Thomas Bullock to George A. Smith, June 30, 1856. George A. Smith Papers.

<sup>29</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Wilford Woodruff, September 14, 1856. George A. Smith Papers.

<sup>30</sup>Joseph Smith, op. cit., p. 55.

testimonial of their work:

The History of Joseph Smith is now before the world, and we are satisfied that a history more correct in its details than this was never published. To have it strictly correct, the greatest possible pains have been taken by the historians and clerks engaged in the work. They were eye and ear witnesses of nearly all the transactions recorded in this history, most of which were reported as they transpired, and, where they were not personally present, they have had access to those who were. Moreover, since the death of the Prophet Joseph, the history has been carefully revised under the strict inspection of President Brigham Young, and approved by him. We, therefore, hereby bear our testimony to all the world, unto whom these words shall come, that the History of Joseph Smith is true, and is one of the most authentic histories ever written.<sup>31</sup>

George A. Smith's staff devoted much energy and judgment to produce a correct account of the period of the martyrdom. With the exception of the criticisms previously mentioned, many historians would agree that they did a creditable job. While Wilford Woodruff's next task was obtaining biographies from all the original Twelve Apostles, George A., though helping some with the biographies, turned his attention to the "History of Brigham Young." In November, 1854, the Historian's Office had been moved to the Tithing Store House, located where Hotel Utah now stands, so that it would be more convenient for President Young to maintain a supervisory role over the project.

George A. did not abandon work on the Joseph Smith period of Church history; he regarded Willard Richards' work as "unfinished."<sup>32</sup> Before beginning where Richards had ended, George A. had done considerable revising of the latter's work for the years 1842 and 1843. His

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., I, v-vi.

<sup>32</sup>Historian's Office Journal no. 21, July 3, 1862.

desire now, as expressed in a letter to Solomon Mack in 1859, was to "collect information preparatory to a final abridgment of the whole documentary history of Joseph Smith and his ancestors."<sup>33</sup> He apparently did not realize this ambition although he expended some effort on the project.

In the years to follow, George A. continued the work of gathering sources and writing the "Manuscript History of Brigham Young" in much the same manner as he had worked on Joseph Smith's history. It appears that in the late fifties and sixties his assignments took more and more from his historical duties. By the time he was released as Church Historian in 1870, the "Manuscript History of Brigham Young" had been completed to 1855.

Another interesting piece of historical work accomplished by George A. Smith was his revision of Lucy Mack Smith's history of her son, Joseph. This fascinating book, originally titled Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith The Prophet and His Progenitors for Many Generations, is one of the few pro-Mormon sources of early Church history. In 1845, the year following the death of her son, Lucy Mack Smith began dictating her history to a friend, Mrs. Martha Jane Knowlton Coray. A copy of the manuscript passed from William Smith to a man named Isaac Sheen. In September, 1852, when Orson Pratt was on his way to England, he purchased the manuscript from Sheen. Pratt published the manuscript under the above title in 1853. Mother Smith sent him a belated letter giving her permission to "print, sell in

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<sup>33</sup>Manuscript History of Brigham Young, February, 1859, p. 204.

this or any other country all those manuscripts" he had acquired from her.<sup>34</sup> The book circulated among the saints in Europe and in the United States. Since George A. was working on the history of Joseph Smith, he read the book and was one of the first to note its deficiencies. In July, 1856, he wrote an eulogy about Mother Smith, who had recently died, for The Mormon. Mother Smith's history, he wrote, recounted many thrilling incidents of herself and her family, but contained some factual mistakes.<sup>35</sup> After further study he and President Young discussed some of the errors in the history. On February 16, 1859, they talked about the miraculous stories of David Whitmer accomplishing two day's work in less than one and about his fields being "plastered" by unknown helpers. President Young, commenting on this story, replied that he "was willing to believe a big story, if it was true."<sup>36</sup> A few days later George A. wrote to David Whitmer asking if the stories were true as he did not "wish to give currency to a rumor that is false." The reply, if any, to this pertinent question has not been located. A day later he wrote to Solomon Mack referring to the fact that Orson Pratt had stated in the book's preface that it was originally written under the observation and approval of the Prophet. Wrote George A., "The facts, however, present the matter in a slightly different light." He went on to mention that the deaths of her four

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<sup>34</sup>Kate B. Carter (ed.), Historic Letters of the Past, (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, n.d.), p. 125.

<sup>35</sup>Journal History, July 5, 1856.

<sup>36</sup>Historian's Office Journal no. 17, February 16, 1859.

sons and husband had "made a visible inroad upon her mind," and though she "evinces a strong memory" in writing the book, it was clear that during the last fifteen years "she got events considerably mixed up, and in a future edition, it will probably be necessary to aid the reader to properly understand her narrative to insert the dates of events in the margin." George A. admitted that the early part of her book was beyond his memory. He then asked Solomon Mack his opinion of the book and added, "You are no doubt aware that works written from memory are liable to certain more or less inaccuracies."<sup>37</sup>

During the next few months, George A. and occasionally Wilford Woodruff continued to study and make enquiries about events in the book. George A. wrote to John Bear asking if he were the Mr. Bear referred to in a doubtful story involving William Smith on page 218 of the book. If you are the man, he said, would you make any necessary corrections in the story.<sup>38</sup> A letter of Woodruff's to John Butler, a participant in the Gallatin, Missouri election riot, asks just how factual was the book's account of that affair.<sup>39</sup> Having these and other suspicions, President Young in 1865, denounced the book as "utterly unreliable as a history" and ordered its suppression throughout the Territory. Unquestionably, George A.'s studies and discussions

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<sup>37</sup>Manuscript History of Brigham Young, February, 1859, p. 204.

<sup>38</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to John Bear, February 23, 1859. Church Historian's Office Letter Book 1854-61, pp. 716-17.

<sup>39</sup>Letter of Wilford Woodruff to John Butler, March 29, 1858. Church Historian's Office Letter Book 1854-61, p. 744.



with the President had considerable influence in leading him to this decision. Apparently, some thought the book too valuable to be destroyed and, therefore, a committee of revision was appointed consisting of George A. and Elias Smith. The LDS Church Historian's Office has in its possession two original copies of the book with penciled corrections in the margins. In both books there appears to be somewhere in the neighborhood of fifty or sixty changes, mostly minor. Whether others made any changes before its republication in 1901 is not known. Stanley S. Ivins compared the original 1853 edition with the 1901 Era republication and found the following: "A check made of the changes made in the 1853 edition of Lucy Smith's History of Joseph Smith, for this publication of the story, showed no changes in the first 12 chapters. There were 370 changes in the remaining 43 chapters, and 31 in appendix. Total changes 401. 247 of the changes were in the last 16 chapters."<sup>40</sup> Another study by Jerald and Sandra Tanner compared the original 1853 edition with the edition printed in 1954. They found that "436 words have been added, 1,379 words have been deleted and 220 words have been changed. This is a total of 2,035 words added, deleted or changed without any indication. In addition, 736 words have been deleted with the omissions properly indicated."<sup>41</sup>

Two other contributions of George A. Smith to the history of

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<sup>40</sup>His study is found in Utah Historical Society copy of Improvement Era, V (November, 1901).

<sup>41</sup>Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Joseph Smith's History by His Mother (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., photomechanical reprint of the original 1853 edition), p. 4.

the Church should be mentioned. His journals and voluminous correspondence, in themselves, constitute a rather thorough chronicle of events in Utah during his lifetime and are valuable sources for researchers. His effort to bring order and organization into the Church's vast collection of historical records is another commendable achievement. There are many references in the Church Historian's Journals of cataloging, indexing, and filing activities. The writer has found four inventories of library holdings during George A. Smith's term as Historian. There may have been others. These inventories are dated April 4, 1855, April 1, 1857, July, 1858, and February 1, 1859. The thoroughness of these lists is impressive. The 1858 inventory, for instance, has twelve pages of material including journals, various types of reports, minutes, records of ordinances, newspaper scrapbooks, Nauvoo records of all kinds, and published books.<sup>42</sup>

The quality of work accomplished in the Historian's Office apparently declined for a time after George A. Smith's administration. The next three men who succeeded him were Albert Carrington, whose term of office spread from 1870 to 1874; Orson Pratt's from 1874 to 1881; and Wilford Woodruff's from 1881 to 1889. Following Pratt's administration a study was made on the "condition of the Historian's Office" by Joseph F. Smith, Francis M. Lyman, and John Henry Smith. Their report was very critical of the quality of work accomplished

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<sup>42</sup>Historian's Office Papers 1837-1915. LDS Church Historian's Office.

under Pratt. The History of the Church, they said, was no longer a history but was "composed of copied extracts from the various Church and other publications." Little had been done about collecting duplicate copies of books, papers, periodicals and documents for and against the Church; no scrapbooks of newspaper clippings had been kept; no person seemed to have an adequate idea of what the Office contained and there was a "great lack of system and classification;" there was no registry of books borrowed, loaned, and returned; there was no journal of the labors of the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles; no effort had been made to publish the History since 1856 "and the History is published up to 1844 now some 37 years since;" the building was inadequate, "all the space is taken." The committee made ten recommendations which undoubtedly improved the condition of the library under Wilford Woodruff.<sup>43</sup>

George A. Smith held the position of LDS Church Historian for sixteen years while acting in other responsible positions of leadership during the same period. The Church Historian's Library today is a vast gold mine of resources for students of Mormon and Utah history and a considerable amount of the credit for building this institution in its early days must go to George Albert Smith.

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<sup>43</sup>Letter from Joseph F. Smith, F. M. Lyman, and John Henry Smith to First Presidency and Twelve Apostles, September 27, 1881. Letter in possession of Earl Olsen, Assistant Church Historian.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE POLITICIAN

As a member of the Council of Fifty, the executive body of the political kingdom, George A. Smith was naturally interested and involved in political affairs. Having lived through the political turbulence of Nauvoo and Pottawattamie days, he had developed a good understanding of the benefits and dangers of political activity. His eyes were always open to anything that might bring political advantage to the Church and kingdom. Throughout this paper are samples of the dozens of letters he sent to Utah's territorial delegate in Washington urging some political measure for the good of Zion, and of the many bills he sent to the territorial legislature designed to improve some facet of life in the settlements. In addition to these political activities, George A. was a member of the upper house of the legislature, the Council, from 1851 to 1870; he became president of the Council during his last six years on that body; he was, with John Taylor, elected in 1856 as a delegate to represent the Mormon people in making their second attempt for statehood; and in 1869, he was elected Lieutenant Governor of the "ghost state" of Deseret.

When the Mormons first arrived in the Great Basin it was Mexican territory, but by the summer of 1848 they learned that it had been annexed by the United States. Therefore, they sought political affiliation with that government. A big question confronting them was what type of political organization would serve best? Should they

seek territorial status or statehood? And how might they incorporate some of the ideas of the political kingdom of God into their new government? Even while in Pottawattamie, George A. was concerned about the options open to the saints. He and Ezra T. Benson wrote to President Young discussing the possibility of becoming a state or territory in the event the United States won the western lands from Mexico, or of remaining independent should Mexico retain the territory.<sup>1</sup> A later letter mentioned the disadvantages of becoming a territory of the United States pointing to Oregon as an example, since the federal government usually sends incompetent officials to govern the territories.<sup>2</sup> Despite this advice, which became all too true in Utah, the Council of Fifty met on December 9, 1848, and decided to petition Washington for a territorial government with the provision that they would be allowed to select their own officers. At the same meeting, officers for the new government were nominated, the name "Deseret" selected, and a committee appointed to draft a petition.<sup>3</sup> In the spring, Dr. John Bernhisel was sent east bearing the petition. It soon became apparent that statehood would give the Mormons more autonomy and therefore Almon Babbitt was sent to Washington to change the request. The slavery controversy delayed any action on the Mormon

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<sup>1</sup>Letter of George A. Smith and E. T. Benson to Brigham Young, *Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, June 28, 1848; hereafter cited as *Journal History*.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, October 10, 1848.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Glass Cleland and Juanita Brooks (eds.), *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1848-1876* (2 vols., San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1955), I, 80-82.

petition until 1850 when they were granted territorial status as part of the omnibus Compromise of 1850.

The Council of Fifty would not wait for the dilatory tactics of the federal government; they went ahead and established the State of Deseret in order, according to Klaus Hansen, "to realize as many of the ideals of the political kingdom of God as possible before affiliation with the United States."<sup>4</sup> Hyrum Andrus has shown that the Council of Fifty "incorporated itself into the provincial legislature of the State of Deseret" in December of 1848, several months before the formal organization of the State of Deseret in the spring of 1849.<sup>5</sup> It was in March that the Council of Fifty brought the provisional state into existence "until the Congress of the United States shall otherwise provide by law." Although the full program of the kingdom of God was not put into effect under the guise of the State of Deseret, it is nevertheless, clear that the Council of Fifty was still in charge. All eleven of the principle officers of Deseret were Council of Fifty members.<sup>6</sup> Later, when Utah's first territorial government was established, the Mormon leaders were disappointed to learn that the chief justice, one of two associate justices, and the territorial secretary were to be gentiles. Brigham Young, the new governor of the territory, set the machinery of government in motion,

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<sup>4</sup>Klaus J. Hansen, Quest for Empire (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), p. 127.

<sup>5</sup>Hyrum L. Andrus, Joseph Smith and World Government (Salt Lake City: The Deseret Book Company, 1958), p. 91.

<sup>6</sup>James R. Clark, "The Kingdom of God, the Council of Fifty and the State of Deseret," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXVI (April, 1958), p. 144.

conducted a census, and had the legislature elected before these officials arrived. The gentile officers, incensed at these and other irregularities, returned east after a brief stay spreading stories of Mormon disloyalty, priesthood domination, and immorality. This was not the end of such troubles. Many subsequent federal appointees fought Mormon political hegemony with all their might and filled the eastern newspapers with stories of Mormon "tyranny" and immorality. This conflict was a major cause for an army being sent to Utah in 1857, to unseat Governor Young and another army in 1860 to insure Mormon loyalty during the Civil War. The Saints regarded this, with good reason, as government despotism of the worst kind.

In 1854, when President Franklin K. Pierce appointed Col. E. J. Steptoe to become Utah's new territorial governor, Mormon self-government was threatened. George A. Smith's reaction to this news was typical of many Utahns. Speaking to an Independence Day crowd he said:

The United States has greatly increased in power, majesty and dominion having many states and territories, but injustice is being done when it says to these territories, you may send a delegate here, but you shall have no voice in the general government, and if you make any laws that do not suit us we will repeal them and we will send you a governor who will veto everything you do that we do not agree with.<sup>7</sup>

Steptoe and his troops had been on their way to California with instructions to build a military road through Utah and help capture the murderers of Captain Gunnison's surveying party on their way. Wintering in Utah, Steptoe became friends with the Mormons and even sided

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<sup>7</sup>Quoted in Zora Smith Jarvis, Ancestry, Biography, and Family of George A. Smith (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1962), pp. 181-82.

with their restrictive measures to keep his rowdy soldiers in check. Steptoe, apparently, did not want the gubernatorial position and was finally persuaded by Mormon leaders that Brigham Young should be retained. George A. became good friends with Steptoe and had many conversations with the Colonel, one of which was described by him as "the happiest chat he had had in a long time." While in Fillmore on business on November of 1854, Steptoe with two other influential non-Mormons, Judge Kinney and Attorney General Colman, paid George A. a compliment by suggesting "that if the people would send Geo. A. Smith to Congress, he would do more in one year than Dr. Bernhisel would do in ten."<sup>8</sup> George A. used his influence in urging Governor Young's reappointment. He wrote to delegate Bernhisel saying he had "whispered to Judge Stiles the other day a suggestion that the Judges ought to get up a petition to President Pierce to reappoint Governor Young in this territory. He told me he had named it to Chief Justice Kinney, who seemed much pleased, and said he would name it to Col. Steptoe, and get up a Petition before the mail left."<sup>9</sup> On December 30, 1854, George A. and E. T. Benson had a long talk with Steptoe and Judge Kinney "on the policy of reappointing Pres. Brigham Young governor." Kinney was in favor of giving the people the man they wanted whereas Steptoe thought it would be better to appoint someone other than the head of the Church on the grounds that it would go further in remov-

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<sup>8</sup>Journal History, November 3, 1854.

<sup>9</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Dr. John Bernhisel, December 22, 1854. Church Historian's Office Letter Book 1854-61.



ing political prejudice against the Mormons in Washington.<sup>10</sup> Step-  
toe became convinced, however, through the urging of others, that  
Brigham Young was the man for the job and signed one of the petitions  
on the subject that George A. was preparing to send to the Chief  
Executive. The petition asserted that Brigham Young possessed the  
full confidence of the people of the territory, that he supported  
the constitution, that his acts as governor and superintendent of  
Indian Affairs had been beyond reproach, and that his ability and  
integrity were unquestioned. As a result of these and other efforts  
Brigham Young won his appointment to another term of office.

Even after Governor Young was replaced in 1858 by Alfred Cum-  
ming and the United States Army, he still continued to be the most  
influential man in Utah politics. The new governor later admitted to  
George A. that though he was governor of the territory, Brigham Young  
was governor of the people.<sup>11</sup> Political power was maintained through  
the Council of Fifty and its creature the "ghost" State of Deseret.  
According to James R. Clark, the State of Deseret "continued to func-  
tion for at least twenty years after its formal dissolution in 1851."  
"In reality," writes Clark, "the federally established territorial  
government of Utah was de jure government; the State of Deseret was  
the de facto government; and the Council of Fifty or General Council  
Council was the policy-making body for the civil government of Utah

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<sup>10</sup>Journal History, December 30, 1854.

<sup>11</sup>Historian's Office Journal no. 22, January 28, 1864, LDS  
Church Historian's Office.

from 1848 to 1870, if not later."<sup>12</sup> Through an effective system, the Council of Fifty was able to select the candidates it wanted, control elections, control key legislative committees, control the judiciary through the powerful probate courts, as well as the territorial militia. Clark states that four, possibly five, out of the six territorial delegates to Congress were members of the Council of Fifty; and that four of the eight territorial superintendents of public schools were members.<sup>13</sup> Elections were controlled by Church leaders selecting the candidates (usually a single slate of nominees) and by a method which made it easy to identify the voter with his ballot. The Organic Act of the territory provided that voting be given viva voce. In 1853 the legislature passed "An Act Regulating Elections" which required the voter to give his ballot to the election judge who would number and deposit it in a box. The clerk would then write the name of the voter and the number of his vote in a book that was preserved in the county clerk's office, thus making it easy to ascertain how every person voted. George A. wrote that Brigham Young "has always been consulted in relation to the election of all the principal and important offices."<sup>14</sup> George A. and other Council of Fifty members were useful in seeing that there was political uniformity in all the settlements. Exemplary of his duties was the work performed prior to

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<sup>12</sup>Clark, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>14</sup>Historian's Office Journal no. 22, January 28, 1864.

the territorial elections of 1855. In mid-July, George A. visited President Young who suggested the names of "2 men for the Legislative Council for Utah and Juab Counties, also 3 for Representatives." George A. visited these counties and "presented the names suggested by the Pres. for the Legislature and they were unanimously accepted."<sup>15</sup> He journeyed through all the towns in Utah County speaking to the local leaders and being assured that "They were unanimously of the opinion there would be no division at the poll." On his return trip he stopped at Pleasant Grove and "saw Bishop Walker and several of the principal citizens who assured me there would be no opposition at the election."<sup>16</sup> To non-Mormons, of course, all this political manipulating looked like a Church-dominated state. To the Mormons, it was only one more example of their marvelous unity--had not the Lord revealed, "If ye are not one, ye are not mine?" A Millennial Star article in 1867 praised this practice of Church leaders interfering in the political process:

At mass meetings held in all the principal precincts, delegates are chosen by unanimous vote to meet in convention and select the names of individuals to fill various vacant offices. In case of any dispute or dubiety on the part of the convention, the Prophet of God, who stands at the head of the Church decides. He nominates, the convention endorses, and the people accept.<sup>17</sup>

There were sometimes chastisements for those who did not want to

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<sup>15</sup>Historian's Office Journal 1855-56, July 18, 20, 1855.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., July 23, 24, 25, 1855.

<sup>17</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], November 23, 1867.

conform. Consider President Young's words to the Provo School of the Prophets:

Some of the brethren think that the Priesthood should not govern us in political affairs but the priesthood is supreme; even in financial affairs. . . . Some would say as with the Democrats [in the] east, each party wanting their man but we must quit that: I hope we may never hear of an opposition in this city or county again: our Representatives are good working men--yet some would prefer others; but we will learn that the Priesthood must dictate.<sup>18</sup>

For nineteen years, George A. Smith served in the upper house of the territorial legislature as a councilor from Iron County. A perusal of the legislative journals during this period reveals him a very active and capable participant. His colleagues honored him during his last six years on the Council by electing him the president of that body. The following chart shows the legislative committees on which he served during his years in office. (See page 165).

A few of George A. Smith's contributions as a legislator should be mentioned. He was very forward-looking as to the benefits Utah would derive from railroads. In 1849, and again in 1853, he spearheaded the writing of memorials to congress asking for the construction of an overland railroad. Branch lines would be needed; and as early as 1851, soon after his arrival in Iron County, George A. petitioned the Assembly for a railroad stretching from Salt Lake City to San Diego. In 1859 he spent a great deal of time as chairman of the Code Commission whose responsibility was to make a thorough revision of the judiciary laws of the territory. The original act

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<sup>18</sup>Minutes of the Provo School of the Prophets, July 20, 1868, Utah State Historical Society Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

George A. Smith served on the following committees during his years on the Council:

Year	Roads	Bridges & Ferries	Canyons	Elections	Judiciary	Education	Militia	Library	Agriculture, Trade & Manufacture	Appropriations & Expenditure	Counties	Indian Affairs	Petitions and Memorials
1851-52			X	X	X	X	X						
1852-53			X	X	X	X	X		X				
1853-54			X	X	X	X			X		X	X	
1854-55			X	X	X	X			X		X	X	
1855-56			X	X			X						
1856-57			X	X	X			X					X
1857-58			X	X	X			X					X
1858-59				X	X			X					X
1859-60				X	X			X					X
1860-61				X	X			X					X
1861-62		X		X	X								X
1862-63		X		X	X								X

1864-1870 - George A. Smith served as President of the Council.

creating the Code Commission said their duty was to

arrange, adjust, and form a code of practice for the courts of Law and Chancery, and the Probate Courts, and Justices of the Peace; to arrange, adjust, and form a criminal code: a law regulating dower, descent, and distribution: a law regulating the sale, or incumbrance of real estate; and a law for the settlement of estates of deceased persons; and such other laws of a general nature as from time to time may be necessary or proper.<sup>19</sup>

A letter of John Lyman Smith states that his brother was spending many hours on a special committee appointed to "revise the laws of this Territory and get up a code suitable for us in our isolated situation." He said to "step into their room and see the piles of Statutes, digests, etc., would make one think that it was no small job that had been placed upon their shoulders."<sup>20</sup> Owing to his capable performance on this project, George A. was appointed, with five others, in 1867 to "draft a Military Code of laws and regulations for the government of the militia of Utah."<sup>21</sup> Correspondence between George A. and Utah's territorial delegate in Washington was frequent. Two of his strong concerns were the inadequate mail service in the territory and the gradual reduction of Utah's territorial boundaries. In 1859, when Congress was considering the admission of the Nevada Territory, George A. wrote to delegate Bernhisel calling it an "outrage" that the proposed eastern boundary of the new territory would include some

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<sup>19</sup>Acts, Resolutions, and Memorials . . . of the Territory of Utah (Great Salt Lake City, 1852), p. 173.

<sup>20</sup>Letter of George A. Smith and John Lyman Smith to "Uncle Richard," June 2, 1859. Church Historian's Office Letter Book 1859-69.

<sup>21</sup>Journal History, January 18, 1867.

of the Mormon settlements in the south.<sup>22</sup>

Before finally becoming a state in 1896, Utah had a long, frustrating history in its efforts of persuade congress that it deserved statehood. Some contend that the major obstacle preventing congressional approval on this measure was the irritating existence of the Council of Fifty. There were a total of seven attempts--one in 1849, another in 1856, then 1862, 1872, 1882, 1887, and 1895. George A. Smith was in Iowa when the first constitutional convention was convened, played a major role in the next two, was in Europe during the 1872 convention, and was deceased when the last three were held. Governor Young, in his address to the legislature in 1855, requested that a second try be made. A territorial convention was called and meetings held in the communities to select delegates. George A. was in Cove Fort, Beaver County, where he was the featured speaker at their meeting. Utah, he declared, was eminently worthy to become a state. Her population was sufficient, her citizens loyal, her colonizing accomplishments unsurpassed, and her benevolent treatment of the Indians laudatory.<sup>23</sup> Great Salt Lake City was dressed in festive array as the delegates met on March 17, 1856, to prepare a constitution and memorial and to choose delegates. George A. Smith and John Taylor were unanimously approved by the people to be their representatives in laying the matter before congress. "Could anyone have supposed," sermonized George A. in April Conference, "that, when the proclamation of the

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<sup>22</sup>Manuscript History of Brigham Young, January 7, 1859, p. 138. LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>23</sup>Deseret News [Salt Lake City, Utah], March 12, 1856.

gospel was commenced twenty-six years ago, the people who would receive that testimony would be knocking for admittance into the national confederacy as an independent state?"<sup>24</sup>

George A. left his families in a rather impoverished condition due to the near-famine of 1855-56, but they were used to fending for themselves. When asked what he would say in Washington about their scarcity of food, George A. quipped, "I gave them to understand that I should tell them that I was about the only person in the territory that had plenty to eat, and that the people had thought best to send me away, for fear I would get too lean."<sup>25</sup> Their journey had its trials. Four hard storms hit them before they crossed the high country. The worst on May 3rd, was described by George A. as a "dreadful storm" that "continued with unabated fury for fifty-six hours." They were forced to cover their animals with blankets to keep them from freezing. East of Fort Laramie the weather turned "extremely hot" and George A., having ridden for a week on horseback, boasted that that was "a considerable feat for a man weighing two hundred and fifty pounds." Writing to President Young enroute, George A. expressed his optimism that there should be no opposition to their petition this time.

During his stay in St. Louis he purchased some new clothes; since he was nearly six feet tall and two hundred and fifty pounds this presented some difficulty. In a letter to Brigham Young he

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<sup>24</sup>Journal History, April 6, 1856.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.



observed that "the inhabitants of St. Louis are such a race of Lilliputians, that it is impossible for me to get a shirt or shoes, or pants, or coats or any other article of clothing usually wore [sic] by men, large enough to fit me." He said their brains were so used to working for "the diminutive race that my proportions quite out stretch their imaginations."<sup>26</sup>

After arriving in Washington on the 21st of June, George A. went immediately to Bernhisel's apartment only to hear discouraging news. Bernhisel informed him that the "whole Republican party is down upon us, and they are a majority, and there is no probable chance for our admission this Congress. It has been the most bitter, fighting Congress that has met since he was a member."<sup>27</sup> The Republican Party in the presidential campaign of 1856 made polygamy a national political issue by inserting a plank in their platform advocating the abolishment of slavery and polygamy, "the twin relics of barbarism." Stephen A. Douglas, a candidate for the presidency at the Democratic Convention, was forced to take a stand against the unpopular Mormons although he had formerly befriended them. In one of campaign speeches "the little giant" referred to them as a "loathsome ulcer of the body politic" and suggested that harsh measures be used against them. James Buchanan got the nomination and was elected president.

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<sup>26</sup> Letter of George A. Smith to Brigham Young, June 17, 1856. George A. Smith Papers LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., June 21, 1856.

It was under his administration that propaganda against the saints became so vehement that an army was sent to Utah to put down the "rebellion."

After a week in the capitol, George A. knew the situation was as Bernhisel had described it. To Brigham Young he wrote that the Republicans would block the admission of any state that did not prohibit slavery and polygamy. Presenting the petition then could hinder Utah's chances for statehood in the years to come. It was his advice to wait until after the presidential election and in the event Buchanan and the Democrats became a majority the saints "might stand a better chance."<sup>28</sup> Brigham Young wrote him on the same day saying some eastern papers had found fault with the Utah constitution and that George A. was to expect "many like quibbles and unfounded objections." But, he continued, "with the wisdom possessed by yourself and colleagues, guided by faith and the Spirit of the Lord, I have no doubt but that you will know when to hold fast and when to let go."<sup>29</sup>

Dr. Bernhisel advised George A. not to talk to any congressmen until they had decided whether or not to submit the petition. George A. went to New York and counseled with Orson Pratt, E. T. Benson, and John Taylor who felt that the memorial should be presented to congress. He next went to Philadelphia to consult with Col. Thomas Kane but the latter was gone. On returning to Washington he was greeted with the

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., June 30, 1856.

<sup>29</sup>Letter of Brigham Young to George A. Smith, June 30, 1856. George A. Smith Papers.

news that prejudice against the saints was on the increase. The previous week, said Bernhisel, the committee on territories had reported a bill to suppress polygamy in Utah. George A. replied, "I look at that as one of the most favorable omens for that will be debated and decided before we shall present our constitution."<sup>30</sup> A week later George A.'s optimism was ebbing away as he wrote, "Our prospects for admission into the Union are certainly dark at present." John Taylor was ill and had not arrived and Bernhisel was overly cautious. George A. was, nevertheless, full of praise for the efforts of his colleagues. The Doctor, he said, had been following "the Departments and Committees until he is pretty thoroughly used up;" Almon Babbitt had "exercised an influence in favor of Utah whenever he could;" and "Marshal Heywood has been dogging the Departments with all the vengeance in his power and so far to very little effect." It is a "lonesome place for a Mormon to live in," he added, "I don't know as any man can endure it but the Doctor."<sup>31</sup>

Contrary to Dr. Bernhisel's advice, George A. had spoken to "quite a number" of congressmen about Utah's objectives. He talked to Stephen A. Douglas who said the Senate was so hostile that if applications were made now they would likely pass a bill dismembering Utah into four parts and attaching the parts to California, Oregon, Nebraska,

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<sup>30</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Brigham Young, June 30, 1856. George A. Smith Papers. This anti-polygamy bill was the Morrill Act that became law during the Lincoln administration.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., July 9, 1856.

and New Mexico. Douglas further declared that a member of the Committee on Territories had repeatedly urged him as chairman to push this proposal but so far he had stalled such a move. Douglas' advice was to burn the constitution and go home. A Congressman Cobb from Alabama was equally pessimistic saying he would have to remain in Washington a long time if he waited until Utah was admitted into the Union.<sup>32</sup> Not only was congress unfriendly to Utah but they were preoccupied with an abundance of other problems. George A. wrote the Star editor that "Congressmen's heads are so filled with President making, slavery, and anti-slavery, Kansas rows, Brooks' assault, and gambling with each other, that they can hardly get time to do anything that is calculated to benefit the country."<sup>33</sup>

John Taylor finally arrived, and together they decided to write for Brigham Young's advice. Brigham's answer offered no practical suggestions but reaffirmed their belief that whatever happened "the Lord is at the helm, and He will direct all matters aright." "Although our admission would be desirable," he wrote, "still we are in no fret about it, for we know that it will all be right. . . . "our course is onward, and not all the combined energies of earth and hell can hinder us!"<sup>34</sup>

George A. was a little embarrassed in mid-July to tell President

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], July 15, 1856.

<sup>34</sup>Quoted in Jarvis, op. cit., pp. 212-213.

Young that the Memorial had not yet been presented. He was continuing his lobbying activity as best he could, "first to gain the ear and then if possible the heart; but it looks like a slow job to convert the whole race of them."<sup>35</sup> He was losing patience with American politicians and politicking: "Speckled--Crooked--Foggy--Clouded--Bloody--Blacked--Buried in Lies and Deceit, is the present prospect of Politics throughout the Country." Though a few were favorable to Utah's admission they were afraid "to face the music." At least one Congressman, however, Sam Houston of Texas, won George A.'s respect. A story is told of one of their discussions which, if true, shows an interesting contrast between the casual friendly manner of George A. Smith and the sometimes stiff and formal Bernhisel. Apparently George A. had invited Senator Houston to his room and when the latter arrived he was sitting on the floor, his back propped against an overturned chair with a pillow on it, his shoes and collar off, reading a newspaper. When a knock at the door was heard, Dr. Bernhisel somewhat anxiously asked George if things should not be cleaned up before their guest entered. George A. replied, unconcernedly, "Tell him to come in." Bernhisel was prepared for a rather elaborate introduction but George A. extended his hand and said, "General Houston, I am George A. Smith of Utah and I want about an hour and a half of your time." Houston returned the warm greeting and both of them sat on the floor with a pillow under their heads resting against a chair. They talked in this manner while

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<sup>35</sup> Letter of George A. Smith to Brigham Young, July 16, 1856. George A. Smith Papers.

Bernhisel sat on a chair and made infrequent interruptions.<sup>36</sup>

There were times when George A. was tempted to override Bernhisel and introduce the Memorial but on one such occasion he mentioned having a dream that dissuaded him against such a course.

On the evening of August 6, 1856, George A. left Washington for New York. He stopped for refreshments and was left behind by the train, an occurrence, he said, that had never happened before. About an hour later the train wrecked smashing several cars including the one in which he would have been riding. George A. felt thankful that "a kind Providence had protected me."<sup>37</sup> After about a month in New York helping John Taylor finish his account of the martyrdom, he made his way westward to St. Louis where he spent some time with Erastus Snow. Together they traveled to Nauvoo and were saddened to see the depressed condition of the city. George A. wrote, "To look upon the delapidated ruins in Nauvoo and contrast it with its brilliant position in the days of the Prophet, it was enough to make any heart sad that was not insensible."<sup>38</sup> They visited the Prophet's widow, now married to Lewis Bidamon, and were treated coldly by her and her children. They visited the Prophet's son, Joseph, and came away convinced that he had little appreciation or understanding of his father's work. George A. believed that Emma had taught the boys "confirmed infidelity, so far as

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<sup>36</sup>Story written by George H. Crosby Jr. who heard it from a Congressman he met in Texas in 1887. George A. Smith Papers.

<sup>37</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], August 11, 1856.

<sup>38</sup>The Mormon [New York, New York], November 15, 1856.

relates to Joseph," and that they appeared to be as "ignorant of the gospel as the disciples of Buddha."<sup>39</sup>

While in St. Louis, George A. visited many of the saints "encouraging them as much as I can." He planned to return to Washington but had little hope for success. His letters reflect this attitude. In correspondence with President Young, he referred to Congressmen as "a pack of nincompoops who have not got the talent, courage, honesty, to do justice for fear of the consequences at the next election."<sup>40</sup> His beloved leader wrote back approval of his labors and sympathy at the peculiar difficulties he was facing. Before leaving St. Louis a letter from Dr. Bernhisel emphasized with "positive assurance" that there was no chance for statehood at this session of congress. George A., manifesting his usual determination to see an assignment through to the very end, returned to Washington and in leaving penned these interesting lines to President Young:

I would like it, if Dr. Bernhisel had faith to take hold of our application with spirit, just as tho' it was going right straight thro', but the universal hatred manifested by all parties toward us, prevents his seeing the shadow running the risk of a chance. I shall try and raise his spirits. . . . his want of faith in our mission, is not from a want of desire to gain such an object.<sup>41</sup>

His final stay in the capitol did not last long; it was hopeless. There was not a "member of either House who was willing to advocate our

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<sup>39</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Brigham Young, November 12, 1856. George A. Smith Papers.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., October 23, 1856.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., November 12, 1856.

admission in this Congress." Dr. Bernhisel dissuaded George A. from further agitating the question or from aiding him in obtaining the desired men for territorial appointments. Said George A., "I believe, he rather feared, that my being such an incessant talker, and talking to everybody, would operate against his obtaining the appointments he wished."<sup>42</sup> Seeing an end to his political mission, he spent two more months visiting saints in the east and speaking at meetings.

He had plenty to tell the saints at home. He summed up his mission by comparing it to "the fishermen in the days of our Savior who toiled all night and caught nothing; still it has been to me a school of experience."<sup>43</sup> He had come away with a lower opinion of the government. Their moral compromising ill-suited men of such high office in his judgment. Everyone, he said, seemed to be trying to "get their hands into Uncle Sam's pockets." They had no respect for the truth. "If a man tells the truth," he maintained, "he stands no earthly chance whatever; he has got to lie and mix so much lie with the truth that it will hide it almost entirely, or he cannot receive any credit whatever."<sup>44</sup> He informed the saints of the great prejudice that prevailed against them. The press has been "universally turned with vengeance upon the devoted heads of this people," he continued. "Nothing that is true can be printed, but to a very limited extent; whereas anything

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., March 15, 1857.

<sup>43</sup>G. D. Watt and others (reporters), Journal of Discourses (26 vols.; London: LDS Book Depot, 1854-86), IV, 331 f.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.



that is false, it matters not how false or exaggerated, it is circulated and represented to the uttermost extreme."<sup>45</sup> Though a little cynical, he had not lost his wit. Once more he entertained the saints with his jocular sermons. He commended them for making it so well through a period of scarcity, then describes some of his own "hardships." "I was a lean 243 pounds" when I got to the states, he said, but then "I fattened up considerably, and got to be quite a decent-looking 'chap.'" When I left St. Louis, I weighed 260 pounds. I thought I was going home in fine order; but, behold, and lo! all my Missouri and eastern beef I had gathered shook off on the plains, and I found myself the poor, 'lean,' meagre man you see before you." He then proceeded to fill them in on the most interesting changes that had occurred: "the rivers all run the same way they did when I was there before, and they run in about the same direction. Railroad collisions, steamboat accidents, fires, and freezing to death are just as common as before, and a little more so. And another thing I suppose you will be glad to learn--the devil is not dead."<sup>46</sup>

Several years later, in December, 1861, it was proposed in the legislature that another try be made for statehood. It was thought that the Union, engaged in Civil War, would welcome a new member. George A. Smith, Albert Carrington, and Orson Pratt were appointed members of a special committee to consider the calling of a convention and the

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., V, 11-12.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., IV, 332.

writing of a constitution. The committee reported in favor of these proposals. On the 6th of January, 3,000 citizens assembled in the tabernacle. Similar meetings were held in towns throughout the territory. George A. was one of five elected to the resolutions committee. They prepared an "Address, Preamble and Resolutions" report which was read to the assembly. It stated their reasons for deserving statehood, gave a summary of their persecutions, chastised the government for not granting them sufficient religious and political freedom and for sending corrupt officials into the territory. It asked that the people be allowed to select their own officers and that taxation without representation not be required.<sup>47</sup> The preamble and resolutions were adopted, the delegates elected, and the meeting adjourned.

The delegates met in convention June 20th to choose officers and committees. George A. chairmanned the committee commissioned to write a constitution and form a state government. The constitution and memorial were essentially revisions of the 1856 models. A few weeks following the convention George A. and other prominent legislators stumped the counties to urge citizens to vote for the State of Deseret candidates. The Deseret News reported:

Hon. George A. Smith. . . has been through Utah County delivering lectures in favor of the constitution and State government for Deseret. His lectures at Payson, Spanish Fork, Provo, Pleasant Grove, American Fork, and Lehi were well attended, the people turning out en masse, manifesting a lively interest in the politics of the speaker, and in

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<sup>47</sup>Deseret News [Salt Lake City, Utah], January 8, 1862.

the rights of the citizens of this Territory.<sup>48</sup>

At the polls nearly everyone approved the single slate of candidates and the constitution. John Bernhisel presented the memorial and constitution to the Congressional Committee on Territories who finally reported in January, 1863, that Congress was moving ahead to admit Nebraska, Colorado, and Nevada into the Union as States but Utah would not be admitted until polygamy was prohibited, plus conformity to a number of other conditions. Another effort to obtain statehood had come to an abortive end.

In 1872, George A. made another trip to Washington which was as unfruitful as his previous one. The Republican Party, for the first time, allowed delegates from the territories to attend its national convention with full powers. In response to this invitation a convention was held in Salt Lake City to choose delegates. George A., recently returned from his European tour, was elected as an alternate delegate and had his opportunity to attend when the Hon. Thomas Fitch withdrew. Forty-one days later, without the knowledge of most Utahns, a convention of anti-Mormons was held in Corrine and two more delegates chosen. When four delegates appeared in Philadelphia and it was found that Gould and Hollister, from the Corrine convention, had the endorsement of "most Federal Office-holders of the Territory," the committee on credentials decided to admit them.<sup>49</sup> George A. was averse to making a contest of their decision. He spent some time in the east visiting

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., March 5, 1862.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., January 28, 1863.

friends and took no part in politics during the campaign.<sup>50</sup>

As for George A.'s election to the office of Lieutenant Governor of the "ghost" State of Deseret,<sup>51</sup> little can be said. Not only are records scarce, but little is known of Council of Fifty activities during the seventies. Brigham Young ceased to convene the legislature of Deseret after 1870, and there was a reorganization of the Council of Fifty in 1880.<sup>52</sup> It may be, therefore, that the Council of Fifty was in a state of disorganization during George A.'s four year tenure as Lieutenant Governor and this position may have amounted to little more than a sinecure.

It is impossible for the historian to assess fully the political contributions of George A. Smith. We can consider him one of the prominent leaders on the basis of the positions he held, yet records are either lacking or unavailable that would give a detailed picture of his activities. He made no monumental achievements, yet served faithfully and capably during his many years in office. Another problem in attempting to evaluate his attainments in both political and Church leadership positions is that most policy decisions were made by several leaders working in concert, thus making it difficult to single out the work of one man. That George A. was valuable in counsel cannot

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<sup>50</sup>Article from the Boston Globe, n.d., 1872. Located in George A. Smith Papers.

<sup>51</sup>Certificate of George A. Smith's election to the office of Lieutenant Governor of the State of Deseret, February 15, 1870. Located in George A. Smith Papers.

<sup>52</sup>Hansen, op. cit., pp. 169, 173.

be gainsaid. He was an understanding, affable man, was endowed with an excellent speaking ability, and kept informed of current political issues. Few could match his understanding and concern for the needs of the Mormon settlements.

## CHAPTER X

### CRISIS IN ZION: THE UTAH WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

The Mormons were plagued with a number of incompetent and prejudiced governmental appointees throughout the territorial period. The "runaway judges" of 1851 set a pattern by providing the eastern papers with exaggerated tales of Mormon evils, thus creating in the nation's mind a negative image of Mormon society that was to be amplified by later reports. The third set of appointees included Associate Justices George P. Stiles and W. W. Drummond. Their "exposés" were of such consequence that historians have considered them to be one of the chief factors precipitating the so-called "Utah War." Stiles had angered some Mormon lawyers who retaliated by breaking into his office and burning papers and books. He spread the false rumor that the Territorial Court records had been destroyed. Drummond, a dissolute man himself, sent a letter of resignation to the U. S. Attorney General, heavy-laden with venomous charges. The letter repeated all the hearsay accusations that had been circulating about the Mormons for years--that Brigham Young was a dictator, that there existed a secret oath-bound organization sworn to obey his every command, that many murders had been committed by these desperados acting for the Mormon hierarchy, that the federal officers of the Territory were abused and insulted, and that Brigham Young handled governmental

affairs in a high-handed and illegal way.<sup>1</sup>

While in the East, George A. Smith had felt the prejudice of these rumors. An April, 1857, letter of President Young said: "All Hell appears to be wide awake against us, the press is doing its wickedness. Drummond is one of the most popular men of the nation at present. . . . Utah troubles the Devils, even Mr. Buchanan don't know what to do."<sup>2</sup> After returning, George A. told the saints that "A great portion of the people have come to the conclusion . . . that we are a very desperate set of fellows out here," and that any extravagant rumor against them was readily believed.<sup>3</sup>

George A. was with the saints in Big Cottonwood Canyon celebrating the tenth anniversary of the pioneer entrance into Great Salt Lake Valley when word came that an army and new governor were on their way to Utah. Not knowing the precise intentions of the troops, many Mormons were confused and shocked. The worst was assumed and Brigham Young vowed, "With the help of God, they shall not come here!"<sup>4</sup> Defense preparations were begun, a stern message of protest was sent to President Buchanan, outlying settlements were called to return, preservation of food was urged, and a "corps of observation" was sent out to watch the movements of the army.

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<sup>1</sup>William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen (eds.), Among the Mormons (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), pp. 293-96.

<sup>2</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Brigham Young, April 15, 1857. George A. Smith's Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>3</sup>Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, May 31, 1857; hereafter cited as Journal History.

<sup>4</sup>Juanita Brooks, John Doyle Lee: Zealot, Pioneer Builder, Scapegoat (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1962), p. 201.

George A. Smith joined the mobilization exercises. His sermons were understandably angry, like those of other leaders. Speaking in the tabernacle on August 2, he declared:

Under these circumstances, as big a coward as I am, I would say what I pleased; and for one thing I would say that every man that had anything to do with such a filthy, unconstitutional affair was a damned scoundrel. . . . If I had the command of thunder and lightning, I would never let one of the damned scoundrels get here alive.

I have heretofore said but very little about the Gentiles; but I have heard all that Drummond has said, and I have read all his lying, infamous letters; and although I have said but little, I think a heap. You must know that I love my friends, and God Almighty knows that I do hate my enemies. There have been men, and women, and children enough who have died through the oppression and tyranny of our enemies to damn any nation under heaven; and now a nation of 25,000,000 of people must exercise its wealth in violation of its own principles and the rights guaranteed by the blood of their fathers.<sup>5</sup>

To understand sermons such as this, one must attempt to imagine the passionate indignation that filled the hearts of the saints. Their memories were awakened to the dark days of the Missouri and Illinois persecutions--scenes of suffering, burning, mob-militias, and indifferent civil authorities. Appearing currently in the Deseret News was George A.'s history of the martyrdom of Joseph Smith. He and others were again reminded of those frightening times. Now a hostile force was on its way to Utah. Not knowing the army's objectives, the saints readily believed the threatening stories brought back by their spies, saying they had overheard soldiers boast of their plan to plunder

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<sup>5</sup>G. D. Watt and others (reporters), Journal of Discourses (26 vols.; London: LDS Book Depot, 1854-86), V, 110; hereafter cited as J.D.



the Mormon settlements and ravish their women.<sup>6</sup> They learned that many in the East were accepting the lurid tales circulated by Drummond and Stiles. Adding to their agitated emotional state was a large-scale religious revival then taking place known as the "Mormon Reformation." Wilford Woodruff recorded that he had never heard such strong sermons. Threats of blood atonement issued from the pulpit, plural marriage was promoted, and Church members everywhere were re-baptized for the renewal of their covenants. Men like William Dame, a prominent ecclesiastical leader from Parowan and participant in the Mountain Meadow Massacre, returned home from October conference in 1856 preaching the "reformation" with great vigor. "The time we have prayed for so long has come," he told his flock in Parowan. "I testify that the line is drawn. . . . Some that have sinned grevous sins are offering their lives at the feet of the prophets as an expiation of them." Brother Heber C. Kimball, he continued, told the police "to guard the flock from the wolves; if they can't do it Bishops you can. If the Bishop finds a man meddling with another man's wife--if he finds me meddling with another man's wife; Bishop shed my blood; if you won't I will require my blood at your hands. This is a sample for all in Parowan."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), IV, 257-59.

<sup>7</sup>Parowan Historical Record, 1856-59, October 19, 1856, LDS Church Historian's Office, pp. 20-21.

In light of these factors, Mormon militancy seems not to have been an extreme reaction. War was threatening! Mormons were acting to defend their homes and families from a perennial enemy.

Two days after his August 2, 1857, tabernacle sermon quoted above, George A. began a journey to Iron County with instructions to deliver "general orders" to the military officers along the way. He also carried a letter from President Young to Indian leader, Jacob Hamblin, outlining a plan to secure the allegiance of the Indians in the event of war. George A.'s orders came from Nauvoo Legion headquarters and were designed to prepare the communities to resist a possible invasion of Johnston's army. He was welcomed in all the villages; in Parowan he was "immediately surrounded by his numerous friends, all anxious to welcome him home again." Considerable excitement prevailed; entering Parowan he noticed the Iron County regiment was drilling. Describing his sermon, George A. said, "I never had greater liberty of speech to proclaim to the people my feelings and views; and in spite of all I could do, I found myself preaching a military discourse."<sup>8</sup> He next went to Harmony with Bishop William Dame who was scheduled to speak on military matters and he on religious, but said George A., "I must say that my discourse partook of the military more than the religious. But it seemed that I was perfectly running over with it, and hence I had to say something about it."<sup>9</sup> Paragonah, Cedar, and other hamlets were visited and "every place felt the same

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<sup>8</sup>J.D., V, 221 ff.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 222.

spirit." Feelings were at such a high pitch that he said, "I am perfectly aware that all the settlements I visited in the south, Fillmore included, one single sentence is enough to put every man in motion."<sup>10</sup> Some relished the prospect of returning vengeance for the cruelties they had previously suffered in the states. Many, George A. declared, were like an old man in Provo who had been carrying some lead in his body ever since the massacre at Haun's Mill and wanted to "pay it back with usury."<sup>11</sup> A rumor was circulating to the effect that 600 army dragoons were advancing through the mountains to attack the southern towns. George A. asked Major Isaac Haight if he would await instructions in case of trouble and was told the local battalion would not wait but would "use them up before they could get down through the kanyons."

Unknown to George A. Smith, a party of Arkansas and Missouri emigrants, known as the Fancher train, were three weeks behind him on the road leading through southern Utah. Many travelers had passed through Utah that summer and fall without encountering trouble, but fate held a tragic outcome for the Fancher group. On September 11, 1857, the entire company, save a few young children, were massacred by whites and Indians at Mountain Meadows. A group of ruffians called the "Missouri Wildcats" accompanied the Fancher company. They added fuel to the already turbulent feelings of the saints and Indians by various hostile acts and threats. They reportedly bragged of participating in the Missouri and Illinois persecutions of the Mormons,

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 223.

one supposedly claimed to have the gun that killed Joseph Smith; they threatened to help the army destroy the saints, and they poisoned a water hole which subsequently led to the death of several cattle, a few Indians, and at least one white man. Some uncertainty persists concerning the truthfulness of these and similar details. Most of these stories were related at the Lee trials of the 1870's by whites who may have been trying to justify their actions by shifting more blame to the emigrants. Assuming that there may have been some exaggerations, the fact remains that members of the Fancher company did antagonize the saints, and among the evidence attesting to this are entries from two non-Mormon journals of the time.<sup>12</sup> On his return trip, George A. reported that his company camped (the night of August 25th) near Beaver and within sight of the fated Fancher party. This report, made a year or so after the massacre, specifies that the Fancher captain visited them, asking if there was any Indian danger. George A. replied that there should be none if they had done nothing to antagonize them. The captain assured him they had not. The following morning the captain visited again and mentioned an ox had died during the night and was curious to know if the Indians would eat it. George A. said they had a habit of eating dead cattle. As they were breaking camp they noticed the captain standing over the dead ox with a bottle in his hand. George A. said he learned later that the animal had been poisoned and ten Indians had died from eating the beef. He wrote that this was, in all probability, the cause of the general

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<sup>12</sup>See Juanita Brooks, John Doyle Lee, pp. 203-04.

Indian rally that led to the massacre.<sup>13</sup>

Horrible as the massacre at Mountain Meadows was, the Mormons should not be yoked with the full blame. They were victims of a situation caused by others. The emotional stress of the time, the belligerency of the "Missouri Wildcats," the pressure of enraged Indians who insisted that their white brothers help them get revenge, were factors that led them to commit a deed that would normally have been abhorrent to their natures.

George A. Smith's fiery sermons have been cited as an important factor in fanning the flames of emotion that led to the massacre. Juanita Brooks, author of a book on the subject, claims that the "fatal relationship" between George A.'s visit and the massacre which followed can "hardly be overemphasized."<sup>14</sup> It is true that his sermons were inflammatory, but one could scarcely expect any different attitude under the circumstances. In an August 9th sermon to the Parowan saints he said:

They [Johnston's army] intend to hang about 300 of the most obnoxious Mormons; Brigham to be hung any how, no trial necessary for him or the principal leaders. . . . They expect that one half the women will leave their husbands and cut their throats, and that one half of the men will join them; they hope thus to split us in two and have an easy victory over Mormonism and make an end to it. . . . They are making great calculations for 'booty and beauty'. . . . If there are any who are afraid, I wish them to go now, go like gentlemen, all who are not willing to die for their religion. Take care of your provisions for we will need them. If the troops come among us, and we have to flee into the mountains, we will haunt them as long as they live, unless they live longer than we do.

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<sup>13</sup>George A. Smith's Report of the Mountain Meadows Massacre to Brigham Young. George A. Smith Papers, n.d.

<sup>14</sup>Juanita Brooks, Mountain Meadows Massacre (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1950), p. 23.

Will we sell them grain and forage? I say damn the man who feeds them; I say damn the man who sympathizes with them.<sup>15</sup>

Two weeks later he addressed the same audience saying, "They fear our union; that is why they seek to destroy us. They think if they do not exterminate us now, when we are weak, it will be still harder to do after a while . . . . They have lived in the last home of mine," he protested. "We must prepare for the worst and hope for the best; fix up all your wagons; get good strong comfortable clothing prepared; and learn to cache grain in the mountains."<sup>16</sup>

It may be that George A. contributed to the already tense atmosphere, but his motive was only to prepare his people to face the enemy; he had no idea that such emotion would lead to a massacre of emigrants. In all probability, he knew nothing of the Fancher company until he saw them on his return trip to Salt Lake. Consequently, any effect George A.'s sermons may have had in causing the massacre was fortuitous. Brooks says that while George A. did not advocate the use of violence, he did "let them feel that he admired their spirit and would not condemn them if they found it necessary to take matters into their own hands."<sup>17</sup> Even if this statement were true, and that appears questionable since her chief source seems to be John D. Lee's unreliable Confessions, the question should be asked to what circumstances did George A. refer? Surely not any action like the Mountain

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<sup>15</sup>Parowan Historical Record, 1856-59, August 9, 1857, pp. 22-23.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., August 23, 1857, pp. 24-25.

<sup>17</sup>Brooks, Mountain Meadows Massacre, p. 27.

Meadows Massacre!<sup>18</sup>

Another problem associated with the massacre calls for closer examination, namely the charge that in the years following the massacre, President Young and George A. deliberately suppressed the facts of the tragedy and delayed taking action against the guilty in order to protect the Church from disgrace and further unpopularity.

There is some uncertainty as to when President Young and George A. Smith, and other Church leaders learned that white men were involved in the carnage at Mountain Meadows. The Mormons who took part in the killing vowed never to tell of their participation and to place full blame on the Indians. John D. Lee made a trip to Salt Lake City, September 29, 1857, and reported most of the details to Brigham

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<sup>18</sup> Lee said he traveled throughout many of the towns with George A. Smith and represents him as asking: "Suppose an emigrant train should come along through this southern country, making threats against our people and bragging of the part they took in helping kill our Prophets, what do you think the brethren would do with them? Would they be permitted to go their way or would the brethren pitch into them and give them a good drubbing?" Lee replied that he believed the brethren, being under stress from the "reformation," and fearful of the approaching army would "probably" destroy such people. "My reply," Lee continues, "pleased him very much, and he laughed heartily, and then said, 'Do you really believe the brethren would make it lively for such a train?'" Lee repeated his opinion and then said George A. mentioned having a similar talk with Isaac Haight who had expressed the same belief. [See John D. Lee, Mormonism Unveiled; or the Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Company's photomechanical reprint of 1880 edition), p. 223], hereafter cited as Confessions.

Since the above conversation contains some of the accusations made later against the Fancher Party, it is probable that Lee was putting words in George A.'s mouth to make him appear guilty. Lee's Confessions are unreliable for several reasons, among them being the fact that he was awaiting execution at the time he wrote them and was very embittered toward the leaders of the Church.

Young put the blame on the Indians.<sup>19</sup> Even if Brigham was suspicious he was too concerned about Johnston's army to do much about it then. On June 18, 1858, nine months after the massacre, Jacob Hamblin was in Salt Lake City and, according to his testimony years later at the second Lee trial, told President Young and George A. the "true" story.<sup>20</sup> President Young, said Hamblin, told him to keep quiet about the affair and "as soon as we can get a court of justice we will ferret this thing out."<sup>21</sup> Undoubtedly Brigham Young's mind was anxious concerning what use to make of this new information. Only a week before, peace became official when Church leaders accepted the pardon offered by the government's peace commissioners. The situation in the territory was still tense--martial law was still in effect, the northern settlements were abandoned, and a hostile army was still on Utah's borders. To reveal the facts of the massacre at that time could jeopardize the government's amnesty and bring on hostilities again. Since Brigham Young was no longer governor he decided to convey this information to his replacement, Alfred Cumming. This was done in late June, after

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<sup>19</sup>In Lee's Confessions, op. cit., p. 252, he reports having told Brigham Young the full truth about the Massacre. This is assuredly untrue and another example why his Confessions are untrustworthy. It is unlikely that Lee would violate his vow of silence so soon; it is improbable that he would have said anything to implicate himself; Wilford Woodruff was present and recorded Lee's description and mentions him blaming it solely on the Indians (see B.H. Roberts, Comprehensive History. . . , IV, 160). Juanita Brooks says Lee on that occasion blamed the massacre on the Indians (Brooks, John Doyle Lee, p. 223), and this is the later testimony of Woodruff and Aaron Farr (see Neff's History of Utah, p. 427).

<sup>20</sup>See B. H. Roberts, op. cit., IV, 166-67; Journal History, June 18, 1858; and J. Brooks, Mountain Meadows Massacre, pp. 120-21.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 166.



the army had passed through the city. George A. Smith and Jacob Hamblin were the president's emissaries on that occasion. From Hamblin's autobiography we have this account:

President Brigham Young requested Elder George A. Smith to have an interview with the new governor, and learn his views concerning the Mountain Meadows Massacre, and assure him that all possible assistance would be rendered the United States courts to have it thoroughly investigated.

Brother Smith took me with him, and introduced me as a man who was well informed regarding Indian matters in southern Utah, and would impart to him any information required that I might be in possession of. He also urged upon Governor Cumming the propriety of an investigation of this horrid affair, that, if there were any white men engaged in it, they might be justly punished for their crimes.

Governor Cumming replied that President Buchanan had issued a proclamation of amnesty and pardon to the 'Mormon' people, and he did not wish to go behind it to search out crime.

Brother Smith urged that the crime was exclusively personal in its character, and had nothing to do with the general officers of the territory, and, therefore, was a fit subject for an investigation before the United States courts.

Mr. Cumming still objected to interfering, on account of the president's proclamation.

Brother Smith replied substantially as follows: If the business had not been taken out of our hands by a change of officers in the territory, the Mountain Meadows affair is one of the first things we should have attended to when a United States court sat in southern Utah. We would see whether or not white men were concerned in the affair with the Indians.<sup>22</sup>

This account, written several years after John D. Lee's trial and execution, is puzzling. The last sentence in the quote indicates that George A. Smith still was not certain that white men took part in the massacre. Did Jacob Hamblin's version of the story make this point uncertain? Or was George A. hiding his knowledge of this fact from the new governor? Available historical documents make it

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<sup>22</sup>James A. Little (ed.), Jacob Hamblin: A Narrative of His Personal Experience As A Frontiersman, Missionary to the Indians and Explorer. . . (Salt Lake City, 1881), pp. 56-57.

impossible to answer these questions. It is significant that both President Young and George A., regardless of how much they knew of the massacre, pressed Governor Cumming to investigate the matter. The latter, however, fearing to foment new troubles during his administration, refused to take action.

The following month (July) the Church leaders decided to make their own investigation. George A. Smith, Amasa Lyman, and a few others were sent to southern Utah for that purpose. It may be that they wanted to check on the validity of Hamblin's report or wanted to learn more than he could tell them. On July 29th they visited the site of the massacre and George A. wrote a description of the grisly scene, some of the bodies having been unearthed by wolves. After speaking to several people, George A. and Lyman conducted a two-day investigation at Cedar City and a three and a half day trial at Parowan. Isaac Haight and William Dame, possibly the two leaders most responsible for the tragedy, were acquitted at the investigation, while Lee's role was still in doubt. A note from Haight's journal reads: "Thursday 12th. After patient but painful investigation for four days, most of the charges proved not true. Much good counsel and instructions were given, and some severe chastisement by Elders Smith and Lyman."<sup>23</sup> Little is known about what happened at these investigations, but it appears that George A. Smith either became convinced that those men investigated did not participate in the massacre, or he was confused

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<sup>23</sup>Quoted in Brooks, Mountain Meadows Massacre, p. 124.

over the fact of their participation, or, as some have insinuated, he was deliberately trying to cover up their guilt. He made two reports of his investigations<sup>24</sup> and since both reports blame the massacre completely on the Indians, we cannot be certain that he was telling all he knew of the event. He did mention in the second report that John D. Lee and "a few other white men" were at the scene of the massacre but he had not learned what they were doing. Juanita Brooks declares that George A.'s reports seem to be "a deliberate attempt to befog the affair and direct attention away from any possibility of Mormon implication."<sup>25</sup> Her conclusion is that George A. Smith, Brigham Young, and other Church leaders learned the truth of the disaster but would not let it be known because of their fear of what such information might do to the Church. She writes:

While the visiting authorities might reprove the leaders of the south, while they might administer severe chastisement in private, they would not turn the offenders over to the enemies of the church for judgment. Neither would they disgrace the local authorities before their followers. The group loyalty which through all the years before had meant their very existence would demand that, while they might make a report of the massacre for the church as a whole and the world at large, they should not bring into the public eye any of the participants if it could be avoided.<sup>26</sup>

The writer feels Mrs. Brooks' evidence is not sufficiently strong to prove these accusations. It is also possible that George A. believed those he investigated to be innocent. Those who gave testimony

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<sup>24</sup>See Appendices V and VI in *Ibid.*, pp. 185-90.

<sup>25</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Brigham Young, August 17, 1858, located in *Journal History*, September 11, 1857.

<sup>26</sup>Brooks, Mountain Meadows Massacre, p. 125.

at the Cedar and Parowan inquiries probably stuck by their vows to accuse the Indians of the tragedy and place no blame on any of their brethren. This being the case, George A. could have become honestly persuaded of their innocence. He may have been more prone to accept this version of the story, and it would be natural for him to disbelieve in his brethren's involvement in such a horrible crime. It therefore seems that the question of George A.'s culpability on this issue may have to be indefinitely suspended.

The following year, 1859, Judge Cradlebaugh, a bitter anti-Mormon, began his investigations of the Mountain Meadow Massacre. Even some impartial observers declare that his intention was not so much to prosecute the guilty as to implicate Brigham Young and other Church leaders with the crime. It is easy to see why Church members would withhold evidence from such a man as he. In 1870, as additional evidence made it clear that at least Lee and Haight were guilty, they were excommunicated. Lee was brought to court and later executed for his part in the massacre. It may be that Lee was a scapegoat, that insufficient effort was expended to convict the other guilty Mormons, that information that may have led to their convictions had been suppressed; but it also seems clear that many of the questions surrounding the massacre are still matters of conjecture, not fact.

George A. Smith, meanwhile, rendered important service during the "Utah War." On September 13, 1857, he spoke from the bowery telling the Salt Lake saints that those in the south were "willing at any moment to touch fire to their homes and hide themselves in the mountains and defend their country to the very last extremity." The

following day he attended a council meeting where it was decided to announce martial law throughout the territory. Governor Young's proclamation forbade the army to enter the territory, summoned the militia to readiness, and declared a state of martial law. Defensive preparations proceeded rapidly. Companies were sent to fortify the canyon passes. Other units were sent to harass the army by destroying their supplies, stampeding their cattle, and scorching the face of the land.

George A., with John Taylor, joined General Daniel H. Wells' staff which departed for Echo Canyon with several companies of troops. They were gone for a month and were busily engaged in improving fortifications, directing troops, formulating strategy, and directing the raids on the United States troops. After a brief inspection of the defense preparations in Echo Canyon, Wells' staff went ahead with lighter wagons to give directions to the troops and attend to any necessary business. They pushed on to Fort Bridger where they prepared a document for Col. Alexander of the U. S. Army, then camped about five miles up Ham's Fork. The communique contained Governor Young's orders for them to surrender all their arms or retreat to the states, otherwise, the Mormons would resist. They kept scouts ahead to watch the movements of the army and also kept in constant touch with Governor Young who assured them that "great numbers were ready at any moment when called upon."<sup>27</sup> George A. tells of a meeting

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<sup>27</sup>Journal History, September 30, 1857.

where decisions were made to burn the grass on all routes leading to the Salt Lake Valley and to send Lot Smith with troops to harass the army. When word came that the army had begun to move, Col. Robert Burton was ordered to take a position "at the head of the invading army." Fort Bridger was burned lest it become quarters for the army; "it burned very rapidly and made a great fire," wrote George A. General Wells' staff started back toward Echo Canyon inspecting defenses on their way. As they journeyed, word came every day or so of Lot Smith's successes in burning the army's supply wagons and appropriating their cattle. A message from Col. Alexander said he considered such tactics rebellion against the United States and emphasized that he was determined to carry out orders to establish a military post at or near Salt Lake City and if any blood was shed the consequences would be upon the Mormons.

By October 25th, Daniel Wells, George A., and others were back in Salt Lake City consulting with Governor Young. Wells returned to the mountains a few days later, taking Charles C. Rich in place of George A. Smith. The reason for this action is unknown, but Brigham Young is quoted as saying, "Geo. A. Smith may stop in the city this time and let Chas. C. Rich go, he is a good general and wise man, I rely a great deal upon him in the future."<sup>28</sup> George A. had undoubtedly made a contribution in the formation of Mormon defensive strategy. It could be that mountain travel was a little arduous for him and Brigham Young

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., October 29, 1857.

assigned him local duties instead.

The Mormon Nauvoo militia had done an effective job. The army was in a weakened and confused condition when Col. Johnston finally arrived to take command. He was displeased that Col. Alexander had allowed the Mormons to raid their supplies. The army began a forced march to Fort Bridger. The Mormons thinking this may be a last desperate attempt to reach the valley raised 1,300 new recruits to resist their advance, but it soon became clear that Johnston was looking for a place to establish winter quarters.

While the United States soldiers shivered through the winter at Camp Scott in the mountains, tempers cooled across the nation. Military preparations continued, however. Troops and supplies were being amassed at Fort Leavenworth to be sent as reinforcements in the spring. The Mormons continued their vigilance. George A. Smith, after the adjournment of the legislature, was sent south on a recruiting mission. The Mormon friend and humanitarian, Thomas L. Kane, traveled from the East, via Panama, to act as an unofficial negotiator in the crisis. He made no progress with the belligerent Col. Johnston but was successful in persuading Governor Cumming to accompany him to Salt Lake City without military escort. The Mormon leaders were wary as they came from Provo to Salt Lake City to meet the new Governor. George A., for instance, remarked "[the] City Corporation, Mayor, Aldermen, and some councilors went out to meet the animal, styled Gov. Cumming."<sup>29</sup> The

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<sup>29</sup>Norman F. Furniss, The Mormon Conflict 1850-1859 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1960), p. 185.

evacuation of the northern settlements was already under way as Cumming entered Salt Lake City in early April. George A. had attended all the policy meetings in early 1858 where it had been decided that, if necessary, the saints would flee to the south and burn their homes rather than fight. George A. had moved his Salt Lake families to Provo as well as the contents of the historian's office. His attitude, as expressed in a letter to TBH Stenhouse was rather typical of the stern determination of the Mormon people.

My new house is just ready to move into. Cost about \$12,000. I have sent my family away. I think my buildings will make a good fire, should Johnston advance on a sudden. I have been driven from Missouri. . . Illinois. . . , and I can go again and again, until death shall furnish me a quiet resting place, should our insane countrymen continue to trample the sacred rights of freemen.<sup>30</sup>

Feelings were strained in the first meetings with the new Governor, but by the end of April, Mormon suspicions had diminished and Cumming was convinced that he would be able to assume his office without resistance. George A. seems to have been one of the few close confidants of Brigham Young during this trying period. At the period of Cumming's arrival, for example, the Church Historian's Journal records that George A. met with President Young, Daniel Wells, and a few others almost daily.<sup>31</sup> Despite cordial feelings toward Governor Cumming, Brigham Young was apprehensive about the army and felt that their entrance into the valley might mean trouble. Cumming, therefore, returned to Camp Scott in an effort to delay the military.

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<sup>30</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to TBH Stenhouse, April 5, 1858. Manuscript History of Brigham Young, p. 307.

<sup>31</sup>See entries in Historian's Office Journal for April 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, and 17, 1858.



Meanwhile back east, the Buchanan administration had been under attack from the press and congress for having sent the army to Utah without even so much as a prior investigation. The favorable reports of Thomas L. Kane and Governor Cumming were evidence that no state of rebellion existed. What is more, "Buchanan's blunder," as it was being called, could only be maintained at enormous expense to the government when it already had problems enough from the panic of 1857 and the troubles in Kansas. In April it was decided to send two peace commissioners, L. W. Powell and Ben McCullough, with a Presidential pardon. The President's proclamation "censored the Mormons for their 'spirit of insubordination' and urged them to accept the federal officers and the nation's laws in order to earn 'a free pardon for the seditions and treasons heretofore by them committed.'"<sup>32</sup> The Mormons, while waiting for the commissioners to arrive, were going forward with the evacuation of the northern settlements and were even considering leaving the United States for good. In May, Col. Kinney mentioned to them an offer to purchase "The Mosquito Country in Central America." George A. studied the possibility at some length saying the country was composed of "thirty million acres of land at the rate of ten cents an acre." The prospect of a new home in Central America was dismissed.

The peace commissioners arrived June 7, 1858, and talks began. The Church leaders reacted angrily to the President's proclamation. George A. said it contained "47 false charges" which the commissioners were challenged to prove. They refused wanting only to know if the

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<sup>32</sup>Furniss, op. cit., p. 193.

Mormons would obey the Constitution and laws of the United States and its duly constituted officials. The Mormon leaders retorted that they had always obeyed the laws of the land and had received only abuse and persecution for so doing. How, they asked, could they accept any "pardon" if they had committed no offense? Norman Furniss states that there were too many at the meeting for real progress to be made. A private conference followed in the evening with the First Presidency and George A. Smith representing the Mormons. A solution was arrived at: The saints would accept the pardon and allow the troops to enter the valley providing they would not camp near the city. A meeting followed the next day in which it was made known that the Administration's demands had been accepted. Furniss says they "disguised their capitulation behind a flood of face-saving rhetoric."<sup>33</sup> George A. Smith was the principal speaker on this important occasion. He masterfully presented the Church's position and did it with such good humor that it must have gone far in soothing the feelings of all who attended. His sermon said in part:

We desire life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We claim the right to regulate our own institution, in our own way, subject to the constitution of the United States. These constitutional principles and privileges are dear to us above all things else. We can cheerfully lay our bones in the dust when our days are numbered; but we can never surrender our constitutional rights. We can see our wives and children turned out of doors, and driven from their homes over and over again, but we can never disgrace the blood of our ancestors by submitting tamely to be ruled by bayonets.

We are Americans! Citizens of this Great Republic! Our fathers bled for its liberties, which they have bequeathed to us, as a priceless treasure, and no tyrant shall ever wrest them from us.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

When the president of the United States refused to listen to our petitions, treating them with silent contempt and answered our applications for an investigating committee, by marching his legions into this territory, when he arrayed his bayonets to sustain the acts of corrupt officials, who had used their influence to bring destruction upon us, I was ready to throw my cowardly body between my children and their bayonets, and, I believe, it is generally understood, I am the greatest coward in the mountains (laughter) and even I was willing to say I will not bear it. (laughter). . . . .

. . . . .  
I am a man of peace, and not of war. I accept the pardon. I may have some serious objections to the form in which it is couched and to the forty-two false accusations therein. . .

I was in favor of stopping the Army last fall; we gained by that means a winter's quiet. You know a sick patient would pay a large sum of money to physicians to lengthen out a miserable existence a little while, and a man who has as many wives as I have would do a great deal to prolong a happy existence. (Commissioners laugh)

He went on to praise Governor Cumming for coming to the "settlements unescorted and alone. He showed himself brave, generous and noble by this act." Let the army walk in, he said, and the world will know that we are disposed to peace. But let them be warned, he added, "that the first man that ravishes or seduces a wife or daughter of mine, I fully intend to blow out his brains."<sup>34</sup>

Thus the peace was made. Some weeks later, George A. wrote with gratitude to Thomas L. Kane for his unselfish efforts in bringing peace to the territory. Said he, "Your sacrifice of the comforts of home, braving the dangers of sea and land, the bloody savage, the barren desert, and the frigid ice of eternal snows in mid winter, to preserve our common country from ruin, in your delicate state of health, is a self sacrifice which few but those who are acquainted

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<sup>34</sup>Journal History, June 12, 1858.

with the circumstances can fully appreciate."<sup>35</sup> These were well-deserved words of praise. George A. accompanied the commissioners to Provo where the saints were told of the news and urged to return to their homes. The army moved through a vacated city to establish camp Floyd forty miles to the southwest. The troops were peaceful but left some reasons for complaint. Their cattle damaged some crops, some fencing was torn down, and a saw mill on Bingham's Creek, partly belonging to George A., was burned. These were only the beginning of irritations with the "army of occupation."

In mid-July, George A. and Amasa Lyman took a trip to the southern settlements to investigate the Mountain Meadow Massacre and do all things necessary for a return to normalcy. Agriculture had been disrupted, and so much of what the visiting apostles said pertained to that subject. July 27, the two apostles addressed the saints in Cedar for three and a half hours on "agriculture, trade and commerce." "We recommended a policy," said George A., "calculated to make us free from Gentile bondage."<sup>36</sup> At Parowan he advised that the old field be abandoned and a new one of 640 acres be fenced in and farmed employing better methods. He felt that this proposal would net them four times more productivity than their present system. "You pollute your inheritances by poor farming," he admonished, "and we will never go to Jackson Co. till you learn to farm decently and with-

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<sup>35</sup>Church Historian's Office Letter Book 1854-61, September 11, 1858.

<sup>36</sup>Manuscript History of Brigham Young, p. 846.

out polluting your inheritances with weeds and impoverishing the soil."<sup>37</sup> The advice of the authorities was not taken at times. After their departure the ward clerk recorded a dispute over the counsel that had been given. He said each one gave their views but no one advocated those of George A. Smith.<sup>38</sup> George A. also advocated the establishment of a new cotton farm. Explorations were being made when he wrote, a month later, asking that the project be discontinued for the present.

It was probably inevitable that some trouble would develop between the army, who was living a boring existence in barren Cedar Valley, and the Mormons. George A. wrote that the most visible effect of their presence was the existence of grog shops, gambling houses, blasphemous language, fights, robberies, and murder "causing our hitherto peaceful city, in these respects, to resemble the enlightened cities of the Eastern States."<sup>39</sup> He, like other saints, often spoke sarcastically of these "enlightened" examples of gentile society that had been sent to Christianize and civilize the Mormon people. Had it not been for the discipline maintained by Col. Albert Sidney Johnston things could have been much worse. Johnston, an unfriendly man, who had strained relations with Governor Cumming and no relations with the Mormon leaders, was soldier enough to disapprove of idle troops on Salt Lake City streets. He required that a soldier before being

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<sup>37</sup>Parowan Historical Record, 1856-59, August 15, 1858, pp. 45-46.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

discharged must have employment or leave the territory.

The greatest trouble came from President Buchanan's judicial appointees--Charles Sinclair, John Cradlebaugh, and Delana Eckles. These men were determined to bring their own version of justice to Mormondom but found themselves thwarted on every side. The Probate Courts had too much jurisdiction to please them. Mormon juries were very reluctant to bring judgments against their brethren; Mormon witnesses refused to testify, and others fled to the hills to escape arrest. George A. complained to Representative Bernhisel in Washington that there existed a "clique of individuals" who met nearly every evening who, "it is generally supposed," were conniving to bring the saints into collision with the federal government.<sup>40</sup> He charged Judge Sinclair of trying to reduce the people of the territory to a condition of "colonial vassalage." Especially odious was his practice of ignoring the Probate Courts, refusing to acknowledge their criminal jurisdiction. Sinclair, he further declared, illegally extended the term of his court to gain more money and give employment to some of his lackeys. George A. deplored Judge Cradlebaugh's high-handed and independent manner of conducting the business of his office, charging him of being absent from his district for the two months he had been in the territory.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to John Bernhisel, December 25, 1858, Church Historian's Office.

<sup>41</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Asa Calkin, Journal History, December 24, 1858.

In the spring of 1859, Cradlebaugh came to Provo with determined zeal to ferret out the guilty in the Parrish and Potter murders in Springville. He claimed there was no adequate jailhouse in Provo and called the U. S. Army at Camp Floyd for troops to guard those being held for trial. The citizens of Provo arose in anger demanding that the troops be removed. Cradlebaugh only called for reinforcements. President Young sent George A. Smith and others to Provo to watch the proceedings, asking George A. to write him every day the court was in session.<sup>42</sup> Cradlebaugh's initial charge to the grand jury was not calculated to win the confidence of the local Mormons. He angrily accused them of being the "tools, the dupes, the instruments of a tyrannical church despotism." Hosea Stout stated that he blamed the Church authorities for every crime that had been committed in the district in the past three or four years.<sup>43</sup> George A. called it a "religious tirade forced down our throats by Bayonets, which are bristling all around the Seminary [the temporary court room]."<sup>7</sup> There was no court held the next day but a couple of fights broke out between the citizens and the soldiers. George A. met with the City Council that evening and advised them to "keep cool." He said that a "rather rabid resolution was passed and referred to a committee where it remains

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<sup>42</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to George Q. Cannon, Journal History, March 9, 1859.

<sup>43</sup>Juanita Brooks (ed.), On the Mormon Frontier, The Diary of Hosea Stout 1844-61 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), II, 689.

as we thought it not best to strike until the Iron is thoroughly hot."<sup>44</sup>

On March 18th the Provo Mayor was arrested and more soldiers were sent to restrain an aroused citizenry. Petitions were sent to Governor Cumming but his request that Johnston remove the troops was refused. A few days later Cradlebaugh, frustrated in his attempts to prosecute, dismissed the grand jury and freed two Indians charged of rape and two Camp Floyd prisoners in retaliation against the obstructive Mormons. He told them they deserved to be punished but since the Mormons refused to punish each other, he would not punish them. George A. Smith wrote that the Judge simply did not give the grand jury sufficient time to perform its duty. He regarded the discharge as a "design on the part of the Judge and other parties interested in keeping the army here to raise an excuse that Utah Jurors would not indict Mormons."<sup>45</sup> Provo became a "powder keg" of emotion. George A. and other leaders were doing all they could to prevent open hostilities, but said he, the soldiers were goading the local saints with threats such as their alleged intention to hang Brigham Young on the "highest tree in the Territory and use up every man that stands up for him." George A. repeated his pledge to work for peace but added that if a collision should occur no one "need be surprised."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Brigham Young, March 10, 1859. George A. Smith Papers.

<sup>45</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to TBH Stenhouse, Journal History, March 30, 1859.

<sup>46</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to George Q. Cannon, March 25, 1859. Church Historian's Office Letter Book 1854-61, p. 743.



In April the situation worsened as a rumor spread that a contingent of Johnston's army was preparing to march on Salt Lake City. General Daniel H. Wells and others felt that their enemies were trying to create a pretext for entering the city in order to massacre President Young.<sup>47</sup> The clerks in the Historian's Office hurriedly packed books and papers "in the event that Gen. Johnston should bombard the town." It was reported that men with striped pants had been seen at different points around the city, especially "just above Pres. Young's mansion, apparently looking out locations for batteries."<sup>48</sup> Brigham Young, Daniel Wells, and George A. Smith called on the worried governor. Brigham Young strongly urged him to stop the army from interfering in civil affairs. The governor feared that they might take such a command as a challenge "and in a defiant spirit they would rush over it." President Young saw things differently. "It is in your power," he remonstrated, "to put a stop to this difficulty, and if you do not do it, an action of the people will have to do it."<sup>49</sup> Cumming turned to the federal government for help in the crisis.

Meanwhile, Cradlebaugh finding his efforts blocked in Provo proceeded to southern Utah with 200 troops with the intention of prosecuting those guilty in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. In Provo he had issued twenty-five subpoenas for witnesses that could not be found,<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Historian's Office Journal, March 26, 1859.

<sup>48</sup> Historian's Office Journal no. 17, April 23, 1859.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., April 24, 1859.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., March 26, 1859.

and his success was no better in the south. According to a letter from William Dame to George A., the soldiers were venting their hatred by killing chickens, pigs, and cattle and stealing everything from shovels to skillets.<sup>51</sup>

The federal government finally intervened by repudiating the actions of Cradlebaugh and Sinclair. General Albert Sidney Johnston was ordered not to use his troops again except as a "possee comitatus in the execution of the laws" and then only by order of the territorial governor. The crisis, for the present, had passed. Many Mormons viewed the whole episode as did John Jaques, an employee of the Historian's Office. He believed that the enemies of the Church were trying to make it look like nothing could be done with the Mormons except by military force. He said their hope was that Mormon people would "be goaded on to commit some overt act, which may be colored so as to make eastern folks believe there is no salvation for the country except by exterminating the Mormons."<sup>52</sup>

Failing in their attempts to bring about "reform" in Utah, the territorial judges once more alerted the nation to the so-called crimes of Mormonism. They attributed the Mountain Meadows Massacre plus dozens of other murders to the direction of the Church hierarchy and they accused Brigham Young of operating a theocratic despotism. The Buchanan administration wanted to avoid another embarrassing confronta-

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<sup>51</sup>Journal History, May 4, 1859.

<sup>52</sup>Letter of John Jaques to Asa Calkin, May 3, 1859. Church Historian's Office Letter Book 1859-69.

tion with the Mormons and therefore held to a pacific policy. Brigham Young, disturbed by recent events, mentioned in a private meeting on May 25th that when the present excitement subsided he wanted to investigate the Mountain Meadows Massacre and other killings that Cradlebaugh had "made such a stink about."<sup>53</sup> This statement seems strange since George A. Smith and Amasa Lyman were supposed to have made a thorough investigation of the massacre the preceding year.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Johnston's Army left Utah, the last soldiers leaving by the summer of 1861. The Mormons had only a brief respite, however, from gentile interference. In 1862, the Lincoln administration sent the California Volunteers to Salt Lake City ostensibly to guard the mail and telegraph communications but also to ensure that the Mormons remain loyal to the Union. The saints wanted Col. Patrick E. Conner to locate his troops in Cedar Valley as Johnston had done but he, feeling it was too far away, camped just east of town and kept his cannon, so it was rumored, trained on Brigham Young's estate. Conner's self-appointed mission in Utah was to flood the territory with non-Mormons who would "by peaceful means and through the ballot box overwhelm the Mormons by mere force of numbers." The Mormons were not yet to live peacefully with gentiles; it took several decades more of struggle before such accommodation became a reality.

George A. Smith was one of the foremost Mormon leaders during the Utah War period. He was, it appears, involved in nearly all the high level strategy meetings; he helped the southern communities mobilize

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<sup>53</sup>Historian's Office Journal, May 25, 1859.

for war; he and John Taylor were advisors to General Wells for a time, and he played a prominent role in negotiations with the peace commissioners. It is extremely regrettable that his militancy backfired in regard to the massacre at Mountain Meadows, but one could scarcely have expected a different attitude under the circumstances. Though he might have inadvertently helped cause that tragedy and may have helped conceal some of the facts in the years that followed, historians may never find a definite answer to that problem.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE PREACHER PROMOTER

While the storms of Civil War swept the nation, the Mormons thanked God for leading them to the safety of the mountain west. George A Smith said it had been difficult to understand why the Lord had allowed them to be driven from the States, but now the war was imminent it seemed clear that God had led them to a place of refuge "while the indignation of the Almighty upon the wicked passed over."<sup>1</sup> Many saints had a tendency to view the war as just retribution for the suffering the nation inflicted upon them in Missouri and Illinois. George A. advanced this idea in a general conference sermon in April, 1861:

When the Latter-day Saints were driven from Jackson county, in 1833, Joseph Smith prophesied that if the people of the United States would not bring to justice that mob and protect the Saints, they should have mob upon mob, mob upon mob, until mob and power and mob rule should be all over the whole land, until no man's life or property should be safe. This Prophecy is being literally fulfilled. . . .<sup>2</sup>

The war was often referred to as a major apocalyptic event of the last days. In 1832, Joseph Smith had predicted a period of latter-

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<sup>1</sup>Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, March 10, 1861; hereafter cited as Journal History.

<sup>2</sup>G. D. Watt and others (reporters), Journal of Discourses (26 vols.; London: LDS Book Depot, 184), IX, 18; hereafter cited as J.D.

day warfare which would begin with an American civil war and continue to grow in magnitude "until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations" (The Doctrine and Covenants, section eighty-seven). In the emotion of the time some Church leaders hinted that these destructions were beginning and would come to a speedy consummation. Brigham Young pronounced that the Union would "got to destruction as fast as time will permit, and nothing can save it;"<sup>3</sup> and Heber C. Kimball predicted the day was "not far distant when . . . we will be ruled by those men whom God Almighty appoints."<sup>4</sup> Some non-Mormons interpreted such statements as disloyal if not treasonous to the Union cause, while others regarded them as harmless rhetoric.<sup>5</sup>

Since Lincoln was elected on an anti-slavery, anti-polygamy platform, the saints initially saw his presidency as a new threat. Though Lincoln rather successfully stuck to his policy of "let the Mormons alone," there were, nevertheless, new troubles that came from his administration. Lincoln's early territorial appointees for Utah were as unfortunate as Buchanan's had been. Governor John W. Dawson lasted only three weeks. After preaching loyalty to the Mormons and vetoing an act calling for a constitutional convention, he allegedly made some improper advances to a lady and while leaving the territory was soundly beaten for the offense. Governor Stephen S. Harding, his successor, arrived on July 7, 1862, and like Dawson commenced his

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<sup>3</sup>Deseret News [Salt Lake City], March 6, 1861.

<sup>4</sup>J.D., IX, 7.

<sup>5</sup>Gustive O. Larson, "Utah and the Civil War," Utah Historical Quarterly XXXIII (Winter, 1965), pp. 65-66.

duties on a friendly note. He soon became hostile as he listened to Mormon sermons, realized his lack of power, and associated with the local anti-Mormons. He wrote his complaints to Washington, and Lincoln referred his letters to Edwin Stanton with a note indicating his approval that troops be sent to Utah Territory.<sup>6</sup> The Mormons were still smarting from the affront made to their loyalty in the "Utah War" when another army under Colonel Patrick Connor came marching into the city in October. With the troops to support him, Harding came out in open opposition against the Mormons in his December message to the legislature. He chastised them for their disloyal sentiments toward the government and warned them to obey the recently passed anti-bigamy law. So incensed were the legislators that they refused to print the Governor's speech. George A. said "the most positive coldness existed between the Assembly and the Governor," whom he called a "wide-mouthed blatant abolitionist."<sup>7</sup> Harding soon joined with two of his justices, Charles B. Waite and Thomas J. Drake, in an attempt to reduce the power of the probate courts and give the governor full authority over the territorial militia.

By March, 1863, rumors were again flying that the gentile officials were concocting a plot on the life of President Brigham Young. These contests produced bitter feelings, even in those ordinarily dis-

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<sup>6</sup>George U. Hubbard, "Abraham Lincoln As Seen by the Mormons," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXXI (Spring, 1963), p. 101.

<sup>7</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Jesse Smith, December 23, 1862. Church Historian's Office Letter Book 1859-69.

posed to peace as was George A. Smith. Writing to Hosea Stout, he said the object of their enemies was to put Brigham Young out of the way in order to "enable his hypocritical holiness, the Executive, officially, to assume that high dignity."<sup>8</sup> In an instant the saints rushed to defend their leader; the Historian's Office, the President's Office, the Eighteenth and Twentieth Ward Seminaries, Wells' barn, and the Tithing Office yard, wrote George A., were all used as temporary barracks for those called to thwart any attempt to arrest the President.<sup>9</sup>

In April, George A. served as foreman of the grand jury that brought several accusations against the army and Governor Harding. They accused the army of polluting Red Creek and of diverting the stream for their own purposes. Governor Harding was charged with refusal to sanction the laws passed by the legislature, of insulting the legislators, and of abusing the pardoning power of his office by unjustly freeing seventy-five Morrisite prisoners.<sup>10</sup> Even more decisive action was taken when a mass meeting was called and a petition sent to President Lincoln demanding the removal of Harding. Lincoln obliged, but also removed Judge John Kinney and Secretary Fuller who, according to gentile complaints, were too friendly with the Mormons.

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<sup>8</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Hosea Stout, Journal History, March 20, 1863.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to John L. Smith, Journal History, April 15, 1863.



Kinney was promptly elected to be the territorial delegate to congress. Prior to the election President Young requested George A. to take Kinney on a tour of the settlements "that the Judge might be acquainted with our wants and be able to represent us at Washington."<sup>11</sup> Their trip took twenty-one days, and held twenty-six meetings. George A. gained a deep respect for Kinney and later wrote him in Washington expressing his hope that the new delegate's assignment would be as "interesting and pleasant" as possible. To me, he added, "it would seem like a dreary banishment."<sup>12</sup>

Governor James D. Doty, Harding's replacement, proved to be an ideal choice for carrying out Lincoln's laissez faire policy with Mormons.

Colonel Connor irritated the saints and consequently evoked his share of invective from Mormon pulpits. In January, 1864, George A. wrote George Q. Cannon that Connor had his troops scouring the country in search for gold and had published to the world that great quantities were waiting to be mined. His purpose in doing this was to "flood this country with desperadoes," but as yet they had had little success and the saints were praying that God would "continue to hide the treasures in the earth."<sup>13</sup> Since the fall of 1863, some soldiers at Fort Douglas were publishing an anti-Mormon newspaper called the Daily Union Vedette, which George referred to as "an abusive, filthy

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<sup>12</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to John Kinney, November 28, 1864. Church Historian's Office Letter Book no. 6.

<sup>13</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to George Q. Cannon, Journal History, January 29, 1864.

sheet, which is doing its best to break up the 'Mormons' and humbug mankind generally, by making them believe that the country is full of gold mines."<sup>14</sup> George A. did what he could to counter the false impressions being created by the Vedette. He wrote to Hon. John F. Kinney saying contrary to Vedette articles there had been no politically offensive remarks made in the recent conference of the Church. "The most fastidious black Republican" said he, could have listened to the whole conference "without having a nerve jostled by a sound of disloyalty."<sup>15</sup> Another letter to Kinney a few days later said the Vedette continued to "vomit up bile and lies."<sup>16</sup>

In July, General Connor, "On the pretext that the Mormons were depreciating the national currency in favor of the gold standard," appointed Captain Charles Hempstead, editor of the Vedette, head of a provost guard that stationed themselves across the street from the Tabernacle. A feeling of ill will again surged through the city. It "opened fresh," wrote George A., "the feeling of indignation which existed, but cannot be described, at the time of the murders of the Prophet and Patriarch Joseph and Hyrum Smith by treachery."<sup>17</sup> George A., John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and F. D. Richards, after a meeting with President Young, petitioned the city council and governor, asking

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<sup>14</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to John L. Smith, Journal History, March 11, 1864.

<sup>15</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to John Kinney, April 14, 1864. Church Historian's Office Letter Book no. 6.

<sup>16</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to John Kinney, April 19, 1864. Church Historian's Office Letter Book no. 6.

<sup>17</sup>Historian's Office Journal, July 12, 1864.

that the troops be removed. When this action failed, Brigham Young closed with bricks the south gate to Temple Square. Finally, Major General Irvin McDowell, leader of the Military Department of the Pacific, had to restrain Connor and have the guard removed. George A. again sought to influence Kinney in a November letter which said, "Gen. Conner has gone East. If the War Department could be approached on the blind side, or on the right side, to transfer him permanently to some other service, it might be a blessing."<sup>18</sup>

After Lincoln's assassination and the restoration of peace, animosities in Utah were set aside in a mutual atmosphere of mourning and rejoicing; and Connor brought a temporary end to the hateful Vedette. Dinners and dances were held in which Mormons and gentiles mingled together like old friends.

Though George A. Smith could not help being embroiled in the political and social conflicts that beset Utah throughout the war years, his principle work was nevertheless in another area. He spent most of his time doing the thing he did best--preaching, promoting, and building the Mormon communities. His history during the war period seems like an endless travelogue of visits to the settlements. In 1862, for example, he reported that less than half his time was spent in the Historian's Office, time spent "by no means as efficiently as formerly." The rest of the year was occupied with President Brigham Young on "all his preaching expeditions," helping with

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<sup>18</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to John Kinney, November 11, 1864. Church Historian's Office Letter Book no. 6.

the initial stages of the cotton mission, travelling and preaching to the saints in Tooele, Davis, Great Salt Lake, and Utah Counties.<sup>19</sup> He seemed to have devoted less and less time to the duties of Church Historian. In June, 1863, George A. wrote to his brother, John, on a foreign mission saying that his health was good except when applying himself to the desk of history which would cause his "old numbness of head" to return and force him "to go out of doors and not think too much."<sup>20</sup> During this period George A. furnished some documentary material to the American historian, Hubert Howe Bancroft, to be used in his notable work, the History of Utah.<sup>21</sup> For the year 1864, George A. wrote that he had spent the "entire season" traveling and preaching in all the settlements of the territory. In a two month period of that year, he preached forty sermons in the counties of Utah, Davis, Weber, and Salt Lake.<sup>22</sup> From entries in the Church Historian's Journal, the year 1865 was another busy year of travel. When one considers that George A. had to attend the sessions of the legislature, two General Conferences, spend some time providing for the needs of his families, and supervise the affairs of the Historian's Office, it would appear that the remainder of his time was spent almost entirely in these travels. February 1 to March 2 was occupied in travels to

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<sup>19</sup> Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], March 21, 1863.

<sup>20</sup> Letter of George A. Smith to John L. Smith, Journal History, June 24, 1863.

<sup>21</sup> Journal History, July 30, 1862.

<sup>22</sup> Letter of George A. Smith to John L. Smith, Journal History, March 11, 1864.

Sanpete County; March 11 was a one day trip to Bountiful; April 11 to the 24th was spent in central Utah communities; May 3 to May 11 he took a trip to the northern cities of Logan, Brigham City, Ogden, etc.; May 23 to June 13 again to Utah County; June 21 to the 27th through Utah County to Nephi with President Young's party; July 7 to early August was spent traveling through all the southern settlements with Captain Hooper; August 31 to September 29 he traveled south to St. George with President Young's company; and on November 12 he took a short trip to Provo.<sup>23</sup>

The question arises as to the value of these trips and the contribution of George A. Smith specifically. Since the LDS Church was a highly centralized organization, the members looked to its General Authorities, and especially its President and Prophet, for leadership, advice, and direction in all aspects of their lives. Mormonism was a complete way of living and therefore the Church considered all facets of life--political, religious, social, and economic--as their proper domain. In order for such leadership to function, it was imperative that Church authorities make frequent contacts with the membership and this meant, in the days before rapid communication and transportation, that General Authorities had to be constantly traveling. To somewhat reduce the necessity of travel at this time, several Apostles were given area assignments such as Orson Hyde in Sanpete County, Charles C. Rich and Ezra T. Benson in Rich County, Lorenzo Snow in Brigham City, Erastus Snow in Southern Utah, and George A. Smith,

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<sup>23</sup>Historian's Office Journal no. 23 for the year 1865.

formerly in Utah County, but no longer assigned to any specific area.

There is no question but that the frequent visits of the Church leaders had a great effect on the morale of the people. The saints, especially those hardy souls who settled in the semi-desert areas of southern Utah, were certainly in need of regular encouragement. It is amazing that they stuck so doggedly at their tasks when one considers the aridity of the Utah soil, the endless toil that was required to extract a living, the destructive floods that periodically destroyed years of labor, and the repeated failures that came to such undertakings as the iron and cotton industries. Time after time George A. Smith, with his humor, conviction, and personal warmth, would buoy up their spirits and prepare them mentally to accept hardships and sacrifices for the kingdom. To understand everything that went into making up their intense motivation one would need to understand Mormon theology, LDS loyalty to Priesthood authority, their desire to follow counsel and maintain unity, and their ambition to labor diligently for salvation. It was the teachings of such leaders as George A. Smith that made these desires uppermost in the life of a Latter-day Saint. Members were constantly reminded that their eternal happiness and reward was dependent on the faithful performance of duty in this life. They were told that these arduous projects were not simply for their own prosperity, but they were, in reality, building Zion--God's perfect society. They were to demonstrate their worthiness and preparedness to return to Jackson County, Missouri, to build the New Jerusalem where the Lord himself would come and abide. "The time is not far distant," George A. taught, when they would return

to build this city and temple and await that great event.<sup>24</sup>

Another effect of these visits was to promote a feeling of corporate identity. A family might live in a small isolated settlement such as St. Joseph, Harrisburg, or Toquerville, but was made to feel himself an important part of one vast religious enterprise. Other benefits included the opportunity to instruct the saints in Church doctrine, keep them current with the news of the world, keep the wards and stakes staffed with leaders, handle any discipline problems, and solve the many personal and administrative problems that were always arising.

It is, of course, impossible to evaluate the full effect of these many visits since George A.'s activities were usually so varied. A trip to Iron County in 1860 illustrates some common types of service that he was called to render. He stayed two days at Cedar "receiving calls from many of the citizens" who were seeking advice and counsel. He then went south to Hamblin's ranch, Santa Clara, Toquerville, where he found the saints discouraged and wanting to move. To them he gave private and public encouragement to remain faithful in their responsibilities along with a few suggestions that might lighten their burdens. Returning to Cedar for Pioneer Day he spoke twice in public gatherings, then hurried to Parowan whose leaders had postponed their celebration two days in order to have George A. with them.<sup>25</sup> While there he met with the city council to consider a problem of a sawmill dumping its sawdust into the creek. They decided against an ordinance that would

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<sup>24</sup>J.D., XIII, 298.

<sup>25</sup>Journal History, July 26, 1860.

have imposed a fine for the offense on condition that the mill owners would do their best to keep the creek free from sawdust. Before leaving Parowan he investigated charges preferred against a bishop and did the same thing in Beaver on his journey home.<sup>26</sup>

George A.'s influence was by no means restricted to these visits. He did a considerable amount of promoting and advising by correspondence. Six letters<sup>27</sup> written within the period of a month in 1860 will exemplify this point. The first letter was to William H. Hooper, the congressional delegate, asking for a mail route between Fillmore and Cedar City. The second is to William Dame tactfully advising him in a personal matter, answering a question about powers conferred by the city charter, and giving his opinion in regard to the best means of land utilization. A third letter is to James Lewis approving his desire to move to Little Creek but urging him to take precautions lest he expose his family to Indian dangers. A February 26th letter advises William Dame on a minor ecclesiastical problem. The next letter was written to a man named Benjamin in Santaquin who had become involved in some kind of trouble with the local authorities and had been asked to move. George A. writes that he had talked to President Young and Benjamin was free to move or stay as he thought best. The letter has a very friendly tone, undoubtedly in an attempt to soothe the man's feelings. The following day, George A. wrote to

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<sup>26</sup>Historian's Office Journal, July 31, 1860.

<sup>27</sup>These letters are found in the Church Historian's Office Letter Book 1854-61 under the following dates: February 2, 8, 8, 26, 28, and March 1, 1860.



Richard Harrison, a discouraged iron missionary, who wanted to move to Beaver Valley. He was commended for his integrity and willingness to follow counsel and told that the saints must expect hardships. He was given permission to move to another settlement.

George A. Smith's influence as a speaker and promoter may have been his most important contribution to Mormon society. A student of his life is constantly locating references to the favorable effects of his sermons, such as the following comments that appeared in the Deseret News during July, 1863: "G. A. Smith spoke some time in his usual humorous and interesting style;" and about a week later, ". . . the Hon. Mr. Smith, speaking with his usual pithy originality, wielding that allegorical sword of his, that goes so precisely home at every thrust for the protection of his friends and regardless of the flutterings of enemies."<sup>28</sup> His sense of humor enlivened many a dry meeting and cheered many a depressed spirit. An interesting remark concerning his reputation as a humorous speaker is found in one of his own talks: "I suppose that my brethren and sisters are acquainted with George A.; and whenever he presents himself in the presence of the Saints, and attempts to entertain them or amuse them with his chin-music, they expect that he will say something funny."<sup>29</sup> Following the advice of the Prophet Joseph Smith, his talks were usually brief and to the point. It is amusing to note how repeatedly George A. was called

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<sup>28</sup>Journal History, July 6 and 13, 1863.

<sup>29</sup>J. D., V, 101.

upon to close a long meeting with one of his succinct prayers. Once after a full day of conference meetings in Parowan, he uttered this prayer, "Heavenly Father bless all good people, Thy servant George A. is tired. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen."<sup>30</sup> Probably his shortest sermon was the so-called "Iron Sermon." In April Conference, 1853, there were displayed the first examples of iron manufactured in Iron County. After President Young's brief remarks about these "fire-irons" there followed a lengthy business meeting after which George A. Smith was called upon to speak. The meeting had already been five hours long and he was aware of the restlessness in the congregation. He carried one of the "fire-irons" to the stand, held it above his head and exclaimed, "stereotype edition." He descended from the pulpit amid cheers, and the meeting was dismissed.<sup>31</sup>

With such personal and forensic qualities, George A. wielded a vigorous force for community building in the territory. His sermons gave the saints deeper pride in their history and a firmer belief in their identity as the latter-day Israel. He was a favorite speaker on special occasions such as Independence and Pioneer Day celebrations. How strong they would feel as George A. praised them for the courage they had manifest in withstanding former persecutions. "The history

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<sup>30</sup> Interview of Ray Haun Gleave with Zora Smith Jarvis, August 18, 1955. Quoted in Ray Haun Gleave, "The Effect of the Speaking of George A. Smith on the People of the Iron Mission of Southern Utah" (unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1957), p. 69.

<sup>31</sup> Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], July 16, 1853, quoted in Ibid.

of our persecutions is unparalleled in the history of past ages," was his principle theme for many sermons. His ability to paint a bright and hopeful picture of Zion's future was so appealing the saints often worked against great odds to bring to pass the vision he had given them. Counseling with a disheartened group of iron missionaries in 1852, he spoke with power and prophesied that they would succeed in making iron. Henry Lunt wrote that George A. was so "full of the spirit" that his words "burned in my bones."<sup>32</sup> In 1863, he declared to a St. George audience his belief that there was no part of the territory in which better facilities existed for producing the necessities and comforts of life. "In a very short time," he predicted, "by careful cultivation, St. George may be made one vast vineyard and the vines draw up a sufficiency of moisture from beneath, so that they will not require irrigating."<sup>33</sup> To a Provo congregation several years earlier he had made substantially the same boast. "Provo has every facility to make it one of the handsomest and most wealthy cities, according to the number of its inhabitants." This was their potential, not yet a reality, he admonished. There is little we could not accomplish, he went on, if we were sufficiently united:

If all this people were absolutely united with all their hearts to pull upon one grand thread, upon one grand cord, they would have power and dominion over the whole earth; all the men and devils in hell, on the earth, or anywhere else could not make a successful opposition against us. The chief

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<sup>32</sup>"Life of Henry Lunt and Family," BYU typescript, pp. 115-16.

<sup>33</sup>Journal History, May 9, 1863.

point we have got to maintain is the point of union; that is all that is necessary to be done to secure all we anticipate. That is what we have been schooled for in the school-house of trouble and affliction.<sup>34</sup>

George A. used his speaking skill in tirelessly promoting anything and everything that he considered would build the Church and kingdom of God. It was not unusual for him to advocate a dozen different projects in a single sermon. A characteristic discourse of this type finds him promoting better schools, more interesting Sunday Schools, more subscriptions to Church magazines and newspapers, home manufacture, proper dress styles, more workers for the St. George and Salt Lake temples, naturalization of those saints who had not yet become citizens, the payment of tithing, and the United Order.<sup>35</sup> An 1865 trip to Sanpete County with Orson Hyde and F. D. Richards was undertaken for the purpose of giving "social, moral and political" instructions. Education was also treated as a "subject of great importance," as was the warning to beware of unprincipled merchants. As to the effect of their preaching, F. C. Robinson reports his confidence that it would bind the people more closely "to the bonds of fraternity and create a strong determination to continue and increase in general improvement."<sup>36</sup>

The kingdom needed to grow numerically, so George A. was a strong advocate of the missionary programs of the Church. After many

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<sup>34</sup>J.D., II, 366.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., XVII, 84 f.

<sup>36</sup>Deseret News [Salt Lake City, Utah], February 18, 1865.

mission reports were sent to him as Church Historian, he replied with letters of pride in such accomplishments and of confidence in even greater attainments. He was involved with the Indian missions from time to time and even sacrificed one son to the cause. Eighteen-year old George A. Smith Jr. was shot and killed by Navajo Indians in November, 1860, while he journeyed to commence his mission to the Mosquis Indians. Though "thunderstruck" with the news of his son's death, George A. bore his sorrow bravely, and upon "reflection. . . came to the conclusion that the Lord wanted the young man just the way He took him."<sup>37</sup> The Indian missions yielded such scanty results that these faithful elders were often in need of a boost in morale. George A.'s visits and letters undoubtedly helped. To one elder he admitted the work appeared to be a "thankless task," but said the "Lord requires us to do all in our power to reclaim the Lamanites."<sup>38</sup> George A. was ever active in contributing to the colonizing missions. The decade following the Civil War saw approximately 150 new towns established in the Mormon commonwealth, and George A. made scores of calls upon people to participate in this great cause. His experience in this field was valuable to these new settlers as they sought his advice.

New converts of the kingdom had to be conveyed to their new Zion, so George A. promoted the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company and other means of bringing the saints westward. He was assistant to the

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<sup>37</sup>Zora Smith Jarvis, Ancestry, Biography, and Family of George A. Smith (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1962), p. 226.

<sup>38</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to John Steele, January 31, 1863. Church Historian's Office Letter Book no. 6.

President--the director of the Company--for a time. On many of his southern trips he raised the needed teams and supplies that were to travel east and return with immigrants and merchandise.

George A. enjoyed the fine arts and often advocated their growth and improvement. His principle diversionary activity seemed to be his frequent attendance at plays and other cultural events in the communities. After witnessing one excellent performance in Parowan he commended the townsfolk, saying this was an evidence that "there is intelligence and even refinement among us." He made it clear that he preferred plays that showed the triumph of good over evil. He praised them in their efforts to organize a brass band for the community and added that he had called a musician to live among them to instruct them in the principles of music.<sup>39</sup>

Since Mormonism was at that time largely an agricultural society, an important part of an apostle's work had to do with the improvement of agriculture. One prominent historian estimated that as much as one-half the recorded sermons of General Authorities during the 1860's had something to say on the subject.<sup>40</sup> In addition to being an officer of the influential Deseret Agricultural and Manufacturing Society, George A. Smith was president of the Jordan Irrigation Company (from 1864 to 1870), and president of the South Jordan and

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<sup>39</sup>Parowan Historical Record, 1856-59, pp. 5-6. LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>40</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 223.

Provo Bench Irrigation Districts in the late 1860's. It is needless to say that the saints were dependent on irrigation water. These latter companies existed to make plans and administer projects that would insure the maximum use of available water resources. The Deseret Agricultural and Manufacturing Society was incorporated in 1856 "with a view of promoting the arts and domestic industry, and to encourage the production of articles from the native elements in this Territory."<sup>41</sup> The Society established several branch organizations in the Mormon communities. Arrington says it was an agency of both church and state. It received appropriations from the territorial government to pay premiums and subsidies, it gathered agricultural statistics, received and distributed seeds and plants sent by the U. S. Patent Office and Department of Agriculture, assisted various industries in behalf of the territorial government, and served as an educational institution by maintaining a library, offering lectures, and publishing materials.<sup>42</sup> George A. Smith was a member and officer of this organization for many years, at least until 1872, when he was one of four officers of the society to attend the California State Fair. Besides enjoying themselves with sightseeing and visiting, they gathered information about stock, wool, agricultural machinery, fruit, and other things that proved useful to Utah's agricultural, horticultural, and manufacturing interests.<sup>43</sup> This society was probably the most influential organization in the 1860's and 70's working for

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<sup>41</sup>Deseret News [Salt Lake City, Utah], April 23, 1856.

<sup>42</sup>Arrington, op. cit., p. 226.

<sup>43</sup>Journal History, September 9 through 12, 1872.

the improvement of Utah agriculture.

Whether acting in an individual capacity or as a member of some organization, George A. Smith spent much energy during the 1860's in the promotion of agriculture. A brief biographical sketch written in 1870 says: He has planted apple, peach, apricot, and plum orchards in the counties of Salt Lake, Utah, Iron, Washington, and Kane, also vines; and devotes much time to the gratuitous distribution of improved varieties of fruits and vines adapted to the varied climate of this Territory," and furthermore, "He has used his influence to unite the energies of the people in the improvement of desert lands."<sup>44</sup> Several of George A.'s letters during the 60's were to Utah Congressional Representatives, missionaries, or distant members asking that they send or bring seeds and plants to the territory.<sup>45</sup> As he traveled through the settlements his attention was often called to some agricultural problem that needed his expertise. In 1864, he intervened in a Payson problem apologizing for the intrusion but saying he did it out of "a zeal to promote agricultural, horticultural, floracultural interests in Utah County."<sup>46</sup> He had an interest in floraculture and the beautification of the cities of Zion. He advised the Parowan saints, as he did others, "to beautify Parowan, and make it like the garden of Edin [sic]." Wood, hen houses, or anything unsightly, he said, should be kept to the rear of the houses and the front yards be always neat and clean.<sup>47</sup> He took great pride in the

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<sup>45</sup>See Letters of George A. Smith to J.M. Bernhisel and Thomas L. Lyman, October 27, 1862, March 26, 1864. Church Historian's Office Letter Book no. 6.

<sup>46</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Mayor and City Council, June 8, 1864. Church Historian's Office Letter Book no. 6.

<sup>47</sup>Parowan Historical Record, 1856-59, February 10, 1856.



accomplishments of the Mormon people. Said he in a typical outburst: "Pass through the settlements of the Latter-day Saints, and what do you find? Peace, temperance, order, faith, obedience to law, industry, and prudence. . . we should not only be entitled to but should have the gratitude of the entire nation for the great work we have done in founding flourishing settlements in and developing the resources of these mountains."<sup>48</sup> George A. had good reason to be proud. Non-Mormon travelers in the territory during these early decades are nearly unanimous in their praise for the orderly, blossoming society the Mormons had built in the desert. Captain Stansbury, a government surveyor, said in 1850 that their progress was "one of the most remarkable incidents of the present age." He said that Utah had the possibility of becoming "one of the most lovely spots between the Mississippi and the Pacific."<sup>49</sup> Two years after the founding of Parowan, Gwinn Harris Heap, a California emigrant and writer, described the houses as "ornamented in front with small flower-gardens, which are fenced off from the square, and shaded with trees. The field covers about four hundred acres, and was in a high state of cultivation, the wheat and corn being as fine as any that we had seen in the States."<sup>50</sup> Hugh Fitz Ludlow, a writer who passed through Utah in 1869,

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<sup>48</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], August 28, 1869.

<sup>49</sup>Howard Stansbury, Exploration and Survey of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake of Utah. . . (Philadelphia, 1852), pp. 123, 129.

<sup>50</sup>Gwinn Harris Heap, From the Valley of the Mississippi to California. . . . Quoted in J. Cecil Alter, Utah the Storied Domain (New York and Chicago: The American Historical Society, 1932), I, 153.

was impressed with the neatly spaced houses and wide streets but was especially struck with the contrast between "fields fairly packed with harvest, smiling gardens, and orchards where the branches crack under their wealth on the one hand; and on the other, tracts where no living thing breaks the monotony of sand and alkali but the ashen artemisia, the cactus, grease wood, or salicorn."<sup>51</sup>

One of the most ambitious agricultural projects of the 1860's was the mission to raise cotton. George A. Smith played a significant role in the initial stages of this venture. In the early 1850's, explorations were made of the Santa Clara and Virgin River basins to ascertain whether such semi-tropical products such as cotton, figs, rice, sugar, flax, and hemp could be grown. Reports were affirmative and by the mid-1850's there was serious talk about starting a cotton industry. In the spring of 1857, a group of twenty-eight families were called to experiment in cotton farming on the Washington flat just east of present-day St. George. They had little success due to the unfavorable soil, and so the First Presidency sent another group to the Tonaquint flat, at the confluence of the Virgin and Santa Clara Creeks, in early 1858. They fared better and brought 575 pounds of cotton lint to Salt Lake City which represented their summer labors.

George A. Smith, at the time, was one of the three presiding officers of the Deseret Agricultural and Manufacturing Society and chairman of the Council Committee on Agriculture, Trade, and Manufac-

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<sup>51</sup>Fitz Hugh Ludlow, The Heart of the Continent: A Record of Travel Across the Plains and in Oregon, with An Examination of the Mormon Principle (New York, 1870), p. 325.

turers in the territorial legislature, two organizations keenly interested in cotton culture. In 1859 this committee published a report on cotton cultivation in Utah. It gave the opinion that enough cotton could be raised in Washington County to supply the needs of the territory. Past failures, it said, were due in large part to inferior seed, improper methods of farming the crop, ignorance as to the best type of soil, the right time to plant, and how to apply irrigation. The committee recommended that a "small sum" be appropriated for premiums which would induce experiments on different kinds of soil, with various methods of watering, and which would provide for the dissemination of knowledge about proper crop management.<sup>52</sup> It appears that the Deseret Agricultural and Manufacturing Society was the organization through which many of these directives were implemented. Two months following the above report Wilford Woodruff, Edward Hunter, and George A. Smith, officers of the Society, wrote a lengthy letter to the "Citizens of Washington Co." urging increased efforts in the production of indigo, madder, tobacco, fruit, and especially cotton. It mentioned that premiums would be offered in an attempt to put new life into the endeavor. The letter names some "well-informed brethren" who would probably be willing to educate others in the best manner of raising cotton. They asked the citizens to pool their money to buy a machine to "gin, card, and spin" the cotton and have the money in Salt Lake City by conference. They further requested that a branch

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<sup>52</sup>Journal History, December 25, 1859.

of the society be organized in Washington County and sent an accompanying letter to Jacob Hamblin and William Crosby to visit the towns, read the letter, and see that it was accomplished. To Church leaders they declared the encouragement of home industry and use of home-made products was a "religious duty, as well as a measure of political economy, public policy and absolute necessity for the benefit of the kingdom of God."<sup>53</sup>

By the summer of 1861, it was becoming clear that the saints would have to raise their own cotton since the Civil War had cut off the South as a source of supply. George A. joined sixty-three others in the President's party to travel south and investigate the prospects. After returning it was decided to launch a full-scale mission to grow cotton. President Young called George A. to get up a company of "missionaries" for the new community. He was aided by John Taylor who went to Utah County to raise recruits and by Orson Hyde who departed to Sanpete County for the same reason. Their object was to raise about three hundred families--thirty or forty from Sanpete, about fifty from Utah County, and approximately two hundred from the Salt Lake area. In total nearly 800 families, or 3,000 persons, were called to Dixie in the early 1860's and another 300 families added to the number in the late 1860's and 1870's.<sup>54</sup>

Many of those called balked at the prospect of leaving their

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<sup>53</sup>Letter of Wilford Woodruff, Edward Hunter, and George A. Smith, February 25, 1860. Church Historian's Office Letter Book 1854-61.

<sup>54</sup>Arrington, op. cit., p. 217.

homes to start again in the barren country of southern Utah. Robert Gardner was one of these. When a neighbor told him his name had been read from the pulpit, he wrote, "I looked and spit, took my hat and scratched my head and thought and said all right." The next day at the Historian's Office he told George A. of his reluctance. Gardner wrote of their conversation: "He laughed when I went in, and said dont blame any one but me, the President told me to get a list of names sutable [sic] for that Mission so I thought of you for one, and thought you would be willing to go if called so I put your name down, But if you don't want to go, Step in to the President [sic] Office and ask him to take your name of [sic] the list and he will do it." Gardner, not wanting the president to know of his hesitancy, replied, "I expect he would but I shant try him I have come to find out what kind of a fit out is wanted and when to go, [George A.] said that is the kind of men we want So he advised me if I could not sell out to good advantage to take one of my famileys and go down and make a start.<sup>55</sup> George A. knew from experience how difficult it was to get some to accept these calls. He once told the saints it was about as much work getting a man to Iron County as it was for John Bunyan to get Christians into heaven.<sup>56</sup> He said further:

I have seen faces look longer than a sectarian parson's face, comparatively speaking; I have seen diseases appear in men that had heretofore been considered healthy, and that, too, as soon as they heard they were wanted to perform any unpleasant mission. I have sometimes argued the case, and

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<sup>55</sup>"Biography and Journal of Robert Gardner Jr.," BYU typescript, pp. 45-46.

<sup>56</sup>J.D., IX, 201.

tried to persuade them in regard to this mission that it would do them good. 'Oh,' but they reply, 'I have always been sick in a warm country.' And so went the excuses.<sup>57</sup>

Before the first wagon left Salt Lake City the new town had been named St. George, after George A. Smith, a postmaster was appointed, a choir leader selected, and plans for lighting the streets considered.<sup>58</sup> Despite the many labors that had been expended to develop the region lying south of the "rim of the basin," that is the area in Utah south of Cedar City, the population in 1861 was very small. Washington, the County seat, had only twenty families, Fort Clara twenty families, Virgin City eleven families, Toquerville ten families, Grafton and Adventure six families each, Gunlock four families, Harrisburg two families--seventy-nine families in all.<sup>59</sup>

George A. Smith, Erastus Snow, and three others were sent in advance of the colonists to seek out suitable locations. After scouting the upper and lower areas of the Rio Virgin and Santa Clara Rivers and their tributaries, they proceeded to Cedar City where they had to report to the advanced company of colonists that a site for St. George had not yet been selected. They had found the country "barren and desolate, as much so as any country in the world." Nevertheless, they found better land and more water than they had anticipated. The

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<sup>57</sup>Kate B. Carter (compiler), Our Pioneer Heritage (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1962), V, 23.

<sup>58</sup>Juanita Brooks, "The Cotton Mission," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXIX (July, 1961), p. 207. Two other references mention Brigham Young's naming the city for George A. Smith: Historian's Office Journal no. 20, October 28, 1861, and Journal History, October 28, 1861.

<sup>59</sup>James Godson Bleak, "Annals of the Southern Utah Mission," BYU typescript, pp. 60-61.

grazing facilities for stock raising, George A. thought, was "inexhaustible to all appearance" and there was also more timber than expected.<sup>60</sup> Speaking in Parowan to some cotton missionaries George A. cheered them with his good humor. Robert Gardner reported him as saying:

Wood was rather scarce down there but by going twelve or fifteen miles to where there was some cedar and by hunting round we might find some long enough to make a frunt [sic] stick by splicing two together, and another of the advantages of the country was it was a great place for range, for when a cow got one mouthful of grass she had to range a great way to get another he sayed sheep done pretty well, but they wore their [sic] noses of [sic] reaching down between the rocks to get the grass.<sup>61</sup>

They started south together soon coming to a fork in the road, one leading up the Rio Virgin to Toquerville and the other toward Washington. They had a problem deciding which way to go. The company finally split, the majority taking the road to Toquerville thus causing "considerable feeling" between the two groups.<sup>62</sup> This first company arrived on the future site of St. George on November 25, 1861. George A. moved on with the Swiss brethren and selected the site of Santa Clara as a good place for them to settle.<sup>63</sup> He searched out a few other possible community sites before returning to Salt Lake City.

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<sup>60</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to J. M. Bernhisel, December 6, 1861. Church Historian's Office Letter Book 1854-61.

<sup>61</sup>"Biography and Journal of Robert Gardner Jr.," op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>62</sup>St. George Stake Record 1850-73, I, 75. LDS Church Historians Office.

<sup>63</sup>"Minutes kept by H. S. Eldredge, journalist of the company," November 30, 1861. George A. Smith's Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

Meanwhile the community of St. George began to take shape under the able leadership of Erastus Snow. Everyone was assigned a task to perform. Gardner wrote his reminiscences of those first weeks: "We was united in everything we went at in these days we had no rich nor poor our tents and wagons and what was in them was about all we had, and we had all things in common in those days and very common to especially in the eating line for we did not even have sargom in those days."<sup>64</sup>

With enormous labor these little communities achieved some success in growing cotton. The first year's crop amounted to 100,000 pounds of seed cotton.<sup>65</sup> In 1863 the total produced was 56,094 pounds of ginned cotton. The following year's yield was reported to be larger. It became clear that a factory was needed to produce their own cotton goods. Construction was begun and the factory completed in 1870. The coming of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, the difficulties of crop specialization, the poor soil, backbreaking labor, unruly rives, and the problem of competing with the larger fields, mills, and cheaper labor of the South all combined to defeat the cotton industry in Utah. The factory limped along until 1910 when the whole venture became one more chapter in Utah's frustrating endeavor to achieve economic independence.

Aside from their religious practices, which has precipitated wide differences of opinion, most historian's concede that the Mormon

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<sup>64</sup>"Biography and Journal of Robert Gardner Jr.," op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>65</sup>Arrington, op. cit., p. 217.



people built a remarkable commonwealth in the arid valleys of the Great Basin. A comparison of their colonizing methods with those of contemporary western territories reveals the superiority of the Mormon enterprise in many areas. The Mormons would move as an organized group into a new area, whereas most western towns grew up in a haphazard and piecemeal fashion. Each Mormon colonizing company had a balanced selection of necessary leaders, agricultural, and industrial workers. Needless to say, gentile communities usually lacked such organization. Community living provided numerous social and personal benefits for the saints, while non-Mormon settlers typically lived on isolated farms. Property and water disputes were common in other western territories, while public ownership of land and water precluded this problem in Mormon society. Another contrast, and important factors in the success of their colonizing program, was Mormon cooperation, brotherhood, and relatively impartial land distribution. A harmonious mingling of church and state in Utah made it possible to use either agency to accomplish whatever was needed. Centralized authority and direction, as opposed to the individualism of other territories, enabled the Church to unite the energies of the people on projects that would benefit the whole society. Strong Church leadership prevented the saints from rushing into the uncertain economics of mining and neglecting the sounder pursuits of agriculture and industry.

In so vast a program there would naturally be some mistakes, but what new territory did not have problems? Though the sugar, iron, lead, and cotton industries were expensive failures, they do represent

a gallant effort to remain independent of the gentiles by producing these products at home. Had the Church sought more expert information, purchased better machinery, given, in some cases, private interests a freer hand in making policies; if they had put their resources in smaller, less spectacular projects with a greater potential for success, the economy may have been healthier in the long run.<sup>66</sup> Such errors are, of course, much easier to observe in hind-sight.

The immense achievements of the Mormon society in the territory of Utah are largely attributable to their ingenious Church organization, its theology, and its devoted leadership. Theology played no small role by leading the saints to believe in the divine inspiration of their leaders and in the concept that their toil was helping to build the kingdom of God on earth. This belief made them much more willing to submit to the will of their leaders than their non-Mormon counterpart. To Brigham Young and other General Authorities, however, must go the credit for planning and executing the many programs that made the desert blossom. Since Mormonism was, and is, a highly centralized organization, it is essential for success that Church leaders be capable, informed, and devoted. Such was the case under Brigham Young's administration. The lot of the colonist was not an easy one, especially in dry and barren southern Utah, George A. Smith's area of responsibility. There were times when some desired to go counter to Church policies, when prodigious problems mocked their efforts; times when discouragement overcame their idealism. Strong

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., pp. 129-30.

leaders like George A. were particularly important in these periods: to build morale, to keep the ideals of the gospel paramount, to introduce and promote new programs, to counsel, discipline, and praise. This chapter, in part, has demonstrated how one leader, George A. Smith, ably fulfilled these demanding and arduous responsibilities.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE GROWTH OF OPPOSITION: INDIAN AND GENTILE CONFLICTS

The last and most costly of Utah's Indian wars commenced in the spring of 1865. The Black Hawk War, as it was called, resulted from several festering problems between the Indians and whites. The federal government did much to breed discontent among the redmen. In 1864, congress passed laws ending Indian titles to agriculture and mineral lands in Utah and opened the land to settlement. The Indians were to be moved to reservations in the Uintah Basin and the government in turn promised them liberal amounts of money, homes, schools, and other necessities. The government failed to fulfill many of its obligations, the Indian Department in Utah was inefficient or worse. Some Indians not involved in the resettlement talks were reluctant to move, and some hostiles began stealing Mormon property. The spark that ignited the conflict occurred when a white man and a youthful Ute chief became involved in a fight at a peace conference in Manti on April 9, 1865. The angry chief raised a war party and began making raids on the settlements, and the raids continued sporadically for four years. Since General Connor refused to involve his troops, the burden of defending the communities fell to the Mormon militia, the Nauvoo Legion. In all, the war cost the lives of about twenty-five Mormons and seventy-five Indians. Approximately twenty small towns had to be abandoned, hundreds of livestock were stolen, and the total cost was approximately one and a half million dollars. Although Mormons asked the federal

government to pay this expense, their request was rejected.<sup>1</sup>

The Indian warriors probably never exceeded three-hundred men, but their guerilla methods coupled with Mormon pacifistic policies made them difficult to defeat. One writer conjectured that a punitive military strike or some genuine peace overtures from the government would have brought the war to an early end.<sup>2</sup>

After a quiet winter, Indian attacks erupted again in the early months of 1866, forcing General Daniel H. Wells to muster the militiamen of southern Utah. George A. Smith and Erastus Snow, Aids-Camp on Wells' staff, were sent to direct military operations in the south. They left Salt Lake City on February 2, sleighing most of the way as the weather was cold and snowy. Their orders were as follows: (1) the Iron Military District was to be enlarged by including Iron, Washington, Kane, Piute, and Beaver Counties; (2) the military forces of the district were to be organized into a brigade and officers elected; (3) Indian depredations in the area were to be stopped and offenders punished.<sup>3</sup>

At Fillmore, they directed the leaders to raise thirty cavalry and thirty infantry and have them ready to strike at a moment's notice. As they passed through the villages, militias were reorganized, where necessary, and placed in a state of readiness, arms were inspected, and

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<sup>1</sup>Nels Anderson, Desert Saints (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 240.

<sup>2</sup>Andrew Love Neff, History of Utah 1847 to 1869 (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News Press, 1940), pp. 404-05.

<sup>3</sup>Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, February 3, 1866; hereafter cited as Journal History.

instructions given to improve defensive fortifications. George A. stopped in Parowan a few days to write letters and direct necessary operations. Indians had raided a Dr. Whitmore's ranch at Pipe Springs killing the doctor, a Mr. McIntyre, and stealing horses, sheep, and cattle. Captain James Andrus was dispatched with men to bring back an isolated family and search out the Indians responsible. Andrus' men found what they supposed were the hostiles and, before they escaped, managed to kill nine of them.<sup>4</sup>

George A. worked hastily to secure the defenses of the district. A letter was mailed to Col. William H. Dame with orders to keep sixty militiamen on alert in Cedar and in Beaver. He requested an answer from Dame stating the whereabouts of a band of warrior Utes reported to be in the vicinity of Circleville.<sup>5</sup> Orders were issued to Erastus Snow the following day to organize the militia of Kane County, Toquerville and Harmony in Washington County. Another letter went to the lower Muddy settlements commending those at St. Joseph for building a fort and farming near the fort. It recommended the same policy be followed at St. Thomas and Hill Point. Allow no family, the letter said, to settle in an isolated area or any unarmed person to roam over the country for timber or any other reason. First secure the safety of your families and then see to your food supplies. The letter then advocated a remarkably benevolent policy toward the Indians in

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<sup>4</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Governor Charles Durkee, February 25, 1866. George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>5</sup>Journal History, February 26, 1866.

in that area:

Next you owe kindness and consideration to the aborigines of the country, for they are our wards and we cannot ignore their existence and claims upon our consideration, and while we and our stock frighten away their game, destroy their grass seeds and other means of living, we should repay them by aiding and encouraging them to plant and raise more wheat and corn and occasionally giving them a beef. Care should be taken to allow the natives who are willing to farm the choice of lands.<sup>6</sup>

The Mormons, unlike their intractable opponents, were careful to discriminate between hostile and peaceful Indians.

In mid-March, George A.'s attention turned to the communities on the Sevier River. He sent Erastus Snow and the First Regiment to their aid with instructions to establish a base of supply.<sup>7</sup> Colonel Dame was commanded to go to the defense of Circleville and Panguitch, to dismantle the log houses at the latter place, and build a fort for the inhabitants.<sup>8</sup> Colonel Murdock, of Beaver, was asked to join Dame's operation. "Select men who will not desert their post," wrote George A., "nor weary in well doing, as I regard the movement as a very important one, the first duty being to build a fort." Any delay, he continued, will add to the danger of attack. Even these calls he referred to as a mission to serve the Kingdom of God--"And while we call these men in a military capacity they are in reality all mission-

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<sup>6</sup>Letter of George A. Smith and Erastus Snow to Thomas S. Smith, Journal History, March 1, 1866.

<sup>7</sup>Orders to Erastus Snow, March 15, 1866. George A. Smith Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Orders to Col. William Dame, March 15, 1866. George A. Smith Papers.

aries in the great work of building up Zion."<sup>9</sup> Despite these extensive maneuvers, George A.'s letter to President Young manifested some apprehension. Although he and Erastus Snow had "done their utmost" to safeguard the communities, the district was so extensive and the villages so small "that it becomes a difficult matter to defend the whole border, as none of the settlements are large enough to spare many men."<sup>10</sup>

Feeling the Sevier settlements to be vulnerable, George A., on March 20th, began a trip through the hills to personally supervise their preparations. He and his companions had a struggle getting through the deep snow. Joseph Fish's journal has this account of their journey:

The picture of us toiling through the snow sometimes up to our waist through the storm made as good a winter scene as ever I saw. . . . In Bear Creek Canyon we found the road quite bad. We tied a sled behind the wagon and got Bro. G. A. Smith to ride in it. A rope was tied to the sled to prevent its sliding off into the creek. This was rather rough ride for a man who weighed 240 pounds, but it was the best we could do and Bro. Smith seemed to enjoy it very much.<sup>11</sup>

Work on the Panguitch fort had not yet commenced, so George A. expressed himself in "strong terms" concerning the need to build adequate defenses. After reviewing the troops and chastising eleven men by letter, telling them to return and help defend the town, he dedicated a site near Panguitch for a military post. Over fifty men from Beaver and Iron Counties were called to man the station. According to Joseph

<sup>9</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Bishop Murdock, Journal History, March 15, 1866.

<sup>10</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Brigham Young, Journal History, March 19, 1866.

<sup>11</sup>Diary of Joseph Fish, BYU typescript, Provo, Utah, pp. 22-23.



Fish, "The duty of the company was to erect a stockade fort and to act as a picket guard for the different settlements nearby, and to make preparations for a settlement. . . . They went about the first of April and did much work as picket scouts, etc. until the settlement of Panguitch was broken up in June and the post abandoned."<sup>12</sup> Traveling next to Circleville, Marysville, and Alma (now Monroe), George A. commented that the latter community was "wholly defenseless and perfectly unconscious of the fact." After urging them to "fort up" he passed on to Glenwood and Salina only to be told that two-thirds of the people would move away rather than build a fort.<sup>13</sup> He proceeded to Gunnison, Manti, Nephi, Santaquin, Springville, Provo, American Fork, and Salt Lake City giving advice and inspecting military manpower and equipment. Immediately upon his return he wrote to General Wells recommending that 150 armed emigrants be sent to the little settlements of Circleville, Marysvale, Alma, Glenwood, and Salina.<sup>14</sup>

His travels had taken him in excess of 800 miles over rough roads during an unfavorable season of the year. George A. concentrated mostly on his historical labors while the war sputtered on for two more years. He must be considered one of the foremost military leaders of the war since it was fought almost entirely in southern Utah and since he was the most conspicuous leader in organizing the defenses of that area. In recognition for his services in "locating

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>13</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, 1866. George A. Smith Papers.

<sup>14</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Daniel H. Wells, Journal History, April 2, 1866.

Fort Sanford and several other posts as a line of defense," Governor Charles Durkee commissioned him with the office of Brigadier General.<sup>15</sup> The war was unfortunate, and had the Mormons been left alone to apply their own humane policies to the solution of Indian problems, it might have never happened.

The decade of 1865 to 1875, the last ten years of George A. Smith's life, was marked by an intensification of Mormon-gentile animosity. The Indian troubles, just mentioned, were minor compared to the hostility of the white man. Up to this period, despite the threats and skirmishes of the 1850's, Utah was still the Mormon domain, an inter-mountain empire presided over by Brigham Young and his apostles. This condition began to change, gradually but inexorably, after the Civil War. After slavery and succession had been dealt a death blow, the attention of the nation was turned to the "Mormon problem." Though polygamy became the prime target of their attack, it was probably only a cover-up to besiege the whole Mormon way of life. The saints, of course, had learned from long and sad experience that they could not live peacefully with, nor trust, the gentiles. They met incursions with stiff resistance and with a determination to preserve their institutions and their solidarity. They developed an isolationist mentality to match their geographical separateness. The world to the Mormon mind was simple dichotomy--God's kingdom versus the decadent world. It was the task of missionaries to venture into

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<sup>15</sup>Brigham Young's Manuscript History, 1870, LDS Church Historian's Office, p. 167.

the world and like fishers seek out the "blood of Israel" that still remained in "Babylon," that they might prepare for the winding up scenes of earth's history.

This Mormon-gentile conflict, of course, continued beyond the life of George A. Smith; it did not begin to subside until after President Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto in 1890. In October, 1868, George A. was given a well-deserved honor by being elevated to the second highest position in the Mormon hierarchy, that of First Counselor to Brigham Young. And though death spared him from the malevolent struggles of the late 1870's and 80's, he did work hand in hand with his beloved leader to develop policies and programs to meet the early thrust of the enemy. Mulder and Mortensen have summarized LDS counter-measures to the gentile threat:

They met the Gentile merchants with Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution, and growing economic inequality with the communal forms of a United Order; they met sectarian schools with church academies, and worldly fashions with retrenchment associations; they countered the Gentile lobby's Liberal party with a People's party and gave the women the vote; they opposed anti-polygamy legislation, like the Anti-Bigamy Act of 1862, with petitions and mass meetings and a tense case that made its way to the Supreme Court; and they met 'cohab' raids with the 'underground' and refugee colonies in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and across the borders in Canada and Mexico.<sup>16</sup>

The Morrill Act, or Anti-Bigamy law of 1862, was at war's end the only piece of federal legislation that had been passed to deal with the so-called Mormon question. This law was ineffective largely because the Mormons considered it unconstitutional and therefore refused

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<sup>16</sup>William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, Among the Mormons (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), pp. 357-58.

to enforce it in their powerful probate courts. From the early territorial period laws had been passed granting civil and criminal jurisdiction to the local probate courts, consequently the three district courts, presided over by federal appointed judges, nearly always non-Mormons, suffered from lack of business. Congress, realizing that polygamy would not be prosecuted in the probate courts, set about to remove this obstacle. This post-war Republican dominated government worried the saints. They could hardly forget that this party had come to power as an anti-slavery, anti-polygamy party. George A. Smith expressed his fears in a letter to his cousin, Thomas L. Lyman: "What the Republicans may do to repeal the law of the Almighty in relation to marriage, I know not; a more reckless set of scamps never had control of a government in my estimation."<sup>17</sup> There were, no doubt, many in the southern states at the time who would have heartily agreed with that opinion. In the same month that letter was written, Senator Benjamin F. Wade of Ohio introduced a bill which advocated harsh measures against the Mormons. It proposed, among other things, to take the Nauvoo Legion and the territorial court system out of Mormon control and transfer it into the hands of the federal officers of the territory. Some felt the need for a more stringent law, and so in December, 1867, Senator Aaron H. Cragin of New Hampshire introduced a bill which added another provision to the Wade proposals, namely a section asking that polygamy cases be heard without a jury. George A. Smith, like many others in Utah, regarded Cragin's

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<sup>17</sup> Journal History, June 26, 1866.

bill as just one more evidence that "feelings of continued hostility" were still "brooding in the hearts of a priest-ridden and licentious nation."<sup>18</sup>

The Ashley and Collom Bills followed on the heels of the stalled Cragin Bill. The author of the former bill, Congressman James Ashley of Ohio, had been in Utah just after the close of the Civil War and in conversing with George A. Smith had said the clergy were now ruling the country and were determined that the "laws of the United States should be enforced in Utah; . . . that the onset might come at any time, . . . that it would be terrible, . . . [and] that the army which would be ordered here would be the refuse of Sherman's and other Corps."<sup>19</sup> The Ashley Bill asked for the dismemberment of the Utah Territory by giving large portions of it to surrounding states. After this legislation had been proposed, George A. wrote to delegate William Hooper asking him to do all he could to bring about its defeat.<sup>20</sup> The bill failed, not so much from Mormon opposition, but because many congressmen thought it would be disruptive to the political systems of the other states. Though Utah still existed as a political entity, congress did manage, during the 1860's, systematically to strip away over half its land. When congress admitted the territories of Nevada and Colorado in 1861, and of Wyoming in 1868, it took 135,720 square

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<sup>18</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], February 22, 1868.

<sup>19</sup>Historian's Office Journal no. 23, July 5, 1865, LDS Church Historian's Office.

<sup>20</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to William Hooper, January 24, 1869. Church Historian's Office Letter Book no. 6.

miles of Utah's original 200,196 miles of land area.<sup>21</sup> This was not accomplished without considerable hardship to the Mormons and without additional political protests. George A. Smith was especially concerned with the alteration of the Utah-Nevada border since the Mormon communities of the Muddy Mission were thereby placed within the boundaries of Nevada. This meant that they would be subject to the heavy taxation of that territory. The saints from St. Joseph, St. Thomas and Overton sent petitions to the Nevada Legislature and to the United States Congress. To the latter they asked that the land be ceded back to the territories of Utah and Arizona or they would be forced to move. To the Nevada Legislature they asked that they not be required to pay the onerous taxes assessed by Lincoln County and that a new county be created in the area named Las Vegas County.<sup>22</sup> George A. used what influence he could to persuade politicians to change the border. One letter went to Utah delegate William Hooper and another to Senator John S. Harris describing the plight of the saints in the area, asking that something be done to allow them to remain on their lands.<sup>23</sup> All attempts failing, Presidents Brigham Young and George A. Smith wrote to the Muddy Mission saints on December 14th, 1870, counseling them to take a vote among themselves as to whether they would remain in their present homes or move into Utah. When approximately 600 people decided to move, Presidents Young and

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<sup>21</sup>B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), V, 6-7.

<sup>22</sup>Diary of James Godson Bleak, Book B, BYU typescript, pp.77-81.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

Smith wrote to the former owners of Long Valley, who because of Indian depredations had resettled in Kanarra and Harmony, asking if they would relinquish their property and buildings to the exiled people of the Muddy Mission. By a kindly gesture of good will, the transfer of land was made. It had been another upsetting affair with the government and George A. complained bitterly about so many saints driven "like hogs on the range," from the homes and farms they had toiled so mightily to build.<sup>24</sup>

In 1870 the Cullom Bill, formulated by anti-Mormons in Utah, took precedence for a time over other bills then pending in congress. It proposed, like previous bills, that the selecting of juries be taken from Mormon territorial officials and be given to the United States Attorney and Marshal. It contained a clause that would have made cohabitation punishable as well as polygamy, since the latter was often difficult to prove. It also stated that polygamy cases would be the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal judges and plural wives would not be exempt as witnesses in their husband's cases. The saints reacted angrily and made their feelings known in mass meetings throughout the territory. Rumors circulated that the Mormons would fight rather than see such laws enforced. The Mormon apostate, William Godbe, traveled to Washington to influence President Ulysses S. Grant against its passage. Grant sent General Philip Sheridan to Utah to investigate the possibility of government intervention should

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

hostilities erupt. Sheridan advised the president that military action was not necessary but that more troops might profitably be sent to Fort Douglas.<sup>25</sup> Apparently the Grant administration was retreating from its original warlike attitude toward the Mormons since they did not want to run the risk of another Utah war. This fear was probably the chief reason for the defeat of the Cragin and Cullom Bills. It was a temporary victory for Utah. But the nation was still in an antagonistic mood, a mood that finally found expression in the passage of the Poland law of 1874 and the Edmunds laws of the 1880's.

George A. Smith, unquestionably one of the most important Mormon leaders during this period, was active in attempting to curtail this tide of hatred and persecution. He was a close confidant of President Young, becoming his First Counselor in the Church Presidency in 1868; he was President of the upper house of the territorial legislature; and in 1869 was elected to the position of Lieutenant Governor of the "State of Deseret." At the death of Governor Doty in 1865, the Mormons endeavored unsuccessfully to make him acting governor.<sup>26</sup> Many of his letters during this period indicate an earnest effort to lobby for the cause of his people. The recipients of these letters were delegate William Hooper and several United States senators including Cragin himself. The letter to Cragin thanked him for

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<sup>25</sup>Alan E. Haynes, "The Federal Government and Its Policies Regarding the Frontier Era of Utah Territory, 1850-1877" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., 1968), pp. 189-190.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 161.



a copy of his bill and sarcastically suggested that two sections be added, namely those parts of the Bible mentioning plural marriage should henceforth be nullified and government officials should take an oath that they no longer believe in those parts of the Bible.<sup>27</sup> To another congressman, Joseph S. Fowler, George A. replied that Church leaders could do nothing to remove polygamy since God had revealed it. He then issued this fervent appeal that justice be meted out to his oppressed people:

During the five general persecutions which had been successively poured upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints, before Celestial Marriage was known among them, our history fails to show the name of a single individual of national, or extended State reputation, who has been moved to raise his voice to turn away from a devoted people the cruelly intolerant storm. As you are aware, without any redress, and having violated no constitution or law, these unoffending people have been robbed of their homes and millions of dollars worth of property, together with hundreds of valuable lives, either by direct violence or subsequent exposure, without a single record of legal conviction against them in any State or Territory, and all this before the present charge generally made against them, was in existence. . . . The Latter-day Saints must be tolerated and protected in their faith and practice, so far as it does not interrupt the rights of others, or America will become the abode of a vast unorganized mob, preying upon each other, and causing the millions who may differ from the stronger factions to be crushed down in sorrow and woe.<sup>28</sup>

Political matters in the Territory of Utah were no less turbulent than on the national scene. The good feeling between Mormons and gentiles in Utah following the Civil War was short-lived. Governor Doty died in June, 1865, and these two groups held separate funeral

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<sup>27</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Aaron H. Cragin, Journal History, January 24, 1870.

<sup>28</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Joseph S. Fowler, January 30, 1872. Church Historian's Office Letter Book.

services to pay their last respects. Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the House of Representatives, was in Utah and spoke at the gentile service. He suggested, before leaving the territory, that unless polygamy was abolished Utah would not be admitted into the Union. The California Volunteers left Utah in July, 1866, but Connor and others stayed on to pursue their mining interests. The gentile population of Salt Lake City at the time, according to one estimate, probably did not exceed three hundred people. Their influence was not proportional with their numbers, however, because they controlled much of the business establishment of the city and because they were a vocal minority. So threatening did their economic dominance become that the saints retaliated with a boycott in 1868, a conflict which will be mentioned later. This led to discord within the Church itself. A dissenting group of Mormon writers and merchants, called "Godbeites," joined forces with the gentiles to oppose Brigham Young's leadership and economic policies.

The first organized political opposition came in 1867 when a gentile, William McGrorty, was nominated to oppose William H. Hooper for territorial delegate to congress. He was, as expected, overwhelmingly defeated but he protested Hooper's right to a seat in congress which became a pattern for subsequent elections. Mormon political unity in the face of growing opposition was imperative. The Church Historian's Journal gives some insight into the pressure that could be brought to bear on those who did not contribute sufficiently to this goal. In what may be a reference to the above-mentioned election, it describes the disciplining of two Church leaders:

"Prest. Wells and Elder Cannon made statements and full confession relative to their not being energetic and alive sufficiently to the importance of putting down the division at the polls. Several of the police and others who had voted the scratched ticket made humble confessions."<sup>29</sup>

The town of Corrine, located about seventy miles north of Salt Lake City on the new transcontinental railroad line, boasted in 1869 of becoming the gentile capitol of Utah. This hope never materialized, but for a time it was the center of Protestant and anti-Mormon activity. A coalition of gentiles and Godbeites met here in 1870, to form the anti-Mormon "Liberal Party." The first issue of their organ, The Salt Lake Daily Tribune, said their program was to

oppose all ecclesiastical interference in civil or legislative matters, and advocate the exercise of free ballot by the abolition of 'numbered tickets' . . . . Commercially, it will advocate the development of the mineral wealth of Utah as its chief specialty. It will labor for breaking down the present sectarian boundaries which have surrounded matters of trade in the Territory and work for the extension of its commercial relations with the rest of the world.<sup>30</sup>

Two weeks later an editorial entitled "The Future Political Contests" declared that "the State must be separated from the Church. . . . The future prosperity of the Territory rests, then, in the emancipation of the community from priestly rule."<sup>31</sup> This, of course, was an open

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<sup>29</sup>Church Historian's Office Journal no. 24, February 17, 1868.

<sup>30</sup>The Salt Lake Daily Tribune, April 15, 1871.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., April 30, 1871.

declaration of political warfare against Mormon hegemony in the territory. The saints, therefore, soon responded by forming their own party, the "People's Party."

The Liberal Party received solid support from President Grant's territorial appointees. After having cooperative governors in James Duane Doty (1863-65) and Charles Durkee (1865-68), Grant appointed J. William Shaffer who had served as Chief of Staff to General Ben Butler during the Civil War, as territorial governor. During his brief term of office he became an active member of the local "Gentile Ring," campaigned for the Liberal Party candidate in 1870, issued a proclamation forbidding the Nauvoo Legion to gather unless ordered to do so by himself or the United States Marshal. He removed General Daniel Wells and appointed Patrick E. Connor to head the Legion. Tempers were at a boiling point when Shaffer died in October, 1870. George A. Smith said of his stormy tenure as governor: "Every act of his administration from his arrival to his departure had been characterized with an utter disregard of the laws, institutions and people of the Territory."<sup>32</sup> Shaffer's successor was George L. Woods of Oregon who spent most of his time in personal mining ventures while his Chief Justice, James B. McKean, carried on with the same militant zeal shown by Shaffer. One writer says Shaffer, McKean, and others were trying to accomplish by arbitrary methods what congress had failed to accomplish by legislation: "The probate courts were stripped of criminal jurisdiction and denied participation in choosing grand and petit juries,

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<sup>32</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Senator J. S. Harris, November 8, 1870. Church Historian's Office Letter Book.

the territorial marshal and attorney general were rejected as officers in the federal courts in territorial cases; juries were selected by the U. S. Marshal in open venire, and belief in polygamy became a cause for rejection in the naturalization processes."<sup>33</sup>

One move was apparently to charge exorbitant taxes against Church property and tithing. George A. wrote that President Young countered by directing the bishops "to omit collecting tithing and not make any more returns to the general tithing office for the present. . . as some of the officers of the Government seem determined to rob us of our hard-earned means."<sup>34</sup>

McKean managed to bring Brigham Young to trial on the charge of breaking the 1852 territorial statute for adultery. The case was called for October 9, 1871, but postponed until the following spring because of the President's illness. President Young and George A. Smith traveled to St. George to spend the winter, as they did each winter during their later lives. Borne down by the weight of troubles, George A. included the following in his dedicatory prayer for the St. George Temple site:

Our Father wilt Thou avenge the wrongs of Thy people upon their enemies, pour out upon them the wrath which thou hast in store for them in their own due time if they will not repent. Hasten the redemption of the centre Stake of Zion on this land over rule the discovery of minerals in this land for the good of Thy people. Control the President of the

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<sup>33</sup>Gustive O. Larson, Outline History of Utah and the Mormons (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1965), p. 229.

<sup>34</sup>Quoted in Zora Smith Jarvis, Ancestry, Biography, and Family of George A. Smith (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1962), p. 224.

United States and those in authority who propose evil against Thy people put hooks in the jaws of the enemies of Zion, and turn them from their wicked purposes.<sup>35</sup>

Fears of another Carthage filled the hearts of many saints as McKean moved the trial date up to early February and ordered President Young to appear. Against the advice of several, he returned to learn that the charge had been changed to murder on the testimony of the notorious apostate, Bill Hickman. Incensed by these tactics, George A. hurried a letter to the Attorney General of the United States asking for McKean's removal.<sup>36</sup>

The President's illness and isolation threw an additional burden on George A.'s shoulders, and he also was troubled with poor health. He reported his situation in a letter to his cousin:

The persecutions inflicted upon our people by lawless bigoted judges have inflicted additional labors upon me. I have endeavored for the present year to rest my mind from its former excessive labors. My medical advisers insisted that this was inevitably necessary to the preservation of my life. But President Young's arrest and confinement threw a responsibility upon me that I could not avoid.<sup>37</sup>

Conducting April Conference without President Young, who was still confined to his home awaiting trial, George A. spoke four days in succession and reminded the saints that public benefactors had been misunderstood and persecuted in all ages. His testimony to the

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<sup>35</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, November 9, 1871.

<sup>36</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to U. S. Attorney General, Journal History, March 16, 1872.

<sup>37</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Hannah P. Butler, Journal History, May 9, 1872.

people reveals the strength of his resistance and the depth of his faith in God: "I know that this is the work of God, and that all efforts of wicked men to trample it under foot will be vain. I know the Lord has commenced his great work of the latter days, and that Zion will triumph."<sup>38</sup>

They had a brief time of triumph when it was announced a few days later, on April 15th, that the Supreme Court had just handed down its decision on the Englebrecht case. It ruled that the Utah statute giving the territorial marshals the right to summon juries was valid. All McKean's cases then in process were dismissed for having illegal juries and the continued work of this arch-enemy was substantially thwarted. Charles Walker described the celebration held in St. George:

As soon as we got word we hoisted the glorious stars and stripes and fired the cannon in honor of the memorable occasion, at night the people assembled in the Meeting house. The Bands played the choirs sang and many pertinent speeches were made by the Brethern espresion of their joy and satisfaction of the decision of the Supreme Court, it was truly a time of rejoicing and thanksgiving to Almighty God for his overuling power in behalf of his children for surely he hath wrought out a great deliverance for his annointed and chosen--And has Br Brigham predicted, all the plans and vile schemes have resulted in a glorious Fizzle I composed and sang the following song which was received with roars of applause. [I quote one verse from the song.]<sup>7</sup>

A queer old chap is this judge McKean  
 A mean old chap I vow  
 He's been trying with all his might and main  
 With the Mormons to raise a row  
 His indictments are false his juries are packed  
 Himself and the ring to screen  
 And of all vile things that Grant sent here  
 Is this hireling curse McKean.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Journal History, April 6, 1872.

<sup>39</sup>Diary of Charles Walker 1833-1904, BYU typescript, I, 435.

A month following the Englebrecht decision, George A. traveled east to attend the Republican National Convention as a delegate from the Territory of Utah. On arriving in Philadelphia, he and his companion, Frank Fuller, were refused a seat in the convention in favor of two Republican representatives from Corrine who represented the "Gentile Ring" in Utah.

Somewhat disappointed, George A. decided to take a vacation from public life. He visited New York, the Boston Jubilee, and the old Smith homestead in Topsfield, Massachusetts. While there he wrote President Young that he was having an enjoyable time riding in the hills near the latter's birthplace. He mentioned visiting the graves of three great-grandfathers of the Smith family. The greatest benefit derived from this activity was its restful diversion from the turmoil of previous months. He wrote, "I have avoided contact with men whose conversation would be likely to agitate my mind, as I wish my absence from home to be a complete rest of the brain. I am well, and feel that my journey and change of air are having a beneficial effect upon me."<sup>40</sup>

It was probably for health and relaxation purposes that George A. embarked on another trip soon after his return to Utah. This adventure took him through most of the countries of Europe and many lands in the Near East. In addition to sightseeing, he and his companions intended to "inquire about the way to open the door of the

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<sup>40</sup>  
Deseret News [Salt Lake City], July 27, 1872.



Gospel to those nations that are locked up in darkness."<sup>41</sup> A letter of instruction from President Young and Wells outlined the following objectives for his trip:

We desire that you observe closely what openings now exist, or where they may be effected, for the introduction of the Gospel into the various countries you shall visit.

When you go to the land of Palestine, we wish you to dedicate and consecrate that land to the Lord, that it may be blessed with fruitfulness preparatory to the return of the Jews in fulfillment of the prophecy and the accomplishment of the purposes of our Heavenly Father.

And since you will doubtless be brought in contact with men of position and influence in society. . . we pray that you may be abundantly blessed with words of wisdom and free utterance in all your conversations pertaining to the Holy Gospel, dispelling prejudice and sowing seeds of righteousness among the people.<sup>42</sup>

On his trip East, George A. visited three sisters of the Prophet Joseph Smith's in Colchester and Fountain Green, Illinois. Sophronia was a widow living with her married daughter; Catherine was living in a home which President Young had provided her the means to purchase. In a letter to the president, George A. said, "Her place is a piece of timber land, which your last bounty enables her to increase to twenty acres, and as in all her life she has never been able to enjoy a home of her own for a single hour, her gratitude to you seems unbounded."<sup>43</sup> Lucy, the Prophet's youngest sister, was glad to see someone from Utah as the others had been.

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<sup>41</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to W. D. Fuller, September 6, 1872. Church Historian's Office Letter Book.

<sup>42</sup>Letter of Brigham Young and Daniel H. Wells to George A. Smith, October 15, 1872. George A. Smith Papers.

<sup>43</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Brigham Young, November 1, 1872. George A. Smith Papers.

In Washington, George A. and Feramorz Little had an interview with President Grant. They discussed affairs in Utah and George A. thanked the president for helping get the Englebrecht case before the Supreme Court before its regular order, a decision which released the saints "from many embarrassments" and placed them "right before the country."<sup>44</sup>

After a rough voyage, the travelers arrived in England and visited President Albert Carrington and the English missionaries. The last time George A. had been on English soil was when he and other apostles had first opened the land to proselyting. Times had changed as he described the missionary work as being similar to the "gathering of grapes after the vintage is done."<sup>45</sup> George A. delighted in the sights that met their eyes in England and Europe. He noted that London was a "wonder mine of history." On the continent they visited schools, industries, and dignitaries including President Thiers of France. George A. told him about the Mormon people, of their trip, and of their appreciation for the things they had seen in his country. George A.'s journal and letters are full of interesting descriptions and historical details pertaining to the cities they visited. They especially enjoyed Palestine and the opportunity it gave them to see the sites of Biblical history and the Savior's ministry. President Smith sometimes referred to the credulity required to accept some of the stories told by their guide. "I do not wonder," he wrote, "At Mark Twain burlesquing

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<sup>44</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to his wife, Bathsheba Smith, Journal History, November 2, 1872.

<sup>45</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Brigham Young, November 18, 1872. George A. Smith Papers.

the ancient sites, when our guide, Isaac, told us gravely that there was the rock cleft at the crucifixion, from which was taken the skull of Adam."<sup>46</sup> George A. was struck by the barrenness and desolation of Palestine and considered it ample fulfillment of the Biblical prophecies uttered against the Jews for disobedience. In early March the little group camped on the Mount of Olives and President George A. Smith offered a prayer dedicating the land for the return of the Jews, asking that it might become fertile again and that the "prophecies and promises unto Abraham and the prophets be fulfilled here in the own due time of the Lord."<sup>47</sup>

Traveling back through Europe, word came to George A. that he had been appointed Trustee-in-Trust for the Church, a position which he held to the end of his life, and a position nearly always held by the president of the Church. The conference also witnessed the calling of five new counselors to assist the ailing President Young in his heavy responsibilities. Cancelling the remainder of his trip, George A. hurried home to assume the duties of his new office. He and others of the company sailed from Liverpool on May 28, 1873. He had traveled over 26,000 miles, had dedicated and blessed the land of Palestine, had called on many influential people, and doubtless spread much good will for the Church. Where the prospects seemed favorable they also made requests that Mormon missionaries be allowed to proselyte in new

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<sup>46</sup>Correspondence of Palestine Tourists: Comprising a Series of Letters by George A. Smith, Lorenzo Snow, Paul A. Schettler, and Eliza R. Snow, of Utah (Salt Lake City, 1875), p. 197.

<sup>47</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, February 28, 1873. Orson Hyde had previously dedicated the land for the return of the Jews, Oct., 1841.

areas. Commenting on this aspect of their journey to a Salt Lake audience, George A. remarked that the Prophet Joseph Smith had laid up the Church an obligation to preach the Gospel to all nations and that "we now know much better than before our visit how to establish missions in those countries which will be done at a proper time as the Lord opens the way." These countries were, he continued, "fearfully tied up with ignorance, superstition and oppressive laws." He mentioned a request made to some members of the Greek parliament who replied that they were Christians already and that the Mormons should go among the heathen nations to teach Christ.<sup>48</sup>

While in Europe, George A. learned that the gentile "crusade" against the saints was gaining momentum. Before returning home he had received a letter from Joseph F. Smith saying President Grant and congress had been working "in an excited and blustering manner, to compell poor little Utah to surrender what few rights and liberties she did possess and to reduce her to a condition of helplessness, entirely at the mercy of the Utah 'ring.'" Grant, he observed

was absolutely frantic over the matter, and threatens Congress that if they do not pass some such legislation on the Vorhees or Cullums [sic] Bills especially for Utah that he will send the army under Gen. Sherridon to 'enforce the laws and protect the rights of citizens there! He has called the Judiciary committees of both houses before him and 'demanded' their services in the matter and then, has sent a special message to Congress on the subject.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>G. D. Watt and others (reporters), Journal of Discourses (26 vols.; London: LDS Book Depot, 1854-86), XVI, 283; hereafter cited as J.D.

<sup>49</sup>Letter of Joseph F. Smith to George A. Smith, February 18, 1873. George A. Smith Papers.

In his 1871 message to congress, President Grant made the following remark on the "mormon problem:" In Utah there still remains a remnant of barbarism, repugnant to civilization, to decency, and to the laws of the United States. . . . Neither polygamy nor any other violation of existing statutes will be permitted within the territories of the United States.<sup>50</sup> Grant's 1872 and 1873 messages also recommended legislation to deal with the saints. George A. Smith, back in the thick of the conflict, was disheartened to see such hate and prejudice against his people. His opinion to a friend was that the country had

fallen upon degenerate times when the question of right and wrong are so thoroughly powerless to guide legislators.

From the time Joseph Smith took the plates of Mormon from the hill Commorah [sic] to the present hour, we have been threatened with the direst calamities in rapid succession, including scandal by the press, abuse from the pulpit, denunciation from Politicians, pelting with eggs, whipping, tar and feathers, buring of houses by hundreds. . . utter disregard of law, path of office, honor or humanity on the part of officials.<sup>51</sup>

Congress, after several failures, finally passed a law that would make it possible for the courts to prosecute polygamy. The Poland Law abolished the offices of territorial general and marshal. It redefined the jurisdiction of the courts in the territory, assigning the probate courts to their "proper business of the settlement of estates." It stipulated that practicing or believing in polygamy

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<sup>50</sup>Haynes, op. cit., p. 210.

<sup>51</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to George Bates, December 28, 1873. George A. Smith Letter Book 1871-75, LDS Church Historian's Office.

could be grounds for refusing to allow a person to sit on a jury. The act was confirmed by the senate on June 23 and the next day the Salt Lake Tribune exalted: "The Last Relic of Barbarism Extirpated from the Earth." This law was the entering wedge that led to the proscriptive legislation of the 1880's.

There was an economic side to the conflict of the late 1860's and 1870's. From the beginning of the Utah period, Mormon leaders had emphasized the development of agriculture and home industry as the most secure economic base for their people. As a consequence merchandising, mining, and banking had largely fallen into the hands of non-Mormons. From the Utah War in 1857 the saints began to lose faith in some of these merchants who made a profit from them yet working against them politically. Brigham Young issued a statement in December, 1866, saying he was not against non-Mormons living and trading in Utah, but he did object to supporting the businesses of unprincipled men who made money from the saints and at the same time endeavored to overthrow their religion.<sup>52</sup> It became steadily clearer to the Church that business profits, instead of building the strength of the gentile community, should and could be used to help enrich their own economy. By 1868, serious measures were taken to realize this objective. The need for economic independence was stressed even more than in the past; the saints were asked to produce everything they needed; and in October Conference a new economic policy was announced which included the following program: (1) gentile

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<sup>52</sup>Deseret News [Salt Lake City], January 2, 1867.

merchants were to be boycotted; (2) a wholesale house called Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution would be established in Salt Lake City to purchase all goods imported into the territory for sale; (3) cooperative retail stores would be established in each ward and settlement and would patronize the parent wholesale house in Salt Lake City; (4) the retail stores would use their profits to build more shops and factories and thus strengthen the Mormon economy.<sup>53</sup>

Lest these measures seem unduly harsh, let us briefly review some of the additional stresses the Mormons were under at the time. Mention has been made of the post-Civil War effort to wrest political control of the Utah Territory from the Mormons. Post-war America looked to the West for wealth and expansion and Mormon hegemony in the Great Basin stood in the way of those objectives. By 1868, non-Mormon mining operations begun by General Patrick Connor, were making significant headway. One writer says "by 1868 nearly one hundred properties yielding gold, silver, lead, and copper were under development," and miners, investors, and prospectors were rapidly moving into the territory.<sup>54</sup> Well known to the Mormons was Connor's intention of attracting a gentile population to the Utah mines that would overthrow the Church's hold on territorial politics.

In the same year the transcontinental railroad was well on its way to Utah. Eastern propaganda advanced the claim that the com-

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<sup>53</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 297-98.

<sup>54</sup>Richard Vetterli, Mormonism Americanism and Politics (Salt Lake City: Ensign Publishing Company, 1961), p. 556.

ing of the railroad would destroy Mormonism. Mormon home industry would be threatened now that better and cheaper goods from the east could be shipped so easily; the mining enterprise would receive new impetus; non-Mormon emigration, it was rumored, would soon obliterate the political and numerical superiority of the saints.

Another worry was the possibility of losing the lands they had toiled so hard to develop to gentile claim-jumpers and the railroad companies. The government had granted huge grants of land to these companies along the railroad route. The Homestead Act of 1862 which allowed westerners to obtain legal title to their lands was not applied to Utah until 1869, after the completion of the railroad. As things turned out there was little successful claim-jumping in Utah, an outcome determined largely by stiff Mormon resistance.

The saints were aware of the fact that the railroad would be a mixed blessing, but their sermons indicate a belief that its benefits would outweigh the disadvantages. George A. Smith, for one, held firm to this opinion. It was he who presented to the provisional State of Deseret in 1849, a memorial to congress for the construction of a national railroad. In 1853, he submitted a similar memorial to the territorial legislature.<sup>55</sup> Speaking to a mass meeting in June, 1868, he declared that while making the pioneer trek they were mapping the most feasible route for a railroad and "every place we found that seemed difficult for laying the rails, we searched out a way for the

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<sup>55</sup>Preston Nibley, Brigham Young, The Man and His Work (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1960), p. 500.



road to go around or through it." He remarked that the route they selected was now being followed rather closely by the Union Pacific. He rejoiced that the necessity of traveling 105 days--"the length of time it took me and my family to move from the Missouri river here"--would soon pass away.<sup>56</sup>

With these factors in mind it can be seen why the political, economic, and social programs inaugurated by the saints were, in their minds, a desperate fight to save their sacred institutions, their political and economic power, their independence, and some thought, their very existence. They could hardly be expected to stand by and see themselves inundated by "eastern capitalists."

George A. Smith, soon to become the second ranking official in Mormonism, worked energetically to make the cooperative movement a success. Previous to the 1868 boycott, he and other Church leaders traveled through every community preaching the folly of "feeding and sustaining their avowed enemies." To the congregation in Payson he drove home the point with a forceful parable. A farmer discovering a snake nearly frozen to death was moved with sympathy and placed it under his shirt to give it warmth. It soon recovered and buried its fangs into his bosom which caused his death.<sup>57</sup>

In December, 1867, President Young organized the School of the Prophets which became the organization chiefly responsible for

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<sup>56</sup> Journal History, June 10, 1868.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., April 25, 1867.

implementing the cooperative movement. The General Authorities of the Church spent considerable time organizing, instructing, and working with these schools to aid them in applying the cooperative program to their various communities. In the spring of 1868, George A. told members of the Provo school that the saints were making the gentile merchants rich and they in turn were seeking to destroy the Church. "They are laying the knife for us," he stated, "and will distress [us] unless the Lord over rules their actions. Which I believe he will notwithstanding our backwardness: fellow scholars, let us quit tending with them and nourishing & cherishing them."<sup>58</sup> One brother in the following meeting accused the gentiles of doing everything they could against the saints. In the world, he continued, those who give aid and comfort to the enemy were considered traitors, therefore "why should we give aid and comfort to the enemies of the Kingdom of God?" The unanimous sentiment at the meeting was that all should stop trading with the gentiles. A week or so later a list of merchants with whom the saints must not trade was read to those assembled.<sup>59</sup>

In order for the cooperative movement to succeed it was necessary that all Church members give their support. Some were reluctant and disciplinary measures were required to bring them into line. Prior to the October, 1868 conference, President Young, George A. Smith, and

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<sup>58</sup>Minutes of the Provo School of the Prophets, 1868-71, Utah State Historical Society typescript, p. 17.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

George Q. Cannon impressed the Salt Lake School of the Prophets with the need to unitedly support the program and those who refused would be severed from the Church.<sup>60</sup> At a November gathering of the same group, one brother "was charged with having bought of a Jew. He confessed, promised not to do so any more and asked forgiveness."<sup>61</sup> Some time later President Young asked the Salt Lake bishops if any "had traded outside the general cooperative. Bishop P. H. Young had bought 1 sack of sugar at the elephant store. Those who had done so were requested to leave their tickets."<sup>62</sup> Non-intercourse with the gentiles went beyond economic matters. George A., for instance, had emphasized the wrongness of hiring school teachers "not of us" to teach their children.<sup>63</sup>

President George A. Smith thus spent a good deal of effort during the late 1860's and early 1870's working with the cooperative movement. In addition to carrying increased ecclesiastical responsibilities as a member of the First Presidency, he was one of five directors for Z.C.M.I.

He returned from his European tour in time to assist President Young and others in expanding the cooperative program into the United Order of Enoch. George A. was re-elected a director of Z.C.M.I. for the years 1873-75, and also had new economic responsibilities as

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<sup>60</sup>Church Historian's Office Journal no. 25, October 2, 1868.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., November 28, 1868.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., May 22, 1969. Admission to the School was by ticket only.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., November 7, 1868.

as Trustee-in-Trust for the Church.

Church leaders had maintained that the cooperative movement was only a preliminary to the Order of Enoch. The nation-wide Panic of 1873 gave the Church an opportunity to reorganize and revitalize Utah's economy along the lines of the United Order. Although there were four basic types in the Order, all were designed to increase Mormon self-sufficiency, stimulate a sagging economy, and promote spiritual unity.<sup>64</sup>

President Brigham Young and George A. Smith commenced the Order of Enoch while at their winter home in St. George in 1873-74. This Order became the model for other communities in southern Utah. By February 28, 1874, Presidents Young and Smith were able to announce in a telegram: "We have organized six companies after the order of Enoch, two in St. George, one in Clara Settlement, one in Washington, one in Harrisburg, and one in Leeds. We go up the river next week to organize the settlements."<sup>65</sup> The saints responded with alacrity to the vigorous preaching to these leaders. George A. urged that all importing cease and that all goods and services be provided by the Order. They should economize wherever possible; sisters were asked to make durable wooden-bottomed shoes, their own hats, can their own fruit, and make their dresses.<sup>66</sup>

Before leaving the south, Presidents Young and Smith telegraphed the other counselors in Salt Lake City reporting that they had

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<sup>64</sup>These types are described in Arrington, op. cit., pp. 330-37.

<sup>65</sup>Journal History, February 28, 1874.

<sup>66</sup>Bleak Diary, op. cit., p. 242.

about completed their work in southern Utah and requesting these brethren to "be prepared to take hold of the work energetically when we arrive, and assist us in pushing it forward."<sup>67</sup> On their homeward journey they organized the Order in nearly every major community. President Young declared that this program was no less than the "order of Heaven, the family of heaven on the earth; it is the children of our Father here upon the earth, organized into one body or family to operate together."<sup>68</sup> George A. preached that the Order was a significant step "towards the triumph of that great and glorious work for which we are continually laboring, namely the dawning of the Millennium and the commencement of the reign of Christ on the earth."<sup>69</sup> He expressed his conviction that prosperity would follow if the saints labored diligently to accept this program. The "fluctuations and difficulties that result from a money panic" would scarcely effect them and, moreover, they would become independent of the world. "Babylon will fall," he emphasized; "We do not want to be entangled with her nor share in her fall."<sup>70</sup>

During the summer, President Young and President Smith went as far north as Cache Valley in extending their work. In all, approximately 150 United Orders were organized in the Territory.

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<sup>68</sup>Nibley, op. cit., pp. 505-06.

<sup>69</sup>J.D., XVII, 62.

<sup>70</sup>Parowan Stake Record, 1870-1952, Record B, April 9, LDS Church Historian's Office, p. 41.

This rigorous schedule was telling on the President's health and by fall, as they started for St. George, he was "suffering severely from rheumatism." Passing through the settlements they once again buoyed up the members of the Church with advice and encouragement. George A. said of their preaching:

At all of the meetings which we have held we have exhorted the Saints to be faithful and diligent in the discharge of their duties. We preached the doctrine of baptism for the Dead; urged the necessity of the brethren building the Temples and preached upon the benefits of the United Order, if carried out according to the design of the Lord. We also dwelt upon the importance of Day and Sabbath Schools, of Aliens becoming naturalized and of citizens performing their duties faithfully.<sup>71</sup>

There are many who criticized the Mormon economic program of this period. Some have judged the United Orders a failure because approximately half of them were abandoned within a year of their organization, and nearly all were discontinued after Brigham Young's death in 1877. More careful scholars have noted the many positive benefits that came from the movement. The gentile onslaught, rather than weakening the Church, forced it to adopt programs which seemed to make it stronger and more unified than it had been. Mormon economic strength compared to that of the gentiles did not change much, but, says Leonard Arrington, "Utah did not become, at least immediately, an economic province whose chief function was to supply raw materials to the industrial East." Mormon economic efforts "managed to postpone, or at least slow down, the 'colonial' status which characterized early Montana, Nevada, Colorado, and Wyoming."<sup>72</sup> Unlike many western

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<sup>71</sup> George A. Smith's Journal, October, 1874.

<sup>72</sup> Arrington, op. cit., p. 255.

profiteers of the period, Z.C.M.I. charged fair prices in addition to being a convenient source of supply and a marketing agent for articles of home manufacture. As for the short-lived United Orders, Arrington suggests that they may only have been expected to carry the Church through the depression of 1873. Therefore, he summarizes,

the United Order movement may be said to have promoted thrift and made possible a more rapid accumulation of funds with which to buy machinery and equipment; created additional employment for the Mormon people; and assured a more rapid development of resources, particularly in areas where Utah had a comparative disadvantage. The United Order, in other words, helped to keep Utah economically independent of the East longer and more completely than would otherwise have been the case.<sup>73</sup>

The construction of Utah temples, especially the St. George Temple, was another important labor that occupied the last years of President George A. Smith. It was at a January 31, 1871, meeting in St. George when President Young proposed the building of a temple. Their jubilation over this news soon turned to questioning, how could such a few, poor people accomplish such a feat? President Young assured them they were in a better condition to build a temple than the saints in Nauvoo had been. The ground-breaking ceremonies were held that fall, and George A. was there to dedicate the temple plot. So eager were the local saints to begin work that the same day men commenced their labors with teams and scrapers. Sources of materials were explored and arrangements made to procure them. Brigham Young, George A., and Erastus Snow went in search of good stone. They examined both sides of the Black Ridge west of St. George. Though

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 338.

this stone was hard and not too accessible, they felt by "culling over considerable territory that we could find enough to build the foundation and carry the building above the dampness of the ground and mineral when the sandstone may be safely used."<sup>74</sup>

President Young had to leave prematurely to attend trial in Salt Lake City and consequently not much was accomplished until the following year. Since the president was in ill health in 1873, George A. assumed most of the responsibility for the temple project. Organizing the various facets of the work was an enormous task. All the saints in southern Utah were asked to contribute funds and labor. The settlements were called upon to provide foodstuffs for the workers, and hundreds of workers from the northern part of the territory were called on missions to help erect this temple in the desert. Brethren from Millard, Beaver, Kane, and Salt Lake Counties, as well as the local saints, gave themselves generously to the work during the fall and winter of 1873-74.

Numerous problems were encountered. As they were excavating for a foundation, for example, they ran into swampy, boggy ground. Some thought the site should be changed, but President Young said the present location had been dedicated and must not be moved. The enterprising saints then rigged a pile-driver by filling their cannon with lead and attaching it to a hoist thirty feet high. With this crude apparatus they drove tons of lava rock into the bog making it suitable

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<sup>74</sup>

George A. Smith's Journal, November, 1871.



for a good foundation.<sup>75</sup>

At General Conference in the spring of 1874, George A. tried to convince the saints of the desirability of going to St. George. He made a call for 150 volunteers to spend the summer in work on the building. In fall Conference he appealed for two or three hundred more, and asked the saints everywhere to remember the destitute condition of the laborers.<sup>76</sup> His plea had positive results for in November over three hundred men from the north arrived in St. George to spend from eighty to one hundred days labor on the temple. All vacant rooms in the city were taken and shanties were being built around the temple block to house the newcomers. George A. was trying to obtain more men for the quarry since the masons were laying block faster than it could be quarried. The most pressing problems, however, were getting lumber all the way from Mt. Trumbull, seventy miles away in Arizona, obtaining adequate forage for the teams, and enough food for the workers.<sup>77</sup> Sometimes the wards would send laborers and then fail to help in keeping them supplied. George A., for instance, wrote to Bishop John Parker of Virgin City saying a temple worker from his ward had run short of supplies for his family and would be forced to discontinue work unless the ward furnished these necessities.<sup>78</sup> Some

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<sup>75</sup>Juanita Brooks, "To the Glory of God," Arizona Highways, XXIII (April, 1947).

<sup>76</sup>J.D., XVII, 87-88, 197-98.

<sup>77</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to John Henry Smith, November 16, 1874. George A. Smith Letter Book, 1871-75.

<sup>78</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Bishop John Parker, December 11, 1874. George A. Smith Letter Book, 1871-75.

lumbermen working at Mt. Trumbull threatened to quit unless they were given better food supplies. George A. wrote that his office had supplied them with potatoes, beef, and molasses as had been promised. Apparently it was their responsibility to arrange for any additional supplies, so George A. replied that the supplies could not be furnished and that the men should "go home and repent of their folly [sic]."79

In late November, George A. wrote that the walls were between thirty and forty feet high, but that he was exceedingly busy" and "the care of keeping such a number of workmen in supplies, tools, and building materials I find onerous."<sup>80</sup> Two weeks later George A. wrote to Bishop Edward Hunter in Salt Lake saying that their beloved but ailing President was urging them to greater achievements and that three hundred tons of rock had been laid on the walls in the past week. George A. mentioned that he was preaching somewhere every Sunday doing what he could to encourage, but in spite of making "every effort" to push the work forward "small hinderances. . . seem unavoidable."<sup>81</sup>

By year's end a crew of nearly 400 men were making rapid progress. George A., though describing himself as having "about as many cares as a man of a family," managed to have enough diversionary activity to make his life interesting and happy. These activities

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<sup>79</sup>George A. Smith's Journal, December 26, 1874.

<sup>80</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Rev. Lyman Colman, November 26, 1874.

<sup>81</sup>Letter of George A. Smith to Bishop Hunter, December 8, 1874. George A. Smith Letter Book, 1871-75.

included the performance of miscellaneous Church duties, giving lectures on his European travels, reading a history of Italy and Captain Codman's travel book about the Mormons.

Brigham Young and George A. left St. George in mid-February for the purpose of securing materials for roofing the temple, better wood-working machinery, a baptismal font, and other supplies. They were planning to return after April Conference to "encourage the brethren and give such directions to workmen as may seem to be necessary."<sup>82</sup>

George A. Smith did not make the return trip; he had made his last journey to his beloved south country. In the spring he was attacked with a severe cold that settled in his lungs, and this, coupled with a strange case of insomnia, finally caused his death, September 1, 1875. The following description of his last words and sentiments, which are so typical of his magnificent life-long devotion, appeared in the Millennial Star.

In conversation last evening with President Young, Elder John Taylor, Dr. J. M. Bernhisel and others, he remarked that if it was the Lord's will he was willing to stay and fight the battles of Zion with President Young and his brethren; but if he was wanted on the other side of the veil, he was perfectly willing to go, as he had endeavored during his entire career to properly discharge every duty that had devolved upon him, had nothing for which to reproach himself, and felt that he had a good record on this and the other side of the veil.<sup>83</sup>

In President Young's opinion he left "as good a record on this side of

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<sup>82</sup>Bleak Diary, op. cit., pp. 380-81.

<sup>83</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], October 4, 1875.

the veil as any man that ever lived."<sup>84</sup> In a letter to Albert Carrington, Brigham Young wrote these moving words concerning his able First Counselor:

By his removal to a higher sphere, I lose a devoted friend, a wise counselor, and a lifelong companion. He leaves behind him, so far as my knowledge extends, and that is very extensive, a record as pure and as worthy of imitation as that of any servant of the Most High, who ever lived upon His footstool. He gave his heart, his mind, his energy, his love, in fact his all, to the furtherance of the great purposes of our God. In youth and in manhood, in sunshine or in storm, in peace or in persecution, he was true to his religion, his brethren,<sup>85</sup> and his God. And more than this, what can we say of any one?

Thus died at a relatively young age--fifty-eight years old--one of Utah's great pioneers, one of its foremost colonizers and community builders, an able historian, a beloved and loyal Church leader, and an efficient politician. George A. Smith spent his life in unwearied service to his Church. His zeal originated from his conviction that Mormonism was the literal kingdom of God on earth. Its leaders were God's oracles and its mission a divinely-appointed work for the last dispensation of the earth's temporal history. Certainly Mormonism's success is largely attributable to courageous, devoted and industrious leaders who were able to impart their spirit and conviction to the general membership.

A summary of George A. Smith's numerous achievements is a weighty challenge. He lived a multiphased life and attained distinction as a church leader, colonizer, speaker, historian, scholar,

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<sup>84</sup>Journal History, September 5, 1875.

<sup>85</sup>Quoted in Nibley, op. cit., p. 517.

military leader, and politician. As a young man he performed valuable service for the Church as a missionary and was chosen to important positions of leadership. He became a member of the First Quorum of Seventy at age eighteen and an apostle at twenty-two, one of the youngest men ever ordained to that office.

After helping discover and explore the saint's new hope in the Great Basin, he served a year in Pottawattamie County, Iowa, as Orson Hyde's counselor. Since Hyde was involved in political and journalistic pursuits, George A. appears to have assumed the burden of leadership at that crucial time. The hundreds of Church members yet to cross the plains had passed through considerable tribulation. Most had experienced the persecutions of Missouri and Illinois, had endured the terrible suffering at Winter Quarters in 1846, and were then living in makeshift dwellings while trying to obtain the necessary equipment and supplies for the westward migration. In addition to poverty, disease, and discouragement, many were being confused by the propaganda of apostate leaders. Who can calculate the importance of strong and optimistic leadership at a time such as this? George A., together with Orson Hyde and Ezra T. Benson, infused new life and hope into the community of saints as they labored to prepare them for the exodus to the New Zion.

As a Mormon colonizer and community builder, George A. Smith's contribution may rank second only to Brigham Young's. Not only was he the first to lead a colonizing company south of Utah Valley, but was instrumental in founding many central and southern Utah communities and nurturing them in their early years of growth. His area of

labor probably presented more obstacles to successful colonization than any other region settled by the Mormons. The hot semi-arid climate, alkaline soil, frequent flash floods, barren landscape, and failure of special enterprises such as the cotton and iron industries, were some of the factors that defied the efforts of the pioneers. No doubt Brigham Young's selection of George A. Smith, and later Erastus Snow, for leadership in southern Utah was a masterstroke. George A.'s success in making Church objectives vivid and meaningful, in building and maintaining morale, in fostering religious devotion, plus handling the myriad problems of ecclesiastical and civil administration, assuredly places him in the forefront of successful colonizers. As was stated in an earlier chapter, George A.'s most important service may have been in the psychological realm. His popular sermons, personable leadership, and steadfast dedication exerted a positive emotional force upon the hearts of the saints. The faithful pioneers of southern Utah greatly benefited from his constant encouragement, praise, and reminders that their work was meaningful in terms of the ultimate goals of the "kingdom."

In the judgment of the writer, George A. was the pre-eminent Church Historian of the nineteenth century. No other nineteenth century Latter-day Saint held the office so long or worked so diligently to collect and write the history of the Church. He should, therefore, be ranked next to those prominent non-professional Mormon historians of the twentieth century, namely Brigham H. Roberts, Andrew Jenson, and Joseph Fielding Smith. George A. assisted Willard Richards in writing and revising the "History of the Church" several years

before he officially became the Church Historian. The documentary "History of the Church" was written from the martyrdom of Joseph Smith to the year 1855 under George A.'s direction; a consistent effort was made to gather documentary material during his tenure; and Church missionaries and administrators were encouraged to keep complete and accurate records. The LDS Church, contains one of the most immense collections of historical material of any organization of comparable size and age in the world; and much of the credit for building this library must be given to George A. Smith.

During the Walker and Black Hawk Indian Wars, George A. was the leading military officer for southern Utah. Though the Mormons were reluctant to follow the policy of the Church by constructing forts or walls around their communities, the fault was not George A.'s. He nearly ruined his health in tireless labor to secure the defenses of the southern settlements. Peaceful relations with the Indians were consistently advocated and practiced by George A. which possibly was an important factor in the prevention of further conflicts.

In preparation for the threatened invasion of the United States Army in 1857, George A. was sent again to mobilize the military power of southern Utah. Though his sermons inadvertently helped cause the horrible massacre at Mountain Meadows, he did play a positive role in helping to formulate Mormon defensive strategy and later as a peace negotiator.

Politically, George A. was repeatedly found initiating legislation or lobbying for the welfare of his people. Political records

are inadequate to reveal his activity in detail, but the positions he held during the territorial period are indicative of his political prominence. He was an influential member of the Council of Fifty, a member of the upper house of the territorial legislature from 1851 to 1870, and president of that body during his last six years of membership. He was a leader in the conventions of 1855 and 1861 held for the purpose of memorializing congress for statehood. In 1856, he journeyed to Washington as one of two Mormon delegates to petition for statehood. In 1869, he was elected Lieutenant Governor of the "ghost state" of Deseret.

It is impossible from historical records to ascertain what influence George A. wielded as a Church leader and first counselor to Brigham Young. In the opinion of one writer, President Brigham Young depended on him "perhaps more than any other 'to bear off the burden of the Kingdom.'"<sup>86</sup> Considering his close personal association with the President during the entire Utah period of 1875, it is probably reasonable to assume that his influence in the formulation of Church policy was significant. President Young's funeral oration referred to George A., among other things, as a "wise counselor." One important instance of his counsel should be mentioned because of its importance. It was principally due to George A.'s advice, it appears, that President Young rearranged the seniority of the Quorum of the Twelve by placing Orson Hyde and Pratt in their proper position, thus bringing John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff into position to

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid.



become the next two presidents of the Church rather than Hyde and Pratt.<sup>87</sup>

If and when the full history of early Utah is finally written, there is little doubt in the mind of this writer, that much of the credit for building that remarkable commonwealth that has previously been ascribed to Brigham Young will be conferred upon his capable and devoted assistants, including George A. Smith.

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<sup>7</sup>Reed C. Durham, Jr. and Steven H. Heath, Succession in the Church (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Inc., 1970), pp. 74-75.

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THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF GEORGE A. SMITH TO THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MORMON SOCIETY IN THE  
TERRITORY OF UTAH

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ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of the contributions made by George A. Smith (1817-1875) to the Mormon society in the Utah Territory. It is an historical exposition and appraisal of his work as a Church leader, colonizer, historian, military leader, and politician.

George A. Smith was one of the most distinguished Mormon leaders during Brigham Young's administration as Church President. He played a vital role in aiding the exiled saints living in Iowa to complete the long exodus to Utah. The first colonizing mission to venture south of Utah Valley was led by George A. Smith. He acted as an administrative overseer to the central and southern Utah communities during most of his career in the territory. He assisted in the establishment of new communities in the region and concerned himself with their spiritual well-being as a Church leader, their political and economic growth as a legislator and economist, and their protection as a military leader. The study concludes that probably no man, save Brigham Young himself, made greater contributions as a Mormon colonizer and community builder. It is also maintained in the dissertation, that George A. Smith's achievements as a Mormon historian apparently exceeded that of any other nineteenth century Church member.

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