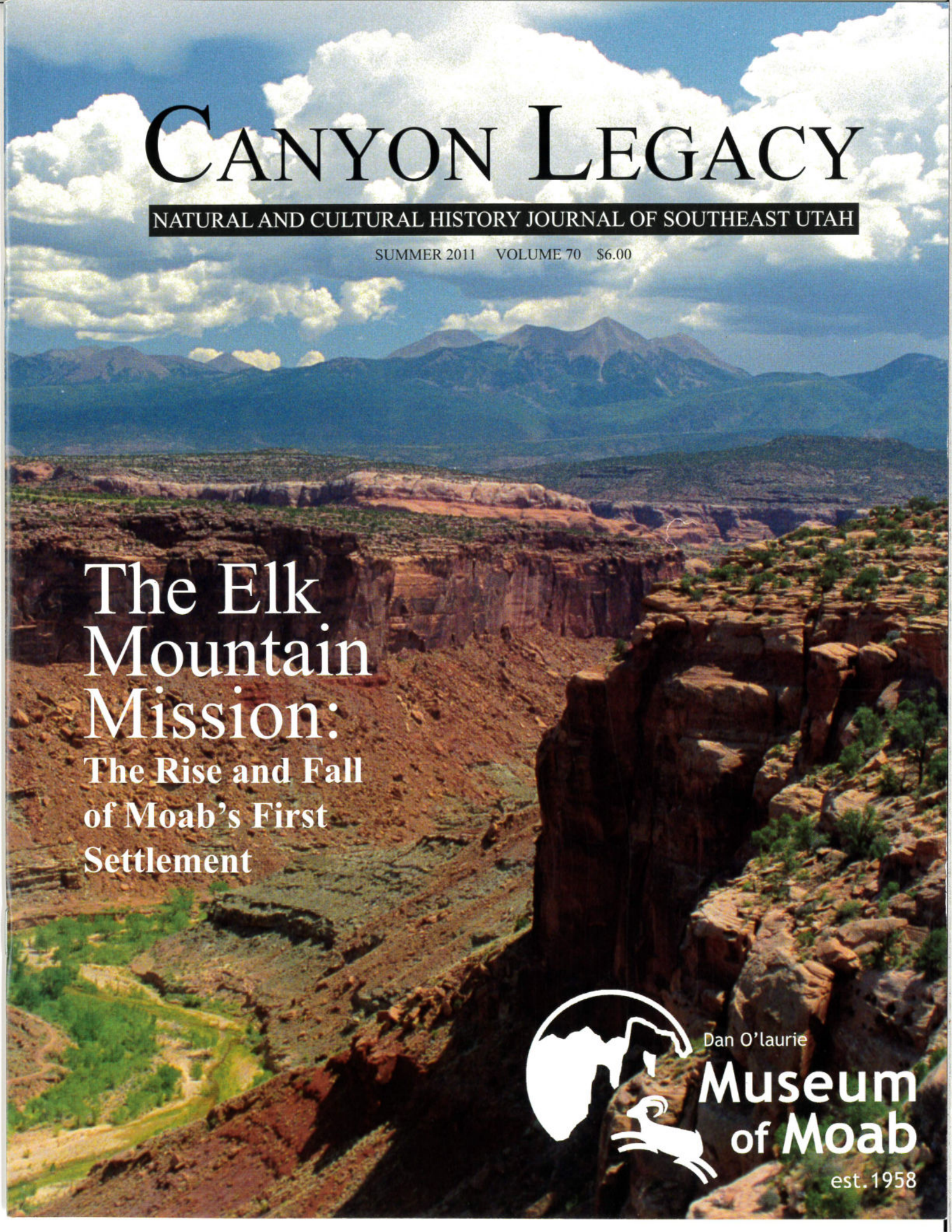

Canyon Legacy

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The Elk Mountain Mission:

The Rise and Fall of Moab's First Settlement

Dan O'laurie Museum of Moab est. 1958

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Canyon Legacy

Managing Editor: Lindsey Bartosh
Museum Director: Travis Schenck
Staff: Lindsey Bartosh, Natalie Dickerson, Billie Provonsha, Andrea Stoughton.

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The stories in this *Canyon Legacy* are all ones many of us have heard before. We have heard the story of the Elk Mountain Mission and its hasty abandonment, about the battles of the Walker War, and tales of slave trade in the West. As it tends to happen over time, these stories have many different renditions, and some are accurate and some are just plain lies. This *Legacy* cuts through the collage of different versions and rumors to offer the real story.

We begin with an excerpt from Mark Blanchard's book *Going to my Grave: The Life and Mysterious Disappearance of the Mormon Scout Levi Gregory Metcalf*. Through his tireless research, Blanchard unfolds the real story of what happened at the first Moab settlement. Through the eyes of the settlers, Blanchard takes us through the journey to the Moab valley, the construction of the fort, the relations between the missionaries and the area natives, and finally the abandonment of the mission. Blanchard's piece gives readers a chance to review the story of the Elk Mountain Mission and decide for themselves what really happened.

Our second story explores the often-unmentioned issue of the Native American slave trade. The slave trade, fueled by the Spanish and their use of the Spanish Trail trading route, often involved the Native Americans trading their women and children for "white man's" goods. This article will open your eyes to the difficulty of life during these times and drastic measures people found necessary to take for survival.

Next, we move to the Walker War of the 1850s. Like the other stories in this issue, the Walker War is often mistold. The term war is too strong a term for what really happened. Tensions were high between Mormon settlers and the Timpanogos Ute tribes and a series of battles insued.

Finally, the Museum of Moab curator, Travis Schenck, takes us back to the original site of the Elk Mountain Mission fort. Schenck examines the fort grounds and surrounding areas and also gives us a look at the real Elk Mountains from Colorado.

So, enjoy this issue. Take time to read some stories you may think you already know and be prepared to learn something new.

--Lindsey Bartosh

On the front cover: Black Mesa, looking towards the La Sals by Fran Barnes.
On the back cover: Ruins of the Elk Mountain Fort circa 1930 photo from Museum Archive.

The mission of the Museum of Moab is to preserve and display artifacts and information, and to promote research and education that accurately reflect the natural and cultural history of the Moab area.

Canyon Legacy

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On the Frontier of Failure:

The Rise and Fall of the Elk Mountain Mission

by Mark Blanchard

In the spring of 1855, LDS President Brigham Young sent a troop of 41 men to settle the Grand Valley, a dry, barren and unexplored wilderness. The only residents of the area were the Shiberetch band of Northern Utes. The Mormons had no idea how, or even if, *the Shiberetch would accept their arrival to the area, but the group was determined to establish a permanent settlement. The settlement of the area, dubbed the Elk Mountain Mission, would hopefully create an area where settlers could live by farming, teach the natives agricultural skills, and eventually spread the Gospel of the Church to the natives. After four short months, the fort was hastily abandoned. The following is an excerpt from Mark Blanchard's book* Going to my Grave: The Life and Mysterious Disappearance of the Mormon Scout Levi Gregory Metcalf.

One Heart and the Hand of Metcalf- The Elk Mountain Mission—Part I

As a group, the Elk Mountain Mission mustered the best young frontiersmen the Mormon Church had to offer in the 1850s, but curiously, it turns out that three of these missionaries were the men responsible for starting three of Utah's Indian Wars.[1] It was James A. Ivie's fight with an angry Ute husband that touched off the Walker War in 1853, while John Clark's capture by Tintic's band was the spark that ignited the Tintic War of 1856, and John Lowry's drunken assault on Jake Arropeen started the Black Hawk War in 1865. This Elk Mountain connection between three of Utah's war starters may not be as big a coincidence as if we learned that somehow Gavrilo Princeps had fired the first shots on Fort Sumter before sinking the battleship Maine. It certainly does not speak well for the group of men that Brigham Young chose to send on such a sensitive inter-cultural embassy.

The morning of the Elk Mountain Mission's departure from its final camp in "civilization" dawned with a fresh dusting of snow on the nearby Wasatch Mountains, reminding the Elders of just how fickle the weather could be on the high elevations of the Colorado Plateau, where snow on the Fourth of July is not unheard of and Christmas in the 90's is rather common. Although wagon travel through this region is possible year round, every missionary present knew that he had to be prepared for all climates at all times. The route the missionaries would take to their Grand River destination was fairly well known to a handful of mountain men and army scouts at the time, but few of the Elk Mountain boys had ever used it.

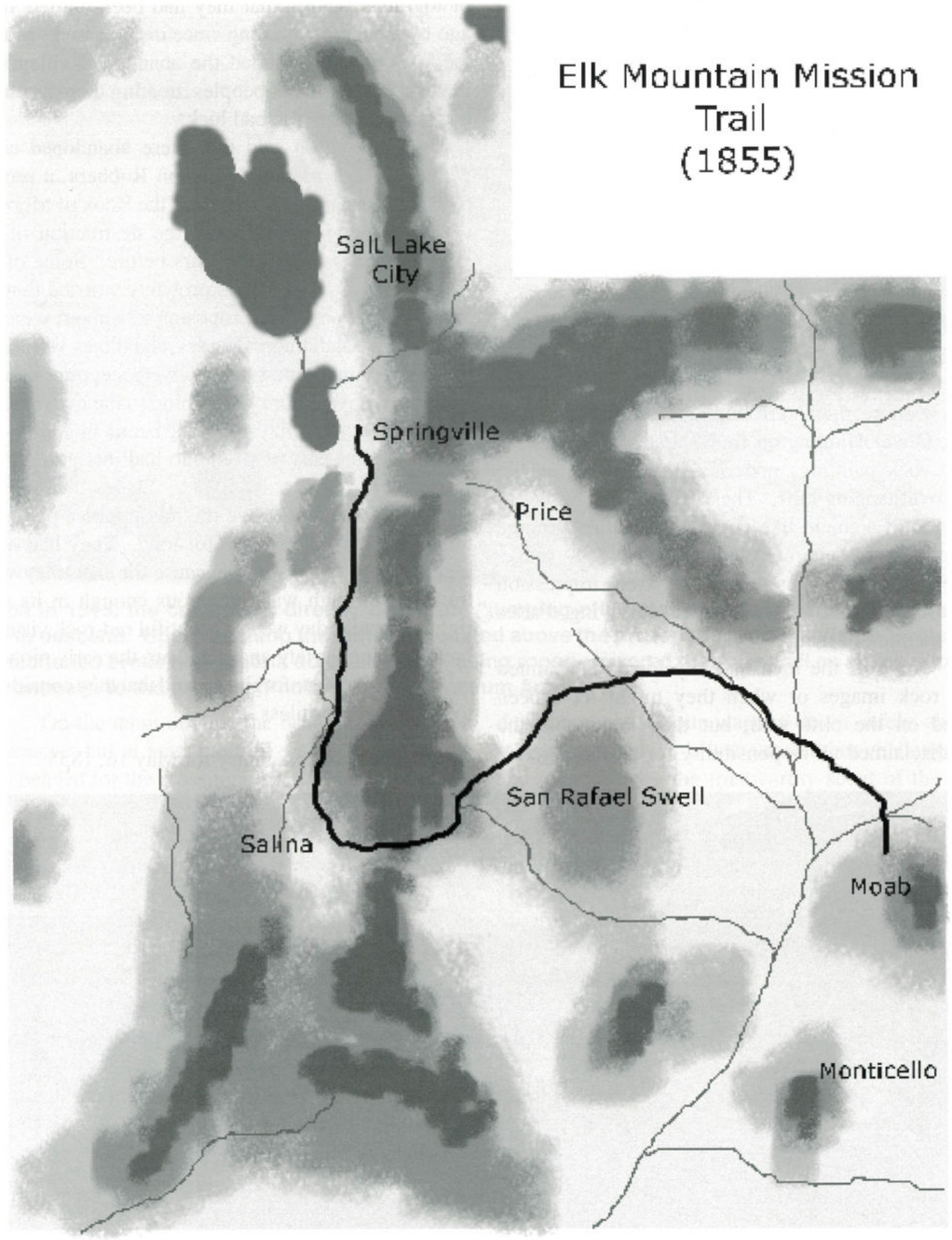
Captain John W. Gunnison, the Beale-Heap Party, and John C. Fremont had each used parts of the Elk Mountain Mission's route in 1853, but these explorers all took numerous side-trips to investigate alternate trail possibilities. In contrast, the Elk Mountain Mission's goal was not to discover new roads, but to get to its known destination as quickly as possible; therefore, it stuck to pre-existing trails whenever they were convenient and it blazed short-cuts only when they promised a more efficient path.

At daylight on the 22nd of May, the expedition officially began. According to Oliver Huntington, the group consisted of 15 wagons with "sixty-five oxen, 16 cows, 13 horses, two bulls, one calf, two pigs, four dogs, 12 chickens, five plows, 11 shovels, 7 hoes, 6 trowels, 2 iron bars, 6 scythes, 22 axes, one cross-cut saw, 1 whip saw, one set of blacksmith's tools, one set of carpenter's tools, one set of stone cutter's tools, four bushels of oats, 32 bushels potatoes, 22 quarts peas, 21 ½ bushels of corn, 22 bushels of wheat, 14,665 pounds flour and a multitude of garden seeds. Of ammunition there was given an account of 99 pounds of powder, 200 pounds of lead, and 37,800 gun caps. For some cause the number of guns was not called for, but there were probably sixty guns and pistols together. There were no breech-loading guns known to us then." [2]

Huntington's inventory makes it sound as if

1 See Peter Gottfredson, *Indian Depredation of Utah* (Tucson, AZ: Fenestra Books, 2002), 43, 101, and 129; first published in 1919.

2 Oliver Huntington, *"The Elk Mountain Mission"*, The Juvenile Instructor, George Q. Cannon, ed. (Salt Lake City U.T.: The Deseret News Co. 1895, Vol. XXX), 225.



Traveling from Springville, Utah, the members of the Elk Mountain Mission headed south through the Sanpete Valley. Turning West near Salina, Utah, the Missionaries then skirted the northern edge of the San Rafael Swell before traveling southeast towards the crossings of the Green River and the Colorado. They arrived in the narrow red rock valley that would be the eventual location of Moab.

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the Elk Mountain boys were rather weakly armed, but actually the reverse is true. The Huntington Expedition of 1854 cached even more lead near Moab which the Elk Mountain missionaries likely retrieved and used or traded to the Indians. Evidence of such large stores of ammunition indicates that the Elk Mountain Missionaries went into the field with the premeditated intention of trading it to the Indians.

May 27th marked the mission's first Sabbath as an organized company so they celebrated the day by making only five quick miles in the morning before stopping to hold Sunday services in the afternoon. After a rousing meeting, some of the men wandered off to explore their surroundings and not far from camp, Oliver Huntington found a strange cluster of Indian rock paintings underneath the protective lip of an overhanging cliff. These mysterious drawings consisted of a shield-like circle next to three strange warrior figures separated by a long vertical snake. These intriguing images made such a strong impression on the Elders that nearly all their surviving diaries make mention of them.

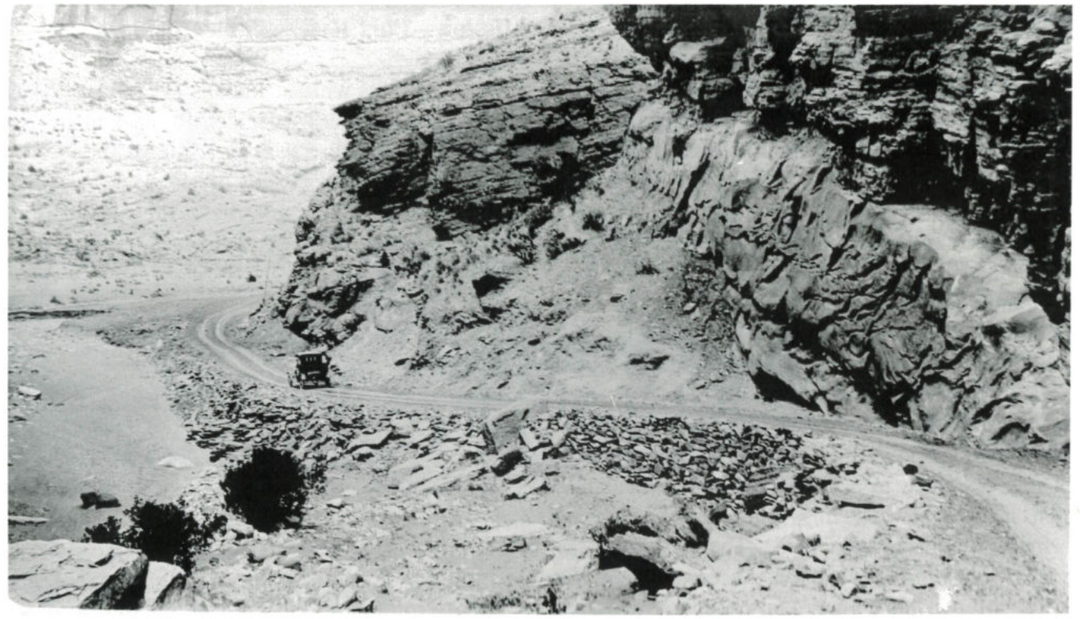
None of the men had any idea who painted these rock images or when they might have been daubed on the cliff wall, but they knew that the Utes disclaimed all responsibility for all the region's pictographs, saying that they had been crafted years ago by a people who long since disappeared. In fact, the Utes usually avoided the abandoned villages of the territory's ancient peoples, treating them as places of great witchcraft or bad luck.

Huntington said that these abandoned cities were the work of the Gadianton Robbers, a sect of Satan-worshipping thieves from the Book of Mormon who had helped bring about the destruction of the good Nephites over 1400 years before. Some of the Elk Mountain missionaries probably worried that the very Indians they were proposing to convert were the remnants of Gadianton's hordes, and if they were, then the Elk Mountain missionaries were stepping into the lion's den. Even more frightening to the missionaries was the fact that they had just heard in Manti that all the Indians east of Colorado had just gone of the warpath.[3]

If these fears gave the missionaries pause for thought, they didn't pause for long. They had more urgent things to fret over because the land they were traveling through was dangerous enough in its own right. Where today we see beautiful red-rock vistas of breath-taking variety and grandeur, the early pioneers saw only a harsh, unforgiving land that they considered to be largely worthless.

3 Pettit, op. cit., entry for May 16, 1855

Taking advantage of the shallow waters, the group crossed the Green River near the present day location of Green River, Utah. Photo courtesy of the Barnes Collection.



Taken in 1915, the car travels directly below the "jumping-off" point the Elk Mountain Missionaries had to descend. Upon reaching the cliff wall, located above the present day Arches Visitor Center, the missionaries broke the wagons down and then, using ropes, lowered them, as well as all the supplies and animals, to the ground. Photo courtesy Museum Archives.

On the tenth of June the heat was once again oppressive, but at least the trail was downhill as the train headed for the crossing of the "Grand", or upper Colorado River. Later that day, the Elk Mountain Mission reached its last obstacle, the dreaded "jumping-off place" near the present entrance to Arches National Park that had nearly stymied the Huntington Company the year before, forcing them to disassemble their wagons and lower them by ropes to the valley bottom. [4]

Greg and Lot Huntington had remembered the pesky jump-off from the year before and had "induced President Billings to take a company of twelve horsemen in the morning and move rapidly to the canyon; all the way down these men fixed the road, and at the 'jump-off' they worked a road over a point of the mountain covered with very large rocks; in half a day they completed a very passable road, where in the morning it had seemed impossible ever to pass with wagons. By doubling teams up and all the men that could be spared to steady the wagons down, we got all our wagons down safely about 9 o'clock at night."[5] It was yet another challenge met and overcome by the trustworthy scout of the train, Greg Metcalf.

President Billings and five scouts swam over the river on horseback to explore the valley they had chosen for their mission's headquarters. The Moab Valley had been their target destination from the beginning, thanks to the recommendations of the scouts who had been there before, Greg Metcalf and Lot Huntington. These six explorers passed through the site of present-day Moab on the 12th of June, examining the land for its suitability while also scanning the horizon for the Indians who were known to live there. Strangely, these scouts rode through the valley and up "Elk Mountain Creek" without seeing anyone; then they headed for a spot that Greg remembered from the year before, a cache site where he had buried thereof the Navajo Mission's wagons and their contents on a high bench about ten miles up Pack Saddle Creek.

4 Letter of William D. Huntington to the Desert News, December 21, 1854.

5 Huntington, Official Journal, op. cit., June 10, 1855.

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Greg's memory had not played him false and the cache was still intact. Although they did not know it, the scouts were probably not alone when they visited the cache site. Skulking somewhere in the sagebrush or hidden in the labyrinthine folds of the red rock were unseen Indians, watching the scouts' every move and waiting for the right time to make their presence known.[6]

On their way back to the crossing place of the Grand, Billings' scouting party passed through an oddly deserted Indian village where they found small, crudely-formed fields that had been hacked out of the dirt by hand and were watered by rudimentary irrigation ditches, but they saw no trace of the native farmers who made them. The missing Indians had probably relocated to a temporary safe haven from which to assess what this large body of armed Mormons wanted in their land. The Shiberetch, or the Elk Mountain Utes, had never seen anything like this train of invaders before. Only a few other wagon trains had passed through their land in their lifetimes and those were all small groups that did not intend to stop and stay. But the Billings' train was different; it consisted of 40 well-armed fighting men in 15 wagons who had brought cattle and plows and gave every indication of settling permanently.

Which is, of course, precisely what Billings intended to do. The spot he picked for his company's fort sat close to the water "on the south side of the valley, and on the east side of the river, near where it enters its perpendicular mountain-walled banks."[7]

The Elk Mountain Mission had made a good start; it would not be long before the missionaries began to express many divergent opinions on how best to live their religion and fulfill their callings. Economic competition between the mission's rival clans would soon split the Elk Mountain Forty-One into a number of sub-groups which were more interested in making a profit than in harvesting souls. And as the Elders debated these issues, the Shiberetch were watching and waiting, ready to make their move.

6 Author Richard Firmage makes this same assumption in his History of Grand County (Salt Lake City, U.T.: Grand County and Utah State Historical Society, 1996), 81-82.

7 Huntington, Private Journal, op. cit., 98.

Of Baptisms and Bartering- The Elk Mountain Mission—Part II

With our without Indians to convert, the Elk Mountain missionaries decided to stay on the spot they picked out near their crossing of the "Grand" River in what is now the city of Moab.

On Saturday, June 16th, President Billings decided to reveal how he thought the mission should be run. According to Oliver Huntington, Billings had "arranged and designed for all the company to work together as a family, having one common interest in all the improvements that should be made, and in all the grain raised, as but few of the brethren could plow, sow, plant, and water at once; and at the same time it was necessary that building, blacksmithing, cooking, etc., should be going on."

"I had a dream the other night and I saw the Mormons coming here to live on my land & I went and got my men to get them and I was going to drive them off, but the Great Spirit told me to let the Mormons alone that we must be good friends, & not fight anymore." - Chief St. John

Since most of the poorer Elk Mountain missionaries had difficulty assembling their meager kits and had received no financial assistance from the Church, they may have been in favor of Billings plan while a few of the richer, better-outfitted elders were probably less than eager to turn over all their belongings to President Billings once they reached their destination, relying on his judgment to determine who had need and who had surplus. Some of the missionaries may have already begun to question their young president's leadership ability during the trek out to Moab and still others may have harbored their own private plans of trading with the Indians. Whatever their reasons, enough of the forty-one missionaries were so strongly opposed to Billings's "United Order" plan that it was voted down within one day of its proposal.[8]

A wagon train near Cisco, Utah circa 1905. The missionaries traveled in covered wagons similar to the ones pictured. The wagons carried the groups' supplies, including farming equipment such as plows, shovels, and hoes, in addition to carpentry and blacksmith tools, food, and ammunition. Photo from the Museum Archives.

The veto of Billings's plan was his first leadership setback and it marked a significant turning point in the mission. Yet, strangely, the president made no mention of the incident in his own private journal.

Freed from centralized control, the forty-one missionaries quickly formed themselves into four teams, or "messes," based on their friendships and previous affiliations, operating as independent mini-corporations in competition with each other.

With their organizational infrastructure in place, these four teams set to work on the mission's communal building projects. Most of the men worked all day on the 18th and 19th, either clearing land or constructing the dam, but when it washed away on the 19th, they all pitched in to dig a two-mile-long irrigation ditch from their fields to a pre-existing beaver dam upstream on Elk Mountain Creek.

8 Oliver Huntington, The Official Journal of the Elk Mountain Mission, manuscript in the LDS Church Historical Archives City, Utah, entry for the date June 16, 1855, as reprinted in Andrew Jenson's recapitulation of the mission for the LDS Church.

Three Elders did not participate in these building projects because they were away on an assignment to retrieve the wagons that the Huntington Expedition had cached the year before. Greg (Metcalf) picked two experienced "Minute Men," Moses Draper and Clark Allen Huntington, to go with him. This trio took four horses and two yoke of oxen to pull the cached wagons back. But when they arrived at the site, they found that the Indians had looted it during the six days since Metcalf had last checked on it. Except for ten shovels, a little lead and tobacco, the unseen Indian raiders had stolen everything else.[9]

This unexpected loss should have come as a wake-up call to Greg Metcalf and the rest of the Elk Mountain missionaries; they should have realized that things around them were not as they appeared and that maybe the "missing" Shiberetch were not so missing after all.

The Shiberetch Utes of the Elk Mountains would never be famous as farmers, but they were widely regarded by the early settlers as the best cattle rustlers and the most incorrigible horse thieves in the Rocky Mountains. One New Mexican writer of the 1850s noted that the Utes "very seldom commit murder; but they consider theft to be one of the greatest human virtues, and no one is thought to be at all accomplished unless he can steal with adroitness."[10] Living, as they did, astride two of the major trade routes that ran through the heart of the Rockies, the Shiberetch had made their living for generations by "liberating" the possessions of others, usually cattle and slave children, which they then transported to

9 Huntington, Official Journal, op. cit., June 18, 1855.

10 Huntington, Official Journal, op. cit., June 18, 1855.

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New Mexico to sell. To the Shiberetch, this was not larceny, it was merely "resource relocation" and it was their time-honored profession. The Utes' trade in slaves and stolen cattle was the source of all their wealth and prestige; there was no shame in it and certainly no reason to stop.

The Shiberetch may have been professional thieves, but for most of June 1855, the Elk Mountain Missionaries had no Shiberetch to worry about. Then on June 23rd, after the Elders had sown large quantities of corn, peas, cucumbers, beans, melons, buckwheat, potatoes, and radishes over 10 to 12 acres of land,[11] some Indians finally made themselves known. Surprisingly, they were Green River Utes led by Chief Shouvornoup who appeared on the other side of the Grand, begging to be ferried across the river, claiming that the Snakes (Shoshone) were after them.

Whatever their true story was, these Green River Utes seemed happy to be among the Mormons, and they celebrated Sunday Services with their new friends on June 24th. They were also immediately helpful; pointing out that the site that the missionaries had picked out for their fort was actually below the high water mark of the Grand River at flood stage. Grateful, the Elders decided to move their fort to higher ground closer to the irrigation dam.[12]

On Saturday, the 30th of June, the Shiberetch finally showed themselves. According to McEwan, "In the afternoon an Indian chief by the name of Cuts-Sub-Soc-its and four of his band arrived in camp, they had a few skins to trade. The corn at the head of this valley belongs to him. He is the same that rescued Brother Metcalf from being killed by the Navajos, we told them also our business and they appeared friendly and satisfied."[13]

The other diarists of the mission recorded the arrival of the little Shiberetch chief in similar terms, although they all disagreed on how to spell his difficult Ute name in English. Regardless of how the chief's Ute name was best rendered phonetically in English, all agreed that his nickname was the disarmingly sympathetic "St. John".

St. John was a small man given to deep contemplation before speaking and although he had decades of experience intercepting caravans that passed through his territory over the Old Spanish Trail, he claimed that he did not know that the Mormons had arrived in his valley until he saw the smoke from their field clearing fires, prompting him to come to see what they wanted. William Pace wrote, "after some little conversation between himself and the interpreters as to our business there on his domains, he expressed himself well satisfied and said we were welcome to a share of his country, but that we were the first white men or red that he ever gave any privileges to stop on his premises any longer than they had time to get away."[14]

Andrew Billings was called to be president of the Elk Mountain Mission. Billings was quite young and often hesitant in his leadership. Image from *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah.*

St. John explained his uncharacteristic generosity, saying, "I had a dream the other night and I saw the Mormons coming here to live on my land & I went and got my men to get them and I was going to drive them off, but the Great Spirit told me to let the Mormons alone that we must be good friends, & not fight anymore.' And from that [dream] he said he knew it was good for us to be there, that he wanted us to learn his wild boys how to plow, raise grain and work like we did."

No sooner had the missionaries started work on their fort than the local Indians objected. Ethan Pettit noted, "The Indians are coming in every day and camping close by us. There is quite a number present, and the Chief's brother says that we must not build a fort and that we must stay without a fort until our grain is ripe and then we must go home."[15] Said Pace, "Some little feelings arose with Old Nicholas (a relative of Chief St. John) and other in regard to our staying on this land, hauling stone, and piling them up as we pleased, as they seemed to call it, which was soon settled satisfactorily."[16]

These are re-assuring words, but on the 11th of July, St. John reappeared in person and he was not pleased. He warned the Mormons that he had one thousand men under his command and at the same time he reprimanded his braves for hanging around the mission, sponging off the Elders.[17] He told Billings that he did not expect the Mormons to give his men food every time they asked, but he also stated that he did not want any more missionaries to come to his lands, that there were already enough to teach his tribe how to farm.[18]

Regardless, the walls of the Moab fort continued to rise and none of the missionaries complained about the labor. All four walls were finally finished on July 19th, with Huntington's mess completing its assigned wall in last place, as usual, two days behind the others. According to Sheldon Cutler, the Huntington mess was slow because it contained men who simply did not pull their weight. On July 17th he noted, "All the wall is finished except the part belonging to one mess, which has progressed rather slow. This afternoon W. Freeman, E. Wight, and myself had our part measured to ourselves." A few days later, Cutler, Freeman, and Wight defected from the slacker Huntington mess altogether, forming a small mess of their own.[19]

All through July, Indians of many different tribes frequented the mission. Yampa Utes, from northwestern Colorado came down to see what the Mormons were up to, as did visitors from Taos, Santa Fe, and the Pueblo area. Chief Arrapene, brother to the great Walker, arrived with a small band on the 14th, carrying the mail from Manti.

Brigham Young had expressly forbidden the slave trade in 1852 but the 1854 Chicken Creek treaty ending the Walker War tacitly permitted it. In any event, Arrapene and the other Ute leaders could hardly be expected to give up their old ways. Along with cattle rustling, the slave trade was the Utes' principal means of income and their sole export. They were a trading people who roamed the West exchanging goods with dozens of other tribes, as well as with the Americans, Mexicans, and Mormons- it just so happens that these "goods" were mainly slaves and rustled cattle, which the Utes rarely bothered to pay for before they moved them from source to market.

Arrapene's band of San Pitch Utes stayed in Moab for four days and both sides were content in the knowledge that they were living the Gospel in brotherly harmony. Then the visiting Utes bid their Mormon friends farewell and departed to sell their kidnapped slave children in New Mexico.

On July 19th, with the fort finished, President Billings made an unusual decision- he allowed eight of his forty-one men to go home on leave, including his Second Counselor and two of his four mess leaders.

When the furloughees departed, the future of the Elk Mountain Mission still looked bright. On Sunday, the 22nd of July, fifteen of the local Indians asked to be baptized and the whole happy community adjourned to the banks of the Colorado for the services. The faithful fifteen, who were later indentified as "Taby-wats" Indians from "the other side of the mountains,"[20] were initiated into their new church by Pres. Alfred Billings and given new Mormon names that their white brothers found easier to pronounce.[21]

In spite of their squabbling and internal competition for buckskin profits, the July baptism of 15 Shiberetch Indians seemed to justify all the missionaries' efforts. From the Mormons' perspective, lives were being changed, the Lamanites were being redeemed, and prophecies were being fulfilled. President Billings had every reason to believe what he wrote when he communicated to Brigham Young on August 10th that, "Ever since we left your city, the blessings of God have attended us both in our journeyings & our labours here to an almost astonishing degree. We are all snugly stowed in stone houses inside our stone fort…Peace prevails universally."[22]

Unfortunately, it is doubtful that the Shiberetch attached the same significance to their baptisms that the Mormons did. Since most western tribes shared their

11 McEwan, op. cit., 50.
12 McEwan, op. cit., 52.
13 McEwan, op. cit., 53.
14 Pace, op. cit., 22.
15 Pettit, op. cit., entry for July 8, 1855.
16 Pace, op. cit., 25-26.
17 McEwan, op. cit., 56.
18 Billings, op, cit., 12.
19 Sheldon B. Carter, Diary of Sheldon Bela Cutler, entries for July 17 & 20, 1855. Typescript by Christine T. Cox, 1995, available at the LDS Church Historical Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.
20 Billings report to Brigham Young, August 10, 1855.
21 Billings Journal, op. cit., 15.
22 Billings report to Brigham Young, August 10, 1855.

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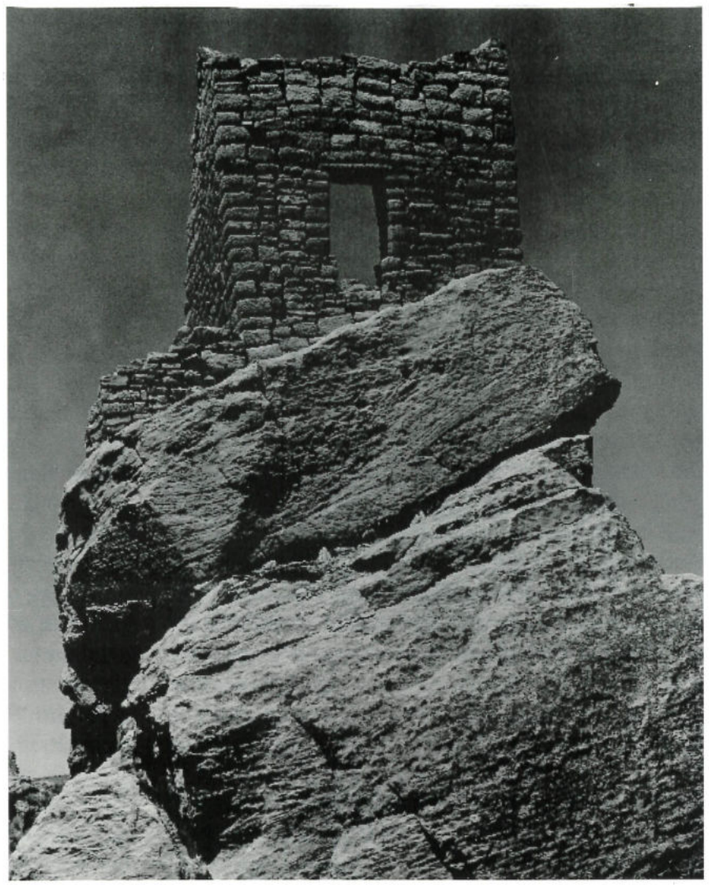
dances and rites with their neighbors at inter-tribal pow-wows as a matter of hospitality, the Shiberetch probably thought they were doing the same thing when they agreed to be baptized. And even if these July and September Indian converts were sincere, they probably had little understanding of how the Mormons expected them to change their lives.

But for the moment, these concerns made no difference to the triumphant missionary/traders living on the Grand River. At least temporarily, they could bask in their success and contemplate a future that appeared to be both financially and spiritually profitable.

Sadly, their celebration did not last long and the July 15th baptismal deluge would prove to be the high-water mark of the Elk Mountain Mission. After it passed, and the tide of enthusiasm receded, the true colors of Moab's saints and sinners would be revealed and their day of reckoning became unavoidable.



The ruins at Hovenweep fascinated the Mormon colonist, who called them "The City of the Gadianton Robbers" in reference to a story in the *Book of Mormon.* Young had sent Huntington Mission in 1854 to discover if these ruins were inhabited by peoples from the *Book of Mormon.* With the help of their Navajo guides, the expedition explored the ruins but reported them uninhabited. It was this mission to the Navajo that inspired the later Elk Mountain Mission. Photo from the Barnes Collection.

The Best Laid Schemes- The Elk Mountain Mission-- Part III

For the rest of the month of July, Billings' Elders were kept busy building stone huts inside their fort while the Utes continued to pour into the area. At this same time, some of the local Utes came into the fort claiming that the Navajos were on the warpath, bent on bringing destruction back to the Elk Mountains. On Sunday the 29th, Comarwats spoke at a meeting chaired by John Clark and Oliver Huntington, saying that the missionaries "were the only friends they had, that all the nations around us were at war, that they did not want to fight."[23] While the Shiberetch pleaded their case to the Mormons in hopes of enlisting them in the squabble with their Navajo cousins, they probably did not disclose that it was the Shiberetch theft of Navajo horses that was the original cause of the dispute. The Navajo were only threatening war if their stolen horses weren't returned, horses which the crafty Shiberetch had likely already traded to the Mormons for guns and ammunition.

Comarwats's plea sounded innocent enough to the missionaries, but both Pace and McEwan warily noticed that unidentified "strangers" had begun hanging around the fort, showing a great deal of interest in the Mormons' building projects.[24] Even more Indians arrived in early August as the messes finished work on their huts, one of whom was Capsuin, a Tampa Ute Chief, who was carrying a letter from the Mormon settlements for President Billings.

Although the Elk Mountain missionaries had no way of realizing it at the time, the official mission journal of Oliver Huntington records an event of great importance on August 16th. Huntington wrote, "Indians are constantly coming from strange parts. Some came in from near Gouse (Taos) who had never seen bread and knew not what it was for. They said they were hunting friends and having heard of Mormons settling here, they had come to see us and wanted to be friends."[25] This passage is significant because all through the first half of 1855, the Muache Utes and Jicarilla Apache from the San Luis Valley near Taos had been on the warpath against the white settlers of New Mexico, attacking several trading posts in surprise raids that caught their victims completely unaware. Just prior to August, the army had launched a counter-offensive from Fort Massachusetts, which had probably driven these "friendly" Utes westward to Moab in search of refuge.[26] Rather than looking for friends, these "Taos" visitors were perhaps more interested in sanctuary or in scouting new targets of opportunity. And they almost certainly had seen bread before.

"In trading with them, which you all have the privilege of doing, as we do here, be strictly careful not to cheat or defraud them…"
- Brigham Young

On August 17th, four or five lodges of White Eye's band of Utes arrived from the north and on the 19th, three of the eight missionaries who had left in July came back. The three returnees were John Lowry, John Crawford, and the far-riding Stephen Moore, who had carried correspondence all the way to Salt Lake and back again. John McEwan records that, "the natives were called in and talked to, President B. Young's letter was also read to them, they felt good and said that the contents of the letter would lay heavy on their hearts; [they] were glad to hear that we intended to go with them and live, travel, and teach them, etc."

If Oliver Huntington's 1895 account of this incident is to be believed, the Prophet's letter revealed that he was not pleased. Huntington claimed that Brigham Young had received word that several things were not going according to his wishes. First, he supposedly was not happy that President Billings had taken four volunteer missionaries "from Manti, to the Elk Mountains, with no authority to call them, [and] he gave instructions for those men to return home immediately, as Manti was a frontier town, and had as much as it could do to take care of itself."[27] Secondly, the Prophet was not content, according to Huntington, that his missionaries had built a fort and were clustered up inside it on the "Grand River." He instructed them to fan out immediately and go to live with the various Ute bands in ones and twos.

Huntington's memoir, which was written to provide moral instruction for LDS youth, pushes the theme that disobedience to the Church leadership brings ruin and chaos. To this end, Huntington consistently makes Billings and his counselors – Greg Metcalf in particular- out to be disobedient freelancers, bent on ignoring the Prophet's express instructions not to build forts or trade with the Indians. Huntington implies that this disobedience led to the failure of the Elk Mountain Mission, but when other contemporaneous sources are consulted, Huntington's "anti-fort" assertions appear to be less than credible.

Regardless of what Oliver Huntington remembered in 1895, Brigham Young never issued orders to the Elk Mountain Mission to stop building its fort or to refrain

23 John McEwan, Journal of John McEwan, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 65-66.

24 William B. Pace, Diary of William Byram Pace, transcript copy in the Harold B. Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 28; and McEwan, op. cit., 66.

25 Oliver B. Huntingon, Official Journal of the Elk Mountain Mission, LDS Church Historical Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

26 Ned Blackhawk, Violence Over the Land (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 198.

27 Oliver Huntington, "The Elk Mountain Mission", Juvenile Instructor (Salt Lake City, UT: G.Q. Cannon & Sons, 1895), 282.

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from trading with the Indians. Nor does he seem to have been upset that President Billings had recruited four extra volunteers from Manti. In fact, the opposite appears to have been the case, as Young's surviving letter of instructions to the missionaries, dated August 6, 1855, indicates. In it, Young repeats the advice he gave to the 1854 Huntington Mission to the Navajo regarding the Indian trade, stating, "In trading with them, which you all have the privilege of doing, as we do here, be strictly careful not to cheat or defraud them..."[28] There was little chance of this happening because, for the most part, the Indians got better of the Mormons in their trades, swapping their surplus ponies and buckskins for guns and ammunition that most savvy gentile traders were loathe to give up.

(Young) does recommend that the elders "branch out and scatter yourselves among [the Indians], go where they go and live with them, and among them, and prove to them by every act of your lives that you love them, and that you live among them to benefit their condition...," but he also adds a clarifying postscript stating, "I mean by going among the Indians and [living] with them, to go where there is an opening and [where] you can go in safety."

"(We) found the Indians had stolen, all our beats, some turnips, and dug up a good number of potatoes...(The) natives were stealing every chance they get (and) they(have) stolen and carried off all our melons and squashes." - Alfred Billings

Billings clearly must have thought he had his mission on the right path because he immediately allowed fifteen more of his best men to return home to the Mormon valleys on leave. None would ever return.

The departure of the fifteen men, combined with the permanent loss of four who left in July and never returned, reduced the mission's force down to just 22 men. From this point forward, the Elk Mountain Mission was little more than an arms-trading free-for-all, with each man bartering his own goods for anything he could get. The Indians were only too happy to participate in this trade and strangely, none of the Elders found the Indians' interest in weaponry and ammunition to be in the least bit suspicious.

With the floodgates of commercial competition opened by Brigham Young's August 6th imprimatur, some of the missionaries decided to form their own independent trading company. They called their venture the "Alfred Billings & Co." and they planned to depart for the south to trade with the Navajo immediately after the August furloughees left for the Mormon valleys carrying some of the company's buckskin profits back to civilization.

The Indians who continued to gather around the Moab fort were not blind to their opportunity. Almost immediately, horses started disappearing. Some were returned, thanks to the efforts of a few friendly natives, but others were not and on the 2nd of September, St. John came down to the fort and admitted that he had lied to the missionaries when he told them that his people would not steal from them.[29]

On September 10th, corn started disappearing from the fields and the Elders were forced to guard the crops in shifts.[30] The six missionaries who had gone to visit the Navajo returned on the 12th, reporting that they had been kindly received and that their trading overtures had gone well, but they also said that they had made no attempts to preach the gospel to the Navajo.[31] By this time, the Elk Mountain missionaries seemed to have officially become the Elk Mountain traders.

On September 15th, Chief St. John sent a messenger from his village to fetch the Elders to give him a priesthood blessing in hopes of curing his unspecified sickness. The Elders went and performed their healing rite alongside Shiberetch shamans who danced and lit gunpowder to scare the evil spirits away. Someone's spiritual medicine must have worked, for St. John quickly recovered. The Elders received several more requests for their impressive healing services.

With these outward signs of success to their credit, six more of the remaining 22 elders pack up their kits and went home to the Mormon valleys on September 19th.

The Indians did not wait long to strike. On the morning of the 20th of September, William Hamblin and President Billings went into the fields and "found the Indians had stolen all our beets, some turnips, and dug up a good many potatoes." In spite of the fact that "natives were stealing every chance they get, [and] they [have] stolen and carried off all our melons and squashes,"[32] the Mormons took no extraordinary defensive precautions. Then on the 21st, without warning, all of the Indians who had been encamped around the fort abruptly disappeared, leaving only two or three old men behind. Even the naïve Elk Mountain missionaries recognized this move as an unmistakable sign of aggression and on the morning of the 23rd, they pushed their herd of cattle to safer ground.

All was not right and about a mile from the fort, Charles, a son of St. John, drew a pistol and shot James W. Hunt in the back.[33] With all the pretense of friendliness dropped, the Indians delivered a withering fusillade. The Mormons returned fire, with Sterrett, Cutler, and Allen Huntington acting as a rear guard while the others dragged Hunt back into the fort. Bullets whistled around them and Pres. Billings was struck in the hand he used to drop Hunt's blanket before the Elders' semi-orderly retreat stemmed the Utes' attack and all the men made it safely back to the fort.

The Indians did not give up. While they laid down covering fire from sniper position in nearby hills, they sent a man forward to set the fort's haystack on fire, hoping to burn through the far end of the corral and free the horses that the missionaries had penned therein.

During the stand-off, John Clark and Clark Huntington used the old hat-on-a-stick trick to dupe the Indian riflemen into firing on it, thus revealing

28 Brigham Young letter to Alfred Billings, August 6, 1855, Brigham Young Outgoing Correspondence files, LDS Church Historical Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

29 Sheldon S. Cutler, The Diary of Sheldon Bela Cutler, typescript by Christine T. Cox, 1995, LDS Church Historical Archives, Salt Lake City, UT, page 30, entry for September 2, 1855.

30 McEwan, op. cit., 88.

31 McEwan, op. cit., 89.

32 Billings, op. cit., 34.

33 According to Pres. Billings's first official report on the attack to Brigham Young, dictated to John Eagar in Manti on October 1, 1855, the ball that killed Hunt passed through his lower back near his spine and lodged in his thigh. Hunt lingered 13 hours before dying. See Billings' October 1, 1855 report, Brigham Young Incoming Correspondence file, LDS Church Historical Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, CR 123 4-1, box 24, fd. 1.

The remains of the Elk Mountain Mission photographed in 1906. The crumbling ruins were little more than a oddity north of the community of Moab, a silent testament to the false start at colonizing the Moab Valley. Photo courtesy of the Museum Archives.

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Looking down from the hilltop towards the former location of the fort. Black Oil Company can be seen on the left of the photo while on the right is Motel 6. The rocks in the foreground provided natural fortifications from which native gunners besieged the fort.

their positions. Huntington then shot one attacker who jumped up to celebrate his "kill" prematurely. Once the Indians "found that we had their range they left the hill," John Clark reported.[34] Just after sundown, the trapped missionaries began negotiating their surrender, promising to vacate the fort and leave all their possessions behind if the Indians would only agree to cease fire and return to their camp. The chief of the Shiberetch, St. John, was not present during this final skirmish and for some reason the missionaries feared that their fate would be worse if they did not escape before his return, so they made plans to depart early the next morning before the chief made his way back o the "Grand" River.

The night of September 23rd was a long and gloomy one for the 13 survivors of the Elk Mountain Mission. James Hunt slowly slipped away about 3 am, and around that same time the renegades cut off the fort's water supply, ending all possibility that the elders could hold out through a protracted siege. The dispirited men lost all remaining hope.

True to form, the Utes were more interested in plunder than blood and they did not follow the escaping missionaries, who rode on until they happened upon a camp of Indian women on the north side of the "Grand" River.

Their flight was precipitous, to say the least. They did not stop to rest lame animals or wait for stragglers and on September 30th, the day the fastest members of Billings's party reached Manti, they left a man behind. Without waiting for instructions from Salt Lake, Billings then told all his Elders to go home and shortly thereafter, when Brigham Young confirmed the recall, the Elk Mountain Mission officially ended, just four months after its promising beginning.

Historians have traditionally ascribed a myriad of causes to the Elk Mountain Mission's collapse. Most attribute its failure to the Mormons' diplomatic blunderings, such as building a fort and squatting on the Shiberetches' best farm land. They assign the bulk of the blame to the wayward missionaries, probably because this is the theme repeated by Oliver Huntington in his three accounts, which are among the most easily found documentary sources dealing with the mission.

Most historians have felt that it was the Mormons' fault for disobeying their Prophet, for not understanding the Shiberetch, and for committing insulting offenses that the noble tribe just couldn't tolerate. These are the traditional Euro-American explanations for what went wrong, but they do not correspond very well to the known sequence of events in Moab or the historical trends of interactions between the Utes and whites on the Colorado Plateau in previous decades.

The Mormons were, unquestionably, naïve in assuming that the Shiberetch would be just another friendly Ute tribe. The Shiberetch were proud, independent raiders, not tractable "diggers" who had to scratch out a living eating lizards and melons. Had the Elders been aware of just who they were dealing with in the Spanish Valley, it is hard to believe they would have made themselves as vulnerable as they did in late August and September. In this regard, the Mormons in Moab were at a disadvantage compared to the mountain men and the federal surveying parties of 1853 who preceded them. Those gentile explorers well understood the perils of trading guns and ammunition to the mountain Utes and usually they refused to do so.

In the end, it is hard to see what the missionaries did specifically to enrage the mixed-band renegades to the point of attack. It is perhaps simpler and more accurate to side with Arrapene and say that the Shiberetch raided the Mormons' fort because raiding is what they did for a living... Nothing personal, it was just business, Shiberetch-style

In retrospect, it seems likely that many of the Indians' religious conversions were simply ruses designed to gain the Elders' trust. This was certainly the opinion of the Sanpete Ute chief Arrapene, who told John Eager that "he had told Brigham that the Elk Utes were bad and had no hearts and would get mad and fight the Mormons." Arrapene had also questioned the wisdom of the missionaries' arms trading policy, stating, "the Mormons would not let him have powder for fear he would kill them, but they let the Elk Utes have it and now they have killed three of the Mormons."[35] To Arrapene, the cause and effect relationship between the Shiberetch nature, the Mormons' arms trading policy, and the demise of the Elk Mountain Mission was self-evident.

In the end, it is hard to see what the missionaries did specifically to enrage the mixed-band renegades to the point of attack. Instead of looking for complex cultural or political scenarios to explain the destruction of the Elk Mountain mission, it is perhaps simpler and more accurate to side with Arrapene and say that the Shiberetch raided the Mormons' fort because raiding is what they did for a living and the Mormons foolishly empowered them by trading away their arms and ammunition. Nothing personal, it was just business, Shiberetch-style.

***Mark Blanchard, the great-great-grandson of Mormon scout Levi Gregory Metcalf, is the author of* Going to my Grave: The Life and Mysterious Disappearance of the Mormon Scout Levi Gregory Metcalf.**

With the help of his family, librarians, archivists, and research assistants, he completed the biography of Greg Metcalf in four years. The Elk Mountain Mission is only a small story in the incredible work Blanchard wrote. He has allowed the Museum of Moab to print an abridged version of the work for the benefit of our readers.

For a complete bibliography or to purchase a copy of Mark Blanchard's book* Going to My Grave: The Life and Mysterious Disappearance of the Mormon Scout Levi Gregory Metcalf *visit the webstie www.gregmetcalf.com

34 Joseph E. Thiriot, Life Story of John Clark, LDS Church Historical Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, MS20021, 6.

35 Letter of John Eager to Brigham Young, October 1, 1855, Brigham Young Incoming Correspondence file, LDS Church Historical Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, CR 123 4-1, box 24, fd. 1.

Human Possession:
The Native American Slave Trade in Utah

by Michelle L. Mulder

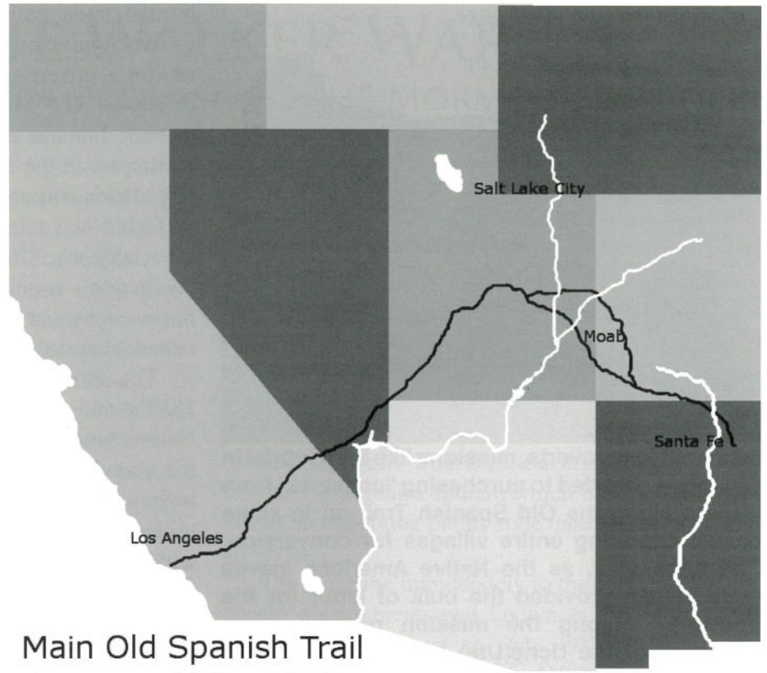
"Struggle for conquest of the great Southwest is symbolized in the dreams, courage and perseverance of the explorer and pathfinder who proved that possession is more effective than conquest,"[1] explains Faun McConkie Tanner, author of *Regional History of Moab and La Sal, Utah*. This emphasis on possession, and the introduction of the concept to the Native Americans by the Spanish, fueled the Native American Slave Trade of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Long before the Europeans entered the Great Basin, nomadic hunter-gathers and basket makers had already inhabited areas ofeEastern Utah. Around 400 A.D., the Anasazi moved into southeastern Utah from south of the Colorado River. The Anasazi, meaning "the ancient ones" or "ancient enemies" in Navajo, prospered until 1200 – 1400 A.D. when food shortages associated with climate changes forced them to move into present day Arizona and New Mexico. In Utah, the Numic (or Shoshonean) speaking peoples of the Uto-Aztecan language family evolved into four distinct groups: the Northern Shoshone, the Goshute or Western Shoshone, the Southern Paiute, and the Ute Peoples. The Southern Paiute were non-warlike and ultimately suffered at the hands of the more aggressive Utes. The Utes were hunters and gatherers who quickly adapted to the horse and buffalo culture of the Plains Indians and also became noted traders with the Spanish, which included a role in the Native-American Slave Trade.

The Spanish did not introduce slavery to the Ute Indians or surrounding groups of Native Americans in the area, but they did contribute to the development of the slave trade; related largely to the concept of possessions. The existence of slavery was noted by some of the first Spanish expeditions in the American Southwest, which took place as early as 1590. Captives during this time were usually adult males, who were utilized as laborers within Native American communities. The origins of servitude in this area are not known for certain; they could have extended from prehistoric times, could have resulted because of influence from indigenous peoples living in modern day Mexico, or could have developed because of the demand for labor within communities. Despite its origins, this model of holding people as captives or having people as servants changed as the Native American Indians came into contact with the Spanish explorers and settlers from the East.

A primitive Ute wikiup and family circa 1930. Over hunting and limited resources lead many Ute bands to sell captured enemies and even children into slavery to obtain coveted goods from white traders. Photo from the Museum Archives

Spanish presence in Utah and New Mexico fueled what became the Native American slave trade. Until this time, the idea of ownership to the Ute Indians was foreign. Richard Firmage explained that "Indian societal character traits put them at a disadvantage in the new scheme of things being gradually imposed on them and upon the land by the explorers and the immigrants who followed. The two groups neither conceived of, nor valued property the same way: wealth was shared by most Indians rather than husbanded, and the notions of competition and status were not the same."[2] As nomadic hunters and gatherers, the Native Americans moved to and from areas based on climate and the availability of food. The land belonged to no one, as did nothing else. When the Spanish regained control of New Mexico in the 1690s, they increasingly continued their exploration and trade activities and ultimately created what we today know as the Native American Slave Trade.



Main Old Spanish Trail
Routes 1830 ~1850

First explored by Fathers Dominquez and Escalante in the 1700s, the overland route from New Mexico to California provide much needed supplies for both areas as well as Native American slaves traded for Mexican goods.

Along the Spanish Trail, the Spanish were able to trade with Native Americans anxious to acquire foreign goods, such as horses, knives, and other tools. Approximately 1,200 mi (1,900 km) long, it ran through areas of high mountains, arid deserts, and deep canyons. It is considered one of the most arduous of all trade routes ever established in the United States. Explored in part by Spanish explorers as early as the late 1500s, the trail saw extensive use by pack trains from about 1830 until the mid-1850s. By 1846, both New Mexico and California had become U.S. territories as a result of the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848, and after 1848, large numbers of Mormon immigrants were settling in Utah, Nevada and California all along the trail, affecting both trade interests and tolerance for the slavery of American Natives.

The problem posed for Native Americans, who owned no personal property, was that they had nothing deemed significant enough to trade with the Spanish. Therefore, the Spanish offered to trade horses and "white man's goods" for women and children.[3] As soon as humans became a traded commodity like tools, the concept of slavery among the tribes changed. Humans became something that could be bartered for possessions and this created a demand for slaves. Tanner explained that "Indians could raid the camps of their enemies, or even their neighbors, and trade the captives to the whites. Strong bands attacked weak ones. The destitute and hungry Paiutes and diggers of the Nevada desert country were most commonly raided and carried away. Sometimes these unfortunate wretches sold their own children to sustain their own miserable lives. Hundreds of these native children and women from weaker tribes were fattened and sold."[4]

This new demand for women and children caused a transition from the former concept of captives to humans as capital and, therefore, the Native American

1 Faun McConkie Tanner, *The Far Country: A Regional History of Moab and La Sal, Utah* (Salt Lake City: Olympus Publishing Company, 1976), p. 33.

2 Richard A Firmage, *A History of Grand County* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1996), p. 53-54

3 Tanner, 38-39.

4 Tanner, 38-39.

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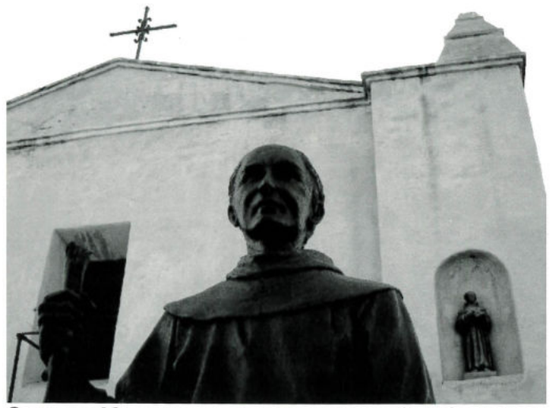

Strapped for converts, missions like San Gabriel in California resorted to purchasing "converts" from traders along the Old Spanish Trail or, in some cases, capturing entire villages for conversion. The neophytes, as the Native American slaves were called, provided the bulk of labor for the missions. Among the mission records many members of the Uche(Ute) and Paiuche(Paiute) tribes are recorded.
Photo of the San Gabriel Mission courtesy of Flickr user To Save On Postage.

slave trade was created. Former societal concepts of captives and slavery, in which males were held for servitude and laborious purposes, probably continued to exist; however, the new demand for women and children initiated a tribal feud. The war-like Ute tribe took advantage of this situation. It was observed that Ute Leader Chief Walkara (aka Wakara or Walker, 1808 – 1855, was a Native American leader of the Timpanogos tribe, with a reputation as a diplomat, horseman and warrior, and a military leader in the Walker War) would attack groups of Paiutes or weaker tribes, to kill the men and then take the women and children to sell into slavery. Mexicans also participated in the slave trade. Similar to the Spanish, the Mexican would barter horses and weapons to acquire women and children.[5] Even though captives had already existed in Native American societies, the bartering system introduced by the Spanish created the idea of using human captives as chattel.

Relationships between Native Americans and Spanish explorers, and later by Mormon explorers, were both fueled by trade. While the Mormons had limited trade with the Utes, they refused to trade goods for humans. Brigham Young, the first appointed territorial governor in Utah, refused licenses to traders of slaves. The Mormons thought of it as unethical to trade humans as goods. Those who continued to participate in the slave trade were arrested and tried. Legislation was enacted in the Utah Territory in 1852 to forbid slave trading but the practice continued, especially by Chief Walkara.[6] The emphasis on possession, acquiring goods, and trading slaves became a way of life for some tribes. New laws were not an adequate way of reversing these behaviors.

The closing of the Spanish Trail in the mid 1850's and the passing of legislation to end the Native American slave trade would not easily erase the already-set precedent. Instead, it angered tribes, including the Utes, who were left without a means to acquire the commodities and "white man goods" which they had grown accustomed to. In his book *The Moab Story: From Cowpokes to Bikespokes*, Tom McCourt tells a famous story of the powerful Ute chieftain, Arrapene. This story emphasizes the distress associated with upheavals at the end of the Native American slave trade. According to the story, Arrapene brought Paiute children to Provo in 1853 in attempt to sell them to the Mormons, but the community had no interest in purchasing the "slaves". When the children were refused, Arapeen grabbed one of the children by the feet, bashed his head into the ground, and killed him. He then told the members of the community they were "heartless" for not purchasing the child and saving his life. Out of anger and frustration at the inability to sell the slaves the child was killed. It is alleged that no caravans of slave traders have crossed the Utah desert since 1848; however, there are said to be Paiute ghosts who still walk the Spanish Trail. If you find a quiet place near the canyons of Moab and listen carefully, you might hear a Paiute mother crying for her children.[7]

Michelle Mulder is originally from Southern California. She completed her MA degree in US history at the City College of New York in Manhattan. She currently lives in Moab where she enjoys climbing, mountain biking, and kayaking.

5 Firmage, 68.

6 *Ibid.*

7 Tom McCourt, *The Moab Story: From Cowpokes to Bike Spokes*. (Boulder, CO: Johnson Books, 2007) p. 26.

The Walker War:

Conflict and Compromise on the Mormon Frontier

by Travis Schenck

Relations between Mormon settlers and native Ute tribes inhabiting the Great Basin and Intermountain West valleys were, at best, cool. The tribes, who were primarily nomadic by nature, soon found their traditional hunting grounds being plowed and cultivated. As Brigham Young, the Mormon Prophet and territorial leader, encouraged colonization of the West, the friction between the two groups increased, with new settlements and forts forcing Ute tribes out of the valleys they had once called home. As tensions rose to a head, a series of battles between Ute groups and Mormon settlers over territorial sovereignty ensued. The Ute bands, led by Chief Walkara of the Timpanogos tribe (whose name was often anglicized to Walker) attacked many outlying Mormon settlements, while settlers responded in kind by attacking and driving off many native groups. The conflict has been dubbed the Walker War and would come to shape relations between European settlers and the native tribes of the Intermountain West.

Prologue to War

Young had led his band of followers across the Great Plains, fleeing Illinois and heading toward the Rocky Mountains. By 1847, the first group of Mormons reached the Salt Lake Valley and began making preparation for permanent settlement in the area after Young declared, "This is the right place; drive on."[1]

The Mormon Pioneers arrival in the valley heralded a new chapter in western history as they found themselves settled squarely in the middle of what had been traditionally Native American territory. The few Europeans who had explored the area had merely passed through and had built no lasting settlements beyond several trading posts. By 1860, over 14,000 members of the LDS Church had crossed the plains to Salt Lake City and had been sent to colonize territories as far north as Canada and south as Mexico.[2]

The Mormons became neighbors to several tribes of Ute peoples who used the valleys of northern and central Utah as summer hunting grounds. The Ute people, or Noochew in their own language, were members of the larger Numic peoples who inhabited the Colorado Plateau and the Great Basin. Though originally a subsistence people, eking out a living from the tough native plants and animals, the Ute culture changed with the introduction of the horse to the Southwest. The Utes transitioned to a culture similar to the Plains Indian, which included living in tepees and adopting plains style dances, clothing, and art styles.

The Ute tribe immediately to the south of the new Mormon settlements was known as the Timpanogos

1 Allen, James B: Glen M Leonard (1976). *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Desert Book Company. pp. 246-247.

2 Hartley, William G. (July 1997). "Gathering the Dispersed Nauvoo Saints, 1847-52". *Ensign: pp. 12-15.*

The drawing, completed in 1853, shows Chief Walkara, or Walker as he was often referred to as, and Chief Arrapene.

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tribe. The tribe made its summer home within the Utah Valley, near the present day Provo/Orem area, as well as farther south in the Sanpete valley near Ephraim and Manti, Utah. In the winter they often traveled south to areas along the northern rim of the Grand Canyon.

Among the Timpanogos, a charismatic and clever man named Walkara, or Yellow-man, rose to a position of authority at the same time in which the Mormon settlers began to colonize his homeland. At first, Walkara and his tribe made peace with the new settlers, as they brought trade goods and medicines which helped his people, but over time, relations grew cold and war loomed on the horizon.

Relations with the Mormons

In the beginning, LDS Settlers to the Utah and Sanpete valleys had no intention of driving off the native people of the area. Many of the Mormon settlers felt the natives were members of a lost branch of the tribes of Israel who had migrated to the Americas sometime in the 6th century B.C. and, as such, they sought to baptize the native tribes.

Issac Morley, a leader of the group of pioneers who settled the Sanpete valley, wrote: "Did we come here to enrich ourselves in the things of this world? No. We were sent to enrich the natives and comfort the hearts of the long oppressed."[3] Mormon settlers even nursed the native tribes of the area, who became sick with small pox which the pioneers had inadvertently exposed to the Ute.

The relationship was mutually beneficial to both groups. The Ute provided furs and meat, and scouted for the Mormon settlement and, in exchange, the settlers provided medicine, gunpowder, and other goods; however, over time, the trade became increasingly one sided as the Mormon settlers became more established. Soon the Ute had very little to give in exchange for the goods the Mormons brought. It was at this point the two cultures began to clash.

Coming to a Head

In July of 1853, Ute tribesmen found themselves in confrontation with the citizens of Springville Utah.

"The tensions came to ahead on July 17, 1853 when several Utes were trading at James Ivie's home near Springville. During the transaction, a dispute erupted between a Ute man and his wife over her failure to strike a good bargain. When Ivie tried to intervene, the dispute turned violent and, in the end, Ivie killed an Indian brave named Shower-Ocats, who was a relative of Walkara. The Utes were outraged."[4]

In an attempt to negotiate for peace, the Springville militia sought out Walkara and his camp, hoping to alleviate the tensions between the two groups. Walkara demanded the Mormons offer one of their own to be killed as retribution. Horrified by the thought of killing one of their own members, the militia fled the Ute camp. Walkara, incensed by the actions of the settlers, began to gather numerous bands of Ute, Shoshone, and Paiute to attack the settlers.

The War

The name "war" is a misnomer for the conflict between Walkara and the settlers. Walkara's band attacked far-flung settlements and trading parties.

In the Sanpete valley, Walkara's band fell upon a group of men traveling with goods to Salt Lake. The men were found, throats cut, disemboweled, and scalped. The discovery enraged local settlers, who quickly set about avenging the deaths of the three men. This took place near Nephi, Utah

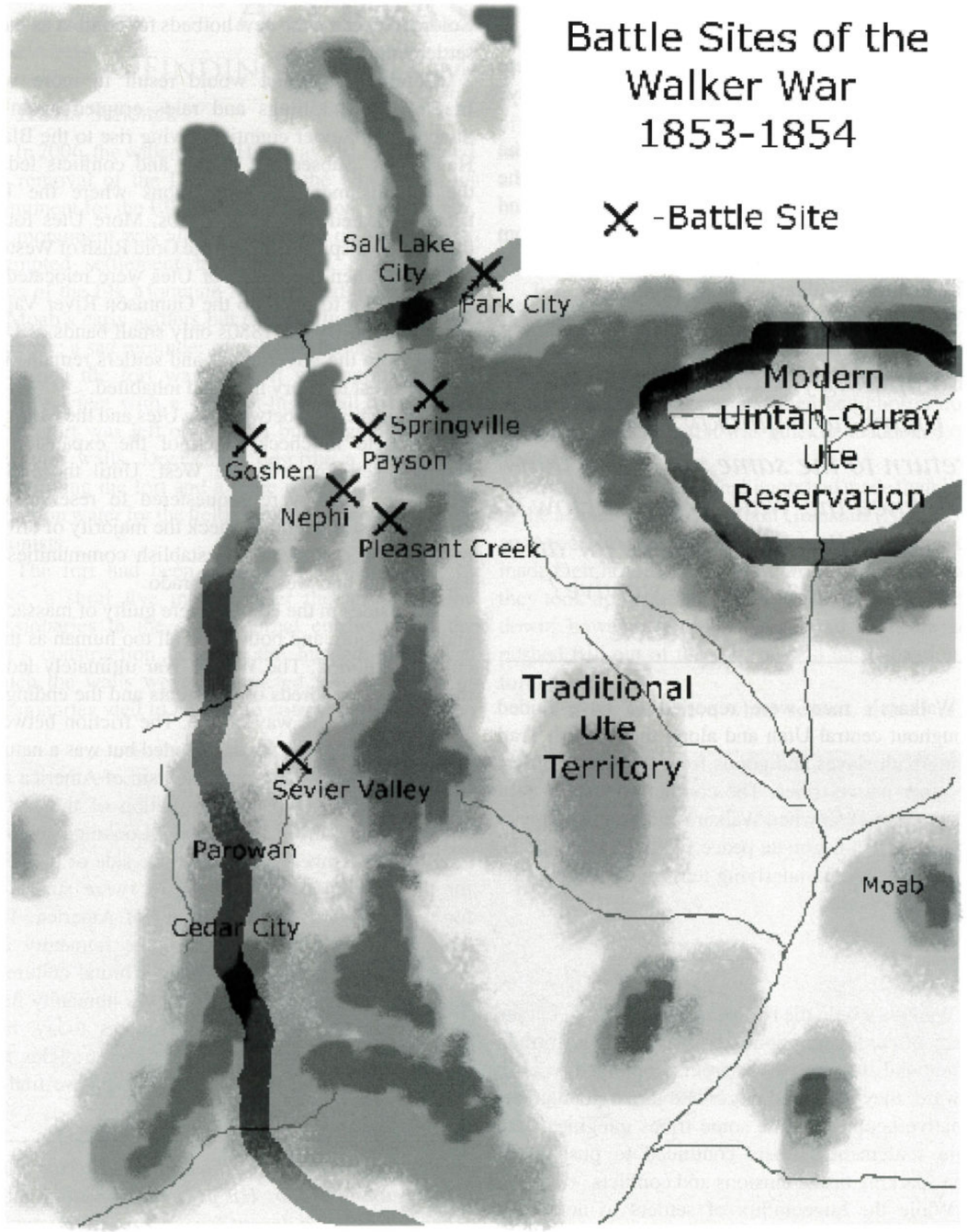
"This barbarous circumstance actuated our brethren, counseled by Father Morley of San Pete… and President Call of Filmore, to do quite as barbarous an act the following morning, being the Sabbath. Nine Indians coming into our Camp looking for protection and bread with us, because we promised it to them and without knowing they did the first evil act in that affair or any other, were shot down without one minute's notice. I felt satisfied in my own mind that if Mr. Heywood had been here they would not have been dealt with so inhumanly. It cast considerable gloom over my mind."[5]

A recent excavation of the described gravesite where the Utes were buried near Nephi confirms the account, revealing the natives were bound and

3 May, Dean L. *Utah: A People's History*. Bonneville Books, Salt Lake City, 1987, p. 104.

4 http://www.legendsofamerica.com/na-indianwarbattles-5.html accessed June 27th, 2011.

5 Juanita Books, ed., *Not by Bread Alone: The Journal of Martha Spence Heywood, 1850-56* (1978).



Though not always full-on battles occured, sites of conflict between Mormon settlers and Chief Walkara's bands occured in Park City, Springville, Payson, Goshen, Nephi, Pleasant Creek, and Sevier Valley.

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executed by the vengeful settlers. It is unlikely these Utes were part of the attack on the men from Sanpete but they quickly became victims of the eye for an eye conflict.[6]

The attacks and retributions continued between the two groups. Brigham Young, in an effort to defend the people, encouraged settlers to move into centralized defensible forts, hoping that by removing them from the edges of the communities they would be less likely to fall victim to Walkara's bands.

As humanity finds itself competing for limited resources today, how quickly would we return to the same struggles that defined the Walker War? How soon will we find an eye for an eye "necessary" to survive?
-Travis Schenck

Walkara's men were reported to have raided throughout central Utah and along the Spanish Trail ,taking both slaves and goods from the white settlers and other native tribes. The conflict continued until the winter of 1853 when Walkara and Young met near Levan, Utah to negotiate peace. Though some peace was achieved, the underlying tension for the conflict was not resolved.

Aftermath

Walkara would die two years later in 1855, but the legacy of conflict continued on between the Mormon settlers and the Utes. As settlers continued to push outward, they displaced larger and larger populations of native peoples. While some tribes integrated into white settlements, others continued to push back, often sparking brutal tensions and conflicts.

While the huge influx of settlers to north and central Utah brought relative stability to those areas, remote settlements still found themselves the victims of raids. Areas such as eastern Utah and western Colorado became the new hotbeds for conflict as more settlements appeared.

Continued conflict would result in more war. In the 1860s, killings and raids erupted again in Sanpete and Sevier counties, giving rise to the Black Hawk War. Subsequent battles and conflicts led to the establishment of reservations where the Ute tribes relocated during the 1870s. More Utes found themselves displaced during the Gold Rush of Western Colorado when thousands of Utes were relocated to Utah in order to open up the Gunnison River Valley to settlement. By the 1880s only small bands of Utes hiding from the government and settlers remained in the once vast territory they had inhabited.

The aggression between the Utes and the Mormon settlers held in check much of the expansion of Mormon settlement in the West. Until the 1880s, when the tribes were sequestered to reservations, they successfully held in check the majority of efforts by Mormon colonizers to establish communities in eastern Utah and western Colorado.

Both sides in the conflict were guilty of massacres and aggression, and both acted all too human as their cultures collided. The Walker War ultimately led to the death of hundreds of innocents and the ending of the traditional Ute way of life. The friction between the two cultures was never intended but was a natural result of the westward expansionism of America and inevitable prelude to the destruction of the Native American way of life and culture. Looking back, it is easy to point fingers and blame one side or the other for their actions, but both groups were struggling for their survival on this frontier of America. That struggle often stripped them of the humanity and made enemies of friends creating a brutal culture of retaliation in an effort to survive. As humanity finds itself competing for limited resources today, how quickly would we return to the same struggles that defined the Walker War? How soon will we find an eye-for-an-eye "necessary" to survive?

Travis Schenck is the curator /director of the Museum of Moab. His passion for history began when worked as a docent for the Tongass Historical Museum and Totem Heritage Center in Ketchikan, Alaska. Attending Brigham Young University, he received a degree in history and museum studies.

6 Salt Lake Tribune, 8 June 2007.

A Treasure Lost:

Finding the Elk Mountain Mission Fort

by Travis Schenck

In 2006, the widening of Highway 191 necessitated the removal of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers monument for the Elk Mountain Mission. At the time, the monument was all that remained of Moab's first attempted settlement by Europeans. The battered ruins of the Elk Mountain Mission had housed many of Moab's early settlers but eventually they were left to decay; a sad reminder of colonial failure.

When the fort was built, it was approximately 64 by 64 feet with a ten-foot-high wall. The center of the fort was left open, with buildings built along the outer walls. Documents describe a large corral surrounding the fort and a three-mile ditch providing irrigation water for the fields planted by the missionary colonists.

The fort had been abandoned in September of 1885, a short five months after the arrival of the missionaries in the area. Journal entries about the fort's construction describe the hurried method in which the walls were constructed, as two teams of missionaries vied to be first to complete their portion of the building. From the beginning, the fort was not intended to be a permanent home for the colonists but a foothold from which a larger community could be built. This followed the same system Mormon settlers had used in communities throughout the intermountain west.

It is likely much of the fort was damaged by the same Native Americans who had been responsible for the hurried evacuation of the Mormon missionaries. The natives had searched for any useable items among the remains of the camp and then had chosen not to remain in the fort and it was quickly abandoned once again.

By the 1870s, new inhabitants had made their home in the abandoned fort. William Granstaff (Negro Bill), an African American, and his companion Frenchie made their home in the valley. Originally prospectors, they took up residence in the old fort hoping to settle down; however, tempers flared and Frenchie soon pushed Bill out of the fort, only to later abandon the fort as well.

As more and more white settlers arrived in the

Looking east at the fort in 1939, it is unclear whether the standing structure had windows or if those stones were later removed. Much of the outer walls have fallen down and only a small portion of the internal structure is left standing.

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Today a few scattered stones show all that remain of the fort.

valley, the fort became a ready source of building materials and slowly the ruins became more scattered and sparse. Few chose to settle near the fort since the ground tended to be marshy and prone to flooding. Soon the town of Moab took shape and the fort was an oddity on the edge of town photographed by visitors and mentioned as an interesting attraction.

In 1940 the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers erected a monument along what is now highway 191. The monument had been constructed using stones from the original fort. At the time, the fort was little more than a pile of rocks outlining the boundary of the walls and a central standing structure.

Bit by bit, the stones continued to disappear. By the time the Museum of Moab opened in 1958, the once ten-foot high walls were choked with weeds and barely rose over two feet high. Many of the stones had been removed by the property owners in a effort to discourage trespassers from exploring the ruins.

In 1976, the Utah State Historical Society applied to have the forts remains recognized by the National Register of Historic places, only to be rejected possibly because of the flood of Bicentennial related sites applying to the Register that year.

Various efforts by the Grand County Historical Commission have attempted to have the fort recognized, preserved, and even rebuilt. None of these projects has been successful. The original monument was moved further south as the road was widened and, eventually, the demands of a growing community necessitated the highway be enlarged even more. The monument was relocated to the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers Museum, located on Center Street and 200 East in Moab.

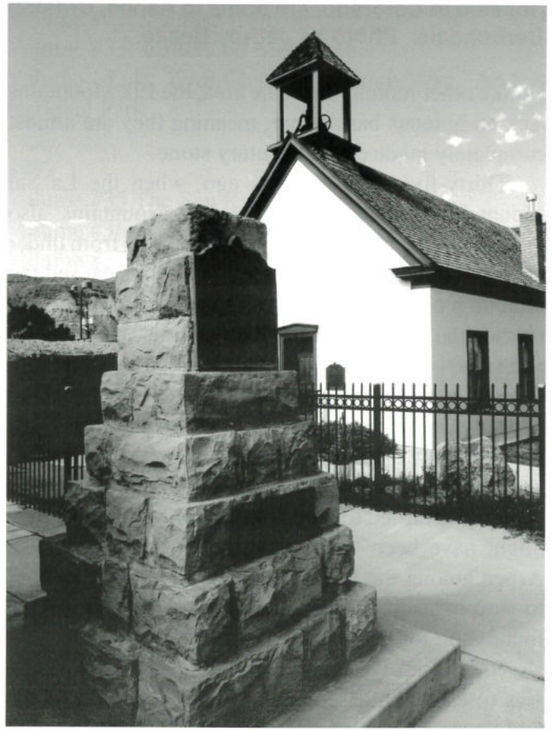
Today, finding the remains of the fort is a difficult journey. The land where the fort was straddles two property lines behind the location of the current Motel 6. The trees pictured in the 1976 photo have grown denser and only a small scattering of one of the walls remains, making any clear identification of the original location difficult. Climbing a nearby hill pictured in the 1939 photo, one can look down on the on the former site. There are no visible remains of the

The remains of the irrigation ditch dug by the missionaries to bring water from nearby springs to their fields. The ditch was nearly one mile in length.

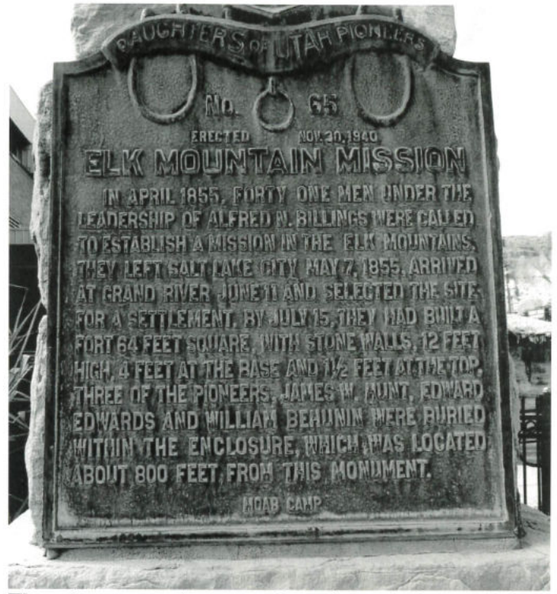
fort, the surrounding corral, or the irrigation canal built by the missionaries, though on closer inspection, a faint impression of the canal is visible in the fields behind the fort site.

Portions of the former settlement are also buried under a graded parking area for one of the businesses which occupy the property. It is unlikely any artifacts remain at the site besides a few rough cut stones and even these are slowly disappearing as a few curious explorers have carried them off to become garden curiosities.

Looking back at the early history of the Elk Mountain Mission and the subsequent settlement of the Moab Valley, the fort itself became victim to neglect as settlers tried to forget the fort and what had happened there. The failure of the missionaries to establish a permanent colony made the ruins a sore reminder of the mistakes and disappointments that came as part of the settlement of the West. As the missionaries returned home, they told stories of "savage" Indians and a desolate wilderness. Their



The Monument of the Fort as it stands today. It was rededicated in 2010 with a new plaque seen below the original brass sign.



The bronze plaque placed on the original monument. The plaque indicates the fort was located 800 feet behind the original site of the monument. In 2006, when the monument was moved, it had already been moved once before, rendering the plaque's directions obsolete.

descendents chose not to return to the perceived ill-fated valley.

Later settlers had no connection to the fort and they took advantage ready of building materials but saw no reason to preserve what was generally regarded as a failure. By the time interest emerged in preserving the fort, little of it remained and only the confused stories of the Elk Mountain Mission and the actual events that occurred there survived.

While today we have a better picture of the founding of the fort and its subsequent abandonment, the ravages of nearly 160 years have erased the remains of the fort from the land. It is a reminder of how transitory much of our history is and how easily we can lose the places tied to it. Today you will only find the Elk Mountain Mission in books and on the worn stones of a misplaced monument, a piece of history almost lost.

The monument memoralizing the Elk Mountain Mission fort can be viewed at the Daughters of Utah Pioneers Museum located at 45 North 200 East in Moab, Utah.

A Mountain by any Other Name:

Discovering the Real Elk Mountains

As members of the Elk Mountain Mission left the Utah Valley, their original goal was to create a settlement at the Elk Mountains; however, most of the party was unfamiliar with the terrain of the Colorado Plateau and as they wearily emerged from the San Rafael Swell, the looming La Sal Mountains quickly were misidentified as the Elk Mountains. The missionaries turned south towards the future location of Moab.

The real Elk Mountains, located in Colorado, are home to Aspen, Crested Butte, Snowmass, and Carbondale. Photo by Jeffrey Bealle.

The real Elk Mountains were named by fur traders in the 1840s who had traveled through the area trapping beaver along the Gunnison River. The trappers had given favorable reports regarding the area and these had been disseminated through national newspapers in hopes of luring settlers to the Colorado Territory, which had been recently acquired after the Mexican-American War.

Settlements grew in the area in the late 1800s when silver was discovered among the Elk Mountains. Today, the Elk Mountains are known for their fantastic skiing and the various resort towns found throughout them. Aspen, Crested Butte, Snowmass, and Carbondale are some of the well known communities near the Elk Mountains.

Geologically, the Elk Mountains were formed by sediment from the tropical inland sea that covered much of the central United States during the Cretaceous Period. The sediment formed a small chain of islands which, as the world cooled during the subsequent Ice Age, became land locked, forming the hills that would become the Elk Mountains. Shifting tectonic stress created by the eastern movement of Pacific Plate caused the North American Plate to buckle and deform, creating the Rocky Mountains. As the Rockies rose, the Elk Mountains did, as well.

Unlike other mountains in the area, the Elk Mountains lack an igneous basalt core, meaning they are almost completely made of sedimentary stone.

Thirty-five million years ago, when the La Sal Mountains were forming, the Elk Mountains also received an abrupt change as igneous rock from under the earth thrust upwards. These intrusions caused the mountain peaks to lift up even more dramatically and infused the mountains with the minerals, such as gold and silver, which drew early prospectors to Colorado. Over time, natural erosion and glaciations have carved out the spectacular peaks and valleys that now host some of the world's most famous ski resorts.

Had the missionaries not detoured from their course and turned towards the La Sal Mountains, they might have been the founders of a community like Aspen among the Elk Mountains. Instead they chose to stop beneath another mountain range and lay the foundation for the history of Moab.

Note: One of the goals of the Elk Mountain Mission was to establish a settlement along a portion of the Old Spanish Trail running through Moab. Portions of the Trail also run through the Gunnison Valley just below the Elk Mountains in Colorado.

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