INTRODUCTION

Brigham Young's accomplishment in bringing his 1847 Mormon Pioneer Company across 1,100 miles of prairie, mountain, and desert to Salt Lake Valley without death or serious accident required leadership, planning, competence, cooperation—and sacrifice. But as a demonstration of those qualities it pales by comparison with his accomplishment in the next two decades of bringing to the valley in organized companies seventy thousand other Mormon converts from the eastern and southern United States and Europe. Even that was far from enough. There remained the challenge of finding places for all these immigrants to live, getting them there, and weaving them into the fabric of what was at one time a vast inland Mormon empire.

This book is the eyewitness account of a little-noticed but important part of the latter effort. In its pages will be found abundant evidence of the qualities demanded by Mormon pioneering, as well as the human weakness and questionable judgment that sometimes plagued it.

The land to which the nineteenth century Moses led his chosen people was harsh: little rain; thin, often-alkali soil; 95 percent of the land mountainous or desert unsuitable for habitation. With the nearest supporting civilization more than a thousand miles away to the east and nearly that far to the west, it was going to take a special kind of people to survive here.

But there were compensations. Out of those mountains came streams of clear water that, the Mormons soon found, could soften the hard-baked soil and bring forth sustenance. The land was vast: in an area that included most of the Great Basin and Colorado Plateau and stretched north in the Snake River drainage as far as the Lemhi River and south to the lower Virgin and across the desert as far as San Bernardino, there was room enough. And because the region was so harsh and remote, it contained no American or European competitors. Except for Indian tribes that the Mormons would ultimately push aside, there were no neighbors to trouble or
be troubled by. For a people whose peculiar beliefs, economic aggressiveness, and political cohesion had raised opposition that drove them from the church’s birthplace of upper New York to Ohio and then, in turn, to Missouri, Illinois, and finally the Great Salt Lake, that was no small thing.

The heart of what would become the Mormon empire is the Great Basin. Gloria Griffen Cline in her book *Exploring the Great Basin* describes it well as “the land of interior drainage.” Stretching five hundred miles west from Utah’s Wasatch Range and high plateaus to the Sierra Nevada and eight hundred miles north and south between latitudes 34 and 42 degrees, the Great Basin encompasses some 210,000 square miles. Geologists include it in the Basin and Range Province for its thirty-five north-to-south mountain ranges and the alluvial valleys below. Near the eastern edge, the Great Salt Lake lies as a shallow, salty remnant of the vast Lake Bonneville that until some fifteen thousand years ago covered most of western Utah.

Except where high mountain ranges trap moisture, the Great Basin is arid country. Vegetation ranges from the creosote, yucca, cactus, and mesquite of southern areas to broad expanses of sagebrush and shadscale at mid-elevations, pinyon and juniper on foothills and in higher valleys, and pine, fir, and spruce on the highest mountains. Human life was hard in such country, but Native Americans had roamed the area for ten thousand years or more. When Brigham Young arrived with his Mormon band, Shoshones occupied the northern part of the basin, while Gosiutes lived in western, Pahvant Utes central, and Southern Paiutes southwestern Utah. Northern Utes and Southern Utes roamed the Colorado Plateau but spilled into the basin’s eastern valleys. The more fortunate clustered around such water holes as Utah, Sevier, and Little Salt Lakes in Utah and Pyramid and Humboldt Lakes in Nevada, where they supplemented their diets with fish and waterfowl. The Utes with their horses more effectively hunted large game animals—and some achieved a greater measure of prosperity by capturing and

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trading slaves along the Spanish Trail. But for many, if not most, life in the Great Basin depended on rabbits and other rodents, birds, insects, pine nuts, and the great variety of plants they had learned to eat. Anthropologists and ethnographers have never been able to estimate with any precision the Indian population of the Great Basin prior to arrival of white settlers. One thing they do know—which the journals in this book confirm—is that many Indian bands had been severely decimated by white men's diseases before Brigham Young arrived.

This, then, was the place the Mormons would put down roots to stay. Samuel Brannan, who in 1846 had shepherded a shipload of Mormons around Cape Horn to California, tried to persuade Brigham that California would be a far more desirable place to settle. So did some veterans of the Mormon Battalion, recruited during the Mexican War, who had marched from Fort Leavenworth to California. Brigham paid no attention. "God has appointed this place for the gathering of His Saints," he declared. "We have been kicked out of the frying-pan into the fire, out of the fire into the middle of the floor, and here we are and here we will stay. God . . . will temper the elements for the good of His Saints; He will rebuke the frost and the sterility of the soil, and the land shall become fruitful. Brethren, go to, now, and plant out your fruit seeds. . . . We have the finest climate, the best water, and the purest air that can be found on the earth; there is no healthier climate anywhere."4

But for the Saints to stay in this appointed place, Brigham had to learn what was out there. Where in this vast, to him largely unknown region could be found the right combinations of water, soil, timber, grazing, building stone, and crop-producing climate that would make settlement possible?

Others had been here before, of course, but none with the same goal as Brigham's—that of building permanent homes. A few Spanish traders, slavers, or miners may have penetrated the Great Basin and/or the Colorado Plateau in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Father Escalante of the 1776 Dominguez-Escalante expedition, which tried to establish a trail from Santa Fe

to Monterey, left a remarkable account, describing in some detail the Uintah Basin, Utah Valley, and much of the route Brigham wanted to establish to southern California. The expedition’s cartographer, Bernardo de Miera y Pacheco, made the first maps of the area, reasonably accurate ones for the times, though with the major mistake of having the Green River flow into Sevier Lake. But neither the report nor the map was available to Brigham Young.

The mountain men who trapped much of the area for beaver in the two decades before the Mormon arrival in Salt Lake Valley acquired extensive knowledge of the region. But, except for the rambling, somewhat incoherent description Jim Bridger gave the Mormon Pioneer Company at his fort in southwestern Wyoming in 1847 and brief conversations along the trail with Moses Harris and Miles Goodyear, Brigham benefitted little from their knowledge. Few left contemporary written records. Peter Skene Ogden kept diaries and wrote reports back to his Hudson Bay Company employers about the region, and the redoubtable Jedediah Smith left an invaluable record of his two trips the length of the Great Basin en route to and from California in 1826 and 1827. But there is no evidence that Brigham saw either man’s report.

Others who knew parts of the Great Basin well were travelers on the Spanish Trail. During the 1830s and 1840s traders from Santa Fe drove mule trains loaded with woolen goods over the trail to California and returned with huge herds of horses and mules, up to four thousand at a time. Of the trail’s 1,120 miles, some 450 crossed what is now Utah, entering the area south of the La Sal Mountains and looping in a great arc as far north as Castle Valley before exiting near the Arizona-Nevada-Utah border. Of the comparatively few reports written by travelers on that trail, apparently none were known to Brigham Young.

Others came. In 1833–1834, Capt B. L. E. Bonneville, on leave from the U.S. Army, led a large, military-style expedition into the region. The party split, Bonneville going north to the Snake River and Oregon. His lieutenant, Joseph Walker, led a forty-man party to explore the Great Salt Lake region, where they killed buffalo and loaded up on the meat, then struck west through the heart of the Great Basin to reach California, following the

Humboldt River that became so essential to the California Trail. Washington Irving’s book, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, describes the region, but the book wasn’t published until 1868. In 1841, John Bidwell and John B. Bartleson, without a guide but determined to reach California, cut the first wagon tracks through the Great Basin. From Soda Springs in what is now Idaho they made their way down the Bear River, around the north end of the Great Salt Lake to the life-saving spring at the base of Pilot Peak on the present Utah-Nevada border, and on to the Humboldt. They learned much of the thirsty character of the Great Basin, but Bidwell’s description of it would not see publication in time for the Mormons to use it.

One whose knowledge may have been useful was the Catholic missionary Father De Smet, who had wandered through part of the region in 1841. He wrote of a meeting with Brigham Young on November 19, 1846, at Winter Quarters on the Missouri River near Omaha, where the exiled Saints, after crossing Iowa from Nauvoo, were waiting out the winter before pushing on to the Great Salt Lake. “They asked me a thousand questions about the regions I had explored,” he wrote, “and the valley [Great Salt Lake Valley] which I have just described to you pleased them greatly from the account I gave them. [He had not seen it but had learned about it from others.] Was that what determined them? I would not dare assert it. They are there!”6 His advice may have been helpful but certainly didn’t “determine them.” The decision to settle in the Great Basin had already been made. And finally there was Lansford Hastings, the California promoter who, guided by mountain man Jim Clyman, rode east across the Salt Desert in 1846 and persuaded immigrants to take his shortcut to California, with disastrous consequences to that year’s Donner party. Brigham had access to Hastings’s wildly creative *Emigrants’ Guide to Oregon and California*, but found it of little use.

What Brigham did have, and had carefully studied, was the report of John Charles Frémont’s second expedition. In the mid-nineteenth century, the country was caught up in the conviction that its destiny was to Americanize the continent all the way to the Pacific coast and as far north as it could manage. Foremost apostle of Manifest Destiny in Congress was the powerful senator Thomas

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Hart Benton, who also happened to be father-in-law to a young army officer named Frémont. Five western exploring expeditions led by Frémont resulted, ranging from brilliant to disastrous. From Brigham’s point of view, the second expedition was most important. In 1843, guided by Kit Carson, Frémont crossed South Pass and descended the Bear River to Great Salt Lake. There he hoped to find the secret of the Buenaventura, the storied river that flowed west to the Pacific. Of the Great Salt Lake he wrote: “It was generally supposed it has no visible outlet; but among the trappers, including those in my own camp, were many who believed that somewhere on its surface was a terrible whirlpool, through which its waters found their way to the ocean by some subterranean communication.” That Frémont himself believed in the existence of a waterway to the Pacific is clear from subsequent entries. In southern Oregon he wrote: “In our journey across the desert, Mary’s lake, and the famous Buenaventura river, were two points on which I relied to recruit the animals, and repose the party. Forming, agreeably to the best maps in my possession, a connected water line from the Rocky mountains to the Pacific Ocean, I felt no other anxiety than to pass safely across the intervening desert to the banks of the Buenaventura.” And a few days later, at the edge of the Black Rock Desert in northwestern Nevada: “We were evidently on the verge of the desert which had been reported to us; and the appearance of the country was so forbidding, that I was afraid to enter it, and determined to bear away to the southward, keeping close along the mountains, in the full expectation of reaching the Buenaventura river.”

He didn’t reach it, of course; the closest thing to the “Buenaventura” was the muddy Humboldt River, which heads not in the Rockies but the East Humboldt and Ruby Mountains of northeastern Nevada and ends not at the Pacific but in the salty marshes of the Humboldt Sink in west-central Nevada. By the time Frémont had circled the Great Basin, traveling through southern Oregon and western Nevada before crossing the Sierra Nevada to California, crossing the Mojave Desert to the springs at Las Vegas, up the Virgin, which he called “the most dreary river I have ever

seen," up the Santa Clara ("prettily wooded with sweet cottonwood trees"), to Mountain Meadows ("rich in bunch grass, and fresh with numerous springs of clear water, all refreshing and delightful to look upon"), across the mountains to the Sevier and on north to Utah Lake—by the time he had seen all that—he knew the truth. There at Utah Lake he finally acknowledged what the mountain men had long known: there was no Rio Buenaventura. Waters of the vast region between the Wasatch Mountains and the Sierra Nevada had no outlet. The region was a great basin; the map he submitted with his report so named it.

His findings were important to the Mormons. After a mob murdered Joseph Smith, the church's founder and leader, in the Carthage Jail on June 27, 1844, it became increasingly clear the Latter-day Saints had to abandon their city of Nauvoo on the banks of the Mississippi and, in fact, leave the state of Illinois. Carefully the leaders studied where to go. Frémont's report, published in 1845, was reprinted in part in the Mormon journals *Nauvoo Neighbor* and *Millenial Star*. Brigham Young and his senior advisors spent hours studying the report and its map; on December 20 Franklin D. Richards, in a meeting in the unfinished Nauvoo Temple, read it aloud to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Its descriptions of the area's vastness, its mountain streams and fertile soil, and particularly its emptiness confirmed a decision that had already been made. Despite speculation about going to Texas or Oregon or Vancouver Island, Joseph Smith as early as August 6, 1842, recorded in his history, "I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains. . . . [S]ome of you will live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains." And on June 23, 1844, when Joseph fled Nauvoo, before returning to his martyrdom in the Carthage Jail, he sent back word by Porter Rockwell to bring horses for his escape and "be ready to start for the great Basin in the Rocky Mountains."

Men of the Mormon Battalion were told in August 1846, before

11. Ibid., 6:548.
beginning their two-thousand-mile march to southern California, that the Mormons would settle in the Great Basin.

So they came, 143 men, 3 women, and 2 boys in the Pioneer Company of 1847. With all they had learned from Frémont and others, they came with an attitude best expressed by William Clayton in his trail journal. After hearing a negative report about the Great Basin from mountain man Moses Harris, whom they met at South Pass, and a "very imperfect and irregular" description from Jim Bridger two days later, Clayton wrote: "We shall know more about things and have a better understanding when we have seen the country ourselves."

Brigham lost no time in doing just that, declaring that he intended to have "every hole and corner from the Bay of San Francisco to the Hudson Bay known to us." Within weeks, explorers looking for the best combinations of soil, water, timber, grazing, and mill sites had searched out valleys to the north as far as Cache Valley, south to Utah Valley, southwest to Cedar Valley, and west to Tooele Valley. Settlement quickly followed. Within days of his arrival in the valley in September 1847, Perrigrine Sessions went a few miles north to find pasturage for the church's cattle herd and established Sessions Settlement, later to be renamed Bountiful. Provo was established in March 1849, Tooele later the same year, and Manti that fall after the Ute chief Walker (the version of Wakara, his Ute name, that the settlers usually used) invited the Mormons to settle Sanpete Valley. Brigham personally chose the site of Ogden in 1849 and sent settlers there the next year. Brigham City followed in 1851.

But Brigham was nothing if not expansionist. For the hordes of converts he knew would gather to Zion—seventy thousand of them, it turned out, by the coming of the railroad in 1869—he had to look to settlement far beyond the Wasatch Front. Pushing out settlements to far places would establish the borders of the Mormon empire and, he mistakenly hoped, keep outsiders away. And there was the matter of an outlet to the sea.

13. Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, chronological collection of clippings and other information, typescript and microfilm, Archives of the Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, July 20, 1847 (hereafter cited as Journal History).
Just when he conceived the idea of a Mormon corridor to southern California is uncertain. But almost from the time of arrival in Salt Lake Valley he was looking in that direction. In August 1847 a party of Mormon Battalion veterans, some of whom were present when gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill, had returned to the valley by way of the California Trail along the Humboldt. Among them was Jefferson Hunt. By mid-November Hunt, with a small party, was on the way to southern California, sent to bring back seeds, tree cuttings, and livestock. Relying in part on Frémont's description of the route and intercepting the Spanish Trail in central Utah, they completed the task and returned by mid-February—though with only one bull and one hundred cows of the forty bulls and two hundred cows he had obtained in California. A month later, on March 21, twenty-five Mormon Battalion veterans led by Captain H. G. Boyle left San Diego for Salt Lake Valley, bringing not only one hundred mules but also seeds and cuttings in a wagon that cut the first wheel tracks on the Spanish Trail.

The knowledge these men brought of what became the Southern Route was useful, but for settlement of the country to the south much more specific information was needed. As early as March 9, 1849, in a long letter to Orson Pratt, who was presiding over missionaries in Great Britain, Brigham declared his intentions: "We hope soon to explore the valleys three hundred miles south and also the country as far as the Gulf of California with a view to settlement and to acquiring a seaport." By November of that year he was ready to act, and with his control of the Legislative Assembly events moved quickly. At his request, the assembly in its November session voted to commission Parley P. Pratt to assemble an exploring party of fifty men, outfit it with the necessary wagons and teams, raise the needed finances, and secure the provisions. All this Pratt was instructed while he sat there as a member. The expedition would be called the Southern Exploring Company. Its instructions were to explore south to the rim of the Great Basin, over the rim to the Virgin River country, and on to the springs called Las Vegas.

Pratt's account of those days says much about his own energy and enterprise as well as the effort required to put down Mormon roots in Salt Lake Valley:

I devoted the fore part of the summer [of 1849] to farming; but, my crop failing, I commenced in July to work a road up the rugged canyon of Big Canyon Creek [today’s Parleys Canyon]. I had the previous year explored the canyon for that purpose and also a beautiful park [now called Parleys Park], and passes from Salt Lake City to Weber River eastward, in a more southern and less rugged route than the pioneer entrance to the valley [the route followed in 1847 and subsequently over Big and Little Mountains and down Emigration Canyon].

I soon so far completed my road as to be able to obtain a large amount of fuel and timber. In November I ceased operations in the canyon and broke up my mountain camp and returned to the city.

I now received a commission from the Governor and Legislative Assembly of the State of Deseret to raise fifty men, with the necessary teams and outfit, and go at their head on an exploring tour to the southward.15

Selecting and recruiting that many men and accomplishing everything else requested would seem to be a formidable task. Incredibly, by November 17, barely a week after his assignment, Parley reported that except for a couple more wagons and some provisions he was ready to go.16 That was a little premature. Of the $238.50 he raised to finance the expedition, $186.02 was donated at a meeting in the bowery the following day.17 Two days later, Parley met with the First Presidency and received final instructions, including that they would go no farther than Las Vegas and be back in the spring. As a final act, the First Presidency blessed Parley and David Fullmer with safety for the journey.18

By November 23 the explorers had gathered at the recently completed adobe house of John Brown in what is now Murray.

“Our company,” Pratt reported, “had 12 wagons, 1 carriage, 24 yokes of cattle, 7 beees [to be killed for food], number of

15. Parley P. Pratt (son), ed., Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt (1938; reprint, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985), 336–38. With fees of fifty cents for a one-animal or seventy-five cents for a two-animal wagon; ten cents per draught, pack, or saddle animal; five cents per head for loose stock; and one cent per sheep, Pratt's Golden Pass toll road was used by some six thousand emigrants the summer of 1850, earning approximately $1,500. With some of those funds, Pratt left the following March for Chile to open Mormon missionary work in South America, and for the next decade the road was used only sporadically.
17. Ibid., November 18, 1849.
18. Ibid., November 20, 1849.
[riding] horses and mules, 38. Average in flour, 150 lbs. To each man; besides crackers, bread and meal. One brass field piece; firearms; ammunition in proportion."19 As John Brown's journal recorded, "We were all well armed and quite a quantity of Indian trade &c."

It was a diverse group of men, many selected for special skills. William W. Phelps, a surveyor and engineer, who was made topographical engineer; Ephraim Green, chief gunner, whose wagon would pull a brass cannon; Robert Campbell, an experienced secretary and clerk, whose wagon would carry the odometer; Dimick Huntington, Indian interpreter. John Brown, William Henrie, and Joseph Matthews, hunters with Brigham's Pioneer Company of 1847, would perform the same service on the Southern Expedition. Besides these three, five other members of the Southern Exploring Company—Rufus Allen, Sterling Driggs, Benjamin Stewart, William Vance, and William Wadsworth—had entered Salt Lake Valley in July 1847. The company's oldest man was Samuel Gould, seventy-one; the youngest, Alexander Lemon, eighteen; the average age about thirty-five. Pratt was forty-two.

At the November 23 meeting, the company voted to organize as had the Pioneer Company of 1847, with a captain of fifty and five captains of ten. By unanimous vote, Parley P. Pratt was named president of the expedition, with William W. Phelps and David Fullmer counselors and John Brown captain of fifty. The full roster as organized November 23 was as follows:

Parley P. Pratt, president; William W. Phelps and David Fullmer, counselors; John Brown, captain; Robert Campbell, clerk; W. W. Phelps, engineer

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<tr>
<th>First Ten</th>
<th>Second Ten</th>
<th>Third Ten</th>
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<tr>
<td>Isaac Haight, captain</td>
<td>Joseph Matthews, captain</td>
<td>Joseph Horne, captain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parley P. Pratt</td>
<td>John Brown</td>
<td>Alexander Wright</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Wadsworth</td>
<td>Nathan Tanner</td>
<td>David Fullmer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rufus Allen</td>
<td>Sterling G. Driggs</td>
<td>William Brown</td>
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<td>Chauncey West</td>
<td>Homer Duncan</td>
<td>George Nebecker</td>
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<td>Dan Jones</td>
<td>William Matthews</td>
<td>Benjamin F. Stewart</td>
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<td>Hial K. Gay</td>
<td>John D. Holladay</td>
<td>James Farrer</td>
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<td>George B. Matson</td>
<td>Schuyler Jennings</td>
<td>Henry Heath</td>
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Samuel Gould  John H. Bankhead  Seth B. Tanner
William P. Vance  Robert M. Smith  Alexander Lemon

Fourth Ten
Ephraim Green, captain
William W. Phelps
Charles Hopkins
William S. Willis
Andrew Blodgett
William Henrie
Peter Dustin
Thomas E. Ricks
Robert Campbell
Isaac Brown

Fifth Ten
Josiah Arnold, captain
Christopher Williams
Stephen Taylor
Dimick B. Huntington
John C. Armstrong
Isaac B. Hatch
Jonathan Packer

The vacancy of three men in the Fifth Ten was to be filled by recruits from the new Sanpitch settlement in Sanpete Valley. Actually, five men, Madison D. Hambleton, Gardner G. Potter, Edward Everett, John Lowry, Jr., and Sylvester Hewlitt, joined there, but two of the explorers would be sent home after reaching the Little Salt Lake, keeping the expedition at fifty men as planned.

So, outfitted, provisioned, organized, and in high spirits, they started. By the time they returned, the men with wagons, according to their amazingly accurate odometer, would have traveled 526 miles. Half the party would have ridden an additional 190 miles on horseback to explore the Virgin River region. The trip would be more arduous than they imagined—the snow deeper, the temperatures colder (as low as 30 degrees below zero), some of the terrain more rugged, the oxen less able to keep their strength on what grass they managed to find under the snow. Because of failing teams, dwindling supplies, and the unpromising character of the 120 miles of desert between what are now St. George and Las Vegas, they cut short their trip, going no farther south than the Virgin. On the return trip, dangerously low on supplies and bogged down by heavy snowstorms, half of the party remained snowbound for seven weeks at the present site of Fillmore in Pavant Valley, while the other half mounted the strongest horses and mules and pushed ahead toward Utah Valley and safety. Even that strategy almost failed. The mounted party ran out of food and were saved when Parley Pratt and Chauncey West rode ahead fifty miles the last two days to reach Fort Utah and send back a rescue party.
But despite obstacles and hardships, described matter-of-factly but compellingly in their journals, they completed their mission, bringing back to Brigham Young detailed knowledge of the country that led to much of its settlement. On his dash home Parley carried with him the expedition’s official report, chiefly a summary of the journal kept by the company’s clerk, Robert Campbell. During two days in the snowbound camp near present-day Fillmore, Parley dictated it to Campbell, who wrote it, as his journal reports, on a cold, snowy night in an open wagon “laying on my belly & a hundred other positions.” Parley reached Salt Lake City on February 1, reported to Brigham, and submitted the official report to the Territorial Legislative Assembly February 5.

The report lists at least twenty-six desirable locations for settlement. To almost all of them, Brigham sent colonists, many within two or three years. It recommended, for example, Peteetneet Creek for a settlement that would become Payson. Yohab (Juab) Valley was “in every way calculated for a city Settlement.” Nephi was settled there. Parley noted the presence of coal near the present site of Salina, the rich bottomlands on the Sevier where Richfield would be built, and reported that river was “apparently navigable, for small steamers.” Those who know the Sevier must conclude he was thinking of very small steamers. He was less than enthusiastic about the Virgin River country, calling it “a wide expanse of chaotic matter . . . a country in ruins,” but noted three thousand and four thousand acres of desirable land in the twin valleys where St. George and Washington would be built. Of the expansive meadows, good soil, cedar, and tall pines in the present area of Beaver, he wrote: “This is an excellent place for an extensive settlement.” And so it went. In the official report, printed in full in the final chapter of this volume, where Parley recommended settlements we have inserted the names of cities and towns built there, together with the dates of their founding.

The most immediate and direct result of the expedition’s findings was the dispatching of a mission to settle Parowan and subsequently Cedar City to exploit the iron ore in the region. Of all the places he saw, Parley was most enthusiastic about Cedar Valley. He describes its “soil mostly black loam very rich,” streams running out of the mountains “nearly level with the surface of the ground” and easily used for irrigation, a delightful climate that in what must have been an unusual December was “frosty but not
extreme... snowy but not much. But the best of all," he wrote, "remains to be told. Near this large body of good land on the southwestern borders are thousands of acres of cedar constituting an almost inexhaustible supply of fuel... In the centre of these forests rises a hill of the richest Iron ore, specimens of which are herewith produced." Cedar Valley, together with Little Salt Lake Valley to the north, he wrote, "constitutes a field of rich resources capable of sustaining and employing 50,000 inhabitants at present, and 100,000 eventually... Taken as a whole we were soon convinced this was the 'first-rate good' place we were sent to find as a location for our next Southern colony." Brigham was not one to delay; within the year 119 men, 310 women, and 18 children were called and on their way to the Iron Mission, arriving to establish Parowan January 13, 1851. From Parowan many moved the following year to found Cedar City, closer to the iron ore.

Another direct result was the settlement of Fillmore, intended to be the territorial capital. Based on Parley's report, Brigham had the Territorial Assembly create Millard County on October 4, 1851, and later that month led a group of lawmakers to select a site for the capitol building. The first settlers to arrive camped the first night precisely where Parley's snowbound wagon company had dug in on Chalk Creek to spend part of the winter, and by February 1852, just two years after those miserable shelters were dug, had built thirty houses and a schoolhouse, all arranged as a fort.

A third early result was the calling of missionaries to the Indians in southern Utah. Parley's report and especially Campbell's journal speak of the friendliness of the Indians, particularly along Ash Creek and the Santa Clara, where Indians pleaded with the explorers to come settle with them and teach them Mormon farming methods. Brigham responded, sending John D. Lee and others in 1852 to establish Harmony on Ash Creek, the first settlement over the rim of the Great Basin. Other missionaries arrived in 1854, built Fort Harmony, and from there Jacob Hamblin and others moved down to establish Santa Clara, where they would teach and assist the Indians. Several towns in the now-booming Virgin River basin stem from that small beginning.

But while the official report led to the practical results of the Southern Exploring Expedition, the human drama, the interplay of relations among the explorers and between them and the Indians, a sense of their immense labor and suffering and of the spiritual
strength and commitment that sustained that effort, can only come from the journals. While other members of the exploration wrote reminiscences years later, the only known contemporary journals are collated here. There are four of them, by men of widely differing temperament. Most important is that of Robert Lang Campbell, twenty-four years old at the time he was elected secretary and clerk of the expedition. Meticulously, with an odometer attached to his wagon, he recorded to a quarter of a mile the distance traveled each day. He recorded daily temperatures, often both morning and night. He recorded the width and depth of streams, the nature of soil, the abundance or lack of grass or sage or timber. He wrote every day, except for one unexplained three-day gap while in the snowbound wagon camp and again when he was on a four-day exploration to find a way out of their snowbound predicament. From his journal comes much understanding of the habits and temperament of Indians encountered, as well as much understanding of the explorers themselves. The official report of the expedition, also in Campbell's handwriting, was primarily based on his journal.

The journal of John C. Armstrong, thirty-six, the company's bugler, is more eloquent and particularly valuable because of its portrayal of human emotions, especially his own. But it is less precise and, because of several lengthy lapses, less reliable. John Brown, twenty-nine, captain of the expedition, was the most experienced explorer in the group, the man who found a pass over the most difficult mountain the company encountered. His journal is less detailed than Campbell's, but clear, accurate, and particularly compelling in its dispassionate description of the difficulties they encountered and the effort required to overcome them. More than the others, his journal reflects awareness of and concern for the condition of the expedition's livestock. Isaac Chauncey Haight, thirty-six, kept the briefest journal, but he wrote it faithfully and it occasionally helps clarify questions of terrain and campsites.

What these journals describe, aside from knowledge of the land they were sent to discover, is what has to be as unusual an exploring expedition as the West ever knew. These were men sent out in winter, suffering frequent and heavy snowstorms and temperatures often below zero. In those conditions, picture individuals, sent to ride into the mountains to find a way over snow-choked passes, composing a song about what they found and singing it as they rode into camp to report. That happened twice
on the expedition. Picture them writing original hymns and poetry and teaching them to the camp. Picture them, almost every night, chilled and sometimes frostbitten after a day of exhausting labor, holding camp prayers, singing, sometimes even sermonizing, before crawling into their bedrolls. They agreed from the beginning to conduct themselves as befitted Latter-day Saints and were frequently reminded, as, for example, when Isaac Haight on December 30 recorded an admonishment about “lay­ing aside our folly and living in such a manner that we should not be ashamed to have Angles [sic] come into our midst and behold our acts.”

Or, for a different mood, picture them preparing an elaborate banquet, 250 miles from the nearest settlement, in a celebration that included hours of speech-making. Or, in their snowbound camps, holding daily lyceums of learning. Or dancing cotillions—even appointing one of their number, Campbell, to teach others the steps.

The journals describe Indian customs and attitudes. Except for a brief and harmless skirmish on the Santa Clara, relations were friendly. While tensions were building to a point of violence and death in Utah Valley to the north, the Indians of central and southern Utah welcomed the explorers, traded with them, invited them to come and settle. Only once did a journal suggest that a missing oxen perhaps was stolen by Indians. By contrast, on the way home, Campbell’s journal notes that “fa [William] Henry leaves his weak ox with the Indians.”

What comes most clearly from the journals, though, are images of immense labor. Of struggling five days to cross the mountains between the Sevier River and Little Salt Lake Valley, shoveling head-high snow to climb precipitous ridges, hauling oxen up by ropes tied to their yokes so the oxen could then pull up the wagons. Or of the wagon company struggling homeward over Scipio Pass after six snowbound weeks: unable to move through four feet of crusted snow, they fashioned their wagons into sleds but abandoned that when the snow got too soft. The men shoveled trails and retraced their steps to drive the livestock cattle forward. They melted snow for the cattle to drink, but many died anyway. They spent fourteen days going twenty-seven miles.

But readers can discover this and much more for themselves. The journals follow.