

NO SMALL MIRACLE: THE MOVEMENT OF DOMESTIC ANIMALS ACROSS THE PLAINS

Audrey M. Godfrey

Before the Saints left Nauvoo, Brigham Young instructed them that to transport a family of five across the plains, they would need one good, strong wagon, two or three good yoke of oxen, two or more milk cows, one or more good beef, and three sheep. He further directed that ten extra teams would be needed for each company of one hundred families, and horse or mule teams could be used, as well as oxen.¹

But many more animals, besides the number needed to pull wagons and provide food and milk, were deemed a necessity by the pioneers. Silas Richards, in addition to the required number, took two Berkshire pigs. When Heber C. Kimball's company pulled out of Winter Quarters in 1848, besides oxen, horses, and cattle, there were also chickens, sheep, pigs, dogs, cats, bees, doves, and a squirrel. Peter O. Hansen's company included fowls, dogs, and a cat, and another company listed goats, geese, doves, and ducks.²

If we tally the number of animals in the whole camp of Israel's first and second companies, as recorded by Wilford Woodruff, there were 229 horses, 2,111 oxen, 1,168 cows, 49 mules, and 660 sheep, totaling 4,217 animals.³ A year later, the first three companies leaving Winter Quarters in June and July included 7,260 animals.⁴

What was it like to move this army of animals across half a continent? Where did they come from? How did the Saints train, feed, carry, or drive them? When a draft animal sickened or died, how was it replaced? What laws were instituted to control the animal population of a company? This article discusses these questions—focusing mostly on cattle, horses, and oxen—using journals, letters, declarations by Church leaders, and con-

temporary newspaper accounts.

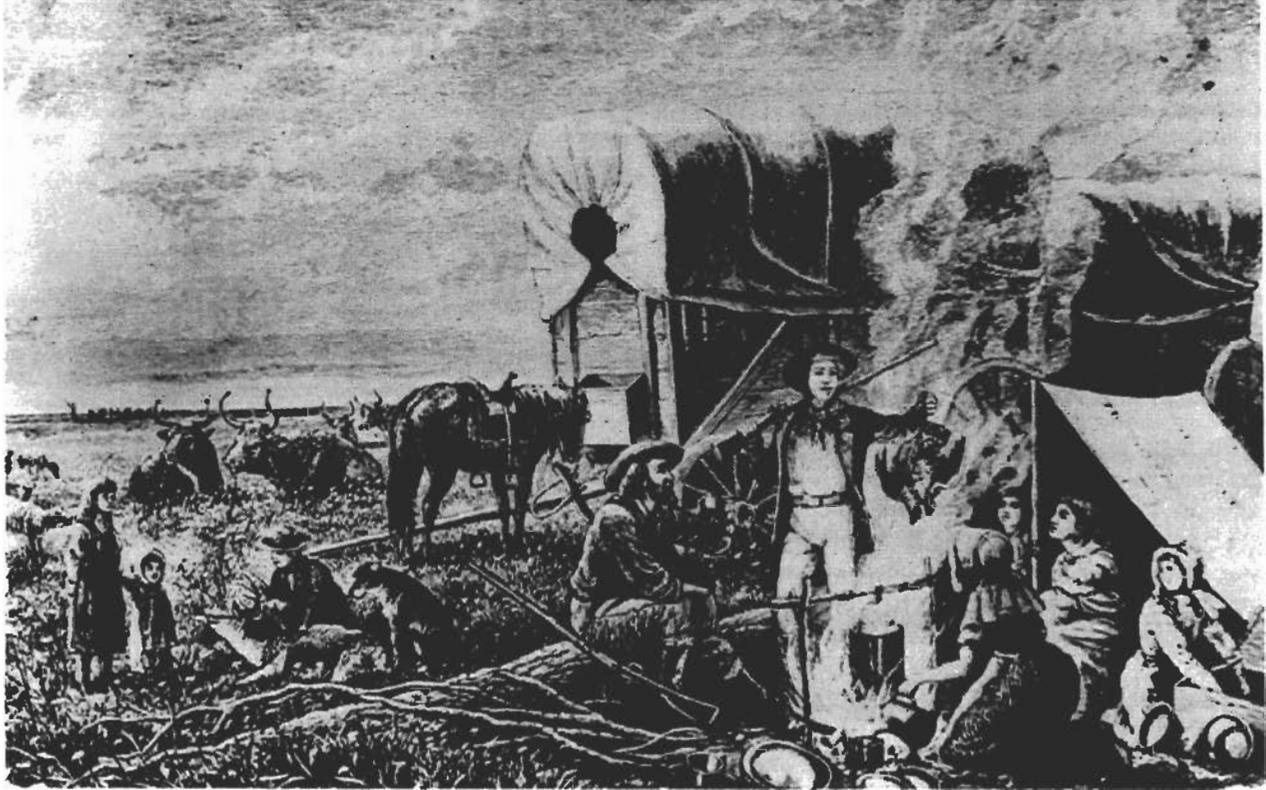
The Acquisition of Teams

Because of the difficulty in finding draft animals and also in gaining the means to procure them, the Saints used all sorts of combinations. Oxen, because of their strength and patience and their docility in treading through mud, quicksand, or desert, came to be the animals of choice. Upkeep was minimal, and they required no expensive harnesses, according to historian Stanley Kimball.⁵ But many started out with horse teams.

Though the Saints knew for some time that they would be leaving Nauvoo, right up until they left, some were still trying to obtain draft animals. In fact, acquiring draft animals continued to be a problem throughout the journey as first, they attempted to obtain ox teams instead of horses or mules and second, through sickness, accident, or other losses, replacements were needed. Thomas Ford's history of Illinois reports that people flocked to Nauvoo to purchase vacated houses. In return, they gave "money, wagons, horses, oxen, and cattle."⁶ William Critchlow traded household furniture for a mule "to mate a small horse." At Warsaw, he bought a pair of horse collars and some trace chains and leather, which he made into a harness. This equipment got him as far as Garden Grove where his son helped him obtain a yoke of yearling calves "that were to grow into oxen" to continue the journey. John B. McDonald traded the framework of a two-story house and all his valuable books for a yoke of "wild steers." And Albert Merrill sold his Nauvoo house for \$150 in cattle.⁷

Others gave up priceless possessions for their outfits. Lyman Hinman purchased his cattle "with our fine clothes, furniture and feather beds. We sold until we put

AUDREY M. GODFREY holds a Masters degree in History from Utah State University. She is on the board of editors for *Utah Historical Quarterly*. Her paper, "All Are Safely Across," was read at the BYU Sesquicentennial Symposium, August 1997. The above paper was read at the Mormon History Association Convention in Omaha, Nebraska, May 1997.



*Pioneer Trek West: Family Camp
courtesy LDS Church Archives*

our effects and family aboard one wagon.”⁸

Hugh Moon learned the copper trade and made soap, which he sold to get money for his outfit. His wife, Maria, had a yoke of small steers, a cow with a broken hip bone, and a heifer, all of which at least got them on the road west, while Philemon Merrill put his horses ahead of a yoke of oxen to pull his wagon.⁹

Job Smith’s uncle, George Bundy, traded construction of a “100-rod double ditch sod bank fence” for board while he worked and for a pair of three-year-old steers. Then, he bought an old wagon “without any iron,” which he brought into such good repair that it made the complete trip to Utah.¹⁰

Prices for animals varied. Joseph Stratton paid \$30 for a yoke of oxen in the spring of 1846, while David Sessions purchased his ox team for \$35 on the trail in

July. Wilford Woodruff paid \$50 each at Montrose, Iowa, for his yoke. Later, in 1862, a yoke of four-year-old oxen sold for \$50. John Brown, who served as emigration agent for a number of years “and who recruited and trained hundreds of oxen,” said that one day he made eight purchases of oxen and that the average price was \$62 per yoke for a five-and-a-half-year-old team. He said oxen were at their best between the ages of four and seven years and would serve well for about fourteen years.¹¹ The hardest year to obtain draft animals and find feed on the trail was 1852 when immigrants to Oregon, California, and Utah crowded the trails.

One incident that shows the ingenuity of some in finding needed livestock is that of William Holmes Walker. Before leaving Nauvoo, he had one horse die after a hard trip he made to aid the burned-out Saints in surrounding settlements. Thus, when he was ready to leave, he had only half a team. He succeeded in pur-

chasing a foundered horse (a lame horse), which was "the best he could do." When they crossed the frozen Mississippi, both horses caught cold, and his good horse died.

When he returned home, the prospects looked grim until he was able to dispose of some unneeded articles and get a small pony. Again, he commenced his journey. Reaching the Masonic Hall on Nauvoo's Main Street, he saw some horses tied to a fence and several men "holding a caucus." He asked about one of the horses, and the owner said he would be willing to trade with him. The only thing Walker could offer was a saddle and bridle. The man accepted but asked for an additional \$5.

Walker, not really knowing how he could get the money, said, "All right, it's a bargain. Go back [home] with me and you shall have it." Back in his neighborhood, he questioned several friends who were also making preparations to leave and luckily was able to get the money, thus again having a team. Later, along the trail, he traded his hard-won horses for oxen.¹²

After the exodus began, Church leaders recognized the propriety of taking ox teams in place of horses or mules, as did those who saw the latter struggle to pull the heavily loaded wagons. At Bonaparte, three days from Nauvoo, Erastus Snow's company took advantage of "incessant" rain to exchange horses for oxen and cows. Just as they started, one ox died, necessitating their purchase of another.¹³

Near the Fox River camp, William Huntington and Nathan Tanner made their own yokes and bows for their new teams. Orval Morgan Allen's company also stopped to make repairs and cow yokes and bows "in order to yoke up cows and strengthen" their teams.¹⁴

At the Nishnabotna River in 1848, Martha Coray tended ferry while her husband, Howard, got some unbroken steers and broke them. With the purchase of a wagon, another good yoke of oxen, and several cows, they moved on.¹⁵

A big, wandering bull became a stand-in for an ox with a sore neck in Peregrine Sessions' team. He found another the next day, but it was lame. Such loose animals with no apparent owner were fair game, unless someone came looking for them.¹⁶

The Training of Teams

Although some ox teams were trained to pull, many were not. And as the Saints added unbroken cattle to their teams, these also needed to be trained. These animals had to learn to go, stop, and turn. When John McDonald strengthened his team with wild steers, his first attempts at getting the animals to work together caused quite a stir. He remembered, "I don't blame the people for laughing at us as we started out; Father had a big rope on the nigh ox's horns, and my brother, William, one on the off ox, pulling for dear life, and I was driving my calves on the lead." Ruth May Fox agreed, saying, "no rodeo could match the scene."¹⁷

William Adams spent two weeks breaking cows to work, getting them used to being handled and yoked. A common way to train an ox team was for an individual to walk at the side of the wagon and, as a command was needed, to show himself quickly first to the off and then to the near steers until they learned to "haw" and "gee." Benjamin Cluff said that fortunately this sort of training did not continue very long, as the teams soon learned to follow the commands.¹⁸

Frederick Gardiner hitched the oxen to a log and forced them to draw it about until they learned to pull. Gardiner said he was very gentle with his animals with the result that they rewarded him by behaving well on the trail while other teams were wild and hard to manage.¹⁹

William Walker used a log chain, too, after his first method failed when one of his large bulls broke his bow. But he used the chain to secure the animal to a tree and then periodically offered the animal an ear of corn. At first, the ox would only look at him, but soon he "became convinced that I was disposed to be friendly with him." Next, he got an extra large yoke and bow and commenced driving his team gently until they learned to pull. Walker noted that he soon had one of the best teams in camp.²⁰

Teamsters

Sometimes, it was the drivers who needed training rather than the animals. George Whitaker signed on as a teamster for Parley P. Pratt, and Whitaker confidently said he could drive Pratt's spirited team of horses. Pratt gave the young Englishman some basic instruction and left to take care of other matters, warning him not to whip the horses. But Whitaker got tired of their slow-

ness and gave them a little flick of the whip. The first thing he knew, they were galloping along the road. Whitaker feared they were going to get away from him, but he held on and finally slowed them down. "This was one of my first lessons in driving a team. When I got to Brother Pratt's he asked me how I had got along. . . . I told him I thought I had done first-rate."²¹

Teaching a group of Danes to drive ox teams proved to be a challenge to John Lowe Butler. He said their inexperience resulted in their overworking the good oxen, as they whipped them to make them pull when the poor ones wouldn't. Lowe taught them they must stop or they would kill half their teams. "Whip the one who won't pull," he told them, and they finally learned to drive.²²

Isaiah Moses Coombs was assigned to take the body of one of the Saints who had died on the plains to his family in Salt Lake City in 1855 in the last Church wagon train from "Mormon Grove." He was given a yoke of young, half-broken cattle to pull the wagon. Erastus Snow helped him yoke the team and hitch them to the wagon and then drove a half mile with him. Coombs recalls:

I started July 28, 1855, an independent teamster bound for Utah. I went on gloriously for a time, but alas! the chain that connected my leaders with the tongue of the wagon broke. I managed to stop my team but in trying to toggle my chain together one of the oxen took a notion to kick up its heels and have a run, and as I was in the way I received one hoof in my stomach which sent me to the grass breathless.²³

When William Rigby learned to drive, his inexperience caused him to be diverted from the road; and he ended up with his wagon on its side in a ditch. His wife, a Sister Newton, and both their children didn't help matters as they began screaming—which almost paralyzed Rigby. Then, to top things off, a driver a short distance ahead came back and, seeing Rigby's predicament, yelled, "You d——d green, English cotton spinner, weaver, or whatever you are, come and help these folks out of this wagon!" His language stunned Rigby and further immobilized him. Finally, a kind leader came back, put his hand on Rigby's shoulder, and said, "Brother William, let's go and assist to unload the wagon." That aroused him from his stupor.²⁴

Women also learned to handle teams, and many were the principal drivers in their group. Patty Sessions drove her wagon all the way from Winter Quarters to Salt Lake City. Two girls were among the hired hands who drove mule teams for Don Nance, which paid for their passage to the first Church camp. Matilda Loveless and her sister, Mary Head, and their husbands drove wagons for a mercantile firm that paid them with the wagons and oxen at the end of their journey. Marthy Allen helped her brother, Andrew, drive his ox team. Rachel Simmons drove a horse and buggy one day to help out her family. She was glad to finally reach the night camp "because I was so completely tired out with the road and the frisky horse." But heroic Margaret Gardner drove a horse team all the way, "even over the big mountain," and had a baby a few days later.²⁵

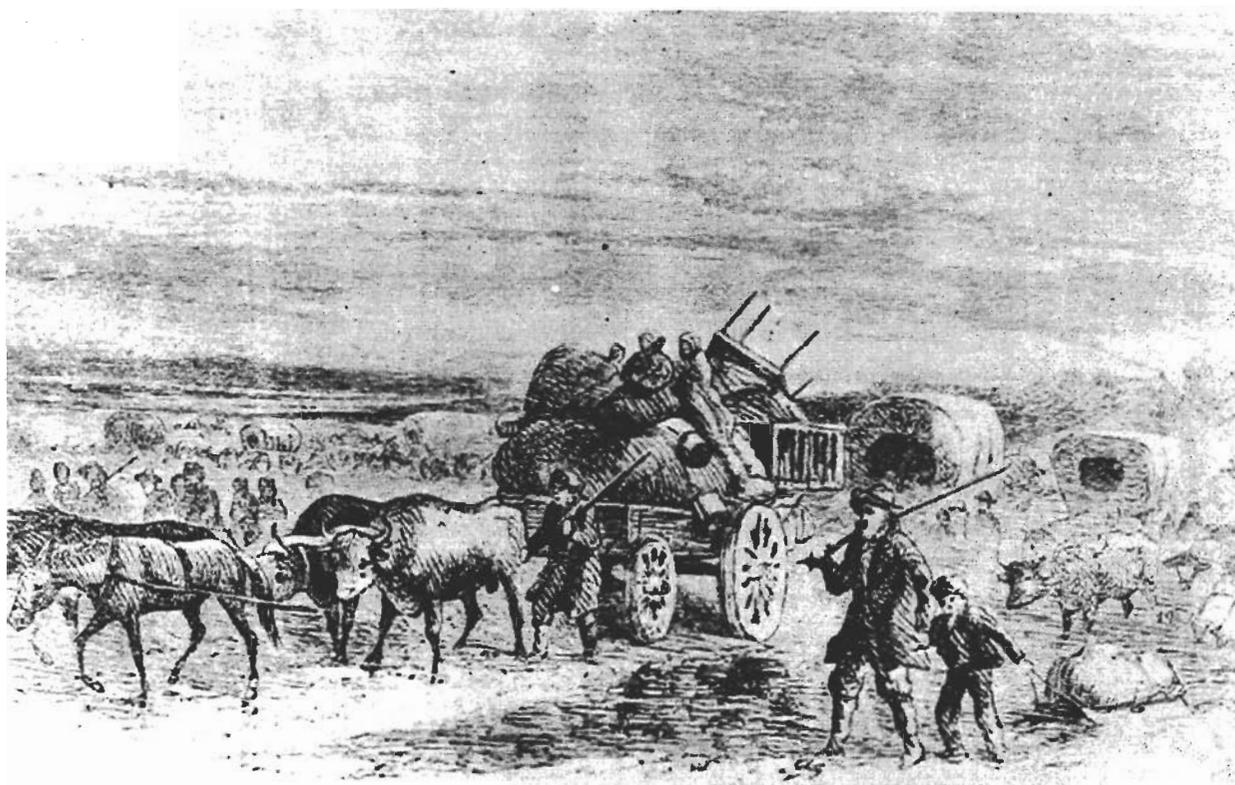
River Crossings

The first obstacle facing the fleeing Saints was crossing the Mississippi River. Nauvoo was situated on a bend of the river that flowed over "an irregular bed of blue limestone" at great velocity near the head of the Des Moines rapids. Church leaders had appointed a ferry-master and some horses to propel the ferry in 1840; and shortly before the exodus, Brigham Young instructed Hosea Stout to gather "several flatboats, some old lighters, and a number of skiffs" to carry the Saints across the river.²⁶

The use of the term "ferry" could refer to movement with the skiffs or rowboats propelled by an oarsman as directed by Young. Also, in Nauvoo High Council minutes, a "house boat [read horseboat, according to Donald L. Enders]" is mentioned, which was propelled with horses, "either through the use of a treadmill, a long rope attached to either end of the flatboat, or a pulley or turnstile, and a taut, stationary cable."²⁷

After Wilford Woodruff crossed, he wrote:

This was one of the hardest days work of my life. We commenced at about sun rise to take our cows over with a skiff. We took 5 or 6 cows at a time in the water tied there heads to the boat, And rowed them over the river until we had taken over 20 cows. We also took over some of our oxen in the same way. And we having to furnish our own men And not having men enough [made it] it vary laborious upon us all. So I took one of the cars myself And



Crossing the Plains
courtesy of LDS Church Archives

assisted in ferrying in the Hot sun until I was nearly melted. . . . The ferry man tore open the belly of one of my best oxen which had to be sowed up and doctored. And when I got through my days work I felt hardly able to stand up.²⁸

The crossing to Iowa took many hours during the first days of exodus. Wagons waited in line on Parley Street for hours for their turn.

The Mississippi crossing certainly was dangerous. In one instance, a man spit tobacco juice into the eyes of an ox tied to Thomas Grover's wagon on the ferry. The ox plunged into the river, dragging another ox with it. As the second animal went overboard, it kicked off one of the bottom planks, which caused water to flow into the "flatboat." The boat almost reached the shore before it sank and the men were forced into the water. Several of the brethren were picked up in an exhausted condition.

The oxen drowned and some belongings were lost.²⁹

Ice on the river was breaking up when George Washington Bean crossed. He observed a white horse frantically trying to stand on its "ice boat" until, as it neared some men on shore, they called to it and a roper pulled it onto the bank.³⁰

As one oxen-pulled wagon neared the Platte River, the thirsty animals broke and ran for the water. The cows and one yoke of oxen dropped off the twenty-foot embankment and hung from the tongue while the remaining team held the wagon back from following. The driver cut the two teams from the wagon and finally guided the loose oxen to a low bank where they could get out. They were again hitched to the wagon, and the journey resumed.³¹

Also, at the Platte River and at the Green River,

Moses and Nancy Tracy held on to the ox bows to guide their teams to the other side.³² At the Loup Fork, cooperation resulted in a successful navigation as horsemen staked out a crossing and cut down the bank on the other side so the wagons could more easily exit the stream. Then, after hitching extra teams to each wagon, the driver, "with a whoop," cracked his whip and plunged into the water, driving the teams diagonally across to the exit point below.³³

"One time a company . . . was held up at the Platte River by a herd of buffalo crossing," remembered Joseph Cluff. Thinking it would not take long, they stood in their places until noon and finally unyoked their animals and let them graze some distance away from the buffalo. It was near sundown when the last of the buffalo crossed, so they had to wait until the next day to make their own crossing. At the Missouri, a large flatboat carried the wagons across with the oxen fastened to the downstream side of the boat.³⁴

Herd Boys

Often, young herd boys helped at river crossings by using their agility and athletic prowess to prod the herd through the water. Early in the morning, a boatload of cattle would be taken across and held on the opposite side of the river. Then, the herd, sometimes numbering a thousand, was driven upstream and forced into the water. At this point, the boys would climb onto the backs of the oxen, at times slapping the animals on the sides of their faces to guide them into the current. Soon, a string of animals stretched from one bank to the other. It was a lively and exciting time that called for courage and physical endurance by these young boys.³⁵

Among those who herded cattle were Joseph F. Smith, son of Mary and Hyrum Smith, Alden and Thomas Burdick, and Isaac Blocksome. William Wamsley received twenty-five cents a day for driving loose cattle. A Father Bosley volunteered to superintend the herd boys in one company. Nine-year-old Samuel Newton Henderson walked most of the way to Utah driving cattle. His bare feet got full of prickly pears, which took until the next summer to work out, with some coming out through the tops of his feet. Two young herders, Alta and Isaac Hancock, also recalled sore, bleeding feet from the rough trails and prickly pears. Margaret McNiel herded the family's one Jersey cow. Each day, she got up early, made breakfast for the family, milked

the cow, and then drove it all day. Being alone much of the time, she had to fend for herself. The cow had a long tail, and when Margaret crossed rivers, she wound the tail around her hand and swam across with the cow.³⁶

Life on the Trail

Life on the trail began each morning with a bugler's call to arise. The Saints then had prayer and breakfast, repacked the wagons, and hitched up the teams. Then, the wagons moved out, the loose stock having left much earlier. Various configurations were tried, such as driving six wagons abreast to shorten the length of a six-hundred-wagon train. But disagreeable dust forced them to drop to just four abreast. Also, when the wagons came into buffalo country, it was thought that traveling three or four abreast would be safer and would keep the buffalo from dividing the train.³⁷

Wilford Woodruff stopped on a hilltop on the prairie where he could see "East west North & South" and beheld "the Saints pouring out & gathering like clouds from the Hills & dales grove & prairie with there teams, waggons, flocks, & Heard's by Hunderds & thousands as it were until it looked like the movements of A great Nation."³⁸

All day they plodded along, stopping for a midday break and then moving on until day's end or until a good camp with feed and water was found. After making a corral, they drove the cows together behind the company and milked them. Then, they pounded stakes into the ground to tie some of the cattle to while herders and guards were assigned to watch the animals outside the circled wagons.³⁹ After the cattle finished eating, they were brought within the circle. A guard was placed both in the corral and out, and when all was quiet, the travelers could hear the men call out, "Twelve o'clock in the corral and all is well." These guards were relieved every three hours. During the night, the oxen lowed, sheep bleated, horses neighed, wolves howled, and dogs barked.⁴⁰

In 1855, Franklin D. Richards wrote an editorial promoting handcart travel and recalled the routine of those who traveled by wagon:

It is only to those who have traveled the plains with ox-teams, that the advantages of doing without them will appear in all their force. They alone can realize

what it is to get up on a sultry morning, spend an hour or two in driving up and yoking unruly cattle; and while waiting impatiently to start on the dusty, wearisome road in order to accomplish the day in due time, hear the word passed around that some brother has an ox missing; then another hour, or perhaps half a day, is wasted and finally, when ready to start, the pleasantest time for travelling is past."⁴¹

Trail Problems

Richards' excerpt reveals common problems of life on the trail—perverse animals, missing livestock, and dusty roads with sparse feed. Dependent on their teams to move across the prairies, the travelers could do nothing except take the time to deal with these trials.

Orval Allen, traveling in October 1846, bemoaned the difficulty of keeping track of their loose stock and ox teams. Joseph Fielding reported that much of the early part of the journey was through woods and thick underbrush on each side of the trail, making it difficult to drive the cattle. "Some of the brethren lost a good many on the way, but with great care we did not lose . . . but a young calf or two." In Allen's journal, during a one-week period, he noted such problems as negligent drivers who let the livestock wander, cattle hunts with few men turning out to help, early-morning hunts for lost stock, and backtracking to try once more to find the animals.⁴²

In March 1846, Patty Sessions lost a cow and an ox; but the company pushed on, and later she was happy to find the animals six miles ahead at a pioneer camp. After stopping to milk them, she went on another nine miles. On another day, a slowdown occurred when her cow calved. They stopped this time for over an hour and then put the calf in the wagon and moved on.⁴³

While unyoking an ox, one young man was injured when the animal turned and kicked him. The perversity that occasionally flared up also caught Frederick Gardiner by surprise. Gardiner had a worn-out ox he had tied to the back of the wagon. But it "was not inclined to travel further and kept pulling back." Gardiner stepped to the back of the wagon to drive it up when it suddenly turned on him, taking him by surprise. "He caught me by the left horn and tore every button from the front of my pantaloons, two inches more would have taken my intestines." The captain of the company, not inclined to be bothered by such an animal, turned it loose "to live or

die as he might." One writer said that hitching even well-broken cattle could be "casual or hellish."⁴⁴

Close to the valley, a slat was torn off the chicken coop attached to Louisa Barnes Pratt's wagon while she drove through some willows, and the only surviving hen was lost. When the loss was discovered, her children "could scarcely be restrained from going back on foot to recover the lost treasure. Such an extraordinary hen, that knew the wagon where she belonged and laid all her eggs in it and had travelled a thousand miles."⁴⁵

Availability of Feed

The lack of feed caused by the season of travel, competition for feed among the animals of wagon trains traveling along the same trail, and buffalo in the area resulted in a weakening of the draft animals, which impacted progress at times. The first group out of Nauvoo was traveling in the season termed "between hay and grass"; and, unable to carry much animal food except some corn, they relied on browse to feed their animals. One group bought wheat and additional oxen to assist their weakened teams. Another solved the problem by sending their animals a mile from their camp at night with a guard to graze. Because the animals were so weak, the tired men had to unhitch them and pull the wagons into camp themselves, "singing all the way" to bolster their strength.⁴⁶

The emigrants learned to take advantage of areas of good feed and sometimes made camp early or stopped after a few miles to "bait" the stock when feed presented itself. At the Chariton, the Elkhorn, and the Platte Rivers, the men cut down cottonwood trees for the cows and cattle to browse on when their corn was gone. Brigham Young and Willard Richards used their knives to cut grass for their horses near the Elkhorn.⁴⁷

Toward the end of the journey, "campsites were few and bad: if there was good water, there was no wood or grass; if there was grass, there was bad water, or none."⁴⁸ Near the Black Hills, Nancy Tracy paid tribute to their two cows who had given milk all the way and worked in the yoke besides. Now, they were failing badly, and her husband, Moses, decided to stop and allow them to recuperate. Archibald Gardner's horses gave out before he reached Laramie. He decided to feed them what corn he had left and, in doing so, got them to go on.⁴⁹ Another group reported that cold weather had killed the grass,

their corn supply had diminished, and one of their animals had become lame in its shoulder—disabling it so much that it was harder on the cattle and the other horse to pull the wagons.⁵⁰

Under these conditions, it became necessary to double and triple teams at times to surmount steep inclines or sandy soil. Hosea Stout said that on such a place, his cattle came near fainting, stopped on the steepest places, and panted as if each breath were their last; but by much whipping and a great deal of abuse to them, he got them to the top and also down. No accident happened, but the cattle were entirely given out. “I took off the yokes and turned them out.”⁵¹

Accidents

Though no accident occurred to Stout’s group, mishaps were very common on the trail. On a similar occasion mentioned by Stout, one pair of cows “ran up a steep hill, fell backward and broke their necks,” making one pair less to pull and to milk. Albert Merrill’s horse “Bill,” which pulled a light wagon, fell into a ravine and died.⁵² At another place:

While crossing a creek a mare began to sink in the mire and commenced flouncing; threw her self with her back down hill and come very near getting her head into the creek, but by the help of John Campbell and myself we succeeded in keeping her out while the rest got the harness off her, and as good luck was on our side she was not hurt nor the buggy broke.⁵³

A similar occasion turned into tragedy for Phineas Young’s horse. The animal was tied with a chain near a steep hole in a ravine. The horse either stepped back or lay down and rolled over into the hole. The chain being short, the horse was choked to death, having no power to extricate itself.⁵⁴

Wilford Woodruff, known for his many near-death experiences, was also unlucky with his animals. On 17 May 1846, he recorded “one of the worst days of my life.” He started into Black Jack Grove to camp with twenty-five animals of various kinds. As soon as he started, the calves and cows ran in different directions. While he was trying to herd them together, the oxen broke the tongue out of his carriage, and he had to mend it. Then, forced to leave his wayward livestock, he had-

n’t gotten far when one of the drivers drove into a mud hole and the oxen mired down. They hooked up eight oxen to the wagon, trying to rescue the outfit, and broke four chains. So they began to dig the wagon out and finally got camped. The diary entry ends with, “I was vary weary at night.” A discouraged Woodruff also noted they had gone only four miles that day.⁵⁵

On 7 June, again his wagons “cut to the hub in turf trying to cross a ‘long swell [swail].’” Even with eight yoke of cattle, they couldn’t pull the wagons out. The wagons remained fast in the swamp all night with Wilford in the mud and water to his knees until 2 a.m. as he stayed with his cattle. At daylight, he finally rolled into a buffalo robe and got some sleep.⁵⁶

Perverse Animals

As mentioned, working with tired, fractious animals sometimes was dangerous. On one occasion, as a teamster attempted to help yoke the steers, one animal jumped and struck the end of the yoke against the side of the teamster’s head, which knocked him down and cut his head to the bone, pinning him under the struggling steer. Luckily, others were able to get the team yoked and the teamster’s head taken care of.⁵⁷

George Q. Cannon drove a young steer and heifer named Jack and Jill part of the way to Utah. Later, he said, “They were not tractable.” Once, they ran away and tipped the wagon over. Cannon, looking angrily at the guilty member of his team, “indulged in the only swearing . . . that he could remember ever using. Losing his temper completely, . . . he burst out with, ‘Blast your eyes, Jack.’”⁵⁸

Stephen Markham traded a mule to Indians for a pony near Chimney Rock and put the mule in harness. When crossing a soft place, the whiffletree unhitched and struck the pony’s heels. It took off toward the head teams of the company and ran twice through the line of wagons, causing other teams to spring from the road. The animals ran for some distance before they could be stopped, and the pony ran nearly a mile. After catching him, the travelers brought him back and hitched him up again “without any accident except a little injury to the harness.”⁵⁹

Louisa Barnes Pratt joked about one of her cows, saying she was told that it was not a Mormon because it



Wagon Train in Echo Canyon, Utah
courtesy LDS Church Archives

had none of the gathering spirit. It seemed to be determined to go back. The man she was talking to told her, "If she was mine I would never take her to Zion."⁶⁰

Sickness and Injury

Injury and sickness among the livestock resulted in some innovative doctoring. When one ox turned sick, they gave it salt and vinegar mixed with some salt pork, and it was better before night. When the cattle of another company ate saleratus lying on the ground at Scotts Bluff, they were treated with "new milk." However, two of them died. A rattlesnake bit a horse on the nose and caused the nose to swell badly. "We got some spirits of turpentine and bathed the wound, washed his face in salt and water and gave him some snakes master root boiled in milk." The next day, the horse died. However, the diarist thought it may have been the cure, rather than the bite, that caused death, as "the men had given it sufficient of the master root to kill four well horses."

Turpentine also figured in a snakebite remedy suggested by leaders whom John D. Lee mentions in his writings. They were instructed to mix it with tobacco, wash the bite area with the concoction, pray for the "recovery of the Beast," and "start her on." Another snakebite cure was quite effective. Charles Rich used a mixture of sweet oil and harts horn, which helped his horse recover.⁶¹

Drinking "mineral water" and bloody murrain killed several oxen in Peter O. Hansen's company. One senses Hansen's desperation as from 12 July to 26 July, he records the loss of one animal after another.⁶²

Other problems arose involving not only teams but also domestic animals traveling with the trains. Near the Iowa River crossing, Lorenzo Dow Young took his rifle out to shoot prairie chickens in abundance. Tiring of the exercise, he returned to his tent and threw down his gun,

which went off and shot one of William Walker's oxen in the forehead. Young reported it "did not inger [sic] him mutch."⁶³

On one occasion, a dog bit a woman at a camp, and the dog was sentenced to be shot. However, being a "good dog to keep off the Indians," it was given a reprieve. At another camp, an old pig was "in trouble" (in labor); and, to save the little pigs, the owner put them in a wagon to continue the journey. However, the roughness of the road caused their death anyway.⁶⁴

The Handling of Animals

Most of the Saints were concerned for their livestock, especially the draft animals and the horses the men rode, so the travelers tended the livestock carefully, hoping they would bring them through storms and sand and over the mountains. At the night camps, George Whitaker prayed for his cattle and horses "that they might be strong so that they might perform the work that they had to do, which was very hard." As Frederick Gardiner started the difficult descent to the Salt Lake Valley, he expressed his pleasure in his "good cattle" that safely took the wagons down the steep mountain. "I have become very much attached to them, they will follow or come to me when I call them, as much as a dog would. I have been laughed at a number of times because I have petted them but I have realized the benefit of it."⁶⁵

Stampedes

There was little anyone could do once lightning, rushing buffalo, or some sudden occurrence in camp startled the animals into a stampede. One day, a flash of lightning struck nearby causing the oxen in a company to scatter. Four wagons were broken, some spokes knocked out, ferrules broken off the axle trees and tongues, and reaches smashed up. On another occasion, the herd of Jedediah M. Grant escaped from the corral at night and broke wagons, killed a cow, broke off several horns, and fractured one horse's leg. In addition, twenty of the cattle were lost. During another fierce storm, several hundred frightened oxen, cows, and steers raced away at a gallop into the darkness with men on horses in pursuit. The people left in camp could hear the bellowing of the animals and took to their wagons so that if the cattle turned, the people wouldn't be trampled. "The terrors of the stampede are not soon forgotten," the writer noted. When fleeing animals were found, many had died of

exhaustion, and the others were "a sorry lot."⁶⁶

Wilford Woodruff's horse, which he bought from the Sioux ran away

with a single-tree at his heels, which gave a tremendous fright to the cows, oxen and horses that were attached to the wagons, and in an instant a dozen or more wagons were darting by each other like lightning, and the horses and mules, as it were, flying over the ground. Some turned to the right and some to the left. . . . The horse and mule that Brother Fowler was driving leaped with all speed, with Brother Little holding the lines and Brother F. holding the bits. . . . They came within one inch of colliding with another wagon's wheels.⁶⁷

When one stampede began, Reddick Allred called to the men to stand by their teams. While teams ran in all directions, Allred stood by his team, talking kindly to them, and "they did not move." Even so, the stampede was "frightful to behold."⁶⁸

Church Way Stations

For those who stayed a time at the way stations at Winter Quarters, Mount Pisgah, and Garden Grove, livestock deemed not necessary were wintered a hundred miles away in river bottoms where they could eat the bushes or were wintered in other places where feed was available. Peder Hansen devised a way to keep track of which animals were his in the big herd. He tied silk threads to the tails of his oxen so he could identify them when they were rounded up.⁶⁹

At the camps, the men built V-shaped cribs so the pile of hay they had harvested automatically settled to the bottom, providing provender with little waste. Corrals were built, as were oxen-shoeing chutes, which had also been left at several points along the trail. These chutes were necessary because, unlike a horse, an ox could not stand on three legs to be shod. Thus, the chute, with an apparatus to lift the ox, was made to take care of periodic replacement of ox shoes.⁷⁰

Regulations were formulated for livestock held at the camps. Hosea Stout, police chief at Winter Quarters, had his hands full enforcing these rules. Sheep, bulls, pigs, and dogs ran at large at night. Indians stole livestock. Cattle strayed.

Strays were put into a stray pen, and owners could retrieve them only by paying a fine. For example, fourteen head of H. H. Blazzard's cattle were bailed out by his giving a cow valued at \$5 to Stout.⁷¹

In the spring, wagon trains formed again. Oxen were purchased if needed to continue the journey. The stock was rested and, with all they had learned, the emigrants found this last lap of the journey was covered more quickly. A new type of night camp was tried by one company. Loose livestock were driven into a deep hollow where there was no water, forming a natural enclosure in which the animals could feed.⁷²

When the second company left that year, it brought 358 sheep with it. Among the owners of these animals was Sally Murdock. Her son recalled her dedication to her flock. "No matter how early I awakened on the plains I found that Mother had taken her sheep to water and was letting them graze. She kept her knitting bag handy and knitted while they grazed, or when there was a delay of any kind."⁷³

On his last night out on the trail, John D. Lee reminisced about the journey, and the family gave thanks. He said they had been 125 days on the road and had traveled 1,031 miles, averaging a little less than eight miles per day. He summarized, "Four . . . oxen had died and one hive of bees had melted down, but . . . two horses were in fair condition, the nine chickens and the dog still alive. They had no sheep, but their herd of cows and loose cattle had made the journey."⁷⁴

The End of the Migration

Arrival in the valley did not mean an end of dependence upon the animals. Sarah M. Kimball sold her outfit for a comfortable little home, which she "always considered providential." Perrigrine Sessions took a herd of cattle north and started Sessions settlement. When Ray Lamborn was called to settle in Laketown near Bear Lake in the 1870s, he gave an old ox, which probably came across the plains with him in 1864, to local Native Americans, who were having a pow wow in the area, to pacify them. Joseph F. Smith continued his service "as a herd boy for several years, and never lost an animal," even though there were a great many large wolves in the valley. During the first rain of the fall, mice almost overran the houses, and a cat was a luxury that was passed from house to house. Horses and oxen continued to pull

loads of wood and rock and to till the fields. Because of the scarcity of wool, dogs were shorn annually, and their hair was woven into cloth and used for clothing.⁷⁵

When called to colonize, families took with them their cattle, horses, and sheep to begin farms and settlements. Others used large herds of livestock they drove across the plains to start the cattle and sheep industries. For instance, Alexander Franklin Barron brought a thousand head of cattle, a herd of sheep, and a large number of fine horses and mules in 1853.⁷⁶ As the Church began its "out-and-back method" of bringing Saints to the valley, it drew heavily on the animals and wagons brought by earlier groups of emigrants.

It is difficult to estimate the actual numbers of animals involved in this great migration west. But it is easy to envision the importance of each of these animals. There could have been no journey from Nauvoo to the Great Basin without them. Upon arrival, the animals formed the basis of farm power, dairy herds, and industry—the means that made the Great Basin thrive and yield to the men and women who settled it.⁷⁷

Notes

1. *Nauvoo Neighbor*, 29 October 1845, quoted in *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 2:539-40.
2. Silas Richards, Autobiography, typescript, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University (hereafter cited as BYU), 2-3. Laree McCauley, "Biography of Mary Pugh," typescript, 4, found in *Nauvoo Narratives in Lands and Records Office, Nauvoo, Illinois*, compiled by BYU, hereafter referred to as *Narratives*. Peter O. Hansen, *Journal*, 24 May 1849, found in Anna Jean Duncan Backus, *The Klingensmith Scrapbook* (Provo: Brigham Young University Print Services, 1996), 103. Levi Edgar Young, *The Story of Utah* (Dansville, New York: F. A. Owen Publishing Company, 1913), 10.
3. Wilford Woodruff, *Journal*, 8 August 1846, found in LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, hereafter cited as CHL.
4. "Emigration in 1848," *Journal History Supplement*, microfilm, Special Collections, Utah State University, Logan, Utah. This paper does not follow any particular year but includes incidents commonly experienced through the years of migration.

5. See Stanley Kimball's introduction to *The Mormon Trek West: The Journey of American Exiles*, by Joseph E. Brown (New York: Doubleday, 1980), xi.
6. Thomas Ford, *A History of Illinois from Its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1968), 412.
7. Benjamin Chamberlin Critchlow, Autobiography, typescript, CHL, 3. John B. McDonald, Biography, typescript, CHL, 4. Albert Merrill, Autobiography, typescript, BYU, 4.
8. Lyman Hinman Letter to "Dear Brother and Sister Taylor," 27 June 1847, Narratives.
9. Hugh Moon, Autobiography, Narratives, 5. Philemon C. Merrill, Autobiography, typescript, CHL, 5.
10. Job Smith, Autobiography, typescript, CHL, 10. Autobiography and Biography of George Bundy, Narratives, 3.
11. Joseph Stratton, 1846 Diary, holograph, CHL. Patty Sessions, Diary, 7 vols., CHL, 1:20 July 1846. *Wilford Woodruff Journal, 1833-1898*, 7 vols., Scott G. Kenney, ed. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983), 3:47. "Pioneer Stories and Incidents, Oxen on the Plains," by President Amy Brown Lyman, *Relief Society Magazine*, August 1847, 34:526-27.
12. William Holmes Walker, "Incidents, Travels, and Life of Elder William Holmes Walker," typescript, BYU, 15-16.
13. Erastus Snow, "A Journal Sketch of the Life of Erastus Snow," 98, typescript, BYU.
14. William Huntington, Autobiography, typescript, BYU, 51. Orval Morgan Allen, Diary, holograph, CHL, 24 October 1846.
15. Howard Coray, Autobiography, typescript, BYU, 20.
16. Sessions, 1:20 August 1847.
17. McDonald, 4. "Ruth May Fox—104 Years," *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 25 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1964), 7:342.
18. William Adams, Autobiography, typescript, BYU, 16. "The Cluff Family Journal," Cluff Family Reunion Publication, n.d., 118.
19. Hugh Garner, ed., *A Mormon Rebel: The Life and Travels of Frederick Gardiner*, (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, 1993), 39.
20. Walker, 17.
21. George Whitaker, Autobiography, typescript, BYU, 11.
22. John Lowe Butler, Autobiography, Narratives, 41.
23. "From the Journal and Diary of Isaiah Moses Coombs," *Our Pioneer Heritage*, (1958), 1:341-42.
24. "Excerpts From the Diary of William F. Rigby," *Our Pioneer Heritage* (1961), 4:248.
25. Robert Crookston, Autobiography, typescript, CHL, 10. James Washington Loveless, Biography, photocopy of typescript, BYU, 2. Marthy Allen, Autobiography, Narratives, 3. Rachel Simmons, Journal, *Hearthrobs of the West*, 12 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1950), 11:161. Archibald Gardner, Autobiography, typescript, BYU, 20.
26. Donald L. Enders, "A Dam for Nauvoo: An Attempt to Industrialize the City," *Brigham Young University Studies* (Winter 1978): 18:246, fns 17 and 18. Elden J. Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846-1847* (Salt Lake City: Elden J. Watson, 1971), 30.
27. *Ibid.*, fn 18.
28. Woodruff Journal, Kenney, 63.
29. B. H. Roberts, ed., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1964), 7:582. Juanita Brooks, ed., *On the Mormon Frontier, the Diary of Hosea Stout*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 2:117.
30. George Washington Bean, Autobiography, Narratives, 25.
31. "Mrs. Metcalf—101 Years," *Our Pioneer Heritage* (1964), 7:352.
32. Not all rivers required ferrying for wagons and animals. Sometimes, wagons could be driven across, called "fording a river." In sloughs and muddy ravines, merely piling brush and willows to keep wheels from sinking allowed vehicles to be driven across.
33. Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy, Autobiography, Narratives, 40. Juanita Brooks, ed., *John Doyle Lee, Zealot, Pioneer Builder, Scapegoat* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1992), 131.
34. Cluff Journal, 154. Tracy, 40. Smith, 11.

35. Thomas L. Kane, "The Mormons," a lecture delivered to the Pennsylvania Historical Society on 26 March 1850, found in Appendix C, Albert L. Zobell, Jr., M.S., *Sentinel in the East: A Biography of Thomas L. Kane* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Company, 1965), 42-43.
36. Don C. Corbett, *Mary Fielding Smith, Daughter of Britain* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966), 218. "Elizabeth Walmsley Marshall," *Our Pioneer Heritage* (1960), 3:107. Orval Morgan Allen, Diary, holograph, CHL, 9 October 1846. Samuel Newton Henderson, Autobiography, typescript, CHL. "They Came Alone," *Our Pioneer Heritage* (1959), 2:335. "Autobiography of Margaret McNeil Ballard," a portion of which is found in Douglas O. Crookston, ed., *Henry Ballard, The Story of a Courageous Pioneer* (Published by Douglas O. Crookston, 1994), 220.
37. Whitaker, 36. Joseph Hyrum Moesser, Biography, typescript, CHL, 3.
38. Woodruff Journal, Kenney, 55.
39. The first time the Saints used a circular, or ring camp, was at the Nodaway River. As a point of interest, contemporary artist George Simons shows a ring camp in a drawing published in *The Frontier Sketchbook of N. P. Dodge*, found in the Council Bluffs Public Library Collection.
40. Whitaker, 37. Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering to Zion: The story of the Mormon Trail* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 203. Gardiner, 44. Ward Eaton Pack Autobiography, *A Bit of Pack History or Biography* (Provo: J. Grant Stevenson, 1969), 20. *Journal History* entry of 27 October 1849.
41. "Welsh Emigration," *Chronicles of Courage*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1995), 6:349.
42. Allen Diary, 13-19 October 1846. Josephine Burton Bagley, W. Lester Bagley, Rae Barlow Barker, & Howard Barker, eds., "Diary of Joseph Fielding," reproduced in type-written form, 142.
43. Sessions, 1:6 June, 12 June 1846.
44. Gardiner, 45. William G. Hartley, "The Great Florence Fitout of 1861," *Brigham Young University Studies* 24 (Summer 1984): 3:363
45. Louisa Barnes Pratt, Journal, CHL, 150.
46. Preston Nibley, *Exodus to Greatness*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1947), 138. Sessions, 1:10 March 1846. *William Clayton's Journal: A Daily Record of the Journey of the Original Company of "Mormon" Pioneers from Nauvoo, Illinois, to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake* (Salt Lake City: Clayton Family Association, 1921), 20.
47. Hansen, Backus, 107. Whitaker, 19. James Amasa Little, "The Biography of Lorenzo Dow Young," *Utah Historical Quarterly* (January 1946): 14: 85. Nibley, 356.
48. Stegner, 150.
49. Tracy, 40. Archibald Gardner, Autobiography, typescript, BYU, 20.
50. Bagley, et al., 143.
51. Stout, 182.
52. Albert Merrill, 4.
53. Lorenzo Dow Young, 14:137.
54. Clayton, 94.
55. Woodruff Journal, Kenney, 48.
56. *Ibid.*, 51.
57. Lorenzo Dow Young, 143.
58. Joseph J. Cannon, "George Q. Cannon," *The Instructor* (May 1944), 209.
59. Clayton, 184.
60. Louisa Barnes Pratt, 132.
61. Lorenzo Dow Young, 136-37. Sessions, 1:23 August 1847. Robert Glass Cleland and Juanita Brooks, *A Mormon Chronicle, The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1848-1876*. 2 vols. (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1955), 1:41. Clayton, 25. Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich, Journal, typescript, CHL, 47.
62. Hansen, Backus, 109-10.
63. Lorenzo Dow Young, 135.
64. Lucy Meserve Smith, Autobiography, typescript, CHL, 12. Simmons, 161.
65. Whitaker, 16. Gardiner, 53.
66. Butler, 41. Sessions, 1:20 July 1847. Ora H. Barlow, *The Israel Barlow Story and Mormon Mores* (Salt Lake City: Barlow Family Association, 1968), 253. Margaret Gay Judd Clawson, "Rambling Reminiscences of Margaret Gay Judd Clawson," *Relief Society Magazine* (May 1919), 6:326.

67. Nibley, 392.
68. Reddick Allred, Autobiography, found in *Treasures of Pioneer History* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers), 5:311.
69. Loren Horton, comments given at MHA 1997 Omaha conference.
70. In Maybelle Harmon Anderson, ed., *Appleton Milo Harmon Goes West*, (Berkeley: The Gillick Press, 1946), 36. Harmon reports building an ox frame and shoeing three oxen at the Platte River upper ferry in 1847.
71. Stout, 275.
72. Hansen, Backus, 108.
73. "The Sheep Industry in Early Utah," *Our Pioneer Heritage* (1966), 9:589.
74. Brooks, John Doyle Lee, 138.
75. "Representative Women of Deseret, Sarah M. Kimball," an autobiographical sketch published in the *Exponent*, 1884, reprinted in *Exponent II*, December 1975, 9. Barlow, 255. Oral Interview with Ray Lamborn, found in USU Special Collections, 3. Audrey M. Godfrey, "No Small Miracle," *The Ensign*, November 1971, 55.
76. "Pioneer Cattle," *Our Pioneer Heritage* (1966), 9:539.
77. Ibid.

Recipe for Elderberry Wine

Take 4 galln spring water & one peck Elderberrys clean pick'd from the stalks, boil them 'till they begin to dimple, then strain off the liquor & to every galln put 2½ Raw Sugar boil it one hour, let it cool in a tub. When cool or new milk warm put in a toast spread with yeast & let it work 3 days in the same tub stir[r]ing it 2 or 3 times a day then turn it into a Barrell that will just hold it, and to every galln a pound of Sun Raisins whole & let them Ly in the cask 'till you Bottle the wine. The above quantity will take 7 or 8 weeks. The larger the quantity the longer it must stand befor[e] Bottled.

Thomas Bullock Papers, "Correspondence"
LDS Church Archives