

Allen Taylor and Early Mormon Emigration

Stephen L. Prince

Caught up in the frenzy of the Gold Rush, great masses—more than thirty thousand across the plains and as many by sea to San Francisco—made their way to California in 1849 to seek riches in gold country. At least five thousand of these Forty-niners, as the gold seekers were called, made Kanesville, Iowa, the staging area for their journey west. The Mormon emigration, however, was small in 1849 in comparison to other years. Fewer than half as many Saints made preparations to cross the plains to the Salt Lake Valley as in 1848, despite the encouragement they were given by Ezra T. Benson and George A. Smith, the Apostles in charge at Pottawattamie:

To the oft repeated question, “shall I go to the [Salt Lake] Valley?” We answer, we advise every person to go, who is able to take with him the amount of provisions requisite, and means to purchase a supply for the remaining part of the year. . . . We believe that the blessing of Heaven will attend every man in leaving this place as soon as he is able; and that whoever delays after that time will be the loser by it.¹

Because of the diminished numbers willing to make the trek, only five official wagon companies were formed in 1849.² Four of the companies were captained by well-known leaders: Apostles George A. Smith and Ezra T. Benson; Orson Spencer, former president of the British Mission; and Silas Richards, a member of the Pottawattamie High Council.³ The fifth captain, Allen Taylor, though probably the least known, was uniquely prepared to lead the company that, with 445 people, was nearly twice as large as any other Mormon company to cross the plains that year.

Taylor’s leadership journey began in mid-1846 when his bid to volunteer

for the Mormon Battalion was denied because it was “deemed advisable for him to remain and help the Saints.”⁴ Four days before the departure of the Battalion, he was one of ninety men at Council Bluffs who were appointed as bishops to take charge of the families left behind by the soldiers.⁵ Two weeks later, on 8 August, the Pottawattamie High Council met to discuss the duties of bishops regarding the welfare of the poor. A committee of seven, including Allen Taylor, was appointed to check on the condition of the poor in the different camps in the Council Bluffs area.⁶

About three thousand Saints had left Nauvoo in the winter of 1846 and another ten thousand in the spring, but nearly a thousand Saints remained there, too poor or sick to leave. In early September, Orville Allen departed Winter Quarters with a relief company of about a dozen men to rescue the Saints in Nauvoo. Allen’s company was in transit when word arrived in camp that Nauvoo was in a state of siege and surrender, endangering the lives of those still in the city. Non-Mormons, becoming ever more restless while awaiting the complete evacuation of Nauvoo by the Saints, first carried out a series of raids on farms near Nauvoo and then attacked the city itself. Only about 150 able-bodied men were left to defend the city; and, after five days of fighting, the Saints were forced to surrender unconditionally, ending the “Battle of Nauvoo.”⁷

Refugee camps were scattered along the Mississippi riverbank in eastern Iowa near Montrose. Most of the exiles had little food and only blankets for shelter. In response to the grave situation, on 2 October 1846, the Pottawattamie High Council, under the leadership of its president, James Allred, met and decided to send more men and teams back to help gather the poor:

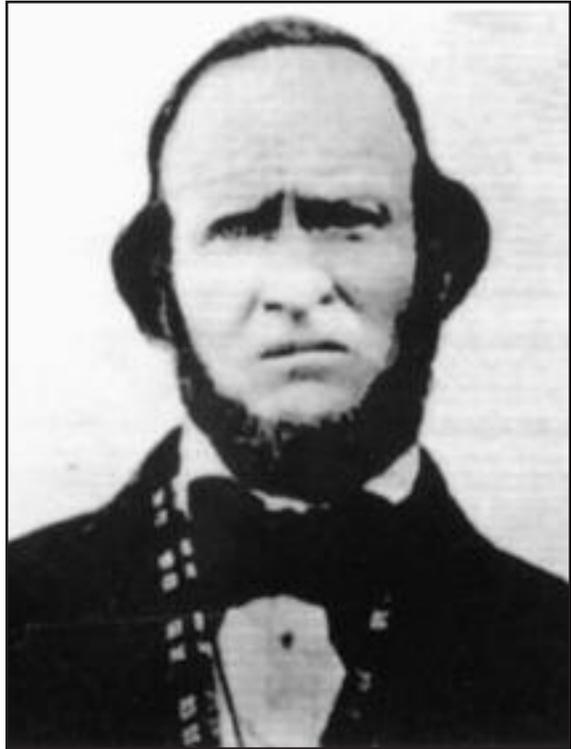
Voted that all men who go 1st this fall with teams to assist the poor, be instructed to meet at Keg Creek Bridge on Wednesday evening next in readiness to proceed on their journey. Voted that Jno. Murdock take the oversight of all teams and men who go from the East side of the Mo. River and appoint others as he shall deem best.⁸

Allen Taylor was appointed by John Murdock to assist Orville Allen in rescuing the Saints in eastern Iowa. The impoverished, hungry Saints Captain Allen found were in a poor state to travel, but on 9 October, flocks of exhausted quail flopped into the camp in such large numbers that “every man, woman and child had quails to eat for their dinner.”⁹ That same day, Joseph Heywood, John Fullmer, and Almon Babbitt—the three trustees appointed by Brigham Young to sell off Nauvoo properties and pay remaining obligations after the exodus from the city—brought shoes, clothing, molasses, pork, and salt to the camp—thus bringing assistance so the “poor”

Saints could begin their journey.

Allen Taylor and John Murdock arrived at Montrose by the end of October to round up the rest of the refugees. With each day, it became more evident why it had been “deemed advisable” that Taylor “remain to help the Saints” rather than go with the Mormon Battalion. In a remarkably short period of time, his company overtook the Orville Allen Company:

Sunday 15
November 1846—
Father Fisher called us
up before dawn of day,
and we heard Allen
Taylor’s Camp, who
was near us. We have
been 37 days [on the
road] and they 17, in
coming to this place
from the Mississippi,
being more than half
as quick again.¹⁰



Allen Taylor

Photo courtesy of Stephen L. Prince

Allen Taylor’s company undoubtedly was smaller than

Orville Allen’s, which would have been a factor in facilitating travel, but the short amount of time necessary to move his company was noteworthy nevertheless. Mindful of the possible danger of attack by their enemies, Taylor took steps to seal off the rear, which presented a problem when his company passed and traveled ahead of Orville Allen’s company:

Tuesday 17 November 1846—A muddy morning. . . . Brother Harmon’s cattle had been driven up for a start, but thro’ the negligence of the driver were allowed to stray away again which delayed us till 12 o’clock, when we had to go 3 miles round the ridge road (on account of the bridge on the shorter road being burnt up, supposed by Allen Taylor’s Company, who said they should encamp there and burn it).¹¹

Having shown his leadership qualities during the rescue mission, Taylor was chosen by Brigham Young to serve in the 1848 emigration in two capacities. The first was necessitated by economics, for though many desired to be part of the emigration of that year, few families by themselves had the necessary means to make the journey. At the April general conference, Joseph Young, Brigham's older brother, arose and said:

I feel that I want to make a few remarks on our emigration. I have had opportunity to know about the circumstances of the brethren in Winter Quarters; there is not one man out of ten there who have got provisions or teams enough for their journey. . . . I have said that if a good many would draw lots and put their teams, wagons, etc. together they could get off. Put your and mine together and one of us can go. Otherwise there is nobody in camp who can go.¹²

Brigham Young took to heart the suggestion of his brother and arranged the loan of sixty teams from the Pottawattamie Saints. Allen Taylor was given the responsibility of returning the teams:

No man need give a team to any other man and think I will be responsible for it. . . . Brethren, don't put teams out at random. When you send a team, send a good confidential driver who will take care of it and return it safe so that you shall not be deceived. . . . It is moved and seconded that Allen Taylor take charge of the teams coming back.¹³

Taylor also was assigned to lead a company of Saints to the Rocky Mountains before returning with the teams and wagons to Pottawattamie. Brigham Young was general superintendent of a company that was divided into three divisions, each with several companies, to avoid overcrowding at campsites and water holes. On 31 May, Lorenzo Snow, William Perkins, Zera Pulsipher, and Allen Taylor were chosen to be captains of hundreds for the third division. Taylor was put in charge of a much larger group than the other captains of a hundred, probably an indication of Brigham Young's trust in him. The designation "hundred" was used rather loosely, supposedly referring to the number of wagons in a company, though Taylor actually had 190 wagons and 597 people—twice as many as in Snow's company and nearly four times as many as in Perkins' and Pulsipher's companies.¹⁴

The companies started out in mid-June at one-day intervals, with Lorenzo Snow in the lead and Allen Taylor in the rear. Cattle were able to swim across the river, but wagons had to be ferried, which was a slow, painstaking process, even though the Elkhorn ferry was a substantial improvement over the conditions endured by the 1847 pioneers. A wagon could cross the river every five minutes, and thus it took several days for all the wagons of the Kimball and Young companies to be ferried across.



Mormon Trail

*Photo courtesy of Utah State Historical Society
Salt Lake City, Utah*

A wide variety of animals accompanied each of the groups. Taylor's company, for example, had 30 horses, 16 mules, 615 oxen, 316 cows, 63 loose cattle, 134 sheep, 66 pigs, 282 chickens, 19 cats, 31 dogs, 3 goats, 8 geese, 6 doves, and 1 crow.¹⁵ Snow's company also included two beehives. It is easy to imagine how difficult it would be to control such a menagerie, particularly at nighttime when the "wolves kicked up a regular rumpus during the night; as quick as they commenced howling the dogs barked, the cattle lowed, and men shouted to call their loose cattle together."¹⁶

The 1848 company, which was much larger than the 1847 pioneer company, was unwieldy and at first very slow moving. Brigham summoned his captains on the evening of 6 June and suggested they "perfect their organizing," forming smaller companies that would travel double file. It was decided that the wagons would be numbered and would move in order, though slower teams would start an hour earlier than the others.¹⁷ To help maintain order, Hosea Stout, who was traveling in Allen Taylor's company, was appointed captain of the guard.¹⁸

The organizational summit must be considered a success, for the very large company ultimately moved at almost the same speed as the much smaller pioneer company the year before. Brigham Young realized how important it was to train leaders for future seasons of emigration, and he proved to be the consummate leader and teacher. He was never above help-

ing to repair a broken wagon wheel, helping to set a broken leg, or traveling at the rear of the train, the most unpopular of all positions because of the dust created by the hundreds of wagon teams in front. After reaching Loup Fork, he braved the river's quick current and shifting quicksand and "crossed & recrossed back & fourth, untill he Saw all over safe."¹⁹

After the crossing, the camp moved down the river near a stand of trees and formed an oblong ellipse, as Brigham Young had learned to be practical in 1847 both to corral the livestock and to guard against attack from the Indians. Allen Taylor's hundred failed to make the proper formation, resulting in an order from President Young calling for "Taylor and [captain of fifty] Daniel Garn not to rest until every wagon was put into a correct line or corral with ours, showing it for a pattern."²⁰

In early August, Taylor's company arrived at the Sweetwater River, 764 miles from Winter Quarters. The grass at the Sweetwater was greener and more plentiful than had been encountered since the beginning of the journey, but several animals still died each day of starvation or water poisoning. In the midst of all the hardships, spirits were buoyed greatly when, on 17 August, an advance team from Salt Lake met the companies with "the joyful information that a large number of teams and waggons were on the way."²¹ With this welcome news, the sixty teams borrowed from the Pottawattamie Saints were unyoked in preparation for their return to Iowa, as Brigham Young reported: "I arrived at the last crossing of the Sweetwater on the 20th and tarried to return the borrowed teams and wagons. . . . Elder Kimball and I returned from this point, 48 men and boys, 59 wagons, 121 yokes of cattle, 44 mules and horses in charge of Allen Taylor to Winter Quarters."²²

An epistle from Presidents Young and Kimball to the Pottawattamie Saints, along with sixty-one letters and a list of returned wagons, cattle, and other animals, was given to Allen Taylor, whose return company was organized on 29 August and departed the next day. On 6 September, one mile below the upper ford of the Platte River, Taylor wrote to Young:

I am sorry that my report is rather unpleasant on account of losing cattle. . . . As we were encamping on Sweetwater under the gravelly bluffs it happened that some of our cattle strayed off. . . . I have had men out hunting for the lost cattle all the time till now, but all in vain; there is 9 head gone as yet. . . . Three oxen have died.²³

The news did not get any better for some who were awaiting their borrowed teams, as several men had died and ten of the wagons did not return. In a letter dated 20 October 1848, Orson Pratt wrote:

Conference voted to send an express to the mountains. . . . At the Horn, they met Captain Allen Taylor with fifty waggons and the return teams which went on in the spring company; they left President Young on the Sweetwater at the Upper Crossing. Four deaths had occurred on the road. About twenty cases of mountain fever had occurred, but all recovered, or were recovering. A number of oxen had died of poison.²⁴

Despite the loss of human and animal life, Taylor had done an admirable job under very difficult conditions in bringing the teams back to Pottawattamie. By virtue of his experience in the rescue of the “poor Saints” at Nauvoo, his appointment as a captain of a hundred in the Brigham Young group and as the leader of the contingent that returned the borrowed wagons and teams to Pottawattamie, he was uniquely qualified for heading one of the 1849 companies. After his selection by George A. Smith, Taylor’s company quickly organized and crossed the Missouri where company members confirmed the appointment of Allen Taylor as “Captain of Hundred” and elected Reddick Allred and Enoch Reese captains of fifty. In addition, Andrew Perkins was elected president of the camp, with Taylor’s father-in-law, Isaac Allred, and Absalom Perkins as his counselors and David Moore as clerk.²⁵ With the completion of the organization, according to William Blood, “All things were prepared for the journey, but we remained in camp on July 4 and respected the day of the independence of our nation.”²⁶

As the sun rose the following morning, Reddick Allred’s fifty began the journey toward the Salt Lake Valley. As was usually the case, “fifty” was just an approximation of the number of wagons in the group rather than an actual sum, for Allred’s company actually consisted of 72 wagons and 246 persons, along with the typical assortment of animals, including turkeys, ducks, geese, and pigs that had been advised by the *Frontier Guardian*. Enoch Reese’s fifty, including 65 wagons and 199 persons, was still organizing and did not depart until the next day.²⁷

The first challenge came almost immediately. The rain-swollen Elkhorn River was a hundred feet wide and swift enough to tear the ferrying raft from its guiding rope. Fortunately, Christopher Merkley, a member of Enoch Reese’s group, was experienced in such matters and was chosen by Captain Taylor to take charge of the ferry.²⁸ A site was chosen upstream, and a new ferry was constructed. After a delay of three days, the first fifty crossed the river and was joined the next day by the sixty-five wagons of the second fifty.²⁹

While the Taylor company was crossing the Elkhorn, the final three Mormon companies heading west that season under Silas Richards, Ezra T. Benson, and George A. Smith were preparing to depart from Winter

Quarters. Together, the four companies totaled more than a thousand. However, in stark contrast to 1848, they were not alone on the north side of the Platte. “The amount of emigration is immense, beyond all estimate,” reported the *Millennial Star*. “It is predicted there will be extreme distress and privation among the emigrating caravans.”³⁰ With this in mind, Allen Taylor saw the importance of communicating with the trailing Mormon companies. To accomplish this, he oversaw the task of boring a hole in a good-sized pole into which letters were inserted. The pole then was set into the ground creating a “post” office, as it was good-naturedly called.³¹



Mormon Trail

*Photo courtesy of Utah State Historical Society
Salt Lake City, Utah*

The post office proved to be an effective front-to-back line of communication for the Mormon companies, although in the first days after crossing the Elkhorn, the travelers had little news worthy of communicating. June rains had given way to July heat, bringing with it a plentitude of mosquitoes but also great beauty to the prairie. “The plains here . . . are covered with rich, luxuriant pastures and beautiful flowers of different odors, colors and variegated hues,” wrote William Appleby, clerk of the G. A. Smith Company that was traveling several days behind Taylor.³²

The beauty of the plains and the excitement of the trip, however, could barely mask the monotony encountered by the pioneers. “In traveling as we did, one day was very like another,” wrote Margaret Judd.³³ Each day was

spent on the trail, going as far as was reasonable; at night the men took care of the cattle while the women prepared the food. To break the tedium, at the end of the day, the travelers made a bonfire while the young folks sang, told stories, played, danced, and made their "own amusements," as Mary Jane Lyttle recalled: "Lovers strayed in the moonlight not too far from camp and I suppose repeated the old old but ever new story."³⁴

Through the first ten days of the journey, the closest thing to a noteworthy event for the entire company was when Allen Taylor was called upon to settle a complaint of some who were tired of traveling each day in the rear. There was no mention, perhaps not even a thought, of the "elephant," a very popular expression among the overlanders alluding to the perils and hardships they had to survive to reach their destination. But then, during the night of 16 July, there was a stampede in Enoch Reese's fifty. The following night there was another stampede, worse than the first but merely a prelude to what was to come:

July 18th—In the morning, after the cattle were all yoked, and most of them chained together, we had another stampede, which was truly awful to behold; cattle rushed from the coral, chained together, from 2 to 3, 4 and 5 yoke, and were literally piled up in heaps . . . two men badly and two slightly hurt. Through the course of the day, we had some six or eight stampedes, and it was with extreme difficulty that we got them quieted. . . . [D]uring this operation I think I saw some of the tracks of the "big elephant."³⁵

Three men were injured in the stampedes, one of whom nearly broke his back.³⁶ "He was a gold digger going to California who had overtaken us and was traveling with our company for a while," Margaret Judd later reminisced.³⁷ From that time forth, there was no doubt that stampedes were the "elephant" of the Allen Taylor Company. To prevent further mayhem, the company began traveling in separate tens, even in Indian country, reasoning "that it was more dangerous traveling among stampedes than among Indians."³⁸

The company reunited to cross the Loup Fork, which, with its soft banks, quicksand, and shifting sandy bottom, always presented a problem, especially in the driving rain encountered on 21 July. A frustrated Taylor again appointed Christopher Merkley to find a ford in the river.³⁹ Merkley, though sick from exposure to the raw conditions, succeeded, and the difficult crossing was made; but already it was evident that the most dreaded and memorable events of the journey would be those that led James Parshall Terry to exclaim, "This was a summer of stampedes."⁴⁰

Terry, who had gone to the Salt Lake Valley and back to Iowa in 1848, was writing with the authority of experience. In that year, he wrote that at

night the wagons circled and each head of cattle was tied outside, while in 1849, in the Enoch Reese fifty, at dark all horses and cattle were placed inside the enclosed wagons.⁴¹ And that, according to Reddick Allred, was the source of the early nighttime stampedes:

Captain Taylor, having crossed the plains the year before as captain of Prest. Young's company, was of great service. He advised us to tie our stock by the head outside of the wagons as they were corralled at night, which I strictly observed, but Capt. Reese did not, with the result that he had not been out a week until his cattle stampeded in the night smashing down wagons to get out.⁴²

Cattle also stampeded in the daytime—and not only in Allen Taylor's Company. Early in the morning of 26 July, cattle belonging to a group called the California Enterprise Company stampeded in a severe hailstorm, stranding the group. Unbeknown to them, on 27 July, near the Wood River, the Taylor Company found fifty-one head of oxen and steers. Two days later, near Fort Kearny, they retrieved another fifty.⁴³ The California company searched in vain for more than a week; however, fourteen days after the stampede, the Taylor company reached the stranded travelers and returned all the lost livestock.⁴⁴

It was difficult to comprehend just how far and how fast the stampeding cattle had traveled. "They went about 130 miles in 48 hours, which appeared to me almost incredible," wrote Riley Senter, a member of the California company.⁴⁵ Others estimated, probably correctly, that they actually had gone the distance in just thirty-six hours.⁴⁶ Regardless, the members of the California company were grateful for the return of the cattle and sent to the Mormons a copy of resolutions they had made:

Resolved, That we return our united thanks to Capt. Allen Taylor, the other officers and members of the train of Latter-day Saints for their kindness and gentlemanly conduct in stopping and procuring for us our teams which broke from our carrel on the morning of the 25th of July, a part of which were discovered on Wood river, some 130 miles from where they left our camp. Also, their vigilant exertions in rescuing a number from the hands of some individuals near Fort Childs, who were determined to detain them, in which, had they succeeded, we would have suffered great inconvenience, since our teams are our main dependence here.⁴⁷

By the time the stray cattle were returned, the Taylor company had entered buffalo country. "All along up the Platte River for two or three hundred miles we saw thousands of buffalo every day," wrote William Blood. "They were so numerous they could not be counted. Large herds were scattered all over the prairie as far as the eye could see. . . . I saw more buffalo that summer than I have ever seen of tame cattle in my life."⁴⁸

The pioneers did more than just look at the strange creatures. Each family or individual had brought the prescribed provisions; but, as food supplies began to run out, hunters were appointed to kill buffalo. "All thought buffalo meat better than any other kind they had ever eaten," noted Riley Senter, though enthusiasm waned with a steady diet of the meat.⁴⁹ Richard Warburton wrote, "After swallowing buffalo beef for a few days it affected us all very badly; a big dose of salts was not in with it. I don't wish any one particular harm, but when I see some of our swell dandies now a days, I often wish they could have a few good meals of the old boiled buffalo. I tell you it would take the stiffening out of them."⁵⁰

On occasion, the buffalo would also stampede, which was a fearsome event—especially at night—creating "an awful sound of tramping and bellying" and causing the ground to shake and the wagons to tremble but, for the most part, inflicting no real damage.⁵¹ When the buffalo got too close, the cattle became agitated and "seemed to give our oxen a wild spirit," wrote William Blood.⁵²

On 15 August, one stampede resulted in the death of a company member.⁵³ Allred told Perkins to fall in the rear, which he learned "was bad policy for their stock remembering their fright started to run while moving."⁵⁴ Terry, driving some distance ahead, "heard a great noise" and looked back to find the whole wagon train in bedlam.⁵⁵ Perkins' cattle had been frightened by a horse and bolted, running toward the front of the train and drawing other teams into the stampede. Thomas Judd, caught amid the chaos, whipped his staid, old oxen to keep them going along, fearing that they might turn suddenly and cause the wagon in which his family was riding to capsizes.⁵⁶ "In a short time," Allred wrote, "teams were running in every direction, excepting a few at the head."⁵⁷

Parshall Terry, one of those at the head of the train, jumped out of his wagon and took the lead ox by the horn to keep the team quiet.⁵⁸ Reddick Allred stood by his team, "talking kindly and they did not move."⁵⁹ The stampeding cattle ran until they were exhausted, causing extensive damage. "It was frightful to behold," wrote Reddick, "especially when we gathered up the wounded."⁶⁰ In the stampede, several Saints were injured. Three were badly wounded, including Margaret Hawk, who died that night.⁶¹

In the aftermath of the chaos, on the morning of 18 August, Captain Taylor called a meeting of the company. The cause of the stampede was obvious to all; and Taylor, wanting to prevent further trouble, told Perkins "to take the lead for a few days until his spirited animals got cooled down."⁶²

The solution was simple and just, though there was without doubt more contention in the company at that meeting than at any other time during their journey west. "The Mormons quarreled like fiends, and I think

besmeared about three-fourths of an acre of ground,” observed nonmember Jesse Morgan from his Gentile vantage point, “but Perkins’ Ten went ahead.”⁶³ Having Perkins in the lead achieved its desired effect. “They had several stampedes after but they had the road before them and no one was hurt that I know of,” wrote Daniel Stillwell Thomas.⁶⁴

Soon they were within sight of Chimney Rock, a slender column rising nearly five hundred feet above the Platte River that, together with the bluffs leading to Scott’s Bluff, appeared to Morgan “more like the work of art than of nature.”⁶⁵ The landscape was unlike anything that most had ever experienced. It was a definite and welcome change from the monotonous and flat Platte valley, but it also marked the beginning of a higher, drier country that would put increasing strain on the livestock.

About thirty miles past Scott’s Bluff, almost exactly halfway between Kaneshville and the Salt Lake Valley, the Taylor company encountered the first Indians they had seen since beginning their journey. “They were Sioux and ostensibly very friendly,” wrote Jesse Morgan.⁶⁶ “They were all dressed alike in new buckskins, leggings and coats, feathers in their hair, and they carried bows and arrows,” William Blood described one large company of Sioux. “They seemed to be about six feet in height. They looked grand and noble as they marched past in single file.”⁶⁷ William Appleby concurred, writing, “They were the finest, noblest, best looking and neatly dressed Indians I ever saw.”⁶⁸

The Mormon company stopped for four hours to trade with the Sioux, “giving flour, meal, powder, lead and cloths, for buffalo robes and mocasins.”⁶⁹ The Indians traded commonly with overland emigrants and, to the surprise of many, were very shrewd. “The Indian is a financier of no mean ability and invariably comes out A1 in a bargain,” wrote Forty-niner Catherine Haun of her company’s experience in dealing with the Indians earlier that summer. “Though you may, for the time, congratulate yourself upon your own sagacity, you’ll be apt to realize a little later on that you were not quite equal to the shrewd redman—had got the ‘short end of the deal.’”⁷⁰

Following the brief encounter with the Sioux, the Saints were less than a day’s travel from Fort Laramie, a point at which trail conditions suddenly changed. From the Missouri River, the Oregon Trail followed the south bank of the Platte River while the Mormon Trail remained on the north side; but at Fort Laramie, the trails merged, bringing much greater competition for camping spots that had adequate feed for the livestock.

The climb along the Platte was steadily uphill along a relatively gentle grade, but Fort Laramie marked the end of the high plains and the beginning of a much more arduous grade through the Rocky Mountains. “From this place we began to see the destruction of both life and property,” noted Jesse

Morgan.⁷¹ Many pioneers overestimated the amount of cargo they could haul and were forced to jettison the excess as their oxen began to fatigue, creating a giant junkyard. Riley Senter wrote:

We here find great quantities of stuff thrown out by those going in the fore part of the season—old boxes, casks, trunks, beans, and clothing and various things. The thing in the greatest plenty is old iron in various shapes.

Everything that it was thought could be spared was left, caused generally by the strife to get thru as early as possible. We find a great many wagons that were left. Some sold for \$10 and even as low as \$2.50, while others who could get nothing offered burned them with the stuff on board.⁷²

In late August, the Allen Taylor Company came within view of the Rocky Mountains. The pioneers were astonished to see a mountain white with snow at that time of year. Though they were becoming exhausted from the rigors of the long journey, they were still more than a month away from reaching Zion; and it was no time to take it easy, particularly as they prepared to cross the mountains. “Here Captain Taylor pushed us hard,” recorded Jesse Morgan.⁷³

Allen Taylor was fully aware of the fine line he was walking in pushing the company and the livestock at this time. Even before reaching Fort Laramie, as Margaret Judd recalled, “The cattle were tired and footsore and the traveling was very hard so Father told us that morning we must all walk.”⁷⁴ Catherine Haun, crossing the region earlier in the summer, wrote: “The poor animals were never well fed and the road now was over rough, steep mountainous grades . . . [and] the wretched creatures sweltered under the hot rays of the midday sun as they trudged over miles of bleak plains with never a tree to shelter them.”⁷⁵

On 3 September, Taylor wrote in a letter to Brigham Young of the poor pastures and the weakened condition of the cattle and meekly called for help:

Many in our companies feel sanguine that they can go to the Valley without help, should they be so providential as to keep their cattle alive through the alkali regions. Many of us, however, would be glad of a little help and indeed will undoubtedly require it before we can climb the mountain heights. We expect, however, that Geo. A. [Smith] is heavy laden, having much Church property, etc., and will need the most help. . . . We do not expect to dictate to you what shall be for us, or what shall be for Geo. A. but we look to you for dictation, for counsel and for help.⁷⁶

In the two preceding emigration seasons, enough Saints had traveled from Kaneshville to the Salt Lake Valley and back that all were fully aware of the dreaded alkali region mentioned by Taylor. “One of the greatest curiosities are the alkali lakes,” wrote Riley Senter. “They are of quite frequent

occurrence and are dangerous to cattle, as many die on the way from drinking the water.”⁷⁷ James Parshall Terry concurred: “Between North Platte and Sweet Water I have seen cattle drop down in the yoke and be dead in a few minutes from drinking alkali water. I have seen the road strewn so thick with dead animals that in places a person could step from one to another.”⁷⁸

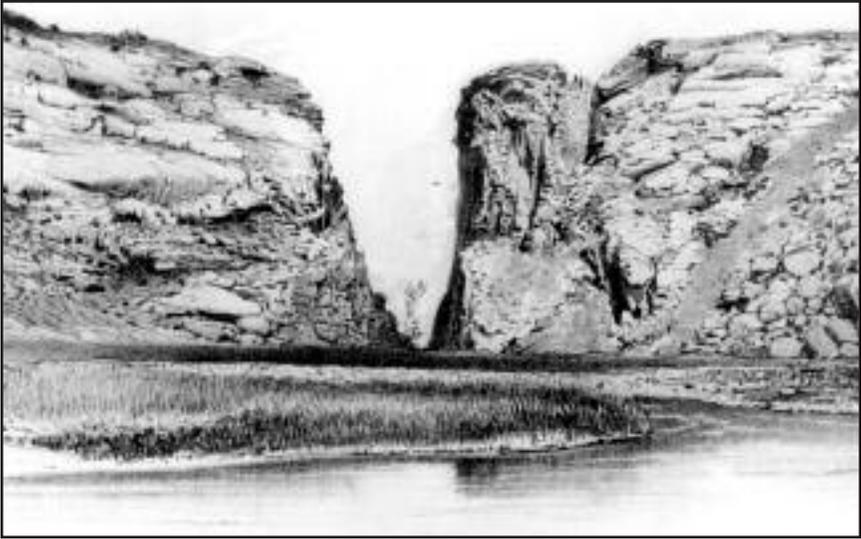
Each passing day brought with it the death of more cattle. Wolves, always plentiful and brazen, became increasingly troublesome as they preyed on the weakened livestock. To Jesse Morgan, travel in this area was “nothing but a continual scene of rocky mountains, sandy barren plains, destruction of cattle, wagons, and other property.” As a sort of exclamation point, Morgan added, “Here the Rattlesnake has taken up his abode.”⁷⁹

Taylor’s company clearly could have used relief, but the arrival of a group of twenty-one wagons and a large number of oxen from the Salt Lake Valley on 16 September was merely a teaser as they were bound for George A. Smith’s Company, which was in more need of assistance. Fortunately, travel became much easier as the company crossed the continental divide at South Pass. For eight hundred miles, the journey had been mostly uphill; now, at last, it was mostly level or downhill. Furthermore, the weather was splendid for travel. Though they were in the midst of the mountains on the first day of autumn, Jesse Morgan recorded that the weather was “so warm that we experienced no inconvenience in traveling in our shirt sleeves.”⁸⁰

The weather held until 1 October when the company reached Fort Bridger, but conditions deteriorated the next day. By daybreak on 3 October, there was snow already several inches deep and steadily falling.⁸¹ At South Pass, where the Richards, Benson, and Smith companies were camped, blizzard conditions lasted for about thirty hours and resulted in the deaths of sixty-two cattle.⁸² In the relative comfort of Fort Bridger, protected from the harsh elements, Allen Taylor’s wife, Sarah Lovisa, gave birth to a baby girl, Clarissa Elvira Taylor.

In such a large company—446 persons according to David Moore’s count—it is unlikely that Clarrissa Taylor was the only baby born during the journey; but to Allen Taylor, she was the most important, and a day or two of rest was justified before continuing onward.⁸³ Taylor had pushed his company hard, and they had made good time for a large company. By comparison, the Silas Richards company departed Winter Quarters just four days after the Taylor company but was still two weeks away from Fort Bridger. Upon entering the mountains, Taylor’s company “split up into smaller companies for convenience for food and camping,” thus facilitating further travel.⁸⁴ These fragmented groups were no longer under the constant direction of Captain Taylor.

It was just over a hundred miles from Fort Bridger to the Salt Lake



Devil's Gate

*Photo courtesy of Utah State Historical Society
Salt Lake City, Utah*

Valley, but this portion of the journey was anything but easy. By 1849, the trail was well established, yet travel over the last thirty-six miles in the narrow canyons leading to the Salt Lake Valley was complicated by the rugged terrain and the rocky creeks that had to be crossed frequently. Sixteen-year-old William Riley Judd was driving a team for a widow who “nearly drove [him] crazy with questions” as they neared the valley. “I told them that when we got to Emigration Canyon the wagon would tip over,” Judd recounted. “She told me if it did, she would tell Brigham Young. This was intended for a joke, but lo and behold, when we got to the canyon the wagon actually tipped over and broke the bows. . . . [I] failed to find out if she told Brigham Young.”⁸⁵

Daily, for nearly a week beginning on 12 October, portions of the widely scattered company reached Salt Lake. Allen Taylor, Reddick Allred, and members of the Taylor and Allred families arrived on 16 October. The journey was long and arduous, though the vast majority arrived safely. Whereas nearly two thousand people died while crossing the plains in 1849, that number included only two members of the Allen Taylor Company—Margaret Hawk and a young son of Joseph Egbert.⁸⁶ But the minimal loss of life in no way lessened the hardships suffered by the pioneers, as James A. Little summarized: “The difficulties that ordinary emigrants passed through in crossing this thousand miles of desert can never be understood except by

those who pass through them.”⁸⁷

One year after Allen Taylor arrived, his brothers Joseph and Pleasant Green were taken by an unexpected sight as they approached the Salt Lake Valley: “We came in by way of Parley’s Canyon,” wrote Pleasant Green, and “found my brother Allen collecting toll, this being a toll road, as he had been placed there for that purpose.”⁸⁸ The three Taylor brothers and their mother Elizabeth subsequently settled in Kaysville (called Kay’s Ward at the time). On 5 October 1850, when Davis County was organized, Allen Taylor became one of the first three functioning county officers.⁸⁹

In 1856, Allen Taylor was made the second bishop of Kaysville Ward, succeeding William Kay. On 14 September of that year, the Kaysville Ward was visited by Jedediah Grant, second counselor to Brigham Young. Grant had been sent to preach repentance and reform, but “when he got there he felt like baptizing and confirming them anew into the church.”⁹⁰ And that is precisely what he did, marking the commencement of the “Mormon Reformation.”

Prest. Grant enjoined upon the Saints to observe the utmost decorum and reverence while the sacred ordinance of baptism was being attended to. After prayer, he proceeded to baptize Bishop Allen Taylor and his counselors, Reddick N. Allred and Dorr P. Curtis. Nearly 500 Saints were immersed under the direction of Prest. Grant, aided by Bishop Taylor. . . . After baptism the Saints repaired to the bowery, where the ordinance of confirmation was attended to. . . . The Spirit of God was poured out to a great degree, and peace and happiness characterised the whole assembly.⁹¹

When the Nauvoo Legion was activated in 1857 in preparation for the impending invasion by the United States Army, the Utah Territory was organized into thirteen military districts. The Davis Military District, which included the whole of Davis County, was organized under the supervision of Allen Taylor. Following the Utah War, Taylor continued to serve as bishop until 1861, when he was called to go to southern Utah to join the Cotton Mission.⁹² By this time, he had four wives and moved the entire family to Harrisburg, where he lived for about two years before relocating to New Harmony, home of John D. Lee.

A second home was established later in Washington, and Taylor divided time between his two farms until 1883, when he was honorably released by Apostle Erastus Snow from his calling to the Cotton Mission and moved to Loa.⁹³ He was accompanied in the move by only his fourth wife, Phoebe Ann Roberts. His first wife, Sarah Lovisa Allred, had lived continuously in New Harmony since about 1864 and remained there. His second wife, Hannah Egbert, no longer wanting to live in polygamy, had divorced him by

that time. His third wife, Elizabeth Smith, chose to remain in Washington.

A year after moving to Loa, seventy years old and with failing eyesight, Allen Taylor attended a church meeting at which Ephraim Hanks, formerly a well-known Mormon scout, was called upon to speak. Neither of the aging pioneers recognized each other at first, but when Taylor was called upon to speak, he was interrupted by Hanks, who asked, "Do you remember me catching a buffalo for you?" The scene was related by a correspondent of the *Deseret Evening News*:

Elder Taylor: (Looking at him fair in the face) "What is your name?"

Elder Hanks: "Hanks."

Elder Taylor: "Why, Brother Hanks, how are ye?"

The two advanced and indulged in a hearty handshaking. Elder Taylor then related that one evening, as he and his company were encamped on the Plains, Brother Hanks came into the camp and said there were some buffalo just around or over a little hill, and thought he could get one. He took down his lasso and started leisurely out to try. In a little while he returned, bringing, with lasso hitched to the horn of the saddle, a fine yearling buffalo, which was brought right into camp to be butchered. The meeting of the two old friends thus, after a separation of nearly a quarter of a century, although a little comical, was very affecting.⁹⁴

Allen Taylor died at the age of seventy-seven in Loa on 5 December 1891 as the result of an infection from a sliver in his finger. "As he had lived, so he died, full of faith in the work to which the greater part of his life had been devoted," reported the *Deseret Evening News*.⁹⁵ *Though he had long since faded from the prominent role he once assumed, he should be remembered as one of the most important leaders in the early days of Mormon emigration.*

Notes

1. Quote of George A. Smith and Ezra T. Benson, 21 March 1849.
2. By comparison, fourteen companies made the trek in 1850, 1851, and 1853 and twenty-seven companies in 1852. One small independent company, under Howard Egan, also crossed the plains in 1849.
3. Spencer's company was cocaptained by Samuel Gully, a former lieutenant in the Mormon Battalion who died of cholera shortly after leaving Kanessville for the Salt Lake Valley.
4. Obituary of Allen Taylor, *Journal History of the Church*, 29 December 1891.
5. Pottawattamie High Council Minutes, 24 July 1846, HDC.
6. *Ibid.*, 8 August 1848.
7. William G. Hartley, "The Pioneer Trek: Nauvoo to Winter Quarters," *Ensign*, June 1997, 31–42.
8. Pottawattamie High Council Minutes, 2 October 1846, HDC. The notes mistakenly identified James Murdock as John Murdock.
9. Thomas Bullock and Will Bagley, eds., *The Pioneer Camp of the Saints*, (Spokane:

The Arthur H. Clarke Company, 1997), 76.

10. *Ibid.*, 94.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, 6 April 1848.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Journal History of the Church*, 16 June 1848, entry of camp clerk Thomas Bullock.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, 4 June 1848.

17. *Ibid.*, 6 June 1848.

18. Juanita Brooks, *On the Mormon Frontier*, 1:314, entry of 6 June 1848.

19. Cleland and Brooks, *Mormon Chronicle*, 39 (entry of 15 July 1848).

20. *Journal History of the Church*, 15 July 1848, entry of Thomas Bullock.

21. *Ibid.*, 323 (entry of 17 August 1848).

22. *Journal History of the Church*, 20 August 1848.

23. *Ibid.*, 6 September 1848.

24. *Ibid.*, 20 October 1848. According to an entry of 14 October 1848, nine or ten cattle died, and five were lost along the way—in addition to the ten wagons that were not returned.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Ivy Hooper Blood Hill, *William Blood*, 14.

27. David Moore, "Journal of David Moore," Brigham Young University, typescript entries of 4, 5, and 6 July 1849, 48–49.

28. Christopher Merkle, *Biography of Christopher Merkle*, (Salt Lake City, 1887), 29.

29. Moore, Journal, 11 July 1849, 50.

30. *Millennial Star*, 1 September 1849, reprinted from the *Cleveland Herald*, 15 May 1849.

31. Moore, Journal, 11 July 1849, 50.

32. William Appleby, "Church Emigration of 1849, Fourth Company," in *Church Emigration Book*, 11 July 1849, HDC.

33. Clawson, "Rambling Reminiscences," 46.

34. Mary Jane Lyttle Little, "Memories of Mary Jane Lyttle Little," copied into the Alfred Douglas Young journal, Brigham Young University, typescript, 38.

35. Martha M. Morgan, *A Trip Across the Plains in the Year 1849*, (San Francisco: 1864), 8. Martha Morgan and her husband Jesse were non-Mormons who were traveling with the Allen Taylor Company to "California via Salt Lake." Though the diary was published by and under the name of Martha Morgan, it was in fact written by her husband Jesse, who died in California in 1850.

36. Moore, Journal, 18 July 1849, 52.

37. Clawson, "Rambling Reminiscences," 49.

38. *Ibid.*, 53.

39. Merkle, *Biography*, 29.

40. James Parshall Terry, "Biographical Sketch of James Parshall Terry," Brigham Young University, typescript, 11.

41. *Ibid.*

42. Reddick Allred, "Diary of Reddick N. Allred," in *Treasures of Pioneer History* (Salt Lake City: 1956), 310–11.

43. William Appleby, "Church Emigration of 1849, Fourth Company," in *Church Emigration Book*, HDC, 2 and 4 August 1849. Riley Senter, in "Crossing the Continent," wrote that ninety-seven head of cattle stampeded.

44. Senter, "Crossing the Continent."
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Journal History of the Church*, 12 August 1849.
47. Copy of resolutions made by the California Enterprise Company, Thos H. Owen, Captain, 7 August 1849, printed in the *Frontier Guardian*, 26 December 1849. The newspaper said of Captain Owen, "Judge Owen is well known in Illinois and other states. He is an honorable and high-minded man, if he is a Democrat."
48. Hill, *William Blood*, 15.
49. Senter, "Crossing the Continent."
50. Richard Warburton, "A Journal of Events Encountered by Richard Warburton While Crossing the Plains in '49," in *Heart Throbs of the West*, Kate B. Carter, ed., (Salt Lake City: 1949), 10:437.
51. Clawson, "'Rambling Reminiscences,'" 49.
52. Hill, *William Blood*, 15.
53. Terry, "Biographical Sketch."
54. Allred, "Diary," 311.
55. Terry, "Biographical Sketch."
56. Clawson, "Rambling Reminiscences," 50.
57. Allred, "Diary," 311.
58. Terry, "Biographical Sketch."
59. Allred, "Diary," 311.
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*, 25 August 1849.
62. E. Kay Kirkham, *Daniel Stillwell Thomas, Utah Pioneer of 1849*, (1985), 21.
63. Morgan, *A Trip across the Plains*, 18 August 1849, 12.
64. Kirkham, *Daniel Stillwell Thomas*, 22.
65. Morgan, *A Trip across the Plains*, 20 August 1849, 13.
66. *Ibid.*, 20 August 1849, 13.
67. Hill, *William Blood*, 14.
68. Appleby, "Church Emigration of 1849," 26 August 1849.
69. Morgan, *A Trip across the Plains*, 24 August 1849, 13
70. Catherine Haun, "A Woman's Trip across the Plains in 1849," Huntington Library, holograph, 23.
71. Morgan, *A Trip across the Plains*, 27 August 1849, 14.
72. Senter, "Crossing the Continent."
73. Morgan, *A Trip across the Plains*, 29 August 1849, 14.
74. Judd, "Rambling Reminiscences," 50.
75. Haun, "A Woman's Trip across the Plains."
76. *Journal History of the Church*, 3 September 1849, letter of Allen Taylor to Brigham Young.
77. Senter, "Crossing the Continent."
78. Terry, "Biographical Sketch," 114–15.
79. Morgan, *A Trip across the Plains*, 13–14 September 1849, 15.
80. *Ibid.*, 22 September 1849, 17.
81. *Ibid.*, 3 October 1849, 19. Morgan's ten was camped about fifteen miles west of Fort Bridger.
82. Appleby, "Church Emigration," 4 October 1849.
83. When Taylor was at Fort Bridger, Jesse Morgan was about a day's travel ahead and yet reached the Salt Lake Valley four days before Reddick Allred's company in which Taylor was traveling. See Morgan, *A Trip across the Plains*, 19–20.

84. Allred, *Diary*, 311.
85. William Riley Judd, *Treasures of Pioneer History*, (Salt Lake City: 1954), 3:174.
86. John D. Unruh, *The Plains Across* (Chicago, 1979), 516 n. 75. Egbert's son died on 27 July.
87. James A. Little, "To the Mountains," *Our Pioneer Heritage*, (Salt Lake City: 1971), 15:97.
88. Pleasant Green Taylor, "Record of Pleasant Green Taylor," HDC, typescript.
89. *Treasures of Pioneer History*, (Salt Lake City: 1954), 3:340. The officers were called "Selectmen" and included Samuel Parrish and Daniel Carter in addition to Allen Taylor.
90. *Deseret News*, 1 October 1856.
91. *Ibid.*, 24 September 1856.
92. *Deseret Evening News*, 29 December 1891, obituary of Allen Taylor.
93. *Ibid.*
94. *Deseret Evening News*, 21 July 1884.
95. *Deseret Evening News*, 29 December 1891, obituary of Allen Taylor.