

"A PLACE OF REFUGE"

BACKGROUNDS FOR THE MISSION CALL

This expedition had its roots deep in the beginnings of the "Mormon War." Of all the inter-play of circumstances which brought a military contingent to Utah, we shall not speak. It was ordered to put down a rebellion; word of its coming reached Brigham Young on July 24, 1857. His response was instant: "With God's help, they shall NOT come here!"

Plans to resist the hostile force about to invade their home-land included sending express riders to all the outlying areas, urging the settlers to come home. Those at Fort Bridger and Fort Supply should burn their homes, hay and grain stacks, and any crops which might be used by the enemy. Those from the Carson Valley should sell their property if possible, or leave it if they must. The/ ^{leaders} must get a supply of powder and ammunition from the coast to bring in as quickly as possible. The colony at San Bernardino must leave their holdings there and come in, and the elders on the continent should leave their missions and hasten to stand in defense of Zion.

With communications limited to travel by horse, it was mid-August before the word of trouble could reach these outlying areas. Meanwhile, within the Territory, every man old enough to carry a gun was mustered in, armed, and drilled. George A. Smith visited the villages in Southern Utah preaching war, storing their food, especially grain in case they were subjected to a long seige. Everywhere there was the determination to stand and fight.

drilled, and prepared to fight. Rumors of forces approaching from the south, up the Colorado River, increased the tensions, and sent Amasa M. Lyman with a small party to reconnoiter the area.

Here in southern Utah was shed the only blood of the war in the Mountain Meadows Massacre on September 10. By this time Lot Smith and others of the cavalry were harrassing the wagon trains of the army, driving off cattle and mules and burning ~~some~~ supply wagons. Emigration Canyon swarmed with young men building bastions and barricades from which to defend themselves in battle. Yet with all their efforts, they were in no way prepared to fight.

If they observe the date of October 17 as the day of their deliverance, they will not miss the mark, for on that day the winter storm struck which stopped the army in its tracks. Before the ^{first storm} ~~winter~~ (116) spring was over, 3000 head of horses and mules perished, (116) and by ~~spring~~ they had left only 357 of the army's horses and a few mules. (154)

During the long winter Brigham Young had time to consider the situation more clearly. Now in a council meeting they ^{consider} ~~decided~~ what plan would be best: whether to attack them before they come near, or to burn our houses & destroy everything in and around us and flee to the mountains.... (HS.654)

For three years Mormon missionaries in Southern Utah had been working with the Indians, giving them gifts and trying to build a solid friendship, knowing that the red men would be either valuable friends or dangerous enemies. Here, ^{on September 11, 1857,} between Mormon zealots and Indian warriors, a whole emigrant train was massacred, except ~~for~~ eighteen small children who had been taken away in a wagon. This was the only blood shed in the Mormon War, and it has been ever since a stain upon the whole society.

At this same time and following until mid-October, Mormon scouts and cavalry harassed the supply trains of the army. Lot Smith burned three trains with 300,000 pounds of food, and Porter Rockwell drove away 800 head of cattle. Stewart Van Vliet, who was sent as an emissary to Brigham Young on September 8, returned with word that the Mormons were determined to fight to the last man.

By this time Emigration Canyon swarmed with infantry building bastions and barricades. Then on October 17, the winter storm set in which froze the army in its tracks. Well might trusting Mormons count this as God's Hand stretched forth in their behalf; for three or four months they were safe. During this time, they had time to weigh matters, and gradually changed their military policy. While in September it was "Stand up and fight!" now it was "Burn and Flee!"

Hosea Stout, a ranking officer, records their discussions. John D. Lee, after a session in the Legislature, ^{on Feb. 8, 1848,} wrote of his assignment from Brigham Young to locate "a resting place for his family & that of the 1st Presidency."

Notes on "A Place of Refuge"

- 1- Much has been written about the Mormon War. One good reference is Norman F. Furniss, THE MORMON CONFLICT, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1960
- 2- The trips of these express riders were often accompanied by grave danger. A classic example is the experience of the 16 men who carried the word to the Carson Valley settlers. They came near dying of thirst on the desert.
- 3- In his speech at the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City GAS admitted that he had found himself preaching a War talk in an area where everything was geared for action.
- 4- See ~~ThaxMann~~ Juanita Brooks, Thamm Oklahoma Press, 1963
- 5- Diaries of John Pulsipher and others are vivid in their accounts of the men in the mountains. Many diaries
- 6- Furniss, opcit. 116, 116
- 7- Ibid 116/154
- 8 A Mormon Chronicle, the Diaries of John D. Lee The Huntington Library, San Marino Calif 1955 ed. by Robert Glass Cleland & Juanita Brooks pp Vol I pp 149 entry for Monday 8 / Feb. 1958/ and the entries following show Lee as seriously looking for a "Place of Refuge."
- 9- 9- On the Mormon Frontier, Diaries of Hosea Stout Univ of Utah Press ed. by Juanita Brooks p. 654 entry for 18 March 1858,
- 10- A Mormon Chronicle, opcit. p. 158 Entry for Tues. 13 April 1858
- 11- Santiago /pseud/ "Pioneer Sketches," The Contributor XI, No. 7 May, 1890. 249-251 250
- 12- ~~xxxi~~ 297
- 13- 251
- 14- p 299

267 June
army entered

