

Guest Editor's Introduction

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Following their initial exodus from Nauvoo, the Mormons spent the winter of 1846–47 in settlements along both sides of the Missouri River, near present-day Omaha, Nebraska. In the spring of 1847, Brigham Young led the next stage of their westward movement, arriving himself on 24 July in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. A new phase of Mormon history had begun. The essays assembled in this issue of *BYU Studies* take a closer look at the early years, focusing particularly on the first decade.

When the Mormons entered the Great Basin, the area they chose to settle in was technically owned by Mexico. Shortly after they arrived, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), ending the Mexican War and transferring the land the Mormons were settling on to U.S. ownership, was signed. The Latter-day Saints sought control over their own affairs by applying for statehood. The events surrounding this attempt is the subject of Peter Crawley's essay. It sheds new light on their initial quest for self-government and thereby on western statemaking.

Of course the land that was organized into Utah Territory in 1850 was not vacant when the Mormons arrived. Native Americans had inhabited the region for centuries, and an important dimension of the Mormon pioneer experience was their relationship with the natives. It is to this area that Ronald Walker directs our attention by suggesting new perspectives as well as fruitful avenues for new research.

The early years were hard ones for those who chose to settle in Utah. Not all did. Focusing on one specific colony, Leo Lyman gives important insights into the San Bernardino settlement, paying particular attention to the area as an outpost of dissent during the formative years of Mormon Utah.

While the Great Basin provided some isolation for persecuted Mormons, trouble followed them west. Problems with federally appointed officials began in 1851 and grew in magnitude until

President Buchanan ordered federal troops to march against Utah in 1857. The subsequent events of the Utah War or “Buchanan’s Blunder” were diffused by 1858, but the large army was stationed in Utah for the next three years. Richard Poll’s essay, part of his larger projected history of the Utah War, focuses on the Move South, a time when Brigham Young ordered the abandonment of the Salt Lake Valley while the army marched through on its way to what became Camp Floyd. In addition to important new details, Dr. Poll suggests what some of the consequences were for Mormon society.

Finally, my own essay looks at a little-known product of the early Mormon press, the almanac. The essay examines the context and content of these publications and thereby invites a closer look at the cultural milieu of early Utah.