At Sword's Point, Part 2

A Documentary History of the Utah War, 1858-1859

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without a fight, and killing some of the infernal scoundrels, but I suppose it is all right, and [we] will carry out the program.

In the evening, a meeting was held, and Bishop Tarlton Lewis called for all the teams and wagons to help the removal south. Twelve wagons were sent—more will be soon.

FROM THE NORTH POLE ON HALF RATIONS:
EXECUTING THE MOVE

With the availability of Richard D. Poll's scholarship, there is little need to describe here much more of the "what" of the Move South. The following vignettes supplement Poll's study with the less accessible firsthand views of hard-pressed Mormon women, children, and some extraordinary husbands and fathers. It is an under-studied group worth meeting.

If, on the evening of Brigham Young's 21 March announcement, Hosa Stout had worried about reluctant neighbors and ominous, snowy weather, by the next morning, the outlook was brighter. Stout found Monday to be a "warm pleasant day, snow melting." As Brigham Young perused his mail that day, he found a letter that must have lifted his spirits while reinforcing his belief that he was on the right track. It was a positive note from a plural wife of Asa S. Calkin, president of the British Mission, who had been called to remain in Liverpool with the departure for Utah of Apostle Benson. Staying behind in Utah, Mrs. Calkin was self-reliant, but she had more than a few practical questions for which her distant husband was unable to provide timely answers. Without hesitation, she sought counsel from the spouse of her friend, Zina Huntington Young, on the day after his big announcement.

MARIEETTA S. CALKIN TO BRIGHAM YOUNG,
22 MARCH 1858, LDS ARCHIVES.

Shall I intrude too much on your precious time, and add a weight to that burden which is already heavier than any mortal can stand up under, without the spirit of God, by asking a few questions relative to our preparations for

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47Here Martineau reacts to Young's bland notice to Bishop Lewis. "you will learn by the Circular, a copies of which are now forwarded to you, that the present policy has varied somewhat from the past." ibid.  
48Stout Diary, 23 March 1858, Brooks, ed., On the Mormon Frontier, 1855.  
49For an example of Mrs. Calkin's earlier search for advice on financial matters, see Marietta S. Calkin to Brigham Young, 23 January 1858, LDS Archives.
this general move, which all good saints intend to participate in?—Perhaps I am wrong in thinking that the cause, which calls for the absence of my husband, together with the debilitated state of my health, and almost helpless state of our family in not having any man to look after our affairs—is a sufficient excuse. It is what I have to offer.—If I am wrong please tell me—

In the first place I would like to tell you how strong we are to move or help ourselves—We have one yoke of cattle about a dozen cows, some of which we thought might work in the yoke, will that be best?—Had we better let all the stock we do not want to use in removing, remain in the care of the man that now has them?—We have a wagon but no wagon cover, or tent, or wagon boxes. We have enough in our house to make our small family comfortable, as well as to entertain our friends when they call to stay all-night—of course it is more than we can remove at one load with our provisions—shall we go with one load and return for another?—

It has been intimated to me that a single woman would like to go with us, she has a plenty of wearing apparel, I think that is all—it would be agreeable to us all to accommodate her if we can bring it about.—We have some good lumber Mr Calkin put up in a state of preservation before he left—also good flour beena [bins] and cupboards—in which we could put all we might wish to bury.

Theodore might dig the hole, though he is not very strong, and we might store them away—but to cover them, I should like some man that had good judgement and felt interest enough to direct in it so that they might indeed be preserved from wet—Looking-glasses and clocks might as well be burned at once as to be put indifferently away—and I prefer it,—For I could then say "blessed be nothing."—

1 will wait for some kind of an answer if you please.

P.S. Please may we locate near your family for the sake of their society.

That Marietta Calkin turned to Mormonism's supreme leader for counsel in such matters reflects a number of factors: her immediate needs, friendship and proximity between the Young and Calkin families, Brigham Young's direct responsibility for her husband's absence in England, his approachability even for parishioners seeking guidance in the most mundane aspects of life, and her elevated position in Mormon aristocracy.

Then, too, there is the matter of Asa Calkin's own temperament: at times a somewhat stern, self-centered one that may have prompted his wives to seek guidance elsewhere. The leadership of a patriarchal, Victorian society

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90Here Mrs. Calkin takes issue gently with Young's specific advice of the previous day to preserve such fragile, hard-to-acquire items.
in motion on the frontier was not always a tender one. Asa Calkin's
later letter to Lizzie, one of Marietta's sister-wives, is a model of
insensitivity to the hardships of the Move South. Recovering from
smallpox in what his wives, unaware of his illness, must have viewed
as the urban comforts of Great Britain, he wrote:

So, you have pulled up bag and baggage and left my house
while I have
gone have you? Well, how do you like "Mormonism" rough and
tumble?
You begin by this time to understand something about what I meant don't
you? I think you once asked me what I meant and I told you it was to live
in a house or a tent or a wagon or by the roadside, to eat bread or roots,
to
dress in cloth and or skins &c And from all accounts you are likely to have
a
taste of the whole budget. How do you like it? Its nothing after you get
used to it. Only hold on to this rod of iron and it will land you safe on the
other side. "The Kingdom of God or nothing" is the motto, hold on to it
and it will help you on wonderfully.51

Asa Calkin's wives were not the only Mormon women lacking
empathetic
husbands during the Move South. A prime example was the behavior of
Elias Smith, a man often called to roles such as Salt Lake City's acting
post-master, a judge of that city's probate court, and an editor of the
Desert News.
From these judgmental perches and the safety of his home cabbage patch,
husband Smith stirred himself from a nap one day to heap long-distance
demands on his refuge-wives in Provo. Smith ended one letter with advice
on loading the family wagon and an admonition: "try and fix the bedsteads
and table so that they will not rub more than is necessary and do not kill
yourself in packing up."52

The children participating in the Move South viewed the experience
as either frightening or a lark, depending upon their age as well as their
families' circumstances. One unidentified girl, age eleven, found it deeply
unsettling to leave her home—ready for the torch—for the uncertainties
of life on the road:

LEVI EDGAR YOUNG,
CHIEF EPISODES IN THE HISTORY OF UTAH, 34–35.

We packed all we had in father's one wagon and waited for the command to
leave. At night we lay down to sleep not knowing when word would come of

51 Calkin to Lizzie Calkin, 5 July 1858, Calkin Diary, LDS Archives. For more such insensitivities, see
Calkin to Marietta Calkin, 27 August 1858, ibid.

52 Smith to Lucy and Amy Jane Smith, 2 July 1858, Franklin E. Smith Papers, Special Collections,
Marriott Library, University of Utah.
the army which we thought was coming to destroy us. Mother went about the house placing everything in order and mending every bit of clothing we could find, for we knew that the time would come when we might be in great need of food and clothing. There were seven of us children in the family. We put away all our playthings, for the days found us so frightened that all we did was to follow father and mother from place to place, looking into their faces for a word of comfort and a look of cheer.

One morning father told us that we should leave with a large company in the evening. He said little more. There was packing and the making of bread. Along in the middle of the day father scattered leaves and straw in all the rooms and through my tears I heard him say "Never mind, little daughter, this home has sheltered us, it shall never shelter them." I did not understand him then, but as we went out of the yard and joined all the other people on the main road I learned for the first time that the city was to be burned should the approaching army attack the people.

That night we camped on Willow Creek in the south end of the Valley and at ten o'clock every soul with bowed head knelt in prayer to God. As I dropped to sleep I heard my mother whispering that the Lord had heard our prayers and that our homes should not be burned. I cried and cried, but at last I dropped to sleep.

As with many other children, the Move South thrust on John Fell Squires, age twelve, the role of boy-drover. For Squires, unhappily in charge of the family pig, there was none of the dignity, derring-do, and freedom experienced by eleven-year-old George Richard Hill trailing livestock south astride a Nez Perce pony obtained by his missionary-father from Indians at Fort Limhi. Yet even though miserable and temporarily fatherless, Squires came to realize the depth of Mormon compassion at the hands of gruff "old" David Udall, progenitor to multiple congressmen from today's Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado.

Autobiography of John Fell Squires in Notes of Interest to the Descendants of Thomas Squires by His Son, Typescript, 5–6, LDS Archives.

Mother was left with four children and winter staring her in the face, very little food in the house, and mighty little wood outside. We burned considerable sagebrush that winter, at least [brother] Harry and I thought so.

*All was not adventure even for young Hill: "Mother turned my collar back and looked to see what was the matter. To her horror, she found my shirt and back covered with body lice. I shudder to think of it now. The camp stopped, the cattle were turned out, the big kettle hung on the fire, filled with water, and I was stripped to the skin and all my clothes boiled." Autobiography of George Richard Hill, ms 1622, LDS Archives.
as mother and my sister could burn it as fast as we could gather and lug it into the house.

No direct news came to us from Dad [Thomas Squires, in Echo Canyon with the Legion]. Occasionally word would be given out in ward meeting that all were getting along OK in camp and that Uncle Sam's men were snowed in and half starved one hundred miles east of them. Of course this was good news to us. Well, we managed to survive the winter one way and another, but came out as poor as crows.

Our next trouble was the call to Move South. As we had nothing to move with, we did not go. But everything comes to those who wait.

One evening in the early part of April (1868), one David Udall, an old friend of Dad's, drove up to our house [in Salt Lake City] and inquired about Father. When told that he was out in Echo Canyon, he said, "That is just what I expected, so I have come to move you south and will take you to Nephi where I live. This place is 98 miles from S.L. City and I can't take all of your belongings as my horses are very poor and the roads are out of sight. We will pile in those things most needed and leave the balance here." Mother objected as she thought we were leaving for keeps, so wanted to take along all that was movable. There was quite a discussion between the two, but this man had his way, so only the articles most needed were piled in and the remainder left behind.

Of course I was just old enough for any change, so the idea of travelling one hundred miles struck me as being a pleasure trip and expecting to ride that distance.

When all was ready to pull out, Mother said, "By the way, Bro. Udall, there is an old sow pig out in the sty. We had better turn her loose as she will starve to death if left in the pen." We went to the pen to attend to this, but when Udall took one square look at that pig and another at me, an idea struck him, so he said, "We had better take it along with us, as pigs are pigs and a very scarce article just now." Mother replied, "Why, we can't have that hungry, dirty thing in the wagon mixing up with us all that way." "Oh no," said Udall, "You don't have to. That boy (pointing to me) can drive it as he will have to walk anyway. We will have to travel very slowly due to the load we already have, the mud, and the poor condition of my horses."

You must remember his horses pulled through the famine, consequently there was mighty little pull left in them for our trip. I had a lurking idea that this man Udall had it in for me, having made myself somewhat fresh several times in his presence when told by him to do this, that, and the other, but this knock-out blow surely did put a quietsus on my anticipated ride.

When the wagon was loaded and we were ready to start for Nephi, Bro. Udall procured a piece of rope, tied one end of it to the pig's hind leg, and, I was going to say the other end to one of mine. All the same, I was attached
to the other end. Suddenly I was doing a two twenty clip around the sty until I became dizzy. Mother hollered, "Let the darn thing go." But I could not get loose and the pig headed for the street. We shot past the wagon and took to the sidewalk, from there I was pulled into another corral and yard on the block. The pig sampled everything in sight, then had time to pick her teeth before the wagon caught up. While our outfit covered only four miles that day, we, the pig and I, covered all the real estate between fences with our tracks.

We finally reached our destination, but not until that pig had sampled every weed, old shoe, bottle, can and rag between Salt Lake and Nephi, looking into every yard and breaking the world's record for speed and high jumping on the shortest notice.

As a boy travelling to Nephi with Bro. Udall, I thought him cross and mean. As I grew older, however, I realized that was not his inherent nature. He came to Salt Lake to take us to his home just out of friendship for Father and to obey counsel. He knew that he would half [sic] to house and feed us after we landed at his place. I know now it was worry and anxiety over this great responsibility as well as fatigue that made him Irritable. There were two small rooms in the Udall home and these good folks emplaced one of them and turned it over to Mother. There she set up housekeeping.

All this time we had never heard one word from Father since he left for Echo Canyon. There was little if any mail getting through and Mother often said to us children, "Another day gone and no word from your Father." One afternoon in the month of June I walked into our little room and said, "Mother Dad will be here tonight." "Why, what have you heard?" "Nothing, only he is coming." Mother did not even look up from her work, just said, "Don't say such things when you don't know what you are talking about." Well, between sundown and dark that very night, Dad loomed up on foot, tired and dirty, having walked 35 miles that day. He told us that he had walked the entire distance from Salt Lake City to Nephi but, to me, he looked like he had come from the North Pole on half rations. He had inquired so often for us along the road that his voice was almost gone when he found us.

When Dad landed in Salt Lake City from Echo Canyon, he made a bee line for our house in the 20th Ward, not knowing that we had long ago gone to Nephi. Smoke was coming out of the chimney and he said to himself, by golly, now for a surprise. When he walked without knocking, a strange woman sprang to her feet saying, "Well, what do you want?" He got the surprise right then! After staring around and getting his breath, he said, "I believe this is my house. At least it once was, but things are so muddled up of late that I might be mistaken. Do you know where the people have gone who, I think, used to live here?" The woman replied, "This place was empty, so we decided to occupy it." That was all the satisfaction he got from her, so that she soon had Dad headed south.