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Mormon Passage of George D. Watt

Ronald G. Watt

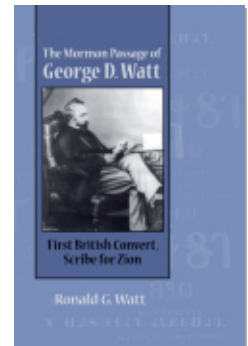
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LIFE AND TIMES IN UTAH POLITICS IN THE TERRITORY

How long we may stay at this point I cannot say, neither does it concern me, I am on the lords business, I am just as ready to return again close on the enemies borders, as to return home, tho I presume my home is as dear to me, and your sweet society, as home and a wifes society can possibly be to any mortal . . .

George D. Watt to Alice Whittaker Watt, October 14, 1857

George Watt was now in Zion. He had been tested in the mission field and had passed admirably, preaching God's word to thousands. Now he was ready to dwell with the Saints. He had missed the experiences of those who had left Nauvoo, sojourned at Winter Quarters, and traveled on to the Great Salt Lake Valley. He also did not voyage on the ship *Brooklyn* or march with the Mormon Battalion, except vicariously through the prism of the *Millennial Star*, which sometimes distorted and omitted important parts of the story. After reaching Zion, he had a vivid view of the forthcoming Utah War and left a record of the conflict in letters he wrote to his wife Alice. He did not participate directly in Utah's Indian wars or the Mountain Meadows Massacre, but he was working in the church president's office, a useful observation point, when those events occurred. He also knew about them from newspaper accounts or firsthand observers.

While he was on his mission, Watt avidly read the *Millennial Star*. It told him about not only what was happening within the British Mission but also events in the United States and especially the movements in the church.

While still in Britain, he wrote to Willard Richards that Orson Spencer, the editor of the *Millennial Star*, “so completely skims off the cream from all news, both of a home and foreign nature.”¹

In 1846 the Mormon leadership considered leaving the United States for California. Brigham Young and others studied John C. Fremont’s report closely and decided to take the Mormons to the Mexican territories. Dutifully, editor Orson Hyde of the *Star* published part of the account of Fremont’s expedition to the West over four months.²

Watt did not know for some time about the Mormon Battalion recruitment, although he had probably read in the English newspapers about the beginning of the Mexican War, which occurred on April 25, 1846. His first inkling about a group of men going to fight the Mexicans came from a published letter by Orson Hyde in March 1847. Writing as if he were an outsider, Hyde described the atrocities that had happened to the Mormon people and the way that Joseph and Hyrum Smith had been killed in “cold blood.” Later in his letter, he stated, “They have sent 500 of their most efficient men into the army of the United States. This cripples them very much in prosecuting their journey, as most of these men were teamsters, and had families or friends dependent upon their personal exertions to get along.”³ The *Star* reported what little information it had, but many questions remained.

A month later, Brigham Young wrote more conclusively about the battalion marching to Santa Fe, where the sick left for Pueblo for the winter. This group of men, under James Brown, left for Colorado “accompanied by the laundresses, sick, &c., of the battalion, numbering in all about eighty.”⁴

Shortly after this, Watt and Lucius Scovil, another missionary, received letters from individuals in the battalion, and they published them in the *Star*. Watt now knew that “a detachment of 170 of our brethren, including the sick and laundress women are stationed for winter quarters, and reached here [Pueblo] after a journey of fifty-two days, without a guide, not seeing a white man on the routes.”⁵ Watt did not yet know about the courageous march across the Southwest. He realized that the battalion had

1. George D. Watt to Willard Richards, February 5, 1848, holograph, Willard Richards Papers, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

2. See the Oregon and California excerpts, “Oregon and California,” *Millennial Star* 8 (July 15, 1846): 3–5; (August 1, 1846): 17–19; (August 15, 1846): 33–35; (September 1, 1846): 49–52; (September 15, 1846): 49–52; (October 1, 1846): 65–67; and (October 15, 1846): 81–84. All of these articles have the same title.

3. “Important Concerning the United States of America,” *Millennial Star* 9 (March 1, 1847): 65–69.

4. “Letter to Elders Hyde, Pratt, and Taylor,” *Millennial Star* 9 (April 1, 1847): 99.

5. “Extracts of Letters from the Camp of Israel, North America. Addressed to L.N. Scovil and G. D. Watt,” *Millennial Star* 9 (April 1, 1847): 133–34. There were 159 men and 30 women sent to Pueblo.

arrived in California when the *Star* reported on July 1, 1847, that General Kearny “was joined about the 9th of January, at San Diego, by Lieu-Colonel Cooke, with the battalion of Mormons under their command. Great praise is bestowed on Col. Cooke, for the condition in which he brought his command in. It is said that all his men were in fine health, with their arms as bright as when they set out on the march.”⁶ Unbeknownst to Watt, the main group had left the Rio Grande River about ninety miles north of El Paso and traveled southwest through present-day Arizona, marching over parched soil and rough terrain to Tucson. Under Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, they arrived in San Diego on January 29, 1847, emaciated and weather worn.

The *Millennial Star* published an official order of Cooke in January 1848, summarizing the journey of the battalion: “Without a guide who had traversed them, we have ventured into trackless prairies, where water was not found for several marches . . . we have discovered and made a road of great value to our country.” He praised the men for their valor: “Thus volunteers, you have exhibited some high and essential qualities of veterans.”⁷

From the *Millennial Star*, Watt also heard details about Winter Quarters. In 1847 Brigham Young wrote his followers in the British Isles that on the banks of the Missouri River, “we have upwards of 700 houses in our miniature city, composed mostly of logs in the body, covered with puncheon, straw and dirt.”⁸

The editors also explained about the ship *Brooklyn*. Watt knew previously that Samuel Brannan had taken a group of Mormons from New York City who were now sailing to California around South America and Cape Horn at its tip. The *Star* editorialized about the wonder of California: “The few scores of emigrants on board the *Brooklyn* are but a fraction of the immense number on their way thither.” On February 1, 1847, the *Millennial Star* reported that the *Brooklyn* had come into port.⁹ Watt did not know that the ship had left on February 4, 1846, with 220 Mormons and sailed around Cape Horn to the Juan Fernández Islands, where they had taken on provisions. They then had traveled to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), landing at Oahu, before finally crossing the Pacific to San Francisco, where they disembarked at the end of July 1846.¹⁰

6. “Various Extracts from the American Papers,” *Millennial Star* 9 (July 1, 1847): 200. The *Star* reported that the Battalion came in on January 9, but they did not arrive until January 29, 1847.

7. “Mormon Battalion,” *Millennial Star* 10 (January 1, 1848): 23–24.

8. “Letter to Elders Hyde, Pratt, and Taylor,” 97–98.

9. “Good News from Afar,” *Millennial Star* 9 (February 1, 1847): 38–40.

10. See Kenneth N. Owens, *Gold Rush Saints: California Mormons and the Great Rush for Riches* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 31–42. Owens has drawn from several accounts, both published and unpublished, to tell the story of the Mormons participating in the gold rush.

The *Brooklyn Saints* settled in San Francisco or traveled farther north, founding the town of New Hope on the Stanislaus River. Brannan left shortly, crossed the Sierra Nevada, and found the Mormon vanguard company on June 30 on the Green River, but Brigham Young would not follow him back to California. The vanguard party arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley on July 23–24, 1847, where the pioneers began to build a city. The Mormon Battalion sick detachment came a few days later. The *Star* also reported that “the other 350 soldiers are discharged in California.”¹¹

The *Millennial Star* did not say that many remained in California to work for a season and bring back supplies to Salt Lake City. A few of the battalion’s members, including James S. Brown, Azariah Smith, and Henry Bigler, helped build a mill on the American River at Sonoma for John Sutter and his partner, James Marshall. The publication did inform its readers on November 1, 1848, “The discovery of gold on the branches of the Sacramento river seems to be confirmed by many witnesses. . . . It is reported that this discovery was made by the Mormons.”¹² Probably later Watt heard that on January 4, 1848, Marshall had discovered the glittering metal, and nearby were James S. Brown and Henry Bigler, both returning members of the battalion. The Mormons finished the mill, but they received no pay from Sutter, who was ruined by the gold mania. In April the battalion boys left California for Utah. Most of the *Brooklyn Saints* had preceded them.¹³

The *Millennial Star* reported the progress of Young’s vanguard company as they left their temporary home in Nebraska and journeyed to the Great Salt Lake Valley much more thoroughly than the other events. About seven months after Brigham Young and his party arrived, the *Millennial Star* published a Thomas Bullock letter that briefly described their journey, their arrival, ploughing, and irrigation of their newly planted crops.¹⁴ In November 1848, John Taylor, who came with a later company, arriving on October 5, wrote, “The valley in which we reside lays between the Great Salt Lake and the Utah lakes, in latitude 41E longitude 112E. It is from 60 to 70 miles long and from 20 to 30 wide; there is a range of mountains running on each side of the valley north and south, the tops of which are perpetually covered with snow.”¹⁵

The best information about the Mormons’ new settlement until Watt observed it came from the first three general epistles of the First Presidency, as reprinted in the *Millennial Star*. They told him that food was scarce in the valley: “In the former part of February, the bishops took an inventory of the breadstuff in the valley, when it was reported that there was little more

11. “Letter from Elder Orson Hyde,” *Millennial Star* 9 (September 15, 1847): 271.

12. “November 1, 1848, Salt Lake,” *Millennial Star* 10 (November 1, 1848): 330

13. See Owens, *Gold Rush Saints*, chaps. 2–5, pp. 57–199.

14. “Letter from Thomas Bullock,” *Millennial Star* 10 (March 15, 1848): 116–17.

15. “Address to the Saints,” *Millennial Star* 10 (November 1, 1848): 324–26.

than three-fourths of a pound per day for each soul, until the fifth of July.” The crickets also appeared, “but large flocks of plover have already come among them.” That report must not have discouraged Watt. The *Star* also described the valley and the church organization by the settlers: “The valley is settled for twenty miles south and forty miles north of the city. The city is divided into nineteen wards . . . and over each is ordained a bishop.”¹⁶ Both the second and third general epistles expressed concern about the Saints going after gold in California.¹⁷ Ute Indians, resisting Mormon settlement of the richest part of their homeland, had also caused problems: “The Utah Lake Indians . . . have been very hostile, killed many scores of our cattle, stole horses, waylaid and shot at the brethren at Utah.”¹⁸ Even with these negatives, Watt anxiously looked forward to crossing the ocean and the plains and coming to Utah. Much had taken place in the years he was gone. He had kept track of the actions of the church through the *Millennial Star*. Now he could share the experiences of the main body of his religious compatriots.

On September 29, 1851, Watt and his family traveled the last few miles down Emigration Canyon and rolled into Salt Lake City. It appeared to be only a little more than a mile from the canyon, but the distance was deceiving, for they found that more than five miles separated the two spots. As they descended from the bluff, they also saw several creeks dotted with cottonwood trees that wound through the valley. The city was partially surrounded by a wall composed of adobe brick, built for protection against the Indians but never completed. They also noticed that water flowed through the ditches that lined the streets.

In the temple block, workmen were busy constructing the Tabernacle, located on the southwest corner. To the east of that building was the Bowery, an open structure, covered with branches that shaded the audience during a hot summer day. To the north and a little east, the builders had started to construct the temple. The other large buildings in the city included a three-story tithing office, the Council House used for church and government administrative meetings, and Brigham Young’s white house. When Watt arrived, there were three stores: Livingston and Kinkead, Reese Brothers, and Thomas S. Williams.¹⁹

In 1855 Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, Frenchmen who had been all over the world, came to town. They commented on the cleanliness of the city and the industriousness of the people: “The masons were at work building,

16. “Important from the Great Salt Lake,” *Millennial Star* 11 (August 1, 1849): 227–32.

17. “Important from Salt Lake City,” *Millennial Star* 12 (April 15, 1850): 118–22.

18. “Third General Epistle of the Presidency,” *Millennial Star* 12 (August 1850): 241–46.

19. There are a number of early articles about the experiences of the immigrants. See “Fifth General Epistle,” *Millennial Star* 13 (July 15, 1851): 209–13; “Ethan Crandall Diary,” *Minnesota History* 20 (September 1939): 348–49. Also see “Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” September 30, 1855, pp. 5–7, LDS Church Archives.

carpenters squaring timber, gardeners digging or watering, . . . gunsmiths making or repairing rifles; in a word, all descriptions of artisans and workmen of every kind."²⁰ These workmen were helping to build the various public and church buildings in this new city.

The Mormon pioneers had discovered nothing they perceived as permanent Indian dwellings, but the Utes, Shoshones, and Gosiutes who lived in the basin of the Great Salt Lake used seasonal, temporary structures for shelter. When they first arrived, the Mormons built a fort to protect themselves against the Native Americans; it was located between Third and Fourth South and Third and Fourth West in present-day Salt Lake City. When they had no trouble, they moved out to lots and built their homes. They looked upon the Indian presence as an opportunity to convert and civilize. However, the Indians did not feel and act benevolently toward these invaders. Mormon settlers were taking their land, and in return they thought they could take, or steal as far as the Mormons were concerned, cattle and other things as a sort of tax. The newcomers reacted to thieving Indians violently, killing several of them. In 1851 Brigham Young, realizing that violence would not effect a solution, advised the settlers to treat the Indians kindly and not kill them, but he also encouraged settlers to defend themselves and authorized the territorial militia to pursue and punish Ute and other Indian warriors.²¹

During the first war with the Utes, members of the Pahvant band on the lower Sevier River in October 1853 massacred a party of seven, led by Captain John W. Gunnison of the Corps of Topographical Engineers. Gunnison had assisted in exploring Utah Lake and the Jordan River.²² Finally, Chief Walkara tired of war and sought peace. The war ended on May 11, 1854, when Brigham Young and Walkara met on Chicken Creek in Juab County and settled the hostilities.²³

To farm, these new settlers diverted the mountain streams into canals, which brought the water to their fields. The Mormons, plagued by crickets that devoured crops, fought them as best they could, usually uselessly.²⁴ From 1855 to 1857, grasshoppers devastated the acreage, and most Utah farmers from Springville to Brigham City lost major portions of their coming harvest. Joseph Eckersley, who lived in Lehi, said that the grasshoppers were so plentiful that they darkened the sun for hours as they flew past in vast clouds.²⁵ Watt undoubtedly lost most of his garden during that time. Utah had grasshoppers many times after that but never as many as during

20. See Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, *A Journey to Great Salt Lake City* (London: W. Jeffs, 1861), 197.

21. Thomas G. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1996), 109–115.

22. "Journal History," October 26, 1853, pp. 1–4.

23. *Ibid.*, May 30, 1854.

24. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place*, 102–3.

25. Joseph Eckersley, Journal and Reminiscence, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

those years of the early and mid-1850s. Everybody, including the Watt family, suffered from lack of food.

In the midst of these years of want and starvation, the Mormons also experienced a period of religious reform: the Mormon Reformation. Jedediah Grant, a member of the First Presidency, preached a sermon about repentance and baptism for the remission of sins in Kaysville in September 1856, and most of the congregation accepted his challenge and were rebaptized. Thereafter, Brigham Young and especially Grant fervently called the people to repent from their sins, and many others followed into the waters of baptism. Watt must also have been rebaptized, although there is no record of it.²⁶ Later, Grant formulated the catechism, which included questions on prayer, stealing, taking intoxicating drink, and paying tithes. The visiting teachers interrogated their families each month about these issues. The zealous part of the reformation ended with Grant's death on December 1, 1856, a few months after it had started.²⁷

Immigrant trains bringing new converts continued to come into Utah during the late summer and early fall months.²⁸ In 1856 the Mormon leadership designed handcarts that could be pulled, thus allowing more people to come across the plains less expensively. A disaster struck two handcart companies and a wagon company that year. The James G. Willie and Edward Martin handcart companies and the W.B. Hodgett and John A. Hunt wagon train with more than a thousand people left Florence, Nebraska, late, and early snowstorms hit them in Wyoming, causing hardship and death. When Brigham Young received word of their plight, he dismissed the October General Conference and called for volunteers to carry food and provisions into Wyoming to help. Watt was in the Tabernacle when Young made his announcement. He did not rush to their aid, but let younger and more able men do that.²⁹

Shortly after their rescue, Watt recognized Josiah Rogerson's mother, who had been a member of James Fielding's congregation at Vauxhall Chapel in Preston, England, and more recently a member of the Edward Martin handcart company, as she and her family were driving along Main Street. Rogerson said that "soon we were unloaded and taken into his adobe building—his home. . . . We had a dinner there, that Sunday, warm and steaming, the relish and enjoyment of which we cannot describe as it was

26. There is a record of only a few of the people who were rebaptized during this period.

27. See Paul H. Peterson, "The Mormon Reformation" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1981).

28. For the best description of the handcart experience, see LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion: The Story of a Unique Western Migration, 1856-1860* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1960).

29. For the most recent version for the Martin and Willie Company's see Will Bagley, "One Long Funeral March: A Revisionist's View of the Mormon Handcart Disasters," *Journal of Mormon History* (Winter 2009) 35: 50-116.

the second taste of light bread and the first real meal of vegetable stew that we had tasted since leaving Iowa City five months before.”³⁰ They probably enjoyed a delightful evening, and Watt undoubtedly asked many questions about people in Preston and the Rogersons’ horrific journey.

After the Mexican War, this small group of religious outsiders was now in the United States. At first the Mormons petitioned Congress for territorial status. Then, realizing the limitations and conflicts they would have in a territorial government, the Mormon leadership agreed to draft a constitution for the State of Deseret. It would have encompassed all of present-day Utah, most of Nevada, and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, California, New Mexico, and Arizona. Senator Stephen A. Douglas from Illinois presented the Mormon petition for statehood. During this period, Congress was bickering over whether the new territories should be free or slave. The congressmen tabled the Mormon request for statehood. They passed an all-encompassing program called the Compromise of 1850, allowing California into the union as a free state and creating the territories of New Mexico and Utah without mentioning slavery. The Mormons lost their grandiose vision of Deseret as a large geographical state. With a territorial government, they also lost their ability to govern their own affairs. President Millard Fillmore appointed a combination of outsiders and local people to fill the territorial offices.

The Utah War began with the creation of the Utah Territory in 1850. President Millard Fillmore appointed Brigham Young governor of the territory and superintendent of Indian affairs. To take care of the judicial system, Fillmore appointed judges who were non-Mormons. Many of these did not understand the Mormons, especially the practice of polygamy. Judge Perry E. Brocchus was the first to upset and belittle the Mormons. Convinced that the territory was controlled by church elite, Brocchus denounced the practice of polygamy in a conference. Young demanded an apology. Brocchus shortly thereafter left Utah, spreading news in the East about the sins of the Mormons.³¹

The tremors created by federal officials continued with the appointment of William Wormer Drummond as a judge. He annulled the proceedings of the Mormon-controlled probate courts and accused the Mormons of being in opposition to the United States. As the controversy intensified, Drummond returned to the Midwest and began his own campaign against the Saints and everything they practiced, especially polygamy. These so-called runaway judges convinced the federal government that the Mormons were in rebellion and something needed to be done.³² President James

30. “Martin’s Handcart Company Had Troubles the Whole Way,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, November 29, 1914, 7.

31. Norman F. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict, 1850–1859* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1960), 22–25.

32. Donald R. Moorman with Gene A. Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons: The Utah War*

Buchanan appointed a new governor, Alfred Cumming, a Georgian, and dispatched an army by mid-June of 1857 to support him.³³

On July 24, 1857, Mormons had gathered up Big Cottonwood Canyon to celebrate the tenth anniversary of their coming into the Great Salt Lake Valley. Watt was also in the canyon, reporting the events for the *Deseret News*. During the day, four riders delivered the message that the U. S. Army was traveling to Salt Lake City to put down a rebellion. Twenty-five hundred men of the United States Army were on their way by command of President Buchanan, escorting Alfred Cumming.³⁴ Brigham Young ordered the Mormons to arm themselves. He declared martial law and called out the militia, the Nauvoo Legion, which he asked to build defenses so they could withstand the federal army. Watt was in Salt Lake City until the end of August, when he volunteered for the militia and left for Wyoming. He took with him his two guns, one a revolving pistol, and the other a .38 caliber, eight-inch-barrel, Volcanic lever-action pistol. He intended to use them, if necessary, to defend his life and the Mormon people.³⁵

In the meantime, the federal army plodded on its way toward Utah.³⁶ By the end of August, the army was at Devil's Gate on the Sweetwater River on the high plains of Wyoming, closely watched by the Mormon troops. Watt joined eighty-five citizen soldiers of the Fourteenth Ward, and the Nauvoo Legion leadership assigned them to the first division under Colonel Robert Burton.³⁷ Burton had taken the cavalry as far as Devil's Gate, but the infantry did not venture that far east. By the end of September, the Burton unit encamped two miles south of Fort Bridger in southwestern Wyoming.³⁸

Watt wrote three letters to his wife Alice (only two are extant), describing what was happening. In the first letter, dated October 5, 1857, he mentioned that the United States troops had camped at Hams Fork about

(Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992) 6–15.

33. LeRoy R. Hafen, *The Utah Expedition, 1857–1859: A Documentary Account of the United States Military Movement under Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston, and the Resistance by Brigham Young and the Mormon Nauvoo Legion* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 319.

34. Moorman and Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons*, 20.

35. The Volcanic lever-action pistol is still in the family.

36. For the point of view of one of the soldiers, see Jesse A. Gove, *The Utah Expedition, 1857–1858: Letters of Capt. Jesse A. Gove, 10th Inf., U.S.A., of Concord, N. H. to Mrs. Gove, and Special Correspondence of the New York Herald*, New Hampshire Historical Society Collections 12 (Concord, NH: New Hampshire Historical Society, 1928). For another article on the federal side, see William P. MacKinnon, “‘Unquestionably Authentic and Correct in Every Detail’: Probing John I. Ginn and His Remarkable Utah War Story,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (Fall 2004), 322–42. The most recent account is a documentary edition by William P. MacKinnon, *At Sword's Point: A Documentary History of the Utah War to 1858*, part 1 (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark, 2008).

37. Nauvoo Legion records, 1852–58, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

38. General Daniel Wells and Brigham Young exchanged numerous letters. See Daniel Wells, incoming correspondence, and Brigham Young, outgoing correspondence, Brigham Young papers, LDS Church Archives.

thirty-five miles north of Fort Bridger. In the meantime, Mormon cavalrymen under Lot Smith had burned three supply trains.³⁹ Watt wrote that five from his company had reported that they had burned seventy-six wagons loaded with clothing and arms. He mentioned that “a company of our boys rode right into their corral, and even struck the guards with their leathers, slapping their animals, and yelling like Indians but all to no purpose.” He told Alice that a detachment of “our boys” reported that the “enemy is on the alert, their animals are well secured, hobbled and chained, making it imposible to stampede them.” He did not “know what the future will reveal but it is certain that all will go well for Israel. . . . The Lord will give us the victory over our enemies and strike Terror to the hearts of those who thirst for the blood of the prophets of God.”⁴⁰

Watt had not outfitted himself for the cold mountain weather. He had left the valley with a pair of boots, but he had done more walking than he expected, and now he needed new boots because the ones he had were “parting soul from the body,” which must have caused lameness. He asked Alice to have brother Godsall make him a new pair, and “if you can by any means send them to me.” He also told her that he needed a new pair of mittens. He had brought a pair of gloves that he had received from his mother. He had exchanged those for a pair of warm mittens, but he had lost one mitten and given the other away.⁴¹

He commented that “camp life in the capacity of soldiers is a hard life, . . . there are scenes highly interesting and amusing the one somewhat ballances the other. We have plenty of beef and flour, but no salt, nor cooking utensils.” He was sure she would find it interesting to see how they cooked their food. He told her that for plates they used wood “chips when we can find them.” Watt said, “The meat is roasted over a large camp fire, each man holding his steak on the pointed end of a green willow stick, the cooked portion is then cut off. The remainder is cooked again in the same way and so on until it is all cooked and eaten.” The men mixed flour with water, rolled it into yard-long lengths around a stick, and “then held before the fire until cooked.”⁴²

Watt had not even had time to harvest his garden: “If you can hire any person to gather my garden, do so.” He was not sure when he would return, so “if you can trade peaches or flour for wood do so, it may be winter before I get home.” Her added burdens concerned him: “Our present circumstances

39. For the story of the suppliers and the damage the Utah militia did, almost bankrupting them, see Raymond W. and Mary Lund Settle, *War Drums and Wagon Wheels: The Story of Russell, Majors and Waddell* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966).

40. George D. Watt to Alice Whittaker Watt, October 5, 1857, holograph, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives.

41. *Ibid.* I can find no brother Godsall in the territory. There was a John Godsall in Iowa City, who was ready to come to Utah.

42. *Ibid.*

throws a little more weight upon you than otherwise would have been, but my Dear have a mans heart in you for a little while, and you can do much to help me while I am fighting for your safety and for the good of Israel." He was convinced that "the Lord will show his power at his own time and in his own way, I am satisfied that all depends upon our obedience to our leaders, faith in our God and union among ourselves." Convinced that they were defending truth and right, his prayer was "may God help me to be brave and valient in the defence of everything that is dear to me and to you." His request was "give us your prayer." In his parting sentences, he sent his love to her father and mother, and his mother, and "all the little boys and girls. God bless and preserve us both in life until we again shall meet amen."⁴³

Some of the U. S. Army units began to move toward northern Idaho. Colonel Burton and his troops followed them. The federal troops later retreated back to their original Wyoming campsite. Two weeks later, Watt reported that he had traveled constantly. He had been "traveling over fortie bottoms and saleratus plains, climbing mountains and threading canyons, passing through hair breadth escapes." He had once been riding in a baggage wagon when it had gone down a "deep declivity, the wagon and its load, with 4 loaded guns all around me being turned upon me, smashing the wagon bows to a thousand pieces." He had also narrowly escaped being blown up by gunpowder when "Geo. Spencer one of our mess had his powder flask in his pocket with a 100 rounds of powder in it, also some matches which ignited and exploded the powder blowing the flask into a thousand pieces, enveloping every person near him in smoke and flame."⁴⁴ Spencer amazingly must not have been injured in that explosion.⁴⁵

General Wells now ordered Burton's unit south to a defensible point in Echo Canyon on the main transportation artery to the Great Salt Lake Valley. By the middle of October, Watt was only about thirty miles away from Salt Lake City or, as he said, "about one days ride from the beloved City and the dear association in it." The Nauvoo Legion, with Watt's participation, had burned Fort Bridger and also the forage around the fort so the army could not feed its animals. Watt had "escaped every danger without scratch or hurt, how great are the mercies of our God!" He thought that they had thoroughly confused and befuddled their adversary: "Our tracks may be seen for hundreds of miles around our enemies camp."⁴⁶

Watt thought it would take only five hundred men to defend Echo Canyon. He saw the dams that his fellow legionnaires built and the rock placements at the top of the canyons, where they could shoot at the passing

43. Ibid.

44. George D. Watt to Alice Whittaker Watt, October 14, 1857, holograph, Watt Papers.

45. If this story is true, it is surprising that George Spencer was not killed along with all those around him.

46. Watt to Alice Whittaker Watt, October 14, 1857.

soldiers. He said, "They have grade rock defences with port holes on every point commanding a good rifle range of the road for a distance of over a mile, they have dug ditches clear across the canyon, and have it so fixed that they can stop the water and make a dam large enough to drown both horse and rider." Watt was convinced that the Mormons could withstand the U.S. Army: "All hope of their ever passing this point is totally extinguished." So there "is nothing now left for them but to lay down their arms, and search for winter quarters, retreat eastward, or remain where they are, to perish in the snows of winter."⁴⁷

He told Alice that he was ready to stay for some time: "How long we may stay at this point I cannot say, neither does it concern me, I am on the lords business, I am just as ready to return again close on the enemies borders, as to return home." He continued, "Tho I presume my home is as dear to me, and your sweet society, as home and a wifes society can possibly be to any mortal, it is to defend such endearments that I am here, ready if necessary to pour out our blood like water for them, for our holy religion, and for national liberty." He said that such feelings had inflamed his own bosom "since I have been out on this campaign to such an extent as to create a longing desire to meet the enemy, face to face and with deadly weapons try the contest."⁴⁸

He had received no mail from home, which concerned him. He was "perfectly ignorant as [to] the state of your health and the health of your friends." She had not sent him any letters. "I have stood with cracking ears expecting every next name would be G. D. Watt but as yet I have not had the satisfaction of receiving a single line from my friends. . . . I must say that I felt for a time forsaken and friendless." Letters had come for almost every man in the unit except him. "I had just come in from a long and tedious days journey, was hungry—weary—and worn—and dirty, and on the top of this no letter for me, I felt for a moment as tho nobody cared for me; but I knew better at the same time." He said he knew she had added responsibilities and then begged her to "drop me a line." He advised Alice not to have brother Godsall make that pair of boots since "my feet is on the ground and has been, but I can get along now, I think until the end of the campaign."⁴⁹

Brigham Young ordered Colonel Burton's weary troops to return to Salt Lake, and they were home by October 18.⁵⁰ Watt returned to Salt Lake City with the other men, and he probably hurried to have brother Godsall or someone repair his boots just in case he was ordered back up the canyon. On October 25, he was in the Tabernacle reporting the meetings again. Many of Burton's men returned to the canyon about that time, but Watt did not. A few weeks later, a large snowstorm hit the area, which kept the U.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Robert T. Burton, Diary, October 18, 1857, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

S. soldiers in their winter quarters for the rest of the season. The Nauvoo Legion released most of its men to return home. Watt remained in the valley until February 1858. For another six weeks after that, he was probably again in the mountains.⁵¹

In the meantime, Colonel Thomas Kane had approached President Buchanan about mediating the end of the war, and Buchanan agreed. Not a church member, Kane had known the Mormons since mobs expelled them from Nauvoo. Kane traveled on a ship to Panama, quickly crossed the isthmus, and caught another ship to California. When he arrived in Utah, he convinced Brigham Young that he should travel to the soldiers' camp. Upon arriving at the camp, he persuaded Cumming that the Mormons would accept him as governor, and the two of them left to visit with Young. Kane was a catalyst to end the war and bring peace.⁵²

The agreement between Young and Cumming allowed the army to enter Great Salt Lake Valley but not camp there. Cumming guaranteed that the army would not molest the Mormons, but Young, not entirely convinced, ordered the Mormons to vacate Salt Lake City and move south.⁵³ He wanted each ward north of Provo to leave as an entire body and assigned each one a special location from Provo south to Fillmore. The movement into Utah Valley began during the latter part of March. Watt remained in Salt Lake City through the April conference and was still there until sometime near the end of May, when the other clerks in the office moved. He by then had three wives, three children, and his mother to transport. The move south involved an estimated thirty thousand people.⁵⁴ The population of Provo swelled from four thousand to as many as fifteen.⁵⁵ Watt probably camped on the Provo River bottoms near the town of Provo. The Mormons had planted their crops in Salt Lake, and some of the men returned to take care of them periodically.

The U.S. Army marched through a deserted Salt Lake City on June 26. General Albert Sidney Johnston marched his troops south and west of the city and there established Camp Floyd in Cedar Valley, about thirty-five

51. Even though there are meetings in the Tabernacle and on Temple Square, Watt is not in attendance. He does not take any reports in that period of time. I surmise that the Nauvoo Legion had called him back to active service up the canyon.

52. For the heroics of Thomas L. Kane, see Richard D. Poll, *Quixotic Mediator: Thomas L. Kane and the Utah War* (Ogden UT: Weber State College Press, 1984). A more recent book is Matthew J. Grow, *"Liberty to the Downtrodden": Thomas L. Kane, Romantic Reformer* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

53. See Richard D. Poll, "The Move South," *BYU Studies* 29 (Fall 1989): 66–88.

54. For a Mormon point of view on the expedition, see Richard D. Poll and Ralph W. Hansen, "Buchanan's Blunder, the Utah War, 1857–1858," *Military Affairs* 25 (Fall 1961), 121–31. For the estimate, see Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 186. In this book, Arrington estimated that thirty thousand people moved into Utah Valley and points south. In *Brigham Young, American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 266, he estimated thirty-five thousand.

55. See Poll, "The Move South," 80.

miles south of Salt Lake City, near the town of Fairfield. A few days after the passage of the army, President Young and his family left Provo and returned to the Beehive and Lion Houses. Others straggled north when they were able. The Mormon pioneers had suffered famine and now had left their homes out of fear of an invading United States Army.⁵⁶ It is not known when Watt returned, but it is possible he brought his families back by the middle of July. He was in his usual place when General Conference opened on October 6. His garden had prospered at least in part. He exhibited some cabbages at the Deseret territorial fair that year.⁵⁷

Federal judges continued to confront the Mormons. In 1858 Judge John Cradlebaugh, who had come with Governor Cumming, attempted to bring to justice men who had committed three murders in Springville. He finally asked General Johnston for men to accompany him to Provo, where he accrued a mass of evidence against the mayor and even arrested him for obstructing justice but later released him. The tension between the army and the local people intensified because of Cradlebaugh's activities. Finally, both the army and Cradlebaugh left, retreating back to Camp Floyd without satisfying the courts of justice.⁵⁸

During the Utah War, a wagon train comprised primarily of Arkansans led by Alexander Fancher and John T. Baker journeyed south through Utah. On September 11, a Mormon militia unit from Cedar City, along with a few Indians, attacked the party at Mountain Meadows about thirty-five miles west and south of Cedar City, killing possibly 120 emigrants.⁵⁹

In 1859 Cradlebaugh with a contingent of soldiers traveled to Mountain Meadows, where they beheld the clothes and bones of those who had been murdered. Watt observed that same site less than a decade later. Cradlebaugh, protected by the army, took his investigation to Cedar City. Attorney General Jeremiah S. Black ordered the federal troops back to Camp Floyd, forcing Cradlebaugh to end his investigation. Two decades later, one man—John D. Lee—was punished for crimes committed at Mountain Meadows.⁶⁰ The army remained at Camp Floyd, later Crittenden, until 1861, when President Abraham Lincoln called the men back to the East Coast to fight in the Civil War.⁶¹ Watt would have heard much about Judge Cradlebaugh, whom Mormon leaders considered a nemesis, while he worked in the president's office.

56. Moorman and Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons*, 55–60.

57. "Journal History," October 6, 1858.

58. Moorman and Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons*, 102–22.

59. For an analysis of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, see Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1950); and Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002). The most recent work is Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Glen M. Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

60. Moorman, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons*, 123–50.

61. For background material on the recall, see Alexander, *Utah the Right Place*, 138.

In 1862 a California volunteer unit under Colonel, later General, Patrick Edward Connor replaced the regular army men. Connor established a military base at Fort Douglas, a few miles east of Salt Lake City. He came to Utah ostensibly to protect the immigrants on the overland trail from Indians but also wanted to control the Mormons. Watt encountered an example of the way Connor kept his eye on the Mormons in 1866. Brigham Young asked him in August to investigate a small “lumber shanty” north of the Beehive House on the bluff. Watt walked up there from his home and found a woman by the name of Mrs. Ryan with her children. She told him that the family received a hundred dollars a month from the United States Army at Fort Douglas for taking care of the place and reporting their observations of what was taking place at President Young’s office.⁶²

Connor encouraged prospecting because he felt that it would attract a great number of non-Mormons to Utah Territory, thus undermining the power of the Saints. When a group of Mormons discovered silver in Bingham Canyon, Connor helped them organize a mining district. Some of Connor’s soldiers also discovered silver and gold ore in the Wasatch Mountains. Connor established a smelter at Stockton, west of the Oquirrh Mountains. By 1870 the smelter had produced more than a million dollars worth of gold, silver, and lead. The establishment of mines in the Salt Lake Valley inspired Watt to write an economic essay concerning agriculture and supply and demand.⁶³

The Native Americans continued to trouble the non-Indian population of Utah. The end of the war with Walkara’s Utes did not erase conflicts between settlers and the Indians. The federal government desired to gather the Utes on the Uintah Reservation. To convince them to move, Oliver H. Irish, Utah superintendent of Indian affairs, negotiated with the Utes to give up the rights to their lost lands.⁶⁴ Most moved, but a small number of the northern Utes under the leadership of Antonga (Black Hawk) began to make forays against the whites, stealing cattle that they sold in New Mexico and killing white men in some instances.⁶⁵ The men of central and southern Utah joined the Nauvoo Legion and fought the Indians in this war. Watt did not join the militia to fight the Indians during the Black Hawk War in the 1860s, although he knew about the conflict since it affected everyone in the territory. In 1866 James A. Ivie walked into the office and wanted the president to read what he had done in the war, so Watt carefully wrote it

62. “Testimony Concerning Instructions of Officers at Camp Douglas,” August 9, 1866, holograph, Young Papers.

63. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place*, 148–49.

64. After World War II, the Indian Claims Commission ordered payment for the confiscated lands. In the negotiations initiated by Irish, the two sides had settled for a dollar amount that extended for more than fifty years, but the Senate of the United States never ratified it.

65. For the best book on the subject, see John Alton Peterson, *Utah’s Black Hawk War* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998).

down in shorthand and then transcribed it for Young. Ivie related how he, some men from Round Valley, and a group of Fillmore men chased a band of Indians who were stealing cattle and horses to the Sevier River. When he returned to his settlement Captain Henry McArthur issued orders “to know no friendly Indians until peace was made.” He mentioned that the next morning an Indian came into town alone. The bishop asked Ivie and another man to get him. Ivie rode out and spotted the Indian running away and shot him. He justified the death by saying that he had done it to protect the settlement and he was only doing his duty. At the end of the fourth page Watt wrote, “The above is exactly as James A. Ivie made the statement to me.”⁶⁶ The war finally ended in 1867, when Black Hawk sued for peace.

Non-Mormons came only slowly to Utah and the Salt Lake Valley. The first Protestant minister, Norman McLeod, a Congregationalist, arrived in January 1865. McLeod, who was a bitter anti-Mormon, found enough Protestants in the city to establish a Sunday school. To raise money for a church, he lectured in California and Nevada. Early in 1866, he constructed his church in Salt Lake City. In March 1866, he left the city, and his Sunday school declined drastically.⁶⁷

The first Catholics came to Utah in 1862 with the California Volunteers, although the first permanent Catholic priest, Edward Kelly, did not arrive until 1866, and Brigham Young allowed him to use the old Tabernacle for mass. Young helped Father Kelly purchase land for a convent, where he expected to establish a Catholic school.⁶⁸ He soon began to remodel an adobe building on the property. One morning he found a note that threatened, “I warn you not to proceed any further in this business. Your chapel will not be allowed to stand.” Father Kelly went to Brigham Young to find out what was happening. Young had Watt read the note aloud. Then he told Kelly that this letter had not come from any of his people. Both Watt and Heber C. Kimball concurred. Young assured Kelly that he should proceed with his church and school: “You are welcome to stay and labor here as long as you choose. And when you are ready to commence building your school, I will give you \$500.”⁶⁹ Sometime in December, the archbishop transferred Kelly back to California, and Salt Lake City had only itinerant Catholic priests until sometime in the 1870s.

During the latter part of 1867, Daniel Sylvester Tuttle, the Episcopalian missionary bishop for Montana, Idaho, and Utah, arrived in Salt Lake City

66. “Statement of James A. Ivie at President Young’s Office,” August 13, 1866, holograph, Depositions, Young Papers.

67. Robert Joseph Dwyer, *The Gentile Comes to Utah* (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971), 35–36.

68. For background on the relationship between Kelly and Young, see James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), 340–41.

69. “Concerning Brigham Young,” *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*, March 14, 1867, 1.

and established a church, the first permanent non-Mormon church in Utah. He called upon Brigham Young, and they had a pleasant conversation. Tuttle commented, "We were most civilly and courteously treated in this call, but I was not asked to call again." He also established a school, St. Mark's, with sixteen pupils on July 1.⁷⁰

Territorial governors continued to have problems with their Mormon citizens. Some of them, like Alfred Cumming, diligently tried to get along with the Mormons. Stephen Harding, a former church member during the Kirtland period, drew rancor and loathing from the Mormons. In 1860 President Abraham Lincoln appointed him as the new governor of Utah Territory. At first the Mormons had great hope that Harding would understand and be fair to them, but he detested them and their teachings of polygamy. He wanted to prosecute the Mormons with the Morrill Act, which outlawed bigamy in the territories.⁷¹ Harding sent to Congress bills to limit the power of the Mormon-controlled probate courts, allow the marshals to summon any people they desired for jurors, and have the governor appoint all militia officers. Watt witnessed all of this and shared at first the hope and later the aversion for Harding. The Mormons, becoming disgusted with the governor, protested. In 1863 they held a mass meeting in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, petitioning for Harding's removal. Watt took shorthand reports in that meeting. Albert Carrington, another clerk, read the messages from the journals of the legislature that outlined Harding's supposed crimes.⁷²

Even though President Lincoln viewed the Mormons as misguided, he perceived them as loyal to the union and did not actively seek prosecution of the Morrill Act. As he told T. B. H. Stenhouse, when he was a youth in Illinois and they were clearing a field and found a log too large to move, they "ploughed around it." That was what he intended to do with the Mormons.⁷³ He kept that pledge while he was president. Shortly after that statement, Lincoln made Harding the chief justice of the Colorado Territory and appointed James Duane Doty, who earlier had been Utah superintendent of Indian affairs, to be the next governor. The Mormons approved of Doty because of his favorable relations with them previously.⁷⁴ While Doty was governor, Watt became the foreman of the grand jury in March 1865, thus fulfilling a civic responsibility.⁷⁵

70. See Daniel Sylvester Tuttle, *Missionary to the Mountain West: Reminiscences of Episcopal Bishop Daniel S. Tuttle, 1866—1886* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 110–13; also see Dwyer, *The Gentile Comes to Utah*, 34–36, 152.

71. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place*, 147.

72. "Journal History," March 3, 1863, 1–3.

73. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place*, 147.

74. Dwyer, *The Gentile Comes to Utah*, 13–16.

75. James Doty to George D. Watt, March 21, 1865, microfilm of holograph, James Doty correspondence, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City.