

CHAPTER 3

RESCUE MOUNTED  
IN

SALT LAKE





ON OCTOBER 4, 1856, ELDER RICHARDS, RETURNING FROM ENGLAND WITH A HANDFUL OF HOME-BOUND MISSIONARIES, RODE INTO A WARM AND SUNNY SALT LAKE VALLEY. TRAVELING IN CARRIAGES WITH MULES, THEY HAD CROSSED THE PLAINS IN RECORD TIME. CHECKING ON THE HANDCART COMPANIES ON THEIR WAY. THEIR NEWS STARTLED CHURCH LEADERS. THERE WERE MORE THAN 1,200 EMIGRANTS STILL OUT ON THE PLAINS. WINTER MOST CERTAINLY WOULD CATCH THESE LAST TWO HANDCART COMPANIES IN THE HIGH COUNTRY.

The premonitions regarding their plight were accurate. That same day, October 4, the Willie Company cut their rations. “Our only alternative,” Chislett wrote, “was to reduce our bill of fare.” Hence, rations dropped to 12 ounces of flour for working men, 9 ounces for women and old men, and 4 to 8 for children, depending on their size.

“It was a great mistake to start them so late,” President Young would later write.<sup>18</sup> He called a meeting of Church leaders to determine the possible location and condition of the two massive groups. He was familiar with the overland trail, having traveled it several times, including leading the vanguard company in 1847.

The next day, October 5, fifty-five-year-old President Young stood at a regularly scheduled Church conference of thousands and boldly set in motion a herculean rescue effort. “Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now 700 miles from this place and they must be brought here. We must send assistance to them,” President Young stated. “This is the salvation I am now seeking for, to save our brethren that would be apt to perish, or suffer extremely, if we do not send them assistance.” Solemnly he concluded, “Go and bring in those people now on the plains.”<sup>19</sup>



## BRING IN THE PEOPLE OFF THE PLAINS

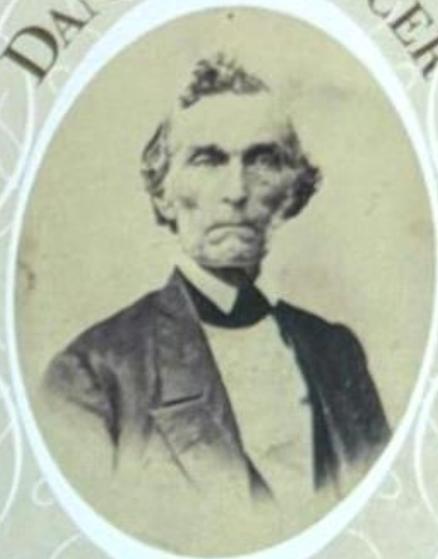
BY ROBERT T. BARRETT

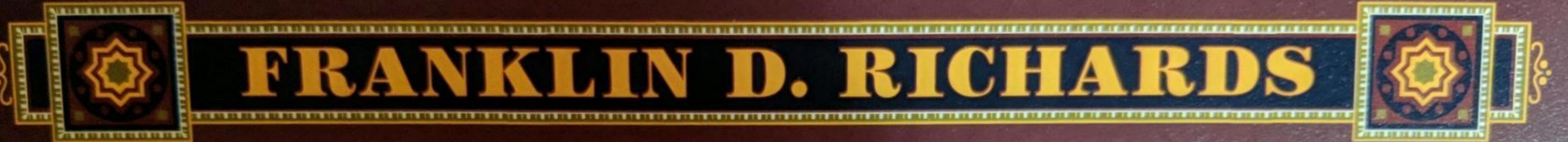
*Brigham Young saw himself and the Saints in Salt Lake City as instruments of divine intervention to save the emigrants. His own experience on the plains had taught him much. He had gone from Ohio to Missouri in 1834 in Zion's Camp. He had crossed Iowa in 1846 when it took four months to go a little more than 300 miles in wilderness conditions. The following spring, 1847, he and a handpicked company journeyed some 1000 miles to the valley in one month, and he returned to Winter Quarters in Nebraska shortly thereafter. In the spring of 1848 he returned yet again to the Valley as captain of one of three companies. Undoubtedly he knew the dire situation the emigrants faced, and his compassion for their plight is clear in the manner in which he sent rescuers and prepared for their future in the Valley.*

President Young called for 40 good young men, 60 or 65 good spans of mules or horses with “harness, whipple trees, neck yokes, stretchers, lead chains,” and 12 to 15 wagons. He committed 24,000 pounds of flour. “If the teams are not voluntarily furnished,” he added, “there are plenty of good ones in the street, and I shall call upon Brother J. C. Little, the marshal, to furnish them.”

Daniel Spencer, who had been in charge of the emigration at Iowa City, was called on to speak to the conference. He said, “The emigration is late, quite late. But it is useless for me to undertake to explain why it

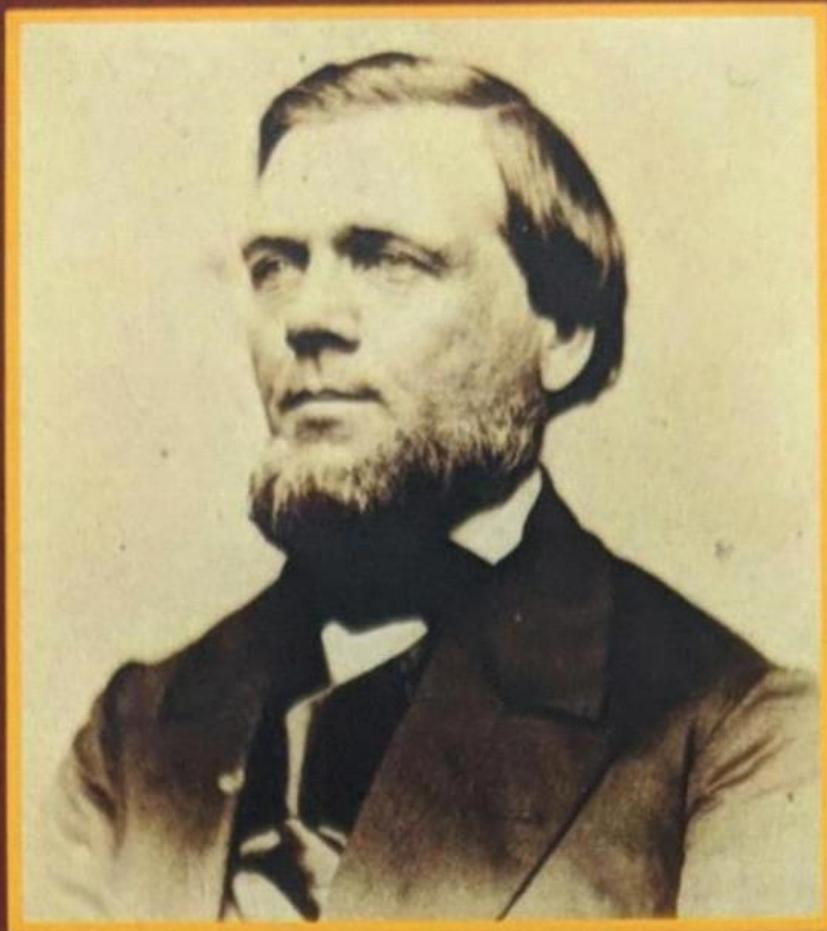
DANIEL SPENCER



A decorative horizontal banner with a dark blue background and gold borders. The banner features a central gold-colored text area. On either side of the text are square decorative elements with intricate geometric patterns in gold, red, and blue. The entire banner is set against a dark purple background.

**FRANKLIN D. RICHARDS**

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**I**n Saturday, October 4, 1856, Elder Richards, a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles since 1849, and a handful of associates arrived in the Valley. They had traveled from London to New York by the steamer *Asia*, by rail to Iowa City, and finally to the Salt Lake Valley from Winter Quarters with strong teams and light wagons. They had made good time. Elder Richards passed the Martin Company on September 7 and the Willie Company on September 12. Elder Richards's group arrived just eight days after the triumphant entry of the Ellsworth and McArthur Handcart Companies, and just two days after the Bunker Handcart Company, expected by Salt Lake City to be the last of the emigrants that season.

Richards brought sobering news: hundreds of men, women, and children, most pulling heavily loaded handcarts, were scattered over the long trail from Scottsbluff to the valley of the Great Salt Lake.

Elder Richards was born in Massachusetts on April 2, 1821, the fourth



of nine children. Missionaries Brigham and Joseph Young left a copy of the Book of Mormon with the Richards family in the summer of 1836. One by one, the family accepted the gospel. Young Franklin, always a serious student of the scriptures, was baptized by his father Phineas on June 3, 1838. Thus began a life of devotion to the cause of Christ, which took him four times to England to direct the work of missionary service.

It was on his assignment in 1856 as president of the European mission (with headquarters in England) that Franklin dispatched to Zion the first of the handcart pioneers. He had, in 1852, organized passage of the first company of Saints to draw upon the Perpetual Emigrating Fund.

Though Elder Richards did not return to the trail with rescuers Joseph A. Young, Cyrus Wheelock, and Dan Jones, who, with him, had made that fast trip across the plains, he was on hand to welcome both companies and assist them in settling in the much-longed-for Zion of their dreams.



The Perpetual Emigrating Fund was a come-now but pay-later plan that put emigrating to Zion within reach of even the poorest converts. In 1853, Brigham Young called for the Saints to donate money, food, goods, and livestock. He counseled the givers to be generous, that they could give anything from a pin to a quilt, but if they gave very little compared to what they had, they would not gain the blessings of sacrifice.

No. 623

## Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company,

ORGANIZED AT GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, DESERET, U.S.A., OCTOBER 6th, 1849.

*J. D. Richards*, Agent, Liverpool.  
December 19<sup>th</sup> 1851.

We, the undersigned, do hereby agree, and bind ourselves to the PERPETUAL EMIGRATING FUND COMPANY, in the following conditions, viz.—

That, in consideration of the aforesaid Company emigrating or transporting us, and our necessary Luggage, from Great Britain to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake, according to the Rules of the Company, and the general instructions of their authorized Agents;

We do severally and jointly promise and bind ourselves to continue with, and obey the instructions of, the Agent appointed to superintend our passage thither: that we will receipt for our passages previous to arriving at the several ports of New Orleans, St. Louis, and Kanesville;

And that, on our arrival in the Great Salt Lake Valley, we will hold ourselves, our time, and our labour, subject to the appropriation of the PERPETUAL EMIGRATING FUND COMPANY, until the full cost of our emigration is paid, with interest if required.

NAME.	AGE.	NAME.	AGE.
<i>David Hutchison</i>	<i>33</i>		
<i>Agnes Hutchison</i> *	<i>32</i>	<i>Ann Hutchison</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Elizabeth Hutchison</i> *	<i>13</i>		
<i>Thomas Hutchison</i> *	<i>10</i>		
<i>David Hutchison</i> *	<i>7</i>		
<i>Agnes Hutchison</i>	<i>4</i>		

Elder Richards in addressing the Saints emphasized, “Our souls cannot be satisfied nor rest until we feel assured that the brethren and sisters now on the plains are brought forward.” He later contended that “hard thinking, hard working, and doing the best we could” went into the planning and executing of the migration. Richards, because of other assignments, did not join the rescue effort but he shepherded their entry into the Valley and into the society of the Saints.

Brigham Young, ever practical, asked for men “to give their names . . . if they are ready to start on their journey tomorrow.” He called them “to come forward . . . rise up now and give your names.” Among the first to step forward to the pulpit were missionaries who had just returned from England: George D. Grant, Cyrus Wheelock, Joseph A. Young (Brigham’s son), Chauncey Webb, and William H. Kimball. Others who also joined the effort as the month progressed included James Ferguson, John D. T. McAllister, William C. Dunbar, Nathan H. Felt, John VanCott, James McGraw, Ephraim Hanks, J. M. Simmons, Daniel W. Jones, and Harvey Cluff.

Then Brigham Young asked the women to fetch food, blankets, skirts, shoes, hoods, winter bonnets—“almost any description of clothing”—to fill the wagons. “The sisters stripped off their petticoats, stockings, and everything they could spare right there in the Tabernacle,” Lucy Meserve Smith recalled.



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**JOSEPH A. YOUNG**

CA. 1857-75



**CHAUNCEY WEBB**

MISSIONARY IN GREAT BRITAIN, 1855



**JAMES FERGUSON**

MISSIONARY IN GREAT BRITAIN, 1855



**WILLIAM C. DUNBAR**

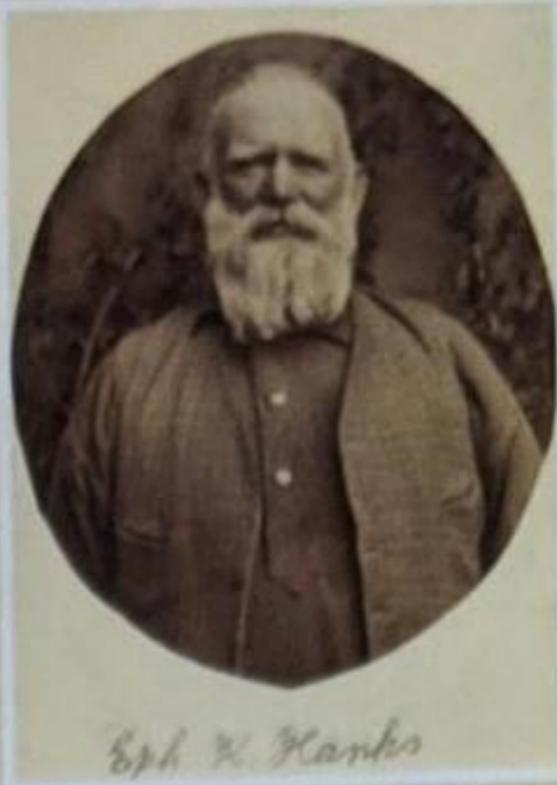
MISSIONARY IN GREAT BRITAIN, 1855



NATHANIEL H. FELT



JOHN VANCOTT



*Eph. K. Hanks*

EPHRAIM K. HANKS



JOSEPH M. SIMMONS



# ECHO CANYON OVERLOOK

BY E. KIMBAL WARREN

*As rescuers rode up Echo Canyon—the sun high in the sky—clouds in the distance foreboded that storms were ahead. One of the leaders of the rescue party, Robert T. Burton, was one of the first up the canyon. When he, Grant, and others located the Willie Company, Burton was charged with bringing them to the valley, again passing through Echo Canyon—covered this time in snow.*

*Remarking about the return trip, Burton later said, “This was the hardest trip of my life. Many of the emigrants died from cold and hunger and were buried by the wayside.”<sup>P</sup>*

E SMITH

“I never had less trouble getting up such an expedition,” related John Butler, local Church official in Spanish Fork. His experience of rallying volunteers was similar in other communities. “The Saints were willing and on hand to do almost anything.”

Tuesday, October 7, two days following President Young’s call for rescue, the first wagons and teamsters began the climb up the steep canyon heading east. They left their own families in almost destitute circumstances, having faced another locust infestation earlier in the season. They had not gotten in all their harvest—meager as it was—or their wood for the winter, yet they stepped up when Brigham Young called for their service. Among them were some who had counseled the handcart companies they’d passed to press on. These volunteers had been home only two days themselves. They took their very best animals though they knew that their animals might die and that they might die also. In addition, they sent what supplies they had—a tent, a bale of hay, tin plates and cups, buckets and kettles, Dutch ovens and fry pans. Wagonloads of food and supplies were gathered from poorly stocked cupboards.

Weeks later, more teams loaded with additional tons of flour and other provisions left to join the rescue. A few were drawn off to help a Church supply train struggling into the Valley. The others continued the search for the emigrants.

Church records were kept of the contributions. The last entry, December 15, in the Emigration East ledger—when the rescue had ended—indicated 1,294

dollars worth of supplies. Most was food; but dresses at 1 to 2 dollars and boots at 6 dollars were also among the items listed.

Estimates projected that Captain Willie and his company might be found two days past Fort Bridger, about 130 miles east of Salt Lake. In fact, they were much farther back on the trail.

The leaders of the rescue were trail-seasoned men. The first night out, the camp elected George D. Grant as captain, and William H. Kimball and Robert T. Burton as his assistants. A majority was older than twenty-six and included several of the best trail scouts. Charles Decker had crossed the mountains forty-nine times. There were also younger "valley boys," as they were

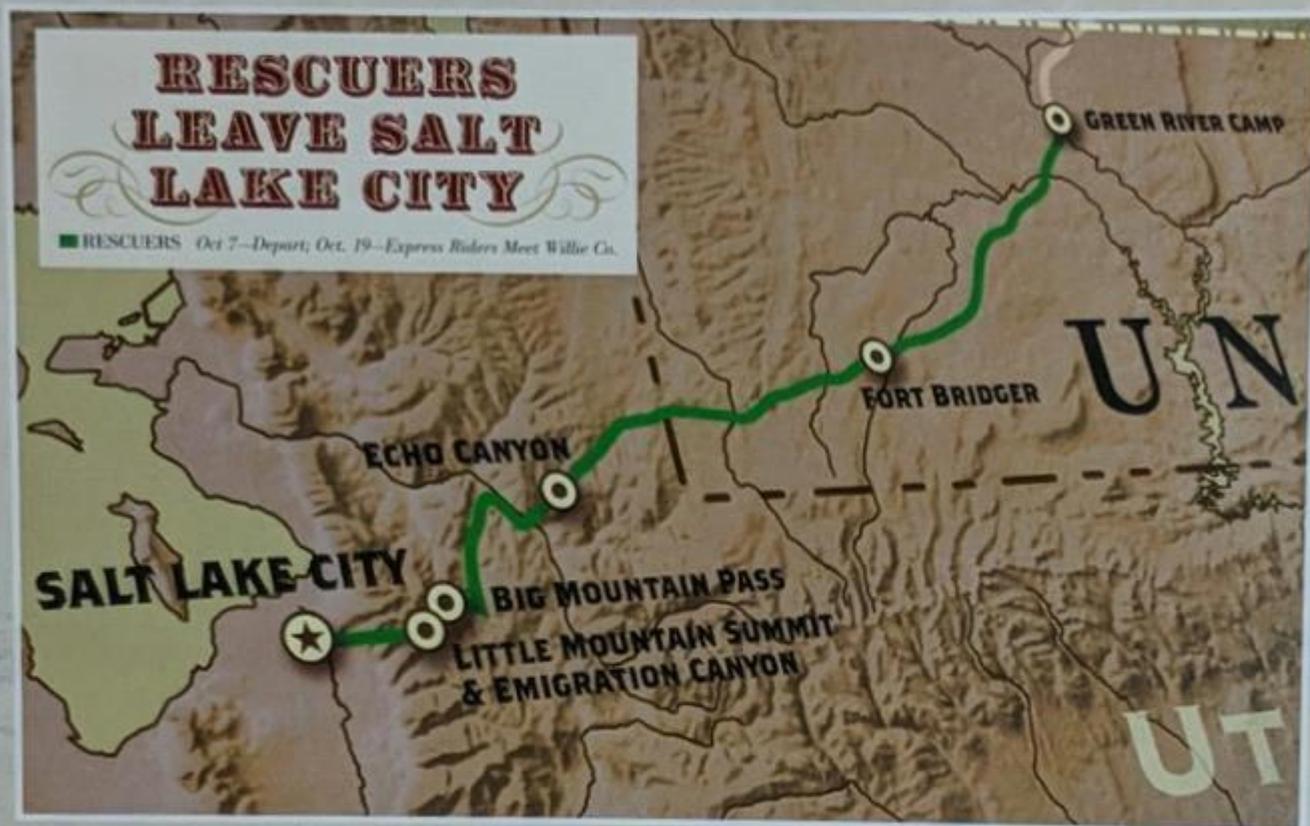
called, who had tended cattle, logged, plowed, irrigated, ferried mail, and even had a few clashes with Indians. "A better outfit and one more adapted to the work before us I do not think could have possibly been selected if a week had been spent fitting it up," Daniel W. Jones contended.

Rescuers found the roads clear; snow was yet to fall, and temperatures were still above freezing. They rode hard, making it to Fort Bridger in six days. They stowed flour and added some beef to their provisions. With no sign of the two companies, they pushed on,

WILLIAM H. KIMBALL

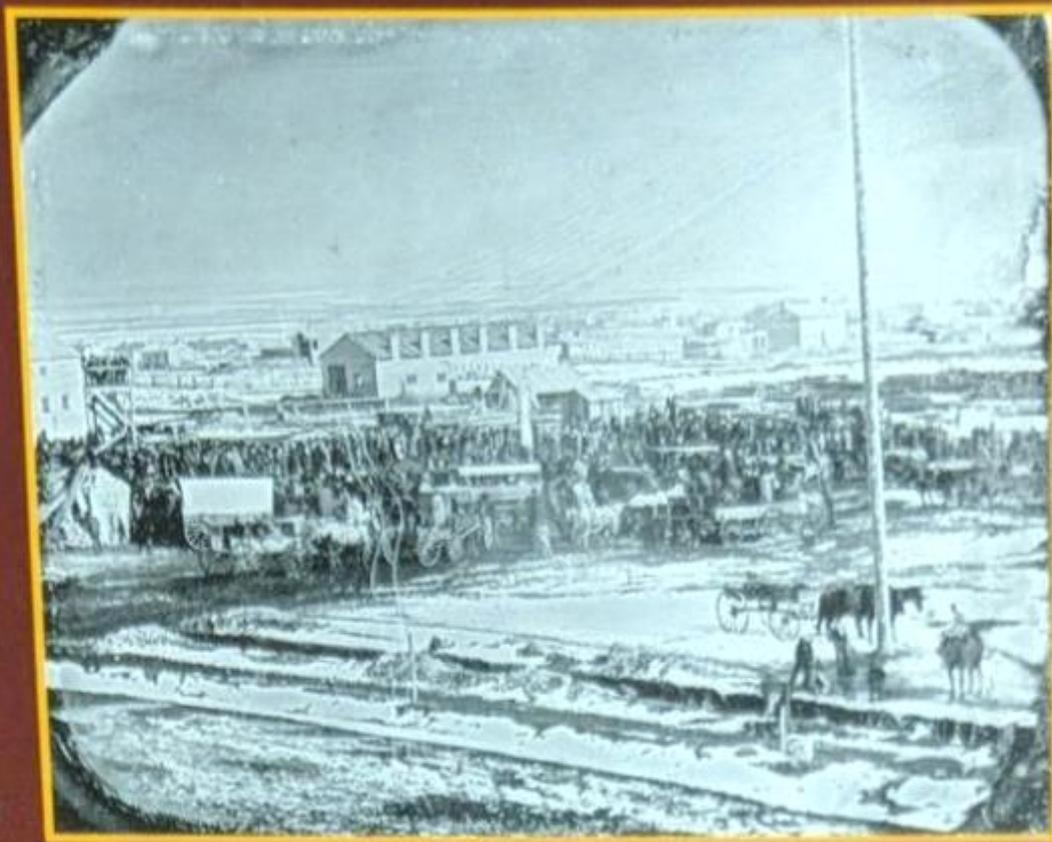


MISSIONARY IN GREAT BRITAIN, 1835



# LIFE IN THE VALLEY

vest of 1850 was abundant. Only three years before, the first pioneers had entered the valley and began to plant crops in what the trappers considered a wasteland. The next four years, the fields continued a prodigious growth. In addition to the growing of wheat and corn by the Saints, the community was also the center of a heavy traffic of federal troops, and many settlers on their way to the west. Almost everyone was able to grow crops, and some even flourished.



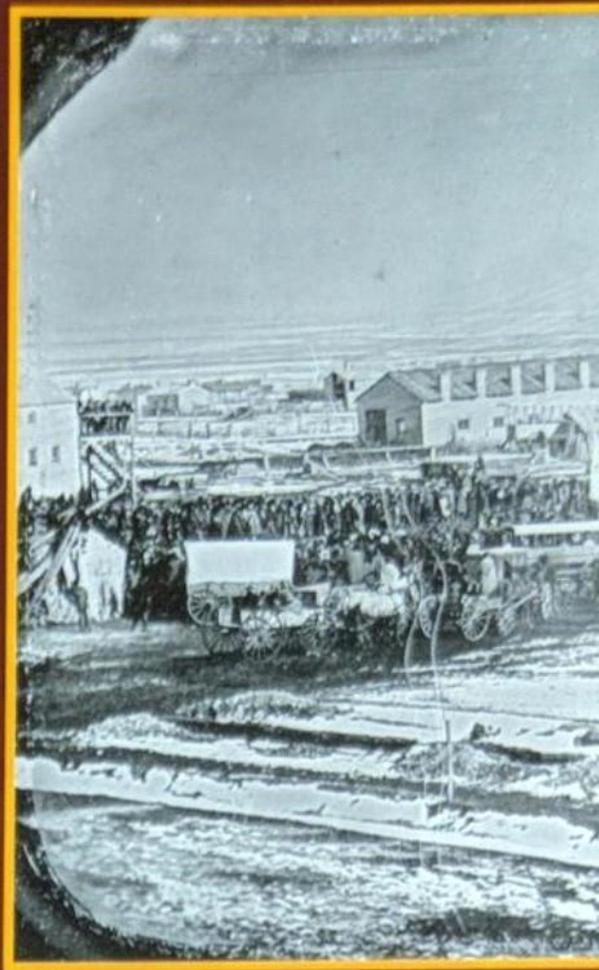
SALT LAKE CITY, FEBRUARY 14, 1853  
*Temple Site Dedication and Groundbreaking*

shawls or sheets thrown over the trees to protect them would be destroyed."<sup>viii</sup> One tract of land they destroyed, and another they destroyed, the first, but second and third years some corn and even buckwheat. A hot, dry summer and drought diminished the stock away in the pioneers. Farmers who had harvested bushels the year before had the end of the 1855 season. The grasshoppers also

The harvest of 1850 was abundant. Only three years before, the first pioneers had entered and began to plant crops in what explorers and trappers considered a desert wasteland. The next four years, 1851–1855, the fields continued a prosperous yield. In addition to the growing number of Saints, the community thrived with traffic of federal troops, miners, and settlers on their way to California. Almost everyone was able to get by, and some even flourished.

Nonetheless, clothing, other than the basics, was still hard to come by; a white shirt cost 4 dollars at the dry goods store; sugar fluctuated between 40 and 75 cents per pound, and a barter economy was still in place.

But in the summer of 1855, the 35,000 residents of the territory faced a series of natural disasters that wiped out any surplus and edged them close to semi-starvation. The first catastrophe was an infestation of hordes of grasshoppers—Rocky Mountain locusts, as some called them. The invasions descended on the land like a dark cloud, and stripped everything green. “They would come suddenly, millions of them and eat every green thing in their way; even



SALT LAKE CITY, I  
*Temple Site Dedication*



**FEBRUARY 14, 1853**  
*Well and Groundbreaking*

shawls or sheets thrown over plants or trees to protect them would be quickly destroyed.”<sup>viii</sup> One tract of land after another they destroyed, “not only the first, but second and third sowings, also some corn and even buckwheat.”<sup>ix</sup>

A hot, dry summer and late-season drought diminished the stores being put away in the pioneers’ cupboards. Farmers who had harvested 1,700 bushels the year before had only 500 at the end of the 1855 season.

The grasshoppers also destroyed the grasses, which fed the cattle. Herds were sent to Cache Valley in northern Utah Territory where grazing land was unaffected by the infestation, but there a severe winter reduced the Church cattle from 2,000 head to only 420. Private owners also lost more than half of their cattle due to the limited grazing and the bitter winter.

The summer of 1856 was no better. Grasshoppers continued to devour crops, and the harvest was reported as less than the year before. To this weakened state came news of the stranded handcart companies and the call to help.



**SALT LAKE CITY, FEBRUARY 14, 1853**  
*Temple Site Dedication and Groundbreaking*

# OCTOBER 1856

JOURNEY  
BY HANDCART



# NEBRASKA TERRITORY

- RESCUERS** Oct. 20—wagons camped in willows west of Rocky Ridge, awaiting word from express riders
- WILLIE COMPANY** Oct. 20—camped on Sweetwater River, out of food; express riders have met them and moved on to find Martin Co.
- MARTIN COMPANY** Oct. 20—stopped at Red Buttes