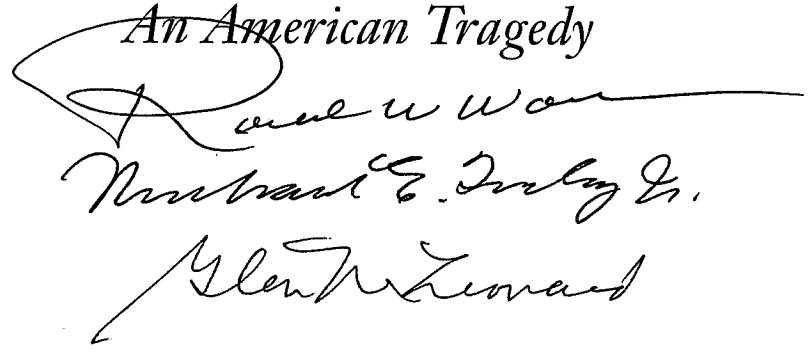
RONALD W. WALKER

RICHARD E. TURLEY JR.

GLEN M. LEONARD

MASSACRE AT MOUNTAIN MEADOWS

An American Tragedy



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CHAPTER ELEVEN

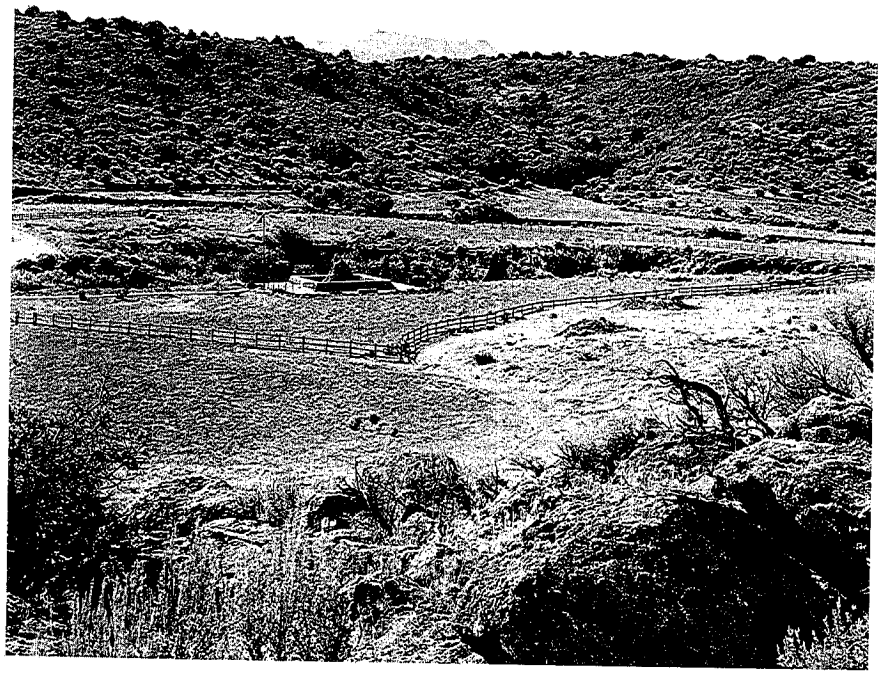
A Fearful Responsibility

Cedar City and Southwest, September 5–7, 1857

Unaware of the Cedar City plans, the Arkansas emigrants drove on to their next camp. Leaving Leach's Spring on Saturday morning, they continued along Leach's Cutoff past Pinto, through the scrub oak and cedar and below the sturdier timber of the highlands to emerge at the northern neck of the Mountain Meadows. For centuries, Paiute bands had lived in and near the Meadows, and just the year before, a county court had granted Jacob Hamblin herding rights there "for the benefit of the Indians Stationed on the Santa Clara."[1]

The emigrant scouts on horseback reached Hamblin's ranch at the north end of the Meadows late Saturday morning or early in the afternoon. The slower wagons with their lumbering teams pulled into the valley a few hours later. Both were expected. David Tullis, who worked at the ranch, remembered Mormon messengers Ellott Willden, Benjamin Arthur, and Josiah Reeves arriving there shortly before the emigrants with a warning of their "sauciness."[2] As ordered, the three young men had come to watch the emigrants for reasons to justify the planned Indian attack in Santa Clara canyon and to hurry them toward the ambush site.[3]

Tullis, who was building a house and corral for the absent Hamblin, eyed the emigrants cautiously but found them "respectable-looking"



MOUNTAIN MEADOWS CAMP AND SIEGE SITE. *John W. Telford, Courtesy LDS Church History Library.*

despite Cedar City's forebodings. "One of the men rode up to where I was working, and asked if there was water ahead," he remembered. Tullis gave them the same answer Hamblin had at Corn Creek, pointing to the springs at the south end of the Meadows. Tullis had no complaints about the emigrants, who he said treated him "civilly."[4]

Hamblin's wife, Rachel, also watched. She displayed reserve, also wary because of the rumors. When the wagons drove past her home without incident, she must have felt relieved.[5] Her husband was still in Salt Lake City and had left Samuel Knight in charge.[6]

Knight was caring for his Danish-born wife, Caroline, who had given birth to a daughter a short time before. The delivery had not gone well, and Caroline lay "nearly at the point of death." To spare her the heat of their home in Santa Clara, Samuel had recently moved his family to the Meadows, where their temporary dwelling was a wagon box. Samuel's life had not been easy. His mother, Sally, one of Joseph Smith's earliest and staunchest converts, died in childbirth during the Missouri troubles; after the Saints' expulsion from Nauvoo, Samuel's father, Newel, made it only to the winter camp in present-day Nebraska before he too died. Samuel struggled to Utah in 1847, just fourteen years old.[7]

Samuel and Caroline were at Hamblin's when the emigrants approached. The men who visited the ranch asked Samuel where they could pasture their animals and rest "for a few days before starting out on the deserts to the west." Just as Tullis had, Samuel "directed them to the south end of the valley where grass and water were abundant." Knight's job was to care for the cattle, and like Hamblin, he wanted the emigrant cattle away from the Mormon herds ranging the foothills near the ranch.[8]

"I saw the train encamp at [a] spring from a high point of land where I was cutting wood," remembered Albert Hamblin, a Shoshone in his mid-teens whom the Hamblins had taken into their family several years earlier.[9] Normally the practice of emigrants was to park their wagons in a rough circle and cluster themselves inside in family groups.[10] But at the Meadows the members of the Arkansas company camped with their wagons only loosely grouped—evidence that they felt no danger. They pitched tents near the wagons and probably herded their cattle into a grassy draw just over a small ridge northwest of their camp.[11]

They posted herdsmen at strategic points to look after the grazing stock, concerned more about wolves and other animal predators than about human raiders. By now the emigrants had passed through the last Utah settlement on the trail, and the Mormons were far less numerous. The Paiutes seemed no threat. Besides, the undulating plain, sweet grass, and gurgling spring had a beguiling peace.[12] With milk cows and prized horses staked nearby and the loose cattle lowing in the distance, the emigrants settled down for the night.

The bucolic scene continued the next morning, Sunday, September 6, with men managing livestock, women and children gathering firewood and filling pails from the spring, and fires dotting the campsite. Tradition suggests that after breakfast, the people gathered under a large tent to commemorate the Lord's day, guided by a "white haired, old, Methodist pastor" and perhaps other clergymen in the group. If the tradition is true, the clergy may have been lay ministers, for no known members of the group were men of the cloth.[13] That morning one of the emigrants visited Rachel Hamblin to see if he could buy butter and cheese. "I had none," she said, "and he stayed but a short time, saying his people had camped at the spring, where they would stay awhile to recruit their stock."[14]

Doing reconnaissance duty, Ellott Willden and another man visited the emigrants twice. When John Higbee sent them to the Meadows

to find something to justify an Indian attack, he also instructed them to tell the emigrants "to move on, on the pretense that the Meadows belonged to them." When Willden and his companion visited the camp, the emigrants "acted civil," saying they were on their way to "Lower California, but that some of them might return if they did not like the country."[15] They also planned "to send some of their men back" to hunt for cattle they had lost while camped at Quichapa Lake. Other men from their train had already gone southeast of the Meadows "into the mountains toward Pine Valley to make tar... to grease their wagons, as wagon grease could not be obtained in the settlements." The emigrants said that when all their men returned, "the company expected to continue the journey to California."[16]

After talking with the emigrants, the two Mormons returned to Hamblin's ranch and helped Tullis make adobe bricks. Later that morning, William Aden and another emigrant "rode up to the ranch and watered their horses." They told the men at Hamblin's that they were headed back along the trail to hunt for lost cattle. Soon they headed back east through Leach's Cutoff toward Quichapa.[17]

Sometime during the emigrants' stay at the Meadows, Amos Thornton of Pinto also paid a visit to their campground, accompanied by two other Mormons.[18] Thornton may have wanted to see for himself if the emigrants were really as threatening as the Cedar City leaders represented.

Confident in their strength or unaware that their hour in Cedar City had lasting repercussions, the emigrants had no reason to believe they were in danger. But side by side with the emigrants' feelings of security were the deadly plans of Cedar City's leaders, which were going forward at several places. At the Meadows, Samuel Knight was an unwilling tool. Before noon on Sunday he went south from the Meadows with orders from "the authorities in Cedar City" to rouse the Paiutes on the Santa Clara and Virgin Rivers. Knight's instructions were to have them "arm themselves and prepare to attack the emigrant train... at the junction of the Santa Clara and Magotsu" in Santa Clara canyon.[19]

Knight did not welcome the assignment. He did not want to leave his bedridden wife and their newborn daughter, and more importantly he was aware of the gravity of the message—and the responsibility he assumed by carrying it. But it was "an order that could not be disobeyed without imperiling [my] own life," he later tried to explain. Knight could not remember whether his orders came from Cedar City's military or religious leaders, but Isaac Haight wore both hats, and the two were often indistinguishable.[20]

Meanwhile at Harmony, John D. Lee was a whirlwind of activity. Returning from Cedar City on Saturday evening, he sent messages to local Paiutes to gather at the fort. He also held a Saturday night meeting at his woodpile with men of the settlement, including Lee's future brother-in-law, Gilbert Morse. "The subject under discussion was the extermination of the emigrant train," Morse recalled, and "the best way to get at them." When Morse protested the attack, Lee told him to leave the group, threatening that "if he did not carry himself straight, he would get his tail cut off just below the ears."[21]

Lee got enough of the other men to agree with the Cedar City plan that he felt confident speaking about it at a general meeting the next day—Sunday, September 6—his forty-fifth birthday. The meeting took place in lieu of worship services, which normally began at 10:00 a.m. Lee stood at the speaker's stand, full of outrage, conducting a war rally. Gentiles had driven the Saints from Nauvoo, causing some to perish, he reminded his audience. Now, he said, gentile emigrants had stirred trouble in Cedar City, including at Haight's home, threatening an attack not only on the leaders but also "every other damn Mormon in the country." Faced with this danger, Lee said Haight and Dame "thought it was best to put them out of the way."[22] Haight had either lied to Lee about Dame's approval, or Lee was using the district commander's name to gain support for the plan.

Lee asked his listeners to show agreement by raising their hands. Harmony was off the main road, and, like those in Parowan, its citizens did not have the same strong feelings as leaders at Cedar City. But Lee had said Haight and Dame were behind the plan, and, in the end, the decision for many may have come down to what they thought their leaders wanted. "So of course they lifted up their hands as that was law," remembered Annie Elizabeth Hoag. The supporting vote carried by a large majority, though some like Hoag hesitated. She started to vote her opposition but dropped her hand. Only two or three in the congregation opposed Lee; probably Annie's then-husband, Peter Shirts, and one of the Shirts sons.[23]

Later that day Lee made an attempt at flourish. He "fixed up as much like a military officer as he could with the clothes he had," tying "a red sash around his waist." Then with "a sword in his right hand," he "marched around the inside of the Fort... at the head of about 40 or 50 Indians," said John Chatterley, visiting from Cedar City.[24] Another witness put the number of Paiutes at seventy-five.[25] During the swagger Lee asked those present to express their support for "success to Israel,"

and two or three responded with lukewarm "amens." A second try brought a little more enthusiasm.[26]

The Indians who marched around the fort included a group from Cedar City. Sometime Sunday morning, more than a dozen of them arrived to escort Lee on the expedition. An Indian known as Comanche had second thoughts about the "program of slaughter" but was persuaded to rejoin the ranks.[27] At least one important Harmony Indian did not go. Youngwuds, a leading headmen of the Ash Creek bands, had left Harmony two weeks earlier to visit Salt Lake City and was still at the Mormon headquarters.[28]

From Harmony, "Bro. J. D. Lee went on an expedition South," said the cryptic and partially incomplete historical record of the community.[29] The Santa Clara narrows—southwest of Harmony—remained his final destination. After soliciting ten days' provisions from the people at Harmony and asking them to pray aloud in their families three times daily for his success, "Lee, at the head of the Indians with Carlos Schurz [Carl Shirts] as his interpreter, set out on the expedition against the emigrants."[30] The group left the fort about noon on Sunday.[31]

Shirts, Lee's new son-in-law, headed south to gather more Indians near Washington and lead them up Santa Clara canyon from the south.[32] Lee and his entourage took a route that would arch northwest to Leach's Cutoff, pass through Pinto, and then sweep southwest through the Mountain Meadows and into Santa Clara canyon from the north. Lee's party stopped three miles above Pinto to eat roasted potatoes from a patch grown by some of the Indian missionaries. The potato patch was a rendezvous point for the gathering Paiutes and not far from Mountain Meadows and the unsuspecting emigrants.[33]

Another drama played out at Carl Shirts's destination, the small settlement of Washington, about thirty miles below Harmony. A few days before, Washington's citizens may have heard about the train from James Pearce and Joseph Adair, men coming down from Utah County who passed it on their way.[34] If Washington resident William Young was at Lee's woodpile meeting on Saturday night as later reported, he may have brought news of the Haight-Lee plan. William Young and Shirts probably arrived in Washington late Sunday or early Monday—though perhaps not together. Shirts went to work recruiting Paiutes. "The Indians about Washington became very excited running to and fro," Young testified, without hinting at who stirred them up.[35]

"John D. Lee and other officials was having their interpreters sti[r] up the Indians to commit hostilities on this camp of emigrants," said John Hawley, the Mormon who had traveled with the Arkansas company for three days before reaching his home in Washington. Hawley knew of the Dutchman's taunts and the trouble between settlers and emigrants over grazing land in Provo and Nephi. But he thought the men in Washington were overreacting.[36]

No instructions had come for them to mobilize; the plan at that point was still to have the Paiutes do the dirty work. But some of the whites decided to go along anyway. "When the Indians had become very excited... We come to the conclusion at last that we would call upon our military," said William Young, laying the blame to the Indians. A group of Washington militiamen—less than one-fourth of their total number—took their guns and headed toward Santa Clara canyon.[37]

While the plan was unfolding everywhere else, it began to unravel in Cedar City. At 4:00 p.m. on Sundays, after the regular worship service, the local leaders sometimes convened a council meeting to discuss and coordinate policy. At the September 6 meeting, Haight sought the council's support for the plan to attack the emigrant train as he had earlier promised Lee to do. The meeting included members of the Cedar City stake presidency—Haight and his two counselors, John Higbee and Elias Morris; the Cedar City bishopric—Klingensmith and his counselors, James Whitaker Sr. and Morris's father, John; and members of the stake high council. Other leading citizens were also present.[38]

One member of the high council, Laban Morrill, was a resident of Fort Johnson, a half dozen miles north of Cedar City. He was a blacksmith—a six-foot, 200-pound block of a man with a rugged and determined manner to match. "His fine head, strong, yet kindly features and dignified bearing marked him as an altogether superior man," said an admirer.[39] But he had an irritating pattern of speech, that of constantly repeating phrases in staccato fashion.[40] Morrill entered the meeting late and immediately sensed "confusion" and some "little excitement."[41]

When Morrill asked "what was up," he heard the Cedar City concerns. "I was told there was an emigrant train that had passed down along to near Mountain Meadows, and that they made their threats in regard to us as a people—signifying they would stay there and destroy every damn Mormon," Morrill said. The leaders took the threat seriously because they believed "there was an army coming on the south and one on the north," and were debating "what method we ought to take in regard to preserving the lives of the citizens."[42]

Elias Morris recalled that "the more radical members present, suggested harsh measures," though he claimed none favored "any wholesale killing." Klingensmith later acknowledged that some in the

meeting advocated killing, though he did not put himself among them. Morrill remembered, however, that Klingensmith, Haight, "and one or two" others thought it best to destroy the emigrants. "Some had heard the statement that they had helped to kill Old Joe Smith out of this emigrant train and [it] made a little excitement."[43]

Morrill was stunned by what he heard. "Do not our principles of right teach us to return good for evil and do good to those who despitefully use us?" he later remembered countering. "To fall upon them and destroy them was the work of savage monsters rather than that of civilized beings of our own enlightened time."[44]

Morrill wanted to know "by what authority" Haight and the others were planning such drastic measures. Had something come from Col. Dame? If so, Morrill demanded to see the documents. In response, Haight and his supporters had to admit they were acting on their own. Nothing had come from Parowan, they said.[45] The full truth went further: Dame had actually told Haight to let the emigrants alone.[46] Still more damning, Haight did not tell the council about Lee and the forces that were already gathering near the Meadows. At least no one present recorded such an admission.

Morrill said others joined his opposition, although he did not list them by name.[47] Years later, Elias Morris and Klingensmith claimed they spoke against the plan, though their claims lack credibility.[48] Both Morris and Klingensmith had been with Haight and Lee in the early stages of the planning, and their subsequent behavior showed they were not opposed to killing.[49] Morrill said Klingensmith was "the hardest man I had to contend with."[50] At one point during the heated discussion, according to Klingensmith, Haight "jumped up and broke up the meeting and went out doors."[51]

The debate continued until Morrill finally got the men to agree "that all should keep still [and] quiet and that there should be a dispatch to Governor Young to know what would be the best course." Brigham Young's views far outweighed anyone else's in the territory, and consulting him was one way to bring the badly divided men together. The motion, however, may have been more than an attempt at consensus. Morrill and others likely believed that Young's answer would end the matter quickly and stop the local conspiracy.[52]

Who in pioneer Utah could oppose such a motion? The vote was unanimous, but Morrill took pains to have Haight assure him he would send the dispatch the next morning.[53] Utah did not yet have a telegraph system, and an express dispatch from Cedar to Salt Lake City and back would require a week of hard riding.[54]

Morrill saw two of Haight's supporters, William Stewart and Daniel Macfarlane, leave the meeting early, a move that roused his suspicions. When it came time to go home, Morrill thought Macfarlane and Stewart—good men in normal times—were waiting to "waylay" him. He gave his horses "the reins" and hurried back to Fort Johnson by an alternate route.[55]

Morrill returned home safely "feeling that all was well."[56] He had stood up to the extremists and prevailed. The Sunday afternoon meeting had worked the way the Mormon system of councils was intended. There had been a thorough discussion that checked extremism.

At some point during or after the meeting, Haight decided to send messengers to Lee. Later that evening, Stewart and Joel White headed west toward Pinto, where Lee was supposed to be rendezvousing with Indians. Macfarlane, who served as White's adjutant, had probably been excused from the meeting to tell White to prepare for his mission.[57]

No one ever explained why Haight sent the two men. If he wanted the attack to go forward in spite of the council's objections, he may have sent Stewart and White to spur Lee on. More likely, given the council's decision to seek Brigham Young's advice, he hoped to back Lee off.

There seemed to be enough time to call off the planned attack in Santa Clara canyon. As far as Haight knew, the emigrants might spend days resting themselves and their cattle at the Meadows, even though he had sent Willden and his companions to prod them on. When the slow-moving cattle company did begin to leave, the journey to the Santa Clara narrows would require two more days of travel.

But Haight also knew Lee. Something lingered in Lee's personality that warned against giving him too much power or trusting his decisions. "Lee was an aspiring Glory Seeking man, who ran before he was sent," Higbee later complained, trying to explain what happened.[58]

Whatever the reason, sometime Sunday evening Lee decided to make an attack at Mountain Meadows instead of Santa Clara canyon. According to Ellott Willden, the change in plans took place at the potato patch near Pinto where Lee and the Paiutes intended to camp that night. One of the Paiute "chiefs" dozed off "while the corn and potatoes were roasting for the evening meal," said one later account. In his sleep, he "dreamed that his double-hands were filled with blood." The Indian leader purportedly regarded "this as a favorable omen, and rousing his braves," they began "the hot and furious march for the emigrant camp... the untasted supper being left in the embers."[59] Placing the blame on the Paiutes, Willden said that "Lee could not hold the Indians back."[60]

Or perhaps he urged them on. According to one source, it was "Lee who interpreted the 'double handful of blood' as a victory for the redmen... that they would secure the blood of the emigrants." This statement fit Lee's belief that he himself was an interpreter of dreams, a modern-day Joseph of Egypt. If Lee had wanted to restrain the Indians he could have sought help at nearby Pinto or Hamblin's ranch.[61]

The notion that bloodthirsty "savages" were primarily to blame for the attack on the emigrants, forcing white settlers to participate, would become a persistent part of massacre lore.[62] No one was more active in promoting it than Lee, whose manufactured stories put him anywhere but at the Meadows when the first attack took place.[63] The truth was that Paiutes would not have attacked the company unless local settlers had stirred them up. And at the final and decisive moment, Lee led them—and any white men who may have participated.[64]

The impromptu plan that emerged Sunday night and early Monday morning required surprise—"to attack the emigrant party before daylight when they would be in the most profound slumber, and to massacre them before they could awake and arm themselves."[65] Before daybreak, which was about 5:30 a.m., the attackers, their faces painted, moved into place. The position most dangerous to the emigrants was the gully southeast of the emigrant camp. This ravine drained the Meadows' southern spring, forming the headwaters of Magotsu Creek. By creeping through the gully, the assailants could be within twenty-five yards of the main camp, near enough to rush the emigrants and kill them at close range.[66]

But things went wrong from the beginning. Instead of immediately rushing the sleeping emigrants, the Paiutes waited for daylight, which gave the emigrants a chance to start campfires for breakfast. Their dogs, sensing strangers nearby, "got to barking."[67]

Lee planned to take out the emigrant herdsmen, "not wishing to appear, if possible to avoid it, at the slaughter of the main party." But this plan, too, faltered—if an account recorded years later had any truth to it. According to its narrative, when Lee came across a sleeping emigrant and tried to shoot him, "the cap burst without exploding the pistol." The man woke and Lee chased him toward the main party, shooting him "just as he stooped to go" into one of the tents.[68] Claiming he was not really present that morning, Lee later told a reporter that "one fool Indian off on the hill fired his gun, and spoilt the whole plan." The gunshot shattered any hope of surprise, and the Paiutes, according to Lee, "fired and killed" several of the emigrants.[69]

At first the surprised emigrants made easy targets. Lee claimed seven of them died, and another sixteen had wounds, although Indians put the total number of dead and wounded at fifteen.[70] Despite the heavy casualties, the Ozark pioneers quickly regrouped and soon were firing back. One child who survived the massacre remembered the "distinct picture" of his twenty-six-year-old aunt, Eloah Angeline Tackitt Jones, fighting along "with the men... using the gun of one of the fallen emigrants."[71]

Most of the Paiutes were stationed in the ravine and at some point made a confused rush toward the wagons, only to be repulsed by emigrant gunfire that killed one Paiute and wounded two others. The wounded men, according to Lee, were "two of the chiefs from Cedar," Moquetas and Bill, who were "shot through the legs, breaking a leg for each of them."[72] Martha Elizabeth Baker, another child survivor, was just five years old at the time. She remembered that after the main assault failed, "the Indians... retreated to the brush-covered hillside and sought safety behind the huge rocks there." From these positions, "a desultory fire pelted our camp."[73] The emigrants fired upon the Indians "every time they showed themselves," said one report, their bullets nicking the stones where the attackers lay concealed.[74]

Four miles north, the people at the ranch house heard the firing, which Rachel Hamblin said went on for half an hour.[75] "The boys at Hamblin's wer astonished," Ellott Willden said of himself and his companions. "The attack on Monday was not... a part of the plan." As soon as it was light enough to see, Willden and two of the others rode south to learn what had happened. They traveled just far enough to see "Indians running to and fro,... the emigrants' cattle running about and several head of stock lying dead." Thinking it dangerous to go farther, they retreated to the ranch.[76] Most Mormon accounts insisted that Lee was the only white man involved in the attack, though it was to their advantage to insist on this version of events.[77]

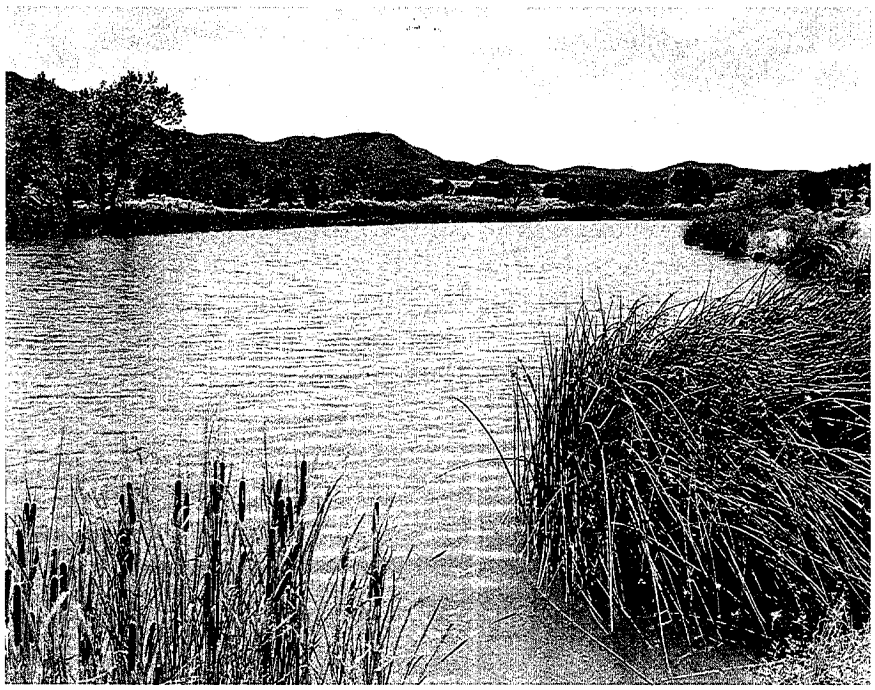
By the time Willden and the others got back, two Cedar City militia leaders had arrived at the ranch house—William Stewart and Joel White, the two men Haight sent out Sunday evening. If they had planned to call off Lee, they were too late. Someone at the ranch told them several emigrant men were outside the Meadows searching for stray cattle and making pine tar. Stewart asked to borrow Willden's pistols, saying he would "fix" the two emigrants who had gone back to Quichapa for cattle. If the emigrants returned to camp and saw what was happening, they might ride off to report the attack and get help.[78]

Stewart and White backtracked toward Cedar City and eventually found their quarry. The two emigrants were on horseback returning

to camp and had paused to let their mounts drink from Little Pinto Creek near Leach's Spring. Stewart and White approached the unsuspecting men and struck up a conversation. The Mormons learned that one of the emigrants was William Aden, the other the much-talked-of "Dutchman." Seeing a tin cup attached to the back of Aden's saddle, Stewart asked to borrow it to get himself a drink. When Aden turned to reach for it, Stewart "shot him through the head, killing him instantly." The Dutchman "put spurs to his horse and fled," dodging the bullets fired after him, one of which apparently wounded him. The men at Hamblin's ranch saw him speed past. So did the besieging Indians, who tried unsuccessfully to bring him down before he entered the corrall.[79]

After the initial attack that morning, the emigrants had circled their wagons, easing the wheels into quickly dug pits so the wagon beds were flush with the ground. For added security they chained the wheels together and filled the gaps with dirt. Inside their makeshift fort, they dug a semicircular ditch, twenty feet long and four or five feet deep. Here, most of the emigrants huddled like cordwood.[80]

The wagon corral was only slightly less congested—about a hundred feet across. Within this space, the emigrants had to bury bodies,



LEACH'S SPRING. *John W. Telford, Courtesy LDS Church History Library.*

nurse the wounded, and comfort terrified infants and children. More than 120 men, women, and children survived the initial onslaught, and as the siege wore on, these had to cope with the necessities of eating, sleeping, and sanitation. There were other problems. Ammunition was running low.[81] Just as critical was the lack of water. The Meadows' rippling springs and brook mocked just out of safe reach.[82]

While the emigrants fortified their corral, Lee and the Paiutes took charge of the spoils, although some of the cattle scattered and ran.[83] Other cattle were killed by the Paiutes for food or as debt-payment for dead or wounded comrades. Still others would be taken by Paiutes who left for home.[84]

Soon after Monday's initial attack and the start of the siege, Lee knew he was in trouble. The plan to wipe out the emigrants in one quick assault failed, and the Paiutes were angry because of the casualties they suffered and the failure to achieve the easy victory they had been promised.[85] Lee himself had a close call. According to one report, he was on a knoll near the emigrants' camp when they opened fire on him. One bullet passed through his hat, another through his left sleeve. During the next several days and later in his life, Lee told the story of his narrow escape many times and with various details, almost always denying his role in the first attack. Once he said he had been grazed just above his belt, "cutting through my clothes to the skin some six inches across."[86]

Lee realized he needed reinforcements. On Monday morning, he sent one Indian runner to Zadok Judd, the acting bishop of Santa Clara, explaining "that Indians had surround[ed] [the] emigran[t] camp, and help was wanted."[87] After waiting some time for a response, Lee grew desperate. The Paiutes were becoming unsettled, and there seemed no way to end the siege without more men. Lee finally set out to get the needed reinforcements himself, promising the Indians he would "go and bring other friends to their aid."[88]

Lee had nearly reached the junction of the Santa Clara River and Magotsu Creek when he heard someone coming and hid himself in the brush. It proved to be Samuel Knight, returning from his mission to alert Paiutes downstream, along with Dudley Leavitt, his fellow counselor to Jacob Hamblin in the Southern Indian Mission presidency.[89] Lee was "disappointed at not seeing Indians with K[night] & L[eavitt], for he had expec[t]ed [a] force with which to renew the attack the next morning."[90]

Lee caught Knight and Leavitt up on the news: the attack, the siege, and the bullet holes in his clothing, which he saw as tokens of

his courage and God's protection. Lee also had a request. He wanted Knight and Leavitt to ambush the emigrants who had gone to Pine Valley to make pine tar. "If any killing was to be done," Leavitt replied tartly, it had to be done "fair and square." Lee backed down. Neither Knight nor Leavitt liked what was going on, and after their conversation with Lee they continued to Hamblin's ranch, which for Knight meant reunion with his wife and daughter.[91]

Lee continued south until he met Shirts, the men who were coming up from Washington, and about 150 Indians. For Lee, the dozen or so Washington men were a welcome surprise—no orders from Cedar City had requested them. Seeing them together with the Indian force, he now felt resupplied. "The whites camped there that night with me," Lee claimed, "but most of the Indians rushed on to their friends at the camp on the Meadows."[92]

Meanwhile on Monday morning in Cedar City, Haight was trying to manage his own difficulties. Sunday's council meeting had rejected his plan to attack the emigrants and instead required an express rider be sent to Brigham Young. Around noon, Haight learned more upsetting news, probably from an Indian runner arriving from the Meadows.[93] For the first time, he became aware of Lee's failed attack, and with this information, the Cedar City leader understood that everything had changed. He now had to explain and manage a situation that was rapidly getting out of control. How much should Brigham Young be told? And how should the situation at the Meadows be resolved?

Each of these two questions required an express rider, one for Salt Lake City and another for the Meadows. Finding riders would not be easy; it was harvest time, and the trips would be grueling. By midmorning, Klingensmith had asked Joseph Clewes, a twenty-five-year-old stone mason, who grimaced. Klingensmith tried to be reassuring. "Do not be afraid, it is a good cause you are going to ride in," he said. He told Clewes to get a horse and meet Haight at the iron company store at noon.[94] Although Klingensmith did not reveal Clewes's destination, at the time it was probably Salt Lake City as news from the Meadows had not yet reached town.

After that news arrived, Cedar City leaders also recruited James Haslam, a thirty-one-year-old carpenter and plasterer who served as a musician in the militia.[95] Haslam was "a big, husky fellow"—not the usual profile for an express rider but willing and available.[96] Within fifteen minutes of agreeing to go, Haslam was home, in his riding clothes, and back at the iron company store waiting for his dispatch.[97] By the middle or late afternoon, the two riders received their assignments. Haslam was asked to carry Haight's letter to Young—a letter that was later lost or destroyed, though several people remembered its contents. The emigrants had been acting "verry mean," the letter reportedly said, and it rehearsed their threats. The letter also claimed the emigrants had gotten into trouble with Paiutes, who had surrounded them and forced them "to seek shelter behind their wagons." Finally, it sought counsel from Young on "what they must do with the *Americans*," suggesting that Haight had heard about Young's changed Indian policy and was uncertain about it. Haslam read the letter, which he later summarized as saying, "The Indians had got the emigrants corralled at the Mountain Meadows, and Lee wanted to know what should be done." Carefully folding and putting the letter away, Haslam "put spurs to his horse" and galloped north toward Parowan, the first stop on his long ride to Salt Lake City.[98]

Express riders seeking Young's advice were not uncommon in pioneer Utah. But Haslam's ride probably had few parallels. He was given one hundred hours—about four days—to make the roughly five-hundred-mile round trip.[99] Later, his ride was so highly celebrated that it became chronicled by exact riding times and the settlements passed through.[100] At Parowan, the startled Dame gave Haslam a letter telling up-road bishops and militia commanders to furnish "horses and supplies, to forward [this] Express [without delay] to Gov or Prest Young."[101]

Within five minutes after Haslam galloped out of Cedar City, Clewes received his dispatch telling Lee to back off, with instructions to take it to Pinto and "get there as quick as I could." His only weapon was "an old rusty horse pistol," borrowed from a friend. To Clewes, it looked as if it had not been used in twenty years. Clewes hurried west across the valley. At the mouth of Leach's Canyon, he met Stewart and White, who were returning to Cedar City after killing Aden. They asked Clewes where he was going, and he told them of the message he carried from Haight. "Your letter is of no use," they frowned. "Lee with the Indians jumped on the emigrant camp this morning and got a lot of Indians wounded." After a moment's reflection, however, they changed their minds. "No, go on," one of them said, thinking of Haight. "I cannot interfere with his orders."[102]

Seeing Clewes's rusty pistol, they traded with him. "Here," one of them said, "give me that old pistol and take these," handing Clewes the pistols Stewart borrowed from Willden that morning—the weapons used in Aden's murder. He probably asked Clewes to return the pistols to Willden, Clewes's brother-in-law, still at Hamblin's ranch.[103]

When Clewes arrived at Pinto, he handed Haight's dispatch to Amos Thornton and then, looking over Thornton's shoulder, got a glimpse of its contents. "Take this dispatch to John D. Lee as quick as you can get it to him," said one sentence. Clewes also remembered the main message: "Major John D. Lee: You will use your best endeavors to keep the Indians off the emigrants and protect them from harm until further orders." Thornton later showed the message to the presiding militia and religious leader at Pinto, Richard S. Robinson, who remembered about the same. "Word had been sent to Salt Lake City," Robinson said, "and Lee was to draw the Indians off and satisfy them with beef if necessary but not to kill the emigrants."[104]

While Clewes was reaching Pinto, Stewart and White returned to Cedar City with their news, and none of it was good. They must have reported more details on the failed attack at the Meadows, as well as the killing of Aden and the escape of the Dutchman, who could testify that white men—not just Indians—were killing emigrants. What if the people of California learned these facts? And how could Haight explain to his own people that his assurances during the Sunday night council meeting meant nothing? When Haight sent Haslam to Salt Lake City, his letter had omitted key details—a first effort at cover-up. The same impulse would lead to still greater crimes in the coming four days.[105]

Sometime on Monday, Haight sent for Nephi Johnson at Johnson Springs, a few miles north of Cedar City. The twenty-three-year-old Johnson had learned the Paiute language while a teenager, and perhaps no Mormon understood or spoke it better. Johnson had a further asset: the Paiutes trusted him. Such credentials, Haight knew, were invaluable. But he also knew that the neighboring Johnson and Morrill families were so closely connected that Johnson might share Laban Morrill's opposition to the anti-emigrant activity. Haight's message to Johnson was suitably vague and probably misleading: "Prest Haight Wanted me to Come to Cedar to talk with the Indians as the Squaws Were Stealing Wheat Out of the Field," Johnson later said of the express.[106]

When Johnson arrived in Cedar City, Haight rehearsed recent developments. He told Johnson of his overnight meeting at his home near the iron works, though he put most of the responsibility on Lee. "Lee had proposed to Him to gather up the Indians And Distroy the train of emigrants," Johnson remembered Haight saying. Haight had merely "consented to it." Haight also told Johnson he had sent a message to Brigham Young, but he now seemed reluctant to wait for Young's reply and hinted of quick action. Johnson responded, "It Would Be a Fearful Responsibility for a Man to take upon Himself to Distroy that train of Emigrants...I Would Wait until I Rec[eived] word from President Young." Johnson did not know that the emigrants had already been attacked, and Haight did not disabuse him. To delay matters, Johnson suggested putting off any action until the Santa Clara narrows. "I was in Hopes He Would put off the Distruction of the Train until He Rec[eived] Word from President Young," Johnson explained, "for I was satisfied What His Answer Would Be."[107]

By this time, Haight must have realized that Johnson was in Morrill's camp and, for the moment, told him to go home. But it would not be the last time he would call upon the young man.[108]