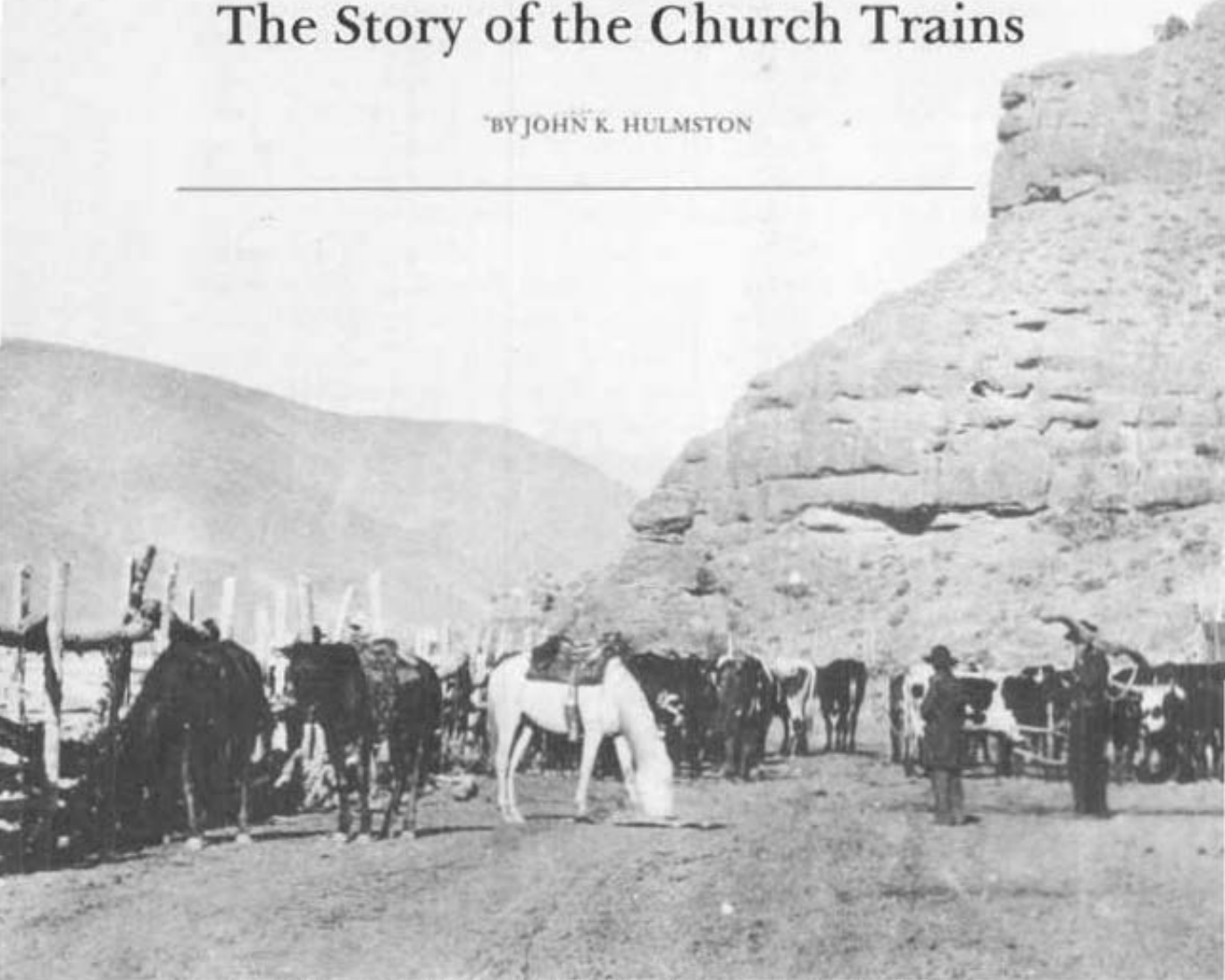


# Mormon Immigration in the 1860s: The Story of the Church Trains

BY JOHN K. HULMSTON

---



*Immigrant wagons and stock in Echo Canyon, ca. 1866, en route to Salt Lake City, USHS collections.*

**I**N 1860, THIRTEEN YEARS AFTER THE FIRST MORMON immigrant company rolled into the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young and his counselors debated both the reliability and efficiency of using handcarts to transport new converts from eastern points to Utah. Although handcarts were modestly successful, a greater effort was needed to increase the

Mr. Hulmston is an archivist with the Utah Division of Archives and Records Service.



number of immigrants making the pilgrimage to the new gathering place of the Saints. As a result, in the fall of 1860 the church announced a new method of travel for converts would commence the following spring. In lieu of handcarts, church trains comprised of ox-driven wagons would be sent from Salt Lake City to the Missouri River to pick up waiting converts and then return to the valley in the same season. Although many were skeptical in the beginning, Young finally convinced his counselors to support the new church train system.

During the transitional period between using handcarts and church trains, two significant events solidified church support for the church trains. In 1859 and again in 1860 two prominent Mormons—Feramorz Little and Joseph W. Young—made successful freighting journeys to and from the Missouri River in one season. Once thought to be impossible, Little and Young's accomplishments provided the linchpin in Brigham Young's final argument for implementing the new immigration system. Their prudent selection and care of draft animals enabled Little and Young to prove beyond doubt that single-season trips to the Missouri River and back were feasible and provided the break-

through necessary for the ultimate success of the church trains. Using the same methods, thousands of new converts were able to immigrate to Utah at an affordable cost to the church.

Three other factors also favored the new idea. The Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company accounts were improving by the early 1860s; there was a surfeit of oxen in the territory; and it had become obvious to church authorities that a better method of immigration was needed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>LeRoy Hafen, "Handcarts to Utah, 1856-1860," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 24 (1956): 316-17; *Journal History*, February 28, 1861, 1, LDS Church Library-Archives, Salt Lake City.

Once the decision to shift to church trains was made, the task of organization began. During a series of meetings in the winter of 1860-61 Brigham Young and bishops representing every ward laid the foundation for the new system; each ward in the territory was to furnish a specific number of men and wagons, flour, and other provisions. Because the economic resources of each ward varied considerably, the leadership agreed with Presiding Bishop Edward Hunter's suggestion that each ward supply the system with provisions based on its particular economic capabilities.<sup>2</sup> This pattern was followed the six seasons church trains were sent east to gather converts.

At the beginning of each immigration season captains supervised the formation of church train companies preparing to depart from Salt Lake City. They oversaw the arrangement and loading of each team assigned to their outfits. Following a thorough inspection of every wagon the captain would signal his teamsters to roll out toward the Missouri River.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, there was a need to coordinate the work of outfitting stations in Salt Lake City with those located on the Missouri River. Prior to each season the church sent agents to the Missouri to manage the eastern end of the system. These agents housed and fed the converts until they could be assigned to incoming church train outfits. The agents also purchased wagons, oxen, and provisions for independent Mormon immigrants.<sup>4</sup>

The efficient management of the eastern terminals by outstanding agents such as Joseph W. Young, Feramorz Little, Nathaniel Jones, Jacob Gates, and Thomas Taylor was an important factor in making the church trains successful in their six years of operation. During that time they assigned more than 20,000 converts to church train companies.

Brigham Young outlined the plan in specific terms on February 18, 1861. Church members quickly responded to his call for donations of cattle, flour, bacon, wagons, whips, clothing, and other provisions. Some gave entire wardrobes, while the less fortunate donated as little as a single pair of boots. An interesting variety of goods poured into Salt Lake City from outlying stakes and wards. Rather than donating a wagon, oxen, or flour, Arthur Jones gave gallon kegs of "Moon's very

<sup>2</sup>Edward Hunter, Presiding Bishopric: Minutes of Bishops Meetings, 1851-1884 (hereinafter called Minutes), January 17, 1861, LDS Church Library-Archives.

<sup>3</sup>Journal History, February 28, 1861; and *Deseret News*, January 1, 1881, B7.

<sup>4</sup>Jacob Gates, Reminiscences and Diaries, 1836-1861, March 9, 1861, LDS Church Library-Archives.

best valley tan whiskey" in order to "ward off the biting cold after fording the many streams along the way." Cache Valley resident O. J. Beach donated one oxen, and his neighbor J. Goodwin furnished a Chicago wagon complete with cover. J. P. Wright stated that he did not have any oxen to donate but that he "would do all he could." The important thing to note is not the quantity of goods provided but the intense involvement of almost every church member. This extensive participation not only provided supplies but also generated a genuine feeling of social cohesion among Mormons throughout the Great Basin.<sup>5</sup>

Reaction to the new system among the bishops was mixed. President Young expressed his full endorsement and urged the bishops to support it. In contrast, Leonard W. Hardy, a counselor in the church's presiding bishopric, argued that to send teams east in the great numbers suggested by the president would require a tremendous exertion and place a heavy burden on many of the poor settlements in the territory. His comments were followed by a spirited exchange of views with most bishops supporting the plan.

The bishops met frequently in the months prior to each immigration season to assess collectively each ward's quota of supplies, but the selection of men to actually run the system on the trail was delegated to individual ward bishops.<sup>6</sup> Captains came from the highest ranks of Mormon society.

Each of the thirty-three captains who led church train companies held a position in the high priesthood. As L. W. Hardy noted, it was essential that captains be experienced and capable leaders because of the great responsibilities they would assume. An excellent example of the high caliber of men chosen is John Riggs Murdock. This Millard County resident was one of the most able company commanders to cross the mountains and plains. A veteran teamster with years of experience, Murdock captained five church train companies both to and from the Missouri River and established one of the best reputations as a competent leader. As he himself boasted, "I think I am safe in saying that I brought more emigrants to Utah than did any other man. I was also successful with my teams and lost but very few."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900*, reprint ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1958), p. 208.

<sup>6</sup>Hunter, Minutes, January 17, 31, and February 14, 1861, 325-29.

<sup>7</sup>Joseph W. Tanner, *A Biographical Sketch of John Riggs Murdock* (Salt Lake City: *Deseret News*, 1909), pp. 136-52.

In addition to the captain, who was in complete command, the staff of a typical church train company consisted of an assistant captain, at least one teamster per wagon, a captain of the night guard, a commissary chief, a chaplain, a clerk, and several night guards. A company of fifty wagons was staffed by approximately fifty-five men.

A key member of the church train staff, a teamster was usually young, single, and more often than not had lived in the valley less than five years. But he was an expert cattleman who had the important responsibility of caring for his yoke of oxen to ensure their good health for the arduous journey. His other responsibilities included general maintenance duties such as greasing axles and inspecting wheels for signs of stress each night before retiring. In the early morning hours teamsters could be seen picking their own yoke of cattle from among the many in the corral. The corral was the special preserve of the teamster and he performed most of his maintenance chores within its circle.<sup>8</sup>

Before they could be yoked and hitched the cattle had to be driven into the corral, and this duty fell to the four to six night herders assigned to each company. In addition, they were responsible for guarding the cattle at night and staying alert for any possible outside threat. After working all night the herders would try to sleep in the loaded wagons. Not surprisingly, one night herder complained that during his journey across the plains he "slept but very little night or day for six weeks."<sup>9</sup>

Each company also had a commissary officer responsible for its supply of food. Usually six people formed a mess, and the commissary chief parceled out food to these groups. John Lingren, the commissary chief in John F. Sanders's 1863 company, disbursed flour, bacon, and soda twice a week to each group. Proper management of the food supply was critical to the success of each church train company.<sup>10</sup>

Once the organization of personnel took place, the problem of compensation had to be addressed. The bishops discussed at length not only how the captains, teamsters, and others would be paid but also how much should be given to those who furnished teams and other provisions to the system. Following vigorous debate, Bishop John Woolley offered a solution that garnered wide support. Under this uniform compensation plan the bishops agreed to pay captains one

<sup>8</sup>William Lindsay, *Autobiography*, p. 276, LDS Church Library-Archives; Tanner, *Biographical Sketch of John R. Murdock*, p. 140.

<sup>9</sup>Manuscript History of Brigham Young, February 28, 1861, LDS Church Library-Archives; Lindsay, *Autobiography*, p. 276.

<sup>10</sup>John Lingren, "Autobiography of John Lingren," *Treasures of Pioneer History*, ed. Kate B. Carter, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1952-57), 1:238-39.



dollar per day plus rations; teamsters, herders, and others would receive ten dollars for each trip east and back. It is important to note here that very little money actually changed hands. Instead, payment was rendered through credits to individual labor tithing accounts.<sup>11</sup>

Outfitting the trains came next. Although both horses and mules were utilized on occasion, most of the Mormon companies were outfitted with oxen because they were less expensive and by 1861 were becoming numerous in Utah. In addition, they needed less care than horses or mules and could graze on a wider variety of grasses and shrubs. They were also less dependent upon grain supplements. Consequently, the bishops agreed to make oxen the primary draft animals of the church trains.<sup>12</sup>

In keeping with Brigham Young's epistle of February 28, 1861, each wagon was to contain one tar can or keg, at least one gallon of wagon grease, and two whip lashes with buckskin—one to splice, the other to be used as a cracker. Each teamster was responsible for provisioning his wagon. For example, each was to secure 250 pounds of flour, 40 pounds of both bacon and dried beef, 10 pounds of sugar, 4 pounds each of coffee and yeast cake, 1 pound of tea, 4 quarts of beans, 1 bar of soap, and as much butter as possible. In addition, each wagon carried some pickles, 1 two-gallon water container, 1 gallon of vinegar, and, most important, a generous supply of salt. For personal comfort each teamster took a buffalo robe, 2 wool blankets, 2 pairs of boots or shoes, 5 pairs of socks, 3 sets of pants, 6 shirts, 3 overshirts, a heavy coat, a sewing kit for mending clothes and wagon covers, and finally, 1 good weapon, preferably a double-barreled shotgun, with an abundant amount of powder balls and shot.<sup>13</sup>

Following a final inspection church train companies rendezvoused at the mouth of Parley's Canyon in preparation for the overland journey to the Missouri River. As long as the departure points for immigrating Mormons were located on the Missouri River (1861-66), church train captains left Salt Lake City in April when the feed for livestock was plentiful.

The centralized organization of the church trains formulated by the first presidency, the presiding bishopric, and ward bishops from throughout the territory facilitated implementation and surely enabled

<sup>11</sup>Hunter, *Minutes*, January 31, 1861, 326-30; February 14, 1861, 345.

<sup>12</sup>Manuscript History of Brigham Young, February 28, 1861, 345.

<sup>13</sup>Journal History, February 28, 1861, 3-4.

the church to manage the wagon train system more economically and expeditiously. When the first phase, organizing the Salt Lake Valley end, was complete the church tackled the second phase, organization at the eastern end of the trail. Characteristically, the church leadership commenced this task immediately and with a sense of destiny, of fulfilling their duty to build up the "kingdom of God on earth."

The outfitting towns on the banks of the Missouri River and at selected sites along the Mormon Trail were crucial to the church train system. Since 1847 the Mormons had used several small communities as outfitting points. During the 1860s they set up facilities at five successive locations—Florence, Wyoming, and North Platte in Nebraska Territory and Laramie and Benton in Wyoming Territory. Florence served as the departure point for the first three years of church train immigration. In 1860 this small town boasted only twelve permanent structures, but new buildings were erected constantly so that by 1861 a hotel, sawmill, and supply store were all in operation. Then, in April 1864 Brigham Young announced that the church was abandoning Florence in favor of a new location forty miles to the south. So, Wyoming, Nebraska Territory, became the focal point for Mormons on their way to Utah during 1864–66. In part, the move came from a desire by the church to find a more isolated outpost away from the corrupting influences of a growing gentile population. Equally important, Wyoming's location on the western side of the Missouri River eliminated the difficulty of fording the giant waterway with the ox trains. Moreover, the overland journey to Utah, plus the distance river steamers had to travel from St. Joseph, Missouri, was reduced by approximately ten miles.<sup>14</sup>

For three years following the Civil War, Mormon departure centers followed the path of the Union Pacific Railroad as it was built westward. By 1866 workers had extended it into the heart of Nebraska Territory to North Platte. In the final year of the church trains (1868) Mormons utilized two departure points. The railroad builders, moving swiftly across the broad, level plains of southern Wyoming Territory, reached the young city of Laramie by the spring of 1868. The Mormons organized wagon trains here for three months.<sup>15</sup> Pulling up stakes in Laramie, the Mormons next moved their terminal even closer to the Salt Lake Valley, and for the remaining nine months of 1868 the railroad

<sup>14</sup>Andrew Jenson, "Latter-day Saints Emigration from Wyoming, Nebraska," *Nebraska History Magazine* 17 (April-June 1936): 113.

<sup>15</sup>John Hanson Beadle, *The Undeveloped West; or, Five Years in the Territories . . .* (Philadelphia, 1873), p. 87.

town of Benton City, Wyoming Territory, served as the departure point for Utah-bound immigrants. Located 125 miles west of Laramie, Benton City proved to be the last outfitting post employed by the church. In 1869 the Union Pacific Railroad linked up with the Central Pacific; from that day forward immigrants traveled west by rail.

With the completion of the organizational apparatus of the church train system, the leadership moved quickly to form companies for the journey to and from the Missouri River. As with most untested programs, however, unforeseen problems occurred as the nascent system became fully operational. For the first few seasons the church train system was modified to adapt to changing circumstances.

The most obvious event during the era of church train service was the American Civil War. Although Utah Territory had few official responsibilities during the conflict, the war did have a direct effect on immigration from the Missouri River. Since the Union Army had concentrated most of its resources toward the suppression of the rebelling southern states, Indian depredations increased along the immigrant routes to the West. In response, Abraham Lincoln in the spring of 1862 called on Brigham Young to raise a company of mounted men to guard the overland mail route.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the difficulties created by the Civil War, the church faced manpower shortages. This problem was solved by sending missionaries with church train companies on the first leg of their journey to permanent mission stations in the eastern states and Europe. These missionaries served as teamsters, night herders, or commissary chiefs for many of the trains heading east to the Missouri River. Returning missionaries fulfilled similar duties for westbound wagon trains. There is no evidence that women served in any of the aforementioned categories; however, when called upon they did drive teams and wagons to the Salt Lake Valley in addition to their other duties. In contrast, immigrant males (regardless of experience) performed all trail duties except captain.

Cooperation and instruction from seasoned veterans of the trail helped to facilitate the transition to trail life for new Americans.<sup>17</sup> To further reduce the possibility of conflict and to promote both discipline and conformity while on the trail, a system of trail procedures developed over the years was incorporated by church train com-

<sup>16</sup>See for example Edward W. Tullidge, *The History of Salt Lake City and Its Founders* (Salt Lake City, 1886), pp. 250-54.

<sup>17</sup>Kate B. Carter, ed., *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958-77), 5:33.



manders. Immigrants in 1861 adhered to at least twenty different rules adopted into the daily routine of the companies.

Once on the trail each company established a daily routine that it maintained for the entire journey. Church trains averaged from fifteen to twenty-five miles per day and took evenly spaced breaks for the care and feeding of both humans and livestock. This mileage was a significant improvement over both the pioneer expedition of 1847 and the handcart method of the 1850s. The average daily progress of the former was just over nine miles per day, and the latter ranged from ten to fourteen miles per day. Church trains bound for the Missouri River from the Salt Lake Valley initially required an average of four to six weeks to complete the journey. In contrast, fully loaded immigrant trains averaged ten to twelve weeks on the return trip.<sup>18</sup>

Since there was a constant need to repair broken axles and disabled wagons and to care for the animals, leaders set aside specific times for these duties during the day. In the morning companies frequently halted after advancing only two to three miles in order to water and rest the cattle. At noon church trains paused for at least two hours so that livestock could be unyoked and permitted to graze. This was followed in the afternoon by two additional breaks—a one-hour delay in the midafternoon and a two-hour hiatus in the late afternoon. By the time the immigrant trains had completed their final break scouts previously sent out to locate a suitable night camp had returned, and the company traveled the remaining distance to the designated rest area. Close to dusk the travelers kept busy arranging night guard assignments, attending to cooking chores, gathering wood, and preparing for the next day's journey. Shortly after the evening meal a horn sounded, indicating it was time to retire for the night.

The first church train company to set out from Salt Lake City was commanded by David H. Cannon. Leaving the Great Basin on April 23, 1861, Cannon reached Florence, Nebraska Territory, in less than five weeks. The initial company of 225 immigrants departed from Florence on May 29 with 57 wagons. Cannon estimated they would arrive in the valley in mid-August. Following him in succession were the companies led by Ira Eldredge, Joseph Horne, John R. Murdock, and, finally, Joseph W. Young.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup>See Philip A. M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of Their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), pp. 51-53; Andrew Jensen, *Church Chronology* (Salt Lake City, 1914), pp. 65-83.

<sup>19</sup>Brigham Young, *History of Brigham Young, 1847-1867* (Berkeley, Calif.: MassCali Associates, 1964), p. 311; *Millennial Star* 24 (1862): 173.



*Mormon immigrants on the plains, 1866, were photographed by Charles R. Savage. USHS collections.*

Despite the fear generated by the Civil War, the possibility of Indian hostilities, and the general apprehension of church leaders anxious to see their new immigration system succeed, the first year's totals surpassed even their most enthusiastic expectations. The five church train companies with 200 wagons and 2,200 oxen brought 2,556 Saints into the Salt Lake Valley in 1861. In addition, the trains had carried 150,000 pounds of flour east and returned with essential goods.

Brigham Young expressed his elation at the success of the first year's venture in a letter to the British Mission in late September 1861. He noted that the cattle sent east from Utah fared much better, had fewer deaths, and in general looked better than the animals previously purchased from eastern suppliers. In addition, he related that the five captains and their companies were pleased with each other and got along harmoniously. More significant, Young stated that 1861 had been the best season to date for gathering converts to Utah. The gamble had paid off. Church trains became the chief method of transporting migrating Mormons to the Salt Lake Valley until the completion of the transcontinental railroad at Promontory, Utah Territory, in 1869.

Bolstered by the notable success of the first year, church authorities felt extremely optimistic about the 1862 season. They estimated that nearly 5,000 Saints—almost double the 1861 figure—could be gathered in 1862. With so many European Saints coming to Utah church officials

worried about the possible negative impact such a large migration would have on the overseas missions. But this was clearly a minor concern as evidenced by the church's steady encouragement of European Mormons to immigrate to Utah.<sup>20</sup>

The men called to serve as company captains for 1862 included Homer Duncan; John R. Murdock, who was making his second trip; Joseph Horne, making his second and last trek to the Missouri River as a commander; Ansel P. Harmon; Henry W. Miller; William H. Dame; and Horton D. Haight, who was to be second only to Murdock in the number of church trains he would take east.

The excessive optimism that launched the 1862 immigration season rose ever higher with the success of the first church train company that entered the valley on September 24. Homer Duncan had piloted a company of 500 converts across the plains and mountains in the remarkable time of sixty-five days. On the negative side, excessive and persistent rain plagued immigrant trains during the 1862 season. Due to an unusually wet winter and spring nearly every river and stream along the trail had risen above flood stage, making fording difficult at best and causing lengthy delays. The rivers and streams in the Rocky Mountains, particularly the Wasatch range, were no exception. Duncan's train had been forced to delay its departure from the Salt Lake Valley for two days while the steep canyon road dried sufficiently to permit travel. Teamster Frank Bradshaw complained that his oxen had "performed their part well, (even though) one-third of the way was as much by water as by land." Indeed, the wet weather affected every church train company that left Salt Lake City during 1862 by delaying departure times and extending the length of time trains were out on the trail by as much as fourteen days.<sup>21</sup>

The unusually wet weather had positive attributes, however, the most important being a proliferation of wild plants and berries along the trail—a welcome supplement to the immigrant diet of bread products, bacon, dried peaches and apples, and brown sugar. Immigrants discovered that wild currants and buffalo berries were abundant in 1862. They made pies and puddings from wild berries and took advantage of the copious prickly pear cacti by stripping the needles and skin and eating it like fruit. It should be noted here that teamsters often supplemented the traveler's diet with fresh buffalo and antelope

<sup>20</sup>*Millennial Star* 23 (1861): 566.

<sup>21</sup>*Journal History*, September 24, 1862, 5-6; *Millennial Star* 24 (1862): 173.

meat which, together with extra domestic cattle transported by most companies, generally provided the immigrants with a reasonably well-balanced diet. This was a significant achievement in itself, for one of the most difficult obstacles church leaders had faced in formulating the new system was the enormous logistical problem of supplying thousands of immigrants with food at the right time and place.<sup>22</sup>

The optimism expressed by church leaders at the start of the 1862 season was not entirely misplaced. Indeed, the year's immigration totals were significantly higher than the previous year. The church trains assisted close to 3,000 Saints from Europe and the United States in 1862 and employed 2,880 oxen and 262 wagons. The seven companies carried 143,315 pounds of flour. Except for the tonnage in flour, the church trains were larger in every other category compared with the 1861 season. Church leaders looked to the 1863 season with even greater expectations.

As the new immigration season approached, John R. Murdock, John F. Sanders, William B. Preston, Peter Nebeker, Daniel D. McArthur, Horton D. Haight, John W. Woolley, Thomas E. Ricks, Rosel Hyde, and Samuel D. White were chosen to lead companies. They made their way to the Missouri River amid persistent rumors of hostile Indian activity. Feramorz Little, immigration agent in Florence, warned teamster John Young that the Sioux were on a war footing and that captains and teamsters should take extra precautions in protecting their livestock and provisions. Little guaranteed that four additional horsemen from Utah would be attached to the company for use as night guards and scouts; however, as the church train pressed closer to the Sioux hunting grounds, the guards Little had promised failed to appear. Still, Murdock traveled cautiously forward, passing the large bend in the Platte River twenty-five miles west of Ash Hollow. While at the Big Bend campsite, a squad of Union soldiers approached with the warning that "the devil was let loose"—meaning that Sitting Bull was again warring against the white man. In spite of this alarming information, Murdock continued on, finally arriving in Salt Lake City on August 29 where he reported with great relief that he had not experienced any form of harassment from the Sioux.

The second church train company, piloted by John F. Sanders, had no trouble with Indians but experienced problems with cattle. Starting from Florence with 398 oxen, 5 horses, and 55 wagons, the captain

<sup>22</sup>Caroline E. W. West Larabee, "Autobiography, 1850s and 1860s," *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 12: 198-99.

reported that his animals had not weathered the journey very well and were generally in poor condition by the time they reached the Salt Lake Valley on September 5, 1863. The poor condition of the oxen was attributed to the inexperience of the immigrants, most of whom were Scandinavian, who drove them too harshly.<sup>23</sup>

As the last three companies rolled into the valley Brigham Young and his counselors had genuine reason for jubilation. The people in Utah had sacrificed a great deal during the first three years that church trains traveled to and from the Missouri River. In a community with a primarily agricultural economic base, the constant need for manpower to run the immigration system created hardships for those whose husbands, fathers, and brothers were away for long periods of time. But the numbers justified Young's elation. The totals for 1863 showed an increase in every category over 1862. Of the 3,646 converts who had been assisted to the Great Basin, 2,117 were from the British Isles, 1,428 were natives of Scandinavian countries, and 83 claimed Germany, France, Switzerland, Poland, or Italy as their native countries.<sup>24</sup>

The final phase of church train immigration spanned the five-year period beginning in 1864 and ending in late 1868. Although the church was unable to outfit companies in 1865 and 1867 because of the Black Hawk War in Utah, nevertheless, during the last three years church trains operated (1864, 1866, 1868), the number of immigrants gathered to Utah nearly equaled the success experienced during the first three years of the system.<sup>25</sup>

In 1864, the last full year of the Civil War, six church trains left Salt Lake City for Wyoming, Nebraska Territory. Captains were John R. Murdock, William Preston, Joseph S. Rawlins, William S. Warren, Issac Canfield, and William Hyde. These capable leaders helped to gather Mormons from the United Kingdom, continental Europe, Russia, and the United States. Combined, the six companies used 1,717 oxen, 58 horses, 170 wagons, and 28 mules. An estimated 150,000 pounds of flour were hauled to storage points along the trail, such as Ash Hollow, and to the outfitting terminal at Wyoming.

While some companies experienced little or no hostility from warring Indians, Sioux activity continued to increase in both violence and number of incidents during the last two years of the Civil War.

<sup>23</sup>John Ray Young, "Autobiography, 1863," *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 7: 28-29.

<sup>24</sup>*Millennial Star*, 25 (1863): 640; James A. Little, *Biographical Sketch of Feramorz Little* (Salt Lake City, 1890) p. 66; Jenson, *Church Chronology*, p. 70.

<sup>25</sup>Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, p. 208; Jenson, *Church Chronology*, pp. 65-70.



Antagonism toward the white man from Cheyenne and Sioux Indians escalated throughout the decade of the 1860s as the overland trails became flooded with immigrants rushing into the western frontier.

In spite of Indian depredations in the Powder River region, disease, and foul weather, church authorities considered 1864 successful. Not as many Saints immigrated in 1864 as in the previous year, but the cumulative total of converts gathered and goods donated still amounted to impressive numbers.

At the beginning of 1865 British Saints were informed that no church trains would operate that year. The church said it needed a year-long hiatus for rebuilding stock herds vastly depleted during the four previous immigration seasons. While this reasoning certainly had validity, the church failed to include in its official statement the negative impact of the Civil War and the initiation of Indian hostilities in the central and southern sections of Utah Territory. As to the former, it had become even more difficult for the church's New York immigration agent to secure suitable landing points along the East Coast, but authorities thought that the problem would ease with the impending defeat of the Confederate Army. More significant was the outbreak of the Black Hawk War in Utah in April 1865. A comprehensive study of this conflict is inappropriate here, but suffice it to say that during the period of hostilities, the settlers in this region suffered enormously—in terms of expenditures, manpower, and the loss of livestock. Indeed, the loss of cattle and the need for manpower in the territory were the direct causes of the church's inability to send trains east in 1865 and 1867.<sup>26</sup>

Indian wars notwithstanding, the church leadership felt in 1866 that they could not delay the resumption of the church train immigration for another year. Consequently, Brigham Young announced that ten companies would be sent to the outfitting town of Wyoming to assist immigrants to Utah. The call for 515 men, 3,042 oxen, 89 horses, 134 mules, and 397 wagons, plus an estimated 250,000 pounds of flour, seems incredible considering the territory was engaged in a costly Indian war.

Called as company leaders in 1866 were Thomas E. Ricks, Samuel D. White, William H. Chipman, John D. Holladay, Peter Nebeker, Daniel Thompson, Joseph S. Rawlins, Andrew H. Scott, Horton D. Haight, and Abner Lowry. These ten brought a total of 3,335 Saints to the valley, second only to the 1863 high of 3,697 converts.

<sup>26</sup>Tullidge, *History of Salt Lake City*, p. 364.

By 1866 church trains were making the trip east and back on the average of 120 days, leaving the Salt Lake Valley in late April, they arrived in Wyoming by late June or early July. After organizing at the outfitting station, captains returned to the Great Basin as quickly as possible. This trip usually took experienced captains from 60 to 65 days. The time steadily diminished as the end of the Civil War freed the Union Pacific Railroad to extend its track west, bringing the outfitting posts closer to Utah. Evidence of the reduction of time spent on the trail came from the first church train of the 1866 season. On July 6 Thomas Ricks's company of 251 Saints departed from Wyoming with 46 wagons pulled by 194 oxen. It arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on September 4—60 days later.<sup>27</sup>

The 1866 immigration season ended on a tragic note when Captain Abner Lowry's company was ravaged by cholera. Actually, the cholera outbreak had first appeared on the immigrant ship *Cavour* while it was still on the Atlantic Ocean. By the time the group reached the outfitting station at Wyoming in early August it was too late in the season to allow the weakened Saints the recuperative period they required. The catastrophic result was that seventy-one converts (mostly Scandinavian) died before reaching the piedmont of the Rocky Mountains.

In spite of the devastating toll to the Lowry company the 1866 immigration season can be viewed as successful. More Saints crossed the plains and mountains than in any previous season except 1863. The strenuous effort put forth by both the leaders and members of the church resulted in the gathering of 3,335 converts and was essential in making the year's immigration a fruitful endeavor.<sup>28</sup>

In 1868 Brigham Young announced that an immense gathering effort would be made; and, in response, ten church train companies were organized under the leadership of captains Chester Loveland, Joseph S. Rawlins, John R. Murdock, Horton B. Haight, Warren S. Seeley, Simpson A. Molen, Daniel D. McArthur, John Gillespie, John G. Holman, and Edward T. Mumford.

Interestingly, Loveland, Rawlins, Murdock, and Mumford piloted mule trains rather than ox trains. Usually six mules were hitched to each wagon instead of the standard four-yoke hook-up of the church bull teams. Among other things, the use of mules by four companies provides evidence of a heavy loss of oxen during Indian skirmishes in

<sup>27</sup>Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, p. 208; *Journal History*, September 4, 1866.

<sup>28</sup>Young, *History*, p. 366; *Journal History*, October 22, 1866.



*C. W. Carter photograph of an 1867 immigrant train in Echo Canyon. Note poles of the transcontinental telegraph, completed in fall 1861. USHS collections.*

Utah in both 1865 and 1867. There is also evidence that Brigham Young wanted to reduce the time church companies spent on the trail in order to minimize the mortality rate from disease and to eliminate as much as possible the Indian depredations in the Powder River region. By shifting to mules church train companies could accomplish both goals. Indeed, mule trains reduced the time spent on the trail by almost ten days.<sup>29</sup>

With the railroad rapidly advancing west in 1868 the church was afforded extra time to prepare for the immigration before sending teams to both Laramie and Benton. Rather than setting out in late April, captains could delay their departure from the valley until mid-June.

In late September 1868 a significant event took place. Edward T. Mumford, who piloted the final small church train company into the Salt Lake Valley, accomplished the trek with no accidents or injuries in twenty-four days. With little fanfare, the Mumford company rolled into town on September 24. What went unnoticed by the new immigrants, including Mumford, was that they had witnessed the end of a unique era.

<sup>29</sup>Journal History, September 24, 1868, 1; Gustive O. Larson, *Prelude to Kingdom: Mormon Desert Conquest: Chapter in American Cooperative Experience* (Francetown, N. H.: Marshall Jones Co., 1947), p. 226.

Clearly, the second stage of the church train system (1864-68) had equaled the success enjoyed during the first phase (1861-63). In the last three years (1864, 1866, 1868) that church trains were sent to gather converts, 9,264 made the pilgrimage to Utah. The factor that sets the second half's gathering apart from the earlier immigration was the added economic burden created by the Black Hawk War. In spite of the sanguinary conflict in Utah the church could still provide the teamsters, cattle, mules, and other provisions necessary to bring thousands of new Mormons to the Great Basin. Had the church been able to send teams in 1865 and 1867, it is safe to assume that at least 4,000 additional converts could have joined the exodus to Utah. Still, the figures for the eight-year history of the church train system are impressive. Approximately 18,466 converts crossed the plains and mountains in ox and mule-driven wagons. In addition, 1,956 wagons were used; 2,483 men from Utah were called into service; more than 17,443 oxen, mules, and horses were either donated by members of the church living in Utah or were purchased by immigration agents in the East; and 1,279,284 pounds of flour and 120,500 pounds of dried meat were hauled by church trains during the six years of service.<sup>30</sup>

It is also important to underscore the significance of the "up and back" journey with reference to the time it took to complete the trek. After all, it was precisely due to the ability of the church trains to complete the double journey that the system was attempted in the first place. Thanks to the pioneering efforts of Feramorz Little and Joseph W. Young, the task that was once thought to be impossible became routine after 1860. In 1847 the initial expedition of 143 Mormons took four months to get from the Missouri River to the Great Basin. In 1861 the church trains accomplished the journey both to and from the Missouri River in the same four-month period, doubling the speed of travel.

By 1868, due to the westward thrust of the railroad, captains were making the round trip in less than two months. In the following year, immigrants could cross the entire continent by rail. Never again would their numbers be as high as they were during the decade of the 1860s. Indeed, the church train experiment of 1861 had blossomed into one of the most successfully organized immigration systems in the history of the United States in the nineteenth century.

<sup>30</sup> Compiled from yearly totals (1861-68) found in *Deseret News*, *Journal History*, and *Millennial Star*; Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1861-68; Jenson, "Emigration from Wyoming, Nebraska," pp. 113-17; Jenson, *Church Chronology*, pp. 65-79; B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City, 1930), 5: 109-11; Larson, *Prelude to Kingdom*, p. 226; Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 138-42; and Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 205-09.