Mormonism in Montana 1847-1898

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MORMONISM IN MONTANA 1847 - 1898

by

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Portions of the thesis show a marked lapse of time between events; other events could be elaborated. But the correction of either is impossible because the material is non-existent or because of the reluctance of the Latter-Day Saint Church historians office to supply such information. The lapses which are apparent in this thesis were not caused from lack of research.

Regardless of these lacks the conclusions reached within the thesis would remain the same and valid. Added information would only have improved the reporting of events.
CHAPTER I

INCEPTION OF MORMONISM

Joseph Smith, Jr., a man whose religious descendants were to play a role in the settlement of Montana, was born in Sharon, Vermont to Lucy Mack Smith and Joseph Smith, Sr. on December 23, 1805. Although unsuspected at that time, the child was to gain, at least in the eyes of his followers, stature equal to that of Moses and John the Baptist in a new and dynamic American Christian religious movement. Joseph Smith, Sr. was a poor tenant farmer, and for twelve years the family moved about the state of Vermont. Finally, in 1817 the Smiths moved to a farm near Palmyra, New York, hoping that this venture would bring the long awaited prosperity.¹

While in Vermont young Joseph² attended the public schools where he learned to cipher, write, and read. Later he went to school in Palmyra, but his mother claimed that he was never an avid reader nor a student; rather he was a lad of meditation. Unlike his older brother Hyrum, who attended Hanover Academy, Joseph did not continue his education beyond the confines of the New York public schools. Though it is apparent that Joseph was not a particularly learned youngster, his Palmyra contemporaries credited him with being fluent of speech and an active as well as a

¹Fawn M. Brodie, No Man Knows My History (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 6-10.

²Joseph Smith, Jr. will hereafter be referred to as Joseph Smith.
successful debator in a local debating club.\(^3\)

When the family moved to Palmyra, young Joseph was twelve years old and had already been exposed to the nonconformity of his father's and mother's religious views of individual religious experiences rather than a belief in organized religions.\(^4\) Not only were his parents religious dissenters, but Joseph's family had a tradition of such nonconformity. Indeed his mother's eldest brother, Jason Mhek, had gone so far as to establish a society of thirty families with himself directing their spiritual and earthly lives.\(^5\)

Added to this training and ancestry was the religious diversity of western New York with its religious revivals. Whitney Gross described these revivals during Joseph's adolescence in the following manner: "The religious upheavals following the War of 1812 surpassed all previous experiences..." in the region.\(^6\) With this background of religious diversity, coupled with the religious uncertainty of Palmyra, Joseph was prepared for the illusions and visions which were soon to begin and to continue throughout his life.

The year 1820 was full of religious activity and revivals in western New York. Ministers of different denominations vied with one another for converts, and people throughout the area changed their religious affiliations


\(^4\)Ibid., 29. They later renounced this stand.

\(^5\)Brodie, No Man Knows... 4.

from week to week depending upon the persuasiveness of the minister sponsoring a revival. Joseph's mother, two brothers, and a sister all joined either the Methodists or the Presbyterians. But Joseph refused to become a member of any religious sect or faction. Instead he was bothered by the revivals and by the claims and counter-claims made by the representatives of the different religions.7

The perplexed and disturbed youngster had long been a home-tutored student of the Bible. His mother and father had given religious instruction to all of the family throughout their childhood. According to his own account8 Joseph literally interpreted James 1:5, saying, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upfemideth not; and it shall be given him..." He determined to ask God the truthfulness of the different religions.

Accordingly, he went into the woods to make an attempt to pray to God in the spring of 1820, asking for the guidance which he sought. After establishing that he was alone, he offered his prayer, and noted in his own words:

I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

He prayed to God that he would be delivered from this horrible situation, and suddenly:

7 M. R. Werner, Brigham Young (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1925), 23.

8 Ibid.
Just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. When the light rested upon me, I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defied all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said, pointing to the other, this is my beloved son, hear him.

The two personages were the Lord (God) and His Son Jesus Christ.

Joseph at this moment, even in the presence of Gods, had the presence to inquire as to which of the churches he should join. He was told that none of the churches taught the principles which were entirely correct and that each of them was corrupt. Jesus Christ then conversed with the youngster, but the exchange was not recorded as the Gods refused to allow Joseph to record the text of their discussion. The time was not yet ripe. Following the exchange Joseph staggered back to the house from the woods. Upon entering the house he was dazed, and his mother inquired if he was feeling well. His reply was that he was not ill and that he had learned Presbyterianism was not true.

The visionary youth of fourteen and one-half years soon began arguing with the resident and revivalist ministers as to the validity of their religious denominations. He would sometimes tell of his religious experience to the pastor. But he was always informed that

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9 A quote from Joseph Smith's autobiography found in Werner, Brigham Young, 24.

10 The Mormons are polytheistic and believe the Trinity consists of two distinct Gods, namely, the Lord and His Son Jesus Christ. They are also anthropomorphic. The Holy Ghost is the only member of the Trinity who is only a spirit possessing no body.

12 Werner, Brigham Young, 24-25.
visions and revelations were things of the past and that God no longer corresponded with earthly beings as he had during Biblical times. Whether God and Jesus Christ visited Joseph may be a matter of doubt, but upon maturity and throughout his adult life Smith was convinced of Their appearance. According to him They and other heavenly beings continued in Their visitations.

Life on the Smith farm continued as it had before, and Joseph was evidently not the recipient of any further revelations until 1823. On the night of September 21, 1823, he felt sufficiently repentant that he prayed for the forgiveness of his wrong-doings. A light suddenly filled his bedroom, and a form appeared by his bed. The personage who appeared was clothed in white and his feet did not touch the floor. The visitor called out Joseph’s name and introduced himself as a messenger from God, his name being Moroni. The angel said that he had been the last of the Nephite people who had lived upon the American continents.

The Nephites were supposed to have been Jewish peoples who had emigrated from Israel before the dispersion. Fantastic as the story is, they were also supposed to have traveled in submarine-type vessels from the Holy Land and light was provided within the vessels by luminous stones which were given to the Nephites by the Lord. Upon their arrival in the Americas, the Nephites soon divided into rival factions. The Nephites who remained relatively righteous (for a period of time) continued to be in favor with the Lord. The other

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
faction, known as the Lamanites, were those who strayed from the ways of the Lord and who were cursed by God and given dark skins as punishment for their evil ways. These dark skinned peoples were known as "Lamanites" (the American Indians).

Finally four hundred years after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Nephites had become so corrupt that God deemed it necessary to smite them from the face of the earth. In accordance with this aim, He allowed their extinction at the hands of their red-skinned brethren, the Lamanites. They had lived on the American continents for one thousand years from 600 B.C. to 400 A.D. Moroni was the last remaining survivor of the Nephites, and it was he who possessed the records of the Nephite people. He put the records in a hill named Camorah for their safe keeping until the Lord wished them to be uncovered at a later date. The Lamanites continued in existence. The account of the Nephites and their destruction at the hands of the Lamanites is given in the Book of Mormon. The moral of the story is that when an ethnic group or nation become morally corrupt God destroys them. This is the Mormon interpretation of the fall and decay of civilizations.¹³

The book is also supposed to serve as another witness of Christ's existence in addition to the New Testament. A small portion of the account deals with Christ's appearance in the Americas following the resurrection. Here He ministered to the sick and uttered prophecies as He had done in Israel. In addition He also appointed another

¹³The Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Deseret Publishing Co., 1956).
Twelve Apostles to aid Him in His activities.

It was these records, (written upon golden plates) that Moroni proposed to intrust to the care of Joseph Smith. Smith would be added in his translation of the plates with the help of two stones fastened together called the Urim and Thummim. By looking through them one could translate the golden tablets. God had prepared the stones especially for this purpose. Moroni then cautioned Smith that no other earthly mortal should be allowed to view the plates and the interpretive stones without God's specific command. If Smith betrayed this sacred commandment he would be destroyed. Joseph then received a visionary portrayal of the place where the plates were buried. Then Moroni disappeared.

Joseph pondered the event, and suddenly the angel reappeared. Moroni repeated his account of the golden plates, the interpretive stones, and the warning to Smith that he should not let others near the golden plates. In addition, the angel made predictions of famines, plagues, and destruction that would be rendered to the earth and its inhabitants if they continued in their evil ways. Moroni disappeared again, only to return in a few minutes once again to give the same account to Smith that he had on the two former occasions. On this occasion he added the information that Satan would attempt to persuade Joseph to gain the golden plates before God intended to give them to him. Moroni left the bedroom as the morning began to break.14

14 Ibid.
Several hours later, Joseph was working with his father on the farm. He suddenly became faint and while unconscious Moroni appeared to him a fourth time, telling the same account as before and added that Joseph might tell his father of the incidents if he wished. His father was immediately convinced and believed this to be the work of the Lord. He urged Joseph to go immediately to where the plates were buried in the hill named Gomorrah near the Smith farm. Joseph began digging in the earth and soon uncovered the stone sealing the vault containing the golden plates and the Urim and Thummim. He then opened the vault and saw the contents as Moroni had described them. He attempted to take the contents when Moroni appeared and told him that the plates were not to be taken until four years from that date. Moroni continued to appear to Joseph from time to time and told him of the Lord's plans for the inhabitants of the earth and for Joseph in particular.15

Joseph soon left his father's farm for work in Harmony, Pennsylvania where he was hired by Josiah Steal to search for a silver mine on his property. While he was employed by Steal, he met Emma Hale, a daughter of a prosperous farmer in the area. Joseph courted Emma and asked her father's permission to marry her, but this wish was not granted. Despite the objections of her father, Emma and Joseph were determined to marry and they secretly eloped.16

Finally the time had come for Joseph, age twenty-two, to obtain

15 Ibid.
16 Werner, Brigham Young, 29.
the golden plates, from the Hill Cumorah. It was on September 22, 1827 that Moroni delivered the plates and told Joseph he would call for them when the time was ready. 17 Brigham Young, who had not yet heard of Joseph Smith nor of his heavenly visitations, claimed later that he had seen lights in the heavens on the same night. 18

The Mormon Prophet did not have a convenient place to hide the plates at home, so he hid them in a hollow birch tree about three miles from his home. But he kept the Urim and Thummim with him, and upon his return to the house showed them to his mother. Evidently these interpretive stones could be shown to others at Joseph's discretion. His father was also taken into the prophet's confidence, and it was not long before the whole community of Palmyra hummed with the rumor that young Joseph Smith had come into the possession of some golden plates. 19 The Devil had already begun his campaign to wrest the sacred plates from Joseph Smith, and the schemes were hatched by Palmyra's inhabitants to obtain the golden book. 20

Several days after obtaining the plates, Joseph commanded his older brother Hyrum to obtain a chest with a lock in which to keep the plates. The prophet then journeyed to the hiding place and took the plates from the tree. He did not take the road homeward because of his fear of being accosted by the local inhabitants; rather he went

17 Book of Mormon, Introduction.
18 Werner, Brigham Young, 29.
by way of the pastures and fields. Joseph was attacked three times, but each time he was able to free himself from his assailants.20

With the golden record now within the household, the family was constantly being beset by individuals, and even mobs were attempting to gain the plates. The constant attacks on the premises of the Smith home made it impossible for the Mormon Prophet to get at the task of interpreting the records. Consequently it became necessary for him and his wife Emma to journey to Harmony, Pennsylvania where he could have the peace and quiet necessary in which to pour over the ancient documents.21

Even on this journey to Pennsylvania, the prophet was not allowed to go in peace. Twice an officer of the law overtook him upon the pretense of gaining something of value that he could attach for debts that were unpaid by Joseph, but each time he failed to find the plates after a diligent search of the wagon.22 Joseph and Emma arrived in Harmony in December, 1827, where they were given a house to live in by Issac Hale, Emma's father.23

The prophet now engaged himself in the translation of the plates into English with the help of the Urim and Thummim. In February, Martin Harris (a friend of Smith's from Palmyra) arrived to take copies

20 Ibid., I, 91.

21 Earlier, in August, 1827, a reconciliation had come about between Emma's father and Joseph. Ibid., I, 94-95.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., I, 94-100.
of the characters found upon the plates to learned men in New York City for their inspection and translation. Professors Samuel L. Mitchell and Charles Anthon were asked their opinions of the copied inscriptions and their interpretation as given by the prophet. According to Harris, the two professors were in agreement that the characters were in Reformed Egyptian and that Smith’s interpretation was correct. But, several years later, Professor Charles Anthon denied having given such advice to the New York farmer. Instead, he claimed he had told Harris that he was the victim of a hoax and that the copied inscriptions were a mixture of Greek, Hebrew, and indecipherable letters and signs.

On Harris’s return to Harmony, he went to Palmyra to arrange his business affairs so that he could become the scribe for Joseph’s translation. In April, 1828, Harris began his labors of writing the transcript as Smith would read from the golden tablets. All during the translation, Joseph was separated from his scribe by a sheet hung between them since the plates could not be shown to unauthorized persons. Harris soon began urging the prophet to allow the translated portion of the plates to be shown to friends and interested persons. Smith refused to grant this request, but after constant urging from Harris, he agreed to ask the Lord for permission to show the translated text. This request and others were refused by the Lord. Finally, He granted the request, and Harris

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24 Thid.
26 Thid., I, 107.
set off to Palmyra to display the translation. While in Palmyra, Harris lost the manuscript.27

Now it was necessary to make from the plates another translation of the portion Harris had lost. But to thwart those who possessed the translated transcript, it was necessary for Smith to work from a second group of golden plates. The first plates Joseph had used were the original and complete records of the Nephite inhabitants of the Americas, whereas the account he now used was an abridgment of the original by a Nephite Prophet, Mormon. Hence the Book of Mormon was the name given to the Nephite scriptures accepted as doctrine by the Latter-Day Saint Church.28

During the summer of 1828, Joseph found it necessary to work upon the land his father-in-law had sold him. Thus he did not begin his interpretive labors again until the winter of 1828 and 1829. Harris was not available to him, since Smith and the Lord were both somewhat dubious as to the reliability of the former scribe. The Lord thus commanded Joseph to cease translating until He provided Smith with a steady and honest person as a scribe.

Oliver Cowdery taught the district school near Palmyra during the winter of 1828-1829 and boarded at the Smith home. He became interested in the story of the golden plates and was sympathetic to the accounts given by Joseph Smith's father and mother concerning the work of their son. Cowdery, determined to check the authenticity of the reports he

27 Ibid., I, 110-11
28 Ibid., I, 112-15.
had heard about the golden plates, journeyed to Harmony in April, 1829, and became convinced of Joseph's story. Smith announced that it was the will of God that Cowdery should become the scribe to write down the material being interpreted. On April 7, the two began working together to bring forth to the world the Book of Mormon. Now the storm began to break in Harmony, but the efforts of Isaac Hale brought an end to the mob action which was being planned in the area. Still, it became necessary for Smith and Cowdery to travel to a mutual friend's farm in Fayette, New York to continue their work. The move perhaps saved their lives. Before embarking upon the journey to Fayette, Smith delivered the golden plates to Moroni so they would not fall into the hands of unauthorized persons. Finally in June of 1829 they arrived in Fayette, where the translation of the golden plates was completed. With the completion of the translation Joseph once more returned the plates to Moroni.  

But, before doing so, the Lord commanded Joseph to show the plates to certain select persons so they could serve as witnesses of the existence of the ancient Nephite record. Smith's cohorts, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris became the three special witnesses who viewed the plates. And while each of these men ultimately rejected the Latter-Day Saint Church, they did not waver from their pronouncement of having viewed the golden plates. Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery returned to the Mormon faith in later life, but David Whitmer once having severed his ties failed to renew his covenant with

the church.30

Still another group of eight also viewed the golden plates. They were: Jacob Whitmer, Christian Whitmer, Peter Whitmer, Jr., John Whitmer, Hirum Page, Joseph Smith, Sr., Hyrum Smith, and Samuel H. Smith.31 Each member of this group continued throughout his life to testify to the existence of the golden record. Even John Whitmer, Hirum Page, and Jacob Whitmer, who were excommunicated or left the church willingly, did not deny the plates' existence.32 Not only these witnesses but others also claimed to have seen the plates. With the translation complete and with the return of the plates to Moroni, the Book of Mormon was put to type in August, 1829. Egbert B. Grandin of Palmyra was engaged to publish five thousand copies of the book for three thousand dollars. Martin Harris's farm served as security for the payment of the expenses. Great pains were taken to protect the manuscript. Oliver Cowdery was to transcribe a second copy; one copy alone would be taken to the publisher at a time; a guard would always accompany the person delivering the manuscript to the publisher; and another guard stood watch over the Smith home at all times. By the end of August the book was published.33

After the publication of the Book of Mormon, the prophet was able

30 Ibid., I, 134-45.
31 Book of Mormon, Introduction.
32 Roberts, A Comprehensive History, I, 147-56.
33 Ibid., I, 157-60.
to turn his attention to the organization of the new church. It was to be neither Protestant nor Catholic. Rather, it was to be unique and directed by God through his earthly representative, Joseph Smith. The prophet and Oliver Cowdery had already baptized Martin Harris, Hyrum Smith, and David and Peter Whitmer in 1829. Then the Lord commanded Joseph Smith to organize the church on April 6, 1830.

According to the Mormon Prophet, the true church had first been organized upon the earth with Adam as its leader, but in Old Testament times it had been repeatedly taken away from the Biblical peoples due to their iniquity and later restored to the earth by God. This occurred several times. During the time of Jesus Christ, the Lord's church was operative, but sometime after His death and resurrection, God's teachings were so perverted by His earthly representatives that the Lord again took His religion from the people. Only through the person of Joseph Smith had the Lord's church been restored to earth.

Following the establishment of the Latter-Day Saint Church in 1830, its leaders and "saints" moved from New York to a small frontier city, Kirtland, Ohio in the same year. God commanded the prophet to make this move as the people in western New York were antagonistic toward the Mormons. A locale untainted by such prejudices would be more suitable for the growth of Mormonism. With the movement of the prophet and his church to Kirtland, this new religion began to grow rapidly. Before the summer of 1831, the church in that vicinity had grown to over one

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The term "saint" is often used in Mormon terminology and is synonymous with the term Mormon.
thousand communicants.\textsuperscript{35}

The "saints" rapidly penetrated into the adjacent areas of Illinois and Missouri. Smith soon received a vision that Missouri was to be the land of promise set aside by the Lord for His elect and chosen people.\textsuperscript{36} In June, 1831 a group of "saints" from Colesville, New York settled just twelve miles west of Independence, Missouri in Jackson county. The Mormon Prophet met with the Missouri "saints" that summer and announced to them that Independence was to be the center which God had set aside for the gathering of His people. Just west of the Jackson county courthouse in Independence was to be the location of a Mormon temple in which sacred rites of the church were to be conducted.\textsuperscript{37}

In accordance with the Lord's aim, monies were gathered from the "saints" in Ohio for the purchase of the promised land in Missouri. In August, 1831 a revelation was received by the Mormon Prophet that the land around Independence was to be obtained by purchase or by blood.\textsuperscript{38}

Once this revelation was made known to the non-Mormon settlers in and around Independence they became determined to oust the "saints" from the locale and of course to prevent the settling of other Mormons in any

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{35}] Roberts, \textit{A Comprehensive History...}, I, 243.
\item[\textsuperscript{36}] Ibid., I, 257.
\item[\textsuperscript{37}] Ibid., I, 255-56.
\item[\textsuperscript{38}] Ibid., I, 263.
\end{itemize}
adjacent areas. Adding to the Missourian's indignation was the fact that these Mormons were northerners without slaves. Indeed, their prophet urged the United States to eliminate slavery and to compensate the former slaveholders. By the autumn of 1833, the Missourians resorted to mob action. The "saints" appealed to the state authorities but their requests went unanswered. Instead, the Mormons were forced to flee Jackson county by January 1834. To this day the Mormons talk of the return of the church headquarters to Independence.

These embattled "saints" next moved to Calhoun county, Missouri. They were first welcomed by their neighbors, but by the summer of 1836 public indignation took the form of a petition which contained the reasons for their opposition to the Mormon settlers. This petition paralleled the former allegations against the same "saints" in Jackson county, with the added charges that their religion so differed from normal Christian beliefs that it made the Mormons intolerable to live with. Further, by preaching and accepting the Indians (Lamanites) into their faith, the Mormons were inciting a red man revolt. Who could believe that the depraved Indian and the Mormon were appointed by God to inherit Missouri? Once again the "saints" were forced to move. They went to northern Missouri. Since the area was sparsely settled, the Mormons expected little opposition. They petitioned for the creation of a county in

39 Ibid., I, 345-47.

40 However, this is nothing more than idle talk, since they are so firmly attached to Salt Lake City. Furthermore their schismatic brethren, the Reorganized Church, now has its headquarters there.

41 Roberts, A Comprehensive History, I, 414.
which they could reside and the Missouri legislature obliged by establishing Davies county. There was also an agreement (but not a statute) between the legislature and the Mormons that the latter would not settle in any other county in the state without the prior consent of non-Mormons living there. But even these precautions did not bring forth a lasting peace between the "saints" and their non-Mormon neighbors. Finally, it became imperative for the Mormons to leave Missouri in the spring of 1839.

Brigham Young had previously become a member of the church's corps of the Twelve Apostles and it was he who was responsible for the movement of the Mormons from Missouri. By April 20, 1839 the resettlement of the ousted Mormons in Ohio and Illinois was complete. From twelve to fifteen thousand had seen fit to leave Missouri. Others remained in Missouri and renounced their faith; they had had enough of persecution; and their belief in the new frontier religion had been shattered. Surely God would not allow His chosen few to suffer so much!

But before the "saints" moved from Missouri, Smith and several of his disciples were jailed in the winter of 1838 and 1839. They were charged with "treason, murder, arson, burglary, larceny, and perjury." In the spring of 1839, the prophet and his company were moved from Liberty, Missouri to Davies county for trial, but on their journey, the sheriff told Smith and the other prisoners that he and his deputies

\[^{42}\text{Ibid., I, 418-19.}\]
\[^{43}\text{Ibid., I, 509-11.}\]
\[^{44}\text{Ibid., I, 499.}\]
would not prevent the Mormons from escaping if they wished to do so. Under the darkness of night, the prophet and his followers fled, making their way towards Illinois and freedom.45

While relations between the "saints" and their non-Mormon neighbors in Missouri had deteriorated from bad to worse, this pattern was also evident in Illinois and Ohio. The incidents mentioned in Missouri are representative of Mormon experiences in Ohio and Illinois. The "saints" were prosecuted, and their prophet was jailed several times before his death. Until his death in 1844, the prophet continually petitioned Congress and the president for redress of the grievances the Mormons suffered in Missouri. But his efforts were not taken seriously in the capital, and he was advised that his complaint was the responsibility of the state of Missouri.

He therefore became convinced that only through the efforts of the Mormons themselves could the wrongs be righted. Accordingly, he announced himself as a candidate for the office of the president of the United States in the spring of 1844. The platform of the new party was to be that of "reform, Jeffersonian Democracy, free trade and sailors' rights"—a far cry from the ultra-conservatism of contemporary Mormons.45 He did not seriously believe that his candidacy would gain much support beyond the confines of his fledgling church. But through this action it was hoped that the Mormons would not become a pawn to either political party in Illinois by having to pledge their support. A national convention was to be held in Baltimore, Maryland on July 13, but Joseph

45Ibid., 532.
46Ibid., II, 207-09.
Smith was killed as a result of mob violence on June 27, 1844 in Nauvoo, Illinois.

Smith's martyrdom gave impetus to this new American frontier religion by helping the movement to survive the crisis of the loss of its founder. And it provided to its adherents additional incentive for their migration across the Great Plains in 1847 to the Salt Lake Valley under the direction of a new prophet, Brigham Young.

The death of the Yankee Muhammad came as a startling shock to the "saints." Why would God allow His prophet to die at the hands of unclean non-Mormons? The answer: who knows the ways of the Lord? Smith's mission had been accomplished, and had not God even allowed His own Son to be put to death at the hands of the Romans nineteen centuries earlier? Smith had been the mystic and visionary person who had founded the church and its doctrines; without him, there would not have been a birth of Mormonism. But just as he was essential to the beginning of the movement, so was, Brigham Young, his successor, to its continuing existence.

Brigham Young was practical. Unlike Joseph Smith he knew that the Mormons could not remain in an inhabited area surrounded by non-Mormons. He was the stabilizing and moderating influence who held the "saints" together and prevented them from seeking vengeance against the community that had killed their first prophet. He had been a close confidant of Joseph Smith and had seen the church through the time of trouble when Smith had been imprisoned in Missouri. He soon resolved to lead the "saints" on an exodus from Iowa and Illinois to a location in the Great American Desert around the Great Salt Lake area.
Brigham Young had been born in Whitingham, Vermont on June 1, 1801. And he, like Joseph Smith and many of the other early leaders of the Latter-Day Saint Church, was a descendant of New Englanders. When he was three years old, his family moved to Sherburn in western New York state not far from the town of Palmyra. In this area, Young was to be exposed to its religious diversity and constant revivals. But during his adolescence he was not particularly concerned with religion; and only when he was twenty-two did he finally join the Methodist faith.

He later joined the Mormon faith at age thirty, after much soul searching and deliberation. In fact, a sister, a brother-in-law, and a brother had all joined the church earlier. Young, upon meeting Smith, had a prophecy from the Lord verifying the authenticity of the prophet's claims; and Brigham was granted at this meeting the power to speak in tongues (a gift given to many in the church's infancy—the "faithful" understood each other's "jibberish"). Upon the death of his wife, Young (left with two children) decided to move permanently to Kirtland so he could be near the prophet and the Mormons who were gathering there.47

He had been a carpenter formerly; and it was this occupation which he practiced when he moved to Kirtland. Young was evidently in favor with the young prophet Joseph. They enjoyed one another's company and they had both come from humble positions without the benefit of formal training beyond the common schools of New York. After residing in Kirtland for two years, Brigham was selected as one of the Twelve

Apostles when Joseph Smith organized that body in February 1835. From this date on, God was kind to this carpenter. He was to become head of the church nine years later and was to establish a Mormon nation in the American Desert.

In 1838 and 1839, with the prophet Joseph in jail, Brigham had arranged for the transfer of the "saints" from Missouri to Illinois and Ohio. After the successful completion of this task, he was sent to England on September 14, 1839 to direct Mormon missionary efforts. While there, he divided the English Mission into a number of branches (districts) which traveling teams of missionaries could cover handily. He then set about organizing emigrating agencies which aided in the sending of newly-made converts to the United States and on to the frontier.

He returned to the United States in 1841 and went to Nauvoo, Illinois (church headquarters had been established there following the migration of the "saints" from Missouri), where he helped oversee the Mormons. Nauvoo was a prosperous city, and by 1842 boasted a population of ten thousand, the largest city in Illinois. In 1844, Brigham was again sent away from the Mormons to overlook missionary activity in the eastern United States. It was while he was in New Hampshire that he heard of the death of the prophet Joseph, and he soon journeyed to Nauvoo to take over the leadership of the fledgling religious movement.

He immediately began the preparations for the movement of the "saints" westward to a location then still undisclosed. Brigham knew that the Mormons could not remain in a hostile land for long. By
July, 1847, Brigham Young and his advance party reached the Great Salt Lake Valley where it was revealed to him that this was the location where the Mormons were to settle and prosper. The members of his party soon began the task of tilling the virgin land and planting crops in an area far removed from civilization. They also began building homes for themselves as well as for their brethren who were to follow the next year. With the Mormons settled in and around the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham next turned to organizing communities for the settlement of immigrant converts.

During the remainder of his life, Brigham ruled the Mormons with an iron hand, by dictating where different families should live and by telling them the vocations they were to follow. He also encouraged the "saints" to till the soil, to irrigate their crops, and to manufacture goods so they would not have to rely upon imports from the East. The Mormon community was to be as self-sufficient as possible. In addition, though possessing little education himself, he established public schools throughout the religious community and also established the University of Deseret (University of Utah) and Brigham Young Academy (Brigham Young University). He also was instrumental in the formation of the Salt Lake City theatre, the first of its kind in the West, and the Zions Cooperative Mercantile which grew into the largest cooperative in the western United States.

He was Governor of the Utah Territory in 1850, and again in 1854, but President Buchanan failed to reappoint him to this position in

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48 ibid.
1858. But while Brigham lived from 1858 until his death in 1877, he still ruled supreme. The Federal government did not recognize him as the temporal leader of the Utah Territory. But in practice this man ruled over his following in the West, and not only in religious matters. His authority was challenged but never successfully taken away.
CHAPTER II

EARLY MORMON SCHISMS, DOCTRINES, and WESTERN SETTLEMENT

Many religions have been plagued with schisms throughout their existence. Mormonism was no exception. Upon the death of the first Mormon Prophet, not all of the Latter-Day Saints threw in their lot with Brigham Young. Some followed James J. Strang to Michigan, while others went with Sidney Ridgon to Pennsylvania. Indeed, the prophet's son, Joseph Smith III, the dead prophet's wife, and a small group of Mormons established the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in 1860 with headquarters in Independence, Missouri. They held the leadership of the church to be patriarchal and that the son of Joseph Smith should be the leader of the religious movement by virtue of lineal descent. In structure, the Reorganized Church continued to have a prophet as the president of the church, a council of Twelve Apostles, a stake (roughly similar to a diocese), with branches (parishes) on the local level as did the group led by Brigham Young. In ideology and practice of worship, much remained as it had been under the first Mormon Prophet.

However, the Reorganized Church and the Utah group had one significant ideological difference, namely, the concept of polygamy. Not until 1852, eight years after the death of Joseph Smith, did Brigham Young announce the doctrine of polygamy to the Utah Mormons. The


2 Ibid., 289-93.
Reorganized Church's leaders, however, rejected any knowledge of Joseph Smith having ever condoned or practiced such a heinous sin. It was this doctrinal difference that was to account for the establishment of a Reorganized Church organization in Montana in 1868; whereas, the Utah Mormons did not venture into Montana until 1896, after they renounced the practice of polygamy. Bawdy and robust as life was in the Montana Territory, its statutes contained anti-bigamy clauses which dampened Mormon hopes for making inroads into the area. Indeed, the polygamous doctrine ultimately prevented the extension of Mormonism not only into Montana but throughout the western United States. Through his own efforts, Brigham Young defeated his dream of gigantic Mormon settlements in the West. In addition to stifling Mormonism's territorial growth, the doctrine of polygamy also caused a drastic reduction in the huge numbers then converting to Mormonism.

The idea that any man could have a personal religious experience which would convey to him the truthfulness of Mormonism was also a basic tenet of this new frontier religion. However, this emphasis on individual experiences ultimately led to the growth of a number of further splinter or schismatic groups within the ranks of the Mormon Church. Actually, many Mormons testified (and do so today) that they had talked with and had seen an anthropomorphic God. Once the church allowed this precept of direct communication between man and God, the way was naturally open for any number of individual doctrinal interpretations and the emergence of pretenders to the position of prophet of the

3The word or term Mormon will be used in connection with the Utah group, since this is the term that had remained with this branch.
Latter-Day Saint Church. And strangely enough, such a dissident group as the Morrisites settled in Montana in 1872 before the Mormons established an ecclesiastical organization in 1896.

On the positive side, Mormonism, despite some of its historical absurdities, doctrinal ambiguities, and dubious origins, did appeal to the frontiersman and to the unsophisticated. The frontiersman after all worked with his hands and had to eke out a living from the land. To such a person, a religion depicting God as resembling man and having manlike qualities had a considerable appeal, especially since the unsophisticated frontiersman did not necessarily wish to think of religion in mystical and perhaps meaningless terms. Mormonism also gave to the faithful and prayerful a direct personal contact with God, and the Latter-Day Saints' literal interpretation of the Bible made this work more tangible to them. A belief in God's interference in man's daily affairs, coupled with a literal interpretation of the Bible, gave the Mormon movement a sense of urgency coupled with a pragmatic earthy appeal to the common man.

After the trek of the "faithful" across the Great Plains to the Salt Lake Valley, the "saints" envisioned setting up a perfect state in the Great Basin free from outside interference and governed only by God's appointed representative on earth, Brigham Young. Indeed, the leaders of the Latter-Day Saint Church established a State of Deseret

4 The Great Basin is a geographical location in the western United States which now includes the present state of Utah and portions of adjacent states.
in 1849 and had illusions of perhaps joining with Texas in a union of some type. The government established in the Salt Lake Valley was a theocracy; the movement from its conception was an ecclesiastical venture.

The economic emphasis of the Mormon communities in the Great Basin and surrounding settlements was based almost wholly on agriculture, and Brigham Young constantly admonished the Mormons not to seek gold in California or in any area for that matter. In an address to the "saints" gathered in conference in Salt Lake City in late September, 1849, Brigham Young said:

That there is plenty of gold in California is beyond doubt, but the valley of the Sacramento is an unhealthy place, and the saints can be better employed in raising grain and building houses in this vicinity, than in digging gold in Sacramento, unless they are counseled so to do.

... When the saints shall have preached the gospel, raised grain, and built up cities enough, the Lord will open up the way for a supply of gold to the perfect satisfaction of his people; until then, let them not be overanxious for the treasures of the earth are in the Lord's storehouse, and he will open the doors thereof when and where he pleases.

In the light of future Mormon contacts with Montana, it is to be noted that the Mormon Prophet, God's representative on earth, clearly stated that only those counseled to do so should seek gold. And those who heeded the above would be rewarded later.

There were several reasons for these admonitions. In the first place, the traditional economy of the "saints" had been agrarian and

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6 "History of Brigham Young, MS., for 1849" in the Latter-Day Saint Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City, 144.
former Mormon settlements in Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri had been primarily agricultural ventures. Second, the "saints" emphasis upon the literal interpretation of the Bible with its pastoral accounts led them to the conclusion that all pursuits other than agrarian were somehow sinfully tainted. And that was another reason for its acceptance by western farmers. Third, Brigham Young anticipated a great increase in the number of Mormons migrating to the Great Basin, which made it imperative that a strong agricultural base be laid and maintained for the increasing population. Young at this time envisioned that a large Mormon nation might very well emerge west of the Mississippi, and he was extremely optimistic concerning the numerical growth of church membership. There was reason for such optimism, because this new gospel message fell upon thousands of receptive ears until with the announcement of polygamy in 1852 Mormonism lost much of its appeal.

After the settlement of the Mormons in the Salt Lake Valley, colonization went through two distinct phases in the period between 1847 and 1858. The inner cordon of settlements ushered in the first phase, with settlements being established in Tooele, Sanpete, Salt Lake, Box Elder, Pahvant, Juab, Parowan, and Cache Valleys. These settlements, and the ones to follow, resembled the New England pattern; a small town including individual dwellings, stores, a school, and a church which was to also serve as the public meeting place, with the area surrounding the town apportioned into plots for the different families. This pattern of settlement was distinctly different from the traditional settlement of the West with the squatter and his family building a
shack or cabin on a little plot of ground often far removed from a town.

The second phase, or the settling of the outer cordon of Mormon communities, began in 1849 with migrations of Mormons to San Bernardino, California; Carson City, Nevada; Moab, Utah; Fort Supply and Fort Bridger, Wyoming; and Fort Lemhi on the Salmon River in Idaho. These outer cordon Mormon centers were located at strategic points of interception to the Mormon communities in and around the Salt Lake Valley. But these outer settlements were soon abandoned and their inhabitants recalled to the Salt Lake Valley to strengthen defenses against the invasion of Johnston's Army in 1857-58. By this time reports of Mormon polygamous activity and of Brigham Young's autocratic rule had been substantiated in Washington D.C., and in 1857 President Buchanan ordered Federal troops to Utah to eliminate the Mormons' disobedience to the constitution and to the laws of the United States. General Johnston led the Federal expedition from Fort Leavenworth to Utah to quell the "insurrection." Although no major skirmishes ensued, troops were garrisoned in Utah until the territory became a state.

The abandonment of the outer cordon settlements thus brought an end (until after the Civil War) to further colonization attempts by the Mormons beyond the confines of the present state of Utah and close adjacent areas. In this period, Montana was too far removed from the Great Basin to be involved in the earliest settlement attempts of the church. And until 1890 the movement of orthodox polygamous Mormonism to Montana was prevented by the Montana settlers' traditional Christian

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Arrington, Great Basin, 84.
concept of monogamy.

Another doctrinal aspect of the Mormon movement to have a great influence on the extension of Mormonism to Montana was to the concept of the mission. The earliest proselyting attempts were voluntary efforts by converts who visited friends, relatives, and neighbors to explain the message of Mormonism. But as the church grew in membership and improved its organizational efficiency, a system of appointed missions was instituted, in which missionaries were to use their own discretion as to the method of presentation and as to the territory they worked. With the movement of the followers of Brigham Young to an isolated area in the Great American Desert, however, it was necessary to abandon such a haphazard missionary program. All faithful male adherents were subject to a formal call. The church did not defray their expenses, and the families, if the missionaries were married, were left to fend for themselves. These calls were usually given in a conference of the "saints" in Salt Lake City without prior consultation with the individual concerned.

Missionary activity had begun soon after the founding of the Latter-Day Saint Church. This was in accordance with a series of revelations made to Joseph Smith in which he and his disciples were urged to preach the "restored gospel" in Fayette, New York and surrounding areas. Later commandments from God stated that the gospel should be preached among the Gentiles, the Lamanites, and the Jews. To fulfill this obligation, missionaries were sent to Canada, to the eastern United States, to the

\[8\text{Ibid.} 33\]
Jews in Palestine, and later to England in the summer of 1839. 9 England proved fertile ground for the missionaries, and a number of Britons converted to Mormonism soon emigrated to the United States. To facilitate this emigration, the British and American Joint Stock Company was organized in England in 1844 under Mormon auspices to aid the church in the accomplishment of the gathering of the "saints" to the land of Zion, the Great Basin. A number of new missions were opened in the years 1849-50: the California Mission; 10 the Society Islands Mission; the Italian, Swiss, and Maltese Mission; 11 the Scandinavian Mission; and the French and German Mission. 12

A few converts were gained in each of the missions mentioned, but it was the British Mission that contributed by far the most converts and emigrants to Zion in the decade of the 1850's. In 1849, only 6,000 "saints" lived within the confines of the Great Basin, but by 1852 the number had increased to 20,000. This increase was largely due to a Perpetual Immigration Fund established by the church for the express purpose of providing funds and transportation for converts to God's Kingdom near the Great Salt Lake. In 1852, the Perpetual Immigration Fund was applied to provide transportation for some 30,000 English converts to the Great Basin; 13 but alas, this was the same year that

9 Roberts, A Comprehensive History... I, 392-96.
10 Ibid., III, 384.
11 Ibid., IV, 384-405.
12 Ibid., III, 390-91.
13 Arrington, Great Basin... 97.
Brigham Young put forth the doctrine of plural marriage—the announcement of which drastically reduced the numbers converting to Mormonism.

This immigration, to be sure, was in accordance with the gathering concept of the "saints" in Zion, but economic considerations cannot be overlooked. The youthful evangelical religion appealed to the unsophisticated throughout England, but nevertheless it was the tin mining area of Wales, where the closure of many mines had caused widespread unemployment and economic hardship, which contributed the largest number of English converts. Hungry men with families might have possessed certain principles, but the opportunity to have one's travel paid to America, the land with the streets paved with gold, was welcome news to many poor Englishmen. Indeed, some of these converts, or most of them perhaps, may have been actual believers in the Mormon Church, but both economic and religious motivations prompted them to leave their homes for a voyage across the Atlantic and a trek across the Great American Desert to the Mormon settlements in the Salt Lake Valley.

It is true that converts were wanted for purely religious reasons, but it is also true that converts to Zion would provide a labor force to help build God's Kingdom on earth in the Utah Territory.

While the concept of polygamy prevented the acceptance of Mormon doctrine in Montana before 1896, large numbers of Utah Mormons nevertheless traded with the Flathead Indians and later with the Montana gold camps. Many of these—"Jack-Mormons"—stayed as miners in Montana,

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14 The gathering concept was that all members of the church should gather in the Great Basin. Following their settlement in Utah, the Mormons began calling Utah Zion.
although the church's leaders constantly admonished them not to do so; and many of these miners and traders later became ranchers and farmers in Montana. ¹⁵

Finally by 1896 Mormon leaders could no longer prevent orthodox church members from moving from the Utah community, since second generation "saints" would not blindly follow the admonitions of their leaders. Church leaders were faced with two alternatives. They could either hold to the gathering concept of the "saints" in Zion and continue to sever the church's ties from its members who had left the Utah community, thereby causing a decrease in the Utah-church membership and the possible extinction of the religion; or they could maintain the church's contact with the individuals who were leaving the Utah community for economic reasons. They came to a paradoxical compromise. On the one hand, they would discourage church members from leaving the Mormon community, while at the same time they would consciously provide a means for remaining in contact with those who left. The establishment of the Montana Mission was a partial outgrowth of this decision.

The Mormon abandonment of polygamy in 1890 helped to reinstate Mormonism within the Christian tradition, making its message more acceptable to the Christian community. Consequently, the religious climate of the times was such that the Montana Mission could be established

¹⁵Until the end of the nineteenth century, Latter-Day Saint Church leaders admonished church members not to leave the Utah-Mormon community. Mormons who left the community without church sanction severed their ties with their brethren. They were given the name "Jack-Mormon," a term applied by the church's faithful adherents to baptized non-participating members.
in 1896. The purpose of the mission was to make contact with the Mormons living in Montana. In addition, it was set up to help to counteract any adverse influence of the Mormon schismatics, and it was of course to help convert Gentiles to Mormonism.
CHAPTER III
MORMON-MONTANA RELATIONS 1847-94

In keeping with their missionary program and activities, Mormon leaders established at Fort Lemhi in 1855 what was up to that time their closest settlement to the borders of the future Montana Territory. The fort was a bare twenty miles to the south of the present site of Salmon, Idaho and was just over the Lost Trail Pass from the Bitter Root Valley. Although the Lemhi settlement was certainly the product of the "saints'" evangelical fervor in their missionary activities and of their hope to bring their lost brethren, the aborigines, into the Mormon faith, it is also true that the new outpost would give them a measure of control over one of the important access routes to the Utah-Mormon community.

Consequently, Brigham Young issued (to a conference of "saints" gathered in Salt Lake City on April 6, 1855) a call for twenty-seven men to found an Indian Mission in the Oregon country. Colonel Thomas Smith was appointed leader and president of the group that left on May 29, 1855, and which journeyed from the Utah Territory to its future home on the Lemhi River (a tributary of the Salmon River). The trip passed without major or fatal incident, despite the fact

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1 He was a colonel in the Utah Territorial militia commanded by Brigham Young.

2 Merrill D. Beal, Souvenir Program for Dedication of the L.D.S. Idaho Pioneer Monument at Fort Lemhi (1950), 1-2.
that on the way north a Bannack chief informed the Mormons that for
their own good they should not settle farther north than the Salmon
River.\textsuperscript{3} This was a significant warning in the light of what was to
come.

A location for the timber stockade known as Fort Lemhi was
decided upon following the arrival of the group on June 18, 1855.
It was a site two miles from the present hamlet of Tendoy, Idaho on a
small stream feeding the Lemhi River. Here the missionaries had
ready access to four Indian tribes: the Bannack, Flathead, Nez Perce
and Shoshone.\textsuperscript{4} The missionaries almost immediately began preaching to
members of the nearby Indian tribes, and by March 30, 1856 their mis­
ionary activity was rewarded by the baptism of fourteen Indians into
the Latter-Day Saint faith.\textsuperscript{5}

Although these God-oriented but practical frontiersmen brought
livestock, fowl, and seeds with them, they nevertheless experienced
some of the same difficulties their brethren were experiencing in the
Utah Territory. For example, in 1855 grasshoppers destroyed most of
the Lemhi settlement's crops, and additional supplies had to be freight­
ed from Salt Lake City.\textsuperscript{6}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[3]{\textit{Milton R. Hunter, Brigham Young the Colonizer} (Independence,
Missouri: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1945), 335.}
\footnotetext[4]{\textit{Beal, Souvenir Program} $\ldots$ 3.}
\footnotetext[5]{Ibid., 5.}
\footnotetext[6]{Hunter, \textit{Brigham Young} $\ldots$, 335.}
\end{footnotes}
The Mormons, to be sure, were sincere in their efforts to establish missionary bastions, such as Fort Lemhi, but they also brought with them a definite awareness of opportunities that might result in economic benefits. With this in mind, Pleasant G. Taylor, Ebenezer Robinson, and Benjamin F. Cummings (some of the first Mormons on record to enter what is now Montana) left on November 12, 1855 for the Bitter Root Valley in Flathead country to discuss the possible purchase of Fort Hall, the location of which is now between the cities of Pocatello and Idaho Falls. Transactions were conducted with a Mr. McArthur who had recently become a part owner of Fort Hall and who was then visiting Major Owen in the Bitter Root Valley. Not only could Fort Hall serve as a center for Mormon settlements throughout all of what is now Idaho, but it was located on the trail which branched off to all portions of Washington Territory (of which Montana was a part). Once in control of this station, the "saints" could then sell supplies to travelers bound for Washington Territory and at the same time encourage Mormon settlements throughout the Northwest. Brigham Young, it must be remembered, at this time envisioned the whole of the western United States as his personal domain. Indeed, the number of people being converted to Mormonism made it imperative that new areas for colonization be found beyond the confines of the Great Basin. Fort Lemhi would furnish a means of extending both missionary work to the aborigines and at the same time provide a means for further widespread Mormon settlements.

The discussions were not successful, either because Mr. McArthur was not disposed to selling Fort Hall or because he was not fully
authorized to carry out such a transaction. The Lemhi men were left with nothing to do but to return to their settlement empty-handed. Still, they had been impressed with the Bitter Root Valley, and Cummings wrote in his journal that the "... Bitter Root Valley appears to me to be one of the grandest locations for a Mormon settlement in the mountains ...." A number of the residents of Fort Owen, moreover, had apparently expressed the hope of having some Mormons settle in the valley since they thought the "saints" were a wholesome and enterprising people.

Several months after the return of the negotiators to Fort Lemhi, the settlement was blessed (on May 10, 1857) with a visit of God's representative on earth, namely, Brigham Young. Young's procession, which made its way from Salt Lake City to the settlement on the Lemhi River, resembled, in size at least, processions of some medieval kings and nobles. The party included Brigham Young and his Twelve Apostles, one hundred and fifteen men, twenty-two women, five boys, one hundred and sixty-eight horses and mules, twenty-eight carriages, twenty-six wagons, and two light boats for ferrying across the Snake River.

The visitors inspected Fort Lemhi, and a certain amount of advice was offered. Two Apostles, Heber C. Kimball and Daniel H. Wells, urged

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8 Ibid., 92.
9 The Deseret Evening News (Salt Lake City), June 10, 1857.
the young missionaries to marry Indian maidens. They argued that marriage would demonstrate the strongest link of friendship between the mission and its Indian neighbors. Brigham Young, however, cautioned that they should not marry "... those old vanigadoes as they would be off with the first mountaineer that came along." Rather, the young men should hesitate before plunging into marriage, but if they did, they should marry young Indian girls. The advice to marry Indians, incidentally, deviated from the usual rule in Mormon-Indian policy and was probably prompted by the isolation of the settlement and the mission's dependence upon the good will of the natives. Also this marital advice was based on the belief that the aborigines were after all actually the "saints" Jewish brethren. The marriages might possibly lead to an increase in the number of Indian converts. Several of the younger missionaries at Fort Lemhi proposed to Indian girls, but in most of the instances the parents "... refused to let their daughter go, or at least seemed not willing." Perhaps the young missionaries, despite the isolation of Fort Lemhi, did not put their hearts into the effort, but regardless of the causes, few unions were attempted.

In the autumn of the same year, an extension of Fort Lemhi was built two miles south of the first stockade to furnish facilities for additional settlers expected to arrive from Utah. On October 27, 1857,

10Beal, "... Salmon River ..., 95.

11Ibid.
fourteen women, thirty-two men, and twelve children arrived from the Utah Territory. This brought the number of settlers to almost one hundred—the maximum number to settle at the fort. Throughout the remainder of the year, relations were favorable with the Indians, and several of them settled at the Mormon fort and began to farm.¹²

Brigham Young's visit to the mission, coupled with the favorable report of opportunity in the Bitter Root Valley from the three man delegation that had traveled there in 1856 and the attempted purchase of Fort Hall, seemed to indicate that a major northern Mormon colonization movement was imminent. However, events both at Fort Lemhi and in Utah in 1858 shattered this expectation.

According to the mission accounts in January 1858, a marked change came over the Indians in contact with the settlers at Fort Lemhi, and they began by making vigorous demands for gifts of food and clothing for no apparent reason.¹³ Suddenly on February 23, and without prior warning, Bannack's and Shoshones ambushed herdsmen tending their flocks.¹⁴ Fort Lemhi was attacked later in the day, and word was immediately sent to Salt Lake City informing Brigham Young of the swift turn in events. Settlers at the mission claimed that there had been no provocation for the attacks, and the Indians left no record of their reasons for such actions. It can be conjectured, however, that the Indians may have feared the rapidly increasing Mormon pop-
ulation at Fort Lemhi and felt threatened in their own territory. Another reason for the attack may have been that the Indians considered the missionary activities of the "saints" meddlesome and undesirable. Still not to be discounted was yet another possibility, that of a messianic movement among the Indians. Later George W. Hill, a settler of Fort Lemhi, told of meeting an Indian Prophet who visited the settlement. Such prophet or messianic movements often resulted in hostility toward missionaries and settlers acquiring Indian lands. Major Owen, incidentally, noted that the Indians were not particularly fond of the Mormons.

But soon after the attacks, some Indians drifted back to the mission in an effort toward reconciliation and even returned some of the captured livestock. Twelve of the mission's converts who had participated in the attack, however, were soundly read off the church rolls and excommunicated. And although no further attacks were made on the settlers, Colonel Andrew Cunningham arrived at the mission from Salt Lake City on March 23, with instructions to abandon the fort, and its inhabitants were recalled to the Salt Lake Valley to

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15 Messianic or prophet movements were not uncommon among the Indians of the northwestern United States. Usually a courageous young brave would claim himself a prophet and would predict an event in the future. Messianic movements often resulted in an attempt to drive the white man from Indian territory.

16 George W. Hill, "Message from an Indian Prophet," Juvenile Instructor, ed. by James Hastings, IV (Salt Lake City, 1879), 91.

17 "Report of John Owen, acting agent to the Flathead Indians, to Governor Stevens, May 11, 1856," records of the Washington Superintendency of Indian Affairs, microfilm.

18 He was a colonel in the Utah Territorial militia.
strengthen defenses against the invasion of Johnston's Army.  

The Fort Lemhi settlement was to have an indirect but nevertheless positive effect on future Mormon contacts with Montana. When gold was later discovered in southwestern Montana, in the Mormon community in Utah were several individuals acquainted with the trail northward to Montana. This geographical knowledge was to prove economically profitable to the former Fort Lemhi settlers as well as providential to the mining camps in Montana whose inhabitants were more interested in gold than in planting crops to supply the needed foodstuffs.

Actually Utah-Montana economic relations had begun even before the founding and abandonment of Fort Lemhi. Both Mormons and non-Mormons from the Utah Territory traveled the Montana Trail between 1847 and the 1860's. One of the earliest to reach Montana from the church community in Utah was a man named E.W. Van Etten (a Mormon). He was reputed to have been the first to freight goods from Salt Lake City to Montana on the Montana Trail in 1856 by way of present-day Fort Hall, Idaho Falls, Monida Pass, the Big Hole Valley, and the Gibbons Pass into the Bitter Root Valley. Van Etten lived near Salt Lake City and in his wanderings traded goods with the Flathead Indians. He also was acquainted with Major Owen, and undoubtedly this contact profited Van Etten in his commercial relations with the Flathead Indians. Van Etten, even though living among Caucasians within Utah, took a Flathead Indian maiden for his bride and became a squaw man in 1859. After

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19 Beal, "...Salmon River ...," 122.
wintering in the Bitter Root Valley during 1861, he left the valley never to return again, possibly as a result of a violent quarrel with Major Owen. Other Mormons were willing to turn their hand at making a fast dollar, and they found the Flatheads eager to trade their fine horses for cattle. These same entrepreneurs also made a practice of wintering stock in the Bitter Root Valley as well as in certain portions of Idaho.

Other men from Utah settled in Montana, but it was a Mormon woman, Minnie Miller, wife of Henry G. Miller, who had the distinction of being the first white woman resident of western Montana. She and her husband came to Montana to manage the Indian Agency at Jocko in 1856 and 1857 for Dr. Lansdale, the Flathead Indian agent, who traveled to the Pacific coast during that winter. Upon Lansdale's return, the Millers left Montana to visit relatives at Walla Walla, Washington in 1857; and in 1860, they again came back to Jocko, but that spring they returned to Utah where they became permanent settlers.

At this same time, with the approach of Johnston's Army toward Utah, a number of Mormons and Utah-Gentiles were assimilated into the present area of Montana. It should be noted that the Mormons who left Utah in these circumstances were considered cowards and unfaithful.

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members of the church.

The stage was thus set for further Utah economic intercourse with Montana when gold was discovered on Grasshopper Creek in 1862, giving rise to the city of Bannack. Jack-Mormons, non-Mormons, Mormons and former settlers of Fort Lemhi carried on the liaison between Utah and Montana by way of the Montana Trail. Utah, with a substantially strong agricultural and home-manufacturing economy, was in a position financially to enhance itself by marketing products, first in Bannack and later in Virginia City, Helena, Butte, and Anaconda. Utah entrepreneurs, upon hearing of the gold strike in Bannack, outfitted wagon trains with foodstuffs and other supplies for the Grasshopper Creek boom town. These first shipments were more than welcome and replenished the stores exhausted in the early hectic weeks of the gold rush.23

During the next two decades, or more precisely the nineteen years following the discovery of gold in 1862 until the Utah & Northern Railroad was completed to Butte in 1881, Utahans engaged in the profitable enterprise of transporting goods in large wagon trains from Utah to Montana. Also, between 1861 and 1864, the Bannack Express was operated by A. J. Oliver and Company to carry the U.S. Mail and passengers northward into Montana and Idaho.24 In 1864, the Post Office Department awarded a contract to Ben Holladay to furnish tri-weekly mail service from Salt Lake City to Virginia City. Holladay,

in an effort to eliminate competitors, set the stage fare at the unheard of low price of $25.00 and lessened the financial burden of those traveling to Montana.25

Fortunately, the trail these men traveled from Salt Lake to Virginia City was "...a rather fast road for the stagecoach and was ideal for trading purposes since it crossed a series of high plateaus connected by narrow canyons and low divides."26 Foodstuffs and essential materials for mining were the first goods to be carried by the wagon trains on the journey to Virginia City that took fifteen days under favorable circumstances. Of the foodstuffs shipped to Montana boom towns, flour was the main staple, and nearly every week several wagon trains of precious food arrived from Salt Lake City.27 Freighters transporting goods along this route realized enormous profits. Alexander Toponce, in 1863, for instance, purchased a six hundred pound swine in Brigham City for $36.00 and sold it in Virginia City for $600.00.28

Some contemporary accounts of wagon trains leaving Salt Lake for Virginia City in 1865 are representative of the make-up of the trains traveling to the Montana gold camps. The Salt Lake Telegraph on


October 13, 1865 described a train of twenty-six wagons loaded with bacon, lard and other necessities, and an additional train of twenty-six wagons soon to follow. Another account four days later described a train of fifty wagons containing flour and other staples leaving for Virginia City and Helena. By 1866, the peak year for such shipments, freighting ultimately had grown to such proportions that the editor of the Montana Post decided no longer to keep track of the freighters arriving in Virginia City as "... the motley crowd was now thronging like the waves of a flood tide, by every pass and canyon, to Montana."

In 1869, Corrine, Utah replaced Salt Lake City as the transfer point for Montana-bound supplies because it was the northern-most terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad. During the decade of the sixties, the traffic between Montana and Utah reached such proportions that this link had become a major artery of commerce, with hundreds of men, thousands of tons of produce, and thousands of head of livestock traveling the route. The transfer of goods along this avenue for the five year period following 1865 amounted to the value of between one and one-half and two million dollars annually."

29 The Salt Lake Telegraph, October 13, 1865.
30 Union Vedette (Salt Lake City), October 17, 1865.
31 Montana Post (Virginia City), April 21, 1866.
While the selling of goods was the prime consideration of the traders, other men wished to disseminate ideas among the miners, and still others wished to establish a means of rapid communication between the Virginia City gold camp and the outside world. To facilitate these aims, a printing press made its way along the trail to Virginia City in 1864; and two years later, the Western Union Telegraph Company completed a telegraph line from Salt Lake to Virginia City.

The decade of the 1860's thus saw a solidification of Utah-Montana relations. Contacts between the two areas were understandable from a geographical point of view, since the valleys of the Rockies run north-south, and Indians, trappers and traders had traveled these natural routes for years. Indeed, transcontinental railroads in the northern United States, such as the Northern Pacific, had to carve an unnatural path through the mountains. North-south communications, freighting and travel increased to tremendous proportions during the decade, and this north-south highway was to gain even more importance in the relations of Utah and Montana with the completion of a railroad from Salt Lake City to Butte in 1881.

The importance of the trade between Utah and the Montana mining towns gave rise to the idea of establishing a rail link between the two territories. Accordingly, the Utah Northern Railroad Company was formed and became one of several railway organizations founded by

33 Edrington, "A Study...", 98-100.
34 Phillips, Forty Years, II, 31.
Mormon leaders. Since Brigham Young, with all his arguments and influence, had not been able to persuade the Union Pacific to build to Salt Lake City, Mormon leaders had therefore been forced to plan a transportational system of their own within the Mormon community and to connect it with the outside world. The Utah Northern Railroad Company was a natural outgrowth of the Utah leaders' original aims.

As early as August 23, 1871, northern Utah businessmen and seventeen church members, with moneyed backers from the East, formed the Utah Northern Railroad Company to build a line from Ogden through Cache Valley, to Brigham City with an extension into southern Idaho, and to a terminus in Montana. John W. Young, son of Brigham Young, was elected president and superintendent of the company and was assisted by twelve other officers from the present states of Idaho and Utah and an additional man, LeGrand Lockwood, from New York City. The possibilities of the road interested Brigham Young since it would provide a means for extending church colonization and for establishing economic intercourse between the existing Mormon community and locales along the way of the road. Montanans were also interested in the road since it would furnish access to the smelters they did not yet possess.

After the company was formed, it was necessary to decide whether

35 The transcontinental Union Pacific had by-passed Salt Lake City and had gone to the north.

36 Merrill D. Beal, "The Salt Lake-Butte Rail Link," MS, in the possession of Professor Merrill D. Beal, Idaho State College, chapter I, 4.
the gauge of the projected railroad was to be of the narrow type or the standard type of the transcontinental Union Pacific. Since narrow gauge railroads cost less than one-third to build in mountainous terrain and cost less to operate than the standard gauge, it was this type that the group favored. Although a narrow gauge railroad involved a lower speed and lighter carrying capacity than did a standard gauge road, actually these two limitations were favored for the proposed Montana-Utah link. Speed was not essential, and traffic of enormous proportions was not anticipated.\(^37\) In 1872, construction began. Soon after, Congress passed an act on March 3, 1873, permitting the Utah Northern Railroad Company to build as far north as Butte and Garrison in Montana to connect with the transcontinental Northern Pacific then being constructed.\(^38\)

The work on the railroad steadily progressed northward into Idaho. In 1875, the general superintendent of the Utah Northern spoke to the Territorial Legislature of Idaho, inviting the territory to lend a financial hand in its construction. Both the governor and legislature spurned his offer.\(^39\) A similar approach involved the road’s builders with the Territorial Legislature of Montana. There the legislature was of a different disposition. When the Montana Territorial Legislature met in January, 1876, Utah Northern interests argued that the

\(^{37}\)Ibid., Chapter I, 466.

\(^{38}\)Joel E. Ricks (ed.), *The History of a Valley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Co., 1956), 177-78.

\(^{39}\)Beal, "Salt Lake-Butte Rail Link...", Chapter IV, 4-5.
extension of the road into Montana was dependent upon a subsidy. The Montana Legislature was persuaded to the extent that it provided means for subsidizing the railroad in 1876, although all of the body's plans proved to be abortive. Similar appeals were made by the railroad group to later Montana Territorial Legislatures until the line was completed. The legislature continued in its efforts to raise money to aid in the construction of the road. One plan initiated by the 1877 legislature provided that $1,700,000 in twenty year bonds be raised by the territory to be given to the railroad building northward from Utah. But in that same year (January), the Utah Northern Railroad Company had been purchased by the Utah & Northern Railroad, a subsidiary of the Union Pacific. The Union Pacific representatives rejected the plan proposed by the Montana Territorial Legislature because they objected to the clause requiring the payment of one-twenty-fifth of all passenger receipts to Montana.

The Utah-Montana link started at Ogden, continued into Idaho through Marsh Valley to Inkom, on to Pocatello, and then across the Fort Hall Indian Reservation to Backfoot, Idaho. These extensions were completed by Christmas of 1878. By the spring of 1879, construction had reached Eagle Rock and Roberts, and on May 9, 1880 it had progressed to the border of Montana. Montanans were jubilant

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40 Ibid., Chapter V, 4.
41 Ibid., Chapter V, 5.
42 Ibid., Chapter IV, 14-16.
and found themselves for the first time anticipating a rail link with the rest of the United States. Construction was completed to Lima in the spring of 1880, to Dillon in October 1880, and to Butte in December 1881. In the spring of 1884, the line reached Anaconda and joined with the Northern Pacific at Garrison that autumn.43

A railroad was now completed which from the beginning had had Mormon sponsorship and financial backing, but in 1877 the rail link was sold to the Union Pacific. Nevertheless, the mere completion of the line helped to solidify Mormon-Montana relations. By the time of the sale, too, many of the original aims of the Mormon leaders had already been met, such as the establishment of Mormon settlements along the path of the railroad. And the Mormon workers on the road had come in contact with Montana.

From 1847 to 1896, economic intercourse between the Mormon-Utah and Montana communities proved mutually profitable. Some of the Utahans, however, having come in contact with Montana, stayed as permanent settlers. Although these settlers first came as traders and minters, some of them later helped to establish agriculture as a basis of livelihood in southwestern Montana. These Jack-Mormon farmers and ranchers contributed their portion to the agrarian economy of the area and helped to make Montana agriculturally self-sufficient by 1872.44 Of the agrarian contingent, many had been converts to Mormonism

43Ibid., Chapter V, 7–12.

and were immigrants from the Scandinavian countries and England to Utah. William Price Thomas, for instance, was representative of such settlers in Montana. Born in Caemarthenshire, South Wales on May 8, 1813, he had been converted to Mormonism, and in 1851 emigrated to Utah. He later left Utah for Bannack in 1863, and after that became a rancher in the Deer Lodge Valley. 45

A number of converts to Mormonism had come with church sponsorship to Utah from the tin mining area of Wales. As miners, it was not unlikely that some of them would move on to a mining area like Montana. Some Welshmen, disillusioned upon their arrival in the Utah Territory, probably set out to find their fortunes in the Montana gold fields. Seemingly this is what some of them did. Not only Welshmen, but Mormon converts from Scandinavia, England, and the United States alike, came to the boom towns in Montana as traders and miners and stayed as herdsmen and tillers of the soil.

Following in the footsteps of the Utah miner, trader and farmer to Montana came the Utah railman. During the construction of the railroad from Utah to Montana, laborers from Utah and Idaho, most of them Mormons, made up the crews working on the road. A basis was thus laid for even more Mormon and Gentile members of the Utah and Idaho settlements to acquaint themselves with Montana. A few of the construction workers stayed on; of the others who returned to Utah, some again returned to Montana to work in the mines in Butte and at the smelter in

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45 Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana (Helena, 1878), I, 90.
Anaconda. Others stayed in Montana to man the trains and maintain the road.

Of the Mormons who remained in Montana, apparently none wished association with the church community. At least the 1890 census reports listed no one in Montana claiming the Mormon faith.46

During the forty-nine year period from 1847-1896, ties between Utah and Montana were steadily strengthened and cemented. Although increasing numbers of Mormons and Gentiles from Utah settled in Montana, no ecclesiastical organization was formed in the territory. The lack of such an organization during the gold rush days is understandable in the light of the Mormon hierarchy’s continued opposition to having church members engage in mining activities. "...Mormon leaders throughout this period uncompromisingly held to the self-sufficiency of the Mormon community as the official policy of the church.47 But why did not the church establish Mormon-Montana settlements under ecclesiastical auspices in the days after the Montana gold rushes, especially since Mormon settlements in Mexico and Canada were established during this time? The reason was that the Montana Territorial Legislature had passed laws against the practice of bigamy, and Congress


47 Arrington, Great Basin, 195.
had outlawed the practice of polygamy. Areas in the United States, such as Montana, were therefore not hospitable to Mormon settlers, while the governments of Mexico and Canada encouraged Mormons to settle in their uninhabited domains on donated lands. The two foreign governments were primarily interested in developing their territories and were not concerned with the Mormons' peculiar practice of polygamy.
CHAPTER IV
MORMON SCHISMATICS IN MONTANA

The decade of the 1860's saw the Reorganized Church make inroads into Montana. The religion was within the monogamous Christian tradition and its proselyting activities were acceptable. On the other hand, the polygamous Utah Mormons were not welcome in the young territory before 1890. In addition, adherents to the Reorganized movement did not have to leave the locales in which they were converted. Conversely, Mormonism uncompromisingly held to a gathering of the "saints" in and around the Salt Lake Valley.

While differences of orthodoxy and marriage persisted between the Reorganized and Mormon Churches, it was the similarity of proselyting programs which led to the establishment of the Reorganized Church in Montana. In the summer of 1868, a missionary, Joseph W. Morgan, came to Montana from Malad, Idaho to carry the message of the church and if possible to gain adherents to the Reorganized movement. Morgan held his first meeting at Reese Creek in Gallatin county and there baptized John E. Reese along with several others. Reese was the first person in Montana to accept the Reorganized faith, and in 1868 he became the leader of its first ecclesiastical organization in Montana as president of the Gallatin branch.¹

The itinerant Reorganized disciple, Morgan, next traveled to Willow Creek, Montana. While there, he baptized several members and

¹Letter from Charles A. Davies, General Church Historian, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Independence, Missouri, February 27, 1961.
appointed a recent convert, R.C. Moore, as president of the Willow Creek branch. By the next year, the movement had met with such success that the Montana District, encompassing the entire Montana Territory, was organized. John E. Reese, the convert of only one year, was appointed president of the Montana District, with Martin M. Fox as secretary.

In 1870, the Reorganized movement in Montana continued to strive for stability and converts. But the dedicated John E. Reese, the leader of the district, was called to the position of missionary to Wales by Reorganized Church leaders. The Montana area was left without an effectual leader, and the year 1871 spelled disorder for the fledgling church. The movement in Montana was still quite small, and it needed a dedicated leader such as Reese to keep it functioning. No such leader arose to fill his position, but luckily for the Reorganized Church Reese was recalled from his labors in Wales in the autumn of 1872 when he again became active in Montana. A year later, in 1873, the Montana District was again reorganized after a year of relative inactivity, with John E. Reese as its president.

From the beginning of missionary activity in Montana until 1896, the Reorganized leaders kept in close contact with their newly-made converts. Even the president of the church, Joseph Smith III, visited Montana in 1886 and spoke at the 4th of July celebration at Thomas Reese's homestead at Reese Creek. This liaison between the church hierarchy and its scattered disciples helped to make individual members feel as though they could identify themselves with the movement's leaders and gave them a sense of participation. Three years later, Alexander H. Smith of the First Presidency came to Montana and gave
further encouragement to the church's remote community. The small Montana Reorganized group thrived on the praise and encouragement of its leaders who were far removed (Independence, Missouri) from the young territory.

By the year 1896, twenty-three missionaries had labored in Montana. Their efforts were crowned with success, for the church had as few as ten members in Montana in 1868, seventy-six members by 1871, with twenty-nine members in the Gallatin Valley and forty-seven in the community of Willow. By 1880, the membership had grown to fifty-three in the Gallatin Valley, and eight years later the movement had increased to one hundred and seven members in and around Bozeman. Also, the decade of the 1880's saw inroads made into the wild mining city of Butte which boasted fifty-three members in 1887. In that same year, the fellow-shipped members of the church numbered slightly over two hundred communicants. It was also during this period that the Gallatin Branch contributed six missionaries called to foreign missions.

The Reorganized Church's appeal was chiefly in the agricultural areas of Montana, but it also had a certain attraction for the miners of Butte. Adherents to the church actively proselyted members of other churches and sects as well as families possessing no religious affiliation. In this manner they converted others to their faith.

Much of the Montana membership were made up of former European

2 Ibid.
3 "Church membership rolls of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints" on deposit at the church historian’s office, Independence, Missouri (photostats).
converts to Mormonism from England and the Scandinavian countries. Still others were second generation Mormons from the Utah territory. The latter had either become disillusioned with the Utah-Mormon community with its practice of polygamy or had come to Montana for economic gain, thus severing their ties with their brethren in Utah. And many former European converts to Mormonism wished to join a church similar to the one they had become members of as long as it did not embody the concept of polygamy.

Some second generation Mormons after having left the Utah community had lost contact with the Mormon Church. Their ties had been broken, and only the Reorganized Church had established an ecclesiastical organization in Montana of a similar church in which they could be communicants. Some of the former "saints" might have remained members of the Latter-Day Saint Church, but they could not since the Mormons had no religious organization in Montana. So it was the Reorganized Church that profited in membership from the former Mormons.

Still another Mormon schismatic group was to live in Montana before the Mormons began their missionary activities in 1896. This faction was commonly known as Morrisites by the Mormons of Utah, after the name of their founder, Joseph Morris. But the faithful disciples of Morris called themselves members of the Church of the

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4 Thid.

5 The Reorganized Church headquarters in Independence, Missouri, would not relinquish any history of its movement into Montana beyond 1906 as of February 27, 1963.
Saints of the Most High. Joseph Morris had been born in Wales on December 15, 1824, and twenty-seven years later had been converted to Mormonism and emigrated with his wife to the United States. During the two year period from 1851 to 1853, he and his wife lived in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. While there, he was the recipient of a number of revelations, and several members of a Mormon schismatic community living in the area (led by Sidney Rigdon) appointed him president of their own religious faction. But in 1853, he and his wife made a sudden move to Utah.

While in Utah, Morris experienced repeated difficulties with the leaders of the Mormon Church. He continued to receive revelations and was soon listed as suspect by the Mormon hierarchy. True, a faithful adherent of Mormonism needed a religious experience which conveyed to him the truthfulness of its message but nothing more. Only leaders of the Mormon Church were selected by God to receive messages for the religious community. Morris was not within the limits of this definition. Even so, he believed himself to be the successor of Joseph Smith and that Brigham Young was an imposter. By the year 1861, he had made himself so obnoxious to the church authorities that they had twice excommunicated him. After the first excommunication, he had shown repentance and was once again received into the fellowship of the church, but with his second violation there was to be no reconciliation between Morris and the Mormon leaders. Third chances were not given by the Mormon hierarchy. The "saints" held that he was disfellowshipped because he was an adulterer; but since this was a common charge made by the church against its fallen
members, it was probably not true. More likely than not he was excom-
municated because of his prophetic claims.

A year earlier, in 1860, Joseph Morris had moved to Weber county
(Ogden is the county seat) where he gained a number of disciples, one
of whom was the bishop of a Mormon ward in that county. Its
growth was now phenomenal. By February 1861, the movement had sixteen
members, including Morris; and by July of the same year it had two
hundred members, and just before the abandonment of the movement in
Utah, it had three hundred adherents.

The Morrisite faction established a settlement in southern Weber
county known as Knight Fort. It was there that the Morrisites gathered
and set up a communitarian society, holding all goods and land in
common. While Morris established his church headquarters at Knight
Fort, he also oriented his ecclesiastical organization along the lines
of the mother Mormon Church, with himself as president and prophet,
two councilors, twelve apostles, and high priests. Morris preached
that the second coming of Christ was imminent, and this approach had
a certain appeal to the evangelical Mormon community. Joseph Smith
had earlier talked of the almost instantaneous coming of the millen-
nium. In addition, this schismatic religion appealed to the monogamous-
minded within the Mormon community, since Morris's group did not
practice polygamy.

However, in spite of his prophecy, Christ did not appear, and

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6 In Mormon terminology, a ward is roughly similar to a parish, and
a bishop could be equated to a parish priest.
several of Morris' disciples wished to withdraw from the community. Morris prevented such action by continuing to postpone the date of the advent of Christ's appearance. Finally, the success of the movement so concerned the Mormon Church leaders that they decided to intervene on behalf of the disillusioned members of the Morrisite community and to forcibly disband the Knight Fort settlement. Accordingly, Mormon leaders sent two hundred and fifty men on an expedition to the fort on June 13, 1862 and demanded the unconditional surrender of Morris and his disciples. The Morrisite band refused to surrender, and a gun battle ensued between them and the Mormon police force. The fight ended with the death of Morris and three of his disciples.

Mormon leaders were satisfied. With the Morrisite leader dead, the movement no longer posed a threat to the Mormon community in Utah, since none of Morris' followers had his leadership ability nor his personal magnetism. Some of the Knight Fort group stayed in Utah and were reinstated into the Mormon Church. Still others left the Mormon community. Of those who left Utah, it was necessary for an armed escort to be furnished by the United States Army from Fort Douglas, so that they would not be harmed by the "saints." The church, during the nineteenth century, had as one of its unannounced policies the detention of Mormon apostates in the Utah community. Indeed, some dissenters were exterminated in the saintly territory.

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The Morrisites who left the Utah community divided into three groups—one group went to California; one to Soda Springs, Idaho; and another to Council Bluffs, Iowa. It was the Soda Springs and Council Bluffs groups that played a role in the history of the Deer Lodge Valley and of the Montana Territory. Those who went to Council Bluffs traveled the Union Pacific on their return to Utah in the spring of 1872. They purchased covered wagons, oxen, and supplies in Corrine, Utah and traveled on to Soda Springs, Idaho where they were reunited with some of their brethren. From there (in the same year), the Council Bluffs group and some of the Morrisites from Soda Springs journeyed to the Deer Lodge Valley to homestead on government lands. They traveled the same trail northward from Corrine, Utah that Van Etten had freighted sixteen years earlier.

Upon their arrival in the Deer Lodge Valley in the summer of 1872, they soon began breaking the virgin soil. And in the winter of 1872 and 1873, a number of them worked at placer gold mining to make ready cash for spring planting. Although some members of the group participated in mining the first winter, none of them again left their agricultural vocations. But they did not revert to their communalistic ways they had earlier practiced in Utah.

In 1872, they built a church on Lost Creek close to the present city of Anaconda. By 1878, they had settled throughout the Deer Lodge Valley between Deer Lodge and Anaconda. In that same year, another church was built near Race Track, approximately seven miles to the south of Deer Lodge. This last church is still standing, and one can see the inscription above the large double doors proclaiming in large
The Deer Lodge Morrisites never numbered more than seventy-five to eighty persons, and ethnically these Mormon schismatics were mostly Scandinavians and a small number of English. Almost without exception, the Morrisites had been converted to Mormonism in Europe and had later emigrated to Utah where they had broken with the Latter-Day Saint Church and had become followers of Joseph Morris. Andrew Hendrickson, the only exception, had emigrated to the United States from Sweden in the 1850's. Mormonism had not lured him to America; instead he had come for economic gain. He steadily worked westward from New York and came in contact with the Council Bluffs Morrisite faction in the late 1860's where he became enamored with a Miss Jorgensen. Hendrickson joined the group and arrived with them in the Deer Lodge Valley in 1872.

In organization, the Deer Lodge group differed from the sect established by Morris and from the mother Mormon Church. The movement possessed neither a prophet, nor Twelve Apostles, nor a high council; instead the faction was held together by the fraternal and communal ties they had formed while Morris was still alive. They uncompromisingly held to the prophetship of both Joseph Smith and Joseph Morris.

8 It was built of planed lumber and was once painted white but the paint has long ago peeled from the building. The building is 30' 84" in width and has a gabled roof. There are two windows on each side of the former church and one window on each end. Just 70' 4" to the west of the building there is fittingly enough a small two by four outhouse. Now this house of the Lord is in a pasture well populated with both cow and sheep dung. Such is the setting of the house of the Lord.
but they appointed no successor. Rather the Morrisites in the Deer Lodge Valley seemed to be more socially than religiously oriented. To be sure, they still preached from the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Bible, but the group did not attempt to convert others to its religious ways.

The refusal of the first-generation in the Deer Lodge Valley to sponsor missionary activities hindered the conversion of adherents to the faith. Not only did they fail to spread their message to others outside of the fold, but they did not even systematically attempt to convert their offspring to the movement. Certainly the children were encouraged to attend the Sunday services, but upon maturity they were not accepted into the leadership of the church. Since their elders refused them responsibility, the younger generation became disenchanted with their religion, and many of them fell from the faith of their fathers. Still others continued to attend the Morrisite services until the death of the first generation leaders. Not one of the children came to the leadership of the church. For instance, Mrs. Frank Agnes Staffanson is the nominal leader of the Morrisite offspring, and she considers herself to be a faithful adherent of the church, but only sporadically do any of the children meet. However, even when there is a meeting of the descendants, it is nothing more than a social get together without religious overtones.

9 Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Publishing Co., 1956). A collection of revelations accepted as doctrine by the Mormon Church.

10 Interview with Henry Hendrickson, Missoula, Montana April 19, 1962.
Rather than carry on in the tradition of their parents, some of the younger generation moved from the Deer Lodge community, and the offspring with few exceptions, have associated themselves with other religious denominations. Some of these descendants remained in the Deer Lodge Valley and became affiliated with the Reorganized Church since it never had the stigma of having practiced polygamy. They feel that this is the church that most closely resembles the Morrisite movement; however, none of the descendants joined the Mormon Church.

For all practical purposes the movement died out with the deaths of the two foremost leaders of the Morrisite community, namely, Andrew Hendrickson in 1921, and George Johnson in the early 1930's. No active participants are alive. Only hazy and nostalgic recollections of the movement remain. It is dead. But during the time the first generation Morrisites lived in the Deer Lodge Valley, they were liked by their neighbors, and they contributed their part in making the valley agriculturally self-sufficient.

Thus, during the twenty-eight year period, from 1868 until 1896, two Mormon schismatic factions (the Reorganized Church members and the Morrisites) made inroads into the area of Montana and were at least indirectly responsible for the establishment of the Mormon Montana Mission in 1896. The Latter-Day Saint leaders by then were no longer willing to allow what they termed a heretical branch (Reorganized Church)

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11 Interview with Mrs. Frank Agnes Staffanson, Deer Lodge, Montana, March 26, 1962.
of the mother church to profit from the conversion of the emigrant Utah-Mormons if they could prevent such an action. The Mormon leaders also wished to counteract any adverse publicity the schismatics might have brought against Mormonism in Montana. Furthermore, since the Mormons renounced the doctrine of polygamy in 1890, they were within the Christian tradition of monogamy. With this, finally, the largest impediment to the growth of Mormonism in Montana had been removed.
CHAPTER V
MONTANA MISSION 1896-98

The message of Mormonism "... shall be made known to all ... the world, to the four corners thereof, ... and to all the nations of the earth ... " Thus had Joseph Smith spoken to his small band of followers in the church's infancy (1841). In this same spirit, the Montana Mission was established in September, 1896 under the direction and control of the Twelve Apostles in Salt Lake City. This mission encompassed the whole area of Montana. Individual branches were also organized, but they were under the direct control of the mission headquarters.

Earlier in the same year, two high ranking church officials, Edward Stevenson and Matthias F. Cowley, had been appointed by the president of the church, Wilford Woodruff, in Salt Lake City to travel in the northwestern United States to make contact with members of the church residing in the area. They were instructed to examine the advisability of setting up church organizations in locales in which "saints" resided. It was as a result of their work and contacts that formal ecclesiastical organizations, of which the Montana Mission was one, were set up in the various states of the Northwest.

1Doctrine and Covenants, Section 124; Verse 3.

2The branches in the mission field can have a numerical strength of from approximately ten to three hundred members. However, there are no set limitations concerning maximum and minimum numbers. They are presided over by a missionary or by a local resident, either of whom is responsible to the mission president.
On September 10, 1896, the Montana Mission was organized with Phineus Tempest, of Rexburg, Idaho as president. This fact established the beginning of the first formal Mormon attempt to bring religion to the fallen "saints" in Montana. The new missionary movement was undertaken with some reluctance, for even while carrying on the proselyting, Salt Lake City church leaders opposed any movement of "saints" to Montana. In an article in the Deseret Evening News of August 5, 1896, Stevenson and Cowley, reporting on the addresses they had given in Butte and Anaconda, stated that "... the saints would be better off in Utah, raising their children in the ways of the Lord rather than travel to these Montana cities as they are extremely wicked and the saints residing in these areas are nothing more than poor transient laborers." Despite the founding of the new mission, it is clear that Mormon leaders continued to hold to the concept of the gathering of the "saints" in Utah as the official policy of the Mormon community.

However, the late nineteenth century had seen a diminishing degree of control by church leaders over their members. Large numbers of second generation Mormons were no longer willing to follow blindly the admonitions of the church hierarchy. But although many second generation "saints" questioned the origin of their religion, they had had pleasant

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4Deseret... News, August 5, 1896.
social experiences in Utah and were unwilling to disassociate themselves from the movement. Despite the fact they were unwilling to give up their religious ways, however, they might renounce their seemingly irresolute convictions. Consequently, the Mormon Church, against its will, had been forced to compromise by forming ecclesiastical organizations to maintain contact with members leaving Utah. The Montana Mission of 1896 was a conscious outgrowth of the leadership's final realization.

Coupled with this policy was the apparently conscious belief that the Montana Mission would go far toward counteracting the adverse publicity the schismatics (such as the Morrisites and the Reorganized Church) might have brought to pass concerning Mormonism. In addition, the mission would serve the purpose of spreading the Mormon gospel to the Gentiles of Montana. Hence, the Utah-Mormon movement into Montana no longer had only economic implications as it had from 1847 to 1896. Rather, from 1896 on, the movement was to be decidedly religious in character. And with the renunciation of polygamy in 1890, Mormon proselyting activities were allowed in the monogamous Montana community.²

Following the appointment of Phineus Tempest as the president of the Montana Mission, headquarters were established in the "wicked" city of Anaconda. For the entire state, the mission was run on a shoe-string and in a haphazard manner. Finances were negligible, the church owned no buildings, and it was forced to rent halls, schools and

²"Montana Mission Records ...."
other buildings large enough in which to hold religious meetings.\textsuperscript{6}

Tempest's first official act in his new capacity was to send Mormon missionaries to the "saints" in Lima to organize a branch of the church which was to be an integral part of the Montana Mission. Soon after the organization of the Lima branch, other proselyting activities were pushed. First and most natural was in the area immediately surrounding Anaconda, as evidenced by the visits of missionaries to Mill Creek, Deer Lodge and other little towns in close proximity. It was on these travels that Mormon missionaries first met with a number of the the members of the Mormon schismatic groups (Reorganized and Morrisite). These contacts were cordial, and the schismatics were eager to converse with the elders, although they themselves were not interested in converting to Utah-Mormonism. By 1898, proselyting activities had been carried as far north as Missoula and encompassed the whole area of southwestern Montana.\textsuperscript{7}

On October 25, 1897, Franklin S. Bramwell succeeded Tempest as president of the Montana Mission. During his presidency, Tempest had held to the view that those who rejected Mormonism were basically un-enlightened. As evidenced by his report in the Anaconda Standard of June 23, 1897 that "... some inquiries of our doctrines are being made by intelligent persons ...", he seemed to indicate that those who rejected the message were both unintelligent and damned. His successor,

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{7}Ibid.
Bramwell, also took this naive view. 8

Bramwell adeptly carried out his obligations as president of the mission. On October 26, 1897, he journeyed to Helena along with three of his elders, namely, John Henry Smith, George S. Young, and A.B. Millbys, and they were granted an interview with Governor John E. Rickards of Montana. Governor Rickards assured the president and the elders that they would have complete freedom in their labors. They also contacted the editors of the Helena Independent and the Daily Herald and were assured that the two papers would not hinder their missionary efforts. Up to this time, seven missionaries had labored in the Montana Mission since its inception.

The mission records of the period were complete and comprehensive. Two elders, Christian Jensen and David Francis, for example, walked sixty-five miles in one week contacting forty-six houses and had forty-one gospel conversations. If this account is accurate, these two individuals were more successful in their persuasive abilities than some of the other missionaries in the area. Because of the almost total lack of favorable response to the missionary activities in Helena and the surrounding area, it was decided not to "work the area" after October, 1897. 9

Indeed, the mission records during the year of 1897 are filled with accounts of hopes, successes, and frustrations. Helena was not receptive toward proselyting, nor was the community of Pony. But other

8 Anaconda Standard, June 23, 1897.
9 "Montana Mission Records ...."
areas, such as those near Gregson Hot Springs, extended a welcome to the missionaries; and on March 31, 1897 four new converts were baptized, three of whom were of different families. Anaconda was also hospitable toward the Mormon movement; and by April 4, 1897, a church meeting had seventy-five persons in attendance. Other locales such as Garrison and Dell were receptive, too, to the message of Mormonism. Nor was Butte excluded from proselyting; for that matter, on Sunday of December 4, 1897, three hundred persons were in attendance; and it was on that date that the Butte Branch was established.

Missionary activity continued into 1898, and by March 28, a missionary Arnold D. Miller, reported that "... Beaverhead, Silver Bow, Deer Lodge, and Missoula counties are yielding to our persistent attacks." But Miller could not report the same success for the remainder of Montana. Persistency is almost an understatement of Mormon missionaries and their efforts. Mormon children, the boys especially, are encouraged throughout their childhood to plan upon a mission for the church; and they serve zealously.

While the Montana Mission was in existence, a smelting works was built in Gaylord, with two Mormons from Salt Lake City overseeing the construction, and James Maxwell as foreman of the brick yard. In addition, twenty other Utah-Mormons were construction workers at the smelter. These laborers were not to become residents of Montana;
rather, like Mormons before them, they returned to Utah. As late as 1898, it is clear that the pattern persisted of Mormons traveling to Montana for economic gain and then returning to Utah. Still, not all of the Mormon laborers who came to Montana returned to Utah, as evidenced by those who remained in Butte and Anaconda. It was those who stayed as residents, together with the new Montana Mission converts, who served as the foundation on which Mormonism was to grow in the state.

In 1898, the Montana Mission was incorporated into the Northwestern States Mission (April 10, 1898) which was comprised of Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. The last president of the Montana Mission, Bramwell, served as president. Initially, the Northwestern States Mission headquarters was established in Anaconda, but it was soon moved to Portland, Oregon.¹²

The Montana Mission had only a brief existence. Montana did not warrant being a mission by itself, if Idaho, Washington, and Oregon were incorporated into a larger mission. But from 1896 to 1898, the church had grown from six members, with seventy-one persons being baptized into the faith in 1898 alone. The problems (animosity toward Mormonism caused by Mormon schismatics and by its own former doctrine of polygamy) faced by the founders of the Montana Mission had been met by the Mormon elders. They were equal to the task at hand and converted members from a once hostile community. Largely through their efforts, the Mormon movement into Montana was no longer one of transients and Jack-Mormons. And Mormon efforts were no longer impeded

¹²Ibid.
to the extent that the church's newly converted charges must return to Mecca (Utah).

The religious descendants of Joseph Smith during the late 1840's and early 1850's had seemed on the verge of moving into Montana. Converts to Mormonism had increased rapidly, and a gathering of the "saints" in the Great Basin would ultimately have led to the church's colonization of the whole West. But such had not been the case. Instead polygamy, the Federal government's fear of Brigham Young's autocracy, and the fear of the Utah territory's secession, had all brought to an end the dream of a huge saintly nation in the West. Federal troops had made sure of this. Montana had remained untouched by orthodox Mormonism.

True, Mormon traders, miners, and laborers had come to Montana. Some of them had stayed but most had returned to Utah. And those who had remained were no longer Mormons as defined by the church. At the same time and later, Mormon schismatics entered the state. By 1896, however, with the abandonment of polygamy by the Utah-Mormons, conditions were such that church authorities were willing to allow non-participating Mormons in Montana once again to become active communicants in the church.
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