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The Church and the Utah War, 1857–58

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The Utah War was different from any other military conflict or venture in which members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have participated. In subsequent wars and military expeditions—with the exception of the Civil War—the Church and its members have supported and fought for the United States and other nations' armed forces to defeat other enemies. In the Utah War, however, this was not the case. In acts of self-preservation, the Church and the

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Lot Smith (1830–92)

At the young age of sixteen, Lot Smith volunteered to be a member of the Mormon Battalion. The experience and knowledge he gained on this overland march to California would prove invaluable to the Church for many years to come. Upon returning to Salt Lake, Smith became a leader in the Nauvoo Legion. During the Utah War, Major Smith carried out his orders to impede the progress of the army while also following the order not to hurt anyone except in self-defense.

Lot Smith. Courtesy of Church Archives.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Lot Smith was again called upon to participate in a military role. He was assigned with one hundred men to protect the telegraph lines, the mail lines, and any settlers traveling from St. Louis to Salt Lake City. His success earned him great acclaim from his peers and other federal cavalry units.

After the Civil War, Smith was called by Brigham Young to aid in the colonization efforts of the Church. He was sent to Arizona to help establish settlements there. In June 1892, he was killed by a renegade Native American in Tuba City, Arizona (Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan, eds., *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000], 1134–35).

Territory of Utah openly challenged federal authority and conducted military operations against the U.S. Army. The territorial militia, known as the Nauvoo Legion, destroyed valuable U.S. military provisions and supplies and stole government livestock, stopping just short of engaging in combat. Thus, the Utah War is a unique military experience in Church history.

During most wars, Church membership has grown and lands have been opened to missionary opportunities in the aftermath of war. Similarly, in most conflicts, the Church has supported national war efforts through nonmilitary means by donating food, goods, and money to ease the pain of those affected by the war.

During the Utah War, these future trends did not apply. Instead of increasing missionary opportunities, Church colonies and settlements closed; missions were terminated; calls to new missionaries stopped; work on the Salt Lake Temple ceased and the foundation was buried; food and resources were hoarded and not allowed to be sold to non–Latter-day Saint immigrant trains; shops and manu-

facturing entities produced war materiel as opposed to consumer goods; and most of the population of the northern Utah cities left their homes and property and moved south to Utah Valley for several weeks in 1858.

In fact, during the spring of 1858, residents of Salt Lake City had prepared to destroy their city rather than allow the U.S. Army to occupy it. During the Utah War the most dreadful event in Church history occurred—the Mountain Meadows Massacre. This tragedy occurred as an act related to war hysteria generated during the Utah War, which led some Latter-day Saints to become crazed in their zeal against their perceived enemies.[1] The Utah War was different from any other armed conflict the Church experienced.

Significance of the Utah War

Commonly called the "Utah Expedition" in official military and government sources, the title "Utah War" more accurately captures the broad scope of this political, economic, military, and religious conflict. It has come to represent the first major rebellion against federal authority by a political entity, the Utah Territory. In a sense, this conflict foreshadowed the Civil War (1861–65), when the Southern states rebelled against the Federal Union. Many of the political and ethical issues that were center stage in 1860 during the secession crisis were first addressed in Utah in the 1850s. Chief among them was the question of supremacy between state and national governments.

The exercise of federal authority in Utah was unlike federal responses to earlier revolts in American history, such as Shays's Rebellion in 1786–87 in New England and the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 in the western Pennsylvania and Ohio Valley areas.[2] These earlier uprisings were led by common citizens, not by local or state government entities. During the Nullification Crisis of 1832, the state of South Carolina challenged the tariff law, but when President

The Mountain Meadows Massacre

One of the darkest days in Utah and Mormon history occurred during the Utah War period. On September 11, 1857, more than a hundred innocent men, women, and children in the Baker-Fancher party, mostly from Arkansas, were slaughtered as they crossed southern Utah on their way to California. Mormon militia, primarily members of the Nauvoo Legion, and Paiute Indians were involved in this tragedy. Some historians, including Juanita Brooks, consider the prime cause of this problem to be the war hysteria local citizens felt as federal troops were marching to Utah with unstated intentions. Other historians paint a picture of conspiracy in the Church.

It is impossible to know all the events, decisions, and men involved in this brutal crime. The Baker-Fancher party did, in fact, surrender to Mormon militia leaders after four days of siege by Paiutes, as they supposed, but in reality most of the attackers were from the militia. The party was lined up and marched out in the desert plain near Mountain Meadows, a favorite water stop along the Old Spanish Trail. There, militia members and Indians fell upon the unarmed party and killed them. Only seventeen small children were spared.

The conspirators swore oaths of secrecy, and for years many held the sorrow of that day in their hearts. Eventually some confessed, and one leader, Major John D. Lee, was tried and executed for his role in the massacre. Many others could have faced the same justice.

Many historians and others have tried to connect Brigham Young and Church headquarters to this dreadful act, but only speculation and circumstantial pieces support this position. It would have been quite uncharacteristic of Brigham Young to order or approve such a massacre. With an army of U.S. regulars en route to Utah and with Utah's inadequate resources of war materiel, why would he approve of the massacre of an unarmed wagon train? Several immigrant trains passed through Utah that year, and some traveled by the same route after the massacre, so why kill the Baker-Fancher party? The most reasonable answer lies with the hysteria of local citizens and their fear of upcoming war. Thus, the Utah War, which is remembered for avoidance of all-out conflict with federal troops, is darkened by the tragedy of the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

Andrew Jackson threatened the use of federal troops, state officials relented.[3] These other conflicts were either local popular contentions or political disputes, as in the Nullification Crisis. After the conflict in Utah ended, President James Buchanan issued pardons to individuals in Utah Territory who had participated in open rebellion and destroyed government property.[4] Utah rebelled only after regular army troops were involved and had entered Utah Territory.

What is most interesting historically is the nature and status of Brigham Young as both the head of Utah's dominant religion and the chief executive of the government body. He was more than just a deeply religious person in a public office of great trust—he was the head of a church in an area where the vast majority of the body politic were members of that church. Furthermore, it was more than just a normal, nineteenth-century American sect that Young headed. The Church claimed divine authority and viewed its head, who was also governor of Utah, as more than just a theological leader but as a prophet of God in every sense of the biblical definition. Brigham Young was the theological, ecclesiastical, cultural, legal, military, and political executive of life in Utah Territory. To the eastern political establishment, he was an American pope reigning over a federal entity in the West. This alone caused great alarm in Washington and among the American public.[5]

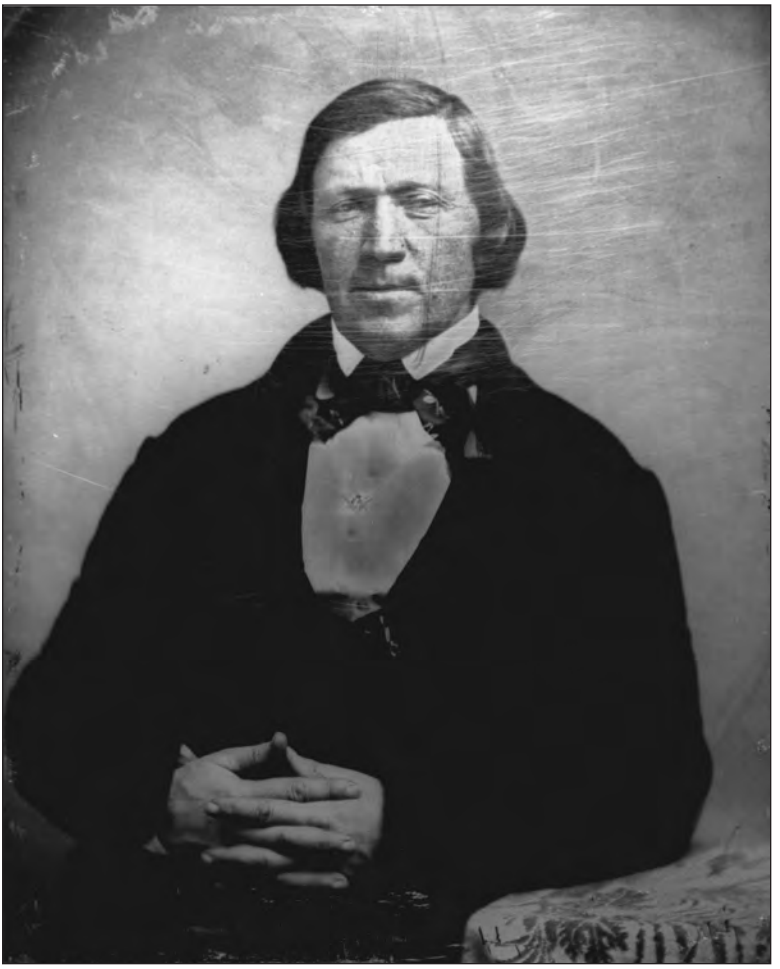
As the first Anglo-American settlers in the Great Basin, Latter-day Saints sought to establish political control and power for themselves. This basic desire to govern themselves with limited or no interference from any outside influence largely precipitated the Utah War. Unlike states' rights as defined later by Southern agitators—with state authority being superior to federal authority—Utah wanted local control by filling federal judgeships and positions by local people and not outsiders.

The conflict was the largest and most prominent military operation to occur between the Mexican (1846–48) and Civil wars.

Dozens of officers from the Utah campaign served as generals during the Civil War. The Utah War was a valuable training and leadership exercise for the war in the East and for frontier campaigns for decades to come. For example, army captain Randolph Marcy's overland mission in winter through treacherous mountains and severe deserts of the American West was a marvel of leadership, discipline, and fortitude. He led a few dozen soldiers and frontiersmen through the southwest corner of future Wyoming, into eastern Utah, and then into New Mexico to secure necessary provisions and livestock for the Utah column.[6]

The political issue of the proper use of military forces in Utah serves as another fascinating lesson for what not to do.

Military logistics is an area in which the U.S. military provided a textbook example of how not to conduct a campaign—crossing a thousand miles of frontier during the late season. The political issue of the proper use of military forces in Utah serves as another fascinating lesson for what not to do. Later the issue of using regular army forces as a posse comitatus and as a police constabulary during the Reconstruction era was an intense emotional problem for Southerners. American government later developed policies and laws for military activity as a result of lessons learned from the Utah War. Because the Utah episode occurred just before the major conflict of Southern rebellion and also because it was a bloodless campaign, most Americans today do not know much of this unique military, political, and social clash.



Brigham Young, circa 1850. Courtesy of Church Archives.

Prologue

To truly understand the conditions out of which the Utah War arose, one must briefly consider the Latter-day Saint story before 1857 or even before the Saints entered the Great Basin in 1847. The story begins with Joseph Smith, the founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and one of the most significant

characters in American religious experience. Under his leadership, the Church experienced nearly two decades of tremendous doctrinal development and membership growth, leading up to the exodus to the Rocky Mountains. The Saints endured years of persistent persecution before arriving in what would become Utah.

The persecutions occurred during the heady days of Jacksonian democracy. It is not my purpose to recount or narrate this tragic chapter in Mormon and American history in full, but it is important to understand the situation of a people who were forced from several eastern and midwestern states; whose fellow Church members were murdered; whose homes and property were destroyed or stolen by their neighbors; who lost whole communities they had carved out of wilderness; and who were deprived of two majestic temples—their sacred centers of worship.

Ironically, even as these religious fugitives fled to the western mountains, they carried a love for the principles of the United States and a dedication to the dreams and rights established by its founders, though at the time many were angry with the U.S. government for its inaction on their behalf. Many Saints were convinced during the Utah War that they were the true guardians of Constitutional rights, freedoms, and American values.

By 1857 some forty thousand Saints, mostly from eastern states and Europe, had created dozens of communities in their "Zion."[7] The Saints struggled for years to make life pleasant and bountiful in a harsh, arid climate, and their success was modest at best. Beyond making the desert into a garden, Brigham Young and the Saints sought isolation from governmental and societal influences and powers beyond their control.[8] But geography forced other qualities onto the separate kingdom of the Saints. Utah grew and prospered somewhat from gold mining in California and other western locales, which brought tens of thousands of fortune seekers and others through Utah. Army expeditions and surveys, scientific explorers, and federal officials came also.

An Unlikely Convert

Charles Henry Wilcken, first a member of Johnston's Army, later joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Wilcken, having earned distinction in the Prussian army during the Schleswig-Holstein wars of the late 1840s, had sought a new life and new adventures. While initial plans called for the German-born Wilcken to travel elsewhere, he arrived in New York in the spring of 1857, anticipating exciting adventure. He soon realized that his life was simply a struggle for survival. Not fluent in English and unable to find employment, a penniless Wilcken walked into an army recruiting office and joined. Recruitment had been active in hopes of raising an army to be sent west to put down a supposed uprising of Mormons.

Charles Henry Wilcken. Courtesy of Church Archives.

While he was unsure of who Mormons were, Wilcken was intrigued at the fervor that had been ignited by their activities. He quickly became disgusted by the American army, its lack of organization, training, and discipline, as well as the seeming lack of moral character exhibited by its troops. Having come from the most organized and professional army in the world, he was appalled by the stark contrast he saw around him. By the time the army had reached the Wyoming plains, Wilcken decided his time with the army had come to an end. Having been instructed to do so in a dream, he approached his commanding officer with the request to spend the day hunting. Granted permission, he set off. Feeling guided in his journey, he soon met members of Major Lot Smith's cavalry and was taken captive.

His captors, however, surprised him. They were very friendly and even allowed him to retain his uniform and weapons, asking for his assistance in herding several hundred head of cattle down the canyon. Upon reaching the valley, Wilcken was warmly welcomed and put into the care of the bishop of Provo. Not long after, he was baptized a member. He spent several years in Heber, where he was able to bring his wife and small children from Germany, and assist in training the local militia. He received a mission call to Germany in 1869 but was delayed two years over concerns of his being arrested on his journey as a deserter from the army. This situation was remedied when he received an official affidavit attesting to his having been captured by Mormon militia during the Utah campaign.

After his mission, Wilcken became one of Salt Lake City's first police officers and was later called to serve as a bodyguard for President John Taylor and later President Wilford Woodruff. He was instrumental in helping keep these brethren and many others protected from federal prosecution for practicing polygamy (Charles Henry Wilcken Papers, courtesy of the Wilcken family).

Causes and Reactions

Thus, after a quarter century of existence and ten years of unsteady peace and prosperity in the mountains and Great Basin, the Saints were determined to stay; to maintain their communities, homes, families; and, if necessary, to fight to guarantee their rights, property, and religious freedom.

Perhaps the two main factors that caused the Utah War can best be summarized as first, the differences in policies between federal and Church authorities concerning relations with the Utah Indians. The second consisted of Americans' absolute fear of Mormon power and religious teachings, including such practices as polygamy, combined with the fear of perceived Mormon vigilantism and oppression of non-Mormons. Of course, most Latter-day Saints then and now would consider these charges absurd. Still, both were allegedly manifest at the Mountain Meadows Massacre.[9]

In the ten years since arriving in the Great Basin, these American settlers had established dozens of communities and settlements, organized a territorial government with Congressional approval, developed an agricultural society and rudiments of its economic foundation, sought to live in harmony with Native Americans, and allowed other Americans to travel through the territory on their way to California or Oregon. Historian Norman Furniss wrote, "One basic cause of the difficulties throughout this decade, and indeed in later years, was the existence of a public opinion extremely hostile to the Mormons and prepared to seize upon any pretext, whether valid or not, to renew the attack upon the Church."[10]

Some non-Mormons stayed in the territory, although Indian relations were unstable and occasionally violent, but tens of thousands of American and European converts flocked to "Zion" for safety and community.[11] The fact that the Saints also publicly practiced plural marriage brought intense criticism from other Americans.

Federal appointees and military parties, arriving in Utah between 1848 and 1856, sought to fulfill directives and missions of the national government. Relations between these officials and the Latter-day Saints soon deteriorated into accusations, insults, and a substantial breakdown of official authority and trust. Some of these officials fled the territory, spreading exaggerated stories and accusations against the Mormons and their religious theocracy. The Mormons, indeed, had developed their own local courts and authority outside the established practices in other states and territories. Some of this governmental apparatus predated the Utah experience of the Saints. The probate courts, which often resembled a religious judicial process, caused great anxiety among territorial judges.

Though the Utah appointees were not prime selections for offices in government, neither were they the villains that legend and some histories have caricatured them.

Latter-day Saint culture tended to exclude non-Mormons from many facets of the community, partly from their past experience and partly from a sense of religious superiority. However, this practice has often been richly exaggerated in literature and history from the early Utah period. "If the Mormon leaders did not encourage intimidation and violence against both gentiles and apostates," wrote historian Robert Coakley, "they seldom took any action to punish the perpetrators of such acts and frustrated the efforts of gentile federal judges to do so. In short, the Mormons made it practically impossible for federal officials to operate in Utah who were unsympathetic to

Mormons control of the territory."[12] Mormon attitude provided its own unique style of drawing a line in the sand. Leading the charge was Brigham Young, who felt that his office as governor was just as religious in nature as his Church position. "I am and will be Governor, and no power can hinder it, until the Lord Almighty says, 'Brigham, you need not be Governor any longer,' and then I am willing to yield to another Governor."[13]

Though the Utah appointees were not prime selections for offices in government, neither were they the villains that legend and some histories have caricatured them. In many cases they were federal officials trying to conduct business among people who were skeptical and sometimes hostile to their actions.

The territorial judges, Indian agents, and other officials allowed their hatred of Mormon practices, unity, and religious zeal to cloud their judgment of the true nature of conditions in Utah during the 1850s. Most of these officials fled Utah because of perceived threats against them. Some of the complaints had a basis in fact, because the Mormons generally did refuse to subordinate themselves to the judges and U.S. marshals. The situation deteriorated into a hopeless morass in which neither party could see or understand the truth of conditions, politics, justice, and law in Utah. The Saints felt they were victims persecuted by wicked federal conspirators, whereas the officials saw Mormon authority as a manifestation of religious extremism.[14]

Into this vortex of national issues, including state (territorial) rights, abolition, free soil, free labor, and the violence in "Bleeding Kansas," Utah entered the national scene. Yet many Americans saw their unique rights and values threatened by a close-knit, fanatical theocracy that seemed to trample the Constitution under their growing numbers and threatened to control local politics. The perception of Mormon hegemony caused great turmoil and distrust among American citizens who had often lived for years in these regions and states.

The American public's fear of Mormon teachings and practices should not be ignored. As the western migration through lands inhabited by native tribes continued, the Mormons seemed to be uniting with the Indians against other Americans. As misguided as these sentiments may appear today, they were real perceptions then. Just as real were the Latter-day Saints concerns over judicial proceedings, representation in Congress, land ownership, and mail delivery. These issues caused raw emotion among the Saints.

May to August 1857

After years of complaints, letters, reports, and a dozen or so affidavits from so-called runaway officials and army officers, President Buchanan decided it was time to act. The government had been severely abused by the press for its inaction in "Bleeding Kansas" the year before. It should be noted that Buchanan was later criticized for issues relating to the beginnings of the Civil War at Fort Sumter.[15] The president, on the advice of a few advisers, determined that Utah Territory was in rebellion against federal power. He based his decision on allegations that judicial records had been burned and on the treatment of officials in general. For example, Almon W. Babbitt, Utah secretary of state, was murdered in 1856 by Indians, not on Brigham Young's orders, as often cited. Allegations of interference of Latter-day Saints with U.S. mail were perceived as another assault on governmental power.

Unfortunately, many of these attitudes and accusations were circulated in newspapers and press releases in the East. Some of the runaway officials, such as Judge William W. Drummond, took delight in exacerbating these issues. Dr. Garland Hurt, a former Indian agent and perhaps the most reasonable and the longest-serving government official in this period, also turned against the Latter-day Saints and denounced the relationships the Saints had with the Native Americans. These types of public and official accusations led the

Camp Floyd

Camp Floyd (named for John B. Floyd, secretary of war) was established by Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston at the conclusion of the Utah War. Brigham Young requested that it be no closer than forty miles from any major Latter-day Saint settlement. It was established on the west side of Utah Lake and is maintained today as a state park. Camp Floyd was one of the most important government installations in the years before the Civil War. It housed the Utah Department and was the largest military garrison in the nation, with approximately 3,500 troops. Though Utah was never the site of any Civil War battles, Camp Floyd was a training ground for the soldiers. Fifty-nine of its officers later served as generals in the Civil War. Interestingly, thirty of the future generals fought for the Union and twenty-nine for the Confederacy (*Deseret News*, October 28, 2005).

By 1860 the fort had been renamed Camp Crittenden, and command was given to Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, friend of the Saints and former leader of the Mormon Battalion. As tension between the North and South increased, the military complement of Fort Crittenden was cut to around seven hundred troops. A month after the war began, Colonel Cooke was ordered to dismantle the fort, sell off all supplies, and immediately bring his command east. This proved a blessing to the Saints as they purchased over four million dollars' worth of supplies and equipment for pennies on the dollar. As a final act before the troops left the valley, Colonel Cooke had the camp's flagpole installed in front of Brigham Young's home as a gift (Audrey M. Godfrey, www.media.utah.edu/UHE/c/CAMPFLOYD.html; accessed October 18, 2006).

Republican Party to denounce the twin relics of barbarism, "slavery and polygamy," in its presidential election in 1856. Even former friend and judge Stephen A. Douglas, then a U.S. senator for Illinois, condemned the Mormons as a cancer that had to be removed from the body politic.[16]

President Buchanan, acting with uncharacteristic resolve, asked Secretary of War John B. Floyd and General Winfield Scott to consider organizing a military escort for the new federal officials' move to Utah. The military was to establish order and enforce the laws of the United States and to impose martial law upon the territory if necessary. Thus, a posse comitatus principle was approved so that even the federal judges could exercise control over U.S. troops.[17]

President Brigham Young, of course, knew of the difficult relations between his people and the federal officials, but he and his followers generally labeled the problems as religious persecution. He was not aware

The remustered Nauvoo Legion. Courtesy of Church Archives.

that a new governor was en route to replace him and that a small army was going to enforce national authority. The first indication of a gathering storm was the termination of the mail contract with the U.S. Post Office in the spring of 1857.[18]

On July 24, 1857, ten years to the day after Brigham Young entered the valley, thousands of Saints were in the mountains celebrating the anniversary when riders brought word that a military force was en route to Utah. For the next few weeks, Young and his advisers discussed the meaning of the government's actions without any word from national officials.[19]

It became obvious that stringent policies were needed to safeguard the settlements and the Saints' property and lives. Food, a bartering commodity with immigrant trains, was restricted for sale to Church members only. Full reorganization of Utah's militia, the Nauvoo Legion, continued an effort that had actually begun months earlier. Weapons and gunpowder were stockpiled. In order to arm the legion, revolvers and other firearms were produced locally, some even on Temple Square itself. At its height, the Nauvoo Legion could field and equip only a fraction of the four thousand

men on the muster rolls. Organized into military divisions, normally by county, the legion was commanded by General Daniel Wells, a member of the First Presidency. General Wells was an accomplished leader, businessman, and Church officer, but he had no military experience beyond militia service.

The legion's only real military experience belonged to a few hundred members who had served ten years earlier in the Mormon Battalion, which had never engaged in combat. With inexperienced leadership in training and combat operations, a limited number of firearms, no useful artillery, inadequate equipment, and little time to train and prepare, the Latter-day Saint military force faced a daunting challenge. Their only advantages were their knowledge of the terrain, a strong base of logistical operations, and support from their local populace.

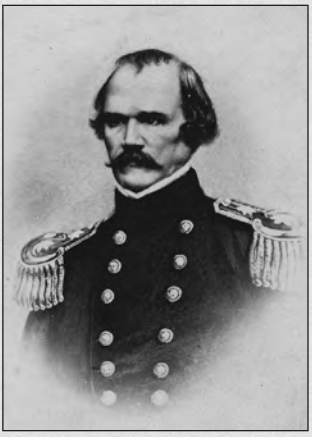
The only logical course of action for the Saints was to conduct a guerilla campaign, as opposed to direct conventional combat, and to use the land, weather, and stealth in their favor. Other actions taken as the conflict continued included recalling missionaries from abroad and closing remote and far-flung settlements. At the same time, food, equipment, fodder for animals, and all valuable stores were safeguarded for family and community needs.

Fortunately, during this time two important events increased the Saints' chances of survival. First, they started an all-out campaign to encourage local Native American tribes to ally themselves with the Mormons against "Gentiles," whose treatment of the tribes was worse than the more benign treatment by Mormons. Second, senior leaders traveled among the settlements giving intense and emotional speeches to boost morale and prepare the Saints for the most dire possibilities.[20]

Out in the field, Church leaders preached and exhorted their fellow Saints to prepare for any contingency, especially war against the United States.[21] From Salt Lake City in the Old Tabernacle and other locations, Apostles chastised those who wavered in the faith.

Albert Sidney Johnston (1803–62)

Before rising to the position of commander of the Utah Expedition, Albert Sidney Johnston fought during the Texas War of Independence and at Monterrey during the Mexican-American War. In truth, the Saints were fortunate that Johnston had been given command of the Utah Expedition. Johnston was more moderate in his approach to the "Utah problem" than his predecessor, General William Harney. Even with this tempered attitude, General Johnston was not a friend of the Church. After entering the Salt Lake Valley, he commented that he "would give up his plantation for a chance to bombard the city for 15 minutes." His service during the Utah Expedition earned him the brevet rank of brigadier general, and after several years in command of the Utah Department at Camp Floyd he was given command of the Department of the Pacific in California.



Albert Sidney Johnston. Courtesy of Church Archives.

At the onset of the Civil War, Johnston left his post and traveled to Richmond, Virginia, to offer his services to the new Confederacy. He was immediately promoted to the second-highest rank in the Confederate Army and given command of the Western Department. Confederate President Jefferson Davis and some officials in the Confederate government considered Johnston to be one of the most competent officers and military minds in the Confederate Army.

General Johnston immediately set up a line of defense from the Appalachians in Kentucky to the Mississippi River. This line proved inadequate, however, and Johnston's armies suffered a series of humiliating defeats at the hands of General Ulysses S. Grant. His army was forced to retreat into northern Mississippi to regroup.

In the spring of 1862, Johnston's army led a surprise attack against General Grant's forces at Shiloh. The attack caught the Union forces completely unaware and proved successful. While leading the charge on the Union position General Johnston was shot behind the knee. Because he did not feel the wound was serious, Johnston sent his personal physician away to aid other wounded enemy troops and continued to lead his men. Minutes later, his staff noticed that he appeared quite faint. When asked if he was wounded, he replied, "Yes, and I fear seriously," before toppling from his horse. The bullet had ruptured an artery in his leg, and his boot had begun to fill with blood. He bled to death within minutes and became the highest-ranking casualty of the Civil War.

Young's close friend and counselor President Heber C. Kimball explained the moral authority that the prophet carried: "Our Father and our God has sent Brigham and his brethren; if you rebel against them, you rebel against the authority that sent them."[22] Such pronouncements clarified for the Saints to whom they should look for direction during the tumultuous months ahead.

The Utah Army Organized and on the March

By May 1857, President Buchanan had ordered Secretary Floyd and General Scott to dispatch a military force to accompany the territorial governor and newly appointed federal officials to Utah. Scott knew that the small regular army was already stretched to its limit, given its far-flung missions from Florida to California, including patrolling war-torn "Bleeding Kansas." Scott first estimated that the Latter-day Saints could not field more than four thousand effective troops—a number that proved very realistic.[23] Therefore, Scott ordered some two thousand five hundred soldiers—two regiments of infantry (eight companies of the Tenth Infantry and all ten companies of the Fifth Infantry) and a strong cavalry support of six, later eight, companies of the Second Dragoons. Also ordered were two batteries of artillery—one each from the Fourth and Fifth Artillery Regiments. These units joined the command at Fort Leavenworth, the base of operations. The army was now a brigade-sized force and was the largest military operation between the Mexican and Civil wars. Command of the campaign was given to General William Harney of Louisiana.[24]

Floyd ordered the military bureaus under his, not Scott's, control, to prepare logistics and contracts for moving and supplying a major military force one thousand two hundred miles across the frontier. Floyd arranged for the Quartermaster Department to send an officer in advance of the main column to secure provisions,

The army faced a difficult and bitter winter on the Wyoming plains. *Never a Complaint,* by Don Stivers. Courtesy of Don Stivers.

locate a suitable camp site, and arrange for services among the Mormons.[25] This advance party, led by Captain Stewart Van Vliet of the Quartermaster Department, became the most obvious symbol that the federal government did not desire a hostile conflict with the Saints. If the army leadership contemplated war and combat, then sending a small detachment under Captain Van Vliet was both risky and foolish. Greeted with guarded hospitality, Church leaders made a determined plea to Van Vliet that they had been wronged by the government and that Utah Territory was not in rebellion, yet they would defend themselves and their homes.[26]

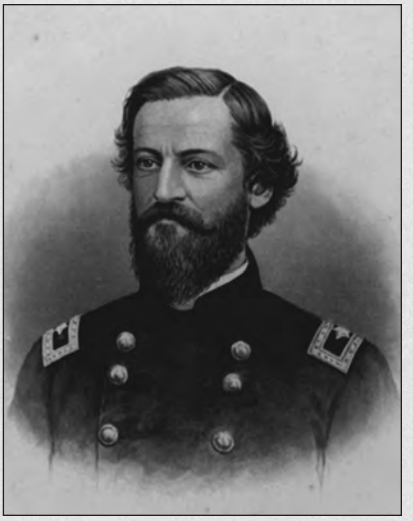
Thomas L. Kane (1822–83)

Thomas L. Kane, born in Philadelphia, son of a wealthy lawyer, was himself trained as a lawyer and was well educated, having attended school in Philadelphia, England, and France. Kane's relationship with the Church began in May 1846 during a special conference of the Church held in Philadelphia by Elder Jesse C. Little. After the conference, Kane invited Elder Little to his home, where they discussed the issues surrounding the expulsion of the Saints from Nauvoo and their desire to migrate farther west. Kane wrote several letters of introduction for Elder Little to use in petitioning the government for assistance. Kane later joined Elder Little in meetings with President James K. Polk. It was Thomas Kane who was able to convince President Polk to ask for a company of Mormon volunteers for the war with Mexico. With his curiosity of the Church piqued, Kane traveled and met the Saints on the banks of the Missouri. There he met with Brigham Young and other Church leaders and quickly won their friendship.

While returning to Philadelphia, Kane visited Nauvoo and traveled through Missouri to personally witness the deprivations and persecutions the Saints had suffered. Deeply moved by what he saw, he vowed from that day to be a sincere friend of the Latter-day Saints. Later, when the Utah Territory was organized, U. S. officials asked Thomas Kane to be the first territorial governor. He politely declined but suggested that Brigham Young be appointed instead.

When word reached Salt Lake City of the approaching federal army, Brigham Young instructed elders in the east to ask Kane for help in contacting the government to address the many misunderstandings that had led to hostilities. Kane immediately went to work contacting his many influential friends. He offered his services to President Polk as mediator to the conflict and was granted permission to go but was told that though he had

the president's confidence he would receive no official status as mediator. Undaunted, Kane traveled to California by ship under an assumed name and quietly entered the Salt Lake Valley with a group of Latter-day Saint emigrants. Kane was able to effectively and efficiently organize a peaceful settlement between Brigham Young and the federal authorities. He arranged to have the newly appointed governor enter Salt Lake City unescorted. This peaceful transition prompted the new governor to write Washington and request that the military campaign end.



Thomas L. Kane

Thomas Kane later served in the United States Army as a major general during the Civil War, seeing action in the battles of Gettysburg and Chancelorsville. During his first visit with the Saints, Kane had requested and received a patriarchal blessing at the hands of Patriarch John Smith. He was promised, "Not a hair of your head will fall by the hand of an enemy. For you are called to do a great work on the earth and you shall be blessed in all your undertakings. Your name shall be had in honorable remembrance among the Saints to all generations" (quoted in Leonard J. Arrington, "'In Honorable Remembrance': Thomas L. Kane's Services to the Mormons," *BYU Studies* 21, no. 4 [Fall 1981], 393).

Fort Bridger

Established in 1843 by mountainmen Jim Bridger and Louis Vasquez, Fort Bridger served as a vital supply outpost to wagon trains traveling west on the Oregon, California, and Mormon trails. In 1852, a few years after the Saints settled the Salt Lake Valley, tensions between the Church and Jim Bridger began to rise after Bridger was accused of selling alcohol and weapons to local Native Americans, exacerbating the delicate conditions that existed between the Saints and their native neighbors. An arrest warrant was issued, and a group of Mormon militia was sent to arrest Bridger for his actions. Rather than face a confrontation with the Militia, Bridger left the fort and traveled east. A few years later, he agreed to sell the fort to the Church for eight thousand dollars.

The fort continued to serve a vital role as a rest and resupply depot for traveling wagon trains. In 1857 it was burnt to the ground by Major Lot Smith's men to keep it out of the hands of the federal troops. In the burned-out remains of the fort, General Johnston organized Camp Scott, where he and his men wintered before entering the Salt Lake Valley. While largely abandoned during the Civil War, the fort was taken over as a federal outpost for several decades after the war, only to be abandoned again in the late 1880s. It quickly fell into ruin and was sold in the early 1900s to the state of Wyoming to be restored as a state park.

September to November 1857

On August 29, 1857, President Buchanan appointed Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston as commander of the army en route for Utah, replacing Harney, who remained in Kansas.[27] Johnston immediately traveled west, arriving at Fort Leavenworth by the second week of September. There he assigned an escort of forty dragoons to accompany him on a hasty march to overtake his disorganized, brigade-size command. He also met newly appointed territorial governor Alfred Cumming of Georgia and the governor's entourage, consisting of his wife, several new federal judges, and others. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, commanding the Second Dragoons, was reorganizing and outfitting several companies of his regiment for the march to Utah. Cooke would lead his regiment and escort the governor and his party across the sparse high desert of Wyoming through a dreadful early winter season.

The story of the army's march to Utah serves as an example of a poorly led and organized campaign and of the misuse and loss of precious government property. Nonetheless, the march was supported by the skilled discipline

and selfless service of American soldiers. Before Colonel Johnston arrived at Ham's Fork in western Wyoming, the Utah expedition was a spread-out and disorganized column, vulnerable to attack—and an attack is exactly what happened. For weeks, Mormon militia had hovered near the various infantry units and wagon trains. Then in early October, three of the army's wagon trains went up in smoke and hundreds of head of livestock were scattered. This severely hurt the expedition's logistical support, thus forcing Johnston to establish winter quarters near Fort Bridger, which the Saints had burned.[28]

The soldiers suffered through the winter, but Johnston imposed a strong arm of discipline, along with modest recreational diversions. Meanwhile, Mormon soldiers guarded the main entrance to the Great Basin at Echo Canyon.[29] Eventually, most of the men went home, leaving only a small detachment to watch the federal army.

During the winter, Thomas Kane, a non-Mormon military officer who was popular among the Saints, acted as an unofficial emissary from Buchanan to resolve the impasse. Through careful negotiation during months of crisis, war was averted and Governor Cumming was promised acceptance in Utah. At the same time, Lazarus W. Powell and Ben McCulloch arrived at Camp Scott as presidentially appointed commissioners to establish peace and federal authority.[30] General Scott had ordered reinforcements of another two thousand troops to Utah. Johnston was appointed commander of the new Department of Utah and received a brevet (honorary) promotion to brigadier general.

Brigham Young and other Church authorities declared that the Saints were never in rebellion. In return, they obtained a pardon for the destruction of government property and interference with military operations. With summer at hand, Johnston marched unmolested through Echo Canyon into Salt Lake City and continued south approximately thirty miles, where he established Camp Floyd, later renamed Fort Crittenden.[31] While some have suggested the

poorly equipped and untrained Nauvoo Legion could have stopped the army at Echo Canyon, militarily speaking, such a possibility seems highly unlikely. With artillery that could have easily dislodged the Mormon defenses, Johnston would have been able to force his way through the canyon with minimal casualties.

Impact on Utah and the Church

With Cumming installed, the army garrisoned in Cedar Valley, and economic and judicial aspects restored, the Utah War ended. Nearly all results of the Utah War were regrettable. Brigham Young was replaced as territorial governor; more Gentiles (even undesired camp followers) and thousands of soldiers entered and occupied Utah; unwanted businesses, newspapers, drunkenness, and prostitution flourished; and additional federal officials, especially judges, were determined to indict and punish Mormons for crimes that included, most prominently, the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Yet not all results of the fray were negative. As a result of the conflict, Utah became open to more commerce and eventually joined the ranks of mainstream America.

After the Utah War, Mormon Zion was never the same. The Church lost the isolation it so desperately desired. Through more federal involvement and laws, officials and others were determined to undermine Church control and power. Yet in the long run, the Latter-day Saints succeeded. This commenced a struggle that lasted until polygamy was abolished in 1890 and statehood was granted in 1896. Through it all, the Church continued to prosper, erect temples, establish strong doctrinal and social foundations, and bring additional converts to Utah.

Notes

1. See Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); and Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950).

2. See Robert W. Coakley, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1789–1878* (Washington DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1988).

3. Coakley, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*, 4–7, 24–35.

4. Norman F. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, 1850–59 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960) 193.

5. See Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, 28.

6. Marcy's adventure is told in his autobiography (see Randolph Barnes Marcy, *Thirty Years of Army Life on the Border* [New York: Harper Brothers, 1866]).

7. Gregory J. W. Urwin, *The United States Cavalry: An Illustrated History* (New York: Blandford Press, 1985), 105.

8. See Donald R. Moorman with Gene A. Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons: The Utah War* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), 6.

9. Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, has an entire chapter that deals with the Indian involvement with the Mormons against the federal army.

10. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, 11.

11. Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 22.

12. Coakley, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders*, 195.

13. Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 223.

14. Coakley, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders*, 196.

15. Moorman, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons*, 273.

16. Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 79.

17. LeRoy Hafen, *The Utah Expedition* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark and Company, 1958), 31.

18. William P. MacKinnon, "The Buchanan Spoils System and the Utah Expedition: Careers of W. M. F. Magraw and John M. Hockaday," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (Spring 1963): 144–45.

19. See Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, 123.

20. See Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 35.

21. See Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 19–21.

22. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, 15–16.

23. See Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, 95.

24. See Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, 95.

25. See Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, 106.

26. See Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, 106.

27. See Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, 101.

28. See Hafen, *Utah Expedition*, 70–71; Coakley, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders*, 204.

29. See Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, 113.

30. See Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, 193.

31. Camp Floyd was established in November 1857, and by the summer of 1861 it was abandoned. Originally named for Secretary of War John B. Floyd, the camp was later renamed for Secretary of War John J. Crittenden after Floyd defected to the Confederate South at the time of the outbreak of war.