

# SPANISH TRACES



## From the Editors

The Notice of Intent for the Comprehensive Management Plan for the OSNHT has been published, and a 120-day period of public hearings (“scoping”) has begun. We encourage you to participate in the hearings in your area and make your opinions known to the CMP leadership.

Simply enjoying historic trails isn’t sufficient. Growth and development along the trails have increased the importance of preservation efforts. Utah President Al Matheson raises the issue of whether sensitive sites should have public exposure, due to the very real possibility of vandalism and destruction. The effort in Nevada to prevent the Virgin River diversion project from destroying a segment of the trail appears to have been successful, but new concerns have been raised about the effect of development in the Las Vegas area on archaeological resources in the OST corridor. The question of whether OSTA should have a Preservation Officer was brought up at the Barstow Board Meeting. We hope it will be discussed in greater depth in the future. While we are

all preservationists, we nevertheless need to establish a concerted effort at preservation. We note that the Oregon-California Trails Association takes this so seriously that they rank the Preservation Officer high on the OCTA masthead; and they commit real money to preservation. This requires someone with the overview to set priorities. It is not something that can be accomplished entirely on the state or personal level. Possibly OSTA is not quite ready for this, but it should be an important goal.

We heard several fabulous talks at the OCTA 2005 Convention in Salt Lake City, including David Bigler’s presentation on the Mountain Meadows Massacre. We have included the talk, together with an interview with Will Bagley on the same topic, and an article about our recent travels to several sites associated with the massacre. We realize that these articles will be controversial and we strongly encourage our readership to send in written responses.

We are looking forward to the annual conference in Green River and hope to see you there.

*Deborah and Jon Lawrence*

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# THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL ASSOCIATION

The Old Spanish Trail (OST), one of America's great long distance trade routes, is now our country's fifteenth National Historic Trail. From 1829 to 1848, the OST took traders and pack mules on a six-week trek from northern New Mexico to Southern California, where New Mexico's woolen goods were swapped for horses and pack stock raised on California's ranchos. Many took the trail—traders, frontiersmen and trappers, a handful of hardy families moving West, military expeditions, and Indian guides.

The mission of the Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA) is to study, preserve, protect, interpret, and promote appropriate use of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail (OSNHT). OSTA promotes public awareness of the OST and its multicultural heritage through publications, a website, and interpretive activities, by encouraging research, and by partnering with governments and private organizations. We encourage you to join OSTA, help in its preservation, and increase appreciation of the multicultural heritage of the American Southwest.

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## Visit the OSTA Website

<http://www.oldspanishtrail.org>

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## In Memoriam: Dorothy R. Parker

Many trail and Southwestern history buffs joined in a memorial service for Dorothy R. Parker at St. Bede's Episcopal Church in Santa Fe on November 19, 2005. Dr. Parker died in Santa Fe on October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Dorothy relocated from California to Santa Fe in 1979. She worked for several years as a tour guide before moving to Albuquerque to pursue a PhD in History at the University of New Mexico. After receiving her doctorate, she taught at Eastern New Mexico University in Portales. When Dorothy retired, she returned to Santa Fe where she occasionally taught college courses and served as a docent at the Palace of the Governors. She chaired the Docent Council for the Museum of New Mexico system for two years.

An active member of the Salida del Sol Chapter of the Old Spanish Trail Association, Dr. Parker served on the chapter board and program committee. She did extensive research on the horse and mule trade on the trail. Her presentation on this topic at the Seventh Annual Conference of OSTA was reported in the Fall 2000 issue of *Spanish Traces*. Her most recent contribution to *Spanish Traces* was a biographical sketch of the noted Southwestern historian, Marc Simmons, in the Winter 2003 issue.

Dorothy herself was profiled in the *Spanish Traces* "Know Your Historians" series by Pat Kuhlhoff in the Spring 2004 issue. Dr. Parker was among those instrumental in securing the location for the Old Spanish Trail marker in Abiquiu at Bode's store. She had first met members of the Bode family when she taught at St. Mary's College in Moraga, California, before moving to New Mexico.

She is survived by three sons and six grandchildren. Dorothy will be missed in New Mexico and the Southwest by many who respected her historical scholarship and her desire to educate people about the important and fascinating history of the region. Her passing leaves a leadership void in the Salida del Sol Chapter of OSTA.

*Willard Lewis*



*photo used with permission*

## Contributors

**Will Bagley** is an independent historian living in Salt Lake City who specializes in pioneer Mormon history and the history of the overland trails. He is an active member of the Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA). His book *Blood of the Prophets* won the 2003 Western History Association Prize.

**David Bigler** is an independent historian specializing in Mormon pioneer history. He is the author of the award-winning *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1846-1896*; the editor of *The Gold Discovery Journal of Azariah Smith* and *A Winter with the Mormons: The 1852 Letters of Jotham Goodell*; and the coeditor of *Army of Israel: Mormon Battalion Narratives*. He is a past president of OCTA.

**John Krizek** is a retired public relations executive who is currently a member of the OCTA Board. Recently, he has been working on an educational supplement to the DVD version of his video *Forgotten Journey*.

**John Sedey** is Trail Boss for the Historic Trail Flyers. The group's recent aerial tour of the OST was their sixteenth trail flyover.

**Robert Youker** is retired from the World Bank and is an independent trainer and consultant. He is an OSTA member who has contributed to past issues of *ST*.

# News from the Trail

## Colorado Director's Report

Doug Knudson spent a week last July riding horseback on a wagon train ride on the North Branch of the OST. Summit Trails, Inc., led the trip along a highland route from La Garita (South of Saguache) over Cochetopa Pass, through the old Ute Agency, and down into the Powderhorn area on Cebolla Creek.

Knudson traveled with Aaron Mahr, Sarah Schlanger, Judy Knudson and Forest Service archeologists Ken Frye and Vince Spero to see the Cochetopa Pass road, topography, and sites along the way. The planning team had visited North Pass earlier, when Cochetopa was snowed in. They saw clear evidence of ancient Indian (perhaps Ute) campsites, stage stations, old power wires, and monuments. At the suggestion of Carol Sperling of Great Sand Dunes National Park, the Knudsons accompanied Mahr and Schlanger to the park, where trail routes and the planning process were explained and questions about interpreting the trail at the park were discussed. Doug will work with Sperling on a site bulletin about the OST.

The Knudsons attended the memorial resolution for and testimony about Judge James Robb in the Colorado House of Representatives on January 23, 2006. In addition to the full House delegation, about 80 people,

including Maggie Robb and her children and grandchildren, were present. The memorial resolution is very eloquent. The North Branch Chapter (Grand Junction) has erected a monument in a city park commemorating the contributions to OSTA of Judge James Robb.

*Doug Knudson*

## Interpretation and Marking

In October, minor adjustments were made to the outdoor OST exhibit at the Piedra Lumbre-Ghost Ranch Education and Visitor Center. Center Coordinator Arin McKenna reported good visitor interest in the exhibit. On a visit to Abiquiu to inspect the new interpretive sign on Bode's store, Knudson talked with Dennis Liddy, the store's owner, who reported on public interest in the sign and the OST. The panel is beautifully mounted and easily visible.

The Trail Partners program now includes at least 40 organizations and enterprises, each displaying OST mini-exhibits and/or dispensing OSTA brochures. California has the fewest participants.

*Doug Knudson*

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## Vereda del Norte Chapter

New officers of the chapter are Pat Richmond (President), Max Lara (Vice President), Stuart Bryan (Secretary), and Suzie Off (Treasurer). The chapter's top priority is the West Fork of the North Branch, including a search for evidence of its use and improved interpretation. The chapter members are frustrated that the West Branch has been removed from National Historic Trail status.

In late November, a few chapter members and five Forest Service and BLM employees met with Aaron Mahr and Sarah Schlanger near Monte Vista, CO, to address this concern. The following issues were raised: Is it appropriate to restrict the acceptable dates-of-use to after 1829, when travel along major portions of the trail occurred earlier in the era of Mexican control? Is the restriction to travel along the entire length of the trail appropriate? Travel along the West Branch was part of a process where trade goods were taken from Taos to Fort Rubidoux where they were exchanged for furs which were traded for livestock from California. Denying the validity of such a pattern for NHT status seems arbitrary. Why is the Carson-Brewerton expedition not included as documented use of the North Branch through the San Luis Valley? Why is it that the maps of the area dating from the 1850's to the 1870's, which document the West Branch as a pre-existing trail, cannot be used as evidence for NHT status? Is it simply because the maps are later than the 1850 cutoff?

We are determined to identify and interpret the West Branch whether or not it receives NHT status. Signs can use a mule logo as long as they are not identical to the NHT sign. The meeting demonstrated that the best source of knowledge about the trail comes from local chapter members, who should be included actively in the planning process.

*Pat Richmond*



## New Mexico Report

At the end of September, Claudio Chacón and Pat Kuhloff took the Armijo Flyover group on a field trip to Abiquiu to see parts of the OST and to view the new wayside exhibit on the side of Bode Store. On Saturday evening, Sarah Schlanger from the BLM spoke to the group about the trail taken by Antonio Armijo from Santa Fe to Farmington in 1829. On October 1, members of the Santa Fe Westerners, the Santa Fe Trail Association, and the Salida Del Sol chapter of OSTA jointly rode the Cumbres and Toltec Railroad from Chama to Osier and back. The Salida del Sol Chapter had their last meeting of the year on November 19 with the Santa Fe Trail Chapter. John Ramsey gave a talk and a slide show on the trail between Velarde and Taos.

*Pat Kuhlhoff*

## Nevada Director's Report

The scoping period for the Southern Nevada Water Authority's application for rights of way to develop and transport water from the Muddy and Virgin Rivers has been completed. OSTA's voice protesting the inundation of a portion of the OSNHT in Halfway Wash was heard loud and clear. The scoping report included comments sent from OSTA and from concerned members. This insures that the issue will be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement, which is now under development. Unofficially, I have been told that the dam will be moved farther north in the wash to protect the trail.

My involvement with this issue has led me to become OSTA's representative on the Virgin River Conservation Partnership. This group includes representatives of agencies and organizations who are concerned about development along the Virgin River. We meet every month or two to update each other on the latest information from our organizations, as well as to discuss issues of the day pertaining to the river and surrounding areas.

On a personal note, I spent five days hiking in the Maze District of Canyonlands National Park. I had wanted to see Spanish Bottom (where some folks say a variant of the OST crossed the Colorado River). The hiking portion of the trip ended at Spanish Bottom from where I took a jetboat back up river to Moab. It was a wonderful place that has seen a lot of history, regardless of whether the OST passed through there.

*Carol Corbett*

## Nevada Chapter Report

Red Rock Learning Center, a BLM sponsored outdoor education center, is being created in Red Rock National Conservation Area. Liz Warren is a member of the core planning team for the history curriculum. The OSNHT is one of the trails that is incorporated into that project. The Red Rock Visitor Center is installing new interpretive exhibits, and Nevada chapter members Carol Corbett, Hal Steiner, and Liz Warren were consulted regarding the proposed new wording for the Old Spanish Trail component.

The Las Vegas BLM has completed the text for eight trail kiosks along the OSNHT; the kiosks are currently under construction.

Liz Warren has nearly completed a report to the Bureau of Reclamation on the history of the Las Vegas Wash, with an emphasis on the Armijo route of 1829-30. The research will be made available to the Southern Nevada Water Authority. Hopefully, the effort to control wash erosion also will prevent obliteration of historic remains. The Clark County Heritage Museum will include information on the OSNHT in interpretive displays and brochures.

*Liz Warren*



## Tecopa Chapter Report

The Tecopa Chapter is making an inventory of sites along the 30-mile segment of the Emigrant Pass Corridor of the OST. Our hope is to get these sites on the National Register of Historic Places. We have come to this conclusion through much discussion with the CMP team, Joan Oxendine, a retired BLM archeologist, trail historians, national OSTA board members, the BLM-Las Vegas archeologists and others. There is much interest in discovering where the trail crossed the Amargosa River, and in filling in the gaps between the sites and segments cited in the studies of Hal Steiner, Liz Warren, and Cliff Walker. According to the archeologists, there are sensitive sites and segments that should not have public exposure. A thorough inventory can clarify which should be promoted to the public. Although a register listing is not a protection device, it is a start.

The Chapter has received bids from the UNLV staff at the Harry Reid Center for Environmental Studies and from Discovery Works, a cultural resources management group based in Long Beach. We will submit our funding request to the Park Service this month. We are pursuing private matching funding.

Cynthia Kienitz and Travis Edwards from the Tecopa chapter, and George Ross, a Native American historian, continue to assist Brad Mastin in obtaining GPS coordinates of traces of the

trail. They have been successful in filling in some gaps and they have found several ancient Native American footpaths.

The California Valley grazing improvements are on the back burner. The range conservationist from the BLM-Needles office has stated that the office is abandoning the drilling of wells and will be piping water from an existing well throughout the allotment.

*Cynthia Kienitz*

## William Workman Chapter

The annual meeting of the William Workman Chapter of OSTA was held in November at David Fallowfield's home in Penrith, Cumbria. It was preceded by a board of directors meeting. Bill Ramsay, President, and all five directors were present. David Fallowfield, Secretary, distributed his written report in which he stated that four newsletters had been produced during the year, one more than last year. He has continued to maintain contact with National Officers in the U.S. on a regular basis, and members have continued to receive and enjoy all issues of *Spanish Traces*. A project to produce a chapter DVD for viewing in the U.S. is unable to go ahead due to area coding incompatibility between U.K. and U.S. systems. Ramsay and Fallowfield hope to attend the National Conference to be held at Green River this spring.

*David Fallowfield*

## Arizona Report

The Armijo flyover group was in Page in late September. An after-dinner PowerPoint presentation that emphasized the unique geography of the Colorado Plateau and the difficult nature of crossing the Colorado River was well received by the group. It is hoped that the upcoming scoping meetings in Page and Kanab will increase interest in formation of an Arizona chapter.

*Paul Ostapuk*

## Utah Report

Since my appointment as Utah Director, my efforts have been to identify sources of information, to survey all known OST locations in Utah, and to outline concerns about the physical and environmental status of the trail. An initial attempt to create a video map of the trail on an aerial survey flight was not highly encouraging, but with better equipment and local expertise, I believe such a project can be successful. I have tracked the trail on the ground from the Nevada border through Castle Creek to Gunlock, and from Stevensville through Meadow Creek to Mountain Meadows. An effort was made to locate possible trail markers near Veyo, reported by a Mr. Pymm who had seen them in his youth. Two sets of markers were located; it remains to acquire GPS coordinates and to research the validity of the markers. I confirmed rumors that dinosaur tracks can be found along the trail. This certainly adds to the mystique

of the trail, in that they would have been observed by those transiting the OST. I also confirmed the existence of a "game" rock—a 5x10 foot lava boulder with inscriptions and an intriguing array of holes ground into the rock. It is near caves and lodging used by ancient natives. The rock's origin may be earlier than the OST.

If such artifacts and their location were widely known, it could lead to vandalism and destruction. OSTA needs to address the issue of preservation and protection. How much information on the location of points of interest and artifacts along the trail can be or should be divulged, and on what basis?

The display of artifacts from the Iron County OST campsite at the Southern Utah University Library's special collections has received good interest. A meeting will be held at the Iron Mission in Cedar City to promote organization of an OSTA chapter.

*Al Matheson*



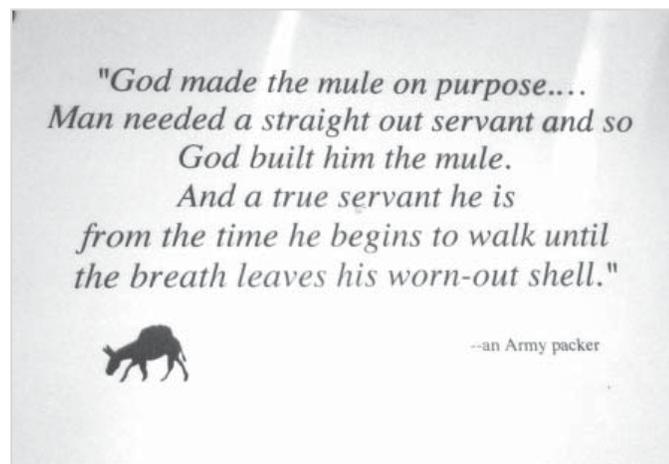
OST near Blue Diamond  
*courtesy of John Sedey*

## California Report

John Robinson recently was elected to be a Fellow of the Historical Society of Southern California. His new book, *Gateways to Southern California* (Arcadia: Big Santa Anita Historical Society, 2005), is in print and will be reviewed in an upcoming issue of *Spanish Traces*.

We welcome Cliff Walker as our new state director.

*Deborah and Jon Lawrence*



Mule wisdom (sign at Ghost Ranch). *courtesy of Pat Kuhlhoff*

## Book Reviews

### *This Small City Will Be a Mexican Paradise: Exploring the Origins of Mexican Culture in Los Angeles, 1821-1846*

Michael J González. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005. ISBN: 0826336078. 304 pages. Paperback, \$22.95

In *This Small City Will Be a Mexican Paradise*, Michael González examines the life of the inhabitants of Los Angeles between 1821 and 1846, the years that Mexico governed California. He structures his book around a single document, a petition signed by twenty-six angeleños, which condemns Indian misconduct, especially during their weekend fiestas, and requests Governor Pio Pico to put an end to their debauchery. González argues that this document, one of the last angeleño petitions composed during the Mexican era, reveals how the angeleños wanted to take on the liberal habits of Mexico and in so doing, stand apart from the Indians.

To reconstruct the angeleños' attitudes toward Indians, González draws on the *recuerdos* (reminiscences the Californios produced in the late nineteenth century), *ayuntamiento* records (municipal council documents), the censuses from 1836 and 1844, and letters and statements of angeleños prior to 1846. In so doing, he revises the traditional interpretation that cattle ranching was the chief occupation of Mexican Los Angeles. In addition

to cattlemen, González argues, there were farmers, merchants, craftsmen, teachers, and provincial administrators.

According to the author, many angeleños nurtured an affectionate attachment to Mexico and desired to follow some form of Mexican life. They did so, at least in part, in order to avoid being like the Indians, whom they considered to be barbaric. By killing or subduing the Indians and adopting Mexican attitudes toward work and restraint, angeleños were able to cultivate their ties to the Mexican interior.

González begins with an examination of angeleños' ideas about work and their perception of the Native Californians. Although wealth and aristocratic bearing were important, angeleños felt that a person's "usefulness" defined his rank and privilege. Consequently, because cattlemen hired others to work for them and, therefore, did not evidence personal productivity, they were not held in high regard by the angeleños. The angeleños condemned Indians even more so. During the Mexican era, a quarter of the population in the Los Angeles environs was Indian. The angeleños felt that the Indians preferred play to work and lacked the character to apply themselves. Supposedly, the Indians staged bacchanalian celebrations on the weekends. Their excesses—drinking and partying—violated the modest habits that many angeleños admired and provided temptations to weak-minded angeleños. According to González, the high attendance of angeleños

at the Indian fiestas suggests the inadequacy of angeleño life. He argues that some angeleños envied the freedoms of the Indian lifestyle and reconciled their envy by mistreating Indians. Additionally, angeleños, many of whom had Indian forebears, were alarmed by their own physical resemblance to the Indians. They feared that activities that encouraged Indian-Mexican intermingling, such as the Indians' weekend fiestas, further threatened to transform angeleño participants into Indians.

Next, González examines what the angeleños admired about Mexican life. According to the author, the liberals from Mexico's interior promoted the virtues of "worthy toil." Instead of bestowing advantages based on blood or social position, liberals promoted a person who worked hard and showed personal restraint. The productive citizen benefited the country, as well as his own spirit. In order to prove that work, and not pleasure, motivated their actions, angeleños complained about the Indians' promiscuity. According to González, in most angeleño accounts, including the 1846 petition, the writers assumed that Indians always gave in to their bodily desires. In contrast to the Indians' pursuit of a life without limits, illustrated by the excess of drink and sex at Indian fiestas, the angeleños supported the liberal principles from Mexico, especially as expressed by productivity and diligence. This allegiance enhanced their ties to Mexico's interior and their distance from the Indians.

In order to get rid of indigenous influence and adopt the Mexican principles that they desired, the angeleños attempted to remove or subdue the Indians. Although killing Indians proved the angeleños' superiority, it gave them only limited satisfaction, whereas, by taking captives, the angeleños were able to use Indians to develop the city's economy and improve their own self image. After they had killed or subdued the Indians, González concludes, the angeleños were able to fashion their Mexican identities. The final chapter explores how the angeleños used the enlightened, liberal habits from the Mexico interior to build a dynamic Los Angeles society.

While González's book is intellectually challenging and will fascinate readers with a knowledge of the subject, the reader unfamiliar with the topic will find it hard to follow because the arguments are not presented in a straightforward manner. In addition, the interpretation of the evidence is not convincing. In part, this is because, as the author himself admits, his sources are suspect. Many of the *recuerdos* are testimonies that involved old men talking to interviewers about events that happened many years earlier. González also admits that the accuracy of the *ayuntamiento* records and angeleño letters and statements are questionable. To strengthen his argument, González says that he must use "*fantasia*," or the imagination. He writes: "To see angeleño sentiments unfold, we look—with the aid of *fantasia* . . ." (18). Oh?

Still, it cannot be denied that readers interested in this subject should not neglect *This Small City Will Be a Mexican Paradise*. González opens our minds to provocative ideas about angeleños' attitudes toward Indians during the Mexican era.

### ***Deborah and Jon Lawrence***

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#### ***The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540-1846***

David J. Weber. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971, reissued 2005. ISBN: 0806117028. 263 pages. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index.

David J. Weber's *The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540-1846* has been reissued. Setting the scene for the development of the Old Spanish Trail, the book examines the role of Taos, New Mexico, as a center for the southwestern fur trade. Because fur trade companies never were successful in the Southwest, the Taos-based trappers worked alone or in small groups. Using such primary sources as archival records, letters, diaries, contemporary newspapers, business receipts, and similar materials, Weber tells the stories of the individual trappers in Taos and in the southern Rockies.

According to Weber, Spanish trappers from Taos were the first to enter the Rockies where they trapped for pelts and bartered with the Indians, especially the Utes. They attempted to keep American and French trappers from working the area, and as a consequence, by the end of the

Spanish period, New Mexico's chief exports were pelts and hides. When Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, New Mexico officials began to allow foreign merchants to enter New Mexico. American trappers and traders began to work out of Taos. Weber describes many different trapping expeditions that left Taos for the area now covered by the states of Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and, of course, New Mexico. Some of these groups used the trails that had been blazed in the past and became the various branches of the OST. The book includes excellent maps and pictures and provides great detail on the various well known westerners, including Kit Carson, "Peg Leg" Smith, James Ohio Pattie, and Jedediah Smith, who was one of the first trappers to reach California by a route that was similar to what became the OST.

In 1834, after just ten years, the beaver fur had fallen out of fashion and the role of the Taos trappers started to decline. Weber ends the book with the following quote: "Though the trapper as an occupational type had nearly disappeared in the Southwest by the time of the Mexican War, former trappers continued to exert influence in the region" (229). Many of them followed the OST to California and became important settlers there, including J. J. Warner, Benjamin D. Wilson, John Rowland, and William Wolfskill.

Students of western history, the Spanish borderlands, and the Old Spanish Trail will enjoy *The Taos Trappers*.

***Robert Youker***

## Film Review

### *Burying the Past: Legacy of the Mountain Meadows Massacre.*

Brian Patrick. (Patrick Film Productions, 2003). 1 hour, 26 minutes.

In his documentary, *Burying the Past: Legacy of the Mountain Meadows Massacre*, director Brian Patrick investigates one of the worst massacres in American history and the Mountain Meadows Association's efforts to get a monument rebuilt at the site of the tragedy. For many years, only an obscure marker on a rock cairn stood as a memorial to the victims. Patrick examines the controversy surrounding this marker and the efforts by the descendants of the victims and the perpetrators to see that a proper and more detailed memorial be placed at the meadows. The film is also



Wagon Train (still from *Burying the Past*)

with permission of B. Patrick

about reconciliation: it chronicles the attempts of the descendants of the Arkansas victims and the descendants of John D. Lee, the only man tried and executed for the massacre, to come together in the spirit of forgiveness.

Patrick combines reenactments, a first-person testimony of a young survivor, and interviews with three historians—Weber State University professor Gene Sessions; Will Bagley, the author of *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows*; and Gene Leonard, director of the LDS Church Museum of History and Art, who is currently co-writing a church-sanctioned history of the event. In addition to the thoughtful insights provided by the historians, Patrick incorporates photographs, the opinions of archeologists and forensic anthropologists, and interviews with descendants and church members.

Explaining all of the details surrounding the massacre is challenging because the story is so tangled and complex and most of the information we have today has been provided by the perpetrators. The documentary does a good job



Who's attacking? (still from *Burying the Past*)

with permission of B. Patrick

recreating what we know about the killings to give the viewer a visual understanding of the events surrounding them. Patrick used non-professional actors to portray the ill-fated Arkansas travelers, Mormons and Paiutes in his re-creation of the doomed wagon train, but by filming these sequences in a grainy black-and-white, he gives the viewer a strong sense of what the massacre might have been like. In the DVD's addenda on the production of the film, Patrick contrasts the filmed version with alternate color sequences, making it graphically clear how effective is the use of black-and-white photography.

Patrick uses Nancy Saphrona Huff's 1875-statement to the *Daily Arkansas Gazette* to provide narration for the re-enactment.

Recounted eighteen years after the event, Saphrona's first-person account of the massacre is powerful and heart rending. She was only four at the time of the tragedy, one of the seventeen children under the age of eight who were spared because they were regarded as too young to remember what they saw at the meadows. Her entire family was killed. Nancy Saphrona's

recollection was excellently narrated by Jennifer Van Eenenaam who won an "Accolade Award" for voice-over.

A professor of film studies at the University of Utah, Patrick took six years to make *Burying the Past*, which has won various awards at film festivals, including the Utah "Best of State" 2004 award, Berkley Film Festival's "Best of Festival" award, the

but it is clear from Patrick's footage of family reunions and interviews that the descendants on both sides are still haunted by the tragedy. By exploring the massacre's impact on the descendants of the Fancher-Baker party, John D. Lee's descendants, and the Mormon church, Brian Patrick addresses issues of forgiveness, reconciliation, and religious intolerance.

It is not easy to reconcile and forgive—it is one of the most difficult things we are called to do emotionally. Part of the process involves the need to uncover the truth in order to grieve properly. Patrick's documentary is an attempt to do just that. Watching *Burying the Past: Legacy of the Mountain Meadow Massacre* is a sobering experience.



White flag (still from *Burying the Past*) with permission of B. Patrick

Western Writers Association's "Spur Awards," and Park City Film Music Festival's "Best Musical Score." Most recently it won the Broadcast Education Association's highest honor: "BEA Best of Festival King Foundation Award Winner."

It has been almost 150 years since the Mountain Meadows Massacre,

To purchase the film, visit <http://www.buryingthepast.com/> or telephone (801) 554-8640.

**Deborah and Jon Lawrence**



## Terror on the Trail: The Massacre at Mountain Meadows

by David L. Bigler

September 11 will mark the anniversary of the most horrific terrorist attack in U.S. history. No, I'm not talking about 9/11, 2001. I refer to September 11, 1857. On that day, white settlers and Indians in southwestern Utah deceived, betrayed, and murdered more than a hundred men, women and children at a rest stop on the Spanish Trail to Los Angeles, known as Mountain Meadows. No one knows for sure how many they killed that day because there were no survivors old enough to tell. But a good estimate would come to about forty unarmed men; some thirty women, most of them young mothers; and as many as fifty children, including about twenty girls between the ages of seven and seventeen.

It was the most horrific terrorist attack in our nation's history, not as figured by body count, but in the *way* its victims were slain. White men and Indians struck them down one at a time, up close and personal, with knives, hatchets, pistols, and muskets. Mercy was shown only to children too young to testify and young enough to come under a doctrinal exemption, known as "innocent blood." Only seventeen children qualified.

For their mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, it was all over in minutes. For seventy or

so white men involved in the killing, it would never be over. All belonged to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Mormons. Most were God-fearing men, devoted husbands, caring fathers. The wounds they suffered that day were soul-deep and never healed. Sixty-one years later, Nephi Johnson lay dying. In delirium, the eighty-four-year-old Indian missionary preached in native languages, sang hymns and prayed. Suddenly his eyes opened wide, staring straight up, and he cried, "Blood! Blood! BLOOD!" Sixty-one years before, he had led the Indians in killing the women and children. He was reliving the horror and was afraid to die.

Noted historian David McCullough has said that nothing ever *had* to happen the *way* it happened. "History could have gone off in any number of different directions in any number of different ways at any point along the way," he said.<sup>1</sup> So why did it go the way it did in this case? How could God-fearing men do such a thing? A hundred fifty years of obstruction, cover up, denial and falsifying have obscured the answers to such disturbing questions.

Our limited time today precludes a detailed examination of the events and since-forgotten beliefs behind the worst atrocity on our overland trails. But as I briefly recount these events and the conditions in which they took place, you may gain some insight into why it happened.

Keep in mind something else McCullough said, that there was never anything like the past. Nobody ever lived in the past. Our ancestors didn't go around saying, "Isn't this fascinating living in the past?" They lived in the present, just as we do, only it was *their* present, not *ours*. Just as we don't know how things are going to turn out, they didn't either. The two-time Pulitzer prize winner and author of *1776* said that it's easy to find fault with people for why they did this, or didn't do that, because we're not involved in it, we're not inside it, we're not confronting what we don't know—as everyone who preceded us always was.

The Arkansas emigrants who headed west in 1857 surely had no idea of what lay ahead. Not only would they be murdered, but forever after they would also be maligned, mischaracterized and blamed for what happened to them. And they would be unable to defend themselves.

This defamation continues today, although we know better. We know that, unlike many of the parties that passed through Utah during this period, they were an orderly train, led by mature, experienced captains, 52-year-old John T. Baker and Alexander Fancher, 45, who surely knew their responsibility for the safety of some eighty women and children. Most of their wealth was tied up in a

large cattle herd, but they also possessed thirty or forty wagons, horses, mules, tools, firearms and cash for expenses. Their picture is not one of hell-raisers, but of prosperous farm families moving west to California to make new homes there.

After more than four months on the trail, they arrived in Salt Lake Valley near the peak of a flaming revival, called the Reformation, to purify God's people and to merit divine favor in an imminent confrontation with the United States. Mormon leaders had seen it coming. The brief history of this fervent millennial movement had already shown that a people, ruled by God through inspired men, could never live in peace within a republic governed by the elected representatives of its citizens. The two governing systems are incompatible. The Reformation featured a fearful doctrine known as blood atonement.

In addition, some weeks after they left Arkansas, Mormon Apostle Parley P. Pratt had been brutally murdered in that state. He was killed by the vengeful husband of a woman he had taken as his twelfth polygamous wife. But to believers, Pratt was a martyr of the faith, whose blood cried for vengeance—not on the man who had taken his life, but on the people of the nation and state, who allowed him to do it with impunity. The popular apostle was killed in the same part of Arkansas the emigrants came from.

Finally, less than two weeks before the doomed company arrived, news had struck Great Salt Lake that an American military expedition had marched from Fort Leavenworth to escort a new governor to Utah to replace Brigham Young and assert federal authority in the theocratic territory.

In short, the emigrants came to the wrong place, from the wrong place, at the wrong time. Utah Territory was a place emotionally inflamed by excessive religious zeal, by the thirst for vengeance, and by the threat of war.

Malinda Cameron Thurston, who survived only because her husband decided to take the northern trail, while the rest of her family took Mormon advice and went south, fixed the day of the train's arrival as August 3, 1857. From that day, out of all the companies that had followed the southern trail since 1849, some with cattle or sheep, the company from Arkansas became a marked train, one singled out for special treatment.

Early that same day, Apostle George A. Smith left in a horse-drawn carriage on a flying visit to the string of Mormon settlements along the route that led to the Spanish Trail, near Cedar City, two hundred and fifty miles to the south. At each settlement he delivered orders from Brigham Young to sell no food to the emigrants and to tell the Indians they have "got to help us or the United States will kill us both."<sup>2</sup> The latter order bore sobering implications.

Mormons then and today believe that American Indians, known as Lamanites, are a remnant of ancient Israel in the New World from the tribe of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, son of Jacob. They also accept as true that most members of the faith also descend from Jacob through Joseph's other son, Ephraim. The conviction of common Hebrew ancestry made Mormons and Indians cousins by blood, and natural allies.

These beliefs appear innocent enough today, but they were hardly non-threatening then. For the Prophet Micah warned that when Zion was redeemed the "remnant of Israel" would be among the gentiles "as a young lion among the flocks of sheep; who . . . both treadeth down and teareth in pieces," a prophecy repeated by *The Book of Mormon* prophet, 3rd Nephi.<sup>3</sup> Mormons then believed the "remnant of Israel" referred to the Indians and the prophecies to their own time and circumstances.

Today such teaching is not taken seriously. At that time, it was. In southern Utah, they took it *very* seriously. The Cedar Stake patriarch in a prophetic blessing on William H. Dame, then commander of Utah's Southern Military District, prophesied the officer's mission. "Thou shalt be called to act at the head of a portion of thy brethren and of the Lamanites in the redemption of Zion and the avenging of the blood of the prophets upon them that dwell on the earth," he promised. "The angel of vengeance shall be with thee."<sup>4</sup>

Unaware of the danger in their path, the emigrants followed Apostle Smith south along the route of today's I-15, but at a much slower pace. In a horse-drawn vehicle the apostle averaged forty miles a day, even after giving sermons and issuing orders along the way. Slowed by their herd, the emigrants journeyed at a little more than seven miles a day. After months on the trail, they needed flour and fresh vegetables, especially for the children, but they could not buy food at any price. At Provo and Nephi, sharp words were exchanged because the settlements refused to permit the emigrants' cattle to graze on common fields. An inflammatory rumor spread that some train members had helped murder the Mormon prophets, Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

Ahead of them, the apostle issued instructions, written and verbal, to those who would soon murder the emigrants. He met with Colonel Dame, mentioned before; John D. Lee, ostensibly a lowly Indian farmer, but an adopted son of Brigham Young under a sealing ordinance long ago discontinued and a main figure in the massacre; Isaac C. Haight, president of the Cedar Stake of Zion; and Major John Higbee, who would give the order to kill the emigrants. Lee later said that he always understood that Smith came to prepare the people for that bloody work.

If so, an important part of Smith's mission was to carry out Brigham Young's order to dismiss the

moderate head of the Southern Indian Mission and to replace him with frontier zealot Jacob Hamblin, who could be counted on to do as he was told. Smith ordered him to gather up the Southern Paiute chiefs and bring them back with him to Great Salt Lake to meet with Young.

Smith had done all this and was halfway home when he and his party, now enlarged by a dozen or so Indians, met the Arkansas train at Corn Creek in central Utah. The apostle camped within forty yards of the emigrants who voiced fear at seeing Mormons and Indians together and doubled their guard. Smith later claimed the Arkansans poisoned the Pahvant Indian band at Corn Creek, but there is no evidence to support this charge. It, like all other tales of emigrant misbehavior, is patently false, but still repeated, for no apparent reason than to convey the impression that "they got what they deserved."

The Corn Creek meeting actually had nothing to do with poison and everything to do with the emigrants' reaction at the sight of Mormons and Indians traveling north together. Up to this point, halfway between Salt Lake and Mountain Meadows, they had traveled at less than eight miles a day. But from Corn Creek to their final resting place, they hurried up to over twelve miles a day, or about as fast as they could go with a big herd after so long on the trail. They were not looking for trouble. They were trying to get away.

As they neared the Spanish Trail, Apostle Smith delivered the Paiute chiefs to Salt Lake where they met with Brigham Young and his personal interpreter Dimick B. Huntington. Afterward Huntington said he gave them "all the cattle that had gone to Cal[ifornia] by the south rout."<sup>5</sup> The gift was an invitation to attack the Baker-Fancher train with the implied promise of help if needed. The Paiute chiefs knew what cattle he referred to because they had seen them at Corn Creek. They left Salt Lake early on September 2 to be at Mountain Meadows when the first volley was fired five days later.

Meanwhile, the emigrants passed Cedar City and crossed the gradual swell that divides Great Basin waters from the head of the Colorado River. On September 6, a Sunday, they camped at the scenic Spanish Trail location named Mountain Meadows because it was more than a mile above sea level and provided ample water and grass. Here, some thirty-five miles from the nearest settlement, they felt secure enough to rest and to recruit their cattle for the desert stretch ahead after driving them hard for almost two weeks. But the spot they selected – not close enough to a spring, and too close to the low hills around it – was indefensible.

Early Monday morning, a deadly burst of gunfire out of the pre-dawn darkness killed or wounded as many as ten men as they stood silhouetted by the campfire. The first volley's destructive impact suggests the involvement of white Indian missionaries under John D. Lee because the Paiutes had few firearms and little skill in using

them. But the emigrants chained their wagon wheels together, dug rifle pits and fought back. Their resolute defense led to one of the bizarre episodes in this story.

Worried by the standoff, the head of Zion's Cedar Stake sent a rider to notify Brigham Young that the Indians, real and disguised, had corralled the train. He asked, "What should we do now?" Where else on the frontier would they send an Englishman with only one horse on a 500-mile ride to inquire what to do about Indians attacking a party of mostly women and children? Anywhere else, they'd know what to do, and, without a "by your leave," do it. And where in western annals of heroic rides for help does the hero come back to find that the settlers have helped the Indians kill the emigrants?

On Wednesday night two young volunteers tried to slip out and return to Cedar City to get help. One had joined the train at Provo to get away from Utah. Mormon guards shot and killed him at a nearby spring. They wounded his companion, too, but he escaped to alert emigrants to white involvement. On Thursday, three other men slipped out after dark in a desperate attempt to reach California on foot. One got as far as Las Vegas Springs before he was tracked down and killed. Meanwhile, a plan was hatched that same night to disarm the Arkansans and decoy them into the open.

On Friday, 9/11/1857, John D. Lee and William Bateman drove two wagons into the little stronghold under a white flag. Lee said they found the emigrants almost out of ammunition, short of water and becoming desperate. He told them their only hope was to turn over their arms, "so as not to arouse the animosity of the Indians," and place their lives under the protection of the Mormon military arm, known as the Nauvoo Legion, which did double duty as the territorial militia.<sup>6</sup>

Soon after, the most heartbreaking parade ever staged on American soil emerged from the camp. Leading it was a wagonload of children under six years old. Then came Lee on foot, followed by a second wagon bearing two or three wounded men and one woman. Some distance behind walked the women and older children. After them, a quarter-mile or so to the rear walked in single file the disarmed men, each escorted by an armed guard. It was all carefully planned. As the women and children entered a narrow place in the hills, heavy with brush, Major Higbee called out: "Halt. Do your duty."

It was horrific. Each of the guards shot the man next to him. At the firing, Indians and painted whites swarmed out of the brush to kill women and children with knives, hatchets and guns. The little valley was filled with gunfire and screams of women and children under murderous attack. Girls begged for their lives and cried out loud as they were dragged

away to have their throats cut. As he killed two wounded men in the wagon with one shot, Samuel McMurdy reportedly prayed, "O lord, my God, receive their spirits, for it is for thy Kingdom that I do this."<sup>7</sup> Nephi Johnson later testified white men did most of the killing. Southern Paiute oral remembrance agrees.

Next morning they covered the bodies with a little dirt, which gave no protection from the coyotes. They then formed a prayer circle, Lee said, and thanked God "for delivering our enemies into our hands." And they swore to keep their role secret from everyone but Brigham Young, to always say the Indians alone did it, and to kill anyone who broke this oath. To excuse their Indian allies, the initial story blamed the victims for what happened to them. They had poisoned the Pahvants on Corn Creek, 140 miles to the north, and brought it on themselves, the story goes. But no Pahvants from Corn Creek took part in the atrocity.

Four days after the killing, Brigham Young declared martial law. He stamped the U.S. Army expedition "an armed mercenary mob," ordered the territorial militia, or Nauvoo Legion, to repel an imagined invasion, and shut down all travel "into or through or from" an area of the American West large enough to enclose New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, without a permit. The massacre and closure of overland trails led California's newly elected fourth governor to voice alarm over the impact

on immigration, “so essential in developing the state’s resources.” To protect citizens traveling through U.S. territory, Governor John B. Weller said, the “whole power of the federal government should be invoked.”<sup>8</sup>

Nearly three weeks after the crime, John D. Lee reported to Brigham Young, who undoubtedly knew all about it by then. At this point, a historian meets a familiar phenomenon. In each of many nineteenth-century conflicts between the Mormons and their neighbors, one almost always discovers two squarely opposing, mutually exclusive, and highly credible versions.

In his later confessions, Lee said he told Young all there was to tell, including the names of those who took part. According to Apostle Wilford Woodruff, Lee only told Young that the emigrants had poisoned the Indians who became enraged and alone killed them, sparing only a few children for sale to the Mormons. Years later, Young swore that Lee came two or three *months* after the massacre and began to tell him about it, but he had stopped him. He’d heard rumors about it and didn’t want his feelings “harrowed up” by a recital of the horrid details.

The end of the Utah conflict in 1858 introduced a period of cover up, obfuscation, appeasement and bureaucratic bungling. To avoid bloodshed, Young’s replacement as governor, Alfred Cumming, scotched an attempted investigation by the fearless

federal judge, John Cradlebaugh. It seemed that everyone west of the Missouri River knew the truth, except federal officials in Utah and Washington. The California newspapers had it right almost as soon as the first reports reached the West Coast.

Yet for twenty years, only the U.S. Army investigated the massacre. In 1859, Major James H. Carleton, who later commanded Union forces in the Southwest during the Civil War, led a mounted company from Los Angeles to Mountain Meadows. He saw at once that “a great and fearful crime” had been committed. The officer called the men who did it “relentless, incarnate fiends,” but his report was largely ignored in the events leading to the Civil War. Arthur H. Clark has published Major Carleton’s Report in a blood red cover with a map and introduction by Bob Clark. It’s worth much more than the modest price.

Carleton and his men of Company K, collected and buried some of the bones and erected over them a monument of stones twelve feet high topped by a cedar cross that bore the words: “Vengeance is mine: I will repay saith the Lord.”<sup>9</sup> The soldiers had gone off to the Civil War two years later when Brigham Young visited the site. He read these words and said, “It should be vengeance is mine and I have taken a little.”<sup>10</sup> His escort tore down the cross and scattered the stones. Three years later Captain George Price and Company M, Second California Volunteer Cavalry, camped there and built it up again.

After the Civil War, pressure grew from the outside and from church members, as well, for an investigation and punishment of the crime. So it was that one would pay the price for all. The year 1870 saw the excommunication of John D. Lee. To get him out of the way, he was sent off to run the ferry at a remote location on the Colorado River, now called Lee’s Ferry. A year later, guilt-ridden former Cedar City bishop Philip Klingensmith appeared before the district court in Pioche, Nevada, and broke the oath of silence.

Still, nothing happened—and for good reason. The only man with the power to conduct an investigation and punish the guilty simply chose not to unless he controlled the outcome. Brigham Young took such authority from a unique legal system created by Utah lawmakers after Congress established the territory in 1850. In brief, a pre-millennial theocracy applied democratic processes to create an exclusive legal system for a people who lived under a higher law. But it gave little or no consistent equal protection to outsiders.

Not for twenty years did Congress dismantle the territory’s controlled judiciary and restore the court system it had meant to create in the first place. Six months after it passed the Poland Act in 1874, a federal marshal arrested John D. Lee and others for the massacre.

Lee’s two trials in 1875 and 1876 stand as remarkable examples of judicial string pulling, first to

exonerate, then to convict the same defendant. The first 12-member jury counted one inactive and eight active Mormons and three so-called Gentiles. No faithful Mormon stepped forward to testify against Lee, but enough evidence did come out to convict him. As expected, however, the panel deadlocked, nine to three. Only the non-Mormons voted to convict.

The wave of indignation that now swept across the country alarmed church leaders. Something had to be done to close the book on Mountain Meadows without incriminating anyone else. At the same time, a new U.S. attorney was under pressure to gain a conviction. So the two sides struck a deal. The prosecutor agreed not to implicate Brigham Young and others. In return, Young sacrificed John D. Lee. He provided the witnesses to convict his adopted son and guaranteed a unanimous verdict. To make it look good, as well as work, the prosecutor empaneled Mormon jurors only.

As scripted, witnesses appeared out of the sagebrush at Lee's second trial in whatever number it took to seal his fate. The all-Mormon jury took less than four hours to find their former friend and brother guilty, twelve to zip. It was all neatly done.

John D. Lee, scapegoat for the sins of many, sat on the edge of his coffin at Mountain Meadows in 1877 and was shot to death by firing squad. "The old man never flinched," one observer said. His reward was a passport to celestial

glory awarded in 1961 when LDS officials restored his church membership and former blessings. He now lies under a marker enigmatically engraved, "Know the truth and the truth shall make you free." With that, the book on Mountain Meadows was finally closed.

Except for the bones. The bones cried from the ground in 1859 when Major Carleton buried many from victims of all ages and erected over them a monument of stones and a cross. The monument was later torn down, but the bones would not keep silent. The men of Company M, Second California Cavalry, heard them and restored it. The bones again cried from the ground six years ago, when the LDS church, in cooperation with the descendants of John D. Lee and family members of the emigrants, began work on a new memorial. A backhoe operator broke the earth and exposed the bones buried by Carleton's men, uncovering a young woman's skull with a bullet hole in the crown, broken children's bones, arm and leg bones, scarred by coyote teeth. A self-disciplined county sheriff saw the children's bones and was deeply moved. "That was what really hit me hard," he said.<sup>11</sup>

The bones tell of beliefs, long ago outdated and forgotten: God's kingdom as a sovereign theocratic state, the immediate coming of the Son of Man, oaths to avenge the prophets' blood, unquestioning obedience to religious authorities, American Indians as instruments of divine justice, uncontrolled

religious zeal, the shedding of human blood for the remission of certain sins, justice by inspiration, the law of adoption, and others.

The bones tell of Arkansas farm families who did not come to torment Utah settlers, but to pass through their country on their way to make homes in California. The bones rebuke the slanders and false testimony to justify and conceal the involvement of those who killed them. The bones speak of vengeance that fell on the wrong heads. They tell of innocent men, women and children, deceived, betrayed and slain for no rational reason or purpose.

On the 142nd anniversary of the massacre, September 11, 1999, over a thousand attended the dedication of the new monument. In dedicating it, LDS church president Gordon B. Hinckley said he came as a peacemaker. We cannot comprehend what happened here so long ago, he said. It was not a time for recrimination, but a time to leave "the matter in the hands of God," he said.

The day before the dedication, several hundred family members of the victims—Bakers, Mitchells, Fanchers, Dunlaps, Tackitts and others—came from Arkansas and across the country to attend special services in the valley on the headwaters of the Santa Clara River. They came to honor their slain early relatives and return to the earth their troubling bones. Reverently, they bore them in little handmade arks to the new monument, where they placed them in soil from Arkansas.

Afterward a Baptist preacher from the town of Springdale, Arkansas, concluded the services with a lesson from Mountain Meadows for the living. It is one that seems especially appropriate as we come three weeks from today to 9/11/2005, the 148th anniversary of the massacre and the fourth of the worst terrorist attack in our history in terms of the number killed. No one knows the hour, or the way, he will be called home, Reverend Stanton Cram said. If for you, it would be today, at this place, as it was for them, he asked, "Are you ready?" That's a good question to think about, as well as to end my talk on, and I do both now with thanks to each of you for your kind attention.

### End Notes

1. David McCullough, "Knowing History and Knowing Who We Are," *Imprimis*, 34:4, April 2005.
2. Young to Hamblin, 4 August 1857, Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 34-35.
3. See Micah 5:8 and *The Book of Mormon*, 3 Nephi 20:15-16.
4. William H. Dame Papers 20 February 1854, MS 2041, LDS Archives.
5. Dimick B. Huntington Journal, 1857-May 1859, LDS Archives, MS1419-2.
6. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 240.
7. *Ibid*, 241.
8. Inaugural Address, Governor John B. Weller, 8 January 1858, California State Library.
9. Romans, 12:19.
10. G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:577.
11. *New York Times*, 15 August, 1999, 22.



### Interview with Will Bagley

[**The editors:** Will Bagley is an independent historian living in Salt Lake City, Utah. For a number of years he wrote the *History Matters* column for the *Salt Lake Tribune*. He is series editor of the Arthur H. Clark Company's *Kingdom of the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier*, a prize-winning multi-volume documentary history that includes *Pioneer Camp of the Saints*, Thomas Bullock's official journal of the 1847 Brigham Young Company, *Army of Israel: Mormon Battalion Narratives* (with David Bigler), *Scoundrel's Tale: The Samuel Brannan Papers*, and most recently, Kenneth Owens's *Gold Rush Saints*. Mr. Bagley's book *Blood of the Prophets*, which is the topic of this interview, won the 2003 Caughey-Western History Association Prize and the Caroline Bancroft History Prize from the Denver Public Library for the best book of the year in western history.

Will's current project is a trilogy on the Oregon-California Trails. Entitled *The Long and Perilous Journey*, it is based on a historic resource survey that he has done for the Park Service that will appear on the internet. The three volumes are titled *So Rugged and Mountainous: The Blazing of the Oregon Trail and the California Trace* (1840 to 1848); *With Golden Visions Bright Before Them: The Oregon California Trails and the Creation of the Mining West* (1849 to 1852); and *The War for the Medicine Road: The Oregon California Trails and the Conquest of the American West* (1853 to 1869).

Will describes himself as a "heritage Mormon" whose ancestors were among the early pioneers to Utah. He is a member of the Utah Crossroads Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA). He spoke on Mormon-Indian relations at the 2003 OCTA Conference in Manhattan, Kansas, and was one of the organizers of the 2005 OCTA Conference in Salt Lake City.

We interviewed Will in a telephone conversation between Salt Lake City, Utah, and Irvine, California, on October 22, 2005.]

**ST** (*Spanish Traces*) What inspired you to take on Mountain Meadows as a book project?

**WB** (Will Bagley) I was actually hired to do it. I had been reluctant to tackle the subject because I knew that the sources were

so problematic. In fact, a lot of the so-called “evidence” about the massacre was actually *created* years later, while solid contemporary evidence was destroyed, so the problems with the evidence were immense. In April 1995 an ad appeared in the *Salt Lake Tribune* looking for a historian to do two years’ research on the Fancher party. Thirtyfive people applied for it and I got it. It’s one of the reasons that I think I’m the world’s luckiest historian.

When I began the research I thought it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to go beyond the conclusions that Juanita Brooks reached.<sup>1</sup> The summary of her conclusions in her book, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, is really a masterpiece. Mormon historians like to say that she vindicated Brigham Young, but she did nothing of the sort—she said Brigham Young and George A. Smith “set up social conditions that made it possible.” She believed the evidence indicated Young had not ordered it and would have stopped it if he could, but she stressed that this was based on the evidence that was *at that time* available to her, whereas in fact the LDS church had hidden an enormous amount of material from Brooks. As she turned up more evidence on her own, she held Brigham Young directly responsible for the massacre. She believed “John D. Lee would make it to heaven before Brigham Young.”

But I still thought that it would be very difficult to push the

story beyond two obvious interpretations. One, to put it quite simply, is that it was a conspiracy to murder, and that the Fancher party was doomed from the moment it came into Utah. The subsequent cover-up and all the brouhaha indicate that. The other interpretation is that it was simply one-damn-thing-after-another. I’m very much a one-damn-thing-after-another historian—events often cascade out of control and what starts out seemingly with a clear objective often winds up a complete muddle. There’s certainly evidence to support both arguments. I didn’t believe that I would find definitive evidence that would allow me to pick between the two alternatives. And I knew that people would say, “All the evidence against Brigham Young is circumstantial. There’s no smoking gun; there’s nothing that *proves* anything.” Well, in fact, you wouldn’t expect that. The orders for such actions were generally couched in either code words or very ambiguous phrasing. I certainly didn’t expect to find orders from Brigham Young to kill the Fancher party. So, I really was very surprised when I learned how Eleanor Pratt got to Utah, and suddenly it was clear to me what had happened.<sup>2</sup>

**ST** At the OCTA 2005 Conference in Salt Lake City, you stressed the importance of the fact that Eleanor McLean Pratt was rushed to Salt Lake in time for the Pioneer Day celebration by none other than Porter Rockwell.<sup>3</sup> Can you expand on this; how does it function as compelling evidence?

**WB** That the circumstances of her arrival were so effectively hidden for generations convinced me her presence in Utah was the catalyst for the Mountain Meadows Massacre. The fact that it was Porter Rockwell who brought her to Utah was so deeply buried that even my dear friend Harold Schindler, who spent forty years turning up everything available on Porter Rockwell, never learned about it.<sup>4</sup> But when I saw an entry in Elias Smith’s 1857 journal that noted Rockwell’s arrival on July 23, 1857, with the widow Pratt, I was amazed. All of a sudden I knew what had happened. Because that telling fact had been suppressed, had been expurgated from other records and so carefully suppressed, I became convinced that it *was* a conspiracy. I’m sure the Mormon church’s historians will argue it was an insignificant detail, but it wasn’t: it gave away the ball game.

**ST** So the compelling evidence is not simply the fact that Rockwell brought her to Utah, but that they covered it up.

**WB** It’s the cover-up. And that, I think, is the key to really understanding the Mountain Meadows Massacre. You can support either thesis, but when historians try to come up with an interpretation of history, it should be the one that is simplest and answers the questions most consistently. Well, the thesis that the Mountain Meadows Massacre was a calculated, ordered mass murder is easy to support, because all the subsequent actions fit that

pattern. But the thesis that, no, one thing led to another, Brigham didn't want it to happen, and he sort of sent orders down to stop it, but then afterwards he had to protect the guys who had done it, that keeps raising question after question. And the enormous lie that was manufactured to protect Brigham Young is an indictment all by itself. His alibi is just too complicated and convoluted to be believable.

**ST** Lee's *Mormonism Unveiled* is a fascinating account of the early history of the church, the kinds of religious experience common to LDS and members of other churches of that era, and early Mormon history (Haun's Mill, Nauvoo). At the same time, Lee obviously distorts his own culpability at Mountain Meadows. How did you use such information?

**WB** Lee's *Confessions* is really two books. Lee's autobiography, which only runs up to 1848, is one of the most reliable and excellent sources on early Mormonism. There are few other documents that capture the feelings and the passions of these people.

**ST** He even he talks about the Mormon culpability in the Missouri "Mormon Wars."

**WB** And his *own* culpability. (Laughs) I stand in awe of the *Confessions of John D. Lee*. Here's a book in which the protagonist admits that he engineered the murder of 120 people, most of them women and children. He accepts responsibility for running

the show. But at the same time, he somehow manages to make you feel sorry for him. In all of Lee's writings, right down to his journals, it's always, "Poor, pitiful me. I'm such a nice guy, and the world just treats me badly." (Laughs) "People are always taking advantage of me. Nobody appreciates my true righteousness." It's comical—or at least very black humor—if you step back and look at it.

**ST** You suggested that the second book starts in 1848. Did his lawyer play a big role in editing that part of the autobiography?

**WB** That's quite controversial, but I don't believe it for a minute. There's no break in style and I believe that the story in the book is John D. Lee's story—a lot of it's a lie, but it's the lie Lee settled on after trying out many alternatives. The notion that it was all made up and inserted by William Bishop is contradicted by the evidence.<sup>9</sup> Juanita Brooks also believed that Lee wrote the massacre account. Apparently the manuscripts were destroyed in the San Francisco earthquake, so the actual evidence that would let us settle the question definitively no longer exists. But there were people at the time who, in response to the charges that Bishop had written it, did look at the manuscript and compare it to the finished book; they said that the confession was in John D. Lee's handwriting.

**ST** Could you clarify the distinction between the pre-1848 and post-1848 parts of the book?

**WB** The pre-1848 material is not about mass murder; it is Lee simply telling the chronicle of his righteous work for the Kingdom of God. He ran out of time and wrote his account of the massacre not long before his execution, and he wrote several different versions of it. I was able to turn up two basic newspaper accounts, both of which differ in slight but significant ways from the one that was ultimately published in the book. The book's purpose was to create a story that portrayed Lee as a sympathetic, even heroic, victim. And to do that, he could not admit the most significant fact about the massacre, that it was organized and executed by the Mormons under the direct command of John D. Lee. If Lee had told the truth, and said, "Oh yeah, me and my friends went out and recruited the Paiutes, then we attacked the party and killed them all," it would have been an invitation for a lynching. Lee had a different purpose: he wanted to shift blame to anyone else who was available. Partly, he shifted blame to George A. Smith and Brigham Young, but the key victims of his blame shifting were the Paiutes. Now, in 1876 and 1877, when he was being tried, there was a tremendous fear and hysteria about Indians in the United States. Right before Lee's first trial, Custer had died at Little Big Horn. But the notion that the Paiutes could attack and overwhelm a wagon train, and in the meantime intimidate their Mormon neighbors into doing something the Mormons didn't want to do, is simply preposterous. It denies the nature of the Paiute

people, their style of warfare, and the basic power equation between the Mormons and the Paiutes. The Mountain Meadows Massacre was not caused or directed by the Paiutes. It was an operation organized, orchestrated and executed by Mormons.

Lee also tried to blame the event on the victims, by suggesting that they brought it on themselves by their atrocious behavior. As I began looking closely at the “Evil Emigrant Stories,” as I call them, they became increasingly silly. I once heard a Mormon historian do a paper trying to prove that the Fancher party included the Missouri Wildcats.<sup>10</sup> This relied on Thomas Cropper’s reminiscence, which was written *seventy years* after the event. The memoir, which is quoted by Brooks, described an event that led to the Gunnison Massacre in 1853, not the Mountain Meadows Massacre four years later. So it was clear in this particular case that it was a conflation. All the conflicts that had happened in southern Utah between Mormons and emigrant parties—and there were many of them—were conflated and tacked on to the Fancher party. Unfortunately, most of the contemporary record of what the party actually experienced was destroyed. The emigrants’ documents were destroyed in the massacre, and the Mormon journals that would have documented their presence were destroyed. David Bigler found the only one that specifically mentions the Fancher party, the Pitchforth diary. All the rest of the stories

about the evil emigrants were concocted. The Missouri Wildcats do not appear in the historical record until 1873. Believe it or not, most of the horrific stories of the emigrants’ behavior date from the 1890s. This is not credible historical evidence.

The new material that surprised me most were the accounts of the surviving children. The best of them is by Nancy Sephronia Huff, who was five or six years old when the massacre happened. Her account was published in 1875, which means that it was before the Lee trial and before the huge publicity from the trial began to infect the story of the massacre. You can see the influence of this publicity on the stories of the other survivors. But her story is simple and direct and powerful. The children’s stories had something that none of the accounts of the perpetrators, or of those that were making up excuses, had. They have consistency. Virtually every one of the survivors mentions seeing “Indians” go to the creek at Hamblin’s ranch, wash off their paint and become white again.<sup>11</sup> For me that was one of the most surprising and satisfying products of my research. It gives voice to these people. It provides evidence to the surviving families that their kin had done nothing wrong but show up in the wrong place at the wrong time.

**ST** We agree. We think that one of the strong points of your book is the sympathy that you show for the Fanchers.

**WB** And I hope that there is also sympathy for the perpetrators. One of the element of the story I was very surprised and pleased to be able to present were the letters from the murderers themselves, trying to find some sort of spiritual solace. George Spencer, who was a school teacher in St. George, wrote an impassioned letter that wound up in the Brigham Young collection to a church leader in southern Utah. In it he pleaded for spiritual advice and help. I later learned from Ken Sleight, who is a descendant of Spencer, and who is a legendary character in his own right—he is the model for Seldom Seen Smith in the *Monkey Wrench Gang*—that Spencer killed himself. These men were essentially thrown away. They’d done the bidding of their leaders, but they were betrayed.

So, I hope that the book does justice to three groups of people who have been vilified and abused unjustly—the victims themselves, the Paiute nation, and the decent men who got caught up in this event and followed orders, sincerely believing that they were doing God’s work.

**ST** We are curious as to why the Fanchers were so unvigilant when they arrived at Mountain Meadows. Didn’t they face a lot of conflict before arriving there that would have put them on their guard?

**WB** The contemporary record makes it clear that there were conflicts over grass, which would be absolutely credible because of

what we know about overland travel and conditions in Utah. Every party that went through southern Utah had a hard time. The journals very consistently express relief to get out of Utah, especially when they went through southern Utah, because the hostility was so blatant, and the government was so authoritarian. Many emigrants commented on how decent the individual Mormons themselves were, but complained about how the authorities would use laws to run the equivalent of a pre-automobile speed trap. People could be arrested for swearing on the territorial road, or for letting their animals graze on private ground, or even on public ground. There were many, many ways that the Mormons would extort money out of visitors, and they applied them very cleverly. So, the conflicts were much more extensive than the Mormon records might pretend.

**ST** Given the hostility they faced in Utah, why do you think that the Fancher party was relaxed enough at Mountain Meadows that they didn't even bother to circle their wagons or post scouts in the area? The Mormons were close enough to hide in the surrounding bushes and watch the Arkansans set up their camp.

**WB** That was something that puzzled me very much. How do you explain the fact that the Fanchers hadn't even formed a wagon corral? It led me to do something I'm very reluctant to do, which is to look at the facts

and then to speculate. And I'm very adverse to speculating. There are real problems in figuring out how the massacre happened. As I got more and more into this research, I learned that the Mormons' initial plan was not to attack at Mountain Meadows, but rather to attack the train as it was making the descent from the Santa Clara plateau down into Santa Clara Canyon. You can still see today where the old wagon trail went down the hillside; there are big switchbacks and it's very steep and treacherous. I believe that if they'd carried out their plan and attacked the train when it was strung out in that situation, they could have started with a party at either end, and by the time the two attacking parties got to the middle, there would have been no survivors who could have given an account. Why did Lee decide to abandon that plan and do something else? And why would the Fanchers not have organized some sort of defensive camp?

Another question was, when did the Fancher party *get* to Mountain Meadows? In the Mormon accounts, the Fanchers arrived there several days before the attack. I'm not sure whether this inaccuracy was because people's memories were bad or whether it's another diversion inserted into the historical record. But, in tracking the chronology of the Fancher party's locations, there are two reliable sources on where they were when. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, they were just north of Nephi, Utah, which we get from Samuel Pitchforth's diary; ten days

later on August 25, they were at Corn Creek near the Indian farm, which is near today's Fillmore. They were traveling very slowly: they were going about eight miles a day. So, we can see how slowly they had been traveling from Salt Lake. That would be consistent with their desire to get their cattle ready to make the crossing of the Mohave Desert, and with the fact that they didn't want to get there in September when it was too hot. The later they reached the Mohave—ideally in late October—the more advantageous it would be for them. Based on that, I tried to figure out where they camped as they went down to southern Utah. Despite the very contradictory and sometimes dishonest reports of when the Fanchers arrived in southern Utah, I concluded that Jessie N. Smith, who was a Mormon official, was accurate in saying that they arrived at Red Creek (present day Paragonah) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September.

The chronology really is an important way to interpret all this. David Bigler did the first real analysis of "when they got where." A critical question is when did they get to Cedar City. We have many reports that the Fanchers were in Cedar City on a Friday, which would be the 4<sup>th</sup> of September. Cedar City is 35 miles from Mountain Meadows. These people, after they camped with George A. Smith and his Indian allies on August 25, suddenly upped their pace from about eight miles a day to about twelve and a half miles a day—and that last push was even faster.<sup>12</sup>

**ST** They were frightened.

**WB** They seemed to be very concerned about what they had seen. When they got to Cedar City, there clearly was some sort of conflict. What exactly it was, I was unable to tell from any of the sources. The Mormon accounts of the Fanchers' depredations in Cedar City are completely inconsistent; nobody tells the same story. But I think the Mormon authorities took some hostile action that created a conflict between the emigrants and the locals. Again it could have been over the grass, or where they could camp, or swearing. But, then what happened the next two days? On Saturday they pushed hard to get as far away from Cedar City as they could. On Sunday they made a second big push so that in two days they went thirty-five miles. For a well-organized train in good terrain that would not be a hard pace, but this was tough terrain, and it's clear that they were making a special effort. I believe that this effort is the key to understanding why there was no wagon corral. Groups of wagons pulled into Mountain Meadows late on Sunday, so that it was dark before everybody was into camp. They felt that at last they had gotten away, that they were now outside of the main Mormon settlements. They must have felt that they were beyond the main threat. Because otherwise, they would have made the extra effort to fort up. When Lee saw how vulnerable they were, he changed his battle plan and attacked the next morning.

**ST** You state in your preface that the massacre is a "watershed event" and the most disturbing episode in the history of the LDS church. Yet, there seems to be much in the story that is relevant to the more general history of the trails. Can you speak to this?

**WB** It's the singularity of Mountain Meadows that makes it such a difficult event for historians. Historians are very reluctant to criticize an ethnic group, or especially a religion. The Mormons had such a hard history of being unfairly treated and even persecuted that it is difficult for historians, especially non-Mormon historians, to step back and say, "This conflict really was about religion and politics." Nevertheless, the Mormons did something on the trail that nobody else ever did. The Mountain Meadows Massacre couldn't have happened any place else. Where else in the West would a substantial body of white people dress up as Indians and attack a wagon train? There were white criminals who disguised themselves as Indians, but those were simply criminal operations. Furthermore, the action was backed up by a state militia. That's what makes it difficult to relate Mountain Meadows to the broader trail experience.

On the other hand, it's easy to appreciate how important the Mormons were in the history of the trails. Once the Mormons were out here in Utah, they provided huge advantages as well as big problems to overland emigrants.

They offered travelers a place where they could at least take a break. And, for the first time, there was a place on the trail where emigrants could re-supply. Remember, when early emigrant trains tried to buy flour at Fort Bridger or Fort Hall, or even Fort Laramie, the traders would just laugh at them because they didn't *have* any flour. But, once you had an agricultural community of very hardworking, determined pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley, they were able to provide pretty much anything the emigrants needed. It was a symbiotic relationship. The Mormons arguably couldn't have succeeded without the physical, material support that the emigration brought to them, especially in 1849. Furthermore, the Mormons were very good pioneers. They opened up several trails and were very significant in the evolution of the overland wagon road.

Remember, the Mormons had come to Utah to establish a Kingdom of God, an independent theocracy. The nature of their religious passions and beliefs dictated that conflict with the federal government, which had its own notions about who was going to govern the Great Basin, was inevitable. The Mountain Meadows Massacre was the product of that conflict. The conflicts that you see throughout the trail period, which come to a head in 1857 when the federal government felt compelled to send the army to Utah, is a function of this confrontation—and Brigham Young's decision to close the

overland road and stage a horrific Indian “massacre” is part and parcel of that struggle.<sup>13</sup> It’s significant and relevant because it shows how difficult it is for a democratic republic to deal with a religious theocracy. The consequences of not dealing with it can be horrific events, like the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

**ST** It also could be viewed as a precursor to the Civil War, where we fought over secession. It was really a kind of secession.

**WB** Oh, it was, absolutely. I just came across a statement by Daniel Boorstin, in which he calls it America’s unsung and inglorious first civil war, which is exactly what it was.

**ST** What new information did you get from your interviews with the descendants of the Arkansas emigrants? In what ways did they contribute to your understanding of the Fancher-Baker party?

**WB** The survivors’ families preserve a feeling and a passion about this that impressed me most of all. They still have a sense of loss about what happened, and a bafflement as to why it happened. I once had a Fancher family member, who was a Disciple of Christ, a very devout evangelical Christian, ask me, “What did these people do wrong that God would punish them?” I said, “They didn’t do anything wrong, except be in the wrong place at the wrong time.” But there’s still, among the descendants, a puzzlement as to how and why this could happen.

**ST** A book that we really like is Judith Freeman’s *Red Water*. Based on your research, how close to reality is Judith Freeman’s take on Emma, Rachel and Ann Lee, the three narrative voices of *Red Water*?

**WB** I think the book is inspired. But that’s not an unbiased opinion. I helped Judith with the research, and I gave her the memoir of Ann Gordge Lee (who, I like to say, was the last thirteen year old that John D. Lee ever married). It’s fascinating to me, because, as historians, we’re so constrained by certain rules. There is a very clear set of boundaries that surround what we can do. Whenever you speculate, whenever you step over those boundaries, you almost always, almost inevitably, get into serious trouble. As a historian, you have to stick with the evidence. You have to seek that most consistent, dispassionate answer. But that also tends to discount a lot of life that is very hard to quantify through historical evidence: feelings, social position, the differences between men and women in the West, the complicated nature of Mormon polygamy, the realities of how life worked in America’s most successful theocracy. One of the revelations in *Red Water* that I thought was most revealing was that, in the story, Ann Gordge Lee only knew how to read the Deseret alphabet, the alphabet that Brigham Young created.

**ST** We saw the alphabet at *This is the Place*, in Salt Lake City.

**WB** Allegedly, Brigham Young concocted it to simplify English spelling and make it easier to teach. Some of the published academic studies of the Deseret alphabet raise the possibility that there was another purpose for this besides simplifying spelling, and that was to control what people could read. If people could only read the Deseret alphabet and if all that was published in the Deseret alphabet was the *Deseret News*, the *Book of Mormon* and the Mormon scriptures, that would mean you wouldn’t have to worry about people going off and reading a bunch of things that might disturb them, or that might give them ideas that you didn’t want them to have.

**ST** This comes up in academic writing?

**WB** Often times they’ll say, “People have proposed this, but it’s just not true.” Well, it *is* true. Of course it’s true. Brigham Young was definitely into control and power, and he didn’t put all this cockamamie system together just to simplify spelling. It did have that other purpose. It’s silly to ignore it. But it was only when I read Judith’s use of that fact and saw how it shapes Ann Gordge Lee’s world and world view that it really came home to me what a potent interpretation it is. By creating a character that has that limitation, Judith is able to show how real it would have been. To simply ignore that, as one of the historical alternatives, is dishonest. She also was able to capture the passions and the

feelings and, more than that, the struggle between these English and American pioneers and their environment. They had come out of humid, green climates, and they were suddenly dumped in the middle of the Great Basin in one of the harshest environments in the world. It was an incredible ordeal.

**ST** Last June, we visited Lee's Ferry, Arizona, where we spoke with Allen Malmquist, the U.S. Park Service employee who discovered the "Lead Scroll" on January 22, 2002.<sup>14</sup> What is your opinion regarding the authenticity of the artifact? If it is authentic, what do you think would prompt Lee to write his confession on lead rather than, say, paper?

**WB** Did Allen express an opinion?

**ST** No, he did not.

**WB** Well, the problem with the artifact is that it has no provenance. When I first heard the story, I thought that this was an obvious fraud. We have no explanation of how it wound up on the floor in the rat droppings. Without a good knowledge as to how it got there, it's very hard to have any sort of definitive opinion about it. But, despite my initial skepticism, when I read the text, I thought, "Oh, my God, that's John D. Lee." So far, the hard scientific analysis has shown one thing, which is that the scroll appears to be made using lead that came from a mine that closed around 1870. The mine was used again after 1980 or so, but this lead seems to be an artifact of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**ST** Mark Hofmann was very good at making historically accurate forgeries.<sup>15</sup>

**WB** But Hofmann didn't do this. My take on it is, if it's a fake, they'll prove it. History is too complicated to create an artifact 150 years later that doesn't include some fatal flaw. The Drake's Plate that all the experts in the 1930s authenticated didn't stand up to modern metallurgical analysis.<sup>16</sup> And in fact, the Clampers, who actually perpetrated the fraud had pretty much published and announced that they did it very soon after the joke got out of hand, if anybody had been paying attention. So if the "Dead Lee Scroll" is a forgery, it is likely the forgers will be unable to keep the secret, because otherwise, what's the point? If they never get credit for it, why go to all that trouble? At the same time, I think that the text sounds authentic. There are Mormon handwriting experts that disagree with me, but I think that what's on the scroll itself is exactly what John D. Lee would have wanted to leave behind. Using a metal plate is something that would be very attractive to a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Mormon. But until we know where it came from, well, we'll never know. One thing is, you'll never prove it's authentic. All you can do is prove that it's a fake. But if it is a fake, I think they'll prove it.

**ST** One of the most important goals of trail organizations such as OSTA and OCTA is to help preserve key trail sites. What is the status of the preservation of the Mountain Meadows site?

**WB** Mountain Meadows is a critical example of how a very important historic site is being threatened by our modern consumer society. There are vacation homes going up all over it, and there may be a golf course there some day. It would be a crime against history to transform that haunted spot into another trashed American landscape. Here the nation's obligation to its past is in danger of being derailed. Part of the problem is that the subject makes the Mormon church so nervous that they want to control it. They've done that in part by buying up a good bit of the property. They seem to have control of a significant amount of the immediate site. What they need to appreciate is that this historical site is important for reasons that extend beyond the interests of the Mormon church. If the massacre had never happened at Mountain Meadows, I think it's entirely likely that we'd have had a National Monument there, simply because it was such a significant historical place. It was so important in the history of the Old Spanish Trail, to the story of the emigration to California, and to the pioneering of the Southwest. It was highly praised by John C. Frémont, it had an influence on trappers and explorers, and it preserves dozens if not hundred of ancient archeology sites. The fact that the largest violent loss of life in the history of the Oregon-California Trails took place at Mountain Meadows means that the federal government should assume responsibility for the site and should protect it and help

maintain its historic integrity. The LDS church needs to realize that it is in its best interest to have a third party manage the site. If they simply stand by and let the place be trashed, they'll look as if they're calloused and indifferent to anyone's history but their own.

**ST** Do you have anything to say in conclusion?

**WB** Yes. The inescapable fact about the Mountain Meadows Massacre is that there's a big dark question that seems to loom behind all these studies. And the question is, "Did Brigham Young do it?" But I don't think that is the most important question about the massacre. The most important question is, what can we learn from this event about human nature and human life? For me, the most difficult question is, what makes decent men commit horrific crimes? Mountain Meadows is an especially troubling example of that because these men were so completely convinced that they were doing God's will. I gave a series of talks in Arkansas last fall and I finally came up with a statement that summarizes my conclusions: "God save us all from men doing God's work."

## End Notes

1. A noted Utah historian, Juanita Brooks (1898-1989) is famous for the integrity with which she examined the tragedy of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Two of her best known books are *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (1950) and *John Doyle Lee: Zealot, Pioneer Builder, Scapegoat* (1961).
2. Eleanor McLean Pratt was the widow of the beloved LDS apostle Parley P. Pratt, who was murdered in western Arkansas in May 1857. Vengeance for Pratt's death was undoubtedly a motive for the murder of the Arkansas-based Fancher party.
3. Orrin Porter Rockwell (1813-1878) was one of the early converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He served as bodyguard to both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. A controversial figure, he was the reputed Mormon "Destroying Angel," a notorious gunman, and a religious zealot.
4. A writer at the *Salt Lake Tribune* for over fifty years, Harold Schindler (1929-1998) is the author of *Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1966. Second edition, 1983), *Crossing the Plains: New and fascinating accounts of the hardships, controversies and courage experienced and chronicled by the 1847 pioneers on the Mormon Trail* (S.L.C.: *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 1997); and *In Another Time: Sketches of Utah History* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1998).
5. Former OCTA president David L. Bigler is the author of the award-winning *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1846-1896*; the editor of *The Gold Discovery Journal of Azariah Smith* and *A Winter with the Mormons: The 1852 Letters of Jotham Goodell*; and the coeditor of *Army of Israel: Mormon Battalion Narratives*.
6. Commanding a troop of U. S. dragoons from California, U.S. Army Brevet Major James H. Carleton (1814-1873) was the first federal officer to investigate the massacre. He visited the site in 1859, two years after the tragedy. In his report to Congress, he stated: "In pursuing the bloody thread which runs throughout this picture of sad realities, the question of how this crime, that for hellish atrocity has no parallel in our history, can be adequately punished often comes up and seeks in vain for an answer."
7. Territorial Judge John Cradlebaugh (1819-1872) initiated the first investigation into the Mountain Meadows Massacre.
8. An adopted son of Brigham Young, John D. Lee was U.S. government Indian Agent in Iron County. He became the central figure in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. In October 1870 Brigham Young excommunicated him from the Mormon church for his role in the affair. In an effort to escape arrest, Lee moved to a remote crossing of the Colorado River, where he established Lee's Ferry, which connected southern Utah with Mormon settlements in northeastern Arizona. Lee was arrested in November 1874, and was tried and convicted of murder at Mountain Meadows. He was executed by a firing squad at the meadows on 23 March 1877.
9. William Bishop was John D. Lee's lawyer in both the first and second trial. He was also Lee's literary executor and was the editor for his autobiography and confession, *Mormonism Unveiled*.
10. Some early writers about the massacre claimed that a group of young ruffians, known as the Missouri Wildcats, accompanied the Fancher train.
11. Brigham Young appointed Jacob Hamblin to be president of the Southern Indian Mission to the Paiutes on August 4, 1857. Hamblin's ranch was at the upper end of the Meadows, about two miles from the site of the massacre.
12. Mormon apostle George A. Smith was a cousin of the prophet Joseph Smith and a commander of the Nauvoo Legion in southern Utah. In John D. Lee's version of the story, Smith brought the orders to kill the Fanchers to southern Utah. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, Smith camped with a mixed party of Mormons and Paiute Indians near the Fancher party at Corn Springs, south of Fillmore.

13. The background to the Mountain Meadows Massacre was the so-called Utah War of 1857, during which President Buchanan sent federal troops, under the command of Albert Sydney Johnston, to suppress a perceived rebellion by the citizens of Utah Territory. The resulting confrontation was ultimately resolved peacefully.
14. In January 2002, Allen Malmquist discovered a lead sheet buried under debris in the old fort at Lee's Ferry. The lead sheet, signed by J.D. Lee, asserts that he acted at Mountain Meadows "on orders of Pres Young thro Geo Smith."
15. A disaffected member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Mark Hofmann, is a skilled forger who murdered two people in Salt Lake City. He is currently serving a prison sentence at the Utah State Prison in Draper, Utah. His most famous Mormon forgery, the Salamander Letter, was purchased by LDS Bishop, Steven F. Christensen in 1984 for \$40,000. Simon Worrall's book, *The Poet and the Murderer: A True Story of Literary Crime and the Art of Forgery* (Dutton Publishing, 2002), chronicles Hofmann's life.
16. The Drake's Plate of Brass is a forgery that purports to be the brass plaque that Francis Drake posted when he landed in northern California in 1579. The hoax, initially perpetrated in 1936 by E Clampus Vitus, a playful fraternity of California history enthusiasts, was successful for forty years.

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## A Tour of Mountain Meadows Sites

by Deborah and Jon Lawrence

A few years ago we drove by Mountain Meadows on our way to Salt Lake City. Not knowing the history behind this beautiful site, we bought several books, where we learned that members of the Fancher-Baker party, emigrants from Arkansas who were traveling to California in late 1857 via the wagon road from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles, were massacred by a party of Mormons from nearby settlements in southern Utah. This was the most violent incident and, perhaps, the greatest tragedy associated with the emigrant trails.

The Mountain Meadows Massacre can only be understood in the context of the early mistreatment of the Mormons by citizens of Missouri and Illinois, the murder of the Latter-day Saint Apostle Parley P. Pratt in Arkansas, and the 1857 "Utah War" wherein federal troops under the command of Albert Sydney Johnston were converging onto Utah to suppress a perceived rebellion against the U.S. government. The history of these events is ably and fairly recounted in Will Bagley's *Blood of the Prophets*, the first major treatment of Mountain Meadows since Juanita Leavitt Pulsipher Brooks' *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* in 1950. A less scholarly study, Sally Denton's *American Massacre* was published in 2003.

We became so interested in the tragedy that, following the June 2005 OSTA Conference in Las Vegas, we toured several key sites connected with the massacre, including sites associated with both the Mormon and non-Mormon participants.

Parley Pratt, one of the original twelve apostles of the LDS church, was sent in 1850 to explore southern Utah. The lack of iron was a particular concern to Utah pioneers and when iron deposits were discovered nearby, Brigham Young called for volunteers to settle the Iron Mission area. Cedar City was first settled by the Mormons in November 1851, and a small blast furnace was constructed ten months later. In addition to being an interesting area of early Utah history, Cedar City was home to several of the leaders of and participants in the massacre. We began our tour there.

We stopped by the Iron Mission Park Museum, located on the west side of the street at 589 North Main. The museum has a nice collection of wagons, small but informative panels on early history (Escalante, the Old Spanish Trail, including an old Utah highway marker full of bullet holes, and the Frémont expedition), an informative exhibit on the history of the Iron Mission area, plus a

small gift shop/bookstore with a good selection of works relating to Mountain Meadows. Before leaving the museum, we picked up a historical tour guide of Cedar City.

Using the guide, we drove 1.6 miles north of Main and Center Streets to the Wagon Box Fort marker, located at the site of the first Cedar City encampment. The settlement was given the name of Fort Cedar because of the abundance of trees which were



Mountain Meadows. *photo by Jon Lawrence*

called “cedar” trees, although actually they are junipers. As more iron workers arrived, the fort became too small, and in 1853 a new and larger fort was built on the south bank of the stream adjoining the old site to the southwest, but it was abandoned in 1855 when the present Cedar City location was established. With the help of our Cedar City historical guide, we drove along the Old

Fort Drive in an attempt to locate the old Cedar City site-Fort Cedar monument, but either the marker had been removed or it was buried in the tall weeds along the road.

We successfully located the Pioneer Iron Works marker on the east side of First East at 400 North. A large blast furnace and foundry were at this site. Next, we found the site of Chaffin Grist Mill. Located just north of 200 South, between 200 South and Coal Creek, this flour mill was constructed in the 1850s and operated for a few years by John D. Lee. Lee, an adopted son of Brigham Young, was an important and influential early pioneer in southern Utah. Born in Kaskaskia, Illinois, in 1812, he had been an early Mormon convert; he had suffered persecution in Far West and Nauvoo; and he had helped in the Mormons’ move west to Utah. He was devoted to the church. The significance of his relationship with

Brigham Young is evidenced by the sixteen wives he had been permitted to marry over the years. Along with Cedar City residents such as Isaac C. Haight, John M. Higbee, and Philip Klinginsmith, he was called by the LDS Apostle George Smith to help in the confrontation with the Fancher party, and he played a leading role in the massacre. According to Lee, he received his orders from Haight at a meeting in Cedar City in early September. “[W]e took

some blankets and went over to the old Iron Works, and lay there that night, so we could talk in private.”<sup>1</sup>

An unusually large wagon train, the Fancher-Baker party included some 130 emigrants, mostly from Arkansas, and over a thousand head of cattle and two hundred horses. Taking the southern route to California from Salt Lake City, through Provo, Nephi, and Fillmore, they arrived in Cedar City on Friday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, where again settlers refused to sell them food. The Fancher caravan then reached the Old Spanish Trail, their road to southern California, went through the village of Pinto and then passed Jacob Hamblin’s crude summer ranch house on Meadow Creek at the northern end of Mountain Meadows. Here at the meadows, the weary emigrants intended to graze and rest their stock before undertaking the long stretch of desert that lay ahead.

After spending the night in Cedar City, we shadowed the Fancher caravan’s route 35 miles southwest to Mountain Meadows. Mountain Meadows is in the southwestern corner of Utah, in the present county of Washington and about eight miles south of the town of Pinto. About ten miles in length and one in width, Mountain Meadows resembles an elongated diamond. It is divided into northern and southern halves by a low bald ridge, which John C. Frémont identified as the south rim of the Great Basin. Mountains surround the meadows.

On the morning of September 7, 1857, Mormons from Cedar City and nearby areas disguised themselves as Indians and, together with their Southern Paiute allies, opened fire on the Fancher camp from a nearby arroyo. After a four-day battle and siege, they pretended to come as rescuers under a flag of truce. With John D. Lee in the lead, the emigrants were marched into the field. About a mile away from their campsite, all but approximately seventeen children under the age of seven were massacred. These seventeen children were taken into Mormon homes. The remains of the victims were hurriedly thrown into shallow depressions and ravines and subsequently scattered over the immediate area by storms and wild animals. On May 20, 1859, Major James Henry Carleton and his men buried bones from thirty-four skeletons in a grave and erected a rude conical monument. It was surmounted by a red cedar cross with the carved inscription: VENGEANCE IS MINE: I WILL REPAY, SAITH THE LORD. The U. S. Army forces at Camp Floyd helped return the seventeen children to relatives in Arkansas.



Monument at Mountain Meadows. *photo by Jon Lawrence*

We walked up the hill to the overlook where there is a granite memorial listing the names of the victims and survivors. There are interpretive signs along the way. From the top, we gazed out at the open valley. To our left was the site of the Fancher encampment near the western spring on the southern end of the narrow part of the meadows. Squinting through our binoculars, we tried to imagine the suffering that had occurred here in the fall of 1857. A broad meadow surrounded by wilderness, it is a beautiful and very moving site.

To an important degree, the severe opposition of most Americans to the Mormon church in the 1830-1860 period resulted from the LDS practice of polygamy. While the mainstream Mormon Church banned polygamy in the late 1800s and excommunicates those who practice it, several fundamentalist Mormon settlements continue the practice. These include the polygamous

towns of Colorado City, Arizona (called Short Creek until 1962), and Hildale, Utah. These towns are home to at least three Mormon fundamentalist sects, including the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS).<sup>2</sup> With a combined population of about 10,000, the towns sit at the foot of the majestic Vermillion Cliffs. Warren Jeffs is the prophet, or leader of the FLDS. Members of the FLDS are forbidden to watch television or read magazines or newspapers, and its leaders routinely evict those who differ with them over religious practices. Worth an estimated \$150 million, the FLDS trust, commonly known as the United Effort Plan, maintains legal control of all property and buildings. In June 2005, a Utah probate judge stripped the polygamist leaders from financial control of their sect. This move is expected to bring wide changes to the community.

Believing that some exposure to polygamous communities would enhance our appreciation of the early opposition to the Mormons, we drove east on Highway 389 across the Arizona Strip, which straddles Utah and is cut off from the rest of the state of Arizona by the Grand Canyon. Suddenly, a sprawl of houses and a sprinkling of not very prosperous looking

businesses lay before us. This was Colorado City. We took one of several unmarked dirt roads that led into town. What we saw was jolting—it was backward-looking and primitive. Girls and women wore ankle length dresses and white stockings appropriate to an earlier era. Conspicuously unacknowledged, we spotted an occasional pickup truck, but for the most part, the dirt streets were deserted. Constructed of particle board, the houses were unusually large and rectangular



Cabin at Lonely Dell. *photo by Jon Lawrence*

in shape, and most of them were in an unfinished state. The size of these houses and the number of cars and pickups in each driveway suggested to us that large families dwelt therein. Only a few houses were in good repair, probably because only a few of the more powerful members of these sects control the finances of the community. Perhaps this is an inevitable result of the lifestyle

of such authoritarian sects. We were relieved when we broke free of the town and were back on asphalt again, heading east towards Lee's Ferry.

For many years, John D. Lee was protected by LDS authorities against Federal investigation for his role in the massacre. However, in 1870, Young advised Lee to move south. Two months later Lee learned that he had been excommunicated. In November 1871, he received orders to "make

a Road to the crossing of the Colorado River." Accompanied by two of his wives and thirteen of his children, Lee went into exile and established the first Colorado River crossing near the mouth of the Paria River. According to Jon Krakaur, "[t]he polygamous roots of Colorado City, née Short Creek, lead back to John D. Lee" and this dismal outpost (262). Due to the shale deposits which slope to the river here, it

was the only place to cross the Colorado River for 260 miles.

The settlement is still known as "Lee's Ferry." When Emma Lee saw the isolated valley that was to be her new home, she cried, "Oh, what a lonely dell," and since then the ranch has been known as the Lonely Dell. The remoteness of the area made it attractive to polygamists and it, along with Short Creek, became a haven for men with plural wives. In 1928 when access to Lee's Ferry was improved



With Allen Malmquist at Lonely Dell. *photo by Jon Lawrence*

and the number of outsiders to the area increased, the polygamous families moved to the more isolated Short Creek.

The hot sun cast its light against the surrounding red cliffs. The sky was cloudless. We straggled up the dirt road from the parking area where we had purchased a "Walking Tour Guide" for \$1.00. The complete tour of the orchard, log cabins, stone ranch house, and pioneer cemetery was a very hot one-mile round trip, and we were grateful that we had bought a bottle of water with us.

We walked to the site that is believed to be where John D. Lee built his cabin. A dugout root cellar is nearby. After the departure of Emma Lee, Warren Johnson took over the operation of the ferry. His first wife moved into Emma Lee's cabin, and he

built another log cabin in 1881 for his wife Samantha Johnson. A second existing cabin was probably built by Jerry Johnson, the son of Warren and Samantha. In 1886 Warren Johnson built a large frame house for his families. They built their wood framed house on the site of Emma Lee's cabin. In 1926, this house burned to the ground. The most modern building on the Lonely Dell Ranch was built by a Hopi stone mason, Poli Hungavi, for Leo and Hazel Weaver in 1935-36. A nearby orchard maintained by the National Park Service continues the Lonely Dell's impression of an oasis in the desert.

We circled around the stone house until we came to the front door. Just inside the screen door stood Allen Malmquist, a Park Service employee. We were ecstatic. On January 22, 2002,

Malmquist uncovered a twelve-by-eighteen-inch "scroll" of lead with a confession signed J. D. Lee. Malmquist showed us the Johnson House foundation, which overlays Emma's cabin, and he let us in the Samantha Johnson cabin. He also answered many of our questions regarding Lee's life at the ferry. We learned from him that Rachel Lee stayed twenty miles up the Honeymoon Trail at Rachel's (later Jacob's) Ponds. After John D. Lee died, Emma remained at the Lonely Dell a few years and then moved to Winslow, AZ, where she worked as a midwife. She married Mr. French, a non-Mormon. When asked about Judith Freeman's novel *Red Water*, Malmquist said that many of the locals found it objectionable.<sup>3</sup>

Before we returned to the parking lot, we walked down the road a few hundred yards to the ranch cemetery which contains graves dating from 1874 to 1933. Four of Warren and Permelia Johnson's children are buried here. After contracting diphtheria from a passing traveler in 1891, the four Johnson children died within a period of seven weeks.

Since we had business farther east, we decided to continue our investigation by exploring the relevant sites in Arkansas. Reaching the Arkansas border was far easier now than in the Fanchers' day. Fueled by our \$3-a-gallon gas, we toiled down the interstate and took turns reading aloud *Blood of the Prophets*.

Hector McLean murdered Parley Pratt, one of the original twelve apostles of the LDS church, near Van Buren, Arkansas—the same part of Arkansas where the Fancher train originated. McLean’s wife, Eleanor, met Pratt and converted to Mormonism. She left her husband, who violently disapproved of her conversion. Although legally married to McLean, she was sealed by Brigham Young to Pratt for time and eternity, making her the twelfth of the apostle’s plural wives. In 1856, she attempted to retrieve her three children, who were staying with her parents in New Orleans. Enraged at his wife’s betrayal, Hector McClean had Parley Pratt captured and brought to trial in Fort Smith, where Pratt was acquitted. After Pratt’s release, the aggrieved McLean caught up with him and stabbed him to death near Alma, Arkansas. This incident happened in May 1857, only two weeks after the Fancher party had left Arkansas for California. Eleanor’s

report of the murder to the leaders of the church put the blame on the state of Arkansas. She asked them to avenge her martyred husband’s innocent blood.

When we arrived in Van Buren, Arkansas, we located the Tourist Information Center at 2915 Interstate 40. Donna House told us that Parley Pratt’s gravesite was nearby. She suggested we go to the Alma police station. At the station, the receptionist made a phone call to Lieutenant Jayson Peppas. It was Sunday and Lieutenant Peppas was in church, but he was on duty and took the call. The lieutenant agreed to take us to the cemetery. We met him in the LDS church parking lot just as the members were filing out the door to their cars.

Lieutenant Peppas is a large man; his towering physique is matched by a warm personality. Originally from Illinois, he is an active member of the LDS church.

Jayson told us that “according to local folklore, Parley Pratt was fooling around with their women.” Leaving the parking lot, we followed him to Parley Pratt’s burial site at the top of a grassy knoll. It is a

beautiful and quiet spot. President Hinkley came and re-dedicated it a couple of years ago.

We drove north, this time stalking the Fanchers. We checked our map and thumbed through Bagley’s *Blood of the Prophets* for any information on the whereabouts of the Fancher homestead. We knew that the Fancher emigrant party was organized in northwestern Arkansas and principally in Carroll County. Alexander Fancher settled near Osage. Near the county line, we crossed the Osage River and drove into the small town of Osage. We stopped for information at the Osage Clayworks, which is located in the Stamps General Store, a three story native stone building built in 1901. We talked to Newt Lale, the resident potter and asked him about the Fanchers. As so often happened on our trips, we hit paydirt. Newt walked out to his front porch and pointed up the road. “The Fancher cemetery is located about a mile east of Osage on the Delmar Road on the Benny McCoy place, which was the original Fancher place,” he drawled. With his directions, we easily found the Old Fancher Cemetery. The graveyard occupied a small, weedy plot behind an old barn. The first headstone we saw marked the grave of Christopher “Kit” Carson Fancher, one of the seventeen surviving children who were returned to Carrollton, Arkansas, in 1859.<sup>4</sup>

As we drove back down the road toward Osage, we stopped briefly at the New Fancher Cemetery, which has the more



Parley Pratt’s grave, Alma, AK.

photo by Jon Lawrence



Kit Carson Fancher grave site, Osage, AK.  
*photo by Jon Lawrence*

recent burials, and then pressed on towards Carrollton, eight miles east of Osage. This is where the seventeen children arrived in Carroll County on September 15, 1859, two years after the massacre. We pulled over at a small park to read the historical markers which commemorated the return of the orphans. While we were reading the plaque, an elderly man in bib overalls and a T-shirt strolled up and asked us what our interest was in the children of the Fancher party. He seemed unsurprised to learn that we were following the trail of the Mountain Meadows tragedy. At eighty-nine, his memory was sharp. He said that when he was very young he knew an old woman in Harrison, Arkansas, who had been one of the survivors. He suggested that we see the Mountain Meadows historical marker at the Harrison Courthouse and then drive four miles south on Highway 7 to view the jumping off place of the

Court House where we found the monument erected to the Fancher party. It lists both those who died in the massacre and the children who survived. We then drove approximately four miles south of Harrison to the site near Crooked Creek where their wagon train assembled in April 1857; a historical marker at the side of the road marks this spot.

Five weeks later, we returned to Utah. We decided to visit a few more sites relating to the Mountain Meadows tragedy.

The Fancher caravan arrived in Salt Lake City in early August 1857. Where they camped and the reception they received from the LDS residents continue to be subjects of controversy. They had two routes to California to choose between: the northern trail along the Humboldt River and the road through the southern settlements. On August 5, 1857, the Arkansas

emigrant party.

Back in the car, we gave each other high fives and boasted of our good fortune. We checked our map and tourist literature and then picked up the road to Harrison. We drove to the Harrison

wagons headed south. The road passed through the small towns of Nephi, Fillmore, Beaver, and Parowan, Cedar City, and Pinto before it crossed the Harmony Mountains to Mountain Meadows.

Our first stop was Beaver, the birthplace of Butch Cassidy. In 1872, the federal government intensified their investigation of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Warrants were sent out for the arrest of nine Mountain Meadows participants, including Lee. At the first trial, the jury deadlocked, and Lee was taken to the territorial penitentiary in Salt Lake to await a second trial. According to Juanita Brooks and Will Bagley, the LDS leaders decided to sacrifice Lee as a scapegoat, thus allowing others to go free.

The U. S. Army built Fort Cameron in Beaver City in response to Indian hostilities and to aid the 2<sup>nd</sup> District Court in its prosecution of John D. Lee. Lee's two trials were held in Beaver and for a short time, he was imprisoned in the fort. The first trial began July 23, 1875, on the upper floor of the Beaver City Cooperative, but because of the number of spectators, it had to be moved to the saloon next door.<sup>5</sup> Lee returned to Beaver for his second trial, which opened on September 11, 1876. He was found guilty and sentenced to die on October 10, 1876. On March 23, 1877, twenty years after the massacre, John D. Lee was executed by a firing squad at the siege site—no other person was ever convicted of any role in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. His last words were, "Center my heart, boys!"



John D. Lee grave site, Panguitch, UT.  
photo by Jon Lawrence

Harvey Lee met the wagon carrying Lee's body at Paragonah and accompanied it to Caroline Lee's home and then to the Panguitch cemetery for burial. According to the owners of the B & B, local tradition says that the Lee's body was reburied in the basement of Caroline Lee's house because the family was afraid that someone would attempt to steal the body from his frequently desecrated grave. After we left the house, we drove to the Panguitch cemetery. On the stone slab that covers Lee's grave is the following inscription: "Know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free."

On April 20, 1961, John Doyle Lee was restored to full membership in the LDS church.

We visited the Beaver Courthouse, which was built in 1882. Although the courthouse museum was closed, a docent and several of her family members were inside. She kindly gave us a private tour of the exhibits. Afterwards, she stood on the front steps and pointed down the street to the Lee trial sites.

We drove on to Panguitch and located the home of Lee's wife Caroline at 185 S 300 E. Here on November 7, 1874, Marshal William Stokes and his agents found Lee hiding in the chicken coop. They arrested him and took him to Beaver for his second trial. Today the home is a bed and breakfast, the William Prince Inn.

After Lee's execution at Mountain Meadows, William Prince and

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## End Notes

1. Bishop, ed., *Mormonism Unveiled*, 225.
2. The 1953 raid on Short Creek by Arizona state troopers is the subject of *The Child Bride of Short Creek*, a film made for television (1981).
3. Judith Freeman's *Red Water* revolves around the Mountain Meadows Massacre that changes the lives of John D. Lee and his wives. The story is told by three of Lee's plural wives.
4. Christopher Carson Fancher, named after the frontiersman, was five years old at the time of the tragedy. He died in 1873.
5. For a description of Lee's two trials, see Will Bagley's *Blood of the Prophets*, pages 290-297 and 301-306.

## For the record

In the Fall 2005 issue of *Spanish Traces*, Carol Corbett was the author of the article on the Virgin River diversion project.

We also apologize to those whose names we mis-spelled in that issue.

## Wings Over the Old Spanish Trail

by John Sedey

Seventeen small airplanes and 6 automobiles carrying 47 members of the Historic Trail Flyers met in Santa Fe on September 23, 2005, for a reunion and to travel the Old Spanish Trail.

Our group had its beginnings in 1993, when we flew the Oregon Trail. For that flyover we had 42 aircraft and 90 persons starting in Independence, MO, and terminating in Independence, OR. The OST flyover was our sixteenth trail air tour. Our members come from throughout the U.S., with one of our members living in Canada. Generally, our aircraft have only one engine and from two to six seats. Our speeds range from 90 to 200 mph.



Some of the flyover planes.

*used with permission of John Sedey*

Saturday morning started with a chartered school bus to Abiquiu with OSTA's Pat Kuhlhoff as our guide. After a one-hour drive, we stopped at Bode's store in Abiquiu for rest and to place orders for lunch. Back in the bus we went to two spots selected by Pat where we put our feet to the trail. It was an awesome feeling to realize that more than a century ago mules, burros and people walked on the spot where we were standing. They were making history and didn't know it.

After lunch and more trail investigation, we returned to Santa Fe for rest and our first rendezvous dinner. This meeting is especially important because it is where the new members and "old timers" meet and find out about each other. At this meeting, Pat gave us a more in-depth vision of what lay ahead for us. Also, we were introduced to Sarah Schlanger of the BLM, who gave a slide presentation. After the meeting we retired for a good night's sleep before hitting the trail for our next destination – Farmington, NM.



Air view of the Rio Chama near Abiquiu. *used with permission of John Sedey*

The weather the following morning was perfect – clear and cool with light winds. We departed to the north, flying over Abiquiu and the spot where we stood the previous day. Although we were flying at 10,000 feet MSL, we weren't that high above the local terrain. (All flying altitudes are measured in feet from sea level and hence called "Mean Sea Level" or MSL.) The town where we visited was plainly visible, as was Rio Chama Canyon with its imaginary pack train plodding along under the warm spring sun so many years ago.

At Farmington we bused to Aztec Ruins. We were made aware that the village was not built by the Aztec, but that it was given its name long ago in error and the name stuck. We now know it was the Anasazi, the local natives, who built it. After dinner we were honored with more presentations by OSTA's Doug Knudson and James Copeland of the BLM, with information unique to the area.

The next morning the weather continued to be fair; in fact, the weather all the way to Los Angeles was picture perfect. Our next stop was Page, AZ, and the Crossing of the Fathers.

We knew the crossing would not be visible, since construction of the Glen Canyon Dam had flooded the area. However, we were scheduled for a lake cruise that got us close to the actual crossing area. The cruise was a great diversion and enjoyed by all of us. Continuing the flight we went through Monument Valley among the towering monoliths and passed Goulding's Resort where we motor-toured a few years back. What a different perspective from the air! That evening after dinner we were treated to another guest appearance by OSTA's Paul

Ostapuk, followed by another good night's sleep to prepare for the next day's departure to Las Vegas.

The view of the Glen Canyon Dam, the lake behind, and the beginning of the Grand Canyon to the south was inspiring. Flight over the Grand Canyon requires special permission and flight at unusually high altitudes, so we stayed to the north of the park boundaries using GPS navigation to insure that we didn't violate sacred air space. The



Flyover group with Hal Steiner.

*used with permission of John Sedey*

regulation protects the solitude of those enjoying the depths of the canyon. Flying into Las Vegas also has specific requirements necessitating special charts, and radio and radar contact with the controlling authorities.

The day in Las Vegas was a free day, planned so those who have never experienced the "Strip" would have a chance to try their luck. Early the next morning we were joined by OSTA's Hal Steiner and boarded a charter bus to view the Old Mormon Fort, Red Rock

Canyon, and Blue Diamond, all the way to a point where the original trail abruptly ended because of extensive off-road vehicle operation. Hal did a great job of showing and explaining the trail sites west of Las Vegas. There was a large demand for his book about the trail. We really enjoyed him.

Friday morning we flew to Lancaster, CA. We boarded the Metro Link to downtown Los Angeles where the Union Station terminal is only an easy one-block

walk to El Pueblo de Los Angeles. I'm hopeful that those who could not make the train trip will be able to do so in the future.

Our last evening was our traditional "Last Supper" where we discussed the fun we had in the past week and planned for our next event. It was agreed that the next

Historic Trail Flyers Air

Tour would be The Chisholm Trail, the cattle drive trail used in the mid-1800's from central Texas to the rail head at Abilene, KS. The time frame will be late September when the summer heat is on the wane and the air is smoother.

The Old Spanish Trail Air Tour was a wonderful event with a great group of people. We couldn't have done it without the guidance and help of OSTA. We offer our sincere gratitude to all we had contact with. We will certainly support your efforts whenever we can.

## Escape From Death Valley

by John Krizek

[**Editors' note:** Because we are fans of John Krizek's *Forgotten Journey*, an award winning documentary about the first emigrant party to get wagons over the Sierra Nevada ([www.thecaliforniatrail.com](http://www.thecaliforniatrail.com)), we were excited to learn that he is making a new film. *Escape from Death Valley*, currently in production, is the story of the gold rush pioneers who gave Death Valley its name. We attended John's talk on the making of the film at the September 2005 meeting of the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners and felt that the history of the Death Valley 49ers, which involves the Old Spanish Trail, would be of interest to readers of *Spanish Traces*. The quotes in the following article are from the book *Death Valley in '49*, by William L. Manly, republished in 2001 by The Narrative Press, Santa Barbara.]

*Escape From Death Valley* is a story of character, courage, duty, and triumph over adversity. It's the story of the gold rush pioneers who, thinking they were taking a short-cut to California, became stranded in Death Valley and gave the place its name. It tells of how they were rescued by two heroic young men, William Lewis Manly and John Rogers, who walked all the way to the San Fernando Mission to find help and then went back to save the young families they had left behind. The rescue of the Bennett and

Arcan families by Manly and Rogers is one of the truly great stories of the American West. It was documented primarily by Manly, a hunter by trade. The Bennett family had been his neighbors back in

Wisconsin when the gold bug bit. Manly and Rogers started out as teamsters with another wagon train in Iowa. How they re-connected with the Bennetts in Utah is another story of marvelous coincidence, which we will not tell here.

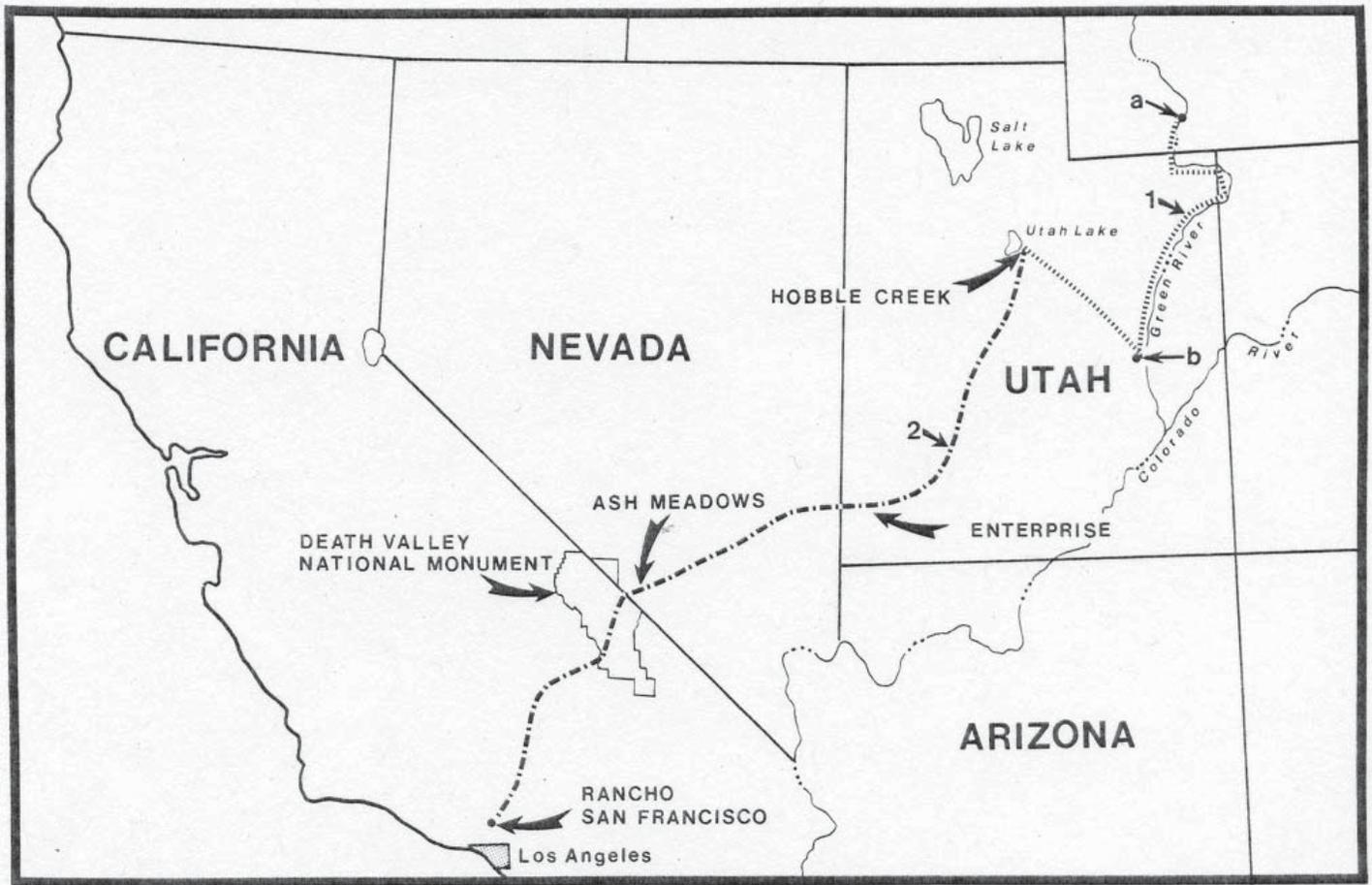
For the purposes of our film, the story starts at a place called Hobble Creek, near Payson, Utah, south of Utah Lake. In the fall of 1849, several wagon trains arrived in the Salt Lake area late in the season. They were aware of what had happened to the Donner party in the Sierra snows three years earlier, and consequently they were concerned. They listened when the Mormons told them about a new road to Los Angeles, which was a long way around the mountains but would get them to the gold fields without the dangers of the winter snows. The Mormons were interested in developing a trade route between Salt Lake and Los



John Krizek at the monument near Enterprise, UT, where the party left the OST for Death Valley. *used with permission of John Krizek*

Angeles. Moreover, they were *not* interested in hosting such a large crowd of visitors over the winter at their small new settlement. Captain Jefferson Hunt had just returned from Los Angeles with a pack train of supplies. Hunt convinced the tourists that even though wagons had not made it all the way through to Los Angeles, it was doable and a far preferable option to risking the mountains to the west.

And so in October, 1849, a large train of 107 wagons, and all the humanity and livestock that went with it, departed for the south. By the time they arrived in southern Utah they'd picked up the Old Spanish Trail. But there were problems. It was too large a wagon train for efficient governance. And there was dissatisfaction with Captain Hunt's leadership. Near Enterprise, Utah—west of Cedar City and northwest of St. George—word of a new shortcut to California seized the camp.



Approximate route of the Bennet-Arcan party. *used by permission of John Krizek*

A pack train had passed by with a copy of the map from Frémont's explorations of the West. Over the blank space marked "Unexplored" and "Great American Desert," somebody had traced a trail showing plenty of water and camp sites all the way to the southern Sierra Nevada, around which they could go through Walker Pass, and wind up at the gold fields of Mariposa. It would save them 600 miles over the desert route through Los Angeles. There was much heated discussion. Captain Hunt said he doubted any white men had ever been over the short cut, and if the pioneers took it, it would be a "road to hell." Nevertheless 100 of the 107 wagons

decided to take the risk and headed west, leaving only a small party continuing to the south.

It was now early November. Things went well for a few days, until they came to an impassable canyon. There was an overnight dusting of snow, a hint of winter to come. Most of them decided to go back and catch up with Captain Hunt. But scouts soon returned, having found a way around to the north, and 27 wagons continued west across today's Nevada into that "Great American Desert."

It turned out to be as miserable as Captain Hunt had predicted.

Much of what they traversed is part of today's Area 51, the huge top-secret Air Force testing range that covers much of southern Nevada. At one point when Lewis Manly climbed a peak to scan the land ahead and saw how bleak it was, he was struck with despair. Years later he wrote: "Prospects now seemed to me so hopeless that I heartily wished I was not duty bound to stand by the women and small children who could never reach the land of bread without our assistance. If I was in the position that some of them were who had only themselves to look after, I could pick up my knapsack and gun and go off, feeling I had no dependent ones to leave behind. But

as is was, I felt I should be morally guilty of murder if I should forsake Mr. Bennett's wife and children, and the family of Mr. Arcan with whom I had thus far been associated. It was a dark line of thought but I always felt better when I got around to the determination, as I always did, to stand by my friends, their wives and children, come what might."

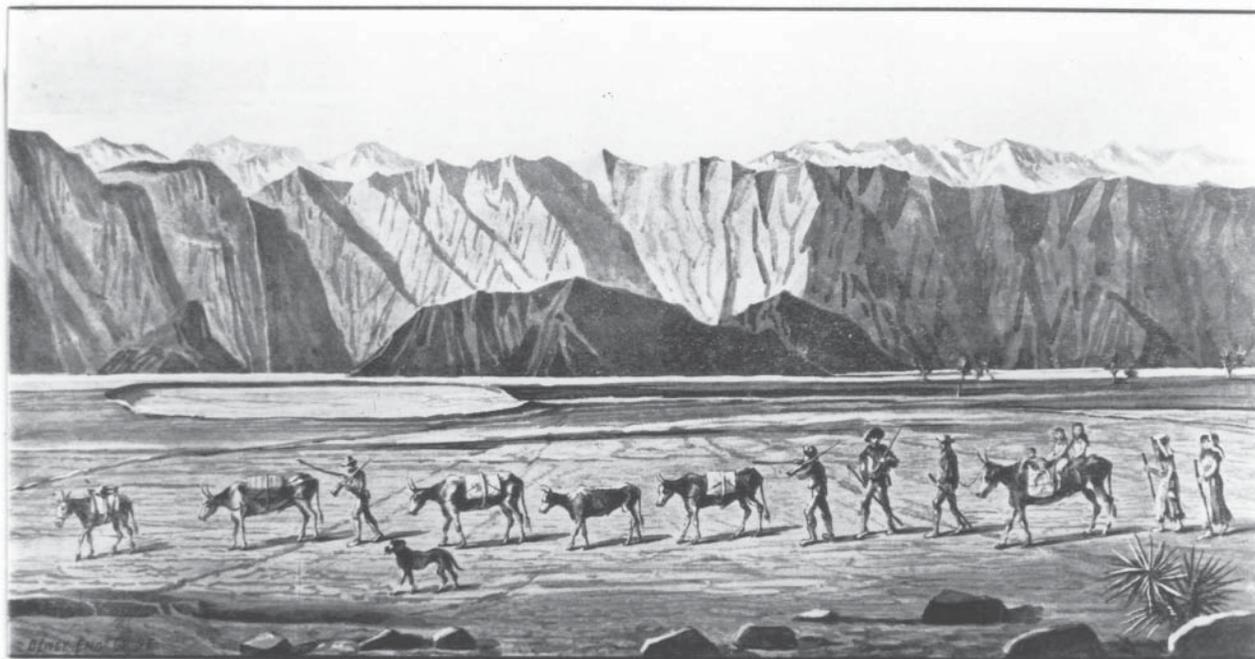
By the time they arrived at the eastern approach to today's Death Valley, the party had broken up into smaller groups. Most of the single men, not wanting to be slowed down by the families, went on ahead. This group, known as the Jayhawkers, came down a dry wash where a faint stream, now known as Furnace Creek, sometimes surfaced. From there they turned north to the area around Stovepipe Wells. Manly, scouting ahead for the Bennett/Arcan party, found the

Jayhawkers burning their wagons, and preparing to cross out of the valley near the north end, roughly where the highway to Olancho goes today.

It was now Christmas, 1849. After staggering into the deepest and most desolate valley of all, the party, including Lewis Manly, John Rogers, the Bennett and Arcan families, and an old sailor they called Captain Culverwell, headed south along the west side of the jagged alkalai at the bottom of the valley that we now call the Devil's Golf Course. Another family with three children, the Wades, followed along but kept their distance from the rest of the party. They were all hoping against hope that the towering Panamint Range in front of them would yield a pass they could get through. From the

valley floor below sea level, the Panamints, a terribly imposing wall of rock, soar to over 11,000 feet elevation. Manly said, "We could see the mountains were lower to the south, but they held no snow and seemed only barren rocks piled up in lofty peaks, and as we looked it seemed the most God-forsaken country in the world."

Of the plight of the families at this point, Manly later wrote: "Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Arcan were in heart-renting distress. The four children were crying for water, but there was not a drop to give them, and none could be reached before sometime the next day. The mothers were nearly crazy, for they expected their children to choke with thirst and die in their arms, and they would rather perish themselves than suffer the agony of seeing their little ones gasp and slowly die. They



LEAVING DEATH VALLEY.—THE MANLY PARTY ON THE MARCH AFTER LEAVING THEIR WAGONS.

Illustration from Manly's *Death Valley in '49*, showing the bedraggled party leaving Death Valley, with their wagons left behind.

California State Library

reproached themselves as being the cause of all this trouble. For the love of gold they had left homes where hunger had never come, and often in sleep they dreamed of the bounteous tables of their old homes, only to be woefully disappointed in the morning.” By this time they were killing their oxen one by one to avoid starvation. Manly reported: “No fat could be found on the giant carcasses, and the marrow of the great bones was a thick brown liquid resembling corruption.”

They tried to work their way up toward a promising pass, but it was no use. It was too steep and the remaining oxen were too weak. Heartbroken, and at the end of their strength, the emigrants returned to a small spring they had found on the valley floor. Here a fateful decision was made. Lewis Manly and John Rogers, the youngest and strongest men in the camp, would leave the group and try to get through the mountains to the settlements that were believed to lie to the west. They would bring back supplies and fresh livestock. It was believed the families could hold out for 10 to 12 days, so the young men needed to get back in that time or all would be lost. And so, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January, 1850, the two young men started out. They left behind a total of 13 adults and 7 children.

When they got to the top of the Panamint Range, they had a stunning view of where they were, and what lay ahead. It must have been one of those “Oh S\_\_\_!” moments. There, off to the West, was the snow-capped Sierra range. They were nowhere near it. Even

farther to the south were the San Gabriels. They were a long way from help. It would be a miracle if they could get back to the families in time.

They crossed the Panamint Valley and skirted the Argus and Slate ranges to the southwest. At one point they went 60 hours without a drop of water. Early, on what promised to be their last morning on earth, they discovered a sheet of ice that had formed overnight in a pocket of rock. They melted it in their pail, and their lives were saved.

They worked their way across what is today the China Lake Naval Weapons Center to Indian Wells, where today Highway 395 joins Highway 14. They saw smoke from a campfire, and fearing it was Indians, they crept close with guns cocked. They hailed the camp and were answered in English: “Don’t shoot!” It was a group of the Jayhawkers, looking much the worse for wear. They were living on ox hides and had been without water for four or five days at a time. It was impossible to swallow food when they were so thirsty. They reported that Mr. Fish and Mr. Isham had died along the way.

From Indian Wells, Manly and Rogers headed south. After Soledad Pass, the landscape changed. They started to see more brush than cactus and found some small game, which they could shoot to avoid starvation. They discovered a good stream with fresh water—the headwaters of the Santa Clara River, near Acton. They worked their way down stream, but it was very brushy and difficult.

Manly hurt his knee, and it slowed their progress. They found signs of diggings near Placerita Canyon, the remains of the brief gold strike in that area, and a pack of coyotes howling as they fed on an animal carcass. They took this as a good sign, for where coyotes could live, so could men.

Soon they came to the top of a ridge, and when they looked over it they saw a sight they would not forget. “A most pleasant sight filled our sick hearts with a most indescribable joy. There before us was a beautiful meadow of a thousand acres, green as a thick carpet of grass could make it, and shaded with oaks, wide-branching and symmetrical, while all over the low mountains that bordered on the south, and over the broad acres of luxurious grass, was a herd of cattle numbering many hundreds, if not thousands. All seemed happy and content, in such a scene of abundance and rich plenty of comfort bursting thus upon our eyes, which for months had seen only the desolation and sadness of the desert, that it was like getting a glimpse of paradise, and tears of joy ran down our faces.” They were describing what is today Valencia.<sup>1</sup>

The next day Manly and Rogers came within view of Rancho San Francisco, a kind of satellite of the San Fernando Mission, located on the ridge just north of Magic Mountain Amusement Park, overlooking the Santa Clara River Valley. They didn’t know what to expect when they approached the ranch. They’d heard the Mexicans didn’t welcome strangers, especially American gold-seekers. And they

were especially apprehensive, since they were wearing fresh moccasins made with the help of a cow they'd killed and eaten the night before. But they were in need, so they went up to the house. A man came out, who spoke only Spanish. They traded a patent leather belt for some corn meal. The man pointed to the north and said, "San Francisco," and then he went back inside. Manly and Rogers camped by the river to contemplate their next move. Eating the corn meal after living so long on a "meat-only" diet made them sick.

The next day, Manly and Rogers were provided with horses, and they started out for Los Angeles, some 30 miles away. They were hoping to find some of their former wagon train compatriots, to help them with emergency supplies. Soon after they passed the San Fernando Mission, they ran into a rancher named French, who was on his way north. He assured them none of the wagon trains were still in Los Angeles, and he told them that their best bet was to go back to the rancho. He knew the people there and would see that they got help. So Manly and Rogers spent the night at the San Fernando Mission—under a roof for the first time in many months—and returned to the rancho.

This time the woman of the house greeted them, and took special pains to help them with supplies of food. Upon hearing of the children in the desert, she expressed tearful dismay. She came up with four oranges, one for each of the small children, and made sure Manly and Rogers understood they were not to eat the oranges, but to bring them to the

children. Manly later wrote: "I shall never forget the kindness of these Californians. We were human beings in distress and we represented others who were worse even than we. And those kind acts of great good will were given freely because we were fellow human beings."

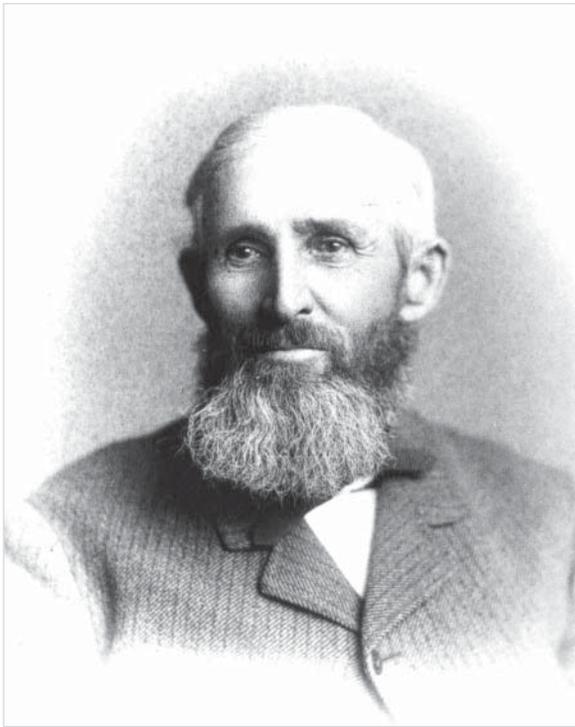
Manly and Rogers managed to acquire three horses and a one-eyed mule. They loaded up their packs and started on the trip back to the families in the desert. By the time they got to the Panamints, one of the horses had died and the other two had to be left behind to die. After an incredible bit of rock climbing and with only the one-eyed mule left to carry supplies, they were at last in the deep valley.

Suddenly, they were brought up short by a sight they didn't want to see: the body of Captain Culverwell stretched out in the sand, with his empty canteen at his side. It looked like their worst forebodings were coming true. How many more bodies would they find? Would they find the camp deserted? In this frame of mind they approached the lifeless camp. They had left seven wagons, now only four remained. Fearing an ambush, they fired a shot in the air. "It was still as death and not a move for a moment," Manly wrote later. "And then, as if by magic, a man came out from under a wagon, threw his arms high over his head and shouted, 'The boys have come! The boys have come!' The others emerged. It was quite some time before any of them could talk before weeping. Finally Mrs. Bennett said: 'Good boys! Oh, you have saved us all! God bless you

forever. Such boys should never die!'"

It was the 9<sup>th</sup> of February, 26 days since they left the camp. Manly and Rogers had covered over 500 miles on their round trip for help. Now only the Bennett and Arcan families, four adults and four children, remained. All the others had left, convinced that Manly and Rogers would be fools to come back once they were out of the desert. Of those who stayed behind, only Captain Culverwell died in the valley. The Wade family made it out the southern end of the valley with their wagons, found the Spanish Trail near Baker, and continued successfully to California.

Immediately, preparations were made to leave. A sling for the youngest children was fashioned out of two old shirts by sewing up the necks and sleeves to make two pockets. This was slung across the back of an ox, "Old Crump," known to be the kindest and most patient of the remaining animals. Young Charlie Arcan and Martha Bennett, both under the age of two, were placed in the two pockets, facing out, and the other two children—George and Melissa Bennett, ages eight and five—rode on Old Crump's back. Led by Lewis Manly and the one-eyed mule, it must have made quite a procession. Mrs. Arcan and Mrs. Bennett wore their finest dresses and ribbons rather than leave them behind. They tried to stay astride the oxen, which were not used to being pack animals, without the benefit of saddles.



William Lewis Manly. *California State Library*

After an incredibly difficult journey, at last they reached the safe haven of Rancho San Francisco on March 7, 1850—24 days after leaving the camp in Death Valley. Revived by the hospitality of the Californians, the Arcans headed for San Pedro where they managed to get passage on a ship to northern California. They got as far as Santa Cruz, where Abigail took one look at the landscape and the redwood trees and said, “You can go on to the gold fields if you want, I’m staying here ‘till I die!”

And she did. The Bennetts, Manly, and Rogers went to Los Angeles, a dusty village of one-story buildings, where happily they found a few friends from their cross-country journey. Rogers and those families together journeyed north. Manly worked for a time in Los Angeles to get reconstituted before heading to the gold fields.

Lewis Manly went on to become a successful farmer in the San Jose area. John Rogers drifted through several jobs including lead mining and wound up in the Merced area. In 1895, 41 years after they had last met, Manly heard that Rogers was crippled, half blind and living in poverty in the Sierra foothills. He left immediately to see him, and they had a wonderfully poignant reunion. In 1906, John Rogers died a pauper, with only a newspaper clipping referring to his role as a pioneer. Lewis Manly died in 1903, at the age of 83. He married late in life and left no children. His account of the journey to California was first published in the 1880’s as a series of magazine articles and then, in 1894, as the book *Death Valley in '49*.

He has left us with a treasure beyond worldly riches. I hope we can do his story justice.

When they reached an elevation where they could look back over the scene of their misery for the past several months, someone took off his hat and spoke the words, “Good Bye Death Valley.” The name has stuck ever since.

## Bode’s Store Marker

An interpretive panel is now in place on the exterior wall of Bode’s store in Abiquiu, New Mexico. Dennis Liddy, owner of the store, has reported that many people have read the sign and expressed an interest in the OST. The historic marker was supported by a contribution from Dale Querfeld to the OSTA Marker Fund, by funds raised by OSTA’s Salida del Sol Chapter, and by Mr. Liddy, who absorbed the installation and repainting costs. Technical assistance was provided by the BLM and NPS.

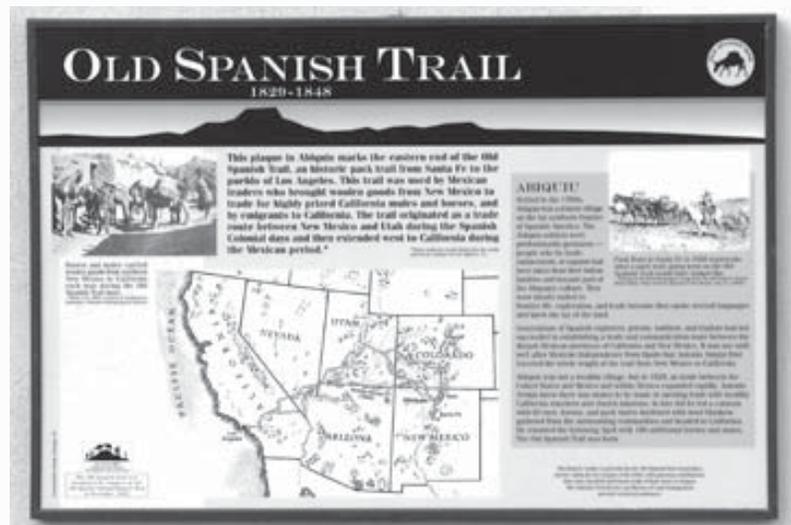


photo by Kenn Carpenter

## Martin Bode of Abiquiu

by Dorothy Parker

[**Editors' note:** Dorothy Parker submitted this article to *Spanish Traces* last year. Given the new interpretive sign at Bode's store, it is a particularly fitting tribute to her memory.]

When Martin Bode first considered emigrating from his native Germany to the United States in 1914, he was facing a hard reality. Germany was entering a war that would soon envelop much of Europe, and although he had a medical exemption due to the loss of his right ring finger, Martin was still subject to military conscription as a reservist. He was a twenty-four-year old, and the prospect of fighting was not especially pleasing to him.

At the same time, the lure of America was strong. Martin's uncle, George Henry Merten, had come to America with his brother William around 1880, and they were not the first of the family to cross the Atlantic. Three older half-sisters had come even earlier, before there was a transcontinental railroad, and had traveled to California in a covered wagon. These relatives had written letters home, of course, and Martin was attracted by the possibilities of life in a new land. His uncles' apparent success revealed new opportunities, for the Merten brothers had established themselves as substantial merchants in the town of Rodey, in southern New Mexico.

William Merten was no longer in the area in 1914; he left in 1897, and may have died in the Boer War in South Africa. George, however, continued to prosper. In addition to the store he and William had established, he had acquired considerable land where he grazed sheep and cattle, and as a cattleman and storekeeper he provided employment for a large number of people. He apparently offered to sponsor his nephew, Martin Bode, and guarantee him a job, and Martin was more than willing to leave Germany. Without telling his father of his intentions, he used his cousin's visa and sailed for America and Rodey, New Mexico.

Rodey, which was originally called *Colorado*, was a small village located in the Mesilla Valley three miles south of the town of Hatch, on the west side of the Rio Grande. The town was established by forty settlers who had moved south from Santa Fe during the Civil War, and by 1880, when George Merten and his brother arrived, Colorado boasted of almost three hundred residents. It was also the area's post office from 1879 to 1886. From 1886 to 1904, the mail was delivered to Rincon, on the east side of the river, but in 1904 the post office was returned to Colorado, which by that time had been renamed *Rodey*.

In 1880-81 the Santa Fe Railroad continued to build south from Albuquerque to Rincon, and from there, one line was built west across the river which passed through Hatch on its way to Deming. Another line went south to El Paso. These lines gave farmers

and ranchers in the Hatch-Rodey area access to supplies from both Albuquerque and El Paso. The Merten brothers had sensed the opportunities that were there, and their merchandising establishment flourished from the beginning. George began to lease and buy property for raising sheep and other livestock, and in filing his 1905 tax return, he listed 14,850 animals, in addition to the store, among his assets.

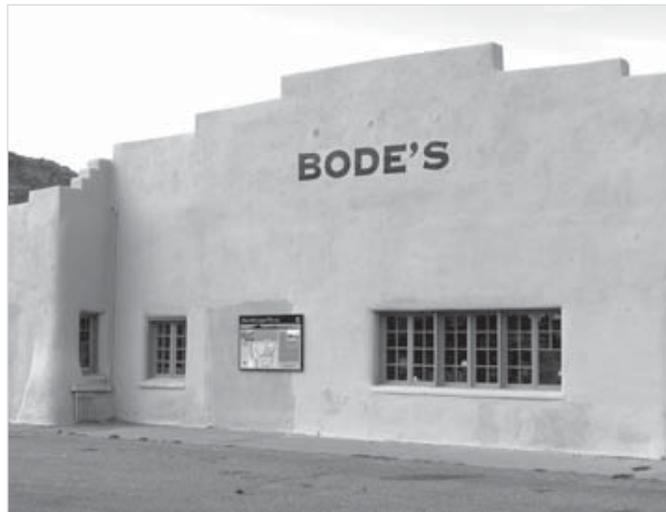
Thus, when Martin Bode sailed for America in 1914, he anticipated becoming part of his uncle's thriving business establishment. He landed in Galveston, not New York, on a German-registry ship called the *Chemnitz*. He did not, however, stay in Texas. He headed west for Rodey, New Mexico.

Martin was immediately put to work in the store, where both he and his uncle lived. George had built an adobe pen behind the store for mules and horses, including his favorite, a large palomino, which was his saddle horse. When Martin arrived, he persuaded George to try to have the Rodey post office moved to the store, and in this he was successful. Martin was adept at languages; he could read both high and low German, French, Greek, Dutch, Hebrew, and Latin, and he quickly picked up the Spanish and English that were necessary in his uncle's day-to-day business activities. Although the local people called him "Schultz," in much the same spirit that they had named George Merten "El Aleman" (the German), Martin was determined to become an American, and he soon took out his first naturalization papers.

But southern New Mexico was a violent place at that time, with the Mexican Revolution spawning unrest below the border that occasionally spilled over to the north. Pancho Villa attacked the town of Columbus in 1916 and was still in the area near the border when Martin and Edward Tittman, George's attorney who lived in El Paso, went as tourists to Juarez. There they came face to face with the notorious Mexican on the main street. Unnerved by the encounter, Martin began to consider relocating. He had always disliked violence, and after consulting with Tittman, he decided to move north. His experience in the retail business with his uncle stood him in good stead, and he was soon employed in Española by Bond and Nohl, one of the largest merchants in the state north of Santa Fe. The Bond and Nohl enterprise consisted of several general merchandise stores, as well as a lumber business in La Madera and large land holdings used for sheep grazing. Martin, who worked for the company for five years, was occasionally "loaned out" to one or another of these various operations, and he soon became acquainted with most of the commercial enterprises in the northern part of the state. He remained alert to other opportunities.

Even in northern New Mexico, however, he could not totally escape the passions arising from World War I. While his English was more than adequate by this time, he always retained a heavy German accent, and there were those who suspected his loyalty and urged that he be deported.

But by the time he received his final citizenship papers in 1921, the local hysteria was forgotten. His area-wide contacts provided the kind of information he wanted, and he went to work for Miguel Gonzales, who owned sheep in Rio Arriba County and also ran a general merchandise store in Abiquiu. Gonzales would rather be taking care of his sheep than the store, and Martin Bode soon became the store's general manager. He also, in time, became an integral part of the local community.



Bode's store. *photo by Kenn Carpenter*

But Martin could not totally escape the violence of the southern area. In 1921, for instance, the Mesilla Valley was hit by a dangerous flood, and some of the *Anglo* ranchers who lived northwest of Rodey threatened to tear down the banks of an irrigation canal, blaming it for their problems. This would have flooded the area to the south, around Hatch and Rodey, which was occupied primarily by long-time Hispanic farmers and sheep-growers. George Merten organized a party of eight or

ten men to disarm the ranchers. The names of the latter are unknown, but they are suspected of being members of the KKK.

That kind of violence came much closer to Martin Bode, living in Abiquiu in 1921, than he could have imagined. His uncle, George Merten, was killed that same year during the night of October 24-25. He was apparently struck on the head with a blunt object early in the evening, as he was going to the well in back of the store. The intruder was able to gain access to the postal safe and took a few dollars, but left behind the stamps and other post office materials. Although a \$1,000 reward was offered, the murderer was never caught.

For almost four years, Martin Bode dealt with the aftermath of this tragedy. He was the only family member related to George Merten living in New Mexico, and so it fell upon him to manage the settlement of George's estate. At first Martin's whereabouts were unknown—even his name had been forgotten, if it had ever really been known. The local people only were able to recall that they had called him "Schultz." And there were rumors that he and his uncle had had a falling-out. Martin apparently read of George's death in the newspaper and hurried south to inform the authorities that he did indeed exist and was still residing in the state. Although a local lawyer had already been sworn in as administrator,

Martin convinced the Probate Court that, as the only family member in the U.S., he should become the administrator, and he was so named.

At the time of his death, George Merten was a wealthy man. Newspapers estimated his estate at \$500,000. Although it was probably about half that, it was still quite a respectable sum. He owned a considerable amount of real property, mostly in Doña Ana County, and held mortgages on still more. He had decided only the year before to get rid of most of his sheep, for which he received \$75,000. Although no one knew for sure, it was believed that he had invested in still more property, perhaps in the El Paso area, so a co-administrator was appointed to investigate possible Texas holdings. Although Martin claimed that the so-called “dispute” between him and his uncle had not been serious and had been resolved some time ago, Martin knew nothing of his uncle’s investments.

Part of Martin Bode’s responsibilities involved contacting family members in Germany and obtaining power of attorney for the administration of the estate. George Merten had been part of a large family, as his father had married twice, and there were nieces and nephews there, potential heirs, whom George had never met. There was even an investigation into the disappearance of his brother William, who was finally declared legally dead in 1924. Eventually, however, all the necessary papers were notarized and filed, and the payment of various state and county taxes brought the entire proceedings to a close in May,

1926, almost four and a half years after George’s death. Martin received relatively little for his efforts as estate administrator and heir. There were six or seven heirs in Germany, and when the final settlement was made, his share was modest.

The rest of my story is more speculative. Martin married Clotilde (Tillie) Gonzales from Taos, whose family had a long and illustrious history in northern New Mexico. In fact, one cousin still owned what was to become Georgia O’Keeffe’s home just off the plaza in Abiquiu. He also bought the large house on the plaza across from the church, which had been built in the 1880s, by another storekeeper named Douglas. There he and Tillie raised five children, one son, Karl, and four daughters. I have often wondered how Martin’s German customs and life style managed to accommodate themselves to old Hispanic customs. Tillie’s family would probably not have allowed the marriage if Martin had not been Catholic. Rollshausen, where he was born, is in a section of Germany that remained Catholic throughout the Reformation.

Martin continued to work for Miguel Gonzales and eventually bought him out in 1956. The original Gonzales store was on the old plaza behind the church, and the building and Gonzales home are still there. It was at that store that Martin brought in an electric generator, and the electricity it produced was used at the store and at the Bode home. Shortly thereafter, the pueblo itself gained electric power through the Rural Electrification Administration during the 1930s. You may

remember that the old road through Abiquiu went directly through the pueblo—the new road was built in the 1960s, and the store was moved to its present site at that time.

There are, of course, many interesting stories about Abiquiu and Georgia O’Keeffe, Martin Bode, and Maria Chabot, who helped O’Keeffe rebuild the house she bought in Abiquiu. That house had been in Tillie’s family for many years, and was given to the Catholic church when there were plans in the making to rebuild the old St. Thomas church on that new site. According to the family, the gift of the property to the church was restricted for that purpose. However, the church was eventually rebuilt on the earlier site, and somehow, O’Keeffe convinced the Catholic diocese in Santa Fe to sell her the property. The house was not livable when O’Keeffe bought it, and Maria Chabot asked O’Keeffe if she could restore it for her. That’s another story, of course, but Maria bought most of the building supplies through Bode’s General Merchandise. She and Karl were both strong-minded individuals, and members of the family recall some heated exchanges over various transactions.

Karl Bode worked in the family mercantile establishment all his adult life, as his father’s sturdy right hand, and when he married, his wife worked as hard as he did. When Martin Bode died in 1977, Karl inherited the business and continued to run the store until the 1990s, when he finally sold it to the present owner. Martin’s wife Tillie died in the early 1990’s.

## Winter 2006 OSTA Board Meeting

The OSTA board meeting was held in Barstow, California, January 13-14, 2006. On Friday morning, Brad Mastin led the meeting at the BLM headquarters. In the afternoon and on Saturday morning, Cliff Walker hosted the board meeting at the Mojave River Valley Museum. In addition to Barstow BLM representatives and museum staff, the meeting was attended by Southern California OSTAs, Jere Krakow of the NPS, and the OSNHT Comprehensive Management Plan team: Sarah Schlanger, BLM, Aaron Mahr, NPS, and Sharon Brown, NPS. The following are some highlights from the board meeting:

### Public Scoping Meetings:

Sharon Brown, Sarah Schlanger, and Aaron Mahr reported on the progress of the public scoping meetings to help plan the future of the trail. (See article on page 48.) The goal is to complete the scoping and publish a preliminary range of alternatives for trail administration by the end of September.

**Mapping Meeting:** The BLM/NPS/OSTA partnership will hold a meeting in Phoenix in late March to discuss the mapping of the OST. This will be an opportunity to better define the trail corridor for the Comprehensive Management Plan. The goal is a clear understanding of what “footprint”—corridor, trail or path—should be identified as the trail for management purposes.

### Green River Conference:

Wayne Hinton reported on the progress of the spring conference arrangements.

The conference will be held June 9, 10, and 11. The conference theme will be “Scoping and Interpreting the Old Spanish Trail.” Leo Lyman has agreed to be one of the speakers.

### Little Red Rocks and OSTA’s Involvement with Trail

**Preservation:** Liz Warren reported that Little Red Rocks, a petroglyph site south of Las Vegas, is in an area where a developer wants to build thousands of homes. Plans also call for a hotel with gaming and a golf course. Warren encouraged OSTA to get involved in the protection of this valuable piece of history that is within the corridor of the Old Spanish Trail. She said that what is needed is a joint effort by private industry, state governments, relevant organizations and federal agencies to preserve this area.

**California Director:** Cliff Walker was unanimously elected to be the new California Director.

## Treasurer’s Report

### Bank Accounts

OSTA Reg Checking	6,043
Price Prime Reserve Fund	<u>8,590</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,633</b>

### Assets

Marker Fund Ledger	3,849
<i>S</i> Traces Protected Fund Ledger	2,500
Retail Sales Ledger	1,760
Las Vegas 2005 Conf Ledger	- 1,931
<u>Estimate owed by PNTS</u>	<u>1,931</u>
General Ledger	6,803
CA FY05-06 Reimbursement Due	<u>1,195</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,576</b>

### Liabilities

UK Chapter	25
UK John Sharpe Ledger	<u>32</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>

**Net Assets** **14,633**

*Kenn Carpenter*



Board meeting at the Mojave River Valley Museum.  
*photo by Jon Lawrence*



Paradise Springs Ranch.  
*photo by Paul Ostapuk*

On Saturday afternoon, OSTAns and friends enjoyed a delicious barbeque at Cliff and Barbara Walker's Paradise Springs Ranch. Cliff led a field trip to Camp Cady, which is located about 20 miles east of Barstow. From 1860 until its abandonment in 1871, the post served as a base for a series of camps, redoubts, and forts along the Old Government Road to Fort Mojave and the Salt Lake Road.



Cliff Walker leads the field trip. Looking east from Paradise Springs. *photo by Jon Lawrence*



Old Mormon Wagon Road, near the Parting of the Ways.  
*photo by Jon Lawrence*



John Hockaday examines the walls of Camp Cady.  
*photo by Jon Lawrence*



**The OSTA 2006 Annual Conference  
June 9-11, 2006  
Green River, Utah**

OSTA's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference will be held in Green River, Utah, June 9-11, 2006. The conference theme will be "Scoping and Interpreting the Old Spanish Trail." On Friday, June 9, there will be a board meeting and a reception. Three sessions, with invited speakers, will be held on Saturday in the John Wesley Powell Museum. On Sunday, there will be a field trip to OST sites in the Green River area. Details will be mailed to OSTA membership in the near future. For further details, contact Wayne Hinton ([Hinton@suu.edu](mailto:Hinton@suu.edu)).

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**Public Scoping Period for the OST Comprehensive Management Plan**

The Notice of Intent to prepare the Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) for the OST was published in the *Federal Register* on January 18, 2006. A public scoping period has commenced, which will end on May 17, 2006. During this period, the public will have the opportunity to comment to the BLM and the NPS on issues and concerns that should be considered in developing the CMP. The current plan for the public meetings is as follows. February-March: New Mexico (Santa Fe, Taos, Aztec) and Colorado (Durango, Alamosa, Gunnison); Late March: Arizona (Kayenta, Page) and Nevada (Mesquite, Las Vegas, Pahrump); April and May: Utah (Moab, Green River, Cedar City) and California (Barstow, San Bernadino, Los Angeles). Dates and locations for the scoping hearings, which are subject to change, can be found on the NPS website for the OST, [www.nps.gov/olsp](http://www.nps.gov/olsp) and on the OSTA website at [www.oldspanishtrail.org](http://www.oldspanishtrail.org). Written comments will be accepted during the scoping period; these can be sent to Sarah Schlanger, BLM, PO Box 27115, Santa Fe NM 87505 ([Sarah\\_Schlanger@BLM.gov](mailto:Sarah_Schlanger@BLM.gov)) or to Aaron Mahr, NPS, PO Box 728, Santa Fe, NM, 87504 ([aaron\\_mahr@nps.gov](mailto:aaron_mahr@nps.gov)).



**PNTS Historic Trails  
Workshop, May 5-6, 2006,  
Kansas City**

The Partnership for the National Trails (PNTS) will hold a workshop on the national historic trails on May 5-6, 2006, at the Quartermaster Hotel in Kansas City's historic Westport neighborhood. The workshop will focus on issues of interest to all the trail organizations, such as preservation, new federal funding sources, and co-ordination of activities between different trail organizations. The workshop will include a tour of trail sites in the Kansas City area that will give an on-the-ground look at examples of resource protection, interpretation and working with agencies and local organizations. For further information, contact Gary Werner (608) 249-7870 ([nattrails@aol.com](mailto:nattrails@aol.com)) or Travis Boley (816) 252-2276 ([TBoley@indepmo.org](mailto:TBoley@indepmo.org)).



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