

THE MORMON TREK ACROSS IOWA TERRITORY

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The Mormon migration of 1846 from Illinois to Utah constituted the greatest mass movement under a single direction in all United States history; nor did any one of the many religious colonies planted along the Atlantic seaboard probably ever attract a larger number of co-religionists than followed Brigham Young and his colleagues from the banks of the Mississippi to the shores of Great Salt Lake. (Young had been elected president of the church following the death of its founder, Joseph Smith, on June 27, 1844.)

As it is proposed here to portray only the sufferings endured and heroism displayed by those zealous pilgrims in their winter march over the Iowa prairies, the one hundredth anniversary presenting an opportune occasion for such a review, no appraisal is attempted of Mormon creed or practices; nor would a lengthy discussion of the disturbances that forced their exodus in the most inclement season be germane to our purpose.

These troubles and controversies, in the opinion of the writer, largely stemmed from the ill-advised charter, granted by the Illinois legislature, whereby Nauvoo was made virtually a free city, having civil and military establishments entirely exempt from state control. This opportunity was promptly exploited by all the lawless elements of surrounding regions, who sheltered there while continuing their depredations elsewhere. They easily obtained protection from local police powers by professing conversion to the Mormon faith, representing the criminal complaints originating amongst their victims as only phases of the persecutions waged against the Latter Day Saints in various places.

As hostilities due to these and other causes multiplied, the Mormon leaders, sadly familiar with the perils and hardships attending previous expulsions, opened negotiations with government authorities at Washington, D. C., looking toward the securing of an immense grant of wilderness country somewhere in the Oregon country. Emigration to that section had been proved feasible by the long wagon trains that every summer were conveying settlers over deserts and mountains to the coastal regions of that vast and vaguely bounded area. This correspondence was broken off by threatening war clouds along our northwestern boundary, where Great Britain claimed sovereignty down to the Columbia river, while the presidential campaign slogan of 1844, "Fifty-Four Forty or Fight," voiced the claim of the United States to the entire Pacific coast south of Russian America (Alaska). As it would be the height of folly to transport a civilian colony into the path of contending armies, the Oregon project was dropped, just about the time that a tragedy in Lee county, Iowa, brought Mormon affairs to a crisis.

This was the robbery and murder in July, 1845, of two prominent Mennonite immigrants by a pair of ruffians who were traced to and arrested in Nauvoo. While the obnoxious city charter mentioned above had been legally annulled, the guilty parties never had been connected with the Latter Day Saints church, and were promptly surrendered to the demands of Iowa justice. But the mere broadcasting of the rumor that thieves and murderers were still harboring in the Mormon capital so inflamed popular wrath that the Illinois militia assembled, and an armed descent on Nauvoo, with the avowed purpose of exterminating Mormonism en masse, was barely averted by the intervention of a group of influential citizens, of whom the famed Stephen A. Douglass was one. He obtained a pledge from the high council of the church, that they would evacuate the state in a body, if only granted time to dispose of their holdings

and prepare for the journey; a pact, which entered into in October, 1845, fixed the early spring of 1846 for the date of final departure from Illinois. This was certainly brief enough period in which a community of some twenty thousand persons could transmute farms, stores, merchandise, town residences, livestock and furniture into transportation and supplies for a hegira of uncertain length to an unknown destination. Seldom, if ever, in modern times, and certainly never in United States history did a primitive theocracy show to greater advantage, nor manifest such hold on its followers, than during the stress of the subsequent events; and few, if any, American captains of enterprise have displayed such marvellous combinations of business acumen, social tact, far-seeing vision, mastery of mass psychology and tireless physical energy as did Brigham Young throughout the entire tremendous adventure then begun.

DEPARTURE FOR UNKNOWN WEST

Sweeping the assemblies of the faithful with the magnetic strains of prophetic oratory, he won almost unanimous acceptance of his proposal that, abandoning the fruits of several years industry, they should fare forth into the western wilderness, with the sole objective of getting far beyond the outermost fringes of civilization, and begin life all over again, just where, when or how it seemed probable Young himself had not so much as guessed at that time. And since we of this more sophisticated era have witnessed how multitudes of seemingly responsible beings have laid self and possessions at the feet of spellbinders like the late John Alexander Dowie, and artists of more recent date, we cannot think it strange that the Mormons generally obeyed implicitly the mandates of one whom they recognized as the accredited representative of the Lord of heaven and earth, with whom he took daily counsel concerning all their affairs, both temporal and eternal.

Threatened by fightings without, beset by fears within, perhaps one in ten of the Mormons broke away, in groups and single families, seeking safety wherever it could be found; the rest of the company, inspired by the commands and promises of their leader, backed by all the eloquence and authority of the hierarchy, plunged into the task of getting ready for their departure. Nauvoo overnight became both a great production center and a busy mart of trade; shops and factories began turning out every article necessary for travel from tent pins to prairie schooners, while mechanical and domestic skill wrought in wood, metal, leather and textiles, manufacturing camp furniture, farm and garden implements, harness, footgear, wagon and tent covers, blankets and clothing. A great ship yard took shape on the river front constructing an armada of flat boats for surmounting the first major obstacle on their outward path, the majestic Mississippi. At the same time all manner of property, real and personal, was dumped upon a soon glutted market, at which greedy profiteers drove cut-throat bargains with owners who had no choice but to take what they could get for what must needs be left behind.

In all these varied tasks, the whole hierarchy from Brigham Young to the newest ordained elder toiled most strenuously, promoting morale by example, maintaining besides a continuous program of exhortation, prayer, praise, and preaching, keeping the religious fervor of their followers at full tension. Yet, with all their careful planning and effort they perpetrated a monumental blunder that at once diverted much of their labor from these vital preparations, and created widespread suspicions of bad faith in respect to the promised migration. This was the announcement that they proposed before departing, to complete the magnificent temple, begun in quieter times, and to which enterprise all the most skilled workmen in their company were detailed, and on which the prophet and his apostles labored more

assiduously than at any other job, the whole undertaking so evidently useless in view of the impending removal, that hostile imagination saw in those massive stone walls a rising citadel of defense, whose spacious galleries could easily be transformed into artillery emplacements; and for what purpose could be such a lofty tower except for a lookout post, commanding every approach to the city?

In this state of excited feeling it is not strange that steps were taken to arraign all the Mormon leaders in the criminal courts of Illinois, action which would have plunged the whole movement into chaos; to forestall which Young and his threatened councilors in January, 1846, crossed over into a large Mormon colony in Lee county, and opened communications with Iowa authorities, asking for safe conduct while passing through the territory, pledging to maintain good order en route, and to make no permanent settlements east of the Missouri river; requests which were promptly granted and pledges which were rigidly kept.

THE CAMP OF ISRAEL

This accomplished, the company of about one hundred families congregated on the Des Moines river, at the mouth of Sugar creek, in what they called "The Camp of Israel," a name that migrated with the ruling Mormon powers to whatever place they might occupy temporarily on the westward march. Successive groups of exiles from Nauvoo joined them in the Sugar creek camp, until by February somewhere near two thousand people were assembled. From here, all the able-bodied men were sent out through the surrounding country, seeking employment at any task, and for any wages offered, accepting pay in goods, clothing, provisions, travel equipment, grain and hay for their livestock. In a word, anything they could use along the way or at journey's end, was legal tender where coin of the realm or "shin-plasters" of doubtful parentage were lacking.

This policy, here begun, was followed by the emigrants until clear beyond the outer rim of civilization, to the mutual profit of residents and passers by; their labor yielding the latter supplies without which they could not have proceeded; while settlers obtained, at almost nominal cost, improvements for which they might otherwise have waited for years. Nowhere on all the frontier, it is related, were so many log cabins replaced with comfortable frame houses in the same length of time as along the lower Des Moines valley, while newly broken prairie farms, neatly enclosed within new rail fences; stoutly bridged and corduroyed highways, and infant orchards sprang up like magic as lasting souvenirs of the Mormon trek. As the season advanced, the same willing hands planted, cultivated and harvested crops for willing employers, on the same easy terms. Nor in tolerant Iowa alone was such service rendered, for task forces from the slow-moving caravans, in search of like employment and similar wages, penetrated hostile and suspicious Missouri into communities adjacent to some from whence they had fled for their lives a few years previously, finding cordial welcome and generous hospitality as transient laborers, with no designs of taking up residence.

INCOME SHARED BY GROUP

All the returns secured by these expeditionary forces, whether of money or kind, went into a common stock, from which distribution was made according to family needs, a regulation that applied to personal possessions, whether great or small, as evidenced by the narrative of Eliza Snow, who related of her brother Lorenzo, a prominent character among them, that although much better off than many, having two wagons and teams, a small tent, a cow, and a scanty supply of provisions, he shared everything with those less fortunate. In fact, throughout the entire expedition, the whole company seems to have operated on this share and share alike

basis, constituting the most gigantic and long lasting communistic enterprise in American history.

Turning from this consideration of business methods to the beginnings of the pilgrimage, we find that the winter continued mild, greatly facilitating the exodus from Illinois, save for the slow and perilous ferriage across the river, now full of ice floes from farther north, until February 16th. Then there descended a northwest blizzard that in a few hours bridged the mighty stream so solidly that thousands passed over with loaded wagons in perfect safety; and the Mormon preachers would have been far superior to common flesh and blood, had they failed to draw a parallel between this manifestation of nature and the parting of the Red sea before God's ancient people.

Far otherwise was the effect of that Arctic visitation upon the Camp of Israel, where recent evictees from snug homes and blazing firesides shivered beneath the shelter of canvass tents, wagon covers and brush huts, while the mercury dropped to twenty degrees or more below zero; and in place of hot meals from torrid kitchens, fared on food prepared on green wood fires sputtering in the drifts, that often froze before it could be eaten. With medical attention as woefully lacking as other comforts, nine babes were ushered into that wintry world, while sick and aged were cared for only as best could be. Nor was this all, for the teams vitally necessary for transportation were wasted to skeletons on a diet of treetops and grass raked from under the snow.

Yet, amid besetments that seemingly would have absorbed every energy in the struggle for bare survival, Brigham Young and the High Council gave time and thought to the future welfare and growth of their cause. Shut out of Oregon, after careful study of the maps and reports of such explorers as Bonneville and Fremont, it was determined to locate in the inter-mountain spaces of that more southern immense and ill-defined tract, the Mexican province of California, putting themselves at

once beyond the settlements and jurisdiction of the United States, and in a region meagerly peopled by widely scattered Spanish villages, and still more scanty bands of hunger-bitten desert Indians. As to Mexican permission to so occupy their territory, it hardly seemed necessary, since that revolution-distracted country having proved utterly unable to prevent a few thousand American settlers from establishing the independence of Texas, it could certainly not hinder an equal number of Mormons from doing just about as they pleased in a district a thousand miles farther removed from the seat of government.

Having fixed upon their destination, it was next decided that the migration thither should not take the form of a grand rush in which only the strongest and best equipped might succeed, but in a series of waves, extending over several years. For the promotion of such plan a chain of way stations should be established where colonies engaged in farming and other activities should entertain and supply the successive groups of co-religionists following in the train of these earlier adventurers. To insure the continuation of these streams of emigration, provision was made for intensive propagation of their faith in both domestic and foreign fields by dispatching reinforcements to the missionaries who were already so engaged. Draftees for this purpose were selected in something like military cold-bloodedness, with respect to their fitness for the tasks assigned, regardless of their personal interests, as in the case of Elder F. D. Richards, ordered to England from the Sugar creek camp, leaving his wife, with several small children (and expecting another), to make her own way westward; the babe born by the wayside, died as likewise did an elder daughter, amid privations of which Mrs. Richards wrote long afterward: "Our situation was indeed pitiable; I had no suitable food for myself or children, and the heavy rain prevented us from having a fire."

THE VANGUARD STARTS WEST

All this while the Camp of Israel was expanding with the tide of refugees from Nauvoo, increasing its occupants to several thousand in number. Having set everything in order, as soon as the weather moderated slightly, after giving the Twelve Apostles supreme command of the encampment, Brigham Young mounted a wagon box rostrum and addressed his followers in prophetic strains, painting roseate pictures of the future glory of the Latter Day Saints. He demanded implicit obedience to the mandates of the hierarchy, bade each and every one to "toe the mark," render every possible assistance to fellow travellers, maintain good order among themselves, and good conduct toward the communities through which they passed. Then, assuming himself the duty of laying out the road across Iowa, the first lap of the long, long trail ahead, he set out with a vanguard of two hundred wagons on as strenuous an undertaking as ever befell pioneers.

Just why their route did not follow the old Dragoon Trail along the divide between Des Moines and Skunk rivers until they could cross the former stream to the watershed between the Raccoon and rivers farther south is a puzzle. Possibly the country was too little known at that time, or perhaps the thicker settlements and connecting roads of Van Buren, Davis, and Appanoose counties may have seemed to offer more favorable travel conditions. At any rate, they held directly west, cutting across waterways large and small, surmounting the rough ridges between them, and encountering vicissitudes of weather almost beyond human endurance. For, as often happens in Iowa's capricious climate, that frigid February was succeeded by a tempestuous March intermingling sudden thaws, torrential rains, furious blasts of snow and sleet, and nightly freeze ups. Under these conditions the primitive dirt roads, unused to such heavy traffic, were soon reduced to an alternation of chaotic knobs of frozen rubble in the morning and bot-

tomless quagmires in the afternoons. Vehicles were wrecked or stalled, and draft horses worn out until traded for oxen, much better suited for heavy going, and much easier subsisted, especially after green grass appeared. Halting at night, the pilgrims at times scraped snow off the ground before they could pitch their tents; at others covered the floor with brush on top of the mud, into which occasionally both bedding and sleepers sunk and froze fast while they slept. With nothing but smoky, greenwood fires for heat, dry clothing and properly cooked food became legends, while in cleanliness the fox holes of Belgium or Guadalcanal probably compared favorably with the camps of the Saints during that dreary winter march.

Thus circumstanced, progress was tediously slow; rain and melting snow alike kept the rivers and creeks at flood stage; broken bridges halted travel, deep mud held them stationary for days. These delays were not utterly wasted, since they were probably utilized in constructing the afore-mentioned way stations, the first of which was located at Richardson's Point, fifty-five miles from Nauvoo, the second at Chariton river, a third at Locust creek, and at last, almost ten weeks out from Sugar creek, one hundred and fifty-five miles from Nauvoo, on the rolling prairies of Grand river, in southern Iowa, they paused at a place where the name and town of Garden Grove perpetuates the memory of their presence. Here the leaders decided was a suitable place for one of the principal supply stations—those already mentioned being more in the nature of rest camps. Here they were clear outside of White Man's Land, the western boundary being at that time the Red Rock Line, close to the east border of Wayne county, all southwestern Iowa beyond being temporarily occupied by the Pottawattamie tribe, allowed to inhabit here enroute to Kansas until such time as it would be needed for expanding settlement.

THE GARDEN GROVE STATION

At Garden Grove the Mormons acquired several hundred acres of ground, either by lease from the U. S. government, or bargain with the tribe just named. If the latter, it is worthy of note that neither in Iowa, nor while crossing the plains, nor yet in Utah, were they ever seriously beset with the Indian troubles almost universally rife in all our frontier history. Aside from the natural irritation springing from the red man's proclivity for theft, a fault common to most barbarous peoples, and not unknown in so-called civilized communities, the Mormons got along pretty well with the Indians; an immunity doubtless largely due to the application of Brigham Young's sanely philosophical slogan of "Cheaper to feed them than to fight them," although possibly savage sensibilities may have been moved to a measure of sympathy for a people whom they might regard as being like themselves, exiles in the wilderness.

A large portion of the land secured was broken up and planted to corn, spring wheat, potatoes and such other crops as would flourish in the raw sod; fields were fenced and buildings erected with rails and lumber hewn or sawed in the Grand river woodlands. An occupational colony remained here for a number of years, supplying Utah bound emigrants with the necessities of life and travel.

West of the Red Rock Line nothing but Indian horse and foot paths led farther, and, perhaps made trailwise by the preceding march, the Mormon's trail angled north-westerly along the Mississippi-Missouri divide until passing above the headwaters of the Grand, Platte, Nodaway and small streams flowing toward the Missouri state line, they came to the East Nishnabotna at Indian Town, now Lewis. On May 16th, while exploring this new route, the Pratt brothers, Parley and Orson, ascended a round topped bluff in the eastern part of what is now Union county, and gazed across the main

branch of Grand river upon a prairie vista stretching farther than the eye could reach clothed in luxurious blue stem verdure, starred by millions of tiger lilies, sweet williams, blue indigo flowers and kindred natural growths, interspersed with groves and timber belts splashed with radiant crabapple blossoms. Entranced by the view, they recalled the law giver's vision of the Promised Land, and named the place Mount Pisgah.

Here, just about half way between Iowa's great flanking rivers, was planted a larger and more important way station than that at Garden Grove. A mammoth spring gushing from the hillside furnished both water and power for the town built around it. An enterprising millwright located beside its flow and manufactured corn and wheat into breadstuffs, on buhrs hewn out of glacial boulders strewn over the hilltops; the millstones, left behind when the place was abandoned, long adorned the gateway of the A. C. White farm home, but now may be seen in front of the State Historical building in Des Moines. Carpenter, blacksmith, wagon and weaver shops likewise sprang up and were busy; and general merchandisers trafficked not only with Mormon emigrants, but with the settlers who soon began to pre-empt claims, bartering groceries, drygoods, boots, shoes, hardware, tools, etc., for furs, hides, wool, wild honey, cured meats and whatever other local products could be freighted to the river towns. Productive farms dotted the fertile environs of Mount Pisgah, and willing Mormon workers supplied much needed cheap labor to the pioneers swarming into the country close after the footsteps of the departing Sac and Fox tribes.

These various way stations flourished until some time in the Eighteen Hundred and Fifties, when their occupants were summoned to assemble in Utah; Garden Grove was then taken over by permanent residents, but more than half a century ago Mount Pisgah faded from sight, leaving as sole reminder of its existence the ceme-

tery in which rest the forms of some hundreds of weary pilgrims whose worn feet refused to bear them farther toward their earthly Canaan.

Returning from this long glance ahead, we find that Brigham Young arrived with the vanguard at Council Bluffs on June 14th, and crossing the river, established a camp he named Winter Quarters near where suburban Florence now graces the map of Nebraska. That sagacious leader decided to proceed no further west until the next spring, lest unforeseen delays find them winter-bound on the plains or in the mountains, cut off from any hope of relief, as the whole region west of the Missouri river was absolutely Indian country. The United States authorities at the Pottawattamie agency in Council Bluffs, objected seriously to the Winter Quarters location as affording ready excuse for trouble with the plains tribes, but with the Mexican war in progress, calling for every musket on the Rio Grande, there were no troops available to hinder the movement, and the Mormon charm worked on the Red Men here as elsewhere. But the vast mass of the emigrants remained east of the river, filling the gulches and canyons along Indian creek with cabins, huts and dugouts, besides store and trading houses, forming a town which they named Kaneshville, in appreciation of the friendly services of Colonel Kane, of the U. S. army, who in return for efficient Mormon nursing through a severe illness, interceded in their interests with government officials both here and in Washington.

Meantime, without waiting for favorable weather or travel conditions, a caravan of more than five hundred wagons set out on March 1st from Sugar creek in the wake of the advance company, whose passage, reducing the primitive highways to wretchedness, and depletion of the supplemental supplies of provisions and provender that could be obtained from the communities through which they passed, rendered progress slower and more

difficult, for a company whose requirements were so much greater. Rain, mud, broken bridges and swollen streams combined to retard them until at times night encampments were scarcely out of sight of morning starting points. Six miles was counted a good days journey and ten was the highest record. When halted by high waters their camp sites were often overflowed as at Chariton river where they were held up three weeks, and a baby boy, born in a tent through which the icy flood waters ran inches deep, carried as lasting souvenir of the situation, the name of the river by which he first saw light.

CRUDE BURIALS COMMON .

That sickness and death were common experiences was but a natural consequence of the prevailing undernourishment, over work and constant exposure to the elements. Funerals were so frequent as to become very informal. Burials of necessity often were made on the nearest dry ground, and the accessories of civilized life were so lacking that envelops of bark, torn Indian style from the larger trees, generally took the place of coffins. In such rude containers, hastily interred in graves unmarked and all too soon obliterated, the sleepers rest as comfortably as though encased in bronze or copper caskets, their sepulchres protected by marble or granite memorials.

The long detention at Chariton river was utilized by instituting a more efficient organization, on lines long in vogue among the frontier freighting and emigration trains. The column was formed into divisions of fifty wagons, subdivided in platoons of ten, under a competent wagon master, each fifty having a commissary charged with the duty of securing and distributing equitably all such essential supplies as were possessed or could be procured.

Now, it should not be inferred from the foregoing recital of difficulties encountered and sufferings endured,

that this movement was a traversing of gulfs of dark despair, for, rising on the wings of buoyant American pioneering temperament, the emigrants gave cheerful response to the morale building tactics of the hierarchy, who employed every known device to inspire, entertain or amuse these patient toilers. Religious exercises of all types were constantly maintained; intellectual pabulum was supplied by meetings patterned after the "lyceums" or "literary societies" then prevalent all over the west. Lectures, debates, orations, prose and poetical readings afforded mental nourishment; while wherever weather and footing permitted the encampments were enlivened by impromptu balls, in which the priesthood, from Brigham Young on down participated, first opening them with prayer, and then leading off in Virginia reels and country dances, the waltz and kindred figures being taboo as unseemly. This latter diversion was immensely promoted by the music furnished by Captain Pitts' brass band, imported from England by a group of performers, all zealous converts to the Mormon faith. These not only dealt out inspiration to their fellow believers, but as occasion offered toured the regions adjacent to the line of march, giving concerts and playing for picnics, campaign rallies and the like, accepting pay in the same currency as that received for manual labor as noted above, and loyally turning all receipts over to the common fund. As advancing spring brought more cheerful weather and stable roadways, according to some writers, their lively, marching airs spurred lagging footsteps to swifter action, and echoing afar over hill and valley were a prime factor in winning and holding the good will of wandering Indian bands.

To all these forms of entertainment Iowans residing near the camping places were cordially welcomed, and apparently little molested by proselyting efforts. Regularity of conduct was so strictly observed that a solitary instance of passing counterfeit money—with which the whole country teemed in that era of state and private

bank issues, little of which had much tangible backing—was the most serious offense finding place in the historic narrations. Over the culprit's head in this case were uncorked all the vials of wrath Brigham Young's volcanic temper was capable of producing; an outburst probably inspired as much by outraged common sense as by principles of honesty, since the dullest witted should have guessed that the broadcasting of the rumor of such a crime by a Mormon, might doom the whole company to starvation, if not mob violence. In a word the general Iowa attitude toward these passers-by was such as to convince even the notorious John D. Lee that many of the troubles experienced by them elsewhere were provoked by the excesses of fanatical fools within their own ranks—a confession that might be under-written by religionists other than Mormon.

Once they were delivered from the grip of a winter that tarried over long in the lap of spring, the wayside camps presented the pleasant pictures drawn by non-Mormon observers, who saw busy cobblers searching creek beds for smooth stones on which to mend old or shape new footwear; bread which had been mixed and raised during the day's march being baked in ovens scooped out of the hillside; buckets of cream churned into butter while suspended from wagon axles jolting along the rough tracks; wheelwrights doctoring ailing vehicles; blacksmiths mending the gun locks used in taking toll of deer, turkey, wild fowl and all the rest of game that swarmed in that hunters' paradise; and perhaps most inspiring sight of all, the evening schools alerting youthful minds to keep intellectual pace with their practical training in camp and travel technique, and the art and science of making the best of meagre resources.

A MIGHTY MIGRATION

All that summer and fall this living tide flowed steadily across southern Iowa. Bishop John Taylor, England

bound from Kanessville in July, estimated that he encountered trains aggregating over three thousand wagons, bearing some fifteen thousand persons, possessing not less than 30,000 head of cattle, horses and mules, with innumerable herds of sheep, the livestock principally secured by the barter of labor and excess household furnishings with permanent settlers along the way. Large as these figures seem, they were confirmed in the main by Colonel Kane, who travelled the same route and whose sympathetic eyes noted many a nondescript conveyance, the makeshifts of extreme poverty, sandwiched among the sturdy prairie schooners; clumsy carts, drawn by bony draft animals and piloted by peaked-faced invalid drivers, peering from beneath bed-quilt canopies; or rickety two-wheeled concerns, akin to what the city poor used to haul slops for the pigs; such affairs bearing but light loads, a baby or two, sacks of flour or bundles of clothes; a foreglimpse of the historic—and disastrous—hand carts of a decade later.

By the coming of winter in 1846 the greater portion of these caravans were located at Kanessville, which swiftly expanded into the main base of operations for the remainder of the journey, being the last point accessible by water transportation. Likewise, through the rerouting of Oregon emigration over the Mormon Trail, it became the jumping off place for those headed that way, and a few years later on, the California gold rushers made it headquarters of the Overland Route. Some thousands, however, remained in the rest camps and way stations previously mentioned, in one of which, Mount Pisgah, was inaugurated one of the romantic incidents of American military history.

ENLISTED QUOTA OF SOLDIERS

With the outbreak of the Mexican War Brigham Young of necessity revised his program of taking his followers beyond United States boundaries; for that far-seeing mind promptly realized that American success

would add California to our national domain. This new departure consisted of an offer, through Elder J. C. Little, his agent in Washington, D. C., to raise among his followers two regiments of a thousand men each, one of which would assist in conquering New Mexico, the other to be transported around Cape Horn by the United States navy to the west coast, where Capt. J. C. Fremont at the head of a small American exploring party was already inciting revolt against Mexican misrule.

From President Polk's diary it would seem that he received this proposal with considerable favor until Sen. Thomas H. Benton, of Missouri, ablest western statesman of that epoch, suggested the possibility that such a force might easily overpower Fremont's little command, and, by means of an alliance with either England, France, or Russia, all of whom were suspected of harboring designs upon the Pacific coast Mexican possessions, establish there the independent government that aggressive Mormons had freely talked about during their Illinois troubles.

Thus admonished, but unwilling to offend the powerful leader of "that peculiar people" as he termed Young's following, the president, while diplomatically forgetting the sea borne part of the offer, cordially accepted the services of some five hundred men who would form part of the expedition being assembled at Fort Leavenworth, with the purpose of occupying New Mexico and proceeding thence to southern California. Carefully pointed out was the advantage it would be to their entire company to be preceded to their destination by such a band of active young men, who, after enjoying the benefits of government pay, transportation, and subsistence, could, upon their discharge, explore and examine the country in advance of the arrival of their friends and families.

Whether Young ever entertained any such ambitious projects as Senator Benton surmised will never be

known, but he was too worldly-wise to refuse the half loaf asked of him, in place of the two big ones offered by him, and when in June, 1846, Captain Allen, founder of Fort Des Moines, arrived at Mount Pisgah on a recruiting drive, the Mormon authorities there and at Kaneshville lent such hearty assistance that the desired quota was soon enroute to the rendezvous. The saga of the "Mormon Battalion" belongs not to this narrative; they fulfilled their mission without experiencing any armed resistance, and their soldiers' pay, faithfully remitted to their families, or the church treasury, added materially to the supplies needed for the plains transit. Discharged in California, a few made arms their profession by re-enlisting; a larger number settled around San Bernardino, but the great majority rejoined their families, by that time permanently located in Utah.

LEFT BEHIND AT NAUVOO

While all these events featured life along the Mormon Trail, a distressed remnant, nearly a thousand in number, of extremely poor, aged and sickly, lingered in Nauvoo, beset by all manner of adversities, chief of which was a rising tide of suspicion that this pitiful rear guard remained merely to hold the fort, pending the return of the hosts which had departed the previous winter; suspicions that culminated on September 17th, when the local militia rounded up all these helpless stragglers, and ferried them across the river. Not even severe illness exempted them from eviction, as witness the relation of one Thomas Bullock, whose entire household of eight persons, himself, wife, four children, her blind mother and an elderly aunt, although shaking with ague, were given just twenty minutes to pack up and vacate their dwellings.

Whether by accident or design does not appear, but this unfortunate band was dumped upon a swampy disease-infested landing place, and in this very properly-named Poor Camp they suffered for nearly a month all

the privations and exposures that befell their predecessors in the winter and spring march earlier that year. On them burst a series of equinoctial rains, soaking everybody and everything as they cowered under flimsy tents made of bedclothes, or under the wagons of the better-equipped. The Bullock narrative tells how, while he was lying in a stupor from fever, the women toiled incessantly at bailing the wind-driven torrents from the wagon box, while near by huddled in the brush, a poor woman and her three children, their only shelter a rain drenched cloak. Food was distressingly scarce, and of poor quality, the principal bread supply made of parched corn, ground on hand mills and mixed with slippery elm bark to swell its bulk; a few less hostile Illinoisans sent them small amounts of clothes, provisions and money; their sales agents in Nauvoo helped with the proceeds of their abandoned property, and on October 9th came rescue parties from Kaneshville and Mount Pisgah with necessary transportation.

Then in the very act of evacuating Poor Camp there happened an event that quite understandably, and very excusably they regarded as a miracle. While preparing their last slim meal there came great swarms of quail from east of the Mississippi river, falling by hundreds in the camp, so exhausted by the flight that even little children picked them up; every family enjoyed an addition to its scanty rations, but were restrained from taking more than sufficient for the one meal, by the captain of the camp, who quoted the prudent saying of some philosophical Indian: "If we kill more than we can eat, we may want to eat when we cannot kill." The phenomenon was noted by local historians for fifty miles up and down the river, and was broadcast over the world by Mormon writers with eloquent references to the event set forth in Numbers, XI, 31-33, as evidence of the Divine care bestowed upon these Latter Day Saints.

Even with this help rendered by their brethren, this meagerly-equipped rear guard did not reach Kaneshville until the last of November, nor did the Iowa Trek end with the arrival of these last exiles from Nauvoo at the western edge of the state.

PRIVATIONS ON THE TRAIL

The Camp of Israel did not set out for Salt Lake until late spring of 1847, being followed at wide intervals of time and space by successive waves of emigration. For the support and equipment of these the various way stations already described were kept in operation; the colonists in them passed the winter of 1846-47 in like fashion with the earliest pioneers in the same territory, suffering the lack of everything save the barest necessities of existence. Conditions were intensified in their case by the need of sharing their resources with passing fellow travelers, and husbanding them for their own use when they in turn should take the long, long trail for the modern Land of Promise, and spend weary, unproductive months getting settled in its untilled spaces.

The sickness and death resulting from privation and exposure experienced by all new settlements did not pass them by, but in some instances were aggravated by the faith-healing dogmas accepted by some Mormons, while the visitations of cholera, typhus and smallpox, epidemic during those years all through the west, took their toll regardless of creed or medical practice. Oftentimes there were scarcely enough well persons to care for the sick and bury the dead; yet by means of the recreations employed in the nightly encampments while on the march, good spirits were maintained and loyalty preserved. Lorenzo Snow, civil and religious head at Mount Pisgah, gives us a lively account of one such entertainment, and at the same time a glimpse of a polygamous family, most objectionable feature of Mormonism under leadership of Brigham Young and his counsellors, but now banned by Mormon law for more than half a century.

This party was given in his own home, said residence being a one-story log cabin, fifteen by thirty in size, dirt floored and roofed, in which he dwelt with his four wives, three of whom were caring for young infants, and the fourth had three children by a previous marriage; seemingly sufficient population for such cramped quarters. But to this they invited all comers, first carpeting the earthen floor with straw, curtaining the log walls with clean sheets, and illuminating the structure with candelabra of scooped out turnips, stuck between the logs or suspended from the ceiling; and here a program was rendered consisting of song, both sacred and secular; recitations, dramatic and comic; orations, conundrums, etc., which was voted a grand success by all present. Religious services were as a matter of course held regularly, and in all the larger camps, warm weather gatherings for this and other purposes such as picnics, concerts, dances and the like were held in "boweries" constructed of poles set on end, raftered and shingled with brush and slough hay, which served likewise as schoolhouses. In Kaneshville two such buildings of a little more substantial construction were erected; one for school the other for church.

Despite prevalent illness, every able-bodied man was kept busy throughout the winter preparing for the future either by repairing travel equipment, or manufacturing camp or household furniture, such as tubs, baskets, tables, chairs, churns and the like, while women were as busy spinning, knitting, weaving, sewing, and mending. Two elders dispatched to the east from Mount Pisgah soliciting assistance returned with \$600.00 cash and such a quantity of provisions that a whole wagon load was sent to Winter Quarters as a Christmas present for Brigham Young.

SCATTERED GROUPS IN IOWA

The Mormon occupation, however, was not entirely confined to its various way stations; small groups dis-

persed all over southwestern Iowa, giving place names to such villages as Manti, near where Shenandoah sprang up twenty-five years subsequently, and Mormontown, now Blockton, in southeastern Taylor county; somewhat larger bands located along the Little Sioux, Boyer and other streams to the northward of Kaneshville; while single families and sometimes individuals in like manner chose distinctive habitations.

A large percentage of these declined to obey the mandate that went forth six or eight years later than the period we have been dealing with, summoning all Latter Day Saints to Utah. One such was a sister of Brigham Young himself, who withdrew from the Mormon faith, married a worthy Gentile, entered an orthodox church, lived and died an honored resident of Wayne county, Iowa.

However, most of those who refused the Utah summons eventually found their way into the ranks of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, a movement starting in Council Bluffs, being led by the widow of Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon faith, and her son Joseph Smith, the younger, who, denouncing polygamy and other objectionable practices of the Utah branch, as unwarranted innovations, have always observed the same standards of social and domestic conduct as other Christian believers.

That all Mormon lingerers in Iowa did not attach themselves to this reorganized church was a matter of general belief, for in a certain unnamed Hawkeye community, where, as the writer was informed by a brother clergyman, now deceased, a Mormon church, that existed until late in the nineteenth century, numbered in its ranks such an undue percentage of "widows" as to give rise to the suspicion that some of these were secretly the plural wives of wealthy brethren who contributed to their support. This situation finally aroused the curiosity of an energetic woman evangelist of an orthodox

church, who, while conducting revival meetings in the village, visited a number of these homes making such leading inquiries as to the duration of their respective "widowhoods," and the relation of the ages of the younger children to the status claimed by the mothers, as to precipitate almost as abrupt an exodus of the parties immediately concerned as the grand departure from Nauvoo.

If there were other instances similar anywhere in the state they have escaped notice, and the general attitude of the Latter Day Saint people on moral issues is quite fairly represented by the action of a certain elder of that church, who while serving as Mayor of Council Bluffs, co-operated valiantly with the Protestant Ministerial Association in campaigns to banish filthy literature from the newsstands, suppress Sunday balls at pleasure resorts, and put all other public dances under strict police supervision.

Since these reminiscences are only intended to review events of Iowa's natal year, with brief notice of some more remote consequences of the same, we allot no space to the tragic handcart episode of ten years later.

HISTORICAL SOURCES:

The foregoing sketch of what has been termed "the most important occurrence in Iowa history prior to the Civil war," has been compiled from a number of narratives. These, in the main, cover the same ground, but differ so greatly in arrangement and sequence of events, as to render the usual system of footnotes extremely difficult of arrangement; hence, the writer prefers giving his list of authorities in the paragraph below. Any who may wish to consult them will find them in the State Historical department collection, or the Des Moines City Library; and doubtless these or others as authentic are to be found in other public libraries.

Principal sources are "The History of Lee County," by Iowa writers of the W. P. A.; "The History of Iowa," by B. F. Gue," and "Mormon Trails," by Edgar R. Harlan. Next to these is Linn's "Story of the Mormons," and "The Prophet of Palmyra," by Thomas Gregg, of Hamilton, Illinois. Some extracts from

the works of two prominent Mormon churchmen, Bishops Cannon and Knapp, may also be mentioned; a valuable piece of information concerning Brigham Young's sister was given the writer by Attorney H. M. Havner, of Des Moines, who was acquainted with her family.

THE SWEEP OF INDIANA HISTORY

The extent and sweep of a state's past is astonishing. Indiana's real age is ancient. Its origins do not begin with the French settlements in the eighteenth century. Before them were the resident Indian tribes, and before them were the remote mound builders. The true history of Indiana begins with remarkable archaeological evidence of these early inhabitants some three thousand years ago, and extends down through three races, several levels of culture and a dozen nationalities to the twentieth century Hoosier. Its scope includes savage warfare, fur trading, forts and missions, international war, pioneer settlement, individual enterprise, communal association, exploitation of natural resources, the growth of farms and manufacturing, and urban development. The variety of life in Indiana (like in all of the mid-west region) is as amazing as its age.

An interest in history is a sign of maturity, not of adolescent enthusiasm. During the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, this nation was too busy fighting for its existence, expanding its boundaries, forming its governments, conquering the wilderness, and developing its resources to pause for a backward look. The rich resources and the freedom offered the individual were a continual stimulant to "progress"—getting ahead, changing, improving. The material past was something to flee from; what was good enough for father was not good enough for son. But, with the disappearance of the frontier and the rise of new social problems, the United States has stopped to examine its origins. The significance of history has received new appreciation.—Howard H. Peckham in the *Indiana History Bulletin*.

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