

The Mormon Gold Mining Mission of 1849

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The story of the Mormon gold mining missions forms an interesting and unique chapter in the annals of the California Gold Rush. Two companies of young Mormons came to California in 1849 at the call of their Church leaders, rather than to satisfy a desire for personal wealth.¹ Their journals give added information on the "Death Valley" tragedy; on life in the California gold fields in 1850; and on contemporary Mormon attitudes and practices. They also tell of the founding of the Latter-day Saints' Hawaiian Mission by some of these mining missionaries.

It is important to note that when gold was discovered in California in 1848, the Mormons were in a position to acquire a giant's share of the precious metal. Six members of the Church were working with James Marshall when the discovery was made,² and they, with some of their companions, discovered other rich deposits, including the fabulous Mormon Island. In addition to the men working with Marshall, over sixty of their Mormon Battalion comrades were employed by John A. Sutter in the immediate vicinity. Nearly one hundred discharged members of the Battalion were working in the San Francisco Bay region and were among the first to reach the gold fields. Sam Brannan, who announced the discovery in San Francisco, advised his Mormon colony, who had come to California on the ship *Brooklyn* in 1846, to go to the gold areas. More than three hundred Latter-day Saints were at work on Mormon Island by

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1 In addition to these missions, one hundred men answered the call of their Church leaders to go to the gold mines in 1855 in a vain attempt to liquidate the debt owed for their San Bernardino property. (See Eugene E. Campbell, *A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in California 1846-1946*, pp. 170-171, unpublished dissertation, University of Southern California, 1952.)

2 These men were Henry W. Bigler, Azariah Smith, James S. Brown, William W. Berger, Alexander Stephens and William Johnson. All had been members of the Mormon Battalion.

July, 1848, according to William Tecumseh Sherman, who accompanied the governor of California on a tour of the gold fields.³

In addition to these advantages, Sam Brannan, who was the official leader of the Latter-day Saints in California, was in possession of a store at Sutter's Fort, a river launch, a large stock of supplies brought around the Horn on the *Brooklyn*, a considerable sum of Church money (tithing) with which he could obtain more supplies, and a large fenced-in farm of fertile land at the junction of the San Joaquin and Stanislaus rivers. Moreover, Brannan possessed an entrepreneur's spirit and considerable business ability. If Brigham Young had chosen to send a messenger from Winter Quarters requesting Elder Brannan to prepare to receive the body of the Church in California, it might have been an easier task to lead his people there than to have them join the advance company in the desolate valley of the Great Salt Lake. The Salt Lake colony, consisting of approximately two thousand people, had survived the first winter, but was facing serious trouble because their crops had been attacked by the crickets. Undoubtedly, it would have taken only a word from their Church leaders to start the Saints on their way to California.

With a strong nucleus of Church members already in California, and with upwards of twenty thousand more on their way westward, equipped with the necessary things to make the trip to California, the Saints could have been in the gold regions a full year before the great Gold Rush of 1849. With their close knit organization, their willingness to sacrifice for the Church, and their talent for working together as a community, they might have "skimmed the cream" off the entire gold area. But history has recorded a different ending. Brigham Young and his aides rejected the opportunity and fought against the idea of the Church members mining gold in California. They were, in great measure, successful in their effort.

"The Lord will bless you and prosper you," President Young told the Saints, "if you will get cured of your California fevers as quick as you can."⁴ He went on to show that the Sacra-

3 William T. Sherman, *Memoirs* (New York, 1875), I, 52-53.

4 Brigham Young to Parley P. Pratt and John Taylor, *Journal History of the Church* (hereafter referred to as *JH*), July 17, 1848.

mento Valley was an unhealthy place in which to live; that the acquisition of gold would not be as valuable as food and drink; and that to become wealthy in precious metals was to court degradation and ruin. He reminded the Saints that the Spaniards had looked for gold, and had not only lost their greatness, but had almost lost their God; moreover, the English colonists, who had paid attention to agriculture and industry, had waxed strong and become a powerful influence for good.⁵ James Brown quoted Brigham Young as saying:

Some have asked me about going [to California]. I have told them that God has appointed this place [the Great Basin] for the gathering of his Saints, and you will do better right here than you will by going to the gold mines. Some have thought they would go there and get fitted out and come back, but I told them to stop here and get fitted out. Those who stop here and are faithful to God and his people will make more money and get richer than you that run after the god of this world; and I promise you in the name of the Lord that many of you that go thinking you will get rich and come back, will wish you had never gone away from here, and will long to come back, but will not be able to do so. Some of you will come back, but your friends who remain here will have to help you; and the rest of you who are spared to return will not make as much money as your brethren do who stay here and help build up the Church and Kingdom of God; they will prosper and be able to buy you twice over. Here is the place God has appointed for his people⁶

In September, 1849, Young recorded the following note in his journal:

Fourteen or fifteen of the brethren arrived from the gold country, some of whom were very comfortably supplied with the precious metal, and others, who had been sick, came back as destitute as they had been when they went on the ship *Brooklyn* in 1846. That there is plenty of gold in Western California is beyond doubt, but the valley of the Sacramento is an unhealthy place, and the Saints can be better employed in raising grain and building houses in this vicinity than in digging gold in Sacramento, unless they are counseled to do so.

The true use of gold is for paving streets, covering houses, making culinary dishes; and when the Saints shall have preached the gospel, raised grain, and built up cities enough, the Lord will open up the way for a supply of gold to the per-

5 See "Second General Epistle of the Twelve," JH, October 12, 1848.

6 Taken from the Autobiography of James Brown (Salt Lake City, 1941), p. 122.

fect satisfaction of his people; until then, let them not be over-anxious for the treasures of the earth are in the Lord's storehouse, and he will open the door thereof when and where he pleases.⁷

Brigham Young was primarily concerned with the "gathering" of the Mormons to build up their "kingdom" in the Great Basin, but he also appeared to be convinced that gold mining was not a fit occupation for his members and that it would actually be to their economic advantage to remain in the Great Basin and till the soil. Supporting this thesis, he said:

I will commence at the north and go to the south settlements and pick out twenty-five men of our inhabitants as they average, and another man may take fifty of the gold diggers, off hand, and they cannot buy out the twenty-five men who tarried at home. Before I had been one year in this place, the wealthiest man who came from the mines, Father Rhodes, with \$17,000, could he buy the possessions I had made in one year? It will not begin to do it: and I will take twenty-five men in the United States, who have staid at home and paid attention to their own business, and they will weigh down fifty others from the same place, who went to the gold regions; and again, look at the widows that have been made, and see the bones that lie bleaching and scattered over the prairies.⁸

On another occasion, in a more vigorous way, he exclaimed:

I hope that the gold mines will be no nearer than eight hundred miles. . . . There is more delusion, and the people are more perfectly crazy on this continent than ever before. . . . If you Elders of Israel want to go to the gold mines, go and be damned. If you go, I wouldn't give a picayune to keep you from damnation. . . . I advise the corrupt, and all who want to go to California to go and not come back, for I will not fellowship them. . . . Prosperity and riches blunt the feelings of man. If our people were united, I would send out some of our men to get gold who would care no more for it than the dust under their feet, and then we would gather millions into the Church. Some men don't want to go after gold, but they are the very ones to go.⁹

Despite the negative attitude of the Church leaders towards

7 History of Brigham Young, MS, 1849, p. 144.

8 JH, September 6, 1850.

9 Bancroft, *History of Utah*, p. 303.

the Church members going to the gold fields,¹⁰ President Young permitted certain leaders to "call" young men of their choice on a "mission" to journey to California and mine gold for them. Prominent among those sent were Henry Bigler, whose diary was to set the accepted date of the original discovery of gold at Coloma, and George Q. Cannon, who later became a counselor in the Mormon Church First Presidency. If reluctance to go could be considered a qualification for being selected, as Brigham Young indicated, then Bigler and Cannon qualified without question. Bigler wrote in his journal:

. . . It fills me with sorrow to think of leaving, for I am attached to this place and this people, for they are my brothers and sisters and my friends, and it was with considerable struggle with my feelings that I consented to go.¹¹

However, he felt it was a call to aid an old man who had suffered greatly for the Church, and consented to go.

Cannon's feelings on the matter were expressed twenty years later in a series of reminiscient articles. He wrote:

. . . it was in the fall of the year that we were selected. We formed a company and were joined by some few whose only motive was going to enrich themselves by digging gold.

There was no place I would rather not have been at the time than in California. I heartily despised the work of digging gold. . . . There is no occupation I would not rather follow than hunting and digging for gold. My instructions were to go to California, and be guided by the counsels of Elders Amasa Lyman and Charles C. Rich, two of the Twelve Apostles.¹²

A third member to leave a written record, Albert K. Thurber, felt that the call was given as a test, and although he was

10 Evidence that this attitude was continued after the call of the miners may be seen in the following excerpts. The *Deseret News* of January 24, 1852, contained the following editorial: ". . . but may we not go to California and get some gold to pay off our debts, then we can buy what we want, and then we can be independent again and go ahead as usual? No! Saints, you cannot go to California, as you have done in years gone by and still retain your fellowship in the Church. It is getting too late in the day for the children of the kingdom to trifle." The Journal History of November 16, 1855, contains the following proposal from Heber C. Kimball: "I move that Henry J. Jarvis, Thomas S. Williams, Lorin W. Babbitt, and those who went to California be cut off from the Church—for their wickedness, their slandering and their meanness."

11 Henry Bigler, Diary, Book B. MS, October 11, 1849.

12 G. Q. Cannon, "After Twenty Years," *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. IV (1869), pp. 13-14. Hafen states that Cannon was outfitted by his uncle, John Taylor (later third President of the Mormon Church). See *Far West and Rockies Series*, Vol. II, Journals of Forty-Niners, p. 218.

not anxious to go, he did not seem so reluctant as the other two. He had come to Salt Lake Valley with a company of gold seekers in 1849, became converted to the Mormon Church, and decided to stay in Salt Lake. He obtained work with B. J. Johnson, one of the Church leaders, who called him to go to the mines. His account is as follows:

The California gold mines were attracting great attention and as B. J. Johnson was of the Council of Seventy, the president, Brigham Young, authorized them to send a few men, as Johnson told me, *to prove them*. He proposed for [Jacob D.] Burnham and me to go. We worked one week without mentioning the subject and then decided to go in a short time. Johnson was to fit us out and get one third of what each made and we to receive one third of what he made at home.¹³

Dr. Leonard Arrington, in his *Great Basin Kingdom*, came to the conclusion that the Church leaders permitted the calls in order to get more gold dust to supply their mint, which had just been reopened.¹⁴

The most detailed and dramatic account of the call is found in Bigler's diary. He described it as follows (Bigler's spelling uncorrected):

MONDAY 8TH Makeing preparations today to go on a mission to California to get Gold for Father John Smith, as he has been kicked & cuft about and finily drove out of the United States because he worshiped God according to the dictates of his own consience and has becum poor, he is Coun-ciled to fit out some person and send them to the Gold mines and he has Called on me to go and is now fiting me out to go with Brother C. C. Rich and others who are sent. Bro. Rich leaves today. It fills me with Sorrow to think of leaving for I am attached to this place and this people for they are my brethren and my friends, it was with Considerable struggle with my feelings that I Consented to go.

TUESDAY OCT. 9TH This day I settled up all my ac-

13 Kate B. Carter, *Treasures of Pioneer History*, Vol. III, p. 274.

14 Leonard Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdoms*, p. 72, Harvard University Press, 1958. Arrington's theory seems to be only a scholarly guess, because his footnote at this point refers to an earlier unpublished study of the L.D.S. Gold Mining Missions made by the author and Professor Arrington, which does not contain any evidence to justify such a conclusion. The author is indebted to Professor Arrington for being made aware of Albert King Thurber's journal and to Dr. LeRoy Hafen for permission to examine his typescript copy of this journal.

counts, paid all my debts, Sold my wheat and a few bords [boards of lumber] to Bro. Stanes.

THURSDAY 11TH last evening Father Smith sent for me he wanted to bless me, he then laid his hands on my head and blest me and also Brother [James] Keeler in the name of the Lord. Brother Keeler is a going for Thomas Calister we will go in the same waggon together; about 2 p.m. we was ready. I told Brother Keeler to call by my house with the waggon and I would be ready. I wrote a note and stuck it on the side of my door for my brother-in-law [John Hess] to take charge of some clothing I had left in a sack; at this moment I experienced what I shall not here attempt to describe. I walked back and forth across my floor and my feelings was spent in a complete shower of tears, every thing I looked upon seemed to simpethise with me and say go in peace only be faithful and all will be right. I herd a rattling and looked up and saw the waggon a coming. I hastened to the Curtings of the window and wiped away every tear, and went out to the waggon. I was requested to get in. I refused. I told Brother Keeler I would walk as I wanted to call at the tin shop to buy a canteen, I paid 6 bits [75 cents] for one & 2 bits for a quart cup; I then got in the waggon and we drove to Brother Flakes on Cottonwood, about 10 miles. Got thare in the night, all was gone to bed, we mired in the big field. we had to get in the mud and water with our shoulders to the wheels; after a long time we got out all wet and muddy. We called at Brother Chipmans and got some Butter and 2 large fresh loves of good light wheat bread for which we paid \$2 together with a little tin pail to carry our butter in.

FRIDAY 12TH This morning we ware detained a little in getting something made. We found that one of our horses was sick, supposed to have a tech of the Belly ache, and to carry out father Smith Blessings we bought a mare of Brother Flakes, paid \$20 down and give our note for 100\$ with interest at our Return. At 10 AM we was on the way, went 13 miles and encampt near the Banks of Jourdan.¹⁵

Bigler and Keeler joined a company of about twenty gold

15 Bigler, Book "B," October 8-12, 1849. "Father" John Smith was an uncle to Joseph Smith; Presiding Patriarch of the Church (1849-1854); and president of Salt Lake Stake (September, 1847, to October, 1848). He had participated in all the Mormon migrations, and had been "kicked and cuffed about" by anti-Mormon mobs. He was sixty-eight years old in October, 1849, and died five years later. Thomas Callister, his son-in-law, was only twenty-eight in 1849, but had been through the Nauvoo experiences and exodus. He subsequently became the first president of Millard Stake.

"missionaries"¹⁶ with James M. Flake as their captain. They left Salt Lake on October 11, 1849, and arrived at Williams' Ranch on December 11, 1849, after a difficult journey in which they became part of the "Death Valley" group that attempted to take a short-cut to the California mines.¹⁷ While at Williams' Ranch, Bigler recorded a communication from Apostles George A. Smith and Ezra T. Benson which reveals something of the Church leaders' attitudes concerning the availability of gold. He wrote:

Brother Rich got a letter from Brothers Geo. Smith and E. T. Benson (both were apostles Brothers S. and B. want Brother Rich to raise them \$5,000 from the brethren who are on a mission to get goald [gold] that their hands may be liberated and be able to return to their fields of labor (missions) and they will pray the Lord to lead the Brethren in some nook or corner where it lays, as for my part I shall be glad to help raise it for them and have their prayers and blessings on my head.¹⁸

They left Williams' Ranch on January 12, 1850, and finally made their way to "Slap Jack Bar" on the Middle Fork of the American River where they began their search for gold.

The company of which Albert Thurber was a member was organized in Provo, Utah, in mid-November "by appointing Simson D. Huffaker, captain."¹⁸ There were thirty-one members in this group, although it is not certain that they were all "called" to mine gold.¹⁹ After a three months' journey, they arrived in Los Angeles, where they were met by Amasa Lyman and Jared D. Hunter. They took the steamer from San Pedro to San Francisco and then continued on to Sacramento, arriving

16 President Cannon says twenty were in the original company. A careful reading of the Bigler journal and Cannon recollections yields the following names: George Bankhead, John W. Berry, Henry Bigler, John Bills, Joseph Cain, George Q. Cannon, Darwin Chase, Joseph Dixon, William Farrer, Peter Fife, James M. Flake, Henry Gibson, James Hawkins, Peter Hoagland, James Keeler, Thomas Morris, Joseph Peck, J. Henry Rollins, Boyd Stewart, Judson Sheldon Stoddard, and Thomas Whittle. Apparently some were not specially called gold miners for the profits were divided among only twelve workers, and only nine accepted mission calls to the Sandwich Isles, while one went to Oregon.

17 Part of the non-Mormon contingent of this company decided to continue this untried northern route and went on to perish in what has since been called Death Valley. See the account of a survivor in William Lewis Manly, *Death Valley in 1849* (San Jose, California, 1849).

18 Bigler, Book B, MS, January 6, 1850.

19 Carter, *Treasures of Pioneer History*. V. 3, p. 274.

April 1, 1850. Here they were fitted out for the mines and began looking for a claim. Thurber wrote:

As we were traveling along a Green Woods in the Valley of Lewisville, we concluded to go up the creek and try our luck. Saw that the whole bottom had been prospected and concluded it was a dull show for us.

Bought a washer of Jacob Gates for \$64.00. Five of us worked with it. First day made some \$2.50 each. At night I told them there were too many with the machine and we put it up at auction. I bought it, and with my partner Burnham, made \$40.00 the next day. We mined in this place for about one month, but sent two men to find a claim for the summer. The gold was beautiful, mostly nuggets. We were very free to exhibit it to anyone supposing that we could do better anywhere else than there as it had been all prospected over by old miners. The first thing we knew the creek bed was nearly claimed and the place was alive with miners, leaving us small claims. It proved very rich all through that section of country.²⁰

Later he described life in the mines in the following excerpt:

The mess that I was in, seven of us, bought seven or eight mules. We concluded that miners were getting too thick and as soon as the water got down in the rivers we would start for our claim high up on the north fork of the middle of the American river, 30 of us men. We could not get animals within one mile of our claim on the river just below where a little stream enters in that has a beautiful cascade on it. We set to work at building a dam and making a race. The river was some 60 yards wide. We built two walls across it, about 6 feet apart and packed dirt in sacks and on our backs to fill in. After we got the water turned, we commenced to sink a hole 30 feet across but failed to reach bed rock. We worked here one month and got \$1.50—five cents apiece.

John W. Berry was very sick at this place. Concluded to leave for the Middle Fork previous to which the following

20 The Thurber Journal mentions the following as probably members of the company: H. Alexander, Erastus Bingham, Willard Bingham, William Bird, Kiser Brown, Isaac Brown, Jacob D. Burnham, David Cade, Washington N. Cook, Berrill Covington, Hyrum Curtis, Albert Dewey, Franklin Dewey, Bradford W. Elliott, Jacob Gates, William P. Goddard, John Gould, Simpson D. Huffaker, Barnum, Kinion, Samuel Miles, John Murray, James C. Sly, and Albert King Thurber. Some of these persons may not have been gold missionaries, but may have been traveling with them. Others are not mentioned. Many details of the Gold Mission will remain obscure until the journals of other participants are brought to light.

21 Carter, *Treasures of Pioneer History*, V. 3, p. 280.

notice was posted. "This is to certify that all persons are forbid to violate the right of a damned claim."²²

Thurber's group finally went to "Slap Jack Bar" on the middle fork of the American River, where the other group had been working all summer. Here they were visited by Apostles Lyman and Rich who advised those men who did not have a good claim to go back to Salt Lake Valley.²³ Thurber concluded, along with fifty others, to return to Salt Lake in the company Amasa Lyman was organizing, but his partner, Burnham, decided to stay and prospect a little longer. When they separated, Thurber remarked, "I never saw a man look so lonesome. He took sick and died about two weeks later."²⁴ Thurber ended up with "two mules, an old pair of boots, hat, a pair of pants and a flannel shirt, \$4.50 in gold dust."²⁵ He later reported to Brigham Young that "he never felt better than when he got over the mountains," which seemed to please the Church leader very much.²⁶

Meanwhile, at "Slap Jack Bar," Bigler's group had been working all summer endeavoring to build a diversion dam across the river. They had been so busy that Bigler had failed to keep his daily diary account, but on September 23, he took time to write the following account:

I have not written for many months. . . . I have exposed myself to both Indians and wether [weather] more than I ever want to do again, living out in the snow and storms and rain without shelter, some of my brethren have died . . . all of my brethren have been sick having been much exposed working in gold. . . . I am tired of mining and of the country and long to be home among the saints.²⁷

Two days later he gave a more detailed report of the summer's experience when he wrote:

I have been at work ever since my arrival at the mines which was last February exposing myself living out in the rains and snow, traveling and prospecting, building and repairing dams, working up to my neck in water and for weeks

22 Carter, *Treasures of Pioneer History*, V. 3, p. 281.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 289.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 283.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 289.

26 *Ibid.*

27 Bigler, Book B, September 23, 1850.

ter up to my waist and arms, having made but little; the expenses overrun the gain. In August I sent \$100 to Father Smith by Brother A. Lyman and we expect to finish our claim in a fiew [few] days and then will leave for our fields of labor. Brother Clark and Blackwell are couniled to go. Brother Clark will preside. . . . The tithing I paid to Brother Rich and Amasa for myself and Brother Smith was \$83.60. That shows how much I have taken from the earth \$836, this would appear that I ought to have lots of money, by me, but I have none. I may say at present and it makes the hair fairly stand upright on my head when I think of it.²⁸

Bigler then included in his account some of his expenditures such as a shovel and pick for ten dollars, four wash pans for eight dollars, one pair of boots for ten dollars, and he also mentions that he had to borrow the one hundred dollars that he sent to Father Smith with Amasa Lyman.²⁹

On October 3, 1850, after finally completing their dam, the missionary miners began to reap the rewards of their labors. Bigler described it as follows:

Sunday, October 6th. Last Thursday morning we commenced taking out the gold after laboring so long in building and repairing our dam so often, and today we divided the pile, there being twelve shares, \$200.00 apiece.

Sunday, October 13th. Washing gold all week and today divided 444 dollars each.

Tuesday, 15th the gold has failed, o what a pity.

Wednesday, 16 divided 92 dollars apiece. We shall make preparations to leave for the Sandwich Islands forthwith.³⁰

The decision to go to the Sandwich Islands came as the result of an event which took place at "Slap Jack Bar" which more than justified the entire venture, as far as the Church is concerned. Bigler's record of this event reads as follows:

This morning the brethren was called together at our tent by Bro. Rich, he stated that he wanted some of us to go on a mission to the Sandwich Islands to preach the gospel, that his opinion was that it would cost no more to spend the winter there than it would here, that we could make nothing in the wintertime in consequence of so much water in the streams, and another thing provisions would be much higher in the

28 *Ibid.*, September 25, 1850.

29 *Ibid.*

30 Bigler, Book B, October 6-16, 1850.

mines and it would cost us more money to stay here and make nothing than if we went to the islands and preach, in his opinion it would be the best thing we could do and the best council he could give. . . then he called upon ten of us 1 of which was to go to Oragon [Oregon] with Boyd Stewart, and the remaining 9 was set apart as follows, Thomas Whittle, Thomas Morras, John Dixon, myself, Geo. Cannon, Wm. Farrer, John Berry if he wished, James Keeler, James Hawkins. He then laid his hands on us and set us apart for the mission and blessed us in the name of the Lord, and told us to act as the spirit dictated when we got there.³¹

This led to the founding of the Latter-day Saint Hawaiian Mission and the subsequent growth of the Church in that region. It is interesting to note that Charles C. Rich did not assume the role of a prophet in calling the men on a mission, but simply gave them what he felt was the best advice that he could. His reasoning seemed to be practical rather than spiritual.

Another point of interest connected with this call was the fact that it seemed to be a fulfillment of a dream which Bigler recorded in his journal almost a year before. On October 16, 1849, shortly after the Church-called miners had left Salt Lake Valley, Bigler wrote, "Last night I dreamed I was not going for goal [gold] but was going to the islands to preach the gospel."³² Again at Williams' Ranch, Bigler recorded that "Today Bro. Pratt asked me if I would go to the islands should Bros. Rich and Amasa Lyman call me to go. I told him that I should if that was their council."³³ It should be noted in connection with the dream that he did not specify what islands he was to be sent to, and that he was in company with some of his friends who were going to the Society Islands. This may have had some influence upon the nature of his dreams at the time.

The day after this call, George Q. Cannon recorded his feelings about the mining situation. This would probably indicate that Apostle Rich did not have to use too much persuasion to get the miners to accept the mission call. He wrote:

The rising water caused a cessation of work in the mines, and there was little to do for the miners expect to gamble away what little they had, and those who had nothing, had nothing to do but steal, rob, play at cut-throat, and such like

31 *Ibid.*, September 25, 1850.

32 Bigler, Book B, October 16, 1849.

33 *Ibid.*, December 31, 1849.

social games. . . . There were three, four, or five murders reported in the territory each day—and no government. Authorities had too much property and business themselves.³⁴

As indicated before, the missionary miners remained at “Slap Jack Bar” until after their gold failed, and then they left for their mission. On their way to San Francisco, Bigler recorded that they stopped at Brother Crow’s in Suttersville to get some Books of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants; had dinner at Brother Leffingwell’s for \$1.25 apiece; slept under a tree at Brother Thatcher’s; and paid Brother Green to carry them in a wagon to Brother Lathrop’s Mormon Tavern. This cost them \$2.00 apiece.³⁵ They seemed to make a practice of visiting Church members along the way, but did not attempt to secure hospitality without payment. They remained in San Francisco until November 15, 1850, when they sailed for their mission in the Hawaiian Islands.

In conclusion, it seems apparent that the gold-mining missions were failures as far as their primary purpose was concerned. The men involved had spent at least a year away from their homes with considerable risk of their lives and health and had failed to find the gold they were seeking. Several members had lost their lives in the effort. The most successful group had secured less than \$20,000 in gold and their expenses had been such as to make their profits almost negligible.

It may be said, however, that the Church profited from the venture in two ways. First, the missionaries who went to Hawaii laid the foundations for a very important branch of the Church there; and second, the returning miners could be cited as living proof of the wisdom of the Church leaders in advising the saints to stay away from the California gold mines.

³⁴ George Q. Cannon, journal entry recorded in the Journal History of the Church, MS, September 26, 1850.

³⁵ Bigler, Book B, October 19 to October 29, 1850.