

# Refugees Meet: The Mormons and Indians in Iowa

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The story of the Mormons and the Indians in Iowa is an important chapter in the larger narrative of Mormon history during the early nineteenth century. In 1830, a small number of Mormons proclaimed to red men and white men alike that through divine intervention an ancient record had been revealed, telling about the past, present, and future condition of the American Indians. Six months after the birth of Mormonism, Church leaders sent missionaries from New York to the Indians to declare this important message, to urge them to accept the restoration of Christ's ancient gospel, and to find a suitable location for a "New Jerusalem." Although inspired by the dream of taking the restoration to the natives, the Mormons became preoccupied with the task of founding a Zion for the gathering of their converts. Initially, a temporary gathering place was founded with a temple at Kirtland, Ohio, while a permanent location was designated as the center stake of Zion in Jackson County, Missouri. When attempts to establish Zion in Ohio and Missouri failed, the Saints fled to Illinois where they built a kingdom on the Mississippi with shops, farms, fine homes, and several villages. Across the river roamed Indian refugees—the Fox and Sac, and the Potawatomi. The Mormons were unaware when they settled along the banks of the Mississippi how in the near future their story would become interlaced with these native refugees in Iowa.

The Mormons had little contact with the Indians in Iowa during the first few months in Nauvoo. Sometime before August 1841, Mormon missionaries met Chief Keokuk and gave him a copy of the Book of Mormon. Early in August, Keokuk and a large number of Sac and Fox Indians camped along the Mississippi River near Montrose, Iowa, for several days. On 12 August, about one hundred Indians crossed the Mississippi on a ferryboat and two flatboats to the Nauvoo landing where they were met by the Nauvoo Legion Band, who offered to

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escort them "to the Grove"; but Keokuk, Kis-ku-kosh, Appanoose, and the others refused to come ashore until the Prophet Joseph Smith met them. In a short time, the Prophet greeted them, extended a welcome to them, introduced them to his brother Hyrum, and escorted them to a grove of trees overlooking the Mississippi.<sup>1</sup>

Keokuk, although partly French, was born into the Fox clan about 1780. That birth normally would have deprived him of being a leader in the tribal councils of the combined Sac and Fox tribes; but through his forceful personality, oratorical skills, and political maneuvers of pitting one clan against another, Keokuk eventually gained control over many tribal resources. However, this initial influence was nearly eclipsed when he failed to join with a small band of Sac Indians led by Kwaskwamia, who refused in the early 1830s to give up claim to the Rock River country. These Indians had listened to Potawatomi and Winnebago prophets preach that their former hunting grounds would be restored, the game would return, and the whites would be miraculously destroyed. Rejecting Keokuk's leadership, they turned to Makataimeshiakiak, or Black Hawk as the whites called him. Black Hawk was intensely religious and had previously been indoctrinated with the revolutionary ideas of Tecumseh and the Shawnee prophet, Elskawata. Black Hawk, who had bravely fought alongside Tecumseh, had believed the Winnebago, Potawatomi, Kickapoo, and Foxes were all his allies; but as the Black Hawk War unfolded in 1832, Black Hawk learned he had been deceived by his chiefs and medicine men. Even Keokuk undermined the feeble union between the Sac and Fox tribes by criticizing those who wanted war and by persuading many Sac Indians to ally themselves with those Foxes led by Chief Paweshik, who opposed war. Even after learning of this lack of unity, Black Hawk continued to fight the Illinois militia composed of such notables as Captain Abraham Lincoln, Colonel Zachary Taylor, and Lieutenant Jefferson Davis. Among the troops were other men such as Thomas Ford, John Reynolds, Thomas Carlin, Joseph Duncan, and Orville H. Browning, who not only fought in the Black Hawk War but also subsequently played very influential roles in Mormon history. The overwhelming military strength of the Illinois militia and its Indian allies overpowered Black Hawk and his warriors within only fifteen weeks.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Co., 1932-1951), 4:401-402.

<sup>2</sup>Donald Jackson, ed., *Black Hawk: An Autobiography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), pp. 1-31. See also Frederick Webb Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, 2 vols. (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1971), 1:673-74.



During the government's final negotiations settling the war, Keokuk took advantage of this situation and helped in reaching a settlement. Government agents returned the favor by acknowledging Keokuk as the "chief of the Sauk." But some tribal members resented this action since Keokuk had not been loyal during the war and because he was not a member of a ruling clan. Black Hawk expressed his dissatisfaction when he struck Keokuk across the face with his clout during the council meeting that elevated Keokuk to his new "appointment as chief." However, Keokuk later gained status in the eyes of many of his people because he successfully defended their claims to the Iowa territories against the Sioux Indians in Washington, D.C. So when Keokuk met the Mormons in 1841, he had regained much of the influence and power that he had held before 1832.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to remember that the Sac and Fox Indians were not natives of Iowa. They formerly had inhabited the Great Lakes region along with other Algonquian tribes, but conflicts with the Iroquois forced them westward to a region around Green Bay and the Fox River, where French explorers met them in the mid-1660s. The Sac and Fox Indians continued to live in Wisconsin until the 1730s when they came in conflict with the French and their Indian allies. After a series of bloody encounters, the Sac and Fox banded together and evacuated Wisconsin. Some settled west of the Mississippi in Iowa, while others migrated to the Missouri near St. Louis.<sup>4</sup>

Relatively peaceful relations prevailed between the Americans and the Fox and Sac Indians until after William Henry Harrison negotiated the Treaty of 1804 which ceded to the United States all Sac and Fox lands east of the Mississippi and a narrow strip on the west side of the river. This unpopular treaty became the source of many contentions, quarrels with fur traders and Indian agents, pressure from land-hungry pioneers, and agitation from British agents who penetrated the region. All these troubles erupted into the War of 1812, and consequently many bloody battles were fought between the Sac and Fox Indians and the American "long knives." However, the most intense struggle came when the Americans forcefully removed the Sac Indians from a region the Indians called Saukenuk, a strip of land north of the Rock River. Eventually this conflict escalated into the Black Hawk Indian War of 1832.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Hodge, ed., *American Indians*, 1:38-43, 473-75, 673-75, 684-85; 2:471-80.

<sup>5</sup>William T. Hagan, *The Sac and Fox Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), pp. 106-204.



Losing the Black Hawk War forced all Sac and Fox Indians westward. Many came to Iowa. When the Mormons built Nauvoo, these Indians had resided in Iowa only a little more than a century.

The Indians became even more dependent upon white traders for arms, ammunition, cooking utensils, and blankets than before the exodus. Despite this reliance on whites, the Sac and Fox Indians adapted much of their eastern woodland culture to their new homeland. They retained their traditional custom of making birch-bark canoes and dugouts by building bull-boats from willows and buffalo hides. In Iowa, they continued planting maize, squash, beans, and tobacco near their villages while continuing to migrate to their favorite game sites for deer, elk, and other animals and to streams for such fish as native trout, sturgeon, and bass. About 1837, the Sac and Fox Indians adopted the horse from the Plains Indians, so when they met the Saints, they were adapting the horse into their culture.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, with their move to Iowa, these Indians retained their elaborate social organization of some fourteen gentes or family clans which they named after woodland animals, except for the Thunder Clan. These clans provided social order in their personal relationships and established meaning and purpose in life. In addition, there were social groups like the Soldier Society and the Buffalo Society. Politically, the Sac and Fox had chiefs and a council. However, chiefs usually came from the Trout and Sturgeon gentes while the council represented all family clans through their own war chiefs and prominent family members. Usually, chiefs were mere figureheads and socially important persons rather than powerful political figures. But sometimes, powerful leaders emerged and exerted great influence among many of the people. Keokuk is one example of a leader who gained considerable influence with his people by the time the Mormons arrived in Nauvoo.<sup>7</sup>

Sac and Fox Indians were a deeply religious people who believed in many Algonquian deities or spirits called Manitos. These spirit beings, it was believed, permeated all forms of nature: human beings, animals, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects, plants, fire, water, and all elements. These Manitos possessed awesome magical powers. Children were taught to gain a personal relationship with some Manito by fasting, meditation, and prayer. Sac and Fox oral traditions contain many stories about human relationships with anthropomorphic beasts

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<sup>6</sup>Hodge, ed., *American Indians*, pp. 3-15.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.



and beings. The most important tale is of Nanabozho, the god of life, the flood, and the restoration of the earth to its pristine condition.<sup>8</sup>

Because a faith in mysteries and supernatural incidents was important to the Sac and Fox heritage, it is likely that when Mormon missionaries told these Indians about Joseph Smith's prophetic powers they indeed believed the Prophet possessed supernatural powers to aid them. In fact, Keokuk not only told Joseph Smith that he prized his copy of the Book of Mormon very highly, but he asked the Prophet for advice in dealing with the white men who were taking their lands, killing their game, and slaughtering their women and children. Joseph Smith sympathized with their troubles and offered advice from his religious perspective. He quoted some passages from the Book of Mormon telling how the Indians had once been a prosperous people with many great towns and cities. But they failed to keep God's commandments, the Prophet said, so they lost their prosperity. However, Joseph Smith promised that Keokuk and his people would not suffer forever, for the time was close at hand when the Sac and Fox Indians, along with others, would once again become a righteous people and help the Saints build a temple in Zion for the Second Coming of Christ. Before this could occur, however, the Prophet declared they "must cease killing each other and warring with other tribes; also to keep the peace with the whites." After this conference, the Mormons shared some food and entertainment with these Indians.<sup>9</sup>

Certainly, Keokuk and his people did not share Joseph Smith's vision of the future, even though Keokuk said he would "follow the good talk." Instead, these Indians were trying to preserve an ancient life cycle of hunting game and growing corn, squash, and beans. In fact, when white men tried to change these patterns of life through education, the Sac and Fox vigorously resisted all efforts to assimilate themselves into the mainstream of white American life.<sup>10</sup>

The visit of these Iowa Indians to Nauvoo drew sarcastic responses from some non-Latter-day Saints. Thomas Sharp, editor of the *Warsaw Signal*, hated the Mormons for their increased political power in Hancock County and poked fun at the Saints for entertaining Keokuk. Sharp published in his newspaper a note that "Indian Chief Keokuk . . . took occasion to pay a special visit to . . . his brother, the Revelator and Prophet, to smoke the pipe of peace with

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>*History of the Church*, 6:401-402.

<sup>10</sup>Hagan, *Sac and Fox Indians*, pp. 205-65.

him in his wik-ki-up to discourse on the wonders of the New Jerusalem.” Linking Keokuk’s visit to Mormon prophecies of building a New Jerusalem in Jackson County, Missouri, Sharp wrote, “The Prophet made a speech . . . depicting in glowing colors . . . the wonders of the Great Temple, the mysteries of the Book of Mormon, and the glorious times that they will all have together . . . in the latter-day city which they are going to inherit.” Characterizing Keokuk as a dumb Indian in a dirty blanket, Sharp said, the chief “looked unutterable things” and replied, “As to the New Jerusalem, to which they were all going to emigrate, so far as he was concerned, it would depend very much on whether there would be any government annuities—and as far as the ‘milk and honey,’ which was to flow over the land, he was not particular—he should prefer whiskey.”<sup>11</sup>

While Sharp’s article was being reprinted elsewhere along the Western frontier, Mormon relations with the Iowa Indians were complicated by rumors that the Mormons were conspiring to overthrow the U.S. government. After being dropped from Church membership in 1842, John C. Bennett traveled throughout Illinois and Missouri charging Church leaders with spreading the sinister doctrine of polygamy and with directing a secret band of Danites who were going to murder their political enemies and overthrow the government. Bennett, claiming to have infiltrated the inner circle of Mormon leaders, declared they

were preparing to execute, a daring and colossal scheme . . . for conquering the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri, and of erecting upon the ruins of their present governments a despotic military and religious empire, the head of which, as emperor and pope, was to be Joseph Smith, the Prophet of the Lord, and his ministers and viceroys, the apostles, high priests, elders, and bishops, of the Mormon Church.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, there was an attempt to assassinate ex-Governor Lilburn W. Boggs, who had issued the order to exterminate the Mormons in Missouri. Legal procedures were initiated to extradite Joseph Smith to Missouri to stand trial for plotting this nefarious deed, and Orrin Porter Rockwell was charged with being the Danite assigned to kill Governor Boggs.

These political troubles had an effect upon Mormon relations with the Indians of Iowa. The Prophet Joseph Smith had begun to think of escaping these political conflicts by moving into the Indian

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<sup>11</sup>*Warsaw Signal*, 25 August 1841.

<sup>12</sup>John C. Bennett, *History of the Saints: or An Expose of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842), pp. 5–6.



territories west of Illinois. Any westward movement would bring the Latter-day Saints into contact with the Iowa Indians. On 6 August 1842, Joseph Smith attended the ceremonies that installed the Rising Sun Lodge Ancient York Masons in Montrose, Iowa. While instructions were being given on the ceremony, the Prophet reviewed the political problems and "prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains."<sup>13</sup> This idea would have a marked influence on Mormon relations with the Iowa Indians during the years to come.

Meanwhile in April 1843, two Mormons brought three Potawatomi Indians from Kansas to Montrose, Iowa. The ancestors of these Potawatomi, like the Sac and Fox who visited the Prophet in 1841, had also migrated from the Great Lakes region, particularly the upper reaches of Lake Huron. According to oral tradition, the Potawatomi were at one time intermingled as one people with the Chippewa and Ottawa. Also like the Sac and Fox, the Potawatomi had moved westward to land near Green Bay, Wisconsin. By the close of the seventeenth century, they had migrated south along the Milwaukee River until they took possession of northern Illinois and extended themselves eastward over parts of Michigan and southward to the Wabash in Indiana.<sup>14</sup>

During the French and Indian War, the Potawatomi sided with the French against the British and then joined Pontiac's uprising. During the American Revolution, they sided with the British against the colonists but were defeated. Twenty years after signing the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, the Potawatomi again sided with the British during the War of 1812 to resist the Americans' encroachment on their lands. Shortly after the Treaty of Ghent in 1815, white settlers intensified pressures upon the Potawatomi for the Indians to sell their lands. During the period of forced Indian removal from 1830 to 1841, some Potawatomi escaped to Canada and became known as the Potawatomi of the Woods, while others moved to western Iowa and Kansas and became known as the Prairie Potawatomi.<sup>15</sup> Some of this latter group moved voluntarily while the others resisted moving until military force drove them westward. Those Indians who came to Nauvoo to meet Joseph Smith in 1843 were Prairie Potawatomi and had been in Iowa for a little more than five years.

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<sup>13</sup>*History of the Church*, 5:85.

<sup>14</sup>Hodge, ed., *American Indians*, 2:289-93.

<sup>15</sup>Ruth Landes, *The Prairie Potawatomi: Tradition and Ritual in the Twentieth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), pp. 3-40.

During all of these migrations, the Potawatomi maintained their elaborate social organization of clans or gentes. In 1843 when they met the Mormons, there were about 1800 Potawatomi belonging to about fifteen different clans who lived in the United States. Reportedly, the Potawatomi believed that each clan possessed a totem which in some mysterious way linked their ancestry to such animals as the wolf, bear, beaver, elk, eagle, carp, rabbit, turkey, or black hawk. This elaborate kinship system of social organization was not understood by the Mormons when the Potawatomi visited them in 1843.<sup>16</sup>

Nor did the Mormons understand the ideas of this deeply religious people, who had at one time worshipped the sun as well as offered sacrifices to heal the sick and to succeed in combat and the hunt. Contact with the French Catholics had influenced the Potawatomi to accept the idea the world is governed by two spirits—one evil called Matchemendo, and one good called Kitchemonedo or the Great Spirit. The Potawatomi believed that by using medicine bundles, dreams, visions, the Religious Dance, or Drum Dance they could influence these spirits. They believed that through the appropriate imitative dance movements, along with beating the drum, power was generated to cure the sick, to influence the animal's movements, and to control the rain during floods or droughts.<sup>17</sup> In 1843, these ideas were so firmly engrained in the Potawatomi that it was not difficult for them to believe Joseph Smith could exercise supernatural powers also. Furthermore, they obviously saw the Mormons as possible allies in their struggles with other white men.

Meanwhile, in April 1843, when two Mormons brought three Potawatomi Indians from Kansas to Montrose, they met a Mr. Hitchcock, who possibly had been commissioned to investigate the exploitation of the natives during their removal from their eastern homelands, and asked him to interpret their conversations with the Mormon Prophet. But he declined, saying he could not serve as interpreter because he had long been opposed to Joseph Smith.<sup>18</sup>

Because the Indians were unable to communicate effectively with Joseph Smith, messengers were sent back to Montrose to Mr. Hitchcock, who accepted this second invitation, thinking the Mormons were "plotting some mischief." When he arrived, he asked the Indians "if they had seen the 'great man or British Officer.' " "One of

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<sup>16</sup>Hodge, ed., *American Indians*, 2:289-93.

<sup>17</sup>Landes, *Prairie Potawatomi*, pp. 12-40.

<sup>18</sup>Henry King to John Chambers, 14 July 1843, "Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs," K1824-81, Iowa Superintendency, 1838-1849, microfilm, 1949, National Archives, Washington, D.C.



the Chiefs inquired which of the two is the man that talks to the Great Spirit," and Mr. Hitchcock pointed to Joseph Smith.<sup>19</sup>

Shaking Joseph's hand, Chief Apaquachawba said he had heard the Prophet "could talk to the Great Spirit and he wanted him to advise them what to do, as the Indians were dissatisfied with the white people bordering on their lands . . . [for] the whites treated them badly." He asked if the Prophet "would give them any assistance in case of an outbreak on the frontier; . . . [since] they had smoked the pipe with ten tribes who had agreed to defend each other to the last extremity." Joseph replied that "he could give them no assistance . . . [for] his hands were tied by the U.S. but . . . he could sympathize [with] them." Mr. Hitchcock, seeking to thwart any cooperation with the Mormons, told the Indians that Joseph Smith "was not the proper person to come to for advice." He added that "they should have consulted [with] their agent on the Mississippi river . . . [for] he would have seen that ample justice was done to them." The natives objected, saying "he was an American Officer." Mr. Hitchcock urged them to present their case to the commanding officer at Fort Leavenworth, but they again refused. Finally, he suggested they see the governor of Iowa, but they "seemed very indignant."<sup>20</sup>

At this point, the Indians gave Joseph Smith a large silver British Medal to put on his Nauvoo Legion uniform. After giving this token, they asked him "to send some of his '*Chiefs*' back with them." But Joseph Smith again declined. Angered by Hitchcock's repeated efforts to influence the negotiations, the Indians dismissed him as their interpreter, and after he left they continued negotiating with Joseph Smith through sign language. Finally, it was agreed that these Potawatomi Indians would return to Nauvoo with some of their chiefs when the corn reached "the top of their leggins."<sup>21</sup>

Early in July, these Indians returned to Nauvoo, but the Prophet was involved in extradition proceedings in Dixon, Illinois, for his alleged role in the attempt to assassinate ex-Governor Boggs. Upon his return, he met with the Indians, who again recounted the loss of their lands, the lives of their men, women, children, and their property. Then they said the Great Spirit had told them "he raised up a great Prophet who would . . . tell us what to do" and indicated that Joseph was that person. Moved to tears by their persecution, Joseph Smith said, "The Great Spirit has told you the truth. I am

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

your friend and brother. . . . Your fathers were once a great people. They worshipped the Great Spirit. . . . But [they] would not hear his words or keep them. The Great Spirit left them and they began to kill one another, and they have been poor and afflicted until now.” Showing the Indians a Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith said, “This is the book which your fathers made. I wrote it . . . this tells you what you will have to do. I want you to begin to pray to the Great spirit.” To solve their current troubles, the Prophet said, “I want you to make peace with one another, and do not kill any more Indians: it is not good. Do not kill white men . . . but ask the Great Spirit for what you want, and it will not be long before the Great Spirit will bless you, and you will cultivate the earth and build good houses like white men.”<sup>22</sup> After his speech, Joseph Smith gave the Indians some oxen and horses and sent Jonathan Dunham to return with them to Kansas. It was probably on this occasion that Joseph Smith gave these Indians two sheets of hieroglyphics copied from the Book of Abraham.

Meanwhile, although Mr. Hitchcock did not serve as an interpreter at this second conference, he gleaned as much information as possible from various sources. Concluding the Mormons and the Indians had concocted a plan to wage war against their enemies, he expressed his fears to Henry King, brigadier general of the Iowa militia, who told the governor of Iowa, John Chambers, that “a grand conspiracy is . . . being entered into between the Mormons and the Indians to destroy all the white settlements on the frontier. The time fixed to carry this nefarious plot into execution is said to be about the ripening of Indian corn.” Believing the situation too serious to “trifle with,” Henry King told Governor Chambers that “in the event of an outbreak we must not be wholly unprepared.”<sup>23</sup>

Governor Chambers forwarded General King’s letter to Thomas Hartley Crawford, who had supported Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Bill in 1830 and had subsequently become U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Commissioner Crawford wanted tranquil white-Indian relations in the Trans-Mississippi West, and so he was understandably concerned when Governor Chambers reported this meeting between the Mormons and the Indians. Even though the governor indicated, “Mr. Hitchcock is, I think, rather indicative of the general suspicion and excitement which prevails against the Mormons than of any treasonable design on the part of their [so-called]

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<sup>22</sup>*History of the Church*, 5:480. This account was copied from the Journal of Wilford Woodruff.

<sup>23</sup>King to Chambers, 14 July 1843, “Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs.”



prophet," he warned that Joseph Smith was "an exceedingly vain and vindictive fellow, and would no doubt feel flattered by the appeal made to him by the Indians and if he could bring them into a conflict with the Missouri frontier, might do so, to revenge his old feud with the people of that state." Assessing the loyalty of the Potawatomi, Governor Chambers added that they should be watched closely since they had sided with the British in the War of 1812 and were among the most savage and irreconcilable of any hostile tribe.<sup>24</sup> Certainly, Governor Chambers was not the only one with this view; many Americans had the same idea. William Henry Harrison, who had fought them, labeled the Potawatomi "our most cruel and inveterate enemies."<sup>25</sup> In view of this opinion, the governor requested that an agent visit the Potawatomi villages "to observe any restlessness among them which may indicate a spirit of mischief." Furthermore, he told General King to watch "for any further intercourse between these Indians and the 'prophet' and to keep me informed of any discoveries he may make."<sup>26</sup>

Obviously, there were reasons besides the ferocious battles the Potawatomi had fought during the War of 1812 that Americans distrusted these Indians. Prior to the Black Hawk War in 1832, a portion of the approximately six thousand Potawatomi settled among Black Hawk's people along Rock River to oppose the government's Indian removal policies. But once they realized the British would not give aid to the cause and once they understood they would lose their trading privileges with the government—privileges which were necessary for their survival—they could see they would be the first to feel the brunt of any attack from the whites. The Potawatomi therefore withdrew their support from Black Hawk's cause. Except for one minor incident during the Black Hawk War, the Potawatomi remained loyal to the United States, but many politicians falsely accused the Potawatomi of supporting Black Hawk. By this means, the whites transferred their hatred for the Sac Indians to the Potawatomi and demanded that all Indians be removed beyond the Mississippi.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, during the removal several conflicts occurred between the whites and the Potawatomi. A number of serious problems

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<sup>24</sup>John Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, commissioner of Indian Affairs, War Department, 7 August 1843, "Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs."

<sup>25</sup>R. David Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), p. 198.

<sup>26</sup>Chambers to Crawford, 7 August 1843, "Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs."

<sup>27</sup>Edmunds, *Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, pp. 215–39.

developed because the early treaties gave land grants to the Potawatomi near Chicago and in a region known as Platte Country, Missouri. At each location, whites wanted the land that had been reserved for these Indians; so officials continued to negotiate until these Potawatomi lands were exchanged for property in Kansas and Iowa. Many Indians refused to move, and the government responded by cutting off their annuities to force them to evacuate these areas. Also, the War Department prepared to use military force, if necessary. However, General Edmund P. Gaines promised the Indians food and transportation on steamboats to Council Bluffs, Iowa, if they would move. Soon, about 1,450 Potawatomi migrated from Missouri and elsewhere to Iowa. Meanwhile, federal officials discovered that the whites wanted all of Iowa; so they negotiated still another treaty to remove the Indians from Iowa.<sup>28</sup> When the Mormons met the Potawatomi, some were in Iowa and some in Kansas.

Government efforts to move those Indians from the Yellow River not far from Chicago to Kansas were also problem ridden. Catholic Fathers were trying to teach the Potawatomi farming and religion and to integrate them into white society. But officials from Washington undercut the mission by renegotiating a treaty with three Indians, who, along with a fourth one named Menominee who refused to sign, owned twenty-three sections of land. One Indian, named Notawkah (Rattlesnake), signed the treaty; he later became acquainted with the Mormons. Trouble did not end with signing the treaty. Menominee was forced to move at gunpoint, nearly three hundred Indians died from typhoid, and all suffered severe hunger due to the rotten food.<sup>29</sup>

Governor Chambers, Mr. Hitchcock, General King, and Commissioner Crawford were familiar with the resentment that many Indians felt because of these and other problems. To them it was entirely possible that the Mormons and the Indians would form a conspiracy. These men took no chances that a Mormon-Indian uprising would materialize on the frontier. It is easy to understand why these men took the precautions they did, given their perceptions of the Saints and the Indians.

But a look at Mormon associations with these Indians during most of the Nauvoo years clearly shows these government officials misread the Mormons' relationships with the Indians. A careful study of Jonathan Dunham's visit to the Potawatomi reveals that he made no attempt to make any alliances with them, even though they

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 240-72.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.



were willing to make a treaty with the Saints similar to the one they had made with the British during the War of 1812. Instead, Brother Dunham studied the Potawatomi villages, economic conditions, religious ideas, and their intertribal feuds and upon his return to Nauvoo brought a letter from a Potawatomi chief, asking the Prophet's advice on selling their lands. Joseph's reply shows his compassion and sympathy for their plight, but he gave no hint that the Mormons would collaborate in any way with the Indians. He advised the Potawatomi chief not to sell the lands but to "keep them to live upon for yourselves and your children." He also said he would assist them in doing their business; if the United States "appoints me as your agent to transact your business I shall cheerfully comply."<sup>30</sup> Finally, a close examination of all other Indian visits to Nauvoo reveals no sign of the Mormons' forming any conspiracy with any Indians.

By the spring of 1844, the anti-Mormon pressures became so intense that during this presidential election year Mormon leaders began seriously to consider alternative locations for settlement. On 20 February, Joseph Smith requested men be sent to investigate California and Oregon as possible locations "where we can remove to after the temple is complete, and where . . . the devil cannot dig us out, and [where we can] live in a healthful climate, [and] where we can live as old as we have a mind to."<sup>31</sup> The next day, Joseph told the Twelve Apostles to send west twenty-five men mounted on horses and mules and armed with double barrel guns, barrel rifles, revolving pistols, bowie knives, and sabers. But if they failed to find twenty-five volunteers, the Prophet told them to "wait till after the election."<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, men who were in Wisconsin cutting timber for the temple proposed an exploration of "the south and western part of North America, together with the Floridas, Texas, West India Islands, and the adjacent islands to the Gulf of Mexico, together with the Lamanites bordering on the United Territories from Green Bay to the Mexican Gulf."<sup>33</sup> Moved by the thought that because of men who had "smuggled themselves into power in the States and Nation" the Saints had lost their liberty guaranteed by the Constitution, early in March Joseph Smith approved a plan for enlisting the

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<sup>30</sup>Joseph Smith to Pottawattomie Indians, 28 August 1843, Library-Archives, The Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter referred to as Church Archives.

<sup>31</sup>*History of the Church*, 6:222.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 6:224.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 6:258.

Indians to help build the Kingdom of God.<sup>34</sup> In this regard, the Cherokee and Choctaw had already requested an interview with the elders of the Church.

Times were turbulent in the City Beautiful. Early in May, several prominent Church leaders who had been excommunicated turned their energies toward undermining the leadership of Joseph Smith by printing a prospectus of the *Nauvoo Expositor*. Meanwhile, Kis-kish-kee, Black Hawk's brother, brought nearly forty Sac and Fox Indians to Nauvoo to see Joseph Smith. The Prophet invited them into the back kitchen of the Mansion House where they complained that the whites had been cruel to them and had robbed them of their lands. Acknowledging their mistreatment, Joseph told them the Saints had not been responsible for these injustices but had bought and paid for the lands they were occupying in Iowa and Illinois.<sup>35</sup>

The Prophet then turned the conversation to those topics of peace, land, and the Book of Mormon which he always mentioned in his conversations with Indians. Trying to impress upon them the importance of the Book of Mormon, he showed them a copy and said, "The Great Spirit has enabled me to find a book . . . which told me about your fathers." Furthermore, Joseph Smith urged them to spread its message. He continued, "[The] Great Spirit told me, 'You must send this book to all the tribes that you can, and tell them to live in peace;' and when any of our people come to see you, I want you to treat them as we treat you." Following the meeting, the Indians walked to Joseph Smith's log house where they performed a war dance for about two hours. Nauvoo residents responded by striking up the Nauvoo Band, firing the cannon, and collecting food for the Indians.<sup>36</sup>

Just one month and four days after his visit with these Sac and Fox Indians, Joseph Smith was assassinated. Soon after this tragic event, James Emmett and Lyman Wight, against the direction of the Twelve, took steps to carry out Joseph Smith's plans to find a resting place among the Lamanites by taking two companies into Indian Territory.<sup>37</sup> In a short time, the Twelve Apostles began finalizing plans to colonize the West. They sent several groups of men to search for suitable locations for settlement and to establish friendly relations

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 6:261.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 6:401-402.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 6:402.

<sup>37</sup>Davis Bitton, "Mormons in Texas: The Ill-Fated Lyman Wight Colony, 1844-1858," *Arizona and the West* 11 (Spring, 1969): 5-26. For an account of the James Emmett Company, see *History of the Church*, 7:377, 383-86, and 495-98.



with the Indians. As these groups crossed Iowa, they had contact with some of the Indians.

On 1 March 1845, the Council of Fifty, a governing body organized by Joseph Smith and now delegated by the Twelve Apostles to direct the move west,<sup>38</sup> met in the Seventies Hall to discuss Joseph Smith's suggestion that the Council "seek out a location and a home where the Saints can dwell in peace and health, and where they can erect the ensign and standard of liberty for the nations, and live by the laws of God without being oppressed and mobbed under tyrannical governments, without protection from the laws."<sup>39</sup> At this important meeting, the Council added several people to "fill up the Quorum," and among the number was Lewis Dana, "a Lamanite of the Oneida nation, and the First Lamanite who has been admitted a member of any Quorum of the Church."<sup>40</sup> Lewis Dana originally came to Nauvoo in May 1840, joined the Church, and was ordained an elder. During this Council of Fifty meeting, eight men were selected to "seek out a location"; and among them were Lewis Dana and Jonathan Dunham, former missionary to the Iowa Indians. Mormon leaders picked Brother Dana partly because of his Indian heritage, but he was ill prepared for this assignment since most Indians living in the region they expected to visit did not speak any dialect of the Iroquoian language. Dana's ancestors had belonged to the Iroquois Confederacy and had once lived south of Oneida Lake in New York. Although they remained neutral during the Revolution, after the war most eventually migrated from New York to Canada or to a region in Wisconsin.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, on 24 April, Elders Dana and Dunham, as well as three others, began this important mission and after several weeks returned with the report that the Indians were friendly but the Indian agents were hostile. In fact, Agent James I. Rains sent Jonathan Dunham a caustic note which said, "Sir I have been informed that a creature of the above name [Mr. Dunham] in the shape of a human being has been lurking about for some time in the Indian country either entirely without business or under pretense of a missionary. . . . In either case you are violating the intercourse law,"

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<sup>38</sup>For a discussion of the Council of Fifty, see D. Michael Quinn, "The Council of Fifty and Its Members, 1844 to 1945," *BYU Studies* 20 (Winter 1980): 163-97; and Andrew F. Ehat, "'It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth': Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God," *BYU Studies* 20 (Spring 1980): 253-80.

<sup>39</sup>See 1 March 1845 entry of William Clayton Diary quoted in Ehat, "Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God," p. 269; see also *History of the Church*, 7:379.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>Hodge, ed., *American Indians*, 2:123-26.

Agent Rains declared; "you are hereby warned to leave the Indian country immediately or I will deal with you as the law directs."<sup>42</sup>

Letters and rumors of this nature did not deter the Mormons from contacting the Indians residing west of Nauvoo. From July through November, several men made expeditions into the West to establish friendly relations with the Indians. In July, Lewis Dana contacted some Cherokee near Webber's Falls on the Arkansas River and invited them to join the Mormons in searching for a "suitable [place] for agriculture and . . . [for] Indian life." He further stated, "It is the intention of the Oneida Nation of which I am one to emigrate to it, together with other Northern Nations who are a party to these our intentions, believing it to be a plan that will result in good if entered into and carried out." He concluded by saying, "This invitation is not confined to you alone, but may be extended through you to as many other friendly tribes as you may think worthy of our fellowship."<sup>43</sup> Clearly, Lewis Dana believed he was following Joseph Smith's plans of enlisting the Indians' help in finding a place for a new Zion. In this regard, he was not unlike Lyman Wight, who took a colony to Texas, and James Emmett, who led a company among the Sioux along the Missouri River.

Early in August 1845, Daniel Spencer and Charles Shumway also ignored the Indian agents' objections by spending about a month establishing friendly relations among the Indians in Iowa and the Indian Territory. They carried a certificate from Brigham Young to prove they were "men of honor and reputation" and to declare that the time had come when the Indians "shall receive the true light and realize the power and glory of the Great Spirit." The certificate also urged the Indians to "pray [to] the Great Spirit in the name of his Son Jesus Christ [to] enlighten your minds . . . that he has commenced and will carry forth his work until ancient Israel is gathered and all the blessings promised by the former prophets are poured forth to the joy and rejoicing of your hearts."<sup>44</sup> After promising the Indians the blessings of the temple, the certificate asked the Indians to assist these Mormon missionaries with their assignment. After visiting with several Indian groups, Elders Spencer and Shumway returned with the bad news that Jonathan Dunham, who had given great service toward friendly Indian relations, had died in late July.

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<sup>42</sup>James I. Rains, Indian Agent, to J. Dunham, 22 June 1845, Church Archives.

<sup>43</sup>Lewis Dana to John Brown, Cherokee Nation near Webbers Falls, Arkansas River, 5 July 1845, Church Archives.

<sup>44</sup>This certificate is entitled "This to the chiefs and all the honorable men among the Senecas and all the tribes through which they may pass," c4 August 1845, Brigham Young Papers, Church Archives.



Meanwhile, the anti-Mormon pressures mounted. Mormon homes were burned, open conflict occurred between the Saints and their neighbors, and several prominent Nauvoo citizens were charged with "aiding and abetting Joseph Smith in treasonable designs against the state, for being officers in the Nauvoo Legion, for building an arsenal, for keeping cannon in times of peace, . . . and for holding correspondence with the Indians."<sup>45</sup> Amid these troubles, Mormon leaders met with public officials and assured them the Saints would leave Illinois. Meanwhile, the Council of Fifty on 9 September decided that 1500 men should be sent to the Salt Lake Valley while a committee of five gathered information on emigration. Then on 30 September this Council met again, and after hearing Parley P. Pratt's calculation on the costs for taking a family of five to the West, they decided the Saints would all go west in the spring with families, friends, and neighbors. Finally, this decision was ratified early in October by a general conference of the Saints in Nauvoo.<sup>46</sup>

Once the decision was reached, additional men were sent to the Indians late in October to insure a safe trip across Iowa and the Great Plains. Among those sent to reestablish friendly relations with the Indians were Joseph Herring and his brother George. George was reported to be a Mohawk chief who spoke "good English," understood white customs, and conversed "freely on all subjects."<sup>47</sup> Probably the Herring brothers came to Nauvoo from either New York, Canada, or some other place in the northern United States. Being Mohawk, their ancestors had been prominent among the Iroquois Confederation. During colonial times, Mohawk villages were scattered from Schenectady to Utica, north to the St. Lawrence and south to the east branch of the Susquehanna. But during the Revolution, the Mohawk sided with the British, and so following the war most of them fled to Canada. The remainder scattered among different Iroquois tribes in the northern United States.<sup>48</sup> Regardless of their previous residence, the Herring brothers probably were unable to communicate in the native tongue of most Indians living in Iowa. But they were native Americans and consequently could not be charged with being white intruders on Indian land.

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<sup>45</sup>*History of the Church*, 7:444.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 7:439, 447, 453-55, 463-65, 466-67, 478-80.

<sup>47</sup>Juanita Brooks, ed., *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844-1861* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 1:72. George L. M. Herring, his brother Joseph, Edward Whiteye, Peter Cooper, and Moses Otis were apparently all Mohawk Indians. Hosea Stout mentions them several times in his diary. These Indians were used to promote friendship with the Indians, but these plans never worked very well. During the Mormons' stay in the Indian Territory, they became drunk on several occasions, threatened the Twelve, and eventually left the Mormons at Winter Quarters.

<sup>48</sup>Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians*, 1:920-26.



Early in December, another fear developed; Samuel Brannan reported that President James K. Polk's cabinet "were determined to prevent . . . [the Mormons from] moving West . . . [and furthermore] they must be obliterated from the earth." Again on 20 January, Sam Brannan stunned Mormon leaders with the report the government intended to intercept the Saints on their westward trek and strip them of their weapons so they could not join forces with another country.<sup>49</sup> Concerned by these rumors, the Twelve decided the Saints could not wait for spring to leave Nauvoo; evacuation would have to begin immediately. So on 4 February, the great Mormon exodus began when the Saints crossed the Mississippi into Iowa.

While thousands of Mormon refugees streamed across Iowa, Mormon leaders wrote to the governor of Iowa Territory and asked permission to use the public lands while they evacuated their settlements near the Mississippi and made their way westward, but the governor thought that, due to the intense anti-Mormon feelings, granting this request might jeopardize Iowa's chances for becoming a state. He neither made commitments to the Saints nor attempted to prevent this migration. Meanwhile, late in May, the Mormons entered the land that belonged to the Potawatomi Indians. When they approached a Potawatomi village located along a branch of the Nishnabotna River, the Saints fully expected the Indians would give free use of their land during the exodus. But to the pioneers' surprise, an Indian met them and demanded payment for their crossing the land. The brave reported that the Indians felt that Mormon livestock would eat the grass which the natives used for their stock. Suspecting this request was the result of some conspiracy between the anti-Mormons and the Indians, the Saints held a council with the Indians and tried to convince them the Mormons were their friends. After several hours of talk, the Indians agreed to let the Saints use their land in this region providing once they moved west they granted the Potawatomi possession of the bridges and other improvements they had built.<sup>50</sup>

The Mormons wanted to protect themselves against conflict of any sort. Because they were so painfully aware of conflict with other people, they realized they needed some rules governing their relations with the Indians. So Mormon leaders forbade their members to trade with the Indians because federal laws prohibited unauthorized white people from exchanging goods with the natives. The Mormons

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<sup>49</sup>*History of the Church*, 7:544, 577.

<sup>50</sup>Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 8 June 1846, Church Archives.



voted to disfellowship any person who violated this rule; later certain Mormons were granted a license to trade with the Indians.<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile, Mormon wagon trains streamed ever westward. On 20 June, they reached the Potawatomi agency at Trading Point. Seeking to prevent any conflicts, the Mormons held a series of talks with the Indians at the agency; with Peter A. Sarpy, a trader; and Major Robert B. Mitchell, the Indian agent. During these conversations, Mormon leaders felt they had established good relations with the Indians, the trader, and the agent. In fact, part of the day was devoted to celebrating the friendly accord that had been reached. Natives, trader, Indian agent, and Mormons all enjoyed dancing, singing, and eating.<sup>52</sup>

But in a few days, the Mormons heard from Peter Sarpy that Agent Robert Mitchell was secretly conspiring with the commander at Leavenworth to prevent the Mormon exodus. Sarpy said Major Mitchell had already "written to the commanders of troops at the Fort [saying] the Mormons were conniving with the Indians and had committed some depredations at Pottawatomie town, and wanted the Dragoons to come up and keep the peace and prevent their uniting with the Indians to fight the United States."<sup>53</sup> Brigham Young met in council the next day and assigned Orson Hyde and Newel K. Whitney to serve as a Mormon delegation to talk to Agent Mitchell about this report. Later that day Elders Hyde and Whitney reported that Mitchell indicated he had written only one letter two months earlier because of his bad impressions of the Emmett Company of Mormons who had spent the winter among the Sioux. He said his recent talks with Mormon leaders convinced him they were good people; so he would do all within his power to assist the Saints' move west, and he felt the officers at Fort Kearny would do likewise.<sup>54</sup>

Accepting Mitchell's explanations, the Mormons proceeded to migrate toward the Great Basin where they hoped to plant a colony before the winter of 1846. On 29 June, they reached the Missouri River near Council Bluffs, not far from Trading Point, and began crossing the river onto Omaha Indian lands. However, Captain James Allen of the United States Army caught the Mormon wagon trains and recruited nearly five hundred men for service in the recently declared Mexican War.<sup>55</sup> After discussing losing the services of these

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 14 June 1846.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 20 June 1846.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 25-26 June 1846.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>See John F. Yurtinus, "'Here Is One Man Who Will Not Go, Dam'Um': Recruiting the Mormon Battalion in Iowa Territory," this issue.



men, Mormon leaders changed their plans and decided to spend the winter on Indian lands on both sides of the Missouri River. But these lands belonged to the Indians; therefore, the Saints needed permission from both the Indians and the federal government to stay in this region. The land in Iowa became government property during the summer of 1846 when the Potawatomi sold it, but the Indians still retained the privilege of using the land for several more years. However, the land west of the Missouri belonged exclusively to the Indians, and the government was legally bound to keep white people from residing on it.<sup>56</sup>

Lacking authorization to remain on these lands, the Mormons asked Captain Allen for permission, and he gave such permission until ratified by President Polk for the Saints not only to pass through these Indian territories but also to make settlements and fortifications while emigrating to their destination. In a short time, the Mormons negotiated a treaty with the Potawatomi Indians near Council Bluffs. The Potawatomi consented to let the Mormons make a settlement and cultivate the soil during the migration to California. Subsequently, President Polk approved of the Mormons' staying on these Potawatomi lands. However, instructions from Secretary of War William L. Marcy warned the Mormons not to make any permanent settlements nor cause any troubles with the Indians that would delay "the survey and sales of lands sufficient to prevent Iowa from becoming a State in the Union." Finally, the Saints must not jeopardize the Indians' interests and rights.<sup>57</sup> But the quest for permission to settle on Omaha lands, across the Missouri, is a different story beyond the scope of this article concerning the Mormons and the Indians of Iowa.

Meanwhile, Brigham Young did more than just gain permission to stay on Potawatomi lands. He sincerely tried to establish cordial relations with the Indians in Iowa. He visited the camps of those Indians who had not been present when the treaty was signed, and he tried to get their consent to this agreement as well. On one occasion, Mormon leaders met with a band of Sac and Fox Indians, gave them a two-year-old heifer, and had a lengthy conversation with them. This experience certainly foreshadowed Brigham Young's policy statement that eventually became a cliché: "It is easier to feed the Indians than fight them." Brigham Young tried to make it clear to the Indians

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<sup>56</sup>Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 29th Cong., 2d sess., 1846, *Executive Document 1* (Serial 493), p. 217. About six million acres were given up in Iowa and western Missouri with these treaties. The treaties are located in Record Group 75, "Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Ratified Treaties," National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>57</sup>Manuscript History of Brigham Young, from 7 August to 7 September 1846.



that he did not want any troubles with their stealing horses and taking other property. He reminded them about the visit some of them had had with the Prophet Joseph Smith when they came to Nauvoo. Brigham told them about the Mormon exodus to the Rocky Mountains, and he invited Chief Powsheek "to come over the mountains and see the Saints when they got located, and bring his men to hunt for us, and we will make blankets, powder, cloth, etc."<sup>58</sup>

On this same trip, the Mormons renewed their friendship with a band of Potawatomi the Saints had known during the Nauvoo years. These Indians had visited the Prophet Joseph Smith in Nauvoo and had heard him speak in the grove near the Mississippi. Jonathan Dunham had visited their villages. These Indians remembered these experiences for they verified their previous contact by showing a paper that "Father" Joseph Smith had given them in 1843 which counseled them not to sell their lands. They also had a map that had been drawn by William W. Phelps showing the boundaries of their land. Apparently, they had not taken Joseph Smith's advice, but they still cherished these papers. Finally, they produced two sheets of hieroglyphics associated with the Book of Abraham.<sup>59</sup> Certainly, Mormon leaders could see how their friendly treatment of these natives had provided friendly relationships while the Saints remained on these lands during their exodus to the Great Basin.

Brigham Young also invited these Potawatomi Indians to come and live in the Great Basin with the Mormons. These were not idle words. On 6 September 1853, during the trauma of the Walkara Indian War, Brigham Young wrote to these Potawatomi Indians and again invited them to come to Utah. Apparently, a member of this band came to the Great Basin to see the Mormons for President Young announced, "Wa-ab-kee-sick who is now with me says you are desirous to know about this country, its climate, and productions, and I take great pleasure in writing to you that you may know for yourselves." The President told them, "The winters . . . are no colder here than where you are, and there is not so much snow in the lowlands, but much falls in the mountains; the rain falls mostly in the spring and fall." He also told how the Mormons watered their crops and raised "the finest of wheat, corn, potatoes, melons, squashes, peaches, grapes, etc." "Should you or any of your people wish to come and live with us," Brigham Young promised to give "what

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 10-11 July 1846.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

land you may wish to occupy to advantage, the same as we do to our own people.”<sup>60</sup>

These pioneer experiences with the Potawatomi were especially important in fostering a lasting friendship between the Saints and these natives from Iowa. From the beginning of the exodus the Mormons enjoyed friendly relations with the Indians in Iowa. Hosea Stout, the Mormons’ police chief, kept a detailed diary of this period and noted how friendly the Indians were in Iowa. On 25 June, he recorded, “There was quite a number of Indians came to camp to day some we fed They were all friendly.” On the next day, he said, “There was a continual crossing of the Indians all day swimming their horses which seemed to be but little disadvantage to them to come to a stream out of its banks.” On the twenty-eighth, Stout wrote, “In the evening there was large numbers of Indians came into camp all friendly and seemed to understand perfectly well the nature of our move and also our ultimate union with them & our return to the lands of our inheritance &c. &c.” Two days later, these friendly Indians reportedly saved Parley P. Pratt’s life. Parley Pratt and Solomon Hancock tried to ford a stream not far from Council Bluffs while they were on their way to Mt. Pisgah to lead companies westward. Hosea Stout reported, “Br Pratt & the mule came very near being drownd. He floted to shore and was so much exhausted that he could not get out. After resting a while he attempted it again and came near being drowned the second time. . . . He was finally assisted over by some Indian boys, not however until they were satisfied that they were ‘Good Mormonee’ as they call us.”<sup>61</sup>

While crossing Iowa, Hosea Stout continued to report of friendly relations with the Indians in Iowa. He recorded, for example, that while the Saints were nearing Council Bluffs early in July 1846:

There was large companies of Indians followed us today for several miles and in fact they thronged around us all the time we were building the bridge & at times would come in droves to the camp but they were very civil friendly & good natured and done none of us any injury while we were here.

They would amuse themselves sometimes by swimming in the creek in large numbers and sometimes at playing cards at which they seemed to be very dexterous. They appeared to be much interested at our operations while at work which seemed to be a great novelty to them.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Brigham Young to Na-na-no-it, Pottawatomie chief, and Woorish-xuck, Squaw-kee chief, 6 September 1853, Brigham Young Letterbook Number 1, 21 November 1851 to 21 February 1855, pp. 235–36.

<sup>61</sup>Brooks, ed., *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:170–73.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 173.



During the entire period, Hosea Stout reported of no serious conflicts between the Mormons and the Indians in Iowa.

Instead, the Mormons used the exodus as an opportunity to share their knowledge with the Indians. Most often the sharing of information with the Indians was informal. But occasionally, government officials hired Mormon women to teach academic subjects to the Indian children in Iowa. A Mr. Wicks hired some Mormon women while their husbands were making the trek of the Mormon Battalion and asked them to move to Indian Mills to hold school for the Indian children. These women taught sewing, spinning, reading, writing, ciphering, and spelling. But they found it difficult, due to the many cultural differences, to teach the Indian girls even the basic skills of knitting and sewing; and the academic subjects were even more difficult to teach than these domestic skills. Some Mormon children succeeded in teaching a few Indians to read.<sup>63</sup>

Meanwhile, the Mormons were unable to establish the same kind of friendly relationships with the Indians living west of the Missouri River in the Indian Territory. Part of the problem no doubt stemmed from the relative prosperity of the two Indian groups; the Fox, Sac, and Potawatomi enjoyed a more affluent life style than the Omaha and the Otoe, who lived in the Indian Territory. Probably, the relative prosperity of the Potawatomi Indians was partly due to the payments they had recently received from the government for the sale of their lands in Iowa. When Hosea Stout first crossed the Missouri he noticed this difference between the Indians. He observed:

The Otos and Mohas or more properly the Omahas . . . differed widely in appearance from the Pottawattamies on the other side of the river. They were not so well dressed. Instead of good blankets they were at best dressed in old blankets & some entirely in dressed skins in their pure wild native dress but they were uncommonly friendly & would sell green corn for bread & such articles as they wanted to eat.<sup>64</sup>

However, Hosea Stout was mistaken about the “uncommonly friendly” nature of these Indians, for the Saints soon had considerable trouble with the Indians living across the Missouri River in the Indian Territory. The most frequent trouble was the loss of property. The Omaha and Otoe Indians often took vegetables, grain, hogs, chickens, horses, and cattle from the Saints. In fact, these plunderings became so troublesome the Mormons used various means to protect their property. Mormon leaders held a series of council

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<sup>63</sup>Mosiah Hancock Journal and “The Life Story of Mosiah Lyman Hancock,” Church Archives.

<sup>64</sup>Brooks, ed., *Diary of Hosea Stout*, 1:183–84.

meetings with Indian chiefs to end these "thefts." Brigham Young gave presents to certain Indian chiefs thinking they would control their people. When these efforts failed, the Saints strengthened their militia and posted guards to watch closely all Indians who came near Mormon property. Even after his departure for the Great Basin, Brigham Young sent a letter in April 1847 to the Saints still at Winter Quarters, saying:

Your crops, and cattle will be exposed to the aggressions of the Omahas, and other Indians, and we say to you, take care of them, learn to watch as well as pray, for the further you go West, the more you will be exposed, and if the Saints cannot watch them safely here, what will they do when they get where civilization or half civilization is unknown.<sup>65</sup>

Troubles continued with the natives near Winter Quarters after Brigham Young made the historic trek to the Salt Lake Valley. Police Chief Stout recorded the loss of several hundred livestock during fifteen separate raids between October 1847 and June 1848. Conflict with the Omahas became so intense that on one occasion the Omahas attacked Francis Weatherbee and some other men who were trying to protect their livestock. Brother Weatherbee was shot through the hip while the others escaped unharmed. Then when Heber C. Kimball's company began making a trek westward in June 1848, several Omaha Indians shot Thomas E. Ricks and Howard Egan while the two men were trying to recover their livestock.<sup>66</sup>

Although the Saints experienced difficulty with the Indians living west of the Missouri River, the pioneers had peaceful relations with the Indians of Iowa while crossing Iowa Territory. Most likely, the peaceful relations between the Mormons and the Indians in Iowa were influenced by the similar heritage of the two different peoples. Both peoples were trying to maintain the integrity of their life-styles, life-styles which differed from that of the general populace of nineteenth-century America. Perhaps their understanding of one another's plight as refugees established a sympathetic relationship. For a brief moment in the span of time, the Mormons and the Indians in Iowa shared a common fate; they were forced to abandon their homes and to found new ones farther west. The red men moved into the Indian Territory while the Saints migrated westward to the tops of the Rocky Mountains.

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid. See Stout's accounts of these incidents from pp. 262 to 315.