

# “A Place Prepared”

## Joseph, Brigham, and the Quest for Promised Refuge in the West

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Probably at no time was Brigham Young more openly and publicly emotional than on September 24, 1848. His return to the Salt Lake Valley with his family marked for him the end of a religious quest that had begun many years before. He was finally home, and he felt it deeply. “I trust I can have command over my feelings to speak with a childlike spirit yet with the confidence and courage of a man,” he addressed his people, “although it may be hard to suppress my feelings. I venture to say that not another person in the congregation has the sensations that I have right now . . . having to guard every moment to keep from bursting into tears and sitting down like a child. We are here! Thank the Almighty God of Israel!” Some had marveled when the Saints agreed to leave the States, he continued, but it was no sacrifice. “From the days of Oliver Cowdery and Parley Pratt on the borders of the Lamanites [1831] Joseph Smith had longed to be here. . . . They would not let us come and at last

we have accomplished it. We are in the midst of the Lamanites! We are here thank the Almighty God. Glory to the Lord, . . . for here is the place of beginning.”<sup>1</sup> “This is the place he had seen before he came here,” Young concluded, “& it is the place for the Saints to geather.”<sup>2</sup>

For Brigham Young and his associates, removal from Nauvoo to the mountain valleys of the West was not a chance result from fleeing enemies but something long contemplated. “Hurra, hurra, hurra, theres my home at last,” exulted Thomas Bullock when he first viewed the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, two days before Brigham Young arrived. That same July day several of the Apostles wrote to President Young, still ill and some miles behind, that they were at last “within the long sought valley.”<sup>3</sup> The pilgrimage was over, marking the commencement of a long-awaited era of new beginnings. In a later history of this journey “from Nauvoo to these valleys,” Wilford Woodruff insisted the move would

“stand in bold relief as the main Key of the Mormon History of the nineteenth century.” Furthermore, added another, “Joseph had spoken of it and Brigham carried it out.”<sup>4</sup>

Is the western exodus a key to understanding nineteenth-century Mormonism? Did the Prophet Joseph plan the exodus that Brigham carried out? Had Brigham Young been directed by a vision of the valley? If so, how do we understand his continual effort to gather solid practical information about the Great Basin? Finally, why did this movement have such profound personal meaning to Brigham Young? To answer, and to understand the exodus, we must begin in the 1830s, when, according to Young, Joseph Smith first longed for the mountain valleys of the West.

In the early days of Kirtland and Missouri the Church was small—first a few hundred, then a few thousand members. Immediate numbers and resources did not, however, restrain visions of the future. Very early there was enthusiastic talk suggesting an expansive destiny for the Saints that in some manner involved North America’s great West. Speaking of those days a few years later, Sidney Rigdon boasted that although the elders could then all fit in a log cabin, their plans were as large as the world: “Many things were taught, preached, & believed then[.] We knew the whole world would laugh at us—so we concealed ourselves—we had things to say to one another that nobody else knew of—all nations to flock to it—whole nations born in one day—we talked such big things. . . . We were maturing plans 14 years ago which we can now tell.”<sup>5</sup> Wilford Woodruff later remembered one Kirtland occasion made memorable by such talk. With other elders preparing for Zion’s Camp, he had just arrived in Kirtland. On Sunday they met to share heartfelt expressions of faith, to which the Prophet responded: “Brethren I have been very much edified and instructed in your testimonies . . . , but I want to say . . . that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother’s lap.

. . . It is only a handful of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world. . . . It will fill the Rocky Mountains.”<sup>6</sup>

Because these and similar reminiscences of Kirtland<sup>7</sup> seem more at home in Nauvoo, where there was clearly not just talk but action relating to the Rocky Mountains and the West, one is tempted to discount them or to at least recognize the tendency for memories to become more specific as the events unfolded. But whether the prophecies were specifically about the Rocky Mountains, as some remembered, or more generally about the West, contemporary records confirm that Kirtland discourse included expansionist expressions about a future destiny beyond the Mississippi. As early as January 1831, for example, the *Painesville Telegraph* reported the Latter-day Saint assertion that God had revealed that their promised land extended from Kirtland to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>8</sup> The next year the Latter-day Saint newspaper, *The Evening and the Morning Star*, only slightly less expansively described the “far west, . . . the section of country from the Mississippi to the Rocky Mountains,” as the region blessed by the Lord as the land of Zion.<sup>9</sup> Clearly the Mormons contemplated an expansive western territory a decade before Joseph Smith proclaimed publicly in Nauvoo that Zion would fill North and South America.

Early Mormon expectations for the West were clearly related to Book of Mormon prophecies about the redemption and future power of the Lamanites, or American Indians. This connection is explicit in the 1832 *The Evening and the Morning Star* article. And in 1834 E. D. Howe characterized the belief that the Native Americans “in a very few years, will be converted to Mormonism” and take possession of their ancient inheritance as a leading article of Mormon faith.<sup>10</sup> Brigham Young believed that from the first time Joseph Smith stood on the banks of the Missouri River looking westward across Indian country, he desired to go further west among the

American Indians but “there was a watch placed upon him continually to see that he had no communication” with them.<sup>11</sup> Government regulations enforced by Indian agents forbade dwelling among the American Indians and attempted to regulate all intercourse with them, and Missourians were suspicious very early on of supposed Mormon meddling with the Native Americans. Whatever Joseph Smith’s hopes and plans for the American Indians and the West in the 1830s, he could not implement them from Missouri. Only when he had access to the American Indians through Iowa in 1839–40 could he and did he begin implementation.

In addition to accepting a special responsibility to redeem the Indians, Latter-day Saints believed it their duty to build Zion and establish the kingdom of God on earth—to gather sufficient like-minded believers to build temples and priesthood-directed communities. Working to create close-knit communities that differed in religion, morals, and customs from their neighbors, the Saints inevitably encountered ill feelings and, eventually, hostility from old settlers. After severe problems in Jackson County, Missouri, in 1833 and later problems in Kirtland, Ohio, it was becoming clear by the late 1830s that to mature as a unique people, the Latter-day Saints needed a secure and perhaps isolated refuge. Living forever among gentile neighbors inimical to their institutions would not do.

Brigham Young came to that conclusion in the summer of 1838, a few months after arriving with Joseph Smith from divided Kirtland to live with the Saints in northern Missouri. Earlier settlements had ended in disaster and, thought Young, the same fate awaited the existing Missouri settlements. “I saw, upon natural principles, that we would be driven from there,” he remembered. “When, I did not know; but it was plain to me that we would have to leave.” He also perceived “upon natural principles” that in order to prosper, the Saints needed time and space to “gain a foothold, a strength, power, in-

fluence, and ability to walk by themselves and take care of themselves.” Thus as early as 1838, Brigham Young understood that the Church would need to establish a secure base in the West and consolidate in order to prosper and to carry out its divinely appointed mission. Only the distant West seemed to promise such a refuge, but Brigham Young knew that legal and governmental obstacles associated with the Missouri Indian frontier, as well as practical considerations, meant that when the Saints left Missouri it would not be directly for the West.<sup>12</sup>

In retrospect, it appears that the expulsion of the Saints from northern Missouri in the fall and winter of 1838–39 was an important step toward eventual settlement in the West. The intensity of the hostility convinced Latter-day Saint leaders that it would be many years before they could hope to occupy lands near their designated “center-stake” in Jackson County, Missouri, and that in order to prosper they would have to find a secure home elsewhere. Existing evidence suggests that the Missouri expulsion turned Joseph Smith’s thoughts again toward the far West.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, there was no immediate way west from Missouri. In 1839, with their resources destroyed and their communities dispersed, the Saints desperately needed not a distant and isolated retreat but any place, the nearer the better, to survive, regroup, and prepare. But from 1839 on, Mormon leaders would not only consider the West but would also actively prepare for a more permanent haven beyond the Missouri River.

Nauvoo was never designated nor at first considered to be a permanent gathering place.<sup>14</sup> Prominent leaders such as Sidney Rigdon, William Marks, and Bishop Edward Partridge publicly expressed doubts that there should even be another gathering after so much grief in Missouri. Brigham Young and other Apostles largely quelled such pessimism, and as soon as Joseph Smith was released from jail, he contracted for Iowa and Illinois lands, confirming the decision to gather anew. Neither revelation nor a long-term

plan dictated the location for the new city, however; it was simply a matter of what land was available on reasonable terms in the vicinity where many of the Saints had arrived. Not until 1841, with the first thrust to the West already under way, did revelation confirm the location, authorize making Nauvoo into a substantial city, and command the construction of a temple (see D&C 124).

Nauvoo, then, was founded as an interim gathering place, a fact understood by at least some of its founding citizens.<sup>15</sup> As early as May 1839, Heber Kimball prophesied that the area, though beautiful, was “not a long abiding place for the Saints.” The statement is reported to have angered Sidney Rigdon, who resided in the region’s best home and had no desire to leave.<sup>16</sup> Other reminiscences, credible in the context of demonstrable interest in the West in early Nauvoo, suggest that within months of founding the city, the Prophet spoke with some individuals about a future move to the mountains of the West. Increasing friction with neighbors and general excitement about the West during later Nauvoo years probably kept such ideas alive. And eventually, according to Brigham Young, hundreds who later traveled to Utah heard Joseph Smith say: “The Saints will leave Nauvoo. I do not say they will be driven, . . . but they will leave here and go to the mountains.”<sup>17</sup> No doubt others felt as did Nancy Richards, who, upon learning in 1845 of plans to abandon the city, wrote that for nearly four years she had “felt confident such a time would come. But how soon or how brought about I knew not.”<sup>18</sup>

Within a year of founding Nauvoo, Joseph Smith commissioned the first important preparatory work among the American Indians near the Missouri River. That this involved more than proselyting was revealed only indirectly when the Prophet dispatched Jonathan Dunham, a participant, from his station near Fort Leavenworth to tribes residing in New York. Describing his mission as “urgent indeed,” Dunham wrote

ahead to ask the Kirtland Saints for assistance. “A new scene of things are about to transpire in the west, in fulfilment of prophecy,” he wrote, adding, “I want your prayers & also the prayers of the brethren that I may accomplish my mission.” He signed himself “J Dunham Lamanite.”<sup>19</sup> Once in Kirtland, Dunham further explained what he understood from the Prophet: “This nation is about to be destroyed,” he told Kirtland leaders, “but there is a place of safety preparing for [the Saints] away towards the Rocky Mountains.”<sup>20</sup> He went on to report that the way there would be difficult and “but few will be preserved to arrive.”<sup>21</sup>

Jonathan Dunham’s later involvement adds credibility to his claims. This was for him the first of several missions authorized by Joseph Smith and later Brigham Young to develop friendship and influence with the Native American tribes and, from his post on the Missouri, learn more about the West.<sup>22</sup> The most explicit statement preserved about the nature of these missions came in connection with Dunham’s 1845 call “to fill Joseph’s original measures” by “proceeding from tribe to tribe, to unite the Lamanites and find a home for the Saints.”<sup>23</sup> Contact with the western Indians was a vital part of the Mormon thrust to the West, a thrust that began in 1840. From Nauvoo, the Prophet directed efforts to establish close relationships with the American Indians, uniting them as allies and friends and attempting to learn more about their country in preparation for eventually settling among them.

The next important contemporary documentation of the Prophet’s plans is in two 1842 letters written by Oliver Olney, a disaffected Latter-day Saint. Olney’s somewhat disjointed letters preserve remarkable glimpses of what the Prophet and his associates intended in reference to the Rocky Mountains. In the first letter, dated July 20, Olney said of Latter-day Saint intentions to go to the Rocky Mountains, “I know of their plans.” First, a few “will start and go out by degrees untill all will follow who has their faith.” As they

arrive at their destination they will "form a union . . . until they become a powerful people." They will also unite with the American Indians, "as this has long been the theme" of the leaders. When might this occur? Olney thought that "if they put their plans into practice" they would "soon be . . . on their way." A few weeks later Olney wrote again his opinion that the Saints' move "to the rocky mountains as the saying is" was imminent.<sup>24</sup>

Both reminiscent accounts and documentation in Nauvoo after the Prophet's death lend credence to this as a fair summary of what Joseph Smith intended.<sup>25</sup> It is even likely that at this early date he had some hope of beginning the process of removal "soon." In the spring of 1842 he launched a series of interrelated measures, including the organization of the Relief Society and the presentation of temple ordinances, which, had he been able to fully follow up at that time, could have prepared the way for full implementation of his western plans.<sup>26</sup>

The supposed dating of Joseph Smith's famous Rocky Mountain prophecy of 1842 places it at about the same time as Olney's first letter mentioning the Rocky Mountain plans.<sup>27</sup> Since no contemporary account of the prophecy has been found, its accuracy and validity have been challenged. It fits well, however, both with the Olney letters and with the prophecy reported by Dunham in 1840, suggesting that there may be no reason to question the substance of the reminiscent account.<sup>28</sup>

When Brigham Young later referred to Joseph Smith's "prophecy that this people would leave Nauvoo and be planted in the midst of the Rocky Mountains," he was probably referring not only to the Rocky Mountain prophecy of 1842 but to a settled belief repeated several times that apparently dated from at least 1840. "This prophecy," President Young explained in Utah, "is not a new thing, it has not been hid in the dark, nor locked up in a drawer, but was declared to the people long before we left Nau-

voo."<sup>29</sup> Hundreds of Utah Saints within the sound of his voice had heard the Prophet proclaim it, he added.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps the idea of a future move to the West became privately a "common-place," something to joke about among friends, as suggested by Phineas Young's closing to a December 1842 letter: "Give my love to Brother Joseph when you see him[,] tell him I would come to the Rocky mountains to see him, and fight my way through an army of wild Cats or Missouri mobers and live on Skunks the whole journey if necessary."<sup>31</sup>

While it is possible that Joseph Smith had hoped to advance preparations towards the West in 1842, he instead found his attention and resources devoted to other priorities until the winter and spring of 1844. That season found Joseph in a mood of expansive optimism as he finished initial ordinance work in anticipation of the completion of the temple and contemplated running for president in the upcoming political campaign. It was also a season of increasing pressure on the Prophet and Nauvoo from adversaries, reinforcing anew the wisdom of establishing settlements elsewhere. With these concerns in mind, Joseph met in council with the Quorum of the Twelve and others on February 20, 1844, to discuss inquiries received from Lyman Wight about preaching to the American Indians. After concluding to let Brother Wight use his own best judgment, Joseph Smith, according to his diary, "instructed the 12 to send out a delegation & investigate the locations of Callifornia & oregon & find a good location where we can move after the Temple is completed, & build a city in a day—and have a government of our own."<sup>32</sup>

The council met twice more to discuss what they variously referred to as the California or the Oregon Expedition. First they selected eight men to undertake the initial exploration, then the Prophet indicated that he wanted "an exposition of all that country" and that they should have twenty-five men, stressing, "If we dont get volunteers wait till after the election."<sup>33</sup> Contemporary

accounts confirm that the purpose of the exploration was to “pitch upon a spot to build a city,” a place of refuge to which the Saints could remove after the dedication of the temple.<sup>34</sup>

Without doubt, Joseph Smith revealed in these councils more details about his designs for the West than terse diary entries recorded. Memory preserved additional information that Brigham Young and his associates retained from these and perhaps other important meetings with the Prophet about the West. For example, as the Saints departed Nauvoo in 1846, Orson Hyde explained, “Joseph Smith declared in Council that it was the will & mind of God to go to the West—said he you will not be driven—finish the temple if you can . . . [but] if your enemies come upon you flee to the West.”<sup>35</sup> In Winter Quarters a few months later, Brigham Young spoke of the Prophet Joseph’s prayer that the Lord would lead them to a more healthy country “where we would not be having to bury our friends every day.” “I know,” he affirmed, “it was the design of Joseph to leave Nauvoo & flee to the Mts.”<sup>36</sup> A sample reminiscence from Utah similarly reflects the Prophet’s Nauvoo concerns: “In the days of Joseph [said Young] we have sat many hours, at a time conversing about this very country. Joseph has often said, ‘If I were only in the Rocky Mountains with a hundred faithful men, I would then be happy, and ask no odds of mobocrats.’”<sup>37</sup>

The Rocky Mountains as a place of safety had been part of the discussion of the West since at least 1840. As noted, however, Nauvoo conditions in 1844 underscored the practical urgency to establish such a retreat, leading Joseph Smith to conclude that if decisive action were not taken, the eventual result would be a city “in ashes and we in our Gore.”<sup>38</sup> These realities underlay the February 20–23 discussions about the West and the statement delivered to the council February 25, “President Joseph Smith Prophesied within five years we should be rid of our old enemies . . . & wishes us to record it that when it comes to pass

that we need not say we had forgotten the saying.”<sup>39</sup> The one sure way to be rid of enemies was to remove to a safe retreat far away.

Perhaps because there were too few volunteers, but more likely because of increasing preparations for the forthcoming political campaign, Joseph Smith never dispatched the planned-for western expedition. First, he postponed further consideration until he organized the Council of Fifty as an enlarged forum to oversee such matters, and then, in the new council, reached the decision to focus on other projects until after the election. In the meantime, members of the Council of Fifty, including several Apostles, would petition Congress for assistance in launching a major western expedition.

One of the first items of business in the Council of Fifty was to discuss planting a Mormon settlement in Texas. Bishop George Miller and Elder Lyman Wight, leaders of a Wisconsin work colony supplying lumber for the Nauvoo Temple, wrote to the Prophet requesting authorization to found in Texas, where they already had connections, “a place of gathering for all the South.” George Miller arrived in Nauvoo on March 8 with the proposal. Two days later the presidency and Quorum of the Twelve discussed it with Bishop Miller, and the following day, March 11, they formally organized the Council of Fifty—and continued discussions on Texas.<sup>40</sup>

The Texas proposal dovetailed nicely with the Prophet’s expansive plans. The time had come, he felt, to move beyond Nauvoo. After the election, the West would be explored; in the meantime, if there was an opening in Texas, it should be followed up.<sup>41</sup> Although there may have been in Texas the potential for unique advantages—and the idea of a regional stronghold there was certainly in harmony with the ultimate goal of expansion throughout the continent—there is no evidence that Joseph Smith and his associates looked to Texas as the location for a new Church headquarters. For that, it seems clear, they continued to look to the isolated mountains

of the West.<sup>42</sup> The Council of Fifty therefore concluded both to initiate contact with Sam Houston and the Texas government and to seek support from Congress for the proposed venture in the far West.<sup>43</sup>

Available minutes and diaries do not preserve the details of the Council of Fifty discussions in March, April, and May relating to expanded settlement and a future headquarters in the western mountains. But Joseph Smith and other leaders publicly taught during this period an expanded conception of Zion. At April conference, after alluding to the great discussion in the Church about the gathering and about the location of Zion, the Prophet proclaimed, "The whole [of] America is Zion"; both North and South America "is the Zion where the Mountain of the Lords house shall be." Once the temple was finished, elders could "build up churches where ever the people received the gospel [in] sufficient [numbers] . . . [and] those who do not wish to come hither to live [in Nauvoo] can bring their families and attend [to] the ordinances and return" to other strongholds.<sup>44</sup> Although the elders would "go through all America & build up Churches untill all Zion is built up," this could not commence "until the Temple is built up here and the Elders endowed."<sup>45</sup>

While Joseph Smith and his associates did not look to Nauvoo as the permanent headquarters of Zion, they did anticipate that it might continue as a temple city even while the Saints established in the mountains of the West another corner stake of Zion.<sup>46</sup> Speaking at the Prophet's urging and after his instruction, George J. Adams proclaimed that same conference, "There shall be a literal Zion established in a literal manner," as the scriptures testified, "[and] it shall be at the tops of the mountains and all nations shall flow unto it."<sup>47</sup>

Documents created during the Prophet's lifetime confirm what Brigham Young and his associates ever after affirmed: during the last months of his life, Joseph Smith enthusiastically

preached an enlarged concept of Zion and, especially in connection with the newly organized Council of Fifty, promoted plans for expanded Mormon settlement in the West. As summarized in Joseph Smith's history, the Council of Fifty discussed how the Saints could obtain their rights from the government and secure "a resting place in the mountains, or some uninhabited region, where we can enjoy the liberty of conscience guaranteed to us by the Constitution."<sup>48</sup> William Clayton, Council of Fifty member and official record keeper, wrote a few months after these discussions led by the Prophet that the Council had prepared to seek a healthful and peaceful home for the Saints in the West where a specially prepared ensign of truth, or standard of liberty, might be raised as a beacon to all nations.<sup>49</sup> Writing from Nauvoo, Elder Parley P. Pratt summarized what had been decided by the Prophet and his associates in these councils: "Our intention is to maintain and build up Nauvoo, and settle other places too," including a new headquarters city in the West.<sup>50</sup>

Joseph Smith never had the opportunity to implement these plans. With the Apostles in the East, petitions to Congress still pending, the political campaign barely launched, the temple not finished, and the western expedition yet to be dispatched, Joseph and Hyrum Smith were shot to death at Carthage Jail.<sup>51</sup>

Brigham Young later insisted that had the Prophet lived, the Saints would have settled in the far West before 1847. Joseph had already reached a firm decision about the West: the need for a place of refuge was increasingly evident, and with or without government assistance, he planned to move. As Heber C. Kimball wrote from Washington a few weeks before the martyrdom, even though the chances for government assistance were slim, the Saints would nonetheless immigrate to a new home: "And it will not be long before this exodus will comence."<sup>52</sup> Had death not intervened, it seems likely that the Prophet would have dispatched the planned-for expedition. It is

also possible that the controversies swirling around the Prophet might have forced the Saints from Nauvoo even earlier had he not been killed. As it was, the murders at Carthage—and the patient Mormon response to them—temporarily defused the bomb, providing a period of peace during which Brigham Young and the Twelve, as new leaders, turned first to other priorities.

Joseph Smith's plans for removal specified "after the temple is completed," or, as Orson Hyde remembered it, "finish the temple if you can." Committed to carrying out "all the measures of Joseph,"<sup>53</sup> the Saints under the Twelve pushed temple construction ahead faster than ever.<sup>54</sup> By January 1845 work had progressed enough for the Twelve to announce that ordinances would begin in December. Also in January 1845, Brigham Young received reports that enemies had determined that they "must drive the Mormons from Nauvoo *before* the temple was don[e] or they never could." Realizing that a commitment to finish the temple at all costs might result in bloodshed, Young noted in his diary, "I inquired of the Lord whether we should stay here and finish the templ[e.] [T]he ansure was we should."<sup>55</sup>

Dissenters and anti-Mormons were correct in seeing a connection between the temple and Saints' willingness to leave Nauvoo, but they had it reversed: until the temple was completed the Saints would not depart without a fight, but once the temple had fulfilled its purpose, however briefly, it would take very little to drive them out.<sup>56</sup>

By spring, when it appeared to Governor Thomas Ford that the Saints had no intention of leaving, he wrote to Brigham Young. First he tried to nudge Young by contrasting the peace they could enjoy by themselves in a new country with the troublesome neighbors around Nauvoo, then added the clincher, "I was informed by Gen Joseph Smith last summer that he contemplated a removal west; and from what I learned from him and others at that time I think if he had lived

he would have begun to move in the matter before this time."<sup>57</sup>

Young did not need the governor's reminder of Joseph's intentions. As early as January 1, 1845, he had "counseled on the subject of settling a new country," and by April, when the governor wrote, decisions had already been made.<sup>58</sup>

Brigham Young reconvened the Council of Fifty in February 1845. By March that body met to discuss filling "Joseph's measures originally adopted in this Council," that is, "going West to seek out a location and a home where the Saints can dwell in peace and health." As before, plans for the West and Mormon-Indian relations were intimately related. Jonathan Dunham, the missionary to the Indians in 1840, and Lewis Dana, a member of the Oneida nation, were among the new members then meeting for the first time with the council. Both men along with others received a confidential call to labor among the western tribes and to learn more about the West, a continuation of earlier efforts "to unite the Lamanites and find a home for the Saints."<sup>59</sup>

By February and March, Brigham Young had begun to seriously consider where the Saints should locate. As had Joseph, he eagerly sought information about the West, correlating all he could learn with the needs of the Saints. He also pondered the Prophet's conversations about the West and sought divine guidance. And then he settled on the interior mountain country of the West as the probable area for a future home. "I am bound to seek a healthy place for this people," he told the Seventies in early March, and "mean to go there Myself as soon as the Temple is finished." He recounted to them that he had dreamt of having searched with the Prophet for such a location. They came to a mountain with several trails, and, spotting a route that Joseph had overlooked, Brigham arrived first at the desired destination. "I thought," he said, "we had found a most beautiful place for a city."<sup>60</sup> Ten days later



Brigham privately mentioned his interest in “settling the interior of the country.”<sup>61</sup>

It is doubtful that Brigham Young ever considered the Pacific Coast as the location for the new headquarters. For years he and others had thought of “a place of safety preparing . . . away towards the Rocky Mountains,” to use the 1840 words of Jonathan Dunham. The coast, though hundreds of miles further removed from a promised Zion in Missouri, offered a less-secure refuge than would the Rocky Mountain region. Rather than a garden spot where the Saints would have to compete with others for such choice land, Young sought a “place apart.” As early as 1838, according to later memory, he had understood “upon natural principles” that his people “had to go to a country that the Gentiles do not desire,” a conviction that clearly influenced decisions now.<sup>62</sup> By 1845 coastal Oregon and California, as well as Texas, had boosters and increasing immigration. By contrast, the Rocky Mountain interior remained little talked about and virtually uninhabited by whites. Though they might retain Nauvoo as a temple city—the eastern rim of a great wheel—and use the western coast or Texas for foreign immigration, the hub would be in the mountainous interior.

During the Council of Fifty meeting of April 11, 1845, John Taylor put the finishing touches on a new song, “The Upper California,” whose verses record the developing plans for removal to the West:

The Upper California. O! that’s the land for me,  
It lies between the Mountains and great Pacific Sea. . . .  
We’ll ask our cousin Lemuel to join us heart  
and hand:  
And spread abroad our curtains through fair  
Zion’s land. . . .  
Then join with me my brethren, and let us hasten  
there;  
We’ll lift our glorious standard and raise our  
house of prayer.<sup>63</sup>

Letters written by Council members that summer revealed more details of their plans for removal to the West. One first mentioned several possible locations on the Pacific Coast, noting, “We shall commence forming a settlement in that region during the coming season”—a plan fulfilled by Sam Brannan’s sea migration. But the main settlement, continued the letter, “will probably be in the neighborhood of Lake Tampanogos as that is represented as a most delightful district and no settlement near there.”<sup>64</sup> Another letter, though less precise as to location, also described the plan: “I expect we shall stop near the Rocky Mountains about 800 miles nearer than the coast,” wrote Parley Pratt, “and there make a stand until we are able to enlarge and to extend to the coast.”<sup>65</sup>

During the spring and summer of 1845, Mormon leaders received important additional information about the region that now held their interest. As early as 1843 the *Nauvoo Neighbor* had published extracts from John C. Frémont’s first expedition to the Rockies, including detailed descriptions of the route to Fort Laramie. Based on preliminary reports, the *Neighbor* announced on March 19, 1845, that the report of Frémont’s second expedition emphasized the region of the Great Salt Lake. In September the paper published extracts from the report, saying, “The great Salt Lake . . . is for the first time revealed to our view by one who has surveyed its shores. . . . The bear River valley . . . is for the first time described.” Here Mormon leaders first learned that the region was a basin, the “Great Basin, as Captain Frémont calls it, and of which he is the first to announce its existence to the world.” No doubt thinking of Mormon hopes for a place of refuge, editor John Taylor noted that a “basin which may hold such a kingdom as France, and which has for its rim a circle of mountains whose summits penetrate the regions of eternal snows is certainly a new and grand subject to be revealed.”<sup>66</sup> By fall Mormon leaders received the full published accounts of both Frémont expeditions. They also had Lansford Hastings’s descriptions

of the Bear River Valley region. During the summer Hastings lectured in Nauvoo, promoting Upper California, and the *Nauvoo Neighbor* printed extracts from his published guide.<sup>67</sup>

The region of greatest Mormon interest is perhaps best described as that portion of the Great Basin in the vicinity of Utah Lake, the Great Salt Lake, and the Bear River, with their associated valleys.<sup>68</sup> Although Mormon leaders understood in 1845 that the Utah or Timpanogos area was the southern part of this region and that the Bear River Valley referred to its northern and eastern limits, descriptive terms were used imprecisely and, to some extent, interchangeably. Some of the valleys along the Bear were contiguous to those associated with the Great Salt Lake, and to Mormon leaders in Nauvoo, the “valley of the Salt Lake” described not a precise location but a large expanse (several related valleys, it turned out) east of the Great Salt Lake. It was within this broad region of perhaps two thousand square miles that Brigham Young and his associates expected, as early as 1845, to establish a new headquarters for the Saints. Orson Pratt emphasized this upon first entering the Salt Lake Valley in 1847. It required two years of striving, he told his companions, “to get to this place, which was had in contemplation before we left the Temple at Nauvoo as the place of our location somewhere in this great valley.”<sup>69</sup>

Mormon leaders felt that there was one particular place better than all others for their headquarters settlement, a specific location that God had reserved for them and to which He would lead them.<sup>70</sup> While still in Nauvoo, Elder George A. Smith later explained, they “sought the Lord to know . . . where they should lead the people for safety.” Fasting and praying daily, Brigham Young, according to Elder Smith, had a vision of Joseph Smith showing him a specific mountain top with an ensign or flag flying above it and telling him, “Build under the point where the colors fall and you will prosper and have peace.”<sup>71</sup>

Contemporary evidence confirms that before Brigham Young left Nauvoo, he had full confidence that he would find the proper location. Only a month before the exodus began, President Young told the Council of Fifty that prophecies would be unfulfilled unless “the House of the Lord should be reared in the Tops of the Mountains and the Proud Banner of liberty wave over the valleys that are within the Mountains.” “I know where the spot is,” he told them, and “I [k]no[w] how to make the flag.”<sup>72</sup> His mind was settled about the matter partly because he now had a key, a mental image, to help him recognize the precise location when he saw it. The Prophet Joseph “sent out” the colors, President Young explained, and said “wherever the colours settle there would be the spot.”<sup>73</sup> The significance of the ensign and the peak during the pioneers’ first week in the Salt Lake Valley confirms, as shall be seen, that this was no idle comment.

In September 1845 the Council of Fifty quietly began to prepare for removal. On the ninth, council members agreed that President Young should select a vanguard to head west in the spring.<sup>74</sup> Before President Young reported his selection two days later, anti-Mormons commenced hostilities against settlements near Nauvoo. Within a week, before Mormon arms or resolve had really been tested, Church leaders capitulated. “We the undersigned,” read a proclamation to the mob, “inform you that it is our intention to leave Nauvoo and the country next spring.”<sup>75</sup> Brigham Young long remembered the mob’s surprise at their willingness to depart, for, although the Council had already decided to send a large body “to prepare a way for a safe retreat,” it had till then been thought “proper not to reveal the secret.”<sup>76</sup> Far from causing the exodus from Nauvoo, the mob merely provided an opportunity for announcing a decision already made.

The short-lived violence of September 1845 and the threat of more did have an impact on the exodus, of course. Mob activity “put the gather-

ing spirit into the hearts of the brethren," to use Brigham Young's phrase.<sup>77</sup> The violence also influenced the decision, apparently made in the fall of 1845, to focus all resources—except for completing the temple for ordinance work—on the exodus and abandon the hope of maintaining Nauvoo as a temple city. Instead of a preliminary exploring and colonizing expedition followed by an exodus in stages, the Saints undertook a mass exodus that the mobs helped complete in September 1846. But even had there been no violence, the western movement would likely have begun in 1846.

Although Brigham Young publicly announced in September 1845 the decision to leave Nauvoo, he made no mention of a destination. During the several weeks of discussion with non-Mormons that followed the outbreak of violence, he again pointedly refrained from revealing the true destination. "All kept dark . . . pulled the wool over their eyes," President Young later said in describing the conversations.<sup>78</sup> As a ploy, Mormon leaders repeatedly stressed Vancouver Island as a potential location. In dealing with General John Hardin, for instance, they thought it "proper not to reveal the secret of our intentions to flee to the mountains," so as a "put off, it was communicated in the strictest confidence" to the general, who promised never to tell, that they planned to settle Vancouver Island. "This report, however, was industriously circulated, as we anticipated it would be."<sup>79</sup> The fact that they were sending at the same time a shipload of emigrants to the Pacific Coast also served to disguise intentions.<sup>80</sup>

The reticence of Mormon leaders to reveal their intentions extended even to relations with the Saints. "Let every man learn to hold his tongue," President Young counseled in the conference after the public announcement. As to a destination, he alluded to "many Countries not yet explored," mentioned Vancouver Island, about which they had good reports, but publicly would conclude only that they were headed into the wilderness, "but where we go we know

not."<sup>81</sup> Brigham Young's letter answering Samuel Brannan's insistent questions as he prepared to sail for the Pacific Coast provides the most interesting example of this refusal to expose the council's decisions. Where would he find them? Brannan asked. "I will say we have not determined to what place we shall go," President Young wrote, "but shall make a location where we can live in peace." When would they leave? "When the grass is sufficient." By what route? "The best route we can find." How many were going? "Uncertain but all . . . are a mind to go." How long would the journey require? "I will tell you when we get to the end."<sup>82</sup>

Though this approach kept enemies uninformed, it also left many of the Saints in the dark. "[In the spring we start] for California," wrote one Nauvoo sister to her family, "and I cannot say but we shall go to Van Couver's Islands."<sup>83</sup> The official proclamation to the Church a few weeks later clarified a little. Mention of the intention to plant a crop "in the neighborhood of the Rocky Mountains" left the possibility that the area would serve as a halfway station rather than a destination.<sup>84</sup> At an organizing meeting on the eve of the exodus, President Young cautioned, "Keep all things secret which shall [be] said or done during the day," and even when the movement was well under way, he instructed a letter writer to "say nothing about our exit to the Mountains."<sup>85</sup>

Brigham Young was concerned that one of two consequences might occur if their full intentions were discovered too soon: either enemies would seek to prevent their departure, perhaps with the assistance of the government, or someone would preempt them on the very lands they intended to settle.<sup>86</sup> These same concerns, it should be noted, influenced the decision to depart in February rather than in the spring.

October conference 1845 was largely devoted to preparing the Saints to leave Nauvoo. Brigham Young and his fellow Apostles presented the exodus as a "glorious emergency," something

they genuinely believed. President Young advised speakers to “avoid reference to mobs, troubles, [etc.],” stressing instead that “we are going cheerfully.”<sup>87</sup> In this spirit John Taylor emphasized the “Satisfaction of going to Calaforna,” where they would be free from oppression. In a similar vein, Parley P. Pratt compared removal to transplanting young fruit trees from a small nursery to a field large enough for mature trees to bear fruit. “The Lord designs to lead us to a wider field of action,” he explained. “This people are fast approaching that point which ancient prophets have along since pointed out as the destiny of the saints of the last days.” Pratt insisted, “We want a country where we shall have room to expand.”<sup>88</sup>

After conference Brigham Young issued a circular to all Church branches informing them of the intended spring departure. The circular described a “crisis of extraordinary and thrilling interest” and advised the Saints to “wake up . . . to the present glorious emergency in which the God of Israel has placed you.” Because the Prophet Joseph had foreseen that “this removal” would come, they were prepared, continued the text, to leave for “a far distant region of the West” where they would begin “a new epoch . . . in the history of the Church.”<sup>89</sup> When Orson Pratt, presiding in the East, learned of the plans to leave Nauvoo, he could hardly contain himself. “I want to fly upon the wings of the wind and be with you,” he wrote Brigham Young. He asked permission to join them immediately, then added: “Should my feelings get the upper hand” and “I start forthwith for Nauvoo, I hope you will forgive.”<sup>90</sup>

Such enthusiasm, combined with the optimism of other leaders, proved contagious. Once most of the Saints had received temple ordinances, the “spirit of removal” took such deep root in the “great majority,” read a Brigham Young letter as the Saints streamed from Nauvoo, that “they could not have been hired to stay even under the most favorable circumstances.”

Cheerfully they now left their temple to implement “the plans of brother Joseph and fulfill the will of the Lord.” The time had fully come, asserted the letter, for the Church to be “transplanted into a far distant country in order to carry out the designs of our heavenly father.”<sup>91</sup> With the long-awaited departure at hand, Young counseled Nauvoo residents, “We want to go whether we are ready or not.”<sup>92</sup>

After crossing the Mississippi, Brigham Young’s personal enthusiasm for the western move seemed to increase with each mile. “Nauvoo is no place for the Saints,” he told his brother soon after departing. “Do not think . . . I hate to leave my house and home. No! far from that. I am so free from bondage at this time, that Nauvoo looks like a prison to me. It looks pleasant ahead, but dark to look back.” To a wife still in Nauvoo he wrote asking that she travel with another family. He could not bring himself to return for her, he apologized, saying, “[I] think I shall goe further west instead. . . . we feele quite happy here in camp and are bound for the West.”<sup>93</sup>

Throughout the western journey, Brigham Young remained vague regarding a precise destination as if he could not be certain until he was upon the ground. This was seen not as a liability but as a parallel with ancient Israel traveling under God’s direction to an unseen promised land,<sup>94</sup> and that parallel was emphasized in later reminiscences. On the seventh anniversary of leaving Nauvoo, for example, Young emphasized that they had crossed the Mississippi for the West “not knowing, at that time, wither we were going, but firmly believing that the Lord had in reserve for us a good place in the mountains, and that He would lead us directly to it.”<sup>95</sup> Contemporary records confirm that even while Young declared his intention to “cross the mountain[s] to the great bason,” the tentativeness remained. As he noted in an 1846 letter to Orson Hyde reviewing their plans, “To define the exact spot we cannot at present.”<sup>96</sup>

Rather than mentioning the Salt Lake Valley as their destination, Mormon leaders in mid-1846 referred most frequently to the Bear River Valley. For example, following a June discussion with American Fur Company agents Sarpee and Green about the roads, climate, and appearance of "the great Bear river valley," Brigham Young several times remarked that he intended to head for that area.<sup>97</sup> The most detailed documentation of intentions, however, included both the Salt Lake and the Bear River regions. After consulting with non-Mormon friend and adviser Thomas L. Kane, Brigham Young wrote President James K. Polk that the Mormons expected to reside "west of the Rocky Mountains, and within the Basin of the great Salt Lake or bear river valley."<sup>98</sup> Kane himself informed Commissioner of Indian Affairs William Medill that "the ultimate destination of the whole people . . . is the country east of the Utah and Salt Lakes and West of the Rocky Mountains," adding that the area they would occupy could not, at this point, "be more closely defined than this." He also penned a similar but more technical description to President Polk, noting that this was a change from their earlier supposed destination near the Pacific.<sup>99</sup> For his part, Young continued to acknowledge the possibility of a number of Mormon settlements in the West, including some on the Pacific Coast, but his main concern was to establish a new headquarters and temple city in the Great Basin. For the present, he was certain, most resources must be concentrated there.<sup>100</sup>

From their post on the Missouri River, Mormon leaders continued from mid-1846 until their departure for the mountains the following spring to gather information about the Great Basin.<sup>101</sup> There is no evidence, however, that additional information changed now well-established plans. In September 1846 Brigham Young wrote that he intended to "fit out a company of men to go over to Bear river valley next spring and thus prepare a home for our women before we take them." On the eve of departure more than six

months later, it was still his plan, according to Hosea Stout, "to proceed on [to] the great Basin without stopping . . . to locate a Stake of Zion and this fall come back after his family."<sup>102</sup>

While Mormon leaders remained on the Missouri River, the New York Saints under Samuel Brannan sailed around South America to San Francisco, and the Mormon Battalion, a company of Mormon soldiers enlisted to secure California during the Mexican War, departed via the deserts of the Southwest. Without describing a precise location, Brigham Young communicated to both groups enough information that they could locate the pioneer company either en route or at their place of settlement.<sup>103</sup> Young instructed Sam Brannan to travel east from the coast via the south shore of Great Salt Lake toward Fort Bridger and South Pass until he found them. Their ultimate location he expected "will be west of the rocky Mountains. . . . perhaps in the great Basin as any where."<sup>104</sup> In February, President Young had thought to have the sick detachment of the battalion, located at Pueblo, go immediately to Fort Laramie and plant. By March, however, the commander of the detachment told his men that they were instructed to go "to Salt Lake and there put in a crop of corn and wait there for the Church."<sup>105</sup> The instructions were to insure getting a crop in the ground rather than to reveal a specific location. Once en route, President Young officially informed the Pueblo Saints that the pioneers' "destination is to find a place for a stake of Zion in some good healthy country which we anticipate will be in the Great Basin, or vicinity of the Great Salt Lake."<sup>106</sup> A few weeks later some of the Mormon soldiers in California prepared to move to the "Bear River Valley . . . where we expect to meet or find our people," while others heard that "the Saints were settling in the Great Salt Lake Valley."<sup>107</sup>

This seeming confusion or lack of precision about a destination was due not to poor communication but to the fact that Church leaders had not yet determined an exact location. Furthermore,

Brigham Young remained unwilling to proclaim a specific destination until he felt a personal confirmation that they had indeed reached the "place prepared." As he left Winter Quarters, President Young wrote of heading "to the Mountains" or to the Great Basin "in search of a resting place." He would, he said, "point [out] the cite as the spirit directs."<sup>108</sup> En route, Brigham Young asserted that the pioneers strived "by every means to press forward and find the spot which the Lord shall point out as a Gathering place." They felt certain that the location could be found within, as Orson Pratt phrased it, "the great interior basin of the Salt Lake, the country of our destination."<sup>109</sup>

Although there is no evidence Church leaders intended to establish a headquarters in coastal California, clearly some Mormon and non-Mormon residents of the region thought they would.<sup>110</sup> Brigham Young learned by July 1847 that Brannan and his company were "comfortably situated with Spanish families" in the San Francisco area and that they had planted crops "expecting us to help eat." Nonetheless, he insisted, their destination was "the great Bason or salt lake . . . to examine the country."<sup>111</sup> Accordingly he wanted the commander of the sick detachment to send someone to the coast for the payroll and to "learn the geography of the country," while the soldiers and their families remained in the mountains "in our beautiful city, which we are about to build."<sup>112</sup>

Both at Fort Laramie and from travelers along the trail, the Mormon pioneers learned in June a great deal more about the land of their destination. After describing for them "the Bear River valley and the neighborhood of the Salt Lake," one traveler left them "little room to hope, for even a moderate good country anywhere in those regions," although he thought Cache Valley had some possibilities.<sup>113</sup> Another agreed that with irrigation the region held promise, but insisted that notwithstanding the rumored richness of the country, the Saints would certainly

find it "vastly over rated" and that if they expected much, they would be disappointed.<sup>114</sup> Although Jim Bridger was concerned that frost would "operate against it becoming a great grain country," he was more encouraging. He thought the area around Utah Lake "the best country in vicinity of the Salt Lake" but liked even better the area further south.<sup>115</sup>

Though not particularly encouraging, this additional information did serve to narrow their focus as they approached the mountains. Settlers, they learned, had already arrived in the upper (northern) Bear River Valley, an area closely associated with the main emigrant trail to Oregon and California. This news confirmed their intention to investigate first the area further south.<sup>116</sup> They learned also that the area near Utah Lake was a prime Native American stronghold where settlement would likely meet violent resistance.<sup>117</sup> Increasingly it appeared that the area north of Utah Lake and south of the Bear River offered "for the present at least" the best prospects.<sup>118</sup>

Brigham Young, forced to stop along the trail because of illness, gave his final instructions to the advance party of the caravan in writing, and the message preserves the fact that he still had not proclaimed a specific location. To avoid crowding the Utes, he urged the pioneers to "bear toward the region of the Salt Lake, rather than the Utah Lake," and there immediately select a place for crops "regardless of a future location." The object was to find "some point in the Basin" and plant. After planting, continued the message, we "shall select a site for our location [a headquarters and temple city] at our leisure."<sup>119</sup> Following President Young's instructions, Orson Pratt's advance party entered the "long sought valley" on July 22 and explored "about 20 miles North" before selecting a "permanent camp ground."<sup>120</sup> The following day Pratt called the camp together to offer "prayer and thanksgiving" and to dedicate themselves and the land "unto the Lord." They then set to work with team and plow.<sup>121</sup>

Since the 1830s Mormon leaders had believed that the Saints had a destiny in the trans-Mississippi West and, as has been seen, by 1840 there had been discussion about a specific refuge "preparing" in the Rocky Mountains. At least from that point, the still-future exodus became for Mormon leaders a matter of deep religious significance. Brigham Young and the Twelve clearly believed that directing the westward movement was a divinely appointed "errand," one that God would oversee. Not surprisingly, their exodus-related decisions were influenced not only by practical information and needs but also by religious faith. Nor were detailed information and earlier spiritual impressions enough. Even in the mountains of the West, before proclaiming a new temple city, Brigham Young awaited final providential confirmation that they had, indeed, found the "place prepared."

When Brigham Young first gazed upon the valley, according to his carefully prepared history, the "Spirit of Light rested on me and hovered over the valley, and I felt that there the Saints would find protection and safety." Wilford Woodruff later elaborated, "He had seen the valley before in vision, and upon this occasion he saw the future glory of Zion and of Israel, as they would be, planted in the valleys of these mountains." When the vision had passed, Young said, "It is enough. This is the right place. Drive on."<sup>122</sup>

Erastus Snow, member of the pioneer company and later Apostle, gave perhaps the most detailed account of this "providential version" of selecting a headquarters location. They had come, according to Snow, seeking "a country which had been pointed out by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the midst of the Rocky Mountains." As they traveled they knew not the terminus of their journey but knew that "God had commanded them to go into a land which he would show them." When asked about a destination, Brigham Young told the pioneers: "I will show you when we come to it. . . . I have seen it in vision, and when my natural eyes behold it, I

shall know it." And when they reached this land, the Prophet Brigham said, "This is the place where I, in vision, saw the ark of the Lord resting." President Young then told the pioneers, continued Snow, to investigate in every direction the prospects for settlement. He assured them that they would find many excellent places but that upon returning, they would say with him, "This is the place which the Lord has chosen for us to commence our settlements, and from this place we shall spread abroad and possess the land."<sup>123</sup>

This reminiscence is compatible with contemporary records of Young's entrance and first days in the Salt Lake Valley as the decision was first confirmed and then shared with all. The first view of the long-anticipated scenery was clearly a moment charged with religious emotion. In his diary Wilford Woodruff described the valley as the "land of promise held in reserve by the hand of God for a resting place for the Saints," adding that here would stand the house of God, here would be unfurled the ensign to the nations. Woodruff wrote that although ill, "President Young expressed his full satisfaction in the appearance of the valley as a resting place for the saints and was amply repayed for his journey."<sup>124</sup>

Once in the valley, Brigham Young did not immediately designate a temple and city site. "This valley seems well calculated for a starting place . . . [and] it is contemplated to commence a location here," noted Heber Kimball in his diary, "although we design looking round further." Specifically, they were interested in a particular hill from which the flag would fly above the temple and the city, as they had anticipated while still in Nauvoo. On July 26 Brigham Young and associates set out to examine the "high hills" to the north of camp. Though still feeble from his illness, President Young insisted on climbing "a high Peak in the edge of the mountain which was considered a good place to raise an ensign." This he named Ensign Peak (or Ensign Hill).<sup>125</sup> Brigham Young was now ready to formally des-

ignite a site. The following day he and Heber Kimball moved their wagons from the camp “to the intended site of the City,” and on July 28 they and the other Apostles present met in council and confirmed the location.<sup>126</sup> That evening they also convened a meeting of all the camp “on the spot intended for a temple lot.”<sup>127</sup>

For nearly a week, camp members had plowed, planted, and explored. Now President Young wanted feelings frankly expressed. “Shall we look further or make a location upon this spot?” he asked. Erastus Snow spoke out strongly in favor of “this place,” both because all who explored returned satisfied with it and, he added, because “the Lord led us directly to it.” To this there was general agreement. Brigham Young responded by saying he thought that the brethren would be willing to accept revelation and “be entirely satisfied” even if the place designated was barren rock. “I know,” he continued, “that this is the spot, and we have come here according to the suggestion and direction of Joseph Smith. . . . The word of the Lord, was, ‘go to that valley and the best place you can find in it is the spot.’ Well, I prayed that he would lead us directly to the best spot, which he has done, for after searching we can find no better.” When one member of the camp expressed preference for another location, Brigham Young acknowledged his right to a different viewpoint but concluded: “I knew this spot as soon as I saw it. Up there on that table ground we shall erect the Standard of Freedom.”<sup>128</sup> Another account reported that President Young had told those assembled that “he knew that this was the place for the City fore he had seen it before, and that we were now standing on the South east corner of the Temple Block.”<sup>129</sup>

Until he arrived, Brigham Young had appeared tentative and flexible. Once upon the ground, however, he expressed no doubts about the location but instead declared that they had found the “place prepared.” This he repeatedly affirmed in later months. “This is the Spot that I

[h]av[e] anticipated,” he repeated to the pioneer camp before returning to Winter Quarters for his family.<sup>130</sup> And when he returned to the valley the following year, he similarly explained to the new arrivals, as Hosea Stout recorded, “This is the place he had seen before he came here & it was the place for the Saints to geather.” “[Joseph] S[mith] and myself [h]ad both seen this place years ago,” Brigham Young stated, according to Stout, during the first Pioneer Day celebration in 1849, “and that is why we [a]r[e] here.”<sup>131</sup>

Mormon leaders had long sought a place of health and safety, and what they found fulfilled their expectations. The isolation of the Great Basin would provide the long-needed “bulwark of strength to protect the infant kingdom of God while it should gather itself strength.”<sup>132</sup> Others, too, recognized advantages inherent in the new location and predicted that if the Mormon masses made it to their Rocky Mountain haven, “all hell cant drive them out.” Hearing this, Brigham agreed. “They never will be drove unless they drive themselves . . . and that I calculate to stop,” he responded. “I prophecy that myself.”<sup>133</sup> He announced to the Twelve as they met to reorganize their new home, “This I [k]no[w] is the place for the L[atter] D[ay] S[aints],” the place where, if faithful, “they will become a mighty p[eo]pl[e] that no power can prevail ag[ain]st them.”<sup>134</sup> Instead of devoting energies to defense, President Young expected that in the Great Basin they would be safe and free to “preach to all nations the peaceable things of the K[ingdom].”<sup>135</sup>

The long-sought valley was now headquarters; the valley was home. Saints already in California, he counseled, could tarry in their “goodly land” or come to the valley as they chose, but he said, “We wish to make this a Strong hold, a rallying point, a more immediate gathering place than any other.” From the Great Basin “let the work go out, and in process of time the Shores of the Pacific may be over looked from the Temples of the Lord.”<sup>136</sup> “The whisperings of the Spirit is



now to all saints, gather yourselves together, to the place which has been pointed out, for a place of rest and Salvation; a place for the building of the House of the Lord, a place 'sought out,' and a city which need not be forsaken [if] the inhabitants thereof will work righteousness."<sup>137</sup> And what did this new beginning, this new epoch, offer Brigham Young? A chance, he felt, to build the kingdom of God on earth, to work for the establishment of Zion—in short, a place where he could labor the days of his life toward realizing what he envisioned when he first arrived. Twenty years later he reported: "The people have hardly commenced to realize the beauty, excellence, and glory that will yet crown this city. I do not know that I will live in the flesh to see what I saw in vision when I came here: I see some things, but a great deal more has yet to be accomplished."<sup>138</sup> Other essays in this volume are about that accomplishment.

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## NOTES

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1. Thomas Bullock Minutes, September 24, 1848, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; hereafter cited as Church Archives.

2. Hosea Stout Diary, September 24, 1848, in *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844–1861*, ed. Juanita Brooks (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press and Utah State Historical Society, 1964), 1:327; hereafter referred to as Hosea Stout Diary.

3. Thomas Bullock Diary, July 22, 1847, Church Archives; Orson Pratt, Willard Richards, and George A. Smith to Brigham Young, July 22, 1847, Brigham Young Papers, Church Archives.

4. Wilford Woodruff to Thomas L. Kane, March 8, 1859, Thomas L. Kane Collection, Church Archives; Provo School of the Prophets, June 8, 1868, Church Archives.

5. Conference Minutes, April 7, 1844, Church Archives.

6. Wilford Woodruff, in Conference Report, April 1898, 57. For other reminiscent versions of this meeting that agree in all essentials, see Abraham H. Cannon Diary, April 19, 1894, and Heber J. Grant Diary, April 17, 1894, Church Archives. Woodruff's 1834 diary confirms the circumstantial details he remembered more than half a century later and dates the meeting April 27, 1834, but the diary does not record the substance of the Prophet's impressive remarks.

7. For additional reminiscences affirming 1830s mentions of a Rocky Mountain destiny, see Lewis Clark Christian, "A Study of Mormon Knowledge of the American Far West Prior to the Exodus (1830–February 1846)" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972), 65–67; see also Abraham H. Cannon Diary, October 6, 1891, Church Archives.

Christian's thesis is an important sourcebook surveying documentation relating to the Mormons and the West before the exodus. For his interpretation and a summary of his conclusions, see his article "Mormon Foreknowledge of the West," *Brigham Young University Studies* 21, no. 4 (Fall 1981): 403–15. Christian's companion work, "A Study of the Mormon Westward Migration between February 1846 and July 1847 with Emphasis on and Evaluation of the Factors that Led to the Mormons' Choice of Salt Lake Valley as the Site of their Initial Colony" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1976), is a useful sourcebook for the later period.

8. *Painesville Telegraph* (Ohio), January 18, 1831, as quoted in Christian, "Mormon Knowledge of the American Far West," 62. The Ohio Mormons reportedly learned this when John Whitmer arrived in Kirtland from New York with a letter from Sidney Rigdon, who had traveled there to meet Joseph Smith. According to E. D. Howe, who reproduced the letter, it said, "The Lord has made known unto us, some of his great things which he has laid up for them that love him, among which the fact (a glory of wonders it is) that you are living on the land of promise and there *there* is the place of gathering, and from that place to the Pacific Ocean, God has dedicated to himself . . . and he has given it to us" (E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* [Painesville, Ohio, 1834], 111).

9. *The Evening and the Morning Star*, October 1832.

10. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 145–46.

11. Brigham Young, August 31, 1856, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–1886), 4:41. See also Brigham Young Discourse, September 24, 1848, Thomas Bullock Minutes, Church Archives; revelation given by Joseph Smith, July 17, 1831, as reported in W. W. Phelps to Brigham Young, August 12, 1861, Church Archives.

12. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:209; see also *Journal of Discourses*, 11:17–19.

13. Lyman Wight later said that while in Liberty Jail the Prophet discussed sending an expedition to explore the West (see Lyman Wight to Wilford Woodruff, August 24, 1857, Church Archives). Orson Pratt similarly insisted that before the Missouri expulsion, Joseph Smith had planned to send an exploring expedition to prepare the way for families moving West (see his remarks in John D. Lee Diary, April 26, 1846, Church Archives). It is also possible that in 1838–39, Joseph Smith received maps of some of the western mountain valleys from a man who had been in the Great Basin with Jim Bridger (see Church Historian's Office Journal, June 26, 1908, Church Archives, for comments of David Lewis regarding his earlier experiences with Bridger and Smith).

14. As Nauvoo became the most impressive Mormon community to date, with more people, resources, power, and promise than any earlier settlement, it began to seem permanent. With investment and success, attachment to Nauvoo grew until, eventually, leaders held out hopes almost to the last that they could maintain Nauvoo indefinitely as a "temple city" even though the headquarters moved elsewhere, and they retained the goal of one day returning to Missouri.

15. Of course, the future *permanent* headquarters was to be in Jackson County, so any settlement outside of Missouri technically could be considered interim. Nonetheless, it seems likely that prior experience with neighbors in Ohio and Missouri, combined with initial reluctance to establish a new city and some talk about a refuge in the West, all contributed to an initial expecta-

tion that Nauvoo would not be a long-term headquarters.

16. Heber C. Kimball, *President Heber C. Kimball's Journal: Designed for the Instruction and Encouragement of Young Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor's Office, 1882), 77–78. Rather than a daily journal like the one Kimball kept in the 1840s, this is a personal history dictated beginning in Quincy, Illinois, in 1839, and revised in Utah. Manuscript versions are in the Church Archives.

17. Brigham Young, March 3, 1861, in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:356. See also L. Marcham, in Provo School of the Prophets Minutes, June 8, 1868, Church Archives: "Joseph Said in 1839 or 40 that this people would have to [leave?] that Country. And build up the kingdom of God in the tops of the mountains." Oliver B. Huntington later recorded that in the early days of Nauvoo, Joseph Smith Sr. privately told his family that "the Lord had told Joseph (his son) the Prophet, that we would stay there just 7 years and that when we left there, we would go right up into the midst of the Indians, in the Rocky Mountains" (Oliver B. Huntington Journal, 204, Church Archives).

18. Nancy Richards to Willard Richards, November 19, 1845, as quoted in Christian, "Mormon Knowledge of the American Far West," 68. Compare this with the statement of Sarah Leavitt, who later wrote (of 1846) that she had known "for ten years that we had got to go and I was glad we had got started" (quoted in Christian, "Mormon Knowledge of the American Far West," 66).

19. This letter was described in a communication from Kirtland to Nauvoo asking for clarification (see Thomas Burdick letter, August 28, 1840, Joseph Smith Collection, Church Archives). That the Twelve, then in England, were aware of plans involving the Indians, and that they attached considerable importance to them, can be seen from Wilford Woodruff Diary, July 13, 1840, Wilford Woodruff Papers, Church Archives; and Brigham Young to Joseph Smith, May 7, 1840, Joseph Smith Collection, where he wrote, "I wish you would tell me how cousin Lemuel gets along with his business."

20. For the idea of a refuge in the West and of the West in general as a place of safety for the Saints, see Parley P. Pratt's *Mormonism Unveiled: Zion's Watchman Unmasked*, 4th ed. (New York, 1842), 6. Compare this with Orson Pratt's memory that in Nauvoo Joseph had assembled some of the elders and told them they would have to “flee to the Rocky Mountains for safety” (Orson Pratt, October 7, 1874, in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:224).

21. Thomas Burdick letter, August 28, 1840, Joseph Smith Collection. As noted, Burdick preserved this information in a letter to Nauvoo asking for clarification. In addition to these statements relating directly to his own mission, Dunham talked about other prophecies, causing Burdick to write, “Such teachings are not all understood in this place, they are calculated to make excitement & what the consequences may be I am not able to say.” Burdick reasonably concluded, “Looking at all his proceedings and teachings, I for one cannot help but doubt more and more his being authorized and sent to teach all these things in this place at this time.” Dunham probably was not authorized to speak as he did. Apparently lacking a formal letter of authority from the Prophet, he may have tried to impress Kirtland leaders by telling more than was prudent. Joseph Smith was not in Nauvoo when Burdick's inquiry arrived, and Hyrum Smith, it appears, declined to handle the matter in Joseph's absence. No written response from Nauvoo on the subject has been located.

22. It is clear that only part of Dunham's activities, and the activities of others like him, can presently be documented. A detailed report of his 1843 mission is in Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1951), 5:541–49. In February 1844 he volunteered to be one of the explorers for Oregon and California who were to “select a site for a new city for the Saints” (Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:223). He was a member of the Nauvoo Police, an officer of the Nauvoo Legion, and a frequent associate of Joseph Smith.

23. William Clayton Diary, March 1, 1845, in Andrew F. Ehat, “It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth’:

Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God,” *BYU Studies* 20, no. 3 (Spring 1980): 253–80; hereafter cited as William Clayton Diary. See also April 11, 1845, 271, where it is simply called “the Western Mission.” For additional information, see Smith, *History of the Church*, 7:401, 428, 434. Had Dunham not died on this later mission, his several years' labors might have borne more direct fruit and become better known during the exodus. See Smith, *History of the Church*, 7:437.

24. Oliver Olney letters, July 20 and October 4 and 6, 1842, Beinecke Library, Yale University, microfilm copy in Church Archives. See also Christian, “Mormon Knowledge of the American Far West,” 75–76.

25. The Indian connection has already been discussed. For Joseph Smith's settled intention to send out a vanguard, see Orson Pratt remarks in John D. Lee Diary, April 26, 1846.

26. Joseph Smith's Nauvoo timetable is complex and cannot be treated here. Some information is available in Ronald K. Esplin, “Joseph, Brigham and the Twelve: A Succession of Continuity,” *BYU Studies* 21, no. 3 (Summer 1981): 302–7, 312–15.

27. On the strength of the prophecy's supposed connection with installation of the Rising Sun Masonic Lodge in Iowa, Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* dates the prophecy August 6, 1842, after Olney's first letter (Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:85). Anson Call, apparently the source for the published account, variously dates it in his own writings as July 14 (1843?) and simply “summer of 1842.” Another reminiscent account places the date as August 8, 1842 (see Christian, “Mormon Knowledge of the American Far West,” 72–77; see also Anson Call Diary and affidavits, Church Archives).

28. Later memories of Joseph Smith's 1842 remarks should not, of course, be treated as the primary documentation of his Nauvoo views of the Saints in the Rockies. For a recent discussion of the 1842 prophecy, see Davis Bitton, “Joseph Smith in the Mormon Folk Memory,” in *Restoration Studies I, Sesquicentennial Edition*, ed. Maurice L. Draper and Clare D. Vlahos (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House,

1980), 75–94. Though suggesting caution in interpreting the prophecy, Bitton nonetheless concludes that it “probably had a basis in an actual statement.”

There are reminiscent accounts, sometimes associated with this prophecy, reporting that Joseph Smith knew the route the Saints would follow to the mountains. See, for example, Hosea Stout Diary, 1:28, and those mentioned in Christian, “Mormon Knowledge of the American Far West,” 68–69, 93–94. Before the Prophet’s death he had access to several maps, including Frémont’s map of the route that the pioneers later followed, and it seems likely that he discussed with associates the routes west. But if he prepared his own map, as some suggest, none has ever surfaced, nor is there any evidence that Brigham Young claimed such a map or was influenced in his travel decisions by one.

29. Brigham Young, March 16, 1856, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:257–58.

30. Brigham Young, March 3, 1861, in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:356; see also Orson Pratt, August 26, 1876, in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:224.

31. Phineas H. Young to Dear Brethren, December 14, 1842, Joseph Smith Collection.

32. Joseph Smith Diary, February 20, 1844.

33. Joseph Smith Diary, February 23, 1844.

34. Wilford Woodruff Diary, February 21 and 23, 1844.

35. Thomas Bullock Minutes, April 8, 1846.

36. Church Historian’s Office Journal, December 2, 1847.

37. Brigham Young, December 11, 1864, in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:16.

38. Nauvoo City Council draft minutes, June 8, 1844, Church Archives.

39. Wilford Woodruff Diary, February 25, 1844. While still en route to the mountains in 1847, the anniversary of Joseph Smith’s death reminded the pioneers of his promise of a safe place. Though keenly feeling the loss of their leader, said Heber C. Kimball, “We cannot but rejoice that we are now as far on our way to the wilderness . . . and that we are already measurably beyond the jurisdiction and reach of our persecutors, with a prospect of soon seeing our families, friends, and the saints located in a place of peace

and safety” (Heber C. Kimball Diary, June 27, 1847, Heber C. Kimball Papers, Church Archives).

40. See Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:222 for Miller’s arrival, and 6:254–61 for the letters and councils. For the Council of Fifty itself, see D. Michael Quinn, “The Council of Fifty and Its Members, 1844 to 1945,” *BYU Studies* 20, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 163–97, and Andrew F. Ehat, “‘It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth’” *BYU Studies* 20, no. 3 (Spring 1980): 253–80.

41. Not only might Texas be a gathering place for Saints from the South, as the Wisconsin proposal suggested, but there were also Indians in and near Texas that needed the gospel and might become allies. No doubt Mormon leaders also perceived diplomatic advantage in having good relations with the Texas government no matter the direction of future Mormon expansion. Finally, looking at all of North and South America as Zion, they may have favored this project as a step toward the vast populations of Mexico and South America.

42. Like the Pacific Coast, Texas seems never to have been viewed as a suitable place for a headquarters. Instead of isolated refuge, they offered the same liabilities as places the Saints had already settled. Regardless of initial welcome, these widely publicized lands already attracted other settlers including, especially in the case of Texas, according to Orson Hyde, many of “our old enemies, the mobocrats of Missouri.” Orson Hyde to Joseph Smith and Council, April 25, 1844, in Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:372. That this was fully recognized as a major liability becomes more clear below.

43. For an overview of the shortlived Texas efforts, see Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 294–95; for information on the efforts of Orson Hyde and others with Congress, see Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:274–77, 282, 369–76. Because of intense national interest in Oregon and California, Mormon leaders thought it worthwhile to petition for Congressional support of their efforts to move American citizens into those territories.

44. Joseph Smith Diary, April 8, 1844; see also Thomas Bullock minutes and Wilford Woodruff Diary,

same date. Though perhaps with less emphasis, Joseph Smith spoke about this concept at least as early as 1840 (see Dean C. Jessee, "Joseph Smith's 19 July 1840 Discourse," *BYU Studies* 19, no. 3 [Spring 1979]: 392).

45. Wilford Woodruff Diary, April 8, 1844. For reemphasis of Joseph's priority of the temple ("We must do all we can to build the Temple—[and] after that to build up Churches" in other parts of the Land of Zion), see remarks of Hyrum Smith and Brigham Young in Thomas Bullock Minutes, April 8, 1844.

46. "Their will be some place ordained for the redeeming of the dead[—]I think this place will be the one," said Joseph Smith, in Wilford Woodruff Diary, April 8, 1844. Compare this with Thomas Bullock minutes of the same date: "I verily believe this to be the place"—and with the suggestion noted in the Joseph Smith Diary version that the fact of having a temple was more important than where the temple was: the "lord hath ordained" that "these last & most important ordinances must be in a house—provided for the purpose—when [where] we can get a house built first there is the place." In spite of the evident flexibility, they clearly anticipated Nauvoo would be the place. As Willard Richards wrote to Orson Hyde in May 1844, in Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:406: "Nauvoo will be a 'corner stake of Zion' forever, we most assuredly expect. Here are the house and the ordinance, extend where else we may."

47. George J. Adams remarks, Thomas Bullock minutes, April 8, 1844, abbreviations expanded; see also Isaiah 2:2–3.

48. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:261. Brigham Young's history simply mentions the goal "to inform ourselves of the unoccupied territory open to settlers" (see entry for March 11, 1844, in "History of Brigham Young," *Deseret News*, March 24, 1858).

49. See William Clayton Diary, January 1, and March 1, 1845, 253–80; for information on the flag or ensign to the nations, see D. Michael Quinn, "The Flag of the Kingdom of God," *BYU Studies* 14, no. 1 (Autumn 1973): 105–14.

50. Parley P. Pratt to Isaac Rogers, September 6, 1845, in Christian, "Mormon Knowledge of the American Far West," 112. Pratt's letter indicates plans for a

headquarters in the West while Nauvoo remained a temple city and other settlements were established—details also suggested in the Prophet's recorded 1844 statements.

51. Before going to Carthage, the Smith brothers had crossed the Mississippi to flee, it is often assumed, to safety in the West. Given the plans and the conviction that safety could be found in the West, the impulse was probably inevitable. However, it should be noted that there was as yet no prepared place of refuge to flee to and no expedition ready to accompany them. Perhaps realizing this, they apparently decided not to head for the mountains immediately but, at least as a preliminary, to meet their families outside Nauvoo (see Linda King Newell, "The Last Crossing: Did Emma Smith 'Entreat' Joseph Back Across the River to His Death?" [paper presented at Mormon History Association, Rexburg, Idaho, May 2, 1981]). Since they ultimately concluded to return to Nauvoo and to arrest, one can only speculate about what their full intention might have been in initially crossing the river.

52. Heber C. Kimball to Helen Mar Kimball, June 9, 1844, as quoted in Christian, "Mormon Knowledge of the American Far West," 91–92.

53. Esplin, "Joseph, Brigham and the Twelve," 328–31.

54. The case of Lyman Wight is instructive here. Even while Joseph Smith was alive, Lyman Wight and associates in the pineries had become discouraged with the pace of Nauvoo developments, especially the failure, as they saw it, to complete the temple in a timely fashion as commanded by revelation. Consequently, they had considered turning their own energies immediately to projects held in abeyance awaiting the temple, leaving the Nauvoo Saints to their fate. It was over this willingness to ignore the temple and do things out of sequence that Lyman Wight and Brigham Young quarreled after the Prophet's death and not directly over a proposed settlement in Texas. Although reluctantly, Brigham Young did authorize Wight to take *only* his original company from the Wisconsin pineries to pursue the Texas project. He publicly proclaimed against the movement only after Wight's public enthusiasm for Texas threatened prematurely to

“draw off” people and resources needed for the temple. Wight, it should be noted, had not been in Nauvoo for the Council of Fifty discussions of March and April, nor had he heard the April conference admonitions about the priority of the temple.

55. Brigham Young Diary, January 23–24, 1845; emphasis added.

56. Ronald K. Esplin, “Brigham Young and the Power of the Apostleship: Defending the Kingdom through Prayer, 1844–1845,” in *The Eighth Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium: A Sesquicentennial Look at Church History* (Provo, UT: Church Educational System, 1980), 106–10.

57. Thomas Ford to Brigham Young, April 8, 1845, Brigham Young Papers.

58. George A. Smith Diary, January 1, 1845, George A. Smith Papers, Church Archives.

59. William Clayton Diary, 269; see also entries for April 11 and 15, 1844, 271. Dunham died in the summer of 1845 while on this mission. As with Dunham’s 1840 mission to the American Indians, this mission, too, was confidential. Initially only those who were in the Council of Fifty or who were part of the mission knew of its intent. Joseph and George Herring, Native American brothers involved in the enterprise, visited Nauvoo a few months later. After a month of close association with Hosea Stout, head of the Nauvoo Police but not a member of the Council of Fifty, they confided to him and a companion “the nature of their mission,” which, noted Stout, “was not understood by us heretofore.” Sensing immediately the mission’s significance, Stout concluded it “will yet make a great alteration in their affairs and ours” (Hosea Stout Diary, October 29, 1845, 1:87).

60. Minutes, March 9, 1845, Seventies Book B., Church Archives. This is not the last time Brigham Young dreamed about finding the right place in the mountains (see Willard Richards Diary, November 6 and 8, 1846, Church Archives).

61. Hosea Stout Diary, March 19, 1845, 1:28.

62. Brigham Young, February 17, 1856, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:210. Compare this with Brigham Young to President Polk, August 9, 1846, Brigham Young Papers, where he said they were headed to a region

where “a good living” would require hard labor, hence an area not coveted by others (see also Miscellaneous Minutes, November 14, 1847, Church Archives, where Young said he wanted a country “not fit for any but Mormons,” and Brigham Young, January 5, 1860 and June 7, 1857, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:105 and 4:434–44. Mormon leaders looked to the mountains also because of a belief that they would there fulfill Isaiah’s prophecy of a house of the Lord in the tops of the mountains. Compare Isaiah 2:2–3 with Young’s remarks as reported in John D. Lee Diary, January 13, 1846.

63. William Clayton Diary, 271–80. “Cousin Lemuel” was a designation used by Young and others as early as 1840 when referring obliquely to contacts with the Lamanites of the West.

64. Council to Addison Pratt, August 28, 1845 in Christian, “Mormon Knowledge of the American Far West,” 111. In Frémont’s 1845 report, Utah Lake, or Timpanogos Lake, although known to be fresh, is described as a south arm of the Salt Lake.

65. Parley P. Pratt to Isaac Rogers, September 6, 1845, in Christian, “Mormon Foreknowledge of the American Far West,” 112.

66. *Nauvoo Neighbor*, September 17, 1845. Although mountain men and earlier explorers had circumscribed the lake and found no outlet, the fact was not widely known until Frémont’s published reports.

67. *Nauvoo Neighbor*, August 13, 1845.

68. For another view of early Mormon decisions about settlement in this region, see Richard H. Jackson, “Myth and Reality: Environmental Perceptions of the Mormons, 1840–1865, An Historical Geosophy” (PhD diss., Clark University, 1970).

Jackson’s conclusions about when Mormon leaders decided on the Salt Lake Valley suffer from a reliance upon later edited versions of the documents, printed versions that sometimes differ in phrasing and specific terminology from the originals.

69. Norton Jacobs Diary, July 23, 1847, typescript, Church Archives.

70. See Brigham Young, February 14, 1853, in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:279. This idea, implicit in the 1840 phrase “a place preparing in the West,” was im-

mortalized by William Clayton in his 1846 hymn “All Is Well,” where he wrote, “We’ll find the place which God for us prepared, / Far away in the West.” The concept is implicit in many documents of the period.

71. George Albert Smith, in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:85–86.

72. Brigham Young referred, no doubt, to Joseph Smith’s earlier instruction about making a “Flag of the Kingdom” or “Ensign to the Nations” (see Quinn, “The Flag of the Kingdom”). See also Minutes, February 26, 1847, Brigham Young Papers, for a Winter Quarters council meeting that discussed the colors and dimensions of this flag, which was to be large enough to fly from a hilltop and be viewed from a distance. Before his death Joseph Smith had begun such a flag, said council participants, not to be flown in Nauvoo but “to be erected some where else,” that is, in their new home.

73. John D. Lee Diary, January 13, 1846.

74. William Clayton Diary, 272.

75. Proclamation to Col. Levi Williams, Broadside, September 16, 1845, Church Archives.

76. Brigham Young, July 24, 1854, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:22–23.

77. Brigham Young to Sam Brannan, September 15, 1845, Brigham Young Papers. For more information about reactions to September violence, see Esplin, “Brigham Young and the Power of the Apostleship,” 113–17.

78. Thomas Bullock Minutes, September 24, 1848.

79. Brigham Young, July 24, 1854, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:22–23; see also Brigham Young, December 11, 1864, in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:18. For the true role of Vancouver Island in Mormon plans as a potential place to locate British emigrants, see Christian, “Mormon Westward Migration,” 130–36.

80. For more examples of the conscious effort not to reveal their plans, see Thomas Bullock Minutes, September 24, 1848, and (Orson Hyde?) to the *Illinois State Register*, February 27, 1846, as quoted in Christian, “Mormon Knowledge of the American Far West,” 146.

81. Thomas Bullock Minutes, October 12, 1845. Compare this with George A. Smith to Wilford Woodruff, November 9, 1845, Wilford Woodruff Pa-

pers, where he describes his preparations to “move beyond the Rocky Mountains” but in a note adds that he was fitting his own wagons for “Van Couver’s Island, Salt Lake or somewhere else.”

82. Brigham Young to Sam Brannan, December 26, 1845, Brigham Young Papers.

83. Minirva Corey to her sister, December 8, 1845, Utah State Historical Society, in Christian, “Mormon Knowledge of the American Far West,” 124.

84. High Council Proclamation, Broadside, January 20, 1846, Church Archives.

85. Undated minutes of organizing meeting, ca. February 4–5, 1846, Brigham Young Papers; and John D. Lee Diary, June 12, 1846. See also George A. Smith, July 24, 1854, in *Journal of Discourses* 2:23, and Brigham Young, September 13, 1857, in *Journal of Discourses*, 5:236.

86. There were rumors, none of them substantive, that the government would intervene. From the East Brannan had so warned, and in his earlier letter Governor Ford had counseled that if they concluded to migrate to California to establish an independent government, they must not let it be known or “it would become the duty of the United States to prevent your emigration” (Ford to Brigham Young, April 8, 1845; see also Thomas Bullock Minutes, September 24, 1848).

87. Willard Richards Diary, October 4, 1845.

88. Hosea Stout Diary, October 5, 1845, 1:80, and *Times and Seasons*, November 1, 1845, 1010–11.

89. Circular to the Churches, Broadside, October 8, 1845, Church Archives.

90. Orson Pratt to Brigham Young, October 21, 1845, Brigham Young Papers.

91. Brigham Young and Council to James Emmett, March 26, 1846, Brigham Young Papers.

92. Undated minutes of organizing meeting, ca. February 4–5, 1846, Church Archives.

93. Brigham Young to Joseph Young, March 9, 1846, Brigham Young Papers; Brigham Young to Harriet Cook, March 14, 1846, photocopy, Church Archives, original in private possession.

94. See, for example, Heber Kimball’s explanation: “we are sojourning to a land west not knowing whether [we] go—Just as it was with the ancient

covenant People of the Lord" (John D. Lee Diary, June 7, 1846).

95. Brigham Young, February 14, 1853, in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:279.

96. Willard Richards Diary, March 8, 1846; and Brigham Young to Orson Hyde, April 2, 1846, Brigham Young Papers.

97. Willard Richards Diary, June 19, 1846; Brigham Young to William Huntington, June 28, 1846, Brigham Young Papers. See also Young's letter to the Trustees, September 11, 1846, Brigham Young Papers, noting that they were headed to "the bear River valley" to "find a location" to plant and build homes.

98. Brigham Young to President James K. Polk, August 9, 1846, Brigham Young Papers.

99. For Kane's letters, see Christian, "Mormon Westward Migration," 117–18. Kane's description accurately pinpointed the center of the settlement to be the Salt Lake Valley.

100. Although members of the Mormon Battalion might, for example, settle on the Pacific Coast, the next temple, according to Young, would not be on the coast but in the Rocky Mountains, where the Twelve would reside and all would come for ordinances (Willard Richards Diary, July 15, 1846).

101. For details about information received in Winter Quarters from western travelers, see Christian, "Mormon Westward Migration," 144–62.

102. Hosea Stout Diary, September 9, 1846 and March 22, 1847, 1:192, 242. Sending a pioneer company ahead without families had long been the intention of Mormon leaders. As soon as the forward base had been located on the Missouri River in June 1846, Young hoped to send "with the least possible delay" a vanguard "to the Bear River valley, great basin, or salt lake" (Brigham Young to William Huntington, June 28, 1846, Brigham Young Papers). Only the federal government's requisition for troops to serve in the Mexican War, combined with the lateness of the season, prevented a move then.

103. For a review of communication with the battalion about the West, see John F. Yurtinus, "A Ram in the Thicket: The Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1975),

315–29, 585–90, 598–603, 607, 625; and Christian, "Mormon Westward Migration," 93–111.

104. Brigham Young to Sam Brannan, June 6, 1847, Brigham Young Papers. Brannan apparently surmised as much and was already well on his way to meet the pioneers before the letter was written.

105. Yurtinus, "The Mormon Battalion," 316–17.

106. Brigham Young to Porter Dowdle, Presiding Elder at Pueblo, May 10, 1847, Brigham Young Papers.

107. Christian, "Mormon Westward Migration," 103–5.

108. Brigham Young to Orson Spencer, April 12, 1847; Council of the Twelve to Winter Quarters, April 16, 1847, Brigham Young Papers.

109. Brigham Young to Absalom Porter Dowdle, June 2, 1847, Brigham Young Papers; Orson Pratt Diary, June 26, 1847, in *Millennial Star*, May 15, 1850, 146.

Pratt's phrasing suggests that they still looked at the region rather than at a precise location within it. It is also clear that they used the terms "Great Basin" and "vicinity of the Salt Lake" interchangeably. The draft version of the Dowdle letter, for example, says their destination would be "in the great Basin, or vicinity of the Great Salt Lake." See also Woodruff's "valley of the Salt Lake or great bason" (Wilford Woodruff Diary, July 23, 1847).

110. For examples, see Yurtinus, "The Mormon Battalion," 585, 602, 605, 608, 625.

111. Brigham Young to Amasa Lyman, Charles C. Rich, and others, July 3, 1847, Brigham Young Papers.

112. Brigham Young and Council to Amasa Lyman, July 8, 1847, Brigham Young Papers.

113. Heber C. Kimball Diary, June 27, 1847.

114. Horace K. Whitney Diary, July 11, 1847, Church Archives.

115. Wilford Woodruff Diary, June 28, 1847; William Clayton Diary, June 28, 1847, photocopy, Church Archives.

116. See Christian, "Mormon Westward Migration," 200–203. Settlement had begun in the area east of Fort Hall near Soda Springs in present-day Idaho.

117. Thomas Bullock Minutes, June 28, 1847.

118. Brigham Young to Amasa Lyman, Charles Rich, and others, July 3, 1847.



“A Place Prepared”: Joseph, Brigham, and the Quest for Promised Refuge in the West

119. Willard Richards and George A. Smith to Orson Pratt, July 21, 1847, *Journal History*, Church Archives.
120. See Orson Pratt, Willard Richards, George A. Smith to Brigham Young, July 22, 1847, Brigham Young Papers; Thomas Bullock Diary, July 22, 1847.
121. Orson Pratt Diary, July 23, 1847 in *Millennial Star*, June 5, 1850, 178–79.
122. Manuscript History of Brigham Young, July 23, 1847, Church Archives; Wilford Woodruff Address, July 24, 1880, *The Utah Pioneers*, 23, quoted in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1930), 3:224. Compare this with Woodruff’s June 12, 1892, recounting in *Millennial Star*, September 12, 1892, 590. Another informant insisted that Young repeated emphatically, “This is the place, this is the place, this is the place” (Autobiography of Gilbert Belnap, typescript, Church Archives).
123. Erastus Snow, September 14, 1873, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:207.
124. Wilford Woodruff Diary, July 24, 1847.
125. Heber C. Kimball Diary, July 24 and 26, 1847; Wilford Woodruff Diary, July 26, 1847. See also diaries of Thomas Bullock and William Clayton for this date.
126. Thomas Bullock Diary, July 27, 1847; George A. Smith History, July 28, 1847, typescript, Church Archives.
127. Norton Jacobs Diary, July 28, 1847, typescript, Church Archives.
128. Norton Jacobs Diary, July 28, 1847; see also Thomas Bullock Minutes, July 28, 1847; and Thomas Bullock Diary, Church Archives.
129. “Sketch of the Life of Levi Jackman,” section prepared from notes with dated entries, July 28, 1847, Church Archives. See also the reminiscence of Lewis Barney, typescript, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 44–45.
130. Thomas Bullock Minutes, August 8, 1847; see also Horace K. Whitney Diary, August 8, 1847, Church Archives.
131. Hosea Stout Diary, September 24, 1848, 1:327; and Thomas Bullock Minutes, July 24, 1849.
132. Brigham Young, July 31, 1859, in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:345.
133. Minutes, May 14, 1848, Miscellaneous Minutes, Church Archives.
134. Minutes, February 11, 1849.
135. Minutes, May 14, 1848.
136. Brigham Young and the Twelve to California Saints, August 7, 1847, Brigham Young Papers.
137. Brigham Young to Nathaniel Felt, November 24, 1847, Brigham Young Papers. See also Brigham Young and the Twelve to Orson Spencer, November 25, 1847, Brigham Young Papers.
138. Brigham Young, June 30, 1867, in *Journal of Discourses*, 12:94.