

“LONELY BONES”: LEADERSHIP AND UTAH WAR VIOLENCE

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Yates! He has neither been seen by any of us since the day we Purchased his powder, nor is it probable he will be ever seen by any—in the flesh. . . . In some lone nook, of some lonelier canyon, his bones lie, as do those of many another victim, calling for the vengeance which shall surely come. —U.S. Army Capt. Albert Tracy, 1860¹

For the great enemy of truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived and dishonest—but the myth—persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic. Too often we hold fast to the clichés of our forebears. We subject all facts to a prefabricated set of interpretations. We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought. —President John F. Kennedy²

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¹Albert Tracy, Diary, April 10, 1860, quoted in J. Cecil Alter and Robert J. Dwyer, eds., "Journal of Captain Albert Tracy, 1858–1860," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 13 (January–October 1945): 96–97.

²President John F. Kennedy, Yale University, Commencement Address, June 11, 1962, <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Ar>

THE "BLOODLESS WAR" MYTH

Both sides emerged from the Utah War of 1857–58 claiming victory.³ But for decades thereafter, Mormon leaders and historians actively fought, and largely won, a campaign to shape American perceptions of what had happened. As a result, the Utah War is largely remembered as a David versus Goliath episode, expensive but harmless. It casts U.S. President James Buchanan as an ineffective blunderer outmatched by the unschooled but nimble military genius Brigham Young.⁴

With the sesquicentennial of the Utah War, this article explores and challenges perhaps its most persistent myth: that the conflict was "bloodless." The earliest such characterization that I have found is a witty, widely quoted comment by Lemuel Fillmore, the *New York Herald's* war correspondent. Entering a nearly empty Salt Lake City in mid-June 1858, several weeks ahead of the army, Fill-

chives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/003POF03Yale06111962.htm (accessed November 8, 2006).

³The Utah War of 1857–58—nearly ten years in the making—was an armed conflict over power and authority in Utah Territory between leaders of the LDS Church and the administration of President James Buchanan. Summaries of the war's origins, prosecution, and meaning appear in my "Utah Expedition, or Utah War," in *New Encyclopedia of the American West*, edited by Howard R. Lamar (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), 1149–51; my "Utah War (1857–1858)," in *Ground Warfare: An International Encyclopedia*, edited by Stanley I. Sadler (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2002), 913–14; and at greater length in Richard D. Poll and William P. MacKinnon, "Causes of the Utah War Reconsidered," *Journal of Mormon History* 20 (Fall 1994): 16–44 and MacKinnon, "125 Years of Conspiracy Theories: Origins of the Utah Expedition of 1857–58," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 52 (Summer 1984): 212–30. The standard narrative and documentary histories are Norman F. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict, 1850–1859* (1960; rpt., New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966) and LeRoy R. and Ann W. Hafen, eds., *The Utah Expedition, 1857–1858: A Documentary Account of the United States Military Movement under Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston, and the Resistance by Brigham Young and the Mormon Nauvoo Legion* (1958; rpt., Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark, 1982).

⁴This image of Buchanan is implicit in the title of Richard D. Poll and Ralph W. Hansen, "Buchanan's Blunder: The Utah War, 1857–1858," *Military Affairs* 25 (Fall 1961): 121–31.

more watched Buchanan's two peace commissioners and Brigham Young at work, then wrote: "Thus was peace made—thus was ended the 'Mormon war,' which, *mirable dictu*, was much less sanguinary and direful than the 'Kansas war,' and may thus be summarily historized:—killed, none; wounded, none; fooled, everybody."⁵ Three weeks later the Buchanan-controlled *Union* similarly editorialized: "The march of the army into Utah was for the purpose of restoring the supremacy of the laws of the United States . . . and not for the purpose of making war upon the Mormons. . . . So far, this object of the President has been accomplished without the shedding of a drop of blood."⁶

Twenty years later while returning east from Brigham Young's funeral, Thomas L. Kane recorded private thoughts about Young's 1857 "determination to put off shedding blood."⁷ In the twentieth century, B. H. Roberts argued that Brigham Young's plan was to have a war that was "bloodless if possible."⁸ By 1960, Norman F. Furniss wrote in his classic history, "Not much blood was spilled during this war."⁹ In 1988 the U.S. Army dealt with the campaign in the broader context of army interventions in civil disorders in a chapter titled "The Bloodless War."¹⁰ Ten years later, I unwittingly reinforced this characterization as "largely bloodless."¹¹ And the widespread image continues that, as the LDS Church website currently phrases it, the Utah War was "a bloodless but costly confrontation

⁵Lemuel Fillmore, "How Peace Was Made," Salt Lake City, June 19, 1858, *New York Herald*, July 19, 1858, 1/6, 2/1-6. In newspaper citations, the first number is the page and the second number(s) is the column.

⁶"Rebellion Complains of Bad Faith," editorial, *Union* (Washington, D.C.), July 8, 1858, 2/1-2.

⁷"Thomas L. Kane's Account of His Journey to Salt Lake City, August 30-September 17, 1877," Thomas L. Kane Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

⁸B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century I*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 4:280 note 12.

⁹Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, vii.

¹⁰Robert W. Coakley, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1789-1879* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1988), 194-218.

¹¹MacKinnon, "Utah Expedition, or Utah War," 1149.

... and they spilled no blood.”¹²

Overlooked or intentionally excluded from these views is the Mountain Meadows Massacre as a wartime engagement on September 11, 1857. It was an atrocity¹³ in which a detachment of the Utah territorial militia (Nauvoo Legion) supported by Indian auxiliaries executed about 120 disarmed men, women, and children, the largest organized mass murder of white civilians in American history until the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. For more than a century, some historians and commentators variously argued that the victims either brought about or deserved their fate, blamed the Paiutes as the principal killers, or viewed the massacre as a local, southern Utah aberration unrelated to the Utah War’s main action.¹⁴ Such arguments—many no longer accepted—not only demeaned the victims but disconnected their deaths from the rest of the war. The “bloodlessness” of the Utah War was a myth; the reality was that the conflict’s total fatalities roughly approximated those happening during

¹²“Struggle for Independence,” <http://www.lds.org/newsroom/showpackage/0,15367,3899=1-34-2-132,00.html> (accessed November 18, 2006).

¹³I use *atrocitiy* to mean violence by military forces (or those under their control, such as Indians) against noncombatants or unarmed military prisoners. The U.S. Army inflicted greater casualties on Native Americans; but in these engagements, the armed status of Indian women blurred the traditional distinction between combatants and noncombatants.

¹⁴Many of these views appeared in an address by LDS Church Historian Leonard J. Arrington at the CES Church History Symposium, Brigham Young University, August 19, 1977, published in “Vistas in Church History,” *The First Annual Church Educational System Religious Educators Symposium: Transcripts of Addresses and Abstracts of Presentations*, August 1977, 17–21. For perhaps the classic exposition of the Mountain Meadows Massacre as an isolated southern Utah aberration, see Andrew Love Neff, *History of Utah, 1847 to 1869*, edited and annotated by Leland Hargrave Creer (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1940), 416. Ten years later, Juanita Brooks turned from her description of the massacre in the south to write a chapter, “A Bloodless ‘War,’” in her *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (1950, 2d ed., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 138–59. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, also took the same approach in a section titled “The Bloodless War,” differentiating the massacre from the rest of the war in their *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 306–7.

1854–61 in “bleeding Kansas.”¹⁵

This article goes beyond mythology to show that wartime lethal force was authorized and exercised repeatedly throughout Utah, although on a far smaller scale than at Mountain Meadows. It will not deal directly with the Mountain Meadows Massacre, which has been extensively studied.¹⁶ Instead, I focus on the killings, woundings, and verbal violence in Utah’s Green River-Fort Bridger area, Utah Valley, and the Salmon River Valley (then part of Oregon Territory, now in Idaho). This focus, I believe, yields a clearer, more comprehensive picture of the Utah War, essential to understanding the massacre’s context.

The intended or actual victims, numbering about twenty, were virtually all civilian noncombatants except, in one case, a disarmed military prisoner. Their killings or attempted killings were committed or authorized by both the Mormon militia and by agents of the U.S. Army, and were the product of multiple, complex factors. This

¹⁵Dale E. Watts, “How Bloody Was Bleeding Kansas? Political Killings in Kansas Territory, 1854–1861,” *Kansas History* 18 (Summer 1995): 123.

¹⁶Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*; Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); Richard E. Turley Jr., Glen M. Leonard, and Ronald W. Walker, *Tragedy at Mountain Meadows* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). A third narrative history is deeply flawed: Sally Denton, *American Massacre: The Tragedy at Mountain Meadows, September 1857* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2003). Space limitations preclude the related and much-studied subject of violence in nineteenth-century frontier America. See Polly Aird, Will Bagley, Edward Leo Lyman, D. Michael Quinn, and William Shepard, “Violence on the Mormon Frontier: Fact or Fiction? A Panel,” August 11, 2001, Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, audiotape available through Sunstone Foundation. More recent explorations related primarily to the Mountain Meadows Massacre are Richard E. Turley Jr., “The Mountain Meadows Massacre and the American Culture of Extralegal Violence,” paper presented at Western History Association annual conference, October 10, 2003, Fort Worth, photocopy in author’s possession, and Robert H. Briggs, Review of Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, downloaded from www.leigh.org/familytrees/revedmundleigh/danielleighfamilytree/samuellaigh/reviewofbagley book. pdf (accessed November 17, 2005).

article deals primarily with the least studied yet most avoidable of these factors: ineffective leadership on both sides in incidents that took place in the north. If troops commit atrocities, accountability rests not only with individuals in the ranks but with their senior leaders as well.

To find our way through this violent, often-murky subject, this article discusses a series of events that began in 1853. These were Brigham Young's public advocacy in April 1853 of summary execution for thieves, and a clash between Mormons and mountain men at Green River in June 1853 followed two months later by another incident that resulted in Jim Bridger's flight and the appropriation of his goods. After these background events comes an unsuccessful attempt to murder two non-Mormons traveling south in February 1857 authorized by secret letters from Brigham Young to his southern bishops. A miscarried plot succeeded in inadvertently wounding four other men. Using these same letters, Springville's bishop Aaron Johnson ordered the execution of "apostates" in March 1857, resulting in three deaths and an attempt on a fourth. Six months later, the Mountain Meadows Massacre occurred in an atmosphere of fear, threats, and heated rhetoric. In October, Richard E. Yates, a civilian mountaineer and trader, was killed in Echo Canyon after being captured by the Nauvoo Legion; and George W. Clark, a deserter from the Utah Expedition, was lynched on Smith's Fork of the Green River by parties unknown. In November 1857, six members of the Aiken party from California were attacked near Nephi; five men were killed and stripped of their possessions.

In an example of violence *against* Mormons, in February 1858, two hundred Bannock and northern Shoshone warriors attacked Mormon Fort Limhi, killing two, wounding five, and driving off hundreds of cattle and horses under circumstances that may implicate U.S. Army Colonel Albert Sidney Johnson. I then explore characteristics of Brigham Young's and James Buchanan's leadership styles and language—factors that I believe materially contributed to the Utah War's violence. For me, but perhaps not for all Utah War students, the evidence is persuasive that these incidents built upon one another, contributing in the process to a violent tone for territorial Utah. Therein should lie not only understanding but also a stimulus for further investigation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEALING WITH THIEVES

At the April 1853 general conference in Salt Lake City,

Brigham Young urged:

. . . *Keep your powder and lead, and your guns in good order. Go about your work, . . . and be ready in the morning, at noon, or in the night, that whenever you are called upon, you can put your hand upon your musket and ammunition at the shortest notice. "Be ye also ready for in an hour you think not behold the thief comes,"* and takes away your horse from your stable. . . .

If you want to know what to do with a thief that you may find stealing, *I say kill him on the spot*, and never suffer him to commit another iniquity. That is what I expect I shall do, though never, in the days of my life, have I hurt a man with the palm of my hand. I never have hurt any person any other way except with this, unruly member, my tongue. Notwithstanding this, if I caught a man stealing on my premises I should be very apt to send him *straight home*,¹⁷ and that is what I wish everyman to do. . . .

I know this appears hard, and throws a cold chill over our revered traditions received by early education. . . . I have trained myself to measure things by the line of justice, to estimate them by the rule of equity and truth, and not by the false tradition of the Fathers, or the sympathies of the natural mind. If you will cause all those whom you know to be thieves to be placed in a line before the mouth of one of our largest cannon, well loaded with chain shot, I will prove by my works whether I can mete out justice to such persons, or not.¹⁸ I would consider it just as much my duty to do that, as to baptize a man for the remission of his sins.¹⁹

This advocacy of summary execution for thieves—what Young

¹⁷"Straight home" or "home by the short cut" were among the multiple euphemisms for murder then used at all levels of society in territorial Utah, including—as here—by Young. Others, in contemporary documents but not quoted in this article, were "send them crosslots to hell," "push him over the rim [of the Great Basin]," and "failed to make the connection." An arcane euphemism was to "nepo" ("open" spelled backwards), meaning to eviscerate the victim, fill the body cavity with rocks, and sink it in water.

¹⁸The British Royal Army used this brutal method of execution during India's sepoy rebellion (1857). See Christopher Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny: India 1857* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 124–25.

¹⁹Brigham Young, Discourse, April 8, 1853, Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830-present, LDS Church Archives; all emphasis is in the Church recorder's notes.

called “the truth as it is in my heart”—presents historians with a dilemma: how to evaluate these problematic expressions, given his otherwise positive, non-violent counsel and accomplishments. I hypothesize that Young was deeply—perhaps especially—frustrated both by thievery in Utah and the carelessness that enabled it. His continuing frustration almost certainly was one factor that prompted the Church-wide Reformation during the fall of 1856 with its emphasis on confession, repentance, atonement, forgiveness, rebaptism, and purification—but cast in rhetoric so violent that it is problematic to this day.²⁰ A specific example of Young’s irritation with thievery was, as discussed below, the immediate cause of his role in the near-fatal Ambrose-Betts affair on the eve of the Utah War.

Young was responsible for the temporal and spiritual well-being of every person in Utah. He bore the federally sworn titles of governor, superintendent of Indian affairs, and militia commander-in-chief as well as the ecclesiastically sustained roles of prophet, seer, and revelator. Because of the power and influence of these overlapping roles, I believe that Young’s 1853 conference advice is significant in understanding Utah’s tone in the turbulent years leading to the Utah War. Several historians have argued that such is not the case because: Young focused only on a narrow, very limited set of circumstances involving thefts; this discourse preceded the Utah War by four years; no reported killings have been linked to this discourse; and attendees of modern Sunday services often do not retain the content of many discourses.²¹ I am unpersuaded by these arguments in the light of Brigham Young’s extraordinary forcefulness, the attention which he commanded in Utah, and the extent to which Mormons of the 1850s indeed remembered and recorded the gist of his discourses in their letters and diaries.²²

²⁰During the Reformation, one question bishops asked Church members during home visits was whether they had stolen neighbors’ property.

²¹Comments by anonymous readers quoted in Lavina Fielding Anderson, Letter to MacKinnon, April 24, 2006.

²²While I have been unable to find a record of this particular discourse by an attendee, Joseph Bartholomew remembered several of Young’s phrases about locking barns to protect horses—a topic in the 1853 conference talk—as they also appeared in one of Young’s February 1857 let-

MORE CONTEXT: CONFLICT AT GREEN RIVER

Other background essential for understanding the Utah War is the lengthy conflict between Mormons and non-Mormon mountaineers and traders at Green River, now southwestern Wyoming. The two groups not only differed in lifestyles and behaviors; also at issue was influence with the local Indians and control over the Green River toll ferries anchored on federal land. Without bridges or even practical fords during high water, ferries were essential at this choke point on the main trail to Salt Lake City and beyond to the Pacific Coast; and the stakes amounted to thousands of dollars per month. With the earlier collapse of the fur trade and the absence of any agricultural or military communities, the ferry trade was the most significant economic opportunity between Fort Laramie and Salt Lake City.

The Utah Legislative Assembly had organized Green River County in 1852 and granted an exclusive ferry license to a Mormon partnership, escalating hostility between the Mormons and the mountaineers, small parties of whom had been operating unlicensed ferries. Adding to the tensions was the outbreak of the Walker War in July 1853, a Ute-Mormon conflict in central Utah that threatened to spill into the Green River region, accompanied by accusations that the mountaineers were trafficking with the Indians in weapons, gunpowder, and liquor.²³

Brigham Young is on record as early as 1849 stating: "I believe that Old [Jim] Bridger is death on us, and if he knew that 400,000 Indians were coming against us, and any man here to let us know, he

ters to southern bishops and quoted them in his affidavit, March 29, 1859. Hannah Tapfield King, *Autobiography*, ca. 1864–72, typescript, MS 628, recorded an excerpt from Young's unpublished discourse on August 16, 1857, LDS Church Archives, on the sensational topic of Mormon independence. Hiram S. Rumfield, Letter to "Frank," December 26, 1861, Beinecke Library, Yale University, passed on his first-hand recollection of Young's scatological comments in a sermon delivered on December 15 or 22, 1861.

²³Fred R. Gowans, "The Battle for Green River, 1850–1857," Keynote address at the Oregon-California Trails Association annual convention, August 17, 2005, summary available <http://www.canvocta.org/slctalks.html> (accessed November 19, 2006).

would cut his throat.”²⁴ Clashes between mountaineers and Mormons were usually small-scale, obscure, and undocumented for a variety of reasons, including illiteracy and a natural unwillingness to record potentially incriminating detail. One such record involved a group of Mormons heading east to the British Mission during the spring of 1853 and a confrontation that took place near Lewis Robison’s licensed Green River ferry. Missionary William Butler, a member of this party, recorded the incident that occurred two months after Brigham Young’s “cannon’s mouth” address.

... When [in June 1853] we came to Robinson’s [sic] Ferry on Green River we were called upon by the Sheriff and Louis Robinson to help serve a writ on some mountaineers who were engaged in keeping a ferry without license and in opposition to Robinson’s Ferry which was licensed. We helped them and in doing so ran the risk of being shot.

There were between four and five hundred [emigrating] Gentiles on hand (who were waiting to cross at the mountaineers’ ferry), to assist the mountaineers and all of them armed with guns and pistols. There were twenty seven of us. We went in to the midst of our enemies to stand by the Sheriff whilst he served the writ on the mountaineers which caused them to curse and swear that they would shoot us. The leader of their crowd came close enough to put his pistol to my breast. At this juncture the Sheriff commenced to serve the writ and they swore and threatened to shoot him. One of our men by the name of Daniel Tyler asked our captain to give him permission to shoot, as the opposing force had their guns and pistols leveled at us. Our captain, Philemon C. Merrill, said to our enemies “the first man that puts a finger to a trigger is a dead man.”²⁵ Both parties had their guns and pistols ready for action, whilst the Sheriff proceeded to serve the writ and which he fully accomplished. After this we proceeded on our journey. At this same time our enemies continued to swear and threaten to shoot us as long as we were in sight. . . .

Most of these mountaineers are outlaws that have run from their country to escape the consequences of their crimes (and had joined the

²⁴Brigham Young, *Journal History*, May 7, 1849, 1-2.

²⁵Tyler, best known as a former sergeant of the Mormon Battalion, later became that unit’s unofficial historian. David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, eds., *Army of Israel: Mormon Battalion Narratives* (Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark, 2000), 440. Merrill was a lieutenant in the Mormon Battalion, a Nauvoo Legion colonel commanding the Davis County troops during the Utah War, and a pioneering colonizer of Idaho and Arizona.

Indians—marrying among them) and make their living robbing and murdering unsuspecting travelers.²⁶

A few weeks after the confrontation Butler witnessed, on August 27, 1853, a fifty-man posse led by U.S. Marshal Joseph L. Heywood and Great Salt Lake County sheriff (and Nauvoo Legion adjutant general) James Ferguson swept into Fort Bridger on Black's Fork west of the ferries. In the party were many of Young's most trusted agents and, later, among the Utah War's best-known, colorful participants: Bill Hickman, Lot Smith, Ephraim Hanks, Robert Taylor Burton, Lewis Robison, and William H. Kimball. The posse had a bench warrant for Bridger for illegally supplying Indians with gunpowder and liquor. The posse narrowly missed capturing Bridger but camped at his trading post, where Bridger had left his Shoshone wife, until early October in an unsuccessful effort to catch him.²⁷

During this stay, according to Hickman, "The *posse* went to Green River, shot two or three mountaineers, took several hundred head of stock, [and] returned to Fort Bridger."²⁸ The record of this Green River raid is fragmentary, although Butler later recorded

²⁶William Butler, Journal, 1850–75, typescript, 7, MS 8795, Reel 11, LDS Church Archives. Butler's account of the ferry incident was part of a summary of his life from 1850; his daily entries began in December 1855. My thanks to J. Stephen Rizley, Scottsdale, Arizona, for his interpretation of the 1853 clash near Robison's ferry and for a transcription of Butler's journal.

²⁷Fred R. Gowans and Eugene E. Campbell, *Fort Bridger: Island in the Wilderness* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 52–55. For the warrant and the posse's roster, see Records of U.S. First District Court, Criminal Court Cases, July 1853, #737–748, Utah State Archives, photocopy in my possession courtesy of Janet Burton Seegmiller, Cedar City, Utah.

²⁸Bill Hickman, *Brigham's Destroying Angel: Being the Life, Confession, and Startling Disclosures of the Notorious Bill Hickman, the Danite Chief of Utah*, edited by J. H. Beadle (1872; rpt., Salt Lake City: Shepard Publishing, 1904), 93. Since Hickman did not write these recollections until 1871, when he was not only excommunicated but under indictment as a self-confessed murderer, legitimate questions arise about their accuracy, his credibility, and Beadle's editing. Brigham Young had been indicted for murder with Hickman. The U.S. Supreme Court quashed both prosecutions in 1872 on a

hearing that "General James Ferguson came out and killed the leader of the mountaineers (who were still running the ferry)[. A]t his death he [the mountaineer] confessed to the murder of a great number of men and murdering unsuspecting travelers."²⁹

Before returning to the Salt Lake Valley, the Heywood-Ferguson posse confiscated one hundred pounds of gunpowder, 17,600 percussion caps, two hundred pounds of lead bullets, thirty-seven rifles, and nearly five hundred "best quality" knives. After asking Brigham Young for instructions about disposing of Bridger's two barrels of whiskey (and not receiving an answer), the posse drank the contents.³⁰ According to Hickman, "The property that was taken [from Bridger and Green River] went to pay a few officers, and, as was said, the expenses of the *posse*; but, poor fellows, I never knew of one of them getting a dollar. It went to pay tithing; and, finally, all was gobbled up and turned over to the Church."³¹ I see in this incident a case of officer-sanctioned seizure of trade goods, if not outright looting, which presumably benefited the institutional Church. Similar cases would occur throughout the Utah War, including the Mountain Meadows Massacre.³²

On September 19, 1853, James W. Cummings, a member of the posse and later a Nauvoo Legion cavalry colonel, wrote Brigham Young from Fort Bridger. Although Cummings was not viewed as especially close to Young, his letter to his governor, Church president, and military commander was remarkably chatty. In it, Cummings proposed to Young a permanent solution to the problem of the mountain men: "Send them home the short cut," a euphemism much like Young's own "send him straight home" five months earlier:

technicality rather than on their merits in its ruling in *Clinton v. Englebrecht*, U.S. 80:434.

²⁹Butler, Journal, 7.

³⁰Gowans and Campbell, *Fort Bridger*, 56–57.

³¹Hickman, *Brigham's Destroying Angel*, 93.

³²Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 171–87, devotes an entire chapter to the "plundering" of clothes, livestock, wagons, carriages, cash, jewelry, and household goods after the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Such behavior reflects not only the Mormons' acute poverty but also a disturbing community willingness to relieve non-Mormon emigrants and departing apostates of their property and possessions.

The most of those that call themselves white men that live in this part of the country are a notorious set of rob[b]ers & cut throats and are the enemies of all good people, and will do wright no longer than they are compelled to by force of arms. I have been told by one of the Mountaineers that there are near a hundred whites in this part of the country within fifty miles of here

And it is my opinion from what I have see[n] that they will have to be watched by an armed force when-ever there is any Mormon Emigration passing this road, unless we send them home the Short cut. The latter I believe would be tended with the least expence and should they give us any provocation we shall try the experiment unless otherwise ordered. I am satisfied however that they will remain perfectly quiet so long as we remain here.

But the Spirit they are of is manifest to all—Bro [C. Allen] Huntington sug[g]ested the idea of sending in the names of some here and have [court] writs issued against them, but I believe we have all the writs that are necessary and the Boys are on hand to serve them The Boys that are with me are faithful and true and as good as I would wish, they both watch and prey.³³

In this context, Cummings's use of *prey* rather than *pray* is eerily appropriate, even given his multiple misspellings. I have found no reply by Young.

In January 1854, Jim Bridger traveled to Washington, seeking political vengeance for the Mormon raid on his trading post at Black's Fork and "telling marvelous stories about his being driv[en] from his home in the mountains."³⁴ Congress responded that month by considering punitive legislation to move Utah's eastern border west from the crest of the Rockies to the rim of the Great Basin, thereby transferring nearly one-third of Utah's territory to the proposed new territories of Kansas and Nebraska.³⁵ Hearing this news, Brigham Young wrote Stephen A. Douglas, chairman of the senate committee on the territories, in April 1854, sarcastically at-

³³J. W. Cummings, Letter to Brigham Young, September 19, 1853, Brigham Young Collection, LDS Church Archives. For another example of "short cut," see "From the Plains," *New York Times*, December 10, 1853, 3.

³⁴John M. Bernhisel, Letter to Brigham Young, February 13, 1854, *ibid.*

³⁵See MacKinnon, "'Like Splitting a Man Up His Backbone': The Territorial Dismemberment of Utah, 1850–1896," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 71 (Spring 2003): 100–124.

tacking Jim Bridger's credibility ("the oracle to Congress in all matters pertaining to Utah, not only civil & political, but even historical and geographical") and even mocking his appearance.³⁶ At the same time, Young wrote to John M. Bernhisel, Utah's congressional delegate. The intemperate letter, that became more wrathful the longer he dictated, focused on Bernhisel's pleas for moderation, Jim Bridger, and the mountaineers of northeastern Utah. The letter contained an obvious death threat:

. . . In regard to "difficulty with mountaineers &c", I defy the world to prove that we have not invariably used all persons within our borders with more courtesy, leniency, & forbearance, taken as a large majority than any other people ever have under any thing like similar circumstances. . . . They would doubtless be pleased to have us allow horse thieves, adulterers, ravishers, delinquent tax payers, in short, law breakers of every grade roam at large in our midst, without so much as our saying why do ~~you~~ ye so, & eve[n] bow & scrape to them, & invite them into our houses, & say to them you are good & true men, ay, gentlemen, for fear they might write, or run to Washington. . . . Please say to all who advocate such policy, "~~Kiss my ass, damn you~~", that we cannot well prevent fools from exhibiting their folly & keep your pet Bridger there, if you wish to preserve him, for if the legal officers get hold of him, & just laws of ~~their~~ your own making are enforced he may be strung up between the heavens & the earth.³⁷

By early March 1854, Jim Bridger's lobbying efforts had failed, Congress had passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act without altering Utah's borders, and tempers had cooled, although deep-seated animosities lingered. In 1855, Bridger returned to Black's Fork, sold his trading post to the Mormons, and withdrew to his Missouri farm until returning to Fort Bridger again in November 1857 as the Utah Expedition's chief guide. Interestingly, when Congress shrank Utah's eastern border in 1861 to form Colorado and enlarge Nebraska, the only part of the territorial loss that seemed to bother Brigham Young (a "blunder") was the region en-

³⁶Brigham Young, Letter to Stephen A. Douglas, April 29, 1854, retained copy in Brigham Young Collection; original in Stephen A. Douglas Papers, University of Chicago Library.

³⁷Brigham Young, Letter to John M. Bernhisel, April 29, 1854, Brigham Young Collection.

compassing the Green River ferries.³⁸

THE 1857 AMBROSE-BETTS AFFAIR

In February 1857 on the very eve of the Utah War, a chain of violence unfolded in Salt Lake City and on the southern trail to California. The action began with the Ambrose-Betts affair, for me a lodestone for navigating one's way through the war's subsequent violence, including the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

John G. Ambrose and Thomas W. Betts were non-Mormon southerners who had drifted into Salt Lake City from the east in mid-October 1856. They were petty thieves—"grifters" in today's parlance—living embodiments of the type Brigham Young had denounced in April 1853 general conference and thereafter.

The first historical study of Betts and Ambrose came with Ardis E. Parshall's landmark *Utah Historical Quarterly* article in 2004.³⁹ She detailed their "hasty retreat from some western outpost or overland company," their weeks-long crime spree in Salt Lake City, and their apprehension by a posse while fleeing to California in a stolen carriage.⁴⁰ Tried before a jury in Salt Lake County's probate court on November 24, 1856, Ambrose and Betts were convicted of larceny and sentenced to thirty days' imprison-

³⁸MacKinnon, "Like Splitting a Man Up His Backbone," 105, 113.

³⁹Ardis E. Parshall, "'Pursue, Retake & Punish': The 1857 Santa Clara Ambush," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 73 (Winter 2005): 64–86. A tenacious independent Utah historian, she had mined the Brigham Young Collection in 2003–04 with the assistance of the LDS Church Archives staff. It is a story of professionalism, cooperation, and openness that perhaps best illustrates the extent to which the LDS Church and some individual members are indeed anxious to have the full story of the Utah War publicly examined. In September 2006, the Utah State Historical Society honored Parshall's study with its Dale L. Morgan "best article" award.

⁴⁰A parallel case a year earlier had been reported: "The merchant trains yearly bring to this place, as teamsters, numbers of men bound for California. Many of these manage to get a good outfit by stealing the cattle and goods of the citizens. Four such characters were last Tuesday sentenced to fourteen months' hard labor in the Penitentiary for burglariously entering the store of Blair Guber [?] & Co., a few days ago." Kadz-Ne-Ate, January 31, 1856, Salt Lake City, "From Utah," *New York Times*, April 18, 1856, 2.

ment. Probate Judge Elias Smith, who doubled as Salt Lake's postmaster, found the sentences surprisingly lenient since the defendants, "from their own statements and admissions . . . were a set of notorious villains." With considerable understatement, Parshall notes that the two had "chosen an unlucky moment for fleecing the merchants of Salt Lake City. Utah was then in the thick of the Mormon Reformation, a period of religious revival and intensely emotional dedication to purifying Zion. . . . Community intolerance for wrongdoing was reaching its most acute stage."⁴¹

The two convicts completed their sentences and were released on Christmas day 1856. They apparently emerged from prison unrepentant, another attitude that was out of step with the Reformation. The next day Betts tried to brace Governor Young in his office. When denied access, he wrote Young an aggressive note: "I am one of the persons who was tryed in this City some five weeks ago for larceny and centenced to the Teratory Prison for thirty days and all my property taken from me, I have served out my time . . . I want to lay the *true* statement of the Case before you. . . . I do not think that I have had justice shown me."⁴²

Brigham Young was then beset by crushing personal, leadership, and health problems that would have sapped the patience and stamina, if not the judgment, of many leaders. Among Young's most obvious burdens were completing the faltering Reformation; recriminations over the large-scale loss of emigrant life among the Willie and Martin handcart companies; the unexpected death on December 1, 1856, of his second counselor Jedediah M. Grant, spearhead of the Reformation; a troubling rash of livestock thefts; a mysterious, debilitating illness that kept Young absent from church services for weeks; worries about the viability of restless Mormon colonies in San Bernardino and Carson Valley; anxiety over the launch of his ambitious, expensive Y.X. Carrying Company; congressional efforts to eradicate polygamy, truncate Utah's borders, repeal its organic act, and split the offices of Utah's governor and superintendent of Indian affairs; and a continuing deterioration in federal-Mormon relations that threatened both Utah's

⁴¹Parshall, "Pursue, Retake & Punish," 67–68.

⁴²Thomas W. Betts, Letter to Brigham Young, December 26, 1856, Brigham Young Collection.

bid for statehood and Young's hold on the governorship.⁴³ In other words, it was a poor time for a petty thief to demand justice from a harassed, ailing executive. Instead of simply ignoring Betts's cheeky note, Brigham Young let the full force of his power fall secretly upon the con men.

The ex-convicts remained in Salt Lake City during January 1857, apparently without attempting to contact Young again, and arranged to travel to California by the southern route with about ten, presumably non-Mormon travelers. In the group were two other men Young was also concerned about: John Tobin and "Colonel" John C. Peltro.⁴⁴ Tobin, a former U.S. Army sergeant, had come to Utah in 1853–54 as part of Captain John W. Gunnison's military escort. Following his discharge on the Pacific Coast, Tobin returned to Salt Lake City in May 1856 and had, on December 29, 1856, married Sarah Jane Rich, the eldest child of Apostle Charles C. Rich, co-founder of Mormon San Bernardino. By late January 1857, the marriage was already troubled. Tobin's projected trip to California, ostensibly to visit his father-in-law, was rumored to be an attempt to abandon Sarah Jane, apostatize, or both.⁴⁵

Peltro was a civilian who traveled part way across the plains with Lieutenant Francis T. Bryan's army surveying party. He reached Salt Lake City alone except for a servant in mid-September 1856—a month ahead of Ambrose and Betts—assumed the title "colonel," and promptly aligned himself with Garland Hurt, the U.S. Indian agent, whose critical reports to Washington Brigham Young in-

⁴³Brigham Young discussed these issues throughout the fall and winter of 1856–57 in letters to Thomas L. Kane, John Taylor, William I. Appleby, George A. Smith, John M. Bernhisel, George Q. Cannon, Horace S. Eldredge, Ezra T. Benson, and Orson Pratt. See Brigham Young Collection. Concerns about livestock and other thefts appear in "From Utah," *New York Times*, April 18, 1856, 2.

⁴⁴Parshall's article presents the only accurate and comprehensive account of Tobin's life and the only orderly discussion of Peltro's brief visit to Utah. Harold Schindler, *Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), 288–89, discusses the attack on Tobin minus its crucial link to the Ambrose-Betts affair.

⁴⁵Later events would reveal Tobin to be an incipient alcoholic, libertine, liar, and bigamist. Parshall, "Pursue, Retake & Punish," 80–84.

tercepted, feared, and resented.⁴⁶

Brigham Young apparently asked Bill Hickman to keep an eye on these undesirables, for, on January 26, 1857, Hickman "called [at the office] and explained the private movements of Peltros, Betts &c. their purpose to go So. to Cala. their fear to stop—their joy in spreading the Report that a new Govr. and new judges are appointed & that with a sufficient Military guard these will be here in the spring to establish order and justice among the Mormons."⁴⁷ These rumors were obviously disquieting to Brigham Young. In early February, he told his clerk he had dreamed of telling two of his principal adversaries, federal judges W. W. Drummond and George P. Stiles, "Said I, at the snap of my finger I c'd send you into oblivion . . . I awoke laughing."⁴⁸ Also, tellingly, he continued to be concerned by reports of theft. He wrote to John Taylor in late January: "Some property has been destroyed here this winter, by persons unknown to us, with the intent probably to plunder and rob, this was annoying to me but we shall discover the perpetrators."⁴⁹ Young made similar statements in virtually every letter sent to absent Mormon leaders between late January and early February 1857.

Within a week of receiving Hickman's report, Brigham Young wrote twice to his bishops in Spanish Fork, Springville, Nephi, Parowan, and Cedar City—all Nauvoo Legion officers, including a brigadier general—to warn them that Ambrose and Betts would soon be traveling south. These two missives have never before been published. The first, written February 3, 1857, was a personal letter to Aaron Johnson, Springville's bishop, then copied for John L. Butler, bishop of Spanish Fork, and George W. Bradley, presiding authority in Nephi. The second was a circular letter, written collectively to the bishops farther south on February 6, 1857.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 71. Although he had no standing as an Indian agent or trader, Peltro accompanied Hurt on an official visit to the Indians in southern Utah a month after arriving in Salt Lake City. Garland Hurt, Letter to Brigham Young, October 31, 1856, Brigham Young Collection.

⁴⁷Brigham Young, Office Journal, clerk's entry for January 26, 1857, typescript in Leonard J. Arrington Papers, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University, Logan.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, clerk's entry for February 9, 1857.

⁴⁹Brigham Young, Letter to John Taylor, January 26, 1857, Brigham Young Collection.

Without mentioning names, Young warned that "some noted persons" would soon be traveling south with the mail contractor for California. Since two had "lately served out a short period in the Penitentiary in this Territory," Young advised Johnson that Andrew Moffatt and Orrice Newell had been assigned to care for "our Stock [by which he presumably meant his personal livestock] and the Stock of our settlements generally, especially our horses now on the range near the south end of Utah Lake." He alerted Johnson that Moffatt and Newell might be calling on the men in Payson and Summit Creek for assistance and that Young was passing on similar information to men in Nephi. He then instructed the bishop:

What we wish of you is to have a few men on the look out and ready to act in case of emergency. It would be well to have them go out and make a short trip around to see that all things are right. . . . If any such thing as we have suggested should occur we shall regret to hear a favorable [sic] report; we do not expect there would be any prosecutions for false imprisonment or tale bearers left for witnesses. We have also received some intimations that the Indians from that vicinity may be induced to make a draw upon our stock by some of our enemies. We wish that you would take a course to ascertain the feelings of the Indians and continue to conciliate them and thereby thwart the purposes of our enemies, who seek to stir them up against us. Be vigilant in these matters and not allow yourself to be taken unawares. . . .

Bro Johnson, you know about these things, have a few men that can be trusted on hand, and make no noise about it and keep this letter safe. We write for your eye alone and to men that can be trusted.⁵⁰

In Springville, one man later testified that he heard Bishop Johnson predict, after reading Brigham Young's letters, that "some of us would yet 'see the red stuff run.'"⁵¹ At Garland Hurt's Spanish Fork Indian farm, Brigham Young Jr. caught up with the group, took Tobin aside, and commented, "John I am sorry to see you in such

⁵⁰Brigham Young, Letter to Aaron Johnson, Springville, February 3, 1857, Brigham Young Collection. Young signed himself, "your brother in the Gospel of Salvation."

⁵¹Aaron Johnson, Springville bishop, March 1857, quoted in Joseph Bartholomew, Affidavit, March 29, 1859, *Valley Tan* (Salt Lake City), April 19, 1859, 1/5. Little is known of Bartholomew's background except that in

bad company.”⁵²

The second letter, written February 6, 1857, circularized bishops south of Nephi. Although resembling in content and even phrasing the letter to Johnson, it also contained several important differences. First, it went beyond calling for vigilance, speculating that Ambrose and Betts “may have made a draw upon our stock already, & may upon yours.” Second, instead of recommending “a few men on the look out and ready to act in case of emergency,” the second letter was more prescriptive: “Have a few trusty men ready in case of need to pursue, retake & punish.” Trial and conviction were not necessary, for this letter repeated: “We do not suppose there would be any prosecutions for false imprisonments, or tale bearers for witnesses.”⁵³

From Parowan, William H. Dame, stake president, Nauvoo Legion colonel, and, seven months later, a leader in the Mountain Meadows tragedy, reported to Young on February 17: “Tobin, Peltro and those from prison passed with seven or eight more a few days before the mail.” They were riding “poor ponies” without brands. He reassured Young: “I . . . have prepared a few [men]. . . . [W]e try to live so when your finger crooks, we move.”⁵⁴

One historian has suggested that, with these letters, Brigham Young was simply warning the southern settlements to exercise due caution about the imminent presence of convicted thieves, while the admonition to Johnson and others about secrecy would reduce the pos-

1857 he was a Mormon resident of Springville, apparently not in a leadership role. Mormon lawyer Hosea Stout criticized Bartholomew's 1859 testimony about the Parrish-Potter murders as intended to exonerate himself while casting blame on Bishop Johnson and others. Juanita Brooks, ed., *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844–1861*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press and Utah State Historical Society, 1964), March 31, 1859, 2:693. Nonetheless, Bartholomew retained his Church membership and stayed in Utah. Polly Aird, email to MacKinnon, November 20, 2006.

⁵²Quoted in Parshall, “Pursue, Retake & Punish,” 73.

⁵³Brigham Young, Circular Letter to Bishops and Presidents South, February 6, 1857, Brigham Young Collection.

⁵⁴William H. Dame, Parowan, Letter to Brigham Young, February 17, 1857, Brigham Young Collection. See Parshall's important analysis of the significance of Young's hand gesture, in “Pursue, Retake & Punish,” 74 note 24.

sibility of panic in an isolated region.⁵⁵ I have reached a different conclusion. I believe that this material, including the reactions of Dame and Johnson, make it difficult to avoid concluding that Young was authorizing, if not ordering, the summary executions of Ambrose and Betts.⁵⁶

Two days after sending his second letter south, the still-ailing Brigham Young delivered one of the Reformation's most violent sermons in the tabernacle, a discourse on "blood atonement."⁵⁷ According to this thinking, those who had committed otherwise unredeemable sins should be helped to redemption by the spilling of their blood. Irrespective of whether Young intended his comments to be taken literally, whether he was engaging primarily in rhetoric to capture the attention of backsliders, or whether his violent admonitions were ever acted upon, Young's words provide insight into his frame of mind that week.

For unknown reasons, the party about which Brigham Young was so concerned divided near Mountain Meadows. On the night of February 17–18, 1857, Tobin, Peltro, John Williams, and an unidentified fourth man camped on the Santa Clara River, while Ambrose, Betts, and probably others bivouacked elsewhere. In the middle of the night, all four members of the Tobin-Peltro group were wounded by a fifty-shot fusillade from approximately eight unidentified whites who also stole the party's horses and saddles.⁵⁸ Unscathed and perhaps even unaware of the attack, Ambrose and Betts (and presumably their

⁵⁵Comments by anonymous reader, quoted in Anderson to MacKinnon, April 24, 2006.

⁵⁶Whether Young saw himself acting as Utah's governor or as LDS Church president is unclear. The retained copy of the February 3 letter is headed "Great Salt Lake City" without an office designation, while that of February 6 bears the dateline "President's Office, Gr. S. L. City." With Young's multiple overlapping roles, a varying degree of precision among his clerks in labeling and filing letters, and the subsequent reorganizations of archival records, the Brigham Young Collection at LDS Church Archives contains letters written by Young in all of his gubernatorial, Indian affairs, Church, and militia roles as do the collections of Utah State Archives, a civil organization.

⁵⁷Brigham Young, Discourse, February 8, 1857, *Deseret Weekly News*, February 18, 1857, 396/4, 397/1–2.

⁵⁸Peltro reconstructed details of the ambush and its perpetrators from spent bullets, boot tracks, and hoof prints. Parshall, "'Pursue, Retake

companions) continued on and disappeared from historical notice into the California goldfields. With the help of a passing mail wagon, the four wounded men in the Tobin-Peltro group made their way to San Bernardino. By focusing on the real rather than the intended victims—understandable in light of Ambrose and Betts's obscurity—historians have overlooked Young's role in authorizing an attack that went awry with unintended consequences.

I am unpersuaded by the argument that the Santa Clara ambush had little significance because there were no fatalities.⁵⁹ Even if no action at all had been taken, Brigham Young's authorization of violence sheds light on his character and on the temper of the society he led in 1857. In her pioneering study, Parshall asks: "Why did Brigham Young issue his directives of February 3 and 6, 1857? Certainly Ambrose and Betts were undesirables who had been expensive visitors for Utah to host. But Utah had law enforcement officers, functioning courts, and jail facilities—all demonstrated by the handling of the felons' November offenses—without need for extra-legal activity." She concludes: "Failure to hold anyone responsible for the [uninvestigated] Santa Clara ambush foreshadowed the silence to follow the Potter-Parrish murders in Springville the next month, the massacre at Mountain Meadows in September, the October bludgeoning death of Richard Yates in Echo Canyon, [and] the murders of the Aiken party near Nephi in November—a catalog of bloodshed without accountability in the surreal year of 1857."⁶⁰

THE PARRISH-POTTER MURDERS

Although the four members of the Tobin-Peltro party survived the attack meant for Ambrose and Betts, the next development had lethal consequences. In Springville on the night of March 14–15, 1857, a father and son—William and Beason Parrish—and their guide Gardner ("Duff") Potter were shot and slashed to death just outside the town's walls as the disaffected Parrishes attempted to flee to California. Orrin Parrish, another son, narrowly escaped the attack. Part of their property disappeared, in a now-familiar looting pattern, although Brigham Young later intervened at widow Alvira

& Punish," 64–65.

⁵⁹Comments by anonymous reader, Anderson to MacKinnon, April 24, 2006.

⁶⁰Parshall, "Pursue, Retake & Punish," 85–86.

Parrish's plea to restore the family's horses and carriage.⁶¹

Unlike the obscure Santa Clara ambush, the Parrish-Potter murders received immediate and widespread attention. During the spring of 1857, the incident became an integral part of a nationwide perception that Utah was violently out of control, although it was not linked to the Santa Clara ambush or, of course, to the virtually unknown felons Betts and Ambrose. In 2004 historian Polly Aird—working independently of Ardis Parshall—determined that the Springville attack was also rooted in Brigham Young's February 1857 letters to bishops on the route south.⁶² Because Aird—like all other analysts—was unaware of the Ambrose-Betts affair, she did not connect the Springville and Santa Clara attacks as Parshall was able to just before her article went to press.⁶³ Nonetheless, Aird's valuable scholarship clarifies that the Parrish-Potter murders took place largely because of Bishop Aaron Johnson's belief—probably mistaken—that Brigham Young's cryptically phrased February 1857 letters authorized executions in Springville. Brigham Young's encouragement to violence made three members of the Parrish and Potter families indirect although real victims of Young's secret intent to eliminate Ambrose and Betts. As a double agent or decoy literally working in the dark as the Parrishes' guide, Duff Potter's unintended death was the most indirect casualty of them all.

Although the full text of Young's February letters did not surface until Parshall's research, Aird reminds us of a brief but remarkably accurate description of one of the letters related by John M. Stewart in 1859. Stewart was Aaron Johnson's counselor and justice of the peace in Springville. He conducted the coroner's inquest at midnight over the three still-warm bodies, later apostatized, and described, from the safety of California, the atmosphere and chain of events in Bishop Johnson's ward during late February 1857:

After all had assembled, and were orderly seated, the Bishop stated the object of the meeting which was, that we might hear a letter which he had just received from "President Young." He there read the

⁶¹Brigham Young, Letter to Aaron Johnson, July 30, 1857, Brigham Young Collection.

⁶²Polly Aird, "'You Nasty Apostates, Clear Out': Reasons for Disaffection in the Late 1850s," *Journal of Mormon History* 30 (Fall 2004): 173–91.

⁶³Parshall, "Pursue, Retake & Punish," 73 note 20.

letter, the purport of which was about this:

He, Brigham, had information that some suspicious characters were collecting at the "Indian Farm," on Spanish Fork, and he wished him (Bishop Johnson) to keep a good look out in that direction; to send some one there to reconnoiter and ascertain what was going on, and if they (those suspicious characters) should make a break, and be pursued, which he required; he "would be sorry to hear a favorable report;" "but," said he, "the better way is to lock the stable door before the horse is stolen."

He then admonished the Bishop that he (the Bishop) understood those things, and would act accordingly, and "keep this letter close," or safe.

This letter was over Brigham's signature, in his own peculiarly rough hands [sic], which we all had the privilege of seeing.⁶⁴

From Stewart's account, it is clear that he—and presumably the entire Mormon leadership in Springville—saw Brigham Young's letter of February 3, 1857, and, without understanding the letter's real intent, interpreted it to be authorization to execute the Parrishes: "About this matter there was no counseling," explained Stewart; "the word of Brigham was the *law*."⁶⁵

THE YATES MURDER

Once the active phase of the Utah War started in June 1857, the potential for casualties among civilians and combatants became a reality. Among the war's first victims after Mountain Meadows was Richard E. Yates, a civilian trader at Green River captured by the Nauvoo Legion around October 15, 1857. For weeks, he had refused to sell gunpowder to the Nauvoo Legion but had sold it to the army when a battalion from the approaching Utah Expedition descended on his trading post. On October 18, while Yates was sleeping, unarmed and manacled, Bill Hickman, then a lieutenant in the Nauvoo Legion, bludgeoned him to death near the legion's Echo Canyon headquarters at Cache Cave. Hickman admitted the murder publicly in 1871 and may have done so informally long before that date.

Little is known of Yates's background except that he was from

⁶⁴John M. Stewart, Letter to editor Kirk Anderson, July 4, 1859, *Valley Tan*, August 24, 1859; see also discussion in Aird, "You Nasty Apostates, Clear Out," 178 note 150, and Parshall, "Pursue, Retake & Punish," 73 note 20.

⁶⁵Stewart, Letter to Anderson, July 4, 1859.

Illinois, had spent the winter of 1853–54 in the mountains west of South Pass, had made a subsequent trip east for trade goods, and then had spent most of 1856 working as a trader in the region between South Pass and the Salt Lake Valley. J. Robert Brown, a young emigrant bound for California, encountered Yates and a partner in Missouri during May 1856 as they started across the plains to their trading territory. Brown's journal describes Yates as frequently tipsy, boorish, and highly unappealing. Unwittingly, Brown also described his impressions of Echo Canyon and Bill Hickman.⁶⁶

On August 16, 1856, no longer traveling with Yates, Brown entered Salt Lake City: "We passed in front of Gov. Young's house. He was standing in the door of his office, and eyed us closely as we passed."⁶⁷ This brief description captures Brigham Young's close, personal attention to the city's visitors. Four days later, Yates called on Young seeking Indian trading licenses on behalf of a group of mountaineers. Young immediately asked Lewis Robison and others who Yates was representing and on what basis, requesting a reply at "the first opportunity." Robison, at this point, had become Young's agent for the Fort Bridger area as well as the Nauvoo Legion's quartermaster general.⁶⁸ Robison's reply has not, apparently, survived. Nor is it clear whether Young issued the trading licenses.

Yates's name next appears in correspondence during the Utah War's early stages, in correspondence in August and September 1857 between Brigham Young, Daniel H. Wells, the Nauvoo Legion's commanding general and second counselor in the First Presidency, Lewis Robison, and Isaac Bullock, Robison's counterpart at the Mormon farming settlement of Fort Supply near Fort Bridger. Because Utah was not then capable of manufacturing gunpowder, the Nauvoo Legion was buying up privately held supplies before the

⁶⁶J. Robert Brown, *Journal of a Trip across the Plains of the U.S. from Missouri to California in the Year 1856, Giving a Correct View of the Country, Anecdotes, Indian Stories, Mountaineers' Tales, Etc.* (Columbus, Ohio: For the Author, 1860). Brown gives an example of Yates's interactions with Mormons approaching the Green River district in his journal, August 12, 1856, quoted on p. 76. Brown's account is the sole contemporary description of Yates.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 78.

⁶⁸Brigham Young, Letter to Lewis Robison, August 20, 1856, Brigham Young Collection.

Utah Expedition seized them. On August 18, 1857, Isaac Bullock wrote from Fort Supply to Brigham Young:

There are a good many Mountaineers on Green River & they will be sought for guides for the Army. Should the Army get up close enough—Yeates a mountaineer has just arrived on Green River with 4 wagons loaded with Indian Goods Powder Lead & [percussion] caps sugar & coffee—he is purposing going to the Utes to trade it, we are getting a long first rate with them. But we can see that the most of the Mountain Men are after money and are not for us but against us and will be on hand to render the soldiers all the aid they can. The Brethren here . . . generally are united.⁶⁹

On September 7, 1857, not yet aware of the siege at Mountain Meadows, Young wrote to Robison at Fort Bridger:

We trust that you have secured that Ammunition. . . . Enclosed you will find authority for taking possession of all the property of Yates & Co—We do not wish you to use this authority without you know or can prove that they have been selling or giving liquor to the Indians [illegible] unless they refuse to compromise the terms of which you are at liberty to dictate—perhaps when they find that they are liable to have their property including their wagons cattle horses &c every thing confiscated they will be willing to compromise fairly we leave this with you.⁷⁰

A week later on September 13, Charles R. Morehead, a young agent of Russell, Majors and Waddell, encountered Yates near Ham's Fork, who presciently described his apprehensions about looting and concern about his own and Jim Bridger's safety.⁷¹ Two weeks later on September 27, Captain Albert Tracy wrote to a friend from the Tenth Infantry's camp on Green River to describe an encounter with a frightened man who was probably Yates's partner: "We saw mounted Mormons today, and an old French trader living here says there are about a hundred some 16 miles above us on the river, and some below us. He told Col. Alexander this in my pres-

⁶⁹Isaac Bullock, Letter to Brigham Young, August 18, 1857, *ibid.*

⁷⁰Young, Letter to Robison, September 7, 1857; strikeovers omitted.

⁷¹Anonymous [Charles R. Morehead], Letter to editor, (*Lexington, Missouri*) *Press*, September 13, 1857, printed in (*Sacramento*) *Daily Union*, December 9, 1857, 1/2.

ence, and besides, that there were two Mormons at his house just arrived from Salt Lake. He is a good deal alarmed, and wants us to get between him and the Mormons. We hear that some Mormons wanted to take some powder from him, but that the Snake [Shoshone] Indians would not let them.”⁷² On October 3, Apostle George A. Smith was at Fort Bridger negotiating with Yates. He recorded in the Historian’s Office Journal: “The avowed object of Yates was to purchase flour, propositions were made to him for lead, powder and blankets in his possession, favorable terms were offered but he would not accede to them.”⁷³

Four days later on October 7, Colonel Edmund B. Alexander, the Utah Expedition’s acting commander, ordered a battalion under Captain Randolph B. Marcy of the Fifth U.S. Infantry to march from Ham’s Fork to Green River to seize Yates’s munitions. Marcy did so, thus outmaneuvering Brigham Young, but it was Yates who paid the price. Mid-October Nauvoo Legion reports or diaries record his arrest and the seizure of his remaining possessions, principally food, clothing, blankets, and livestock.

On October 15, 1857, three senior leaders—General Daniel H. Wells, and Apostles John Taylor and George A. Smith—sent Brigham Young this field report:

We have not as yet interrupted their [army] pickets or fired a single gun, but shall continue for the present to carry out your instructions to avoid the shedding of blood. Yates is a prisoner in the hands of Col. [Thomas] Callister at Bridger, having been passing to and from the enemy’s camp (and it is believed) as a spy. According to his own statement the [U.S.] troops have got his ammunition. We learn from him that an express is about to start from the troops to the States, by the hands of one Joseph Mageau for which Col. Callister is on the look out. He is a mountaineer, and has sold out to the Gov-

⁷²Captain Albert Tracy, between South Pass and Big Sandy, Letter to unidentified friend, Buffalo, N.Y., September 23–28, 1857, “From the Utah Expedition,” (*Buffalo*) *Commercial Advertiser*, November 20, 1857, 2/2.

⁷³George A. Smith, Historian’s Office Journal, October 3, 1857, LDS Church Archives. A confirming description of these negotiations appears in Nauvoo Legion Brigadier General Hiram B. Clawson, Log, October 3, 1857, LDS Church Archives.

ernment.⁷⁴

They followed up three days later from their new headquarters in Echo Canyon, where Heber C. Kimball, Young's first counselor, was apparently also present: "We send Yates on the road to the City, a prisoner in charge of Wm. Hickman."⁷⁵ On the same day, Sunday, William C. Staines, a Salt Lake horticulturist who was in Echo Canyon for an unknown reason, recorded: "At 10 AM W Hickman with Yates a Prisner a Man who has been selling the Troops his Powder Lead Blankets &c &c things he Bought for Indian Trade had refused to sell them to us at 2 pm passed on to the City[.] Heber Kimball left with his Company for Salt Lake the night is cold and stormy."⁷⁶ Before morning, Hickman had killed Yates and buried his body in Echo Canyon beneath the ashes of their campfire. As Hickman himself described the scene, "About this time all was still, and everybody supposed to be in their beds. No person was to be seen, when Col. [N. V.] Jones and two others, Hosea Stout and another man whose name I do not recollect, came to my camp-fire and asked if Yates was asleep. I told them he was, upon which his brains were knocked out with an ax."⁷⁷

Less than a week later, Brigham Young wrote detailed instructions, not about launching an investigation into the murder, but for taking possession of the related property: "Yates & partner have sold them [the army] beef[,] oxen, ammuniton &c therefore take and keep what you can find belonging to them, keeping an accurate account of same. Use the blankets and clothing as well as beef and other supplies as needed for the boys, also keeping an accurate account of each issue."⁷⁸

A second-hand report from Albert G. Browne Jr., an attorney and correspondent for the *New-York Daily Tribune* traveling with the

⁷⁴Daniel H. Wells, John Taylor, and George A. Smith, Letter to Brigham Young, October 15, 1857, Brigham Young Collection.

⁷⁵Daniel H. Wells, John Taylor, and George A. Smith, Letter to Young, October 18, 1857, Brigham Young Collection.

⁷⁶William C. Staines, Diary, October 18, 1857, photocopy of holograph, MS 2453, LDS Church Archives.

⁷⁷Hickman, *Brigham's Destroying Angel*, 125.

⁷⁸Young, Letter to George D. Grant, Robert T. Burton, and Lewis Robison, October 26, 1857, Nauvoo Legion (Utah) Adjutant General's Record 1851-70, 151, LDS Church Archives.

Utah Expedition, quoted a captive returned from Salt Lake City. This captive, Private Henry Feldman, said that Hickman murdered Yates for having sold the army "some kegs of gunpowder" from his post. For "more than \$1,000," he drove "some beef cattle" to the army camp on Ham's Fork. "On his return to Green River a party of Mormons captured him. . . . It is said that Hickman acknowledges the murder, and has exhibited articles which are known to have been in the dead man's possession."⁷⁹

On October 14, 1858, Captain Albert Tracy recorded a conversation with an unnamed "ancient" Welsh Mormon woman, living in Springville and selling pies at Camp Floyd. She caught his attention with tales of Utah murders:

I made further inquiry and asked the woman what she knew of her own observation of such things. Glancing around in a nervous manner, she replied . . . "and if I had time, Captain, I could tell you stories of such things that would make your hair stand on end in the day-time"—which were her exact words. "Then," said she, "there was Yates, that sold the regulars the powder at Green River, last fall, and afterwards tried to leave. He disappeared—'went up the pocket of the Lord,' we call it—and Bill Hickman—one of the 'Destroyers'—passed through this very town [Springville], wearing the overcoat of Yates and riding his bay pony." Thus the riddle of the man who left the command of [Captain] Marcy, on our return march from the expedition to Green River, was solved. There could be, as there really is, no further doubt as to his fate. Hickman, who was also at one time in our camp by Ham's Fork is noted as one of the most villainous and merciless of all the gang of "Destroying Angels" in their work of freeing themselves of enemies.⁸⁰

In 1871, Hickman publicly admitted culpability, and Hickman, Young, Wells, and two legion officers—including its judge advocate—were indicted for Yates's murder. However, no trials followed from the indictments and preliminary hearings, for in 1872 the U.S. Supreme Court dismissed hundreds of verdicts and indictments in Utah as procedurally flawed, including those returned by the grand

⁷⁹Albert G. Browne, Dispatch dated January 3, 1858, published as "Later from Utah," *New-York Daily Tribune*, March 1, 1858.

⁸⁰Alter and Dwyer, "Journal of Captain Albert Tracy, 1858–1860," October 14, 1858, 45.

jury in the Yates case.⁸¹

In the interim, in press interviews and in his autobiography, Hickman further asserted that he had killed Yates on orders from Brigham Young delivered by his son Joseph A. Young. Brigham Young's correspondence describes Joseph as a courier between Salt Lake City and Echo Canyon on the day before Yates's murder. Hickman resentfully added that he had personally delivered nearly \$1,000 of Yates's gold to Brigham Young in his office but had been denied a share in these spoils.⁸²

Since by 1871 Hickman was an excommunicated, self-confessed murderer of no moral standing, Mormons of the period and others, as well as some historians, acknowledged the murder as free-lancing, but dismissed his claims of Brigham Young's involvement as noncredible. Persistent descriptions of Hickman as "notorious" became a way of demeaning Hickman and dismissing his accounts of

⁸¹See the discussion of *Clinton v. Englebrecht* (U.S. 80:434) in Edwin Brown Firmage and Richard Collin Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 138, 144-47.

⁸²The \$1,000 figure discussed in 1871 matches Feldman's rumor of what Yates received from the army. There are five relevant primary sources on who ordered Yates's murder: (1) Hickman, *Brigham's Destroying Angel*, 122-27, 191-93, 205-6; (2) "Brigham Young's Janissary: Interview with Bill Hickman, the Confessed Assassin—Two Sides of the Yates Story—A Specimen United States Official—The Apostle Mormons, &c., &c." *New York World*, November 25, 1871; (3) Hickman, quoted in unidentified correspondent, June 23, 1877, "Saints or Demons: Conclusive Evidence of Murder against Brigham Young," *Salt Lake Weekly Tribune*, July 21, 1877, 1/2-6, 2/1-2 (As quoted, Hickman alleged that Joseph A. Young "said his father wanted that man Yates killed."); (4) Unidentified correspondent, Interview with Joseph A. Young, September 29, 1871, "The Charges of Murder—the Evidence," *New York Tribune*, October 7, 1871, 1/5-6; and (5) George A. Townsend, "Interview with [Daniel H. Wells] the Mayor of Salt Lake," October 25, 1871, *The Mormon Trials at Salt Lake City* (New York: American News Company, 1871), 25-26. The principal first-hand (but not contemporary) challenge to Hickman's account of the Yates murder and Brigham Young's involvement is Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years among the Indians, a True Yet Thrilling Narrative of the Author's Experiences among the Natives* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1890), 130.

violence on demand.⁸³ Interestingly, the “freelancing” criticism of Hickman was an argument also used to distance the Nauvoo Legion’s actions at Mountain Meadows from the Salt Lake hierarchy.

Without trying to make a case for Hickman as a man of good character, I would argue that the 1871 attacks on Hickman’s credibility about 1857 events are weakened by his obvious good standing then with Brigham Young. In addition to being an officer in the Nauvoo Legion, he was a key figure in Young’s launch of the Y.X. Carrying Company in February 1857. Also in January 1857, Utah’s legislative assembly and Governor Young had formally petitioned Congress and the U.S. president to appoint him U.S. attorney for Utah if another nominee proved unacceptable. The insistent language of the petition on behalf of Hickman and others was so inflammatory that it shaped the Buchanan cabinet’s perception that the territory and its governor were out of control.⁸⁴ In June 1857, Brigham Young’s principal lawyer, Hosea Stout, had Hickman write to at least one Missouri newspaper attacking Judge Drummond’s character.⁸⁵ Eighteen months later (immediately after the Utah War’s active phase), Brigham Young personally renegotiated for Hickman his indebtedness with the non-Mormon mercantile firm of Gilbert & Gerrish, promising that the house would pay the principal due if Hickman refused, on condition that the firm would forego the

⁸³Emblematically, as Hickman lay dead near Lander, Wyoming, in August 1883, a party of Mormon apostles, patriarchs, and bishops unwittingly passed the blacksmith’s shop where a wagon-maker was making Hickman’s simple pine coffin. The report of this irony described him as “the ‘notorious’ Bill Hickman.” “A Party from Utah Have an Interesting Tour,” *Deseret Semi-Weekly News*, August 28, 1883, 2/8; Hugh Nibley, *Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass: The Art of Telling Tales about Joseph Smith and Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 264.

⁸⁴Text of the unpublished January 6, 1857, petition of Utah’s legislative assembly is in Utah State Archives, and the Buchanan administration’s reaction to it is described in John M. Bernhisel, Letter to Brigham Young, April 2, 1857, Brigham Young Collection.

⁸⁵William A. Hickman, Draft letter to editor, *Platte City Argus* (Weston, Mo.), June 30, 1857, Brigham Young Collection. That this letter was drafted for Hickman’s signature in the hand of Hosea Stout and filed in Brigham Young’s papers indicates Hickman’s good standing with these leaders as the Utah War began.

accrued interest.⁸⁶ In short, there is no evidence of a lack of trust in Hickman in 1857, a circumstance that should discourage automatic blanket dismissal of this flawed character's later account of Utah War events.

THE LYNCHING OF PRIVATE CLARK

A second October 1857 murder in northeastern Utah was that of George W. Clark, a private in Company I, Tenth U.S. Infantry. On October 9, Clark stole an army mule and disappeared into the mountains with his rifle like dozens of other deserters.⁸⁷ That same evening Captain Marcy's detachment had returned to camp with Yates's gunpowder, and Colonel Alexander had announced that the next day he would lead the Utah Expedition from Ham's Fork to Salt Lake City by the northern route (Bear River and Soda Springs).

When a federal patrol found Clark near Smith's Fork of the Green River almost five months later, his frozen body was hanging from a tree limb. Crows had pecked away his blue eyes and much of his face. An unidentified correspondent for the *Cincinnati Enquirer* stuffed a breathless dispatch into the mail leaving Camp Scott on March 1, 1858, before the victim had been identified. The range and inaccuracy of the correspondent's speculation about the victim (as Bill Hickman's brother George), the murderers (mountaineers), and their motive (vengeance against Bill Hickman) reveals as much about the climate of violence in the Green River district as it does about Hickman's local reputation.⁸⁸

Four days later, the *New York Times's* "A.B.C." submitted a more

⁸⁶D. H. Wells, Letter to Gilbert & Gerrish, December 3, 1858, Brigham Young Collection. Why Wells, let alone Young, served as intermediary in this negotiation is unclear.

⁸⁷For the Clark case, see "A.B.C." [David A. Burr], Letter, March 5, 1858, published as "From the Utah Army," *New York Times*, May 19, 1858, 1/1-2. The Utah Expedition was so depleted by desertions during the summer and fall of 1857 that Albert Sidney Johnston acquired replacements by virtually impressing more than four hundred unemployed teamsters into a "volunteer" infantry battalion. For one company commander's comments about desertion from his unit at about the time Clark deserted, see Captain John W. Phelps, Diary, October 2, 1857, typescript, Hamilton Gardner Papers, Utah State Historical Society; holograph in New York Public Library.

⁸⁸Anonymous [probably W. J. McCormick], Letter, March 1, 1858,

detailed and accurate account. A.B.C. was actually David A. Burr, son of David H. Burr, Utah's former surveyor general. The younger Burr was not only a *Times* reporter at Camp Scott but a daguerreotypist and Green River County justice of the peace, in which role he had empaneled the coroner's jury for the Clark case. After a description of the gruesome details, Burr reported the jury's findings:

"He came to his death by hanging by the neck until life was extinct." The Coroner agreed with the verdict of the Jury, adding further that he came to his death by the hands of persons unknown. The probability is, that the deserter (who had stolen a mule on starting) was endeavoring to make his way to Fort Supply (a Mormon village) when he was met by a party of Mormons, who, taking him to be [a] spy, hung him. The spot where he was found is about 30 miles from Ham's Fork and about 16 miles from here.⁸⁹

Who killed Clark? Despite Burr's speculation, it is not currently possible to determine responsibility. Because of the Mormon-federal tensions in the region, the fact that the Nauvoo Legion was patrolling Smith's Fork, and the common Mormon rhetoric about putting people "out of the way," it is easy to accuse Burr's "party of Mormons." Yet both sides threatened lynchings, and no reference to this incident appeared in either Nauvoo Legion reports or the *Deseret News* (in contrast to the Yates case). Brigham Young was then actively encouraging deserters from the Utah Expedition, not trying to frighten them.⁹⁰ Like the mistaken identities that resulted in the attack on the Tobin-Peltro party and Duff Potter's murder in Springville, I hypothesize that Clark fell victim to mountaineers, who may have mistaken him for Dr. George W. Hickman as did

printed as "Murder of Dr. G. W. Hickman," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, and reprinted in *New York Daily Tribune*, April 16, 1858, 6, http://www.hickmanfamily.homestead.com/files/murder_GWH.htm (accessed April 12, 2001).

⁸⁹"A.B.C." [David A. Burr], "From the Utah Army," 1/1-2.

⁹⁰On October 17, 1857, a week after Clark's desertion, Young sent Wells detailed instructions on how to entice potential deserters into leaving army camps, a reflection of Young's interest in the subject and his proclivity for micromanaging legion operations. Letter quoted in Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 260.

the *Cincinnati Enquirer's* reporter.

OTHER THREATS IN THE GREEN RIVER DISTRICT

Other events, perhaps inconsequential individually, but tell-tale straws in an increasingly violent wind, also help document the atmosphere between Green River and Salt Lake City.

On November 2, 1857, three days after the Nauvoo Legion ran off the mountaineers' cattle herd at Green River, Wells reported to Young: "Bro Lewis Robison has been to see the mountaineers. They are all scared and very willingly agreed to get out of the way. Some are going in to the Platte and some into the Utah [Ute] Country to winter, with their stock."⁹¹

William Clark (no known relation to Private George Clark), a discharged civilian teamster, was captured by the Nauvoo Legion near Fort Bridger in mid-November 1857 as he headed for California. Clark, who survived to become mayor of Ames, Iowa, published a memoir of his experience in 1922. In it, he recalled a frightening encounter with Bill Hickman. Hickman said of U.S. Indian agent Garland Hurt, who had fled from his post at Spanish Fork on September 27, 1857, "I'd like to get in reach of him with my old rifle he wouldn't tell any more tales, and I'll get him yet."⁹²

On November 28, 1857, Hiram F. Morrell, the federally appointed postmaster of Salt Lake City who had fled from Utah in April and was returning under the army's protection, wrote to his brother in New Jersey from his refuge at Camp Scott. Without providing details, Morrell said that "Gov. Young's son" had sent him a personal message through "a released prisoner": "Tell Morrell, damn him, that we came within one day of catching him and we'll hang him yet."⁹³ Perhaps the most-hated non-Mormon in Utah,

⁹¹Daniel H. Wells, Letter to Brigham Young, November 2, 1857, Brigham Young Collection. Fear of the legion and atrocities rapidly spread north, creating apprehension even among the tough mountaineers and traders of Montana's isolated valleys.

⁹²William Hickman, quoted in William Clark, "A Trip across the Plains in 1857," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 20 (1922): 201. Hurt's "tale" was the first news the army had of the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

⁹³Hiram F. Morrell, Letter to brother, November 28, 1857, *Daily En-*

Morrell was hardly an unbiased source on Mormon affairs,⁹⁴ but this letter is consistent with the contemporaneous apprehensions of W. M. F. Magraw, his Camp Scott mess-mate. Magraw had abandoned his position as a superintendent of the Pacific Wagon Road project in October 1857 after threatening Mormons James Gemmell and Asa S. Hawley (and possibly Porter Rockwell). By the end of 1857, Magraw was an infantry captain in the Utah Expedition's Battalion of U.S. Volunteers, a safe haven which permitted him to escape Yates's fate.⁹⁵ Magraw told Buchanan that "the Mormons were watching my movements, and dogging my trains, requiring on my part the utmost vigilance to protect the animals and other property from being carried off." Nauvoo Legion records corroborate this targeting of Magraw and his livestock, and Hickman later admitted such an intent.⁹⁶

ASSASSINATION OF THE AIKEN PARTY

During late October 1857, six well-outfitted, cash-flush civilians from California, entered Utah by the northern route, mistakenly assuming that the army had already occupied Salt Lake City. Until David Bigler's recent research, historians have known little about this group, known as the Aiken party,⁹⁷ or its violent fate. The six were brothers Thomas and John Aiken, John Achard, Andrew

quirer (Cincinnati), January 22, 1858, 1/6. See also Les Whall, *The Salt Lake City Post Office 1849-1869* (Salt Lake City: Crabtree Press, 1982), 112. The governor's son was probably Joseph A. Young.

⁹⁴For reactions in early 1857 to Morrell's appointment as Salt Lake City's postmaster, see Sarah C. Thomas, comp., "Elias Smith's Journal," typescript 1984, January 20, 1857, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City; and Elias Smith, Letter to George A. Smith, February 7, 1857, George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Archives.

⁹⁵MacKinnon, "Unquestionably Authentic and Correct in Every Detail," 333 note 24; Asa S. Hawley, *Autobiography*, 1912, typescript, MS 7808, LDS Church Archives.

⁹⁶Magraw, Letter to President James Buchanan, January 2, 1858, James Buchanan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; MacKinnon, "The Buchanan Spoils System and the Utah Expedition: Careers of W. M. F. Magraw and John M. Hockaday," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 31 (Spring 1963): 127-50; Hickman, *Brigham's Destroying Angel*, 118.

⁹⁷The most complete, recent account is David L. Bigler, "A Fine

Jackson ("Honesty") Jones, John Chapman, and Horace C. ("Buck") Bucklin. Unable to provide a credible explanation for their presence other than tourism, they were arrested near what is now Brigham City by the Nauvoo Legion on suspicion of being spies for the army or the prospective operators of a house of gambling and/or prostitution.

The party was placed under house arrest in Salt Lake City, then released about November 20. Bucklin remained in Salt Lake City to winter over as did Chapman at Lehi. The remaining four men headed back toward California by the southern route, escorted by Porter Rockwell and three others. On the night of November 25–26, four members of the party were shot and bludgeoned while camped along the Sevier River twenty-five miles south of Nephi; two were killed outright and the others were dispatched soon after seeking refuge and treatment for their wounds in the hamlet of Salt Creek. The assassins took their cash, weapons, horses, silver-studded saddles, and even their clothes, leaving the bodies in a ditch.

The next year Horace C. Bucklin, a fifth man in the original Aikens party, was dispatched by Bill Hickman with a shotgun blast to the head. The body was buried in a ditch north of Salt Lake City. John Chapman, the sixth member of the party, disappeared without leaving a record of his fate.

The comprehensive recent study by David L. Bigler and Harold Schindler's less accurate one document elements in the Aiken affair consistent with other Utah War episodes: disputed instructions from Brigham Young, a disregarded plea to the governor from one of the victims, and an initially incompetent but ultimately successful execution squad that included Nauvoo Legion officers. In 1877 Porter Rockwell and Sylvanus Collett, presumably a Nauvoo Legion private on detached duty from Fort Limhi, were indicted for the mur-

Looking Party of Men': The Aiken Party Murders and the 1857–58 Utah War," *Western Historical Quarterly*, forthcoming. Other, more fragmentary accounts appear in Schindler, *Orrin Porter Rockwell*, 268–81, and "J.J.G." [John I. Ginn], Letter to Editor Kirk Anderson, March 26, 1859, *Valley Tan* (Salt Lake City), April 26, 1859, reprinted for the first time in MacKinnon, "Unquestionably Authentic and Correct in Every Detail," 334–35. An account of these murders—apparently written by Beadle rather than Hickman, appears in Appendix F to Hickman, *Brigham's Destroying Angel*, 206–11.

ders. Rockwell was awaiting trial at his (unrelated) death in 1878, and Collett was acquitted. Bigler concludes on the basis of "circumstantial evidence" that "an authority at Great Salt Lake made a considered decision to allow two of the [Aiken] men [Bucklin and Chapman] to remain at large over the winter and kill the other four. Such an authority could only have been Brigham Young."⁹⁸

MASSACRE AT FORT LIMHI

The next atrocity of the Utah War was committed, not by, but against, the Mormons. On February 25, 1858, about two hundred Bannock and northern Shoshone warriors attacked herders at Fort Limhi, the Mormon-built Salmon River Mission 380 miles north of Salt Lake City and then in Oregon Territory. Mormons George McBride and James T. Miller were killed, five other farmer-missionaries were wounded, and the Indians drove off 220 cattle and 35 horses. Realizing that he could no longer rely on the northern tribes as allies or likely converts, Brigham Young ordered the fort abandoned on March 8, 1858. David L. Bigler believes that Young's decision shifted Utah War plans away from the option of a mass exodus to Montana's Bitterroot Valley (and perhaps beyond) via Fort Limhi and toward a strategy of negotiating with the army through Thomas L. Kane while preparing Utah's population for what in late March became the "move south."⁹⁹

Since the unusual visit of Brigham Young and D. H. Wells in May 1857, the forty-three Mormon men at the mission were organized as a company of the Nauvoo Legion, but they were primarily noncombatants, farming at Mormonism's northernmost settlement and attempting to proselytize the local tribes as part of the missionary effort among Native Americans begun in 1855. Nevertheless, the region's traders and mountaineers saw them as the vanguard of

⁹⁸Bigler, email message to MacKinnon, June 19, 2006.

⁹⁹My discussion of the Fort Limhi affair is based primarily on three histories by David L. Bigler, who has unquestionably done the definitive work on this topic: *The Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847-1896* (Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark, 1998), 186-87; *Fort Limhi: The Mormon Adventure in Oregon Territory, 1855-1858* (Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark, 2003); and "Mormon Missionaries, the Utah War, and the 1858 Bannock Raid on Fort Limhi," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 53 (Autumn 2003): 30-43.

a potential Nauvoo Legion attack, especially as news of the Yates murder and Mormon-federal maneuvering in the Green River-Fort Bridger area spread north.¹⁰⁰ Circumstantial evidence suggests that the raid's instigators were civilian stock-buying agents of Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston's Utah Expedition, although a proper investigation never occurred.

The *Deseret News*, then edited by Albert Carrington, charged on April 14, 1858, that John W. Powell, an unsavory mountaineer, "was most actively engaged with the Indians in the massacre and robbery perpetrated at that Fort; and it is reported that soldiers from Col. Johnston's camp wintered at Beaver Head [Montana], a short distance east of Fort Limhi." He was often in conflict with Fort Limhi Mormons and some of the nearby tribes.¹⁰¹

As Mormons saw it, Powell had been collaborating with Benjamin Franklin Ficklin, a civilian guide at Camp Scott. A well-educated (Virginia Military Institute) but tough frontiersman, Ficklin had formerly worked as an assistant engineer on Magraw's Pacific Wagon Road crew and was briefly interim U.S. marshal for Utah at Camp Scott. On December 9, 1857, Johnston sent Ficklin northwest to Flathead country in command of a small detachment of civilians and perhaps a few soldiers to buy remounts and beef cattle to replace those stolen by the Nauvoo Legion. Bigler has reconstructed Ficklin's movements that winter, and he is known to have spent time with Powell at about the time of the Fort Limhi raid, following which he swung through the Deerlodge and Bitterroot valleys. The Flatheads and mountaineers were unwilling to sell livestock for fear of angering the Nauvoo Legion (one of Yates's offenses), and Ficklin and the mountaineers returned to Camp Scott largely empty-handed on April 10.¹⁰² Soon thereafter, Powell also reached Fort Bridger and quarreled with Ficklin. The two resolved to fight a duel to the death, prevented by their arrest by the civilian court at Camp Scott. Albert Sidney Johnston hired Powell as a guide at the substantial daily rate of five dollars; he died in an unrelated street shoot-out on April 7,

¹⁰⁰Diaries by such non-Mormon frontiersmen as Johnny Grant, John Owen, Frederick H. Burr, and Granville Stuart reflect the intensity of these fears even in the isolated valleys of southwestern Montana.

¹⁰¹"Another Murder by Indians," *Deseret Weekly News*, April 14, 1858, 35/1-2, qtd. in Bigler, *Fort Limhi*, 283-84.

¹⁰²Bigler, *Fort Limhi*, 254-57.

1879, in Montana.¹⁰³

On April 21, Ficklin and Powell gave sworn affidavits flatly denying the *Deseret News's* accusations, a denial supported by Bridger and Magraw at Camp Scott. They also accused the Fort Limhi mission of selling firearms to Shoshones and Bannocks. Bigler finds these charges unsupportable, characterizes Ficklin's affidavit as evasive and incomplete, and likewise calls Powell's "a cover of false or misleading half-truths over his own role, while deliberately withholding vital information about the raid and its causes." Johnston accepted these affidavits and sent them to both Governor Cumming and army headquarters without further investigation.¹⁰⁴

Although technically no longer Utah's superintendent of Indian affairs, Brigham Young sent letters and affidavits to the U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., reporting accusations from friendly Indian sources that officers and guides at Camp Scott were offering bounties to various tribes for Mormon horses and weapons. On the Fort Limhi attack, Young commented, "Our enemies have no scruples in exciting the Indians against [us] and, especially when taken in connection with actual hostilities and depredations [sic] on their part . . . leaves but little room to doubt the complicity of the Army in these hostilities."¹⁰⁵ Bigler characterizes "the alleged inquiry" as little more than "shallow at best and . . . [Johnston's] hurried attempt to protect himself and favored underlings at worst." Without "a serious investigation and with a subsequent cover-up," final responsibility for the Fort Limhi raid cannot be determined, but Ficklin's earlier and active role "added up to a compelling motive for him. . . . He also had ample opportunity to conspire with men as impulsive and reckless as himself in instigating the attack. . . . But there is far less doubt about the connection of John W. Powell to the raid and events that led up to it."¹⁰⁶

In early June, George A. Smith wrote a hot-tempered letter to T. B. H. Stenhouse cataloguing what he believed to be army-instigated Indian attacks on Mormons and their herds (for instance,

¹⁰³Ibid., 312, 318–20.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 288–92.

¹⁰⁵Young, Letters to U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, April 5 and June 30, 1858, Utah Indian Affairs, typescripts, Utah State Historical Society.

¹⁰⁶Bigler, *Fort Limhi*, 297, 302–3, 306.

James Youkerson was allegedly killed, roasted, and presumably eaten near Salt Creek Canyon). He denounced Buchanan's "savage barbarity in employing the Indians to murder, butcher, roast and eat his countrymen. . . . To see the administration of my country so insane as to set on foot the savage to rob and destroy throughout the length and breadth of this Territory is to [sic] much to write about & keep cool."¹⁰⁷

Given these events and accusations, what is Johnston's accountability for Fort Limhi's civilian casualties and, by extension, his general leadership of the Utah Expedition? How responsible was his quick dismissal of Mormon accusations against Powell and Ficklin without a real investigation? Daniel H. Wells failed to convene a Nauvoo Legion court of inquiry or court-martial after the murders of unarmed civilian prisoners at Mountain Meadows, Echo Canyon, and near Nephi in September, October, and November 1857; but Johnston himself also failed to investigate not only Fort Limhi but Mountain Meadows, even though Garland Hurt had reported the slaughter to him near South Pass in late October 1857, and Johnston did not leave Utah until March 1860.

Perceptions of Mormons' "tampering" with the Indians were, of course, part of the farrago of finger-pointing that brought on the Utah War. Once the Utah Expedition was in the field, these accusations intensified from both sides. Young saw the Utah Expedition as a destabilizing force that would incite the tribes to uncontrollable violence.¹⁰⁸ Young's accusation about the army's incitement of the Uinta bands through Indian agent Garland Hurt was accurate. It was based, no doubt, on his awareness from intelligence agents in and near the army that Hurt had left Fort Bridger in early January for a mysterious mission to the Indians' winter encampment in the Uinta Mountains. In mid-January Colonel Johnston's adjutant recorded in his diary:

For some weeks it has been contemplated to make use of the Uintah Indians as allies against the Mormons in case the latter attempted to interfere with our movements in the Spring, or threatened the safety of the caravan under Marcy, when returning [from

¹⁰⁷George A. Smith, Provo, Letter to T. B. H. Stenhouse, New York, June 7, 1858, Historian's Office, Letterpress Books, LDS Church Archives.

¹⁰⁸Young, Letter to James W. Denver, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 12, 1857, Brigham Young Collection.

New Mexico]. Some days since three of our men who had been prisoners among the Mormons were returned to camp from Salt Lake City. These men confirmed the information or impression that the Mormons designed an attack upon Capt. Marcy, and were going to organize a party of some two hundred men to capture or stampede and scatter his animals. This determined Col. J. to rely upon the Indians, and as an auxiliary to the force expected with Capt. M. and had Dr. Hurt, the Indian Agent of the tribe approached on the subject.¹⁰⁹

Notwithstanding his awareness of this compromising diary entry, Johnston's biographer stepped over it with the weak rationalization that, "Perhaps the mere presence of a threatening army encouraged some Indians to commit violence against the Mormons. . . . But, according to the testimony of all of Johnston's associates, he did not incite the Indians to prey upon the Mormons."¹¹⁰

A hitherto unpublished document communicates Johnston's decision on March 3, 1858, barely a week after the attack on Fort Limhi, to hire Chief Washakie's Shoshones to "protect and run the ferries upon Green River and Ham's Fork," a scene of protracted Mormon-mountaineer conflict.¹¹¹ A few weeks later, Magraw and Bridger confirmed that Johnston had such influence with the tribes that if he "had given either Wash-a-kee or [Chief] Little Soldier the least encouragement, they would have at once commenced open hostilities against the Mormons."¹¹²

On March 11 Jacob Forney, Brigham Young's successor as

¹⁰⁹"Extracts from the Diary of Maj. Fitz-John Porter A.A.G. while acting with Genl. Albert Sidney Johnston in the Utah Expedition," January 14, 1858, Porter Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

¹¹⁰Charles P. Roland, *Albert Sidney Johnston, Soldier of Three Republics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 209.

¹¹¹Major Fitz John Porter, assistant adjutant general, Letter to Utah Indian Superintendent Jacob Forney, March 3, 1858, Records of the War Department, RG98, U.S. Army Commands, Dept. of Utah, Letters Sent, 1857-1861, Vol. 1, No. 68, National Archives. Porter was Johnston's chief of staff and frequently communicated his orders.

¹¹²W. M. F. Magraw and James Bridger, Camp Scott, Letter to Major F. J. Porter, April 28, 1858, "Report of the Secretary of War," *House Executive Document 2*, 35th Cong., 2d sess., serial 975, 83. Magraw and Bridger claimed that Johnston was not using Indians against the Mormons but, in so doing, testified to his influence among them.

Utah's superintendent of Indian affairs, reported to his superior in Washington that Johnston had asked him to employ "some expert Indians," not for "actual fighting, but as scouting parties." Forney decided to comply and sent for Washakie. Then on April 26, 1858, the eve of the Shoshone visit to Camp Scott to finalize the arrangement, Johnston abruptly cancelled both the invitation and his plan to use Indian auxiliaries.¹¹³ My assessment is that Johnston probably changed his mind because of the controversial accusations that the army had been involved in the Fort Limhi attack.

LEADERS AND COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS

What orders governed Nauvoo Legion operations in northeastern Utah during the fall of 1857? Even more broadly, what was Brigham Young's command style and how did he communicate his attitude to the legion about summary executions and looting? It is an important issue because, in the 1870s, Young described the Mountain Meadows Massacre to Josiah Rogerson Jr., the court stenographer at John D. Lee's two trials, as "a wanton, uncalled for affair, one that I never authorized or endorsed. Could we have had a telegraph line in our territory at that time that thing would never have happened."¹¹⁴ Later some historians and Church leaders have made the same argument about both Mountain Meadow's and the war's onset.

¹¹³Jacob Forney, Letter to C. E. Mix, March 11, 1858, Utah State Historical Society, Federal Writers' Project Transcripts (A458), Utah Indian Affairs, Correspondence 1855–59; Porter, Letter to Forney, April 26, 1858, *ibid.*

¹¹⁴Josiah Rogerson, "The Guilt of John D. Lee," 18, in Mountain Meadows File, LDS Church Archives, quoted in Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 331. H. H. Bancroft also held Young blameless in the massacre because his violent comments of September 9 could not have traveled "three hundred miles" in only two days "in the absence of telegraph and railroad." Bancroft, *History of Utah* (San Francisco: History Company, 1890), 544. Richard D. Poll argued that, with respect to the Utah War itself, "had there been transcontinental telegraphic communications at the time, what has been referred to as 'Buchanan's Blunder' almost certainly would not have occurred." Poll, "The Utah War," *Utah History Encyclopedia*, edited by Allan Kent Powell (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 607; Poll and Hansen, "Buchanan's Blunder," 122–23. LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley, in dedicating the reconstructed monument at Mountain Mead-

For northeastern Utah, such a scenario of misunderstood, broken, and slow communications is, in my estimation, another myth. By all accounts, Yates was murdered virtually at legion headquarters at Echo Canyon's Cache Cave, within a few miles of Kimball and Wells and less than a hundred miles from Salt Lake City. Letters flowed almost daily between Brigham Young and legion commanders by courier, one of them his own son.¹¹⁵ The Brigham Young correspondence for these months shows that he heaped advice on Wells. Wells encouraged such micromangement by frequently seeking counsel on equally minor as well as major issues.¹¹⁶

Notwithstanding Young's frequent assertion that commanders in the field knew best and were to be guided by good judgment and local conditions, the practice was different. Young's command philosophy for the Nauvoo Legion was generally not characterized by delegation or broken communications, even in mountain wilderness. There were, of course, exceptions, e.g., Young's willingness to let Wells determine when to destroy Forts Bridger and Supply and attack army supply wagons; but the local "when" decision in the mountains was made only after Young and Wells had earlier grappled with the "whether" decision in Salt Lake City. Unaware of the destruction occurring as he wrote, Young was surprisingly relaxed in telling Wells that "I can in no wise perceive but what the spirit of our God guides and blesses you in your views and plans" but nonetheless added the unnecessary advice that "it will probably be best to vacate

ows on September 11, 1999, commented, "I sit in the chair that Brigham Young occupied as President of the Church at the time of the tragedy. I have read very much of the history of what occurred here. There is no question in my mind that he was opposed to what happened. Had there been a faster means of communication, it never would have happened and history would have been different." Quoted in John L. Hart, "Let the Book of the Past Be Closed," *Church News*, September 18, 1999, 3, 8-9.

¹¹⁵In contrast, at this time and during the 1857-58 winter, messages between the Utah Expedition and the War Department (or army headquarters in New York) took up to four months in transit.

¹¹⁶For Young's intervention in drill procedures, see "Nauvoo Legion," *Deseret Weekly News*, July 1, 1857, 4/4, and Head Quarters, Nauvoo Legion, General Orders No. 3, June 30, 1857, *ibid.*, 8/3. For counsel on other operational matters, see Young, Letters to D. H. Wells, October 11 and 17, and November 18, 1857, Brigham Young Collection.

and lay waste Forts Bridger and Supply at the earliest date that your judgment may dictate."¹¹⁷

Will Bagley, noting Young's leadership style in connection with the Mountain Meadows tragedy, concludes that it "poses an untenable paradox—that Brigham Young was aware of 'every sparrow' that fell in Utah Territory but for more than a dozen years knew nothing of the worst crime to take place during his service as territorial governor, Indian superintendent, and commander-in-chief of the militia."¹¹⁸

Aside from Brigham Young's discourse about summary execution for thieves in 1853 and his arguably overheated rhetoric on blood atonement in 1856, what exactly did he communicate about lethal force during the late summer and fall of 1857? On September 14, 1857, Young and Wells had jointly instructed William H. Dame, regimental colonel and stake president in Parowan, "Save life always if it is possible—we do not wish to shed one drop of blood if it can be avoided. This course will give us great influence abroad."¹¹⁹ Wells added a now-famous postscript to his October 4, 1857, operational orders to Major Joseph Taylor, admonishing him to "take no life."¹²⁰ From these two examples, one could conclude—as many have over the decades—that restraint was the order of the day.

Correspondent Albert G. Browne Jr., unimpressed by the phrasing of Taylor's orders once captured and publicized, wrote heatedly on November 1: "What constitutes the basis for the distinction between their present system of hostilities, and the shedding of blood, I am unable to understand. . . . If it lies in a belief that they do not become traitors till they take human life, they are greater fools than I am willing to believe."¹²¹

Young's own unpublished rhetoric during this period provides fundamental contradictions to the "restraint" policy, thereby

¹¹⁷Young, Letter to Wells, John Taylor, and George A. Smith, October 4, 1857, Brigham Young Collection.

¹¹⁸Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 366.

¹¹⁹Brigham Young and D. H. Wells, Letter to William H. Dame, September 14, 1857, quoted in Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 119–20.

¹²⁰Wells, Letter to Taylor, October 4, 1857, quoted in "The Utah Expedition," *House Executive Document No. 71*, 56–57.

¹²¹A. G. Browne Jr., Dispatch, Camp on Black's Fork, November 1, 1857, "Later from the Mormon War," *New-York Daily Tribune*, December 28,

raising the possibility that Young's and Wells's instructions to Colonel Dame and Major Taylor—written in the immediate, legally dangerous aftermath of the Mountain Meadows Massacre—were phrased to establish a record for what today is caused “plausible deniability.” For example, on multiple occasions during the late summer, Young threatened to stop restraining the local tribes, bringing transcontinental emigration to a bloody halt. On August 16, 1857, in an unpublished discourse, he said: “Now let me say if the United States send their army here and war commences, the travel must stop; your trains must not cross this continent. To accomplish this I need only say a word to the[m] for the Indians will use them up; unless I continually strive to restrain. I will say no more to the Indians, let them alone, but do as you please. And what is that? It is to use them up; and they will do it.” In the same discourse, Young also commented that, if any federal property came into Utah, “I need not tell you that . . . I mean to put my hand on it to pay myself.”¹²²

Less than a month later on September 12, 1857 (unwittingly, the day after Mountain Meadows), he wrote to Jeter Clinton, president of the LDS branch in Philadelphia:

For years I have been holding the Indians, the check rein has broken, and cousin Lemuel is at length at large; in fact he has been already collecting some of his annuities.¹²³ Day after day I am visited by their Chiefs to know if they may strike while the iron is hot. My answer depends on Mr Buchanan's policy—if he do not mete out justice to us, the war cry will resound from the Rio Colorado to the head waters of the Missouri—from the Black hills to the Sierra Nevada—travel will be stopped across the continent—the deserts of Utah become a battle ground for freedom. [I]t [is] peace and our rights—or the knife and

1857.

¹²²Brigham Young, discourse, August 16, 1857, Unpublished Discourses, LDS Church Archives.

¹²³“Lemuel” was one of the ancestors of the Lamanites, or American Indians, according to the Book of Mormon. The allusion to collecting annuities is ambiguous; in this context it could either be to what Young then understood might be Indian violence at Mountain Meadows or to his own decision in early August to authorize the tribes to raid the cattle of emigrant trains en route to California.

tomahawk—let Uncle Sam choose.¹²⁴

This is strange language indeed for a territory's sworn U.S. superintendent of Indian affairs. Young's phrasing was so provocative—especially in juxtaposition to the explosive Mountain Meadows issue—that historian Ronald W. Walker has argued that Clinton may have used this letter to blackmail President Young ten years later in connection with his involvement in an unrelated controversy.¹²⁵

Young sent a much milder version of the same threat to James W. Denver, U.S. commissioner of Indian Affairs, on the same day he wrote Clinton, and Denver replied apoplectically:

In addition to this [suborning the allegiances of Utah's tribes], you have been denouncing this government and threatening an armed resistance to the authorities sent out by the President. Indeed, unless you and your coadjutors are most grossly misrepresented, and your language misquoted, the appearance of those authorities among you is all that is necessary to prompt you to an overt act of treason. It could never have been intended, when the appropriations were made by Congress, that the money should be used in arousing the savages to war against our own citizens, or to enable a subordinate officer to carry on treasonable practices against his government.¹²⁶

The day after writing to Clinton and Denver, still without fully understanding what had already happened at Mountain Meadows, Young delivered a double-barrelled warning to visiting U.S. Army Captain Stewart Van Vliet: "If the Government Calls for volunteers in California & the people turn out to come to destroy us they will find their own buildings in flames before they get far from home & so throughout the United States. Again if they Commence the war I shall not hold the Indians Still by the fist any longer for white men [emigrants] to shoot at them but I shall let them go ahead & do as

¹²⁴Brigham Young, Letter to Jeter Clinton, Philadelphia, September 12, 1857, Brigham Young Collection.

¹²⁵Ronald W. Walker, *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 101–4.

¹²⁶Brigham Young, Letter to James W. Denver, Washington, September 12, 1857, Brigham Young Collection; James W. Denver, Washington, D.C., Letter to Brigham Young, November 11, 1857, "The Utah Expedition," *House Executive Document 71*, 186–87. In December, Denver became governor of Kansas Territory.

they please and I shall Carry the war into their own land and they will want to let out the Job before they get half through."¹²⁷

In mid-October and November, as the two military forces closed on each other and tensions rose exponentially, Young explicitly authorized lethal force against the Utah Expedition and introduced allusions to summary execution into his messages to Utah Expedition officers. On October 16, Young wrote to Colonel E. B. Alexander of the Tenth U.S. Infantry, "George Washington . . . would hang the administration as high as he did [British Major John] Andre."¹²⁸ On October 17, the day before Richard Yates's murder, he instructed Wells, Taylor, and Smith: "If they [U.S. troops] undertake to swing round into Cache Valley or the Malad, . . . pick off their guards and sentries & fire into their camps by night, and pick off officers and as many men as possible by day."¹²⁹ On November 8, Young told Wells and two of his brigadiers that, if the Utah Expedition moved west of Fort Bridger toward Salt Lake City, "policy dictated that the Officers and mountaineers with them be as rapidly disposed of as possible."¹³⁰

As a result of Brigham Young's directives, throughout October and November, as tensions over the army's intent continued to rise in northeastern Utah, communications ordering or permitting lethal force flowed between the Nauvoo Legion's senior field commanders. The gloves were off; and with this change, the legion secretly abandoned the prohibition on killing—widely touted then as well as now, but a fiction after September. It is clear to me that, during the fall, General Wells was loath to shed blood and hoped that the army's halt at Fort Bridger would forestall action. Nonetheless, he was unquestionably prepared to use lethal force beyond that

¹²⁷Brigham Young, quoted in *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898*, typescript, edited by Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–85), September 13, 1857, 5:96–97.

¹²⁸Brigham Young, Letter to Colonel E. B. Alexander, October 16, 1857, "The Utah Expedition," *House Executive Document* 71, 57.

¹²⁹Brigham Young, Letter to Wells, Taylor, and Smith, October 17, 1857, Brigham Young Collection.

¹³⁰Brigham Young, Letter to D. H. Wells, C. C. Rich, and George Grant, November 8, 1857, *ibid.*

point and authorized such action.¹³¹ The next March, Young authorized the “destruction” without trial of a party of army deserters, apostates, and emigrants leaving Utah if they stole from Mormon settlements en route.¹³²

These instructions targeted U.S. troops, accompanying civilians, and other noncombatants without legal proceedings. That none of these communications can be linked to a specific killing (and they have not been) does not mean they had no effect. They were issued by a leader claiming to be the federally sworn and paid governor of an American territory, and they were issued against other arms of the same government. On December 30, 1857, a federal grand jury near Fort Bridger indicted Brigham Young for treason; fourteen years later, another grand jury heard evidence about

¹³¹For examples of such authorizations, with oft-shifting descriptions about the crucial line of demarcation, see Young, Letter to Wells, Taylor, and Smith, October 16, 1857; Wells, Letters to Callister, October 10, 17, and 19, 1857; Wells, Letters to Warren S. Snow, November 2 and 4, 1857; Wells, Letters to Robison and Burton, November 10 and 23, 1857, Brigham Young Collection. Emblematic of earlier murky instructions on lethal force was the behavior of George A. Smith, apostle and former Nauvoo Legion colonel, who visited Pinto, the hamlet closest to Mountain Meadows, in mid-August 1857. In a discourse in Salt Lake City on September 13, 1847, Smith described encountering there an unnamed major (probably John Higbee) who was highly excited about rumors that Colonel E. V. Sumner’s expedition in Kansas, seeking to punish hostile Cheyennes, was secretly headed for the area. Smith asked “if he was not going to wait for instructions,” but the major replied: “There was no time for any instructions; and he was going to take his battalion and use them up before they could get down through the kanyons; for, said he, if they are coming here, they are coming for no good.” Smith did not, apparently reinforce the need for instructions rather than vigilante action or discuss rules of engagement (which he may not have known). To his Salt Lake audience, Smith commented wryly, “I admired his grit, but I thought he would not have the privilege of using them up, for want of an opportunity.” Smith, Discourse, *Deseret News*, September 23, 1857, 226/4 and 227/1–3. This major was very likely involved at Mountain Meadows only three weeks after his meeting with Smith.

¹³²Brigham Young, Letter to Colonel Chauncey W. West, March 12, 1858, Brigham Young Collection; see discussion in Parshall, “Pursue, Retake & Punish,” 85 note 47.

his 1857 behavior and returned an indictment for murder.¹³³

On the Mormon side—as discussed in the multiple examples presented above—there was an unhealthy, undisciplined, longstanding use of language by and in the presence of the governor and the legion's most senior commanders about lynching and other forms of summary execution as well as about theft. It was strange behavior from a religious community whose own founder-prophet had been lynched.

Should such talk be dismissed as the rough-and-tumble way of the frontier, the effort of rough-hewn leaders attempting to command the attention of even less-educated followers? Perhaps, but when militia officers—and even their wives—wore the clothes of the murdered and rode their stolen horses, as happened after the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the Yates murder, and assassination of the Aiken party, it is appropriate to scrutinize command accountability and the effectiveness of senior leaders. They followed up such talk by sanctioning, if not participating in, repeated acts of looting, thereby setting the stage for an unstudied decline in Nauvoo Legion discipline that became a self-fulfilling prescription for disaster. It was part of the tone in territorial Utah that has prompted D. Michael Quinn to argue that it was a time and place “filled with violent incidents breaking out along religious lines of division. LDS leadership did not discourage this, but actually created a culture of violence with sermons, congregational hymns, newspaper editorials, and patriarchal blessings invoking the memories of past persecutions, while urging vengeance against Mormonism's enemies and ‘blood atonement’ against the wicked.”¹³⁴

Even some of Brigham Young's closest associates had difficulty determining his wishes long-distance. For example, in February 1857 (concerning a handcart matter), Apostle John Taylor wrote bluntly from New York: “When Brs. Grant & Kimball first came, I felt & said that I would give \$500 for five minutes conversation with you. You must here excuse me Br. Young, I may be obtuse and so may those who were with me; but however plain your words might be to

¹³³Although neither indictment resulted in a trial, I see them casting a pall over this period of Brigham Young's governorship.

¹³⁴D. Michael Quinn, “LDS ‘Headquarters Culture’ and the Rest of Mormonism: Past and Present,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 34, nos. 3–4 (Fall-Winter 2001): 149.

yourself on this matter, neither I nor my associates could understand them.”¹³⁵

So what did Brigham Young mean to communicate when he sent James Haslam riding south on September 10, 1857, with a message to Isaac Haight, the Nauvoo Legion commander at Mountain Meadows, that included the crucial sentence: “The Indians we expect will do as they please.”¹³⁶ This phrase appeared mantra-like twice in Young’s August 16 discourse, his September 12 letter to Jeter Clinton, and in his September 13 parting conversation with Captain Van Vliet. Juanita Brooks commented that the letter to Haight “is so typical” and enigmatic in phrasing that it “sounds as though he [Young] might not condemn an Indian massacre.”¹³⁷

The Utah Expedition’s senior commanders showed a similar lack of military judgment in their comments. Even before the Utah Expedition marched out of Fort Leavenworth in July 1857, General William S. Harney—the brigade’s initial commander and Johnston’s predecessor—resolved, according to his biographer, L. U. Reavis, “to capture Brigham Young and the twelve apostles, and execute them in a summary manner, and winter in the Temple.” Reavis added his appraisal that such acts “would not have been . . . improbable” for the volatile Harney.¹³⁸ This talk cascaded down into the ranks along with barracks discussion about the anticipated availability of Mormon women.

Reports of such braggadocio quickly reached Utah through emigrants and the agents of the Mormon Y.X. Carrying Company. Brigham Young and other senior leaders took these lynching boasts seriously. George A. Smith also commented on the troops’ plans about “booty and beauty.” Eastbound Samuel W. Richards passed an army bivouack on the Nebraska plains and reported the soldiers’ “high glee at the idea of wintering sumptuously in Utah where, as the [Irish] Paddy said, ‘the women are as thick as blackberries,’” and gloated over Brigham Young’s discomfiture as the soldiers, “with his wives parad[ed] the streets of Great Salt Lake City. Every dirty,

¹³⁵Taylor, Letter to Young, February 24, 1857, Brigham Young Collection.

¹³⁶Young, Letter to Isaac C. Haight, September 10, 1857, *ibid*.

¹³⁷Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 63–65.

¹³⁸L. U. Reavis, *The Life and Military Services of Gen. William Selby Harney* (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand & Co., 1878), 277–79.

foul-mouthed Dutchman [German] and Irishman . . . fully expected some 'Mormon' woman would jump into his arms upon his arrival in Utah, and hail him as a heavenly messenger, sent to bring deliverance."¹³⁹

Against the background of anti-Mormon violence in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, such reports stiffened Brigham Young's resolve during August and September 1857 to keep the army out of the Salt Lake Valley.¹⁴⁰ Simultaneously, Mormon anxiety spawned a completely groundless rumor that Colonel E. V. Sumner's expedition in Kansas, seeking to punish hostile Cheyennes, was really assigned to make a surprise assault on Salt Lake City, seize Mormon leaders, and execute them.¹⁴¹ Rumors that the Utah Expedition carried already-made executioners' nooses spread throughout Utah, persisting for years.¹⁴² Asa Hawley, a Y.X. Carrying Company employee, recalled in 1912 encountering a wagon load of rope and hearing lynch talk from a federal wagon master near Fort Laramie during August 1857.¹⁴³ Brigham Young gamely wrote to Jacob Hamblin in southern Utah: "The current report is that they somewhat query whether they will hang me with or without trial. There are about 30 others whom they intend to deal with.

¹³⁹Brigham Young, Letter to Jacob Hamblin, August 4, 1857, Brigham Young Collection; George A. Smith, Discourse, September 13, 1857, *Deseret Weekly News*, September 23, 1857, 226/4 and 227/1-3; Samuel W. Richards, Liverpool, Letter to Orson Pratt, Liverpool, October 4, 1857, *Millennial Star*, October 17, 1857, 668-71.

¹⁴⁰A related issue was Mormon fears about the presence of camp followers and soldiers' attempts to seduce Mormon women. MacKinnon, "Sex, Subalterns, and Steptoe: A Civil Affairs Nightmare Impacts 1850s Mormon-Federal Relations," paper presented at the Mormon History Association annual conference, May 2006, Casper, Wyoming.

¹⁴¹Correspondence between LDS leaders throughout August 1857 is sprinkled with queries about the location and mission of Sumner's Cheyenne Expedition.

¹⁴²For folk reports on nooses, see "Federal Courts and Judges," *Deseret Weekly News*, June 17, 1863; Lester A. Hubbard, "Militant Songs of the Mormons," *Western Folklore* 18 (April 1959): 64, 125. For a second-hand account of troop banter at Camp Floyd about nooses intended for Young and the apostles, see McGavin, *U.S. Soldiers inside Utah*, 271.

¹⁴³Hawley, Autobiography.

They will then proclaim a general jubilee.”¹⁴⁴

Buchanan’s appointment of Harney—dubbed “Mad Bear” by Sioux and “Squaw Killer” by whites—to lead the Utah Expedition was a serious misjudgment. Instead of appointing an officer of demonstrated tact, maturity, and sound judgment, Buchanan selected an officer whom the army had court-martialed four times—with a civil court acquitting him of culpability on a fifth occasion when he bludgeoned a female slave to death. Buchanan’s May 1858 promotion of Harney to supersede Johnston as the campaign’s overall commander horrified the Utah Expedition’s other officers. Their lack of confidence was fully justified by Harney’s catastrophic misjudgments in the Pacific Northwest’s “Pig War” (1859) and the Missouri unrest of 1861. These imbroglios forced first Buchanan, then Lincoln to relieve him of command.¹⁴⁵

Language is far from a military commander’s only qualification, but in matters of life and death it is crucial as well as revelatory about the leader’s skill and effectiveness.¹⁴⁶ Notwithstanding James Buchanan’s first-rate formal education and superb portfolio of senior governmental experiences, his writings betray the military neophyte catapulted into an ill-fitting role.¹⁴⁷ Like Brigham Young’s instructions, Buchanan’s suffered from ambiguity and indirection at important times. Throughout the Utah War, Young feared postal interception—a practice in which he himself engaged—and felt the need to conceal many of his purposes. The phrasing of Buchanan’s messages was driven by a different motivation—a crabbed, lawyerly

¹⁴⁴Brigham Young, Letter to Jacob Hamblin, August 4, 1857, Brigham Young Collection.

¹⁴⁵George Rollie Adams, *General William S. Harney: Prince of Dragoons* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); MacKinnon, “Review Essay [Harney],” *New Mexico Historical Review* 76 (October 2001): 431–37; Wilford Hill LeCheminant, “A Crisis Averted? General Harney and the Change in Command of the Utah Expedition,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 51 (Winter 1983): 30–45.

¹⁴⁶James M. McPherson, “The Unheroic Hero,” *New York Review of Books* 46 (February 4, 1999): 16–19, discusses U. S. Grant’s clear instructions and their effectiveness.

¹⁴⁷Buchanan’s military service consisted of riding with a volunteer band of young men during the War of 1812 who attempted informally to protect Baltimore from the approaching British army.

desire to avoid political criticism by splitting hairs and changing directions. Buchanan frequently hedged mightily in his communications—most of which he wrote himself with the help of a single secretary.

The result was serious communications and decision-making shortfalls. For example, in May 1857 Buchanan, Secretary of War John B. Floyd, and the cabinet apparently decided to send an expeditionary force to Utah without fully consulting Winfield Scott, the general in chief. This astonishing omission was compounded by Scott's remarkable unilateral decision years earlier to move army headquarters from Washington to New York.¹⁴⁸ In June Buchanan created a nightmarish conflict by promising Harney and his dragoons to both Governor Robert J. Walker in Kansas and to Scott for the Utah Expedition.¹⁴⁹ At times, Buchanan and Floyd reassigned regiments to the Utah Expedition without telling Scott until after the fact.¹⁵⁰ Buchanan was the principal draftsman for the State Department's instructions to Utah's new governor, Alfred Cumming, that overlapped but differed in essential ways from those issued three weeks earlier (also drafted by Buchanan, as well as Floyd and Scott) by the War Department to Harney, charged with escorting and protecting Cumming.¹⁵¹ In these all-important Utah War orders for Harney, the administration's drafting committee included an instruction that it characterized as "a suggestion—not an order, nor even a recommendation," perhaps the least definite guidance

¹⁴⁸M. Hamlin Cannon, "Winfield Scott and the Utah Expedition," *Military Affairs* 5 (Fall 1941): 209–11, discusses and publishes Scott's prescient, but last-minute, memo of May 26, 1857, in which he argued for delaying the expedition until the spring of 1858.

¹⁴⁹For the clashes and recriminations between Walker and the administration over assigning Harney to Kansas or Utah, see Adams, *General William S. Harney*, 159–81. See also Pearl T. Ponce, "Pledges and Principles: Buchanan, Walker, and Kansas in 1857," *Kansas History* 27 (Spring-Summer 2004): 51–91. Walker resigned in the fall of 1857 over what he considered to be Buchanan's broken promises.

¹⁵⁰Scott's complaints appear in letters to Major Irvin McDowell, April 11, 1857, Scott Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and to Brevet Major General John E. Wool, September 2, 1857, Wool Papers, State Library of New York, Albany.

¹⁵¹Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict*, 97–99.

for a commander issued during the entire war.¹⁵²

As late as mid-July 1857, Buchanan's administration knew so little about conditions in Utah that an uneasy Floyd sent a confidential agent to Fort Leavenworth to ask Harney such basic questions as: "What is likely to be the reception the troops will meet in Utah? Any reliable information concerning the condition of the Mormons, their disposition &c[?]." ¹⁵³ It took the administration months to realize that, in cancelling the Y.X. Carrying Company's mail contract effective June 1, 1857, it had unwittingly severed communications with its own army in the field. It took until the spring of 1858 for the administration to respond fully to Scott's and Johnston's apoplectic demands for a replacement mail service.¹⁵⁴

Incomprehensibly, between the launch of the Utah Expedition in late May 1857 and Buchanan's first annual message to Congress on December 8, seven months later, he made no public statement about the campaign. By today's standards, this silence seems to be weak presidential communications skills. But historian David Hebert Donald argues that, in the traditional nineteenth-century view, "the President, once elected, had no direct dealings with the public. His job was to administer the government and to report his activities and wishes to the Congress. Presidents rarely left the capital city, except for brief vacations; they almost never made public addresses; and they maintained, in theory, a sublime indifference to public opinion and political pressures."¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, when Buchanan finally did communicate, near-contiguous paragraphs of his December message referred to Mormon "rebellion" and "insurrection," then backtracked

¹⁵²Lieutenant Colonel George W. Lay, New York, Letter to Harney, Fort Leavenworth, June 29, 1857, "The Utah Expedition," *House Executive Document 71*, 7-9.

¹⁵³Secretary of War John B. Floyd, Letter to Major Ben McCulloch, July 8, 1857, Records of the Secretary of War, Letters Sent (RG107), National Archives.

¹⁵⁴For an army officer's biting but anonymous commentary on this self-inflicted handicap to effective communications with the Utah Expedition, see Unattributed [Captain Randolph B. Marcy], Letter of August 28, 1857 ("en route"), "The Utah Expedition," *New York Herald*, October 22, 1857, 8/1-2.

¹⁵⁵David Hebert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster,

by asserting that “unless he [Brigham Young] should retrace his steps the Territory of Utah will be in a state of open rebellion.”¹⁵⁶ Congressmen could well be pardoned for being confused, if not cynical, about whether Utah was, in fact, in rebellion. Buchanan’s congressional opponents began calls for relevant documents.

If Brigham Young believed that he could have averted the Mountain Meadows Massacre by using a telegraph line that did not yet exist, Buchanan implied that a few hours’ meeting with Young could have prevented the whole conflict.¹⁵⁷ Historian Richard D. Poll agreed that “a transcontinental telegraph or railroad” would have obviated the expedition “because the facts,” which could have been thus easily determined, “did not support the alarms of either party.”¹⁵⁸ I am less optimistic, given the grossly different temperaments, worldviews, and communication styles of the two leaders. These what-if conjectures were the musings of leaders retrospectively rueful about the impact of their decisions and wholly unrealistic about their ability to change their deep-seated decision-making and communications behavior.¹⁵⁹

1995), 440. Nonetheless, when there was an issue of great importance to Buchanan, he found a way to take his case to the public. In contrast to his long silence over Utah, he issued a public letter on August 15, 1857, to leading citizens in New Haven, Connecticut, rebutting their criticism of his Kansas policy.

¹⁵⁶See Buchanan’s “First Annual Message to Congress,” December 8, 1857, in *The Works of James Buchanan Comprising His Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence*, edited by John Bassett Moore, 12 vols. (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), 10:153–54.

¹⁵⁷John M. Bernhisel, untitled account of conversations with James Buchanan, June 1859, Brigham Young Collection.

¹⁵⁸Hansen and Poll, “Buchanan’s Blunder,” 122–23; Poll, “The Utah War,” in *Utah History Encyclopedia*, edited by Allan Kent Powell (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 607.

¹⁵⁹For perspective on the reluctance of senior army commanders to use the available telegraph in Kansas, see Tony R. Mullis, “The Dispersal of the Topeka Legislature: A Look at Command and Control (C-2) during Bleeding Kansas,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 27 (Spring-Summer 2004): 62–75. During the Franco-Prussian War (1870), American diplomats in Paris also failed to make optimal use of the trans-Atlantic telegraph. David Paul Nickles, “Telegraph Diplomats: The United

CONCLUSIONS

Although these episodes are hardly an exhaustive account of Utah War violence, through them I hope to have made and documented several points. First, these relatively small-scale murders and woundings of disarmed military prisoners and noncombatants—slightly more than a dozen—together with the Mountain Meadows Massacre, dissolve the myth of the war as an expensive but bloodless affair. The fact is that the Utah War produced about the same number of total fatalities—approximately 150—as the contemporaneous carnage in “bleeding Kansas.”¹⁶⁰ Second, I also challenge the argument that wartime killings on the Mormon side were essentially confined to Mountain Meadows, inflicted by panicky locals who were freelancing more than three hundred miles from cooler, disengaged senior leaders in Salt Lake City. And third, the federal side of the conflict is not free from its own possible culpability for violence, but on a different scale and in a different way than was the case with the Mormon side.

The first American military doctrine for dealing with atrocities began with the U.S. Army’s General Order No. 100 during the Civil War. Presidents Buchanan and Young and Generals Wells and Johnston should not be judged by what is today the Law of Land Warfare, although common sense does not absolve them of accountability.¹⁶¹ During the 1850s neither West Point nor the army in the field taught command responsibility except for leadership by example in each regiment. Often the example provided by senior officers was a negative one. By the time of the Utah War, all of the U.S. Army’s general officers, including Winfield Scott, had been court-martialed or relieved of command at least once, as had virtually all of the army’s line colonels. Harney was perhaps an extreme case of a petulant, self-indulgent, even abusive command

States’ Relations with France in 1848 and 1870,” *Technology and Culture* 40 (January 1999): 1–25.

¹⁶⁰Watts, “How Bloody Was Bleeding Kansas?” *Kansas History*, 123.

¹⁶¹Department of the Army, *Field Manual FM 27-10: The Law of Land Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Army, July 1956), 178–79. I thank Colonel Patrick Finnegan, U.S. Army, professor and head, Military Law Department, U.S. Military Academy, for calling this source to my attention as well as for briefing me on the history and command implications of dealing with military atrocities.

style, but he was not wholly atypical.

Reflecting the complex culture which it served, the Nauvoo Legion functioned even more idiosyncratically than did the U.S. Army. None of its senior leaders had professional army or even extensive militia experience. Addresses to troops focused more on religious doctrines than on military matters or the proper treatment of prisoners and civilians.¹⁶²

Buchanan and Young were accomplished but militarily inexperienced, flawed, and seriously ill leaders when this long-festered Mormon-federal crisis came to a head during the spring of 1857. Their ineffective response was to mobilize large groups of armed men whose highly motivated commanders received ambiguous, brutal, and sometimes conflicting instructions as well as leadership by example that enabled, if not encouraged, violence. In Brigham Young's case, the language of his discourses, conversations, and letters set a fateful tone for the territory and militia he led; he expected subordinates like Aaron Johnson, both a legion brigadier and bishop, to interpret the violent message of even his "crooked finger."¹⁶³ Why Scott tried twice to replace Johnston in mid-campaign with seriously flawed successor-leaders is a tantalizing mystery about

¹⁶²For Taylor's and Wells's gentle but significant criticism of a few of the legion's colonels, see D. H. Wells, Echo Canyon, Letter to Albert Carrington, Salt Lake City, October 7, 1857, Albert Carrington Collection, Marriott Library, University of Utah; John Taylor, February 20, 1884, *Journal of Discourses*, 26:355–56. Harney expressed similar concerns about the Utah Expedition's commanders. Harney, Letter to John B. Floyd, August 8, 1857, Records of Adjutant General's Office, Letters Received (RG95), National Archives.

¹⁶³Historian Ronald W. Walker and I probably disagree on Brigham Young's accountability for violence in Utah, but I support his conclusion, among others, that "in August and September 1857, Brigham Young's fear of a possible war with Washington, his desire for an Indian alliance, and his outspoken words about emigrant misconduct helped to create a climate of violence." Walker, "Experiences and Lessons along the Way: My Personal and Professional Encounter with the Mountain Meadows Massacre," Paper presented at the Mormon History Association annual conference, May 2006, Casper, Wyoming, photocopy of draft in my possession.

command effectiveness awaiting further research.¹⁶⁴ The darkness of Mountain Meadows that has historically shadowed southern Utah had its counterpart elsewhere in Utah Territory during the same period. And so the violence came but remains poorly understood today.

¹⁶⁴For public debate over Johnston's effectiveness, see editorials, *Deseret Weekly News*, October 13, 1858, 138/1-4; (*St. Louis*) *Democrat*, August 24, 1858; (*St. Louis*) *Republican*, November 8, 1858; A. S. Johnston, Letter to N. J. Eaton, October 11, 1858, quoted in William Preston Johnston, *Life of General Albert Sidney Johnston* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1878), 232-33. For Scott's multiple attempts to supersede Johnston, see Scott, Telegram to Brevet Major General John E. Wool, January 13, 1858, Records of the Headquarters of the Army, Letters Sent (RG108), National Archives; LeCheminant, "A Crisis Averted?", 30-45.