

MATTHEW PHELPS FIFIELD

Born June 18, 1830 Died September 30, 1920
By Allen Fifield, with edits by Don Fifield Kussee

The subject of this sketch was born after Andrew Jackson had been president of this nation only a little over a year. The Mormon church, which he later joined, had been organized but three months, and the Book of Mormon had been off the press but four months.

Early Years: Vermont

The house in which he was born was undoubtedly of logs, among high mountains and amid thick timber. The town, New Haven, Vermont, had in 1950 a population of but 881, what it was 120 years previously can only be guessed. Today it is a winter resort with a ski lift, located among granite mountains similar to those of Rutland, about 30 miles east of Lake Champlain, and about midway between Middlebury and Burlington, Vermont. The nearest town of any importance is Vergennes about seven miles north.

At the time of Matt's birth, his father, Joseph Levi, was 27; his mother, Amy Tracy, was 3 months older. Her father, Thomas Tracy, had been dead two years. A woman with high standards, a love of the best in life, Amy had a deep interest in religion. Her favorite colors were purple and wine color. She was small in stature and weighed less than 100 pounds. Matt's brother, Charles Byron, born nearly three years later, was Matt's close associate through life, but died about 25 years earlier.

Both boys had red hair; while Matt's eyes were brown, Byron's were blue. In size they weighed about the same, 160 pounds, and were about 5 feet, eight inches tall. Both were extremely active physically and possessed large bumps of curiosity.

As a youth, Matt grew up under the influence of his parents' uncles who had served in the Revolutionary War, who taught him to believe that when he did a dirty trick to a Britisher, he had done God a service. Later in life, he regretted this; many of his closest friends were British. Since French Canadians were employed in the woods where Matt lived, they also influenced him much in his outlook. Often in his old age, he told anecdotes, and when puzzled about an item repeated their phrase, "I no stand under what you is say".

New Haven, located on Otter Creek was likely the site of a saw mill; at least lumbering was the chief industry. Whether or not logs were cut and boomed down to Lake Champlain, we don't know. His father earned his living as a gun and blacksmith. His son often told how his father welded chain links and did other technical jobs which required great skill. Undoubtedly the boy spent much time pulling the bellow rope while his father watched the forge to tell when the iron was right for welding.

Where Matt got his schooling is not definitely known. Knowing his mother's energy and love for learning, one must surmise that she passed on to him, much of what she knew. His love of education, his flair for spelling, correct pronunciation and his reading of good literature point to a good early background. Being on the frontier all his life greatly limited his opportunities.



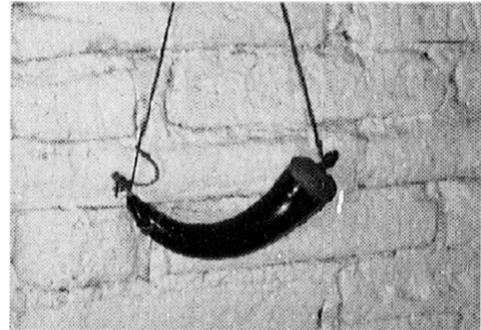
Matt Fifield

Samuel Matthew Phelps was the name of a minister his parents greatly admired, though we don't know the church preference of his parents. His training was Calvinistic and he grew up with a New England conscience, as one of his early anecdotes proves.

The Powder Horn 1838

One of the chief ways of providing food for the family was with the rifle, which was loaded with a powder horn via the nuzzle. Naturally Matt's desire was to have a powder horn of his own. One of his daily chores was to fetch the family cow to and from the pasture. Along the row was a tan yard about which lay hundreds of cows' horns. Although the tanner was a close friend of Matt's father, the lad couldn't muster up enough courage to ask for one.

At last his yearn to own the coveted horn became stronger than his training; looking carefully to make sure no one would see him, Matt crawled into the yard, selected the horn he wanted, put it away in his bosom, and went about with his chores to see the cows got home. Along the way he met a man. "The only place that man looked was at my bosom," Matt said. When safely by, the lad put the coveted horn under his hat. The next person he met looked only at his hat. When it was safe to put the desired horn another place, he stored it in the seat of his pants. Passing a girl, he looked back to see if she noticed him; sure enough, she was looking straight at the seat of his pants. When he thought no one was looking he threw the horn into high brush and went on his way.



On his way back to the tan yard next morning, he recovered the horn and pitched it into the tan yard where he had picked it up. That day the tanner came to the house and he asked for permission to buy a horn. "Matt, if you want a horn, go in the tan yard and get as many as you like," the tanner said. No one noticed him on the way home that night with half a dozen horns he took along for the boys of his neighborhood.

Grandparent's

His mother's birthplace was about eight miles north of his home; we can guess that he visited his Grandmother Tracy quite often. While still quite young, Matt's parents went south down the river to his Grandfather Fifield's home at East Plainsfield, New Hampshire, whose name was David and was about 60 at the time. His paternal grandmother, Elizabeth Reed, was in her early forties. It isn't likely that they had much influence on the boys' lives. We do know that Levi took his sons over to Salisbury, New Hampshire, where many generations of his ancestors lived; from there they went on to Hampdon, Kingston, and Ipswich, Massachusetts, where the first Fifield, William, settled after coming from England in 1834. Matt had vague recollections of having visited Portsmouth, New Hampshire, then one of the chief ship-building ports on the east coast.

New York

At the time Matt was eight, his parents moved to Crown Point, New York, a place which figured in General Benedict Arnold's campaign against the English in which General Cornwallis hoped to divide New England from the other colonies and end the war. Ethan Allen, on whose head both New York and New Hampshire had a price before the Revolution set in, had captured

Ticonderoga, five miles further south, and sent Colonel Warner, under whom one of our Allen ancestors served to capture Crown Point. The four years Matt spent here made a great impression on the boys; their ages were ripe for admiration of physical feats.

The average temperatures in that region averages about 18 degrees. Ice formed early on the timber-surrounded lakes; since there was no wind to ruffle the water's surface, skating was perfect sport. Preston Heninger relates that Grandfather told of jumps 35 feet in length. Incredible as it sounds, when one remembers that running jumpers can leap 27 feet, the greater speed possible on skates would make an additional eight feet possible. The great strength of these lumber Jacks, their leisure time spent in skating and the demands required physically in the woods make such stories credible. Ski jumpers leap 150 feet because of the great speed they have at take-off, and one should think twice before questioning Grandfather's statements about the skaters of his time. Some of these unsung athletes were superb, even though their records were not recorded (about 1840).

Frontier Food

The imagination of grandfather's descendents can scarcely realize how it was necessary for him to borrow fire from the neighbor when someone forgot to properly bank their own ashes before going to bed; or how he would start fire with flint and steel on tinder or punk. His food was cooked in a pot over the fire from a crane or in a bake-over among the ashes and coals. For lights the family depended on the reflection from fireplace, or candles, a luxury in those days of ox-team transportation. Candles unavailable, pine knot torches or rag "bitches" did the trick, at the same time depositing a layer of soot on the dried fruit or squash hanging on strings among the rafters. Log houses are, as a rule, quite warm in winter; even so, people living in those days turned themselves 'round and 'round, like a roast on a spit, to keep themselves comfortable.

Almost every family kept a cow for obvious reasons. Sheep were almost as necessary because to keep her family in clothes, the mother had to card, spin, and weave every spare minute for the rugged winters and rough wear given clothes on the frontier. Even then buckskins were used to supplement the clothing supply. One of the terrors of Grandfather's boyhood was a new tow shirt. In making linen, it was almost an impossibility to soak and wash out the natural glue that held the flax fibers together. When dry, these particles of glue rasped mercilessly on the necks of boys whose proud mothers had new white shirts for them to wear at church. Wool scratches but tow — oh dear!

Another reason sheep were popular was because of their size. When killed for food, a large family could eat most of the mutton before it spoiled, which was not true of cows in those days of spring-house refrigeration. Almost every home was the center of large numbers of fowl of all kinds: ducks, geese, guiana fowl, peacocks, even pigeons served for an ever-present demand for meat, the staple article of diet in those days when wheat had to be cut by hand and threshed by winnowing. On the frontier game was easy to get; this fact accounts to a great extent for movement into the wild stretches by our ancestors. It was easier to kill wild animals than to raise and protect tame ones from Indians.

In the springtime, scurvy was a common ailment. Lack of greens and vegetables containing vitamin "C" is responsible for scurvy. They diligently raised and pitted potatoes, carrots, onions, cabbage and ruta bagas for winter use. Water cress, pieplant and gooseberries were sought eagerly in the seasons thereof, to supply this need of the body; even the dried fruits of the time lacked enough ascorbic acid to keep the body strong and teeth from falling out. Hubbard squash kept well far into the winter and was easy to raise. A combination of dried

beans and a corn called succotash were another staple article of the diet as was hominy, made by soaking dry corn in wood ash water until the outer hull fell off. Salt was the universal preservative. That and smoking meat and fish was one of the practices of the time to ward off famine.

Frontier Clothes

Matt's mother made all his clothes. Eli Whitney's cotton gin reduced the price of raw cotton, but it was not until 1816 that cotton thread was spun in this country, England's laws preventing the emigration of skilled spinners and the exportation of spinning jennies kept cotton thread costly. Even after Samuel Slater sneaked away from England and built a thread factory in Rhode Island, the cost of cotton thread made it impractical to buy it for weaving into cloth. So Amy's boys wore either buckskin, linsey-woolsey¹ or tow shirts. Sheep were necessary to keep her family in clothes, but the frontier mother had to card, spin, and weave every spare minute to supply her family with clothes for the rugged winters, and the rough wear given clothes on the frontier.

One of the terrors of Matt's boyhood was a new tow shirt. In making linen, it was almost an impossibility to soak and wash out the natural glue that held the flax fibers together. When dry, these sharp particles of glue rasped mercilessly on the boy's necks, after the proud mothers worked hard to provide new white shirts for them to wear at church. Wool scratches, but tow, oh dear! It rasped their necks raw until sufficient washing and boiling had soaked away the glue, and they became soft. At that time, all respectable men wore breeches which buttoned at the sides. When dandies came to Crown Point wearing breeches which buttoned down the front, a preacher led a mob against them, tore off their clothes, tarred and feathered them, and rode them out of town on a rail. To young boys, such an event was a milepost in their lives, Matt never forgot it.

Frontier Money

Money was scarce and hard to get. Even though "shin plasters"² were scarce, there was little faith in it's value and it was often greatly discounted by money changers and merchants. Only by making such items as potash,³ and maple sugar were the frontier people able to obtain the gold needed to buy store-bought goods. Barter was the usual way to get items not made in your home.

One of Matt's favorite stories was about sugar-making.⁴ A favorite pastime of boys was to get some of the warm, taffy-like sugar and pull it like honey candy. Then, when it cooled enough, toss it to a dog which would always open his mouth to catch anything coming his way.

¹ Linsey-woolsey was made by weaving linen fibers in one direction, with wool fibers in the other direction. The linen started as flax stalks which included the long fibers and the glue that had to be removed, to make so it could be worn. It was a very serviceable, inexpensive, and home-made cloth.

² "Shin-plasters" were early paper money, issued by the Federal Government to pay the government debts. They were held in low esteem, as the government was tenuous and unable to tax the people to raise monies necessary to redeem the paper money for gold. Therefore, they jokingly said to only be good for wallpaper, or to be used in plaster casts, hence the name.

³ Potash is made by burning hardwood trees, saving the ashes and mixing them with water. The resulting slurry was then evaporated into a powder. Potash is used in the manufacture of soap, glass, and fertilizers.

⁴ Sugar was made by cutting a circular groove in sugar maple trees in late February and early March. The rising sap would leak out of the cuts and was channeled into wooden pails. The pails were emptied into a large copper vat, with a fire built under it. When evaporation had concentrated the sap until it was ready to "sugar-off," it was poured out onto planks, where it cooked in layers. These layers of sugar were cut into cubes about an inch thick.

As the dog's mouth closed down on the sugar, it stuck tight and he couldn't get it open until the lump dissolved. During the time his mouth was stuck shut the dog whined, rolled over, pawed his nose, and ran about through the snow, all of which is very funny to growing boys. The dog had a short memory and was always ready to grab another chunk of sugar when his misery was over.

Because Amy's husband was a skilled gunsmith, her home had many comforts most homes of that time were denied. To get a good gun, it was common for husbands to barter away the fancy work their wives had made for such purposes. Women were eager that their men have efficient rifles as it meant safety from Indians and a more ample larder.

Matt remembers that when Mormon Elders came to preach in Crown Point in 1841-1842. He was on his toes for more thrills, and after listening to the Elders a short time, the lad stole away to his father's blacksmith shop and brought the tar bucket to his father, "Here's the tar bucket father," he said, hoping that this would start the fun. "Go put it on that stump," Levi bade his son. Matt obeyed and for all he knows the bucket is still there.

Moving to Nauvoo 1843

We have no details as to how the Fifield's became members of the Mormon church. But shortly after joining, they started their move to Nauvoo, Illinois. The trip started by coach to the point where the Erie Canal joins the Hudson river. Boarding a canal boat, they traveled the 369 miles to Lake Erie. By traveling day and night they made the trip in eight days, about 46 miles per day or an average of two miles per hour. Matt told how he rode the tow mule part of the time, not because it helped pay part of the expenses, but because of the thrill of doing something.

When the boat came to a bridge, the boy would sing out, "Low bridge! Everybody down." The mule slackened his pace, and the bridge keeper would unhook the tow chain from the boat. While the boat coasted under the bridge, the mule walked around the bridge, was hitched again to the boat, and the slow pace continued up the canal. There were 82 locks to lift the canal boats from the Hudson River up to Lake Erie, a 517-foot difference in altitude. At first the novelty of travel was wonderful for the Fifield boys, but they soon tired of the poor food and sleeping on the hard shelves built on either side of the ark. Also the flies, cockroaches, and rats were almost unendurable to them, especially because of their dainty mother's protestations. Amy was especially thankful to reach Buffalo.

The lake traffic to Chicago was heavy at this time of year, and while waiting for a suitable boat, Matt's father hired out by the day as a blacksmith. The rooming houses in the boom town of Buffalo were not much better than the canal boat. Bedbugs were horrible. There were no screens on the windows and the thin partitions between the rooms gave little privacy. There was no plumbing of any sort. Hot water was obtained only by heating it on a wood stove in the already furnace-like rooms. As the wages were high, and Levi as quite contented to stay in Buffalo and work there, but his dainty wife wanted to get to Nauvoo where she could have a home that was clean.

Food was bad as there was no refrigeration of any sort. Since the food came in ox-drawn wagons, it was almost spoiled before it reached Buffalo. To a fastidious woman like Amy such conditions were repulsive and one wonders in this age of paved streets and inside plumbing how they survived. The two boys roamed the dusty unpaved streets anxious to pick up a coin for running an errand. Matt would wander to the wharf to watch operations there. The alert red haired, brown-eyed boy with the freckled face drew the attention of everyone; his ready wit and keen sense of humor won him admirers everywhere.

It was here that Matt first heard a song that was to stay in his mind the rest of his life, “Buffalo girls won’t you come out tonight and dance in the light of the moon.” Hurly-burly houses kept going night and day. Fiddlers were everywhere and with the stir and bustle it was hard for the boys to stay in the hot stuffy rooms of the rooming house.

The trip on the lake steamer was wonderful after the hot days in Buffalo. The section from A Sault St. Marie down to Chicago on Lake Michigan was best of all, as the sea was calm. Still, the smell of a ship carrying a load of cattle and horses made Amy glad to land in Chicago. As Matt’s father tried to arrange transportation down the Mississippi River, Matt and his brother wandered about the town. They found Chicago was a city of tents among the willows, built on the flat land between a lake and several small rivers. They were amused to learn that the Indian word for Chicago means “land of the skunks” and thought it was appropriate.

The Nauvoo Period

Nauvoo the Beautiful 1843

It was a rough 210 miles over frontier roads from Chicago to Nauvoo when at long last the Fifield family reached Nauvoo. When they were safely settled, Levi told them to wait there while he went up to town. An hour later he returned to his family with a man whom he introduced as his brother. Amy and the boys were completely flabbergasted because he had spoken little of this relative to them. To his descendants researching the anecdote in 1960, this individual is still an enigma: Levi’s three brothers were all older. A search of Mormon records failed to reveal any other Fifield than Levi. One of his brothers may have been in the west at the time, but the letter found on page 110 of this biography comments that all three of Matt’s uncles died in New Hampshire. Whether one of them had joined the Mormon church, become disaffected, and went back to New Hampshire is not known.

When Levi and his family reached Nauvoo, they found a boom town with all its hullabaloo. There may have been a housing shortage but early in September it was not yet too cold to sleep in tents. Of course everyone was anxious to meet the prophet, and shortly after their arrival, the entire family was able to hear him speak in the bowery. His presence and appearance were unusual, so there was no need for the whispered word of Amy’s neighbor, “That’s the prophet.” From the deference paid to him by his associates, Matt identified the Mormon leader. There was a sadness in his face that struck the intuitive boy. Matt knew that thirty days previous to the address, Joseph Smith had lost his father, his brother Don Carlos, a son, and his private secretary, Robert B. Thompson.

The prophet’s short sermon on vicarious work for the dead, made a long lasting impression on the attentive Matt. He commented on the concepts throughout his life. His lasting interest in genealogy and temple work was one of the main features stressed by Matt in his religious life. After the meeting many pressed forward to meet the seer and the Fifields were among them.

The keen brown eyes of the re-haired boy took in at once the spots in Nauvoo to be investigated more fully. Many of the streets had open ditches beside them to drain off the swamps which had been breeding spots for mosquitoes. The river wharves and landings always intrigued young boys. Of even more interest was the arsenal with its guns, cannon, and war paraphernalia. What most disappointed him was the shanty-like construction of most of the houses; there had been too many of those already in Matt’s life.

Nauvoo Legion

After his father became a member of the Nauvoo Legion, Matt could hardly wait until his mother made him a uniform so he could join the Boy's Legion. After he became a member, the boy took great pride in marching with this group of six hundred. The prophet had a love for show and parades, so there were many occasions for the lad to wear his uniform. Seldom did Joseph Smith pass up an opportunity to create a holiday or have fun.

After one parade the boys, in a spirit of bravado, made a charge on their fathers. In response a cavalry troop rode hard toward the charging boys who broke and ran for cover. But boys have an observant nature that adults seem to lack. One boy noticed that an unusual noise would put the horses to rout. In the next parade besides his wooden sword or gun, every boy was armed with a tin pan. After the parade, the boys again led a charge against their fathers. This time it was the responding adult cavalry that was thrown into a rout by the pandemonium of the tin pans. Only when the prophet put the spurs to his mount, Charlie, and rode among the on-charging boys did the adults retreat by the end.

Drainage of the swamps ended much of the sickness in Nauvoo. But even then there was much to be done. Dr. John C. Bennett, who was instrumental in getting a liberal charter for the city, set about to improve the health of the beautiful city's inhabitants. Wild tomatoes called "love apples" grew everywhere like weeds. Dr. Bennett picked some and ate them in public and recommended them as a supplement to the diet of the people. Amy tried them and like the fruit which she had formerly thought to be poisonous. From then on she made them a regular part of the diet of her family, much to their benefit.

Matt's parents planted a garden. Both Byron and Matt were kept busy hoeing out the lusty weeds which grew among the carrots, beets, corn, and squash vines. The work habits the boys developed did much to shape their later lives. Amy's scrupulousness in washing all vegetables in boiled water, did much to spare her sons much of the illness prevalent at the time. The diets of the people at that time and their carelessness in drinking water from any source all contributed to the scourge of cholera, summer complaint, malaria, chills and fever, ague, and the other ailments one reads about in journals kept by those people.

The Pumpkin Patch

One hot day while sweating among the tall corn and lush pumpkin vines, Matt noticed the prophet running out of the blacksmith shop. "Quick, hide me!" the seer panted. Without hesitation the red-haired boy led the prophet to a maze of pumpkin vines growing over a low place in the garden. He lifted them so the prophet could crawl under them, then pulled them down over Joseph's body so he wouldn't be noticed. Matt quickly returned to hoeing. Almost immediately law officers entered the garden and asked if he had seen anyone come into the corn patch.

Matt pretended he didn't hear. His New England conscience was at work and he needed time to think up an answer that wouldn't be a lie. After the officers had gone through the corn patch, they came back again and asked if Matt had seen a man. "Huh?" Matt said. "Can't you hear?" the irate official shouted. The redhead pointed to his ear and shook his head.

"Did you see anyone come running out of the blacksmith shop?" the frustrated officer shouted. "I must've been too busy a-hoin" was Matt's answer. "Want I should help look?" He led the officers through the tall thick corn. "He could hide here easily without me a-seen' him" he suggested. After another search the officials weren't so sure. "I'd swear I saw old Joe Smith running to that blacksmith shop" one of them said.

“He might be over here,” Matt suggested and led them to a melon patch. “Ain’t noth’ over that way but pumpkins and he couldn’t hide in them. Golly, the pigtail on this melon is dead. It’d taste mighty good on a hot day like this.” He pulled it off and led the way back to the shop where one of the tired men produced a knife with which they divided the luscious melon.

When they went on their way, Matt’s father said, “You did some quick thinking, son. I thought they had the prophet for sure this time.”

“So did I,” was the reply. “And I didn’t have to lie about it either” Matt justified himself. It was after dark before the prophet dared crawl from under the hot pumpkin vines. Making his way to the gunsmith’s house, he ate with the family for the first time. It was then that Joseph Smith agreed to test the sights on Levi’s guns and to testify of their accuracy in shooting. Everyone knew of Joseph Smith’s skill with guns and his word that a firearm was accurate was a great recommendation.

Entertainment was not provided by anxious adults for teenagers at that time. Hunting, fishing, swimming, boating, skating were natural recreations that were enjoyed by Matt. Located on the banks of the largest river in our country, Nauvoo was ideal for such sports. The Mississippi, as all rivers, was treacherous to swimmers, but the boys were always ready to take a chance. Despite the usual numbers of deaths by drowning, Matt soon learned to swim to an island midway in the river. He finally won plaudits for having swum clear across.

Goats

The favorite place for swimmers was an inland pond, not only because it was safer but because of a belligerent billy goat which pretended to the honor of being boss of the pasture around the pond. The boys dived into the pond from a high, clay bank. This was viewed with such an insolence by the patriarch of the nannies that it intrigued the boys. One of the braver boys tried shaking a hat at old “Billy”. Not one to take a dare, the goat charged. Knowing the habits of goats, the challenging lad stepped aside at the right time, and the goat went over the bluff and into the deep pond. Then all the boys had to try. Strangely enough, neither the goat nor the boys seemed to tire of the sport.

Learning of the practice, the owner of the pasture, goat and pond, forbade the pastime. Boys were boys, then as now, and a forbidden sport is more cherished than the allowed sports. Surreptitiously the fun went on, until the bloated old landlord looked out and saw his edict flouted. He waddled toward the pond bent on enforcing his power. Meanwhile, the nimble boys hid themselves in a nearby patch of willow and waited for the results. Seeing no one near, the old fellow started to talk to himself and he said, “I swear I seen some of those darn boys plaguing that goat.” The goat merely sniffed and shook his saucy head. “You sassy old blatherskite, don’t get fresh with me,” the owner puffed and threatened. Taking another look for the offenders, he added, “I don’t guess them scallywags was here.” Taking off his hat he fanned his florid face. Old Billy lowered his head, stamped his feet, and bleated.

“Maybe them boys had reason to bother you, you darn old rascal. Think I’ll try myself.” His fat old belly shook with laughter at the thoughts of seeing the astonished goat plunge into the pond below. He had hardly lowered his hat, when the eager goat started charging. The old man’s timing was poor, and before he could sidestep, the billy caught him ‘midships and both went helter-skelter into the water below.

The boys emerged from the willows to see the excitement. It became apparent at once that the old man was in trouble and forgetting the possible chastisement, the boys helped the old fellow to safety. When everything was right, the wet, dripping owner said, “You boys are all

right. If you hadn't been right here, I'd've drowned sure. Any time you want, you can jump that perky old billy goat into the pond. Maybe he'll learn to behave himself." Permission granted, the sport lost much of its zest.

One of Matt's closest neighbors was Sidney Rigdon, whose son John became so intimate that they shared playthings and fishing tackles. Once John borrowed Matt's cane fishing pole, prized because of its length which made it possible to reach out into the river where the big catfish were. John returned the pole one evening, but didn't tell Matt it was broken. When he learned of his chum's trick, Matt accosted him with the details and gave him a drubbing for denying it. The incident passed and they became good friends again. After John was re-baptized into the church about 1910, the two old men met each other and John asks Matt if he remembered the licking he gave him for breaking the fishing pole. John knew he had the punishment coming and was not the sort to hold feelings for it.

One evening John came for Matt and the two went out into town. There seemed to be something special afoot, because only the most trusted boys were in the group. When at last the chosen ones were together, John confided his purpose. It seemed that Joseph Smith, a married man, had asked John's older sister, Nancy to be his spiritual wife. To the boys this was unthinkable, scandalous, and deserving of punishment. They resolved to do something practical about it and made plans to be carried out the next day.

Early next morning Matt went into the blacksmith shop and picked up the tar bucket. "Where are you taking that?" he heard his father call.

"Oh, just some place," was the reply. Sensing something was amiss, Levi put pressure on his son who family admitted that his gang of playmates was going to tar and feather Joseph Smith because of his questions to Nancy Rigdon. Levi Fifield was not the sort of man to question the motives of one in whom he had faith, and his faith in the prophet was such that he would listen to no word of scandal against him, even from adults.

"Put that tar bucket where you got it, and don't you ever let me hear of such nonsense again." The note of authority in his father's voice assured Matt that he meant what he said.⁵

Watermelon Stealing

Another sport of the time was stealing watermelons and Preston Heninger remembers the following stories. During the day, boys would "spot" a path and a way to approach it at night. Each would take his turn leading the gang to the coveted delicacies. Even though every boy in the group hoed a patch of his own, he took delight in getting into another field, just for the fun of it.

Matt's turn to lead came on an especially dark night. Taking a devious route, the group finally reached the patch and busied themselves. Suddenly one of them realized he was in his own field. Seeking out the leader of the night's foray, he hit Matt a jolt that almost sent him down. "You done this a-purpose." "What's wrong with stealing melons from your own patch?" Matt laughed. Other boys saw the joke and soon laughed the irate boy out of his anger.

On another occasion Matt saw the owner of the patch sneak in among the melons and lie down. Creeping near the hiding owner, he reached over and plunked him on the head. "Here's a nice juicy one," he whispered and began to pull his ears. The owner laughed and gave permission for as many melons as the boys wished. It was no fun stealing melons from such men as that.

⁵ Matt never did like the institution of polygamy and never entered into it.

Fishing

Fishing has always been a favorite boy's sport. Nauvoo's location on the Mississippi River made it a frequent activity. One day Matt's father took him along to catch minnows which were used as bait for catfish. The boy's pin hook was baited with worms and he fished from sand bars in shallow water. One huge catfish that had made its way into the shallow water, grabbed hungrily at the scared minnows. Seeing the worm, it took a grab at that. Feeling the sharp hook, the catfish panicked and flopped into even less water, up almost on the bank. With his accustomed quick decision, Matt plunged into the water, hooked his finger in the gills of the fish and wallowed ashore. Hailing his father he proudly displayed his catch. "Splendid! Keep on," his father advised. But Matt had other ideas. In a straight line the way home would have been but a little over a mile. But for the proud boy, with a fish that weighed almost as much as he did, there was no other way to go but through the town, where he was stopped often by admiring boys and adults.

Amy's Lightning

Before going to work each morning, Matt's father told the boys to fill the wood-box and make sure there was enough kindling so their mother didn't have to gather chips to prepare the noon meal. That chore done, the boys went to the shop where they helped their father, or they hoed in the garden directly behind the shop.

One very hot day, Amy went outside to gather an apron full of chips from the woodpile. Outside she saw a neighbor and struck up a conversation over the back fence. Clouds gathered fast and lightning began to flash. Amy stooped to fill her apron with wood chips and as she rose she put her free hand against a tree to steady herself. At that instant a flash of lightning struck and she dropped stunned to the ground, severely burned.⁶ Her friend was also injured by the same lightning strike.

Seeing the tragedy, neighbors carried the women to bed and went for their husbands. Levi gathered his sons and went home to find his wife unconscious. After doing what he could for his wife's immediate relief, he sent for someone to assist in administering to her. When Amy regained her senses, she tried to get up. Much to the dismay of the family, she found her right side was paralyzed.

From that time on, Matt or Byron spent time with their mother, carrying out her requests. Even though their father hired another woman to keep the house, do the cooking, and other household chores, Amy's sons felt it was a privilege to do their mother's bidding.

Levi was a Seventy and it was decided that the Seventies were to build a hall that would house a library and where they could hold quorum meetings. Hyrum Smith offered to give a patriarchal blessing to anyone who would contribute \$10. Levi went and had one for himself on March 19, 1843. He also requested the patriarch to come to his home and give a blessing to Amy. Amy seemed to think the blessing given by Hyrum Smith contained a promise she would get well, and conveyed those hopes to her boys.⁷

It was hard for the Fifield men to see the tiny, independent woman pine and wither away. All that could be done for her was cheerfully done. Matt was only thirteen at the time, but if she

⁶ According to NOAA, there are about 100 deaths and 500 injuries due to lightning each year in the United States.

⁷ These are the words in her blessing given April 9, 1843 "...seal a blessing upon your head for the consolation and comfort to your heart whilst your affliction remaineth and even henceforth for the blessings of God according to the desire of your heart and as you have asked for it, it shall be given unto you in due time and you shall increase in faith, your health shall increase, and as your health increases until you shall be made whole not far hence."

had to be moved and her husband wasn't home, Matt carried her. Amy's love for order, for the niceties of life, for the well kept, clean clothes, were instilled in Matt not only as hereditary traits, but also by having him wait on her and fetching the needles and cloth for the fancy work she occupied herself with. She required napkins and rings for every meal. Tea was served to all her callers and visitors with the usual formalities required of those times. Where her hired help was not on hand to do the serving, Matt or Byron did it.⁸

Amy was not one to deny her sons the pleasures that Nauvoo afforded. And after the first shock had worn off, she insisted that the boys go to hear the band whenever it played. The Nauvoo Musicians had come from England as a unit already trained and was a source of great pride to the Mormons. No other western city had a band which played with such polish. The prophet, who loved the display and splendor, seized every opportunity he had to call out the band.

Indians

When the Indian chief, Keokuk,⁹ brought a group to Nauvoo to learn about the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith had the Relief Society put on a dinner for them at the Nauvoo House. Not to be outdone, Keokuk offered to have his braves dance. An excuse to call out the band, Joseph had the bugler call them together. It was a frosty November and a huge bonfire was built to light the streets and add warmth and cheer to the gala festival. During the dance, some fun-loving braves would break the line, made for some of the gaping boys with his uplifted tomahawk and pursue him until the scared lad took refuge among the crowd. The whites took the fun in the spirit it was intended. On this occasion Amy and been hauled to the scene and lifted from the carriage to a chair. Suddenly a brave took after Matt. Putting himself between the menacing brace and his mother, Matt grabbed a faggot from the fire to defend his mother. The Indian stopped, laughed, and said "You heap skookum." Matt never could make out what the crowd cheered so heartily.

Nauvoo – The City's Problems

Because of Nauvoo's liberal charter¹⁰ and its size,¹¹ the frontier and river city attracted many disreputable characters including robbers, counterfeiters, horse thieves, cattle rustlers, and gamblers. The Mormons had many difficulties earlier, including false arrests in New York, Ohio, and Missouri. To protect themselves in Nauvoo, the charter required that a county sheriff obtain extradition clearance by a city judge before he could take a citizen from inside the city limits. The Nauvoo city judges were reluctant to allow extradition of any church member. Some shady characters joined the church and professed great piousness to get this protection. They would go outside the city to commit their crimes, and then return with their loot to safety. They even paid tithing to be considered members in good standing. The scallywags got protection, and put the blame on the Mormons. The real Saints got a bad reputation that was not deserved.

⁸ It was at this time that Matt acquired his taste for tea, a luxury given him to the end of his life, even though church authorities frowned on the practice as contrary to the Word of Wisdom.

⁹ Keokuk was a well known Indian. There is now a city and a major dam on the Mississippi River (near the Des Moines river) named for him.

¹⁰ The Nauvoo City charter even allowed an army (called the Nauvoo Legion) of 500 men.

¹¹ Nauvoo was larger than Chicago at this time, and equal with New York City. It was much smaller than Boston and Philadelphia.

The area near Nauvoo, is mostly flat, with a few hills a few hundred feet high. The area became popular with Mark Twain's novel of Tom Sawyer and Mississippi River in the town of his birth, Hannibal, Missouri

A block from where the temple was being built was a gully. On one edge of the gully there was a ramshackle house where several "fancy ladies" lived. Boys Matt's age learned the reputation of the place, and with bated breath used to go near and watch to see who entered, how long they stayed, and to speculate on what took place inside. Some of the braver ones scrawled four-letter words on the outside walls in charcoal. One night Levi warned the boys to stay out of the neighborhood but didn't give a reason. Later that night the city officials had the "ladies" taken to a river boat with warnings not to return, and the police pried the house off its foundation and sent it into the gully, where "it made a beautiful, crashing sound," as Matt remembered in his old age.

The Gunsmith

Needing guns of the best quality, outlaws made Levi's shop one of their most frequented places. Their pay was always good and because of his ailing wife, Levi took much custom work he otherwise may have turned down. He could charge outrageous prices to questionable customers and there was no bickering. They were glad to get Levi's expert services at any cost and they paid promptly. While waiting for their arms to be repaired, they joked with the bright-eyed redhead, paid him well to run errands, and tried to win favor with the Fifield's generally. Strangers came from near and far to get their guns set on "a hair trigger" or have an estimate made on the cost of "rifling" the barrels of their old muskets or to order a new rifle. The outlaws were quick to take advantage of such improvements and had the money to pay for them. Missourians also crossed the river on the pretense of getting their guns improved or repaired and loitered in the shop in hopes of picking up bits of information which would help them bring charges against some of the Mormons. These ruffians made threats which curdled the blood of the boys. But the Mormons also had people who listened and were able to learn the intentions of the mobs.

Joseph Smith

One of the sports of the time was wrestling. Joseph Smith was very fond of this sport and few men could throw him. The waiting men at the shop often took part in either "square-hold" or "side-hold" wrestling, best man taking two out of three falls. Sometimes the prophet would be present, and when challenged would refer to Matt's father as able to "throw" him. "If you can throw Levi, then I'll take you on," was his comment.

The prophet lost no opportunity to dress up in his gold-braided blue coat, with his light brown riding breeches tucked into his high black military boots. He would don his ostrich feather cap, mount his big, neighing black stallion and ride through the city. In his high hat, Joseph looked to be seven feet tall. Since testing rifles was a military operation, Joseph Smith,¹² as general of the Nauvoo Legion, often appeared at the gunsmith's place to see if a new model Levi always had in mind had been completed. The new guns were always test fired by the Prophet.

Even though she was unable to prepare the meals now, Amy took great pride in the sort of table she set. Nothing pleased her more than to have a meal ready for Joseph after he had

¹² As the commander of the largest army in the United States at that time, Joseph Smith was the highest ranking military officer in the United States.

tested the sights of her husband's guns. The boys were thrilled at having so distinguished a man at their home, and since the seer was fond of good food it was an easy matter to induce him to stay for a meal. He always asked them if they were going to be gunsmiths like their father. They always answered in the affirmative, but shuddered at the thoughts of pulling the bellows rope and trying to wash the soot and grime from their hands. Then the general would urge them to get a good education, and name various kinds of food for them in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, or German, which delighted Matt very much.

The Martyrdom

On June 18, 1844, Matt was fourteen. On this day he listened to the last speech of Joseph Smith. Nauvoo had been placed under martial law and the Legion had been ordered out to protect the city and keep the peace. The prophet read from the *Warsaw Signal*, "A demand on the part of all citizens in Hancock County, to unite and drive the Mormons out of Illinois." When Matt made the evening report to his invalid mother, he felt a sinking in his stomach. His mother said, "It's no use, we will have to go through the same things our people did in Missouri. Why can't they leave us alone?" She read the untrue and inflammatory story from the *Warsaw Signal*.¹³ It promised that after all the Mormons were dead, peace would again reign. Matt was afraid, not for himself, but for his mother.

The evening of June 23, Matt noticed a large group gathered at the wharf. Going there he waited with the crowd who guessed something important was going to take place. After a long wait in a heavy rain, he was hungry and ready to go home when someone called, "Here they come." Other said "It's the prophet and his brother." The Mississippi River was at high flood. Matt was soaked to the skin but he still wished to see what would happen. Porter Rockwell pulled a skiff from a hiding place and Willard Richards helped get it close to the wharf so the Smith brothers could get into it. Then the four men went out on the boiling waters into the darkness.

Details of this episode have been so frequently written by historians that it is useless to do more than copy what Matt himself wrote:

"I was present when he started to go west and saw him on his return. I also saw him start for Carthage to his martyrdom, heard his last sermon, and saw the bodies of the martyrs when they were brought back into Nauvoo. I followed them to the Mansion with the large crowd, and was present at the Funeral of the Martyrs."

There were many misgivings and much speculation after the burial as to who would take the leadership of the Mormon church. The eldest son of Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Brigham Young were those most often discussed. At a meeting on 8 August 1844, Matt attended he reported that "I could have sworn that when Brigham Young got up to talk, that it was the prophet himself. It sounded like him and looked like him."

It was a time of great turmoil in Nauvoo. There were reports of barn and house burnings by mobs in Lima, Macedonia, and Bear Creek. The Mormons agreed to leave Nauvoo in the following spring, but they also continued to work on the Nauvoo temple and this caused confusion and concern. Strangers came into Nauvoo from every direction and tried to pry secrets from the boys and girls when they couldn't get the adults to talk. Following the example of church leaders, Matt got himself a knife and began whittling a stick on the approach of every

¹³ The *Warsaw Signal* had falsely reported that 500 anti Mormons had been killed in cold blood by 10,000 men of the Nauvoo Legion. This was the story that in the end enraged people from three states and resulted in a march on Nauvoo; the sacking, burning, and pillaging of the city.

stranger. His gentle mother talked him out of such actions, and as she was gradually growing weaker, he made her request his command.

Amy's Death

Amy's death on January 26, 1845 greatly upset the emotional boy and his brother Byron. Although they had a housekeeper to cook and do the work which women usually do about the house, they had kept close to their Mother, and done much of her errand running. Her passing was traumatic to the boys. It meant breaking up of the Fifield household and family life. Matt's father was also greatly upset, and though outside events crowded upon them so fast that Levi scarcely had time to mourn, his emotions were greatly wrenched.

Nauvoo hosing remained a problem, and not far from the Fifield home, a family from England was living in a little shanty. The father, William Smith, worked odd jobs including some work for Levi. When the gunsmith learned of the cold, leaky place in which they lived, he invited the Smiths to move into the Fifield home. In return, Mrs. Smith and her daughter Sarah took over the housekeeping.

Because they were English, Matt took a violent dislike to them and spent much of his time visiting with other boys about the town. He and Byron would go away and stay overnight, sometimes sleeping in haystacks or in the shelter of some neighbor's barn. Because of the pressure of work and his emotional condition, Levi was scarcely aware of what was going on. Then Mr. Smith got a job in St. Louis and moved away leaving his daughter behind to keep house for Mr. Fifield. Joseph Levi Fifield and Sarah Smith were married June 7, 1845; just before Matt turned 15. Matt's father was 25 years older than Matt's new stepmother and she was only two years older than Matt. This marriage so soon after his mother's death hurt Matt deeply, but he could also see his father's plight. When Levi wasn't making or mending guns, he was busy making nails for the temple; or sharpening saws, or pounding the nails he had made into the roof of the temple.

The Millers

One of Amy's close friends in Nauvoo was Clarissa Pond Miller, the wife of Daniel A. Miller. Before the Millers moved out to the farm at Adams, Illinois, Clarissa used to come into the house and comfort Amy, fixing up little dainties and doing the things only women know how to do for their close friends. To cheer Amy she would say that Amy would outlive herself. And in fact she did as Clarissa died about four months before Amy.

Daniel A. Miller married Hannah Bigler about two months after Clarissa's death. The early friendship of the first wives and similar character traits gave Levi and Daniel much in common, and their relationship was always amiable.¹⁴

After Levi married again, the two boys used to go out to the farm near Adams and stay overnight, sleeping in a shanty and cooking their own meals. The new Mrs. Miller saw the lonesome boys trying to fend for themselves and took to asking them to come over and eat. In this way the Fifields and the Millers came to be friends.¹⁵ Daniel's oldest son, Jacob Miller was about Byron's age, and hoping to keep his sons on the right path, Levi asked Daniel to keep an eye on them.

¹⁴ Levi was 7 years older than Daniel Miller.

¹⁵ As will be seen later, the Miller's can be given much of the credit for many of Matt's virtues.

On the Trail West 1846

Leaving Nauvoo

After Joseph Smith's death there was a lull in the persecution of the Mormons,¹⁶ but in the fall there was an increase in anti-Mormon activity and the church leadership knew that they would have to leave Nauvoo. In February of 1846 the Mississippi river froze, and the ice was thick enough to support horses and wagons. The first group of Saints left Nauvoo during a terrible storm, to camp in the woods on the west bank of the river. The Nauvoo temple had been completed enough so that there could be endowment work done, and on Feb. 2, 1846 Levi was in the fourth company to complete his temple work.¹⁷ While he was prepared to leave with the others, Levi was counseled to stay behind and repair wagons and do black smithing for those who would follow. So, instead of going with the first wagon groups, Levi took a boat for St. Louis to visit with his new wife's folks, and to buy iron to be used in the camps the Mormons later established on the Missouri River.

The boys were staying with Daniel Miller much of the time and they didn't actually leave Nauvoo until sometime in April. When Daniel Miller's group did leave, Matt drove his father's horses and wagon on the ferry that took them across the Mississippi. When the party reached what was called Reed's Creek, they found that Charles C. Rich had taken a contract to clear brush off some land in return for much needed supplies. The young redhead's industry won the eye and approval of Brother Rich, who later chose him for other important missions. After the brush was all cleared off, the party Matt was with went on to what was known as Richardson's Point. At this place the boys became reunited with their father. Levi had brought the needed iron and came ahead to help repair wagons which were literally pulled to pieces by being dragged through the heavy Iowa mud. The spring of 1846 was one of the wettest known in history. There was plenty of dry wood at Richardson's Point, and even in the rain it was possible to start a fire by hewing off the wet timber and using dry kindling underneath to start a fire.

Iowa

While they rested, Levi built his son a gun, rifled the barrel, and took special pains so the lad would have something to kill game with, along the trail. Matt fashioned the stock from a piece of walnut which he carefully carved. His father had him cut out recesses for two fifty-cent pieces which were inlaid on either side of the stock. This gun was Matt's companion for many years.

Before Levi could do much black smithing, it was necessary to obtain charcoal.¹⁸ As there was no place in the loaded wagons to haul charcoal, pits had to be dug along the way and the wood burned or rather charred before the black-smithing could be done. Since Matt knew just how to do this, he as often sent along to instruct those making the charcoal.

When the Mormons arrived in Iowa after crossing the Mississippi, they were only allowed to camp on low, swampy ground near the Missouri River. As a result there was much sickness, especially among those who arrived first. When permission was obtained from the Indians through their agent to move up onto the bluffs everyone's health improved. The water

¹⁶ There were no convictions in the trial for the murder of Joseph Smith.

¹⁷ Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register, page 263.

¹⁸ Charcoal was the only fuel which could be used to heat iron hot enough to weld.

was better, early fruit such as gooseberries were eaten and the dreaded scurvy disappeared.¹⁹ The Fifield boys had great fun shooting rabbits, quail, and other game which they gave to the less fortunate and widows. They also herded cattle in the meadows south of the camp.

Winter Quarters

Just after Levi arrived at Winter Quarters, he had the opportunity to go with a party of trappers (The Thomas Rhoads' party) to California. The Lincoln's, who started the Lincoln House in Sacramento, left at this time. Mrs. Murphy did laundry work to pay for her expenses in traveling with the Donners. But as blacksmiths were a critical need to prepare for the long trip west, Levi agreed not to go with the first groups. As he would be here for some time, he began to dig a place to live in the side of a hill. About June 1, Matt's stepmother arrived from St. Louis with her parents and a new baby. William John Fifield was born in April 1846. The Fifield boys went to live with Daniel Miller, who had been appointed Bishop of one of the wards by that time. They slept in a brush wickiup, shot and cooked game for their own meals. Their father furnished them with the other necessities when they could not earn it for themselves.

When the Mormons began to lose cattle to the thieving Indians, they asked the Indian agent for redress. The agent ordered the Mormons off the Indian land on the east bank of the Missouri River. It became the duty of the young men to get the loose stock across the Missouri River.²⁰ During the move Matt was asked by Hosea Stout to assist in relocating the cannon and these were buried on the west bank.²¹

The Mormon Battalion

A United States Arm Colonel James Allen arrived in the Mormon camp and attempted to form a battalion of men for use in the Spanish American war. Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball were at Mt. Pisgah and urged the men to sign up. After listening to the advantages offered to both the church as a whole,²² as well as an individual,²³ Matt decided to enlist. At 16, Matt was "a good chunk of a lad" with no wife to fret about and felt he was able as any of the men who had pledged themselves to enlist. Without consulting his father, the redhead went to the recruiter, gave him his name and, with no twinge of his New England conscience, gave his age as 18. When he was assigned to Company C, he heaved a sigh and stood around watching to see who else was signing up.

By chance he ran into his father. "I gave them my name, father" he spoke rather softly. Nothing more was said then. Next day when Brigham Young named officers for the five companies, James Brown was put in as Captain of "C" company. Levi went to Colonel Allen and asked to have his son's name taken off the roll as Matt had fibbed about his age, but was told

¹⁹ Gooseberries contain large amounts of vitamin C. Scurvy starts with a sore mouth, progresses until the teeth fall out and spots develop on the skin. It can result in a weakness so great that the patient must be confined to bed. A diet lacking in vitamin C causes this condition.

²⁰ Cattle won't swim a large stream unless forced to, but by crowding the stock into a low, steep bank they bunched up the herd until a few of the weaker ones were pushed into the river. In this way it was possible to start the crossing process and the other cattle would follow until the whole herd was over. Once started, the boys would jump into the water, grab the tail of a cow and steer them across the deep water.

²¹ The cannon had been brought from Nauvoo and were kept hidden at all times.

²² The move to the west bank of the Missouri river onto Indian lands was legalized because of the formation of the Battalion, "...it allowed the United States Army to better protect dependents of serving soldiers."

²³ The individual soldier was paid the full years pay to start, received a uniform allowance (but could use his own clothes and keep the money) and was issued a rifle. To the poor men who had just left most of what they owned in Nauvoo, it offered a way for them to get west, and money for their families to live for the year they were gone.

it was too late. Levi learned that the only way his boy could get out of the dangerous plight was to have another take his place. Though Levi had a young wife and a new baby boy, the 43-year-old gunsmith signed his name and went back to get ready to march to Fort Leavenworth. Matt was told that his duty was to help his stepmother, but Sarah said her father would take care of her. Bishop Miller said he'd also look out for Levi's wife and sons.

When the Battalion left,²⁴ there were several wagons with families that went too. Although Levi had wagons and teams to take, in a quick decision; the Fifields felt it was impossible to prepare for so long and arduous a trip in the time allowed. What money he had, Levi left with his wife and Bishop Miller. His wages as a soldier²⁵ would be given to his family. Matt knew he could not live with his stepmother and her parents, so he and Byron dug, thatched and prepared a place of their own where they could live as bachelors. They herded cows, cut wild hay, chopped wood and did whatever they could for their keep and meals, for whoever would ask them.

Widows and soldiers' wives were helped whether they could pay or not. Going from one cabin being constructed to another, they earned more than their food from men and women who were grateful for their help. By the end of November, 538 log huts and 83 sod huts had been erected, most of this work being done after the soldiers left for California. The boys also would bring in a turkey or rabbit to give various hungry people, and would be asked to share the provided game. Cows strayed so often that the brothers were in constant demand by someone to find and bring them back.

On November 22, word reached the boys' ears that Howard Egan, John D. Lee, and some other soldiers had come into camp from Santa Fe. Matt went to get information about his father, but it was impossible to get near the messengers because so many people were there. Levi had sent the boys a separate letter for which they were very grateful. They were advised to closely follow the advice of the church authorities and see that Mrs. Hanna Miller always had plenty of wood, water and other things which the teenage boys could furnish. By following their father's advice, they were always welcome at the Miller's cabin.

Most of the mail that came to the Mormon camp had to be carried from a far away post office at Austin, Missouri. A petition was signed by all the males in the camp on Jan 20, 1847, for postal service to be extended to the Missouri river. The names of all the Fifield boys were on the petition, even William John Fifield though he wasn't yet two years old. At that time, Matt was living at Miller's Hollow, later called Kanessville. The request was granted and a semiweekly mail service was granted to the Mormons.

Dancing

The poverty of the Mormons at Winter Quarters and the lack of funds made parties and feasting almost an impossibility. To keep the Saints busy and provide a pleasant diversion, Brigham Young encouraged dancing and sought out dancing teachers who could teach the popular dances of the times. While Matt had been around the lumber camps of Vermont and "York" State, he had observed the French-Canadians in their dancing, and was asked to teach the French four, the cotillion, and the quadrille. With the niceties of the "pas de cheval", "balance", "jete", and "glissade" he was popular throughout the camps and became well known to the Church leaders. In later life he could name the wives of all the apostles, tell who their parents

²⁴ The map of the Mormon Battalion's journey to California shows the longest forced infantry march in history. There are many books written on this experience, and well worth reading.

²⁵ Levi's wages as a soldier were far less than what he could have earned as a blacksmith in camp.

were and tell about many of their children. Had his many stories been written down, our legacy would have been priceless.

Guard Duty

The presence of Indians made it necessary that Matt take his turn standing guard, a cheerless task compared to that of teaching dance steps to girls. At this time the Indians were killing cattle which belonged to the Mormons and justifying themselves by saying the cattle was pay for the use of the Indian lands. Matt was put to night-herding and several times he took a shot in the night at what he supposed was an Indian. During the winter the constant winds from the northeast, the deep snow, and the cold made it necessary to change the night guards every two hours. When it was very cold, there was no prowling on the part of the Indians; taking advantage of this, the guards stood in a sheltered place near the fires.

Hosea Stout was in charge of the guard detail. On his return from the Battalion on 21 Nov. 1846, John D. Lee was made consulting officer of the guard. One of Lee's duties was to check what was going on for military defense and he charged that too much carelessness was evident. One day a Chinook wind came up and melted the snow, leaving ponds of water in the low places. Matt went to his post that night with special instructions from Stout to challenge everyone regardless of his rank. On special alert, he caught sight of a man creeping low between reeds and rushes across a pond. His rifle at readiness, Matt called for the person to come forward and give the password. After a moment's hesitation, the lad put his rifle to his shoulder and cocked it, the click of the hammer sounding out strong in the still, crisp, night air. The alarmed man called "DON'T SHOOT! I'VE FORGOTTEN THE PASSWORD, but I'm John D. Lee on inspection."

"Then you know the rules," replied the sentry with his gun still at his shoulder.

"Don't make me wade the pond on a night like this," was the plea, "Come to the end of the pond, Matt, and I'll identify myself."

"My orders are to shoot unless the instructions are strictly followed," was the guard's reply. Lee waded through the slushy, iced over pond and was taken to the corporal of the guard who sat near a fire in a cabin. Matt went back to his cold post to finish out the watch. Next morning, Lee and Matt told the same story. Stout congratulated Matt on his alertness, and released Lee on the grounds that such inspection was necessary. There was no levity on the part of Matt, Stout or Lee, but Matt said that Lee never showed that he held feelings against Matt.

Another moonlit night while at his post, Matt noticed tree stumps where he had never observed them before. He brought his rifle to "alert" and stood still a moment. By comparing the stumps to a reference point, he noticed some of them seemed to move. After challenging a time or two, he raised his rifle and fired, calling at once for the corporal of the guard. By the time the officer arrived, all the "stumps" had disappeared. Investigation by a larger body of men showed that there had been "stumps" in the form of bark peeled from trees behind which someone had been hiding. When asked in later life if he had ever shot anyone while on guard, he always answered, "I don't know. I hope not."

By the start of spring in 1847, almost everyone was out of food and there was much sickness. Matt always carried the gun his father gave him, and shot many rabbits, wild chickens, and turkeys to take to Bishop Miller's wife. As spring progressed, lettuce, radishes, and wild gooseberries were found on most tables and the loose teeth and skin disorders stopped. Herbs were steeped and drunk freely on advice of Brigham Young, who likely got the knowledge from his cousin, Dr. Willard Richards.

About the middle of March 1847, John D. Lee came to Matt with word that President Young was requesting 33 wagons to make the trip west. Levi had left Matt with a well-seasoned and carefully ironed wagon, with orders never to part with it. Everyone in camp had used the wagon for local chores and commented on its good qualities. The lad told Lee that much as he regretted it, he'd have to turn the request down. Later on Lee again accosted Matt with the word that although he had obtained 30 wagons for Brigham, he was still looking for three more. Matt still held out, but when Brigham himself came and requested the wagon, Matt let it go. In April, when the first group of Saints went west to find the new home of the church, the Fifield wagon went also.

Summer Quarters

About the time Brigham Young left to go west, John D. Lee called for volunteers to go to Summer Quarters.²⁶ During the summer of 1847, Matt and his brother spent most of their time keeping cattle and Indians out of the 600 acres of land that made up this farm.

Alert to the need for properly cured hardwood, Matt took to cutting some trees along the streams and peeling off the bark so the wood would dry. He left his timber in the shade of large trees where men would come to get it for making wagons.²⁷ Because Matt had so often helped his father set tires, much of his time was spent helping to put wheels together, using his father's tools in the processes. During the summer, many people finished their wagons in preparation for the following year's trek west. In early December, some Battalion men under the leadership of Lieutenant Philomen C. Merrill came into Kanessville. The Fifield's got word that Levi had stayed in California, and that Matt should bring his stepmother in the wagon. Part of Brigham Young's company arrived back in camp. When the main party arrived a few days later, they were hungry, tired, but had the news that a "resting place" had been found in the Great Salt Lake Valley.

Heading West

In preparation for the trip west Matt and Byron were set to cleaning the guns in camp. This responsibility and dances each night kept the boys busy until early spring. The boys were trained in shooting from a kneeling, sitting, prone, and standing positions. They wondered how they would do in case of an Indian attack. As the preparation continued, waiting became almost unbearable, and many became impatient. Companies were formed, and then the leaving date would be delayed because the river boat was late. Quarrels developed and threats were made. The Nebraska Indian agent demanded the Mormons move back to Iowa territory.

The Mormon Trail

²⁶ This plot of land was used to grow food for the main company of people in Winter Quarters that year. In the following years, companies on the road west used the produce. Each group would tend the farm as they passed by (early groups plow and plant, later groups weed, and the last groups harvest) so that even during the trek west, some produce could be obtained by the companies on the road.

²⁷ The usual time allotted to the process of drying hardwood was two years of storage in the shade. Standing trees which had died were cut to use in making the hubs, the most vital part of any wagon. The parts were shaped by hand, then soaked in hot tar and doweled together with wooden pegs. Then the spokes and felloes were split out and rubbed with oil to keep them from season-checking. The wheels were held on the axles by lynch pins and a large washer. If these pins became loose there was no end of trouble keeping the wheels on the wagons.

FINALLY – Friday, May 26, 1848 about 3 P.M. – Matt Fifield drove a wagon from Winter Quarters heading west and traveled some 12 miles the first day.²⁸ The wagon Matt drove west was loaded with beans, grain of various kinds, corn, potato, dried squash, smoked and salted bacon, as well as the furniture needed to set up housekeeping. Matt drove the wagon; Byron did the more tiresome job of driving loose cattle.

Daniel A. Miller was captain of the ten in which they traveled. Mrs. Miller²⁹ was about 10 years older than Matt, so he didn't mind too much when she gave him advice. But when the boys' stepmother gave orders (remember she was only two years older than Matt), they listened respectfully, then went and did as their own judgment thought best. Their stepmother Sarah and her parents were not in the same wagon company with the boys, but she took it upon herself to warn them against drinking anything that hadn't been boiled and the boys listened to that warning.

The weather was very hot, so hot that word reached the camp that honey comb in the bee hives had melted down. The second day of the trip they completed 16 miles in spite of the heat. An early morning rain cooled the air but made the roads very muddy. By traveling part of Sunday, they were able to make camp on the Elkhorn river where the 300 wagons preceding them were waiting to cross. Although there was a ferry, it was just a raft pulled back and forth by ropes. The Elkhorn was usually less than two feet deep, and almost never more than 3 feet, but as Matt's turn came it had risen to more than 7 feet deep.

It was Wednesday, May 31, before Matt's wagon was across the Elkhorn. The company was reformed with Wm. G. Perkins as captain of the 100, John D. Lee captain of the first 50 and Eleazar Perkins captain of the second 50. Captain of the first 10 wagons was Henry B. Jacobs; captain of the second 10 (where Matt was located) was Daniel A. Miller. At this point each wagon was numbered and marked so that the leaders could tell in an instant which captain was in charge. Heber C. Kimball was the Captain of 100 just behind the Perkins' company.

Platte River Day 6

June 2, the company rolled by the site of a recent Indian battle and several of the dead Redmen were still on the ground. There were several bad storms and when Captain Perkins reached the Platte River, a liberty pole was set up. Things started to settle into a pattern with the usual breakdown, stops for repair and going back to look for lost cattle or pigs. They averaged about 16 miles a day. On June 8, Captain Perkins found fault with the way Daniel Miller's cattle were tied, and asked that in the future a better job be done. Matt took note of the instructions and afterward his oxen were secured in the manner Perkins wished. Standing guard in the rain didn't suit Matt, but he took his turn without any protest. Elk and antelope were seen and the company killed some for food.

June 10, they reached Beaver Creek. The fishing was good, but the continued rains caused the creek to rise and made crossing difficult. Rumors were circulated that the government was going to stop the migration of the Mormons. There were constant reports of broken arms, legs, or of some child being run over by a wagon.

June 11, was Sunday and regular church services were held. After church, an organizational meeting was held to better manage the activities, in the hope more miles could be

²⁸ In the first group to head west in 1848, there were 397 wagons, 1,229 people, 74 horses, 19 mules, 1,275 oxen, 699 cows, 18 cattle, 411 sheep, 141 pigs, 605 chickens, 37 cats, 82 dogs, 3 goats, 10 geese, 2 hives of bees, 8 doves, and a pet crow.

²⁹ She had a brother Adam Bigler about Matt's age and they became good pals.

traveled each day. It was decided to have the sergeant of the guard blow a horn to wake up all the people. Some were assigned to milk the cows, the rest to get breakfast. The oxen were to be turned loose to feed. At the second horn, herdsman were to fetch the oxen in for yoking and hitching to wagons. The third horn (30 minutes later) was to start all wagons rolling. After the day travel, with lunch on the move, they stopped in time for wood fathering and dinner before dark. At 8 P.M., the fourth horn sounded and the guard put on duty. At 9 P.M., the fifth horn signaled prayers and going to bed.

Quicksand Day 18

June 14, Captain Miller thought he had found a better creek crossing than the one used by most of the companies, but his wagons got caught in quicksand and was the last ten to get over. On June 15, everyone was told to get his gun ready for a battle with the Indians as Heber C. Kimball's company had been in a skirmish with them. Howard Egan shot one Indian who had his gun aimed at Thomas Ricks. After the Indians learned they couldn't catch the Mormons off guard, they were less threatening.

Sunday, June 18, was Matt's birthday. Brigham Young spoke at the church services and said that never in history had there been a people who had shown such a fine spirit of cooperation. It was decided that Captain Perkin's company should be second in line of march. That evening about 5 P.M., the teams were hitched and the wagons moved to a point about 6 miles ahead of the main body.

The Plains Day 25

From this point, the sand became rather troublesome and the dust rose in great clouds from the ox-drawn wagons. At times Matt thought he would suffocate and was thankful when rain came along to settle the dust and cool the air. After every storm it got so cold it was hard to keep warm. It was at this point, that wood became scarce and they started to burn "buffalo chips" to cook their food. It was not easy to eat what tasted like the dung, but there were few other choices, they could have eaten it raw or starve!

June 26, the entire encampment came to a halt for general repairs and to wait for other companies to catch up. By this time they were so strung out Heber C. Kimball's group was two days in the rear. Daniel Miller was made permanent sergeant of the guard and when it was necessary that he be away, Matt took charge of the group of 10. Three days later one of Miller's cows got stuck in quicksand and had to be killed for beef. It was a poor time for this to happen, as the hunters were finding plenty of buffalo for meat.

Rattlesnakes Day 37

July 1, a rattlesnake bit two of Daniel Miller's cows and they died and a work ox was also bit. Since he had a large herd, Bishop Miller didn't suffer as much as other families who lost cows. Feed was getting scarce along the way. Wagons made of poorly cured wood were beginning to fall apart because of the dryness. Sand and dust became one of the main problems of the drivers. Because of Matt's experience in his father's blacksmith shop, he helped many in setting tires and was always in demand.

July 8, a company of wagons was met coming east. These people had left the Salt Lake Valley on May 18 because of a scarcity of food and their dissatisfaction with the church. They said that those remaining in the Salt Lake Valley were waiting eagerly for President Young. Rattlesnakes began to be common at this point and they were rather dangerous because some of

them were blind. Several horses and some cattle were lost. On July 14, the encampment was called “Snake Bite.” Brigham Young became distressed because some of the companies were very slow die to the prevalence of snakes.³⁰

July 9, it was announced that they were 363 miles from Winter Quarters, averaging just over 8.5 miles a day. Matt (for the first time) saw an Indian child wrapped in a blanket for burial.

Chimney Rock Day 52

July 15, they were near Chimney Rock, Nebraska and cooking fuel was very scarce. July 17 there were to Scott’s Bluff. July 19, Daniel Miller told the captain of his 50, that they were going to leave the “slow 10s” behind and go on ahead. They could travel faster and their cattle would do better than if they remained together. Captain Perkins and Lee argued that it was not in the right spirit to leave the weaker ones behind, and besides that would take the company blacksmith from the rest of the 100 wagons. In spite of these protests, when the company stopped early at a grove of cottonwoods on the north bank of the Platte River, Daniel Miller went on ahead.³¹

Mountain Fever Day 57

July 20, four men including Porter Rockwell were met coming from Salt Lake Valley. They reported the crops were good, though there were problems with crickets. Matt was stricken with what was then called “mountain fever.” He was sick, so sick that he went out of his mind. He continued to drive his team until he fell out of the wagon. It was hot and the flies were everywhere. Since it was not customary at this time to let those with fevers have water, Mrs. Miller carefully tried to keep water from Matt.

When a band of Indians came riding by distracting the others. Matt crept to the water barrel and drank his fill. Catching him at the barrel, he was roundly scolded by his nurse. He didn’t mind thinking it would be better to die than to continue to suffer for the want of a drink of water. While she was still scolding, Matt went to sleep. When he awoke, he felt much better and in less than a week’s time was back whacking the bulls. In the light of present day medical science, it is more than likely that his disobedience was the means of saving his life. Others, who didn’t get water, often died.

Green River Day 96

At Green River, Daniel Miller’s company was four days ahead of the main caravan. They were met there by Lorenzo Dow Young coming from Salt Lake, and bringing teams to help wagons without sufficient motive power to get over the mountains. Miller’s company was in good condition. So Young continued east to assist those less fortunate.

The Promised Land

Salt Lake Valley Day 115

³⁰ The cure for snake bite consisted of mixing turpentine with tobacco and placing the mixture on the bite. This and the laying on of hands by the priesthood prevented most deaths.

³¹ This group included Miller with 4 wagons and 8 other men with a total of 20 wagons, and all their stock.

Miller's group pulled into Salt Lake Valley September 19, one day ahead of Brigham Young (who had taken a special rig and went ahead of the main company). That day there was a very heavy rain in the valley, but in spite of this Matt took a team and started back to help those whose teams were weak and poor. He met Willard Richard's company and Amasa M. Lyman. They both urge him to continue east. He met Jedediah M. Grant's company at Bridger's Fort,³² October 4. They needed the help Matt had brought, so he turned back west. They reached Salt Lake October 10.

Levi Found

When he arrived back from this relief trip, he found his Father in Salt Lake.³³ There was a joyful reunion of the Battalion men with their families and a public feast was held in their honor in the Salt Lake valley. Stories of the part played by the Battalion men in the discovery of gold were told. The Mormon men were also proud that despite the lure of the yellow metal, they had fulfilled the contract to build the mill for John A. Sutter.³⁴ Levi Fifield had gold. It is likely that Levi's gold was turned over to Brigham Young (see endnote 3). He also had seeds, cattle, and supplies he had taken for pay from Mr. Sutter.

Salt Lake Valley

Since there was game in the mountains and fish in the streams, it is not likely that the Fifield family went hungry. We know they settled south of Salt Lake on Mill Creek, south of the "Big Field," and there is reason to think it was near the mountains. The author recalls Matt referring to "East Mill Creek" as the place where he lived while in the valley. There could have been several reasons for this:

1. The ease of getting fuel, a very scarce necessity in those days. Being near to the mountain, it was close to the scrub oak and maple, as well as to the birch and willows which grew along all mountain streams.
2. At that late season it was imperative that a shelter for his family is provided as soon as possible. Since Levi Fifield's wagon had been donated (as tithing) for church use, he had no wagon for his family to live in. We do know that Levi's family lived in a dugout the first winter in Salt Lake.
3. Having seen irrigation while in routes to California, Levi had in mind the ease of getting water to his land or "inheritance," which was given him by the Church. At the mouth of Mill Creek Canyon it was easy to get water on the land, and the land was very fertile.

The winter of 1848-1849 was cold, with lots of snow starting on November 10 and remaining late. It was better in the hastily constructed dugout than in the adobe and log huts. What vegetables they had did not freeze and the roof didn't come falling down on their heads when the snow began to melt. Because the roof was strong enough to support their weight, the

³² Near what is now Evanston, Wyoming.

³³ Eshom, in his *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah*, records that Levi came to Salt Lake June 5, but this is not likely. June 5 was before the Battalion men left Pleasantville, California. The snow was so deep in the Sierras that the attempted crossing was not successful until after then. In his own handwriting, Matt records that he met his father on his return from the relief trip with Jedediah M. Grant's company.

³⁴ Mr. Sutter lost much of his property and he had difficulty paying his debts when gold seekers overran and filed gold mining claims on his property. Levi's detachment of Battalion men also brought back two Russian-French cannons from California acquired from Sutter in payment of his debts. The cannons were greatly valued by the Mormon leadership during the subsequent trouble with the U.S. Army.

men could shovel the snow off before the thaw. Still, they had to put up with mice, rats, and other rodents moving in with them. At least the predators like hawks, coyotes, and wolves stayed outside.

Finding the winter extremely hard, Indians came begging. The policy of feeding rather than fighting was not established at this time. With scarcely enough food for themselves, the Mormons' treatment of their Lamanite brethren was not praiseworthy. It was still snowing in March, but sego lilies were beginning to push up on the south-facing hillsides. The children flocked over the hills with sharpened sticks to dig the succulent bulb delicacies.³⁵ Matt learned how to temper his hardwood digger by holding it in a fire, and when there was time, he spent hours getting the bulbs, some of which he fed his half-brother Billy. As soon as possible, the Fifield family cleared brush and prepared to put in a garden, using the seeds that Levi had brought from California.

With both whites and Indians living off the game, it soon became scarce. The Indians took to killing cattle, justifying themselves in that the whites had killed their game. Indians attacked the whites on the outskirts of some of the settlements, terrifying the women and children. Although the older Indians knew such practices would lead to trouble with the whites, the younger ones were all for it. John Scott and Hosea Stout took a small band of well-armed men to the settlement at Provo and after three days of skirmishing, the Indians sought safety in running away. Matt enlisted and soon rode to the city twice a week to drill. In his own handwriting, Matt wrote, "Came to Cache Valley with 42 in Company with David Moore, George Hill, D. B. Dilley, Lieutenant Cyrus Canfield, Captain Francillo Durfy of the Mormon Battalion and others, after Indians between July 4 and 24, 1849."

The 49'ers

To the Gold Fields

Immigrants from the east on the way to the gold fields, began to pour into the valley. Needing fresh vegetables, they offered surplus ponies for supplies.³⁶ Matt obtained a very fine pony in return for a few sackfuls of turnips, carrots, and other things he had raised in his father's garden. In a short time, the pony was fat and ready to take him on his frequent trips to the city about seven miles away. The Saints were discouraged by the Church leadership from going to California to dig for gold.

Kincaid, Briggs & Burris

In late July or early August, Matt was employed by Kincaid, Briggs and Burris to drive cattle to the Nevada Territory.³⁷ Matt related that, because of the stench of dead cattle along the route to the gold fields and their prevalence near the sources of the water supplies, the workers were furnished whiskey as part of the "findings," along with food and bedding. Not to lose any of his rights, Matt drank all the whiskey offered him. When he became aware that he was developing a thirst for the stuff, he let someone else have his ration in return for the other's water

³⁵ The Sego Lily is now the official Utah State Flower.

³⁶ These ponies were often in poor condition and too ragged (worn out and fatigued) to continue much farther west.

³⁷ Later Kincaid became part of the mercantile firm of "Kincaid and Livingston" and even later was appointed governor of the Nevada Territory.

canteen. When Matt found a water hole with clean water he filled all of the canteens he could collect.³⁸

Because there was so much available food along the river, there was little trouble from the Redmen. Occasionally they would try to sneak in camp to steal a horse or gun, but when the nights grew cold, they'd much rather sit around a fire in a wickiup than annoy the trekking whites. The monotony on the trail led men to act in silly ways they'd scoff at under ordinary circumstances. Variations of swearing were invented just to get a laugh. Tall tales were spun. One Matt repeated later went this way:

“A butting billy goat got so troublesome that its owner resolved to break it of its charging habit. Early one morning the master got behind a stump, shook his hat and the goat came with his head lowered. Then the goat backed off and took another try, while the owner went about his work. At noon the goat was still backing off, and then butting the stump. Dark found the same going on. Next morning when the owner came out, there was only the tail of the goat left, but it was still backing off, and then hitting that stump.”

Donner Pass

On reaching the sink of the Humboldt at the place now called Rye Patch, the stock was allowed to rest for a few days prior to the drive cross the forty-mile desert. It would take two nights and a day to get the slow-moving beasts across and the going would be tough for men, their mounts, and the herd. But it was the fall of the year and the trip was made without incident. At Ragtown, the trail boss decided to cut across the low divide to the Truckee River. Leaving the chuck wagon at Donner's lake, they continued through Donner's Pass, the scene of the Donner party tragedy. The “cannibal camp” and cabins were still standing as his father had described them when he came across Donner Pass, two years earlier. Matt saw human skeletons and bones lying about in the pines where they had been scratched out of their graves by wolves.

The summer of 1849 was dry and no snow was encountered during the drive. Going down on the west side of the Sierras about two days they found signs of the white man. Two men were dangling by their necks from an oak tree. When one of the group attempted to cut them down, a voice called telling them to “let them be; there're a warning to all newcomers against thievery.”

Sutter's Fort

Dropping down the steep mountain side into Bear River, it took almost a week to get the herd to Sutter's Fort. The tired drovers were paid off and went to a shed to get something other than chuck wagon food. It was after nightfall, and there was a Chinese cook who served them the most tender and juicy steak they had ever eaten. Early the next morning, Matt went to look the place over. Near the eating shed he saw the Chinese cook cutting away on the hind quarter of a horse, hanging in a tree. “Is that where you got the meat you fed me last night?” the redhead asked. “Oh, yes,” the slant-eyed cook grinned, “You likee?” Matt went to the river and tried to dispose of what had been eaten the night before by tickling his throat with his finger, but it was too late

Everything in the area was hustle, hurry, swindle, and high pressure and everyone was rushing around. The rains set in almost as soon as the “Fort” was reached. It was an unceasing rain and even though it was warm it got under everyone's skin. To make it worse a fog came up

³⁸ From that time on he was bitterly opposed to the use of liquor in any form and one of his favorite topics for sermons was the “Word of Wisdom”.

the Sacramento river and once wet, the only way to dry clothes was to hang them inside by a fire. Many of the drivers became so fed up with the constant rain and dampness that they started back toward Salt Lake City. But Matt wanted to learn about gold digging. He went to Sutter's fort and told the roly-poly Swiss who he was. Sutter was drunk as usual, but when he heard the name Fifield, he wanted to hire Matt as a blacksmith. The boys said he guessed he wasn't as good a smith as his father. Sutter told Matt he still owed Matt's father some wages, and bade him go to the Brannan and Smith's store and get what he needed and charge it to Sutter. Matt went to the store as Sutter had bid him. "Bless his old sauerkraut-eating heart," Brannan said jestingly when Matt told him what "Capt." Sutter had said. "He already owes me more than the fort is worth. But if you're Levi Fifield's son and want a pick and shovel on credit, you can pay me when you strike it rich." Buying a supply of food and the usual tools, Matt paid for them from what he had in his purse.

Mormon Island

Together with some of his friends, Matt started up the river toward Mormon Island, where he learned several fellow church members were busy. The water was not yet high enough to make an island of the peninsula formed by the meeting of the two forks of the American river, but later Matt saw it when it was an island. A natural place for gold to deposit, it still has the reputation of being the richest 'diggings' ever in California. Rock walls were being built to divert water from the creek bed so the gold, deposited by water over ages past, could be extracted.

While always hustling these men were never too busy to make fun, and the gold diggers took every opportunity to create a joke at the other fellow's expense. Matt asked one of the men working on the Island where would be a likely place to find gold. Pointing at a bluff up the hillside, the bearded digger said, "That bluff on that there hillside. That's ware I calculate digging when I've done with this place." A sly twinkle in his advisor's eye warned Matt something was awry. Bill Bean elected to join with Matt and go up the bluff.³⁹ After the two youngsters were out of easy hearing distance, they heard loud guffaws. "They're laughing at our greenness," Matt's companion said. "Let's dig anyhow," the redhead proposed. "Father always said gold was where you found it."

Staking out their claims first, the greenhorns shoveled away some of the topsoil, and filled their pans with what they hoped would be 'pay dirt'. As they walked back to the river where they were to wash out, they heard roars of laughter, the advisor taking time from his picking to come over where they were. "Just thought I'd help you, in case you didn't have the savvy of washing," he said. Wading into the stream, they let their pans into the water so the water would run over the top ever so gently. The light earth floated away and then lowered the pan so the current was more effective. Turning the pan from side to side, it was not long until nothing was left but small pebbles.

"Let's see what you got!" the joker asked, hoping for items more precious than gold to the miners. With a wide grin of anticipation he shook the pan. Then he said under his voice, "Well I'm hornswoggled. Color in the first pan full." His bantering tone changed to emotion while he thought things over. Turning to Matt's friend, he asked him to wash out his sample also. It proved richer than the first. "You young'uns stake me out a claim and keep quiet 'bout what you've found. When I've worked out the claim I'm in, I'll be up and join you. No one ever thought there'd be gold on Fifield Ridge."

³⁹ The Bean family came to Utah in 1848 in the same wagon company Matt did.

Fifield Ridge

“Fifield Ridge!” came in unison from the astonished lads. To the now baffled miner, Matt’s partner explained, “You see, his name is Fifield.”

“Be ye, by chance, any kin of Joe Fifield, Sutter’s black-smith?” Matt’s nod affirming the fact brought a bear hug from the dirty old miner. “He always went by the name of Levi at home,” the redhead said. “I otter knowed it. You’re his spitting image, only his eyes are blue. I’ll bet my last strip of bacon you’re Matt. I’ve heard Joe talk about you lots and lots.” Then he wanted to know all about Matt’s father. “Many’s the time he sharpened my pick. Getting hungry?”

At the miner’s cabin the boys saw for the first time flap jacks tossed into the air and turned deftly over when half cooked. They knew about sour dough, but his skillet trick was a skill they practiced when alone until they were as expert as Mr. Hendrickson, or Abe, as he called himself. He was a veteran of the Mormon Battalion who had not returned to Utah. He acted like a father to Matt and Bill Bean.

San Francisco, California

Yerba Buena 1848

After about six weeks of digging in the fog and rain, the mine petered out. With the dust they had, the two decided to go to Yerba Buena (San Francisco) and take in the sites. Abe had been there before but decided to go along to take care of the lads. They took a boat at Sutter’s and after a day and a night riding among the marshes, under overhanging tress and enduring the antics of brawling drunken miners, Mexicans, and Chinese, they reached their destination. Knowing there would be a lack of a place to sleep, but Abe bargained for three bunks on a ship stick in the mud at the bay. Though it was infested with all sorts of crawling critters, it was a place where they could keep out of the unending rain and be free from robbers, scallywags, and squaws.

Eating was a problem in San Francisco. Meals could be had from a dollar each at a Chinaman’s restaurant to \$20 at the more hoity-toity joints where drinks were served. Many of the places were so disgustingly dirty, one couldn’t eat unless he held his nose. The choice of food was salt bacon, hard tack, black strap molasses, and biscuits yellow as saffron and made with saleratus.⁴⁰ Fresh meat and fish were offered but after one sampling, the trio decided not to risk any more health on those viands, tempting as they were. Mud was everywhere and tracked into the public houses by miners’ boots where it dried. It was stirred up into the air in choking clouds, and settled on everything including the food. The atmosphere was heavy with foul-smelling cigars, the smoke so thick one had to get within arms’ length of his partner to recognize him. Diners gobbled down their food from plates which often still had particles of the food left on them from the previous meal.

Out on the street one encountered every race, tongue and people. Most disgusting of all were the bigheaded California Indians who’s shock of hair and deep-set eyes made them seem more beast than human. The public buildings were lumber shacks and tents, and canvas was stretched over unroofed buildings.

Entertainment

⁴⁰ Saleratus is sodium bicarbonate, or baking soda.

Entering one dive they watched a faro dealer pull in the gold filled buckskin pouches without a twinge of conscience and hand them to a burly attendant who disappeared into a back room. At another table a long-bearded gamester sought to lure Matt into his snare. "Come on, boys," he shouted, "see if your bright eyes are as quick as my hand." They hesitated. "This bag of gold dust against one tiny pinch that you can't tell which shell the pea is under." He displayed the tools of the game. "Nope, not me," Matt said with finality. "Why not?" "Because it's your game," the red-haired lad replied. Loudly announcing him a coward, the gambler hoped to embarrass one of them to take a chance. Unable to stand the banter any longer, Matt challenged the gambler to a game of checkers. "Where were you born?" he wanted to know. "Vermont" was the answer. The gamester shook his head. "No, not if that's where you come from. Then adding a bit of advice, "You've got the right idea. Never play the other fellow's game, and you'll make out in life all right."

Yerba Buena Day 2

Groping their way back to their beds on the ship, they tried to get some sleep. Vermin came out to see if Mormons tasted like gentiles. Long before morning the boys were ready to "go and see the elephant," the term in that day for seeing something, that has no real benefit to us, but to say we have been there. Today we use the "been there, done that, got a T-shirt." Going in search of food, they passed behind some gaming casinos and saw a Chinaman and two Negroes hauling corpses away. "Only two this morning," the Negro explained. "Yesterday there were four."

There was no boat to Sacramento until the next day, or the men would have left without breakfast. After gagging down some victuals, they took off toward some oak trees growing on sandy hills. "Maybe we can get a breath of fresh air," they consoled themselves. Although it was overcast, there was no rain. Out under a tree was a man with two or three rifles and a whisky flask hung from the tree on a 6-foot chord. "Five pinches to your one you can't hit that bottle from twenty-five paces," he bantered. Matt had seen the trick, and picked up one of the rifles to inspect the sights. "The sights are all right," the stranger assured. "See that bulls-eye yonder? Try it on that." After firing at the target, Matt let the man take a pinch of gold dust. With the musket, he paced off the distance and shot down the flask. The five pinches of gold were measured out in a dawdling manner with nothing said. After the three had gone out of hearing distance, Matt told them that the ball of a musket carried a body of air around it that caused the flask to swing away unless one shoots at the neck of the bottle. This was a trick he had learned at Crown Point, New York.

That day they met Apostle Amasa M. Lyman in San Francisco. He had come to California to collect the tithing from the Battalion men. Lyman said he was to try to make an agreement with General Wilson about uniting California and Utah for the purpose of getting statehood. He had been to the nominating Convention at Monterey where they were framing a state constitution. Then Lyman mentioned that he was to meet Charles C. Rich in southern California, and suggested Matt accompany him. Little did Matt realize his father would be with Rich or he might have gone. Old "Port" Rockwell was also with Lyman.

As nothing else seemed interesting, the three decided to go to the Embarcadero and watch the boats arrive. Mud was ankle deep, and there was much shoving among the rough crowd of all the nationalities at the pier. Bill told Matt to watch his gold pouch as a pickpocket had been fumbling at Bill's jacket. But because both boys kept their valuables inside their clothes, nothing was lost. Then a murmur ran through the crowd. "Mrs. Sutter and her family," passed from lip

to lip. The Captain's wife proved rather dull in her odd Swiss garb. She was a tall, round-shouldered, and dark with a bun of grey hair on the back of her head. She looked like a scold, thought Matt.

The trio decided to try a sea food meal at a Chinese joint near the wharf; then they went back to their ship bunks to get out of the heavy rain.

Yerba Buena Day 3

They were glad their boat for Sacramento left the next morning. After the captain looked at Matt's ticket, he pronounced his name and asked him if he was kin of Levi Fifield. He shook Matt's hand when told he was Levi's son and said, "I knowed him, knowed him well. Many's the time he rode this boat." After the boat got moving, a thickset man with a German brogue came to Matt and said, "I hear the captain call you Fifield. Me, I ban Heinrich Lienhard. I vust bring Captain Sutter's family from the old country. I know your father well. He made me a fine pair spurs; dem I vill show you ven we get to Sacramento. You vatter a gut blacksmith, very gut gunsmith same as in old country. He make Sutter good iron plow and do de iron work for de mill at Coloma. Yah, Fifield and Hudson also find the first gold at Mormon Island, and make de test mit the anvil and hammer on de gold Marshall bring to Sutter when it is first found. Vy you don't come see me ven ve get to Sacramento." Then he told how he had been to Europe to get the Sutter family and said it would have been better for them to have stayed there, Sutter being drunk all the time. Lienhard had a poor opinion of the great Sutter. He said that Sutter was not a captain in the Swiss army and that he ran away from the old country because he wouldn't pay his debts. "And he von't pay dem here, needer," he concluded. "Your vatter, he had to take cannon, nicht wahr, to get his money. I know because I was Sutter's bookkeeper.

The Stinking Tent Saloon

When the boat arrived at Sacramento, the trio went to the common meeting place for those arriving from the coast, The Stinking Tent saloon. Abe pointed out a huge man wearing part of a uniform. "That's Keseburg, the so-called cannibal. I don't believe it, but most folks here think he ate human flesh when he as snowed in at Donner's lake."

"Father says he knew him, and thought the man was innocent," Matt added. "I'd like to meet him. Didn't he used to be a captain on a boat?"

"The Sacramento. But it got so people wouldn't ride the boat, and although he was a good captain, the owner had to let him go." Abe introduced Bill and Matt to Keseburg, who showed gratitude and asked Matt about his father. The big German talked about the gold discovery and the part Levi played in its discovery, mentioning especially how the Mormons under contract to Sutter stayed until their part of the work was done. The air in the building was so foul that the men finally excused themselves and made their way to Brannan and Smith's store to get supplies before going back to the mines.

While Smith was waiting on them, Lienhard came into the store and asked them to come to his cabin where he showed them the spurs Levi Fifield had made. Matt tried to buy them, but the German wouldn't sell. The cabin was inside the walls of Sutter's fort, and Lienhard led them to a plow he said Levi had made for Sutter. "De first iron plow made in California." It made Matt feel very proud.

Hangtown, California

Mounting their ponies, they started for the diggings and met Porter Rockwell. "You got any gold you want to send back to the Valley?" he asked. "Reckon I'd just as well send what I got in this pouch," Matt said handing it over to the buckskin-clad old scout. "I see you ain't cut your hair yet." "Nope, and I ain't a gonna" the bearded man replied. "The prophet (Joseph Smith) promised no bullet would ever kill me as long as I kept it long." Rockwell had come on the same boat they had from San Francisco, but had stayed in his bunk all the while. Mounting a horse the first day after his arrival, he had been to Mormon Island to collect gold dust for the Church, and then expected to ride down the valley to meet with Apostles Charles C. Rich and Lyman. As they parted, Abe said, "Don't let the Hounds get you." These outlaws were extending their forays into the gold fields and became the terror of the entire state. Sam Brannan had made himself a very popular hero by organizing a police force to combat them.

Abe knew of a Mormon colony south of Hangtown [now Placerville], and the trio headed for that place. The rain was heavy and constant, the ground was soft and slippery, but the group reached their goal soon after dark. Next morning on the way to get some wood to cook their breakfast, their first sight was a couple of men hanging from a tree. Matt was so shocked that he couldn't eat any food that day. They were later told that these two members of the hounds were caught stealing. Over in Pleasant Valley, they found several Mormons and were able to get dry sleeping quarters and a safe place to store their belongings. From there they went in different directions, digging perhaps a week here or there as the rumors and spirit led them. But the rains kept coming. In March word came that the entire city of Sacramento was under water, and people were going about in row boats. "You couldn't get me to live in this place for all the gold dust that has been taken out of the Mother Lode," Matt said. By this time Matt had about \$600 in gold dust.

Back to Utah

Word came that Davis Burris of the firm Kincaid, Briggs and Burris, would leave Hangtown with a wagon train to go east about June 10. Matt engaged to drive a wagon. The rains had stopped by now and the soil was firm, but much work had to be done on the road through Carson Pass as they traveled over it. At Tragedy Springs he saw the rock-covered graves of the three Battalion members, and the carved tree with the names of Ezra H. Allen, Browett, and Cox.

At Mormon Station Matt saw people he knew, Bill Prows, the Barnard boys and Reese. They had already put a log cabin up to the square to shelter their supplies and were waiting for the gold-seekers to come for trade. They had a large patch of turnips and potatoes were planted, and the turnips were already large enough to thin and eat. Matt also had some Mormon-made butter, the first he had tasted since leaving Utah. Bill Prows showed them some gold he had discovered at a canyon about 40 miles to the northeast, and offered to go back with them and show them where if they wanted to dig. Since they already had gold and were anxious to get home they declined the offer to join with Bill.

The grass was good at this date, and the only trouble they had was with the Indians. Cutting across the meadows they reached Ragtown, near where the town of Fallon is now. Piles of discarded supplies stood between the greasewood and rock piles. Harnesses had been cut to shreds rather than let another, who might come later, benefit from the losses sustained by the tired gold-seekers. Burris, the owner of the wagon Matt was driving, had the men load up some of the discarded supplies which he thought he could sell when he got back to Salt Lake. They rested the stock for a couple of days prior to the trip across the Forty Mile Desert. Then after

loitering in the shade of some cottonwood trees until mid-afternoon, they hitched their stock to the wagons and started across the dreaded desert.

Nothing marred the trip except at one place a jokester stopped his team and began to dig in the sand with his hands. Asked what he was digging for, he said a dime. "What makes you think you'll find it here?" to which he answered, "It's an easy place to lose it, ain't it?" They met the first westbound gold seekers near the present site of Winnemucca. The gold seekers asked why anyone would be crazy enough to leave the goldfield. Matt showed them his buckskin pouch, much to their wonder and admiration, and told them they could have California, gold and all. Most of the whites in the westbound train were as emaciated as the poor Indians of the desert, whose ribs could be counted. Their wagons were tied up with rawhide and wire, and squeaked curses at their drivers every revolution of the wheel. They were in worse condition than those which brought the Saints to Zion. The west bound men were interested to learn all they could about the goldfield and were anxious to keep ahead of the hordes which would come later.

Since the grass was getting good, there was plenty of game in the form of rabbits and antelope. What was most needed were flour and vegetables. Fear of Indians kept most of them close to camp. Since the Redman was getting better food, they were becoming saucier. Unlike the summer of 1849, the summer of 1850 was dry and forage for stock became more scarce as they went east.

At Thousand Springs and Wells, the grass had been grazed so close it was found necessary to take another course to keep them going. Still the gold-hungry whites came, the trains closer together and bigger than ever. Little did they know what lay ahead, the disillusion, hard works, and heartaches. When the expedition reached a point where the town of Malta is now, it was decided to take the cutoff over which Hudspeth and his band had come the previous year. It was believed the grass would be better and the drives between water would be shorter. This trail led through the south end of Rockland valley no far from the Commings farm.⁴¹ At this place Matt was relieved of his wagon job and drove a herd of cattle down into the Curlew valley and then down into Salt Lake.

Salt Lake City, Utah

Courting 1850

Matt was disappointed to learn his father and brother, Byron had gone to California with Jefferson Hunt. Because of his dubious relationship with his stepmother, he sought out his friend Daniel Miller and stayed with him a few days. Then he went to work for various farmers and others for what they could afford to pay. Taking church scripts and notes from the long defunct Kirkland Anti-banking Society, his gold dust went into circulation in the form of coins minted at the Church-owned and operated mint.

A short time after Matt's arrival, he met Amasa M. Lyman who told him he had just returned from California where he saw Levi and Byron. They had turned over to Lyman the gold dust they had collected. He told Matt that his folks planned to stay in the goldfield a year.

In the early winter a schoolhouse building was begun in Salt Lake. Matt worked much of the winter, making roads and getting timber from the mountains for the schools. Matt's knowledge of dancing made him very popular this winter, and his services were again sought to

⁴¹ This route is now called the historical Hudspeth-Sublette cut-off. Matt would end up living in Rockland later in life.

teach the niceties of the French Four, the quadrille, and other intricate dances of the time. He had a very good reputation with those who knew him best, particularly Jedediah M. Grant. It was at one of the social affairs that the so-called polygamy reel was invented. This made it possible for one man to dance with two women at the same time. At one of these dances, Jeddy, as Mr. Grant was called, led Matt to one side and naming some likely-looking girls, asked Matt to find out what the girls thought about him.⁴² While dancing with them, Matt inquired and the answer he got was “I wouldn’t mind marrying Brother Grant if it wasn’t for his big nose.” When Matt repeated the comments to Jeddy he was told “If they marry me they’ll have to marry me, nose and all.” The outcome, as Matt put years later was that “both girls did marry Brother Grant, nose and all.”

This year Matt started paying attention to girls. Among them was a pert little lady, Almira Jane Gibson.⁴³ Almira had flashing black eyes like Matt’s mother, and a turned-up nose, and the two made a striking appearance on the dance floor. Both seemed to float rather than dance. He liked her and was afraid someone else would get her, but she said not to worry—she had no wish to be in a hurry.

The winter of 1850-51 was very hard. As the settlers took more and more wild game and fish, they became more scarce, and this resulted in Indian raids on Mormon livestock. Lack of knowledge on how to irrigate resulted in a poor harvest. All the pioneer asked of life was enough food to continue living, but there was often not enough, and many died. What good things they had came from trade with the “gold rush” people, and they knew that when the gold rush was over there would be an end to those goods. Times were hard, and the future was a bleak speculation on the part of the Saints.

Stepmother Problems

New Year’s Day Matt rode his pony out to Mill Creek to see his stepmother who was living with her parents. She carried on about how Levi had failed to use common sense in answering the “call” of Brigham Young. She had two babies and nothing to feed them. Matt was aware that she was hungry and poorly clad so he gave her a handful of tithing office scripts and went out on the mountain and shot a deer which was wallowing through the deep snow. Before returning to Salt Lake City, he reminded Sarah that she was in no worse circumstances than most of the others in the valley, but she could only see the bad. On the trail back his mood was grim, and he determined he’d never marry.

Matt was relieved when word came to him that his father and brother had arrived in the Valley with Jefferson Hunt and five others on February 2, 1851. When he went to see his father, he found Byron ready to go back to the goldfields. While his younger brother applied great pressure to have Matt go with him, there was a little black-eyed girl who held great influence over him and caused him to stay in the valley.

Ogden Courtship 1851

⁴² Matt first met Grant when he went with the rescue party in October 1848, just after he had arrived in Salt Lake City.

⁴³ Almira was the daughter of John and Elizabeth Wade Gibson. Almira’s family came across the plains the same year as Matt. She was 18 (3 years younger than Matt), born at Wheatland, New York March 30, 1833. Matt had ridden with her brother to fight Indians in Cache Valley in the summer of 1849.

Early in the spring, Matt decided to go with his father to settle in Weber valley where there was a need of blacksmiths. The Gibson family had preceded them, and perhaps Almira Jane's presence there had more to do with Matt's decision than his father's offer. At any rate, he was there in time to plant a crop on a piece of land adjacent to his father's. He went right to work building a log cabin on it, the purposes becoming very evident. Since records show land transactions were made to his father April 23, 1851, it is logical to assume Matt was in Ogden at that time. He told stories about the black smithing so it is further assumed that he worked with his father in the shop.

One of Matt's stories had to do with going into Ogden canyon to get out logs to build his first house. There were huge rocks in the bottom of the canyon and roads couldn't be built around them. Since blasting powder was expensive, the pioneer way of breaking the rocks was to build a huge fire over them, then pour water on the heated rocks. The rapid cooling would cause the rock to shatter in an explosive manner. For safety, those pouring water stood behind a slab wall to keep from being hit by the flying rock.

Pioneer Life

Farming in the early days of the Salt Lake Valley was difficult. Those arriving had to clear the brush and plow and level the land before they could plant the first year. They did not have good equipment to do this and their animals were worn out from the long trek over the plains. They seldom had brought enough seeds with them and what they did bring was the wrong kind for this high desert climate.⁴⁴ Starting on this poor footing, the problems were compounded because they did not have a knowledge of how to irrigate, and had inadequate tools and implements for working the soil. The resulting small crops were further reduced by crickets and grasshoppers. There were droughts, disease, and very bad winters to contend with. What little stock they had was attacked by Indians, wolves, and coyotes. A bare living was all they could produce. During this same time they also had to build cabins, make roads, and set up places for school and church to be held.

But the thrills of growing up, searching for, and courting a mate were no less glamorous then than now. Matt related that the first year in Ogden he slept under a government wagon his father owned while Levi and his wife lived upstairs in the wagon box, sheltered from the sun by a wagon cover stretched over bows. Sarah tended her two baby boys, cooking the meals, and washing the clothes for the family. In addition to his work clothes, Matt had a nice, white rawhide suit which he cleaned by rubbing it with white clay.

Though reassured on his every visit by Almira Jane that she would never marry in polygamy⁴⁵, Matt knew men had their eyes on the pretty little Gibson girl and terror struck his heart every time there was the possibility of a delay in his plans. Matt worked hard and long preparing a place for his promised bride.

Levi's Death

Then tragedy struck. Shoes were hard to get in those days, and anything that could be used to make them was so scarce that when one of the Fifield's cows died from eating poison parsnips, Levi took Matt out in the hot August sun, and together they skinned it. Levi

⁴⁴ The high altitude resulted in a short growing season, with frequent late spring or early fall frosts. The desert had soil with a high alkali content and insufficient rain. There was often no protective covering of snow during the long cold winter.

⁴⁵ Matt in turn vowed that he would never marry another woman.

commented “I’ll take this to Tom Weir and Ricks, the tanners up at Farmington, and then get it made into shoes for Billy and Joe. Sarah needs new shoes too, but I’m not too sure she’d wear those clumsy things Weir makes. Poor fellow! That blow he got on his head while in Santa Fe about did him in, but he still can make good shoes.” The critter was almost skinned; and as they were trying to turn the body over, Matt’s father received a scratch on his elbow. When Matt wanted to know if it hurt, Levi said, “Nah, not enough to fetch the blood.”

Next day in the shop, Levi complained of a severe headache and went home with work left undone. That night Matt sent Byron to Ogden for a doctor, who when he got there said Levi had blood-poisoning, and that nothing could be done for him. August 16, 1851, he died in the wagon he had built for his family, and was to be buried in the Ogden City cemetery.

His father’s death was a great blow to Matt and Byron even though it was true they had been orphans most of the time since their mother’s death in Nauvoo five years before. They felt they couldn’t live with their step-mother; she was only two years older than Matt. Besides she was British—that they couldn’t bear to think of. But little Billy was so cute and Joe looked just like their father. But Sarah’s tirades against Brigham Young for taking all her husband’s Battalion money and his refusal to make amends got tiresome.

“Why does she have to rant at us?” Byron wanted to know, “We can’t do anything about it.”

With a will the two boys set out to finish the cabin his father had commenced to build on the banks of the Ogden. That winter they went up the canyon, cut choice house logs and pulled them to the stream where they could be floated down next spring. While trying to complete this work, their step-mother announced she was going to have another baby, which pleased them some, but they hoped it would not be like her, although Billy and Joe were two fine boys of whom they were very fond.

Indians were becoming threatening and twice every week they had to report to the center of town for drill in the Weber branch of the Nauvoo Legion to D. B. Dilly and Captain Cyrus Canfield of Mormon Battalion fame. At this time Byron decided to go again to California with the first opportunity and tried to get Matt to go and stay to get out of the miserable poverty Mormon leaders had imposed on their followers. But again a pert little maid changed Matt’s mind. When not drilling and getting materials for his father’s widow, he was making plans for a family of his own.

As planned Almira Jane Gibson went with Matthew Phelps Fifield for the April conference, and were married in the Endowment House, April 5, 1852. In Ogden they made their home with Almira’s parents, John and Elizabeth Wade Gibson out on the hills beyond Five Points. The Gibsons came to Utah in the Levi Murdock company and had settled first at Mound Fort. When the flood waters got so bad there, they decided it would be better to live further out.

On February 26, Matt bought the rights to some choice land that he was planning to keep.⁴⁶ About this time Matt’s step-mother decided to leave Ogden. She arranged for Matt to take her to Salt Lake and she moved into the home she still owned on East Mill Creek. She traded her share of the property in Ogden for some things Matt and Almira had acquired, and relinquished her share of the Ogden holdings for the boys’ share in the Mill Creek place.⁴⁷ Matt

⁴⁶ The lots on Block 1, West Range 2, south part of lat 4 (seven acres); and the north half of lot 15 and 16 (20 acres), from Willis Bass. Some of his neighbors were William Barker, Jonathan Wells, Charles M. York, and Levi Murdock.

⁴⁷ When Sarah left, she was expecting her third child to be born. The girl was born in January, 1852 and died shortly thereafter, before Matt had a chance to see her. After Matt left Sarah in Salt Lake City he never saw any of

and Jane (as Almira Jane Gibson Fifield was called) moved to their own home and Jane Almira was born January 27, 1853.⁴⁸

Indian Problems 1853

Indians were getting bad and the authorities began to have more frequent Legion drills. Matt heard that his step-mother was going back to the States and went to inquire about her. In Salt Lake he was told she had visited Brigham Young and “told him off.”⁴⁹ Going out to the house on Mill Creek, Matt found she had gone and her neighbors didn’t know where. Some said her father, William Smith had come for her and taken her to live with him in some of the southern settlements. Matt nailed up the door to the cabin and returned to his family in Ogden. On returning home, he found his cow had stayed away. Jane was afraid to hunt for her because the Indians were getting saucy and impudent.⁵⁰

New Farming Ideas

Early in the spring Matt had a few acres of land ready to sow wheat. He bought a new variety of seed, one he was told would ripen early. He broadcast it in, harrowing the land several times so all the seed would be covered. Then he set about to prepare a place for oats, potatoes, and other crops which could be planted later. While he was about this, a widow woman wanted to know if he’d help with her house while her son harrowed his land. Always one to oblige, he set the boys to harrowing while he began placing the logs in place on the unfinished cabin. Looking up he saw the boy driving the harrow across the green wheat field. He was shocked and shouted madly for the boy to not cross the patch. Turning the team around, the harrow was dragged across the fresh moist land. It looked as if the entire field had been uprooted. But when harvest time came, that part of the field that had been harrowed was much better than the rest. After that, if there was time, Matt Fifield’s wheat field always got a second harrowing in the late spring of the year.

This new wheat was earlier than any other around and folks came from far and near to borrow a “grist.” They were hungry for breadstuff. When Jane noted that the bin was daily going down, she asked Matt what to do about it. “Let them have it, until there’s only enough left for seed. Then stop.” He knew what it meant to hungry folks. “But we won’t have any for

them again until Billy came west in 1902 for a visit. Joseph Levi died in 1855, but we know no details about his death, whether it was in Utah or in Council Bluffs.

⁴⁸ She was so named because she looked so much like her mother.

⁴⁹ She then wrote him a letter asking for relief. Brigham turned the letter over to her bishop, but nothing was done to suit her. Again she wrote a hot letter, reminding him of the sacrifices her husband had made to go in the Battalion and how she had gone hungry.

⁵⁰ When the Mormons came into the Salt Lake area there were so few people that they did not pose a threat to the Indians; and the two groups lived in semi-peace. But there was a rapid build-up of settlers. Trying to save their few stock animals, the settlers obtained meat by hunting deer, bear, and other wild animals of the area. The increased population, with better guns, and taking the best land for farms soon reduced the Indian source of meat. The farmer’s animals were easy to obtain, and as the farmers had taken the Indian’s food supply, the Indians would take a cow or sheep if the opportunity came along. The Church sponsored a policy of “It’s cheaper to feed them than to fight,” and led to a general peace. But the Indians also somewhat believed that the palefaces were afraid to fight, and this led eventually to some violent battles. At best, there was animosity between the two groups, and much of the time the farmers had to keep looking over their shoulders, and preparing to defend their home, family and animals. The “feed them” policy led to many pioneers going hungry in order to feed the wolfish, dirty savages. It was even more unsatisfactory to many Mormon pioneer women, when they had some dirty savage come uninvited unto her house and lay his dirty body on her bed.

ourselves,” protested Jane. In the end, those who borrowed a “grist” brought back all they took and a little extra, until Matt says he had good interest on what was lent.

Mill Creek, Utah 1854

The Indian troubles continued to increase, requiring increasing time preparing to deal with them. After Matt had been called out several times to chase Indians, he decided to move his family to Mill Creek, into the cabin vacated by his step-mother.⁵¹ While at Mill Creek, his second daughter, Amy Elizabeth was born on August 22, 1854.⁵² She was a lovely child and grew fast.

Word circulated that Franklin Pierce, the United States President, was sending a gentile to replace Brigham Young as governor. On August 31, 1854, Lieutenant-Colonel Edward J. Steptoe led two companies of artillery and 85 dragoon recruits into Salt Lake Valley.

With his wagon and two yoke of good oxen Matt made a good living for that time. Matt was in Echo canyon at the time the military came along, and liking the looks of Colonel Steptoe, he applied for and was granted a job. The colonel needed freighters to haul supplies from the Mormon settlements to his soldiers, and knew it would be easier to have Mormons do the work than cause antagonism by having outside people working among the settlers.

At first there was resentment against Matt for cooperating with the “Gentile oppressors;” but after awhile it appeared that Steptoe was reporting the true affairs, and was dealing honestly with the Saints.⁵³ Consequently, Mormons applied for every job available and the colonel made up jobs in some cases for worthy men.

Congress had appropriated \$25,000 to build roads, with instructions that Steptoe should improve the route to the goldfields south from Salt Lake into California so that travel could continue during the winter. Government surveyors set a course which the experienced Mormon guides and scouts scoffed at.⁵⁴ While the trail was wrong, it did build a bridge over the Provo river and provide work for Mormons who sorely needed ways to feed their families.

Trails to the West

Then came word for Steptoe to find a better way across Nevada than the long route north of the Snake river.⁵⁵ He hired Dimick B. Huntington, a brother-in-law of Brigham’s and another scout to seek a shorter way. They selected a trail over the salt flats. When spring came and Steptoe asked Huntington to go along to show the proposed route, the latter refused. Sensing something wrong, “Old Porter Rockwell,” was asked his opinion on the Huntington trail. He replied that this new route was entirely unfit for spring travel. Realizing how nearly he had led his command into tragedy, Colonel Steptoe delegated Captain Ingalls to take a group to Oregon

⁵¹ Matt’s home was not inside Mound Fort. He reasoned there would be more safety in the numbers in the town.

⁵² She was named after Matt’s mother and Jane’s mother.

⁵³ Colonel Steptoe’s first assignment was to determine who had killed Lieutenant J. W. Gunnison north of Sevier Lake in 1853. A trial had been held in which the accused Mormons were freed by an all-Mormon jury. Although Steptoe’s junior officers were dissatisfied with the verdict, Steptoe agreed that it was angry Indians who committed the atrocity. History has revealed that his decision was just. The Colonel’s report on the affairs in Utah led President Pierce to reappoint Brigham Young as governor. “Under the present conditions,” Steptoe wrote, “there is less crime and greater loyalty to the local governor than one will find in the States.” He added, “If appointed, I could only govern the territory; Brigham Young would continue to govern the people.” Steptoe’s stock boomed. He was no longer the oppressor of “God’s chosen people.”

⁵⁴ The winter travel course was over the route Levi and Byron took when they went with Captain Hunt and the 49’ers.

⁵⁵ That route cut back south up the Raft river and finally across the steep hills to the headwaters of the Humboldt.

over the old north route. Matt was to go and continue with the herds until they reached their final destination.⁵⁶ Matt had no use for Ingalls and so he turned down the job and a good-sized increase in pay and returned to Jane and his two daughters at Mill Creek.⁵⁷

In spite of the shortage of water in 1853, Jane had a good garden when Matt got back from Nevada. Their land was sub-irrigated and she had carefully hoed out each weed and kept the surface mulched until every plant was fully developed. For some reason unknown to both of them, the crickets and grasshoppers didn't seem to bother them as much as it did the others near them. Then fall came, Matt very carefully pitted every nubbin of potato or turnip he could find. His small patch of wheat was carefully cradled, staked and threshed as soon as he could get to it, thus keeping the mice out of the grain stacks. But the winter was a hard one, the leanest that Matt and his wife ever went through. They had enough for themselves, but they also had to share with the ever increasing stream of immigrants coming into the Valley.

The next year in Salt Lake, Matt busied himself in improving the place where he lived, working at intervals on the ward meeting house and getting timbers out for the tabernacle and temple. One of his perpetual delights was the excellent garden he always had. He sold produce in the city and to immigrants passing through.

The winter of 1853-54 had been so severe that food of any sort was scarce. Many felt it would be necessary to find a different place to live. Food was so scarce that the immigrants from the "States" were routed over the northern route through Fort Hall [near Pocatello Idaho] to California. With his big garden, Matt took a load of produce north and traded it for tools, horses, and the things which couldn't be bought in Salt Lake. He made out all right for himself.

Byron had not yet returned from his second trip to the gold fields. Matt's influential friends Amasa M. Lyman, Charles C. Rich, and Jefferson Hunt had gone to San Bernardino, California.

The Politics of Utah

Some said the saints would go back to the States to save the Union; many said they should go to California. About the time Matt got back from his trip with Steptoe, the President appointed two men to be federal judges that caused great problems for the Saints. George P. Stiles and William W. Drummond were both lawyers in the "States". When they arrived in Salt Lake City, one of the first things these scallywags did was to make scandalizing accusations against the Mormon women. They reported that the records concerning Federal matters in Utah were being destroyed. They claimed that they were not given "proper respect" and that the law officers refused to carry out their orders. Everyone, including the Gentiles, turned against these vile-minded rascals and there was never a dull moment. When the capitol of Utah was moved to Fillmore, much of the excitement subsided.⁵⁸ All the politicians, scallywags, and grafters went to Fillmore for work.

In 1855, Byron had arrived from California bringing some gold dust with him. He moved in with Matt and Jane and whenever he saw a good buy in food, he brought it home, but Jane felt he was imposing on them. Since Byron was the only kin he had in the Church, Matt felt protective toward him. Byron was also a good fisherman and often brought in food from that source when no one else could catch any. Matt said to himself that he couldn't turn Byron away.

⁵⁶ Steptoe now had some 300 horses, 450 mules and 70 wagons (some to go to army camps in Oregon and some to California) and had employed 120 drovers including Matt.

⁵⁷ Ingalls had seduced a young girl and Matt could not abide that.

⁵⁸ Fillmore was chose as it was more centrally located in the Utah Territory.

The Rescue of the Immigrants 1856

To add to his burden, Matt was called from his family to go help immigrants coming into the valley. This was the last part of November and there was deep snow on the ground and sub-zero weather. As Matt drove his oxen up the canyons he wondered if the blessing of Mormonism was worth the price of hunger, cold, hard work, and poverty. Coming into sight of the starving huddled immigrants in wind-swept Wyoming, Matt was sorry to think he had complained, even to himself. After he'd loaded several families into his tight wagon and started west toward Zion, he was glad he had come, even if he did have to swing his arms to keep up circulation. Jane had knitted heavy wool socks, and these kept his feet warm in the deep, frost-dry snow. His fur cap kept his ears warm, and his mittens kept his fingers from freezing; only his nose got cold.

Byron was called on a mission to Fort Supply.⁵⁹ There he studied the Indian language and became a good interpreter. Jane was glad to have the cabin to herself and family again, but Matt missed Byron's genial company. The spring of 1856 was a sad one for the Fifields. Two year old Amy sickened and died in April, probably a result of the lack of suitable food. The food shortage in the valley was general and hundreds died. Jane was expecting another child and the blow affected her health greatly. On July 5, she gave birth to a boy they called Samuel; he died the day he was born. In those days infant mortality was very high. When Jane was able, Matt turned his place over to some immigrants and moved back to Weber valley so Jane could be closer to her folks. Having lost two children in Salt Lake, she felt it was a good place from which to get away.

Ogden, Utah

Continuing Indian Problems

In Ogden, Matt lived in the First Ward.⁶⁰ The Indians at this time grew so saucy that it was necessary to send out a troop to fight them. Almost before he got his furniture moved into his cabin, Matt had orders to report. Some Mormons were killed when they tried to protect their cattle from raiding, hungry Indians. Matt received word that his Salt Lake troop had a battle west of Utah Lake and two of his friends were killed. "Had I stayed in Salt Lake, I could have been one of them," he mused.

Irrigation Systems

Matt spent a great deal of time clearing the land, digging wells, and setting up irrigation systems to provide water in dry years.⁶¹ As there was no official survey in Utah at that time, all the land rights the people of Utah held were under squatter's and common law. Matt's land was

⁵⁹ Fort Supply was a place which the Church set up in competition to Fort Bridger.

⁶⁰ At this time Erastus Bingham was bishop.

⁶¹ As more people came to the area it became more evident that to produce food in a dependable way they could not depend on the desert weather. The concept of irrigation systems was studied and the farmers started developing it. With partial information, few tools and a great deal of work, they built dams, reservoirs and water ditches necessary to make a system work. Lack of engineering knowledge and data caused some systems to fail because they were too weak. Some systems were built (at great cost of time and manpower) so large they couldn't be filled, or very excessively strong. The change in water flow caused floods and washouts. But through trial, failure, and then the additional work to rebuild, the required systems were built.

bottom land with willows growing all over and he worked hard to clear his holdings under these laws.

In 1856 there was ample rainfall and a good crop was raised. That winter the snow was more than four feet deep in Ogden. Again, it was fortunate that Matt had a location where he could cut plenty of willows for firewood to keep his family warm. He shoveled snow off the dirt roof so that when the warm weather came, it would not leak down through into the house. Jane's health was good, there was plenty to eat and enough firewood to keep warm. Aside from military drill and church, there was little reason to leave the place.

The Law of Consecration 1857

The law of tithing and consecration was instituted. The property was signed over to the Church and held by Brigham Young as trustee-in-trust. Matt's compliance to this Law is recorded on page 77, Deed Record Gook, Weber County Court House.

“Be it known by these presents that Matthew Phelps Fifield residing on Lot 5 in block 8, plot B of Ogden City Survey in the county of Weber and Territory of Utah for and in consideration of good will which I have in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints give and convey to Brigham Young, trustee-in-trust for said church, his successors in office and assigns all my claim to and ownership of the following described property to wit:

Farming land Lot 3 in Block one west range B North Ogden survey containing thirteen acres, one hundred dollars,	\$100
Grape land in the N.E. corner of Lot 1, block 2, West range 5, North Ogden survey, seventy five dollars	\$75
One cow, two yearling heifers	\$55
Two caves (2) fifteen dollars	\$15
One yoke oxen seventy-five dollars	\$75
One pig and fifteen chickens	\$13.75
Household furniture, kitchen, bedding	\$50
Debts due seventy dollars	<u>\$70.00</u>
Total	\$553.75

together with all the rights, privileges and appearances thereunto belonging or appertaining. I also covenant and agree that I am the lawful claimant and owner of said property and will warrant and forever defend the same unto the said trustee in trust, his successors in office and assigns against the claims of my heirs, assigns or any person whatsoever.”

(signed) Matthew P. Fifield Jan 8. 1857

Witnesses: C. R. Critchlow & Nanette Critchlow

On April 7, 1857 a plump girl whom they named Ellen Orrelia came to stay. She was a cheerful little girl and took the place of the two children that they had left on Mill Creek.

Brigham Young sent out a call for freighters to haul supplies and express from the east. Matt was cautious, he felt he would have more in the long run if he stayed on his farm than to work for the Brigham Young Express and Carrying Company.⁶² Shortly after Matt had finished his plowing, Brigham Young and a large party passed by on their way to the Salmon River colony.

⁶² The Brigham Young Express and Carrying Company was called the “YX Company” by people at that time.

Military drill was stepped up to double what it had been. A special inspection of guns, together with orders not to shoot at any Indians unless it was absolutely necessary led to much speculation.

The hasty departure of Judges Stiles and Drummond with Sgt. Thos S. Williams led Matt to “smell a rat” as he termed it. Judge Drummond wrote a paper indicting the Mormons. On March 30, the Mormon rebellion began to be reported in Washington D. C. President Buchanan had been in the cabinet earlier when Benton, Boggs, and Fremont had stirred up strife against the Mormons. It was only natural that he should want to get northern troops out of the “States” in case the rebellion should break out in the east. Utah was a convenient excuse.

Preparations For War

General Winfield Scott gave orders May 28 for troops to begin marching toward Zion. Even before that, the members of the Nauvoo Legion were called into Salt Lake and re-organized with special emphasis put on the necessity of readiness for some emergency. Scouts brought word in regularly about “Indian” activities; and everyone was told to get supplies ready for any emergency. When word reached the July 24 celebration that General “Squaw Killer” Harney was on the way to quell the rebellious Mormons, there was real consternation.

Matt narrowly missed being sent as a rider to Genoa, Nevada with word to buy all the arms and ammunition possible from California. Sickness in the family saved him. In all there were about 6,000 Mormons able to carry a gun and they were drafted into the Legion. Regardless of their sacrifice, everyone was ordered to leave the outlying settlements and come to Utah. The state’s emblem is the beehive, and the state buzzed within as well as without. In August, word came to Utah that the army was at Fort Bridger and that “Old Gabe” was acting as scout and advisor.

Early in September, Captain Van Vliet of General Harney’s staff rode into Salt Lake City. Large numbers of the Legion, Matt among them, went to Echo canyon. They dug ditches for water so the roads could be flooded. Trenches were dug at vantage points along the mountain slopes and rocks were adjusted so a slight push would start them rolling down the mountain side. It was heavy, exhausting work with no surcease. Matt was 37 and still able to do it.

After the heavy work of fortification had been completed, Matt as the owner of a splendid riding pony, was put into the cavalry. Mormons under Lot Smith attacked the supply wagon trains of the Army in Wyoming and greatly reduced their food, ammunition, and supplies. Although Matt rode with Lot Smith’s men, circumstances kept him from participating in any of these wagon burnings. The Mormons also successfully used the scorched earth policy to prevent the short-of-supplies Army from scrounging supplies locally.⁶³ Anything that would burn was set on fire, and Matt helped do this. After Albert Sidney Johnston replaced Harney as commander and decided the winter was so severe that even the United States Arm had to go into Winter Quarters. Members of the Legion were allowed to go home at intervals.

Rescue at Salmon River 1858

In January 1858, a force of 1,000 mounted riflemen was raised by the Mormons. Matt was mustered into this troop. In addition to his own supplies, he gave his prized rifle as part of

⁶³ The scorched earth policy had been used by Russians against Napoleon fifty years before.

the donation levied on the Ogden First Ward.⁶⁴ In spite of the deep snow and severe winter, the trail up Weber Canyon was kept open as a precaution against a surprise attack. While this was hardship duty, it gave Matt a chance to visit his family often. He was on leave when Indians attacked and killed some of the Salmon River colony.⁶⁵ The call for help came after dark, and before dawn one hundred men under Andrew Cunningham started toward the colony.⁶⁶ When they got to Medicine Lodge Creek, a severe snow storm set in stopping further travel that night. At least when it stormed, they were secure from Indian attacks. Reaching Fort Lemhi the following day, they found the settlers ready to leave. One man was badly wounded and two men had been killed.⁶⁷

With the urgent need of medical attention for the wounded man, 11 men (including Matt) set out for a hurried trip to get them to Salt Lake. The snow was two feet deep and following the trail was difficult, but in two days they were again at the Snake River ferry and crossed before nightfall. The group camped among the willows at the mouth of Bannock Creek, and early the next morning were attacked by a group of Indians. A short battle took place and W. Bailey Lake was shot in the head and instantly killed.⁶⁸ As they continued toward Salt Lake, they found Fort Call abandoned, as well as all the homes along the North String. At Brigham City, Willard, and even Ogden, all of the homes were vacant. They found straw piled on the floor, and everything worth taking gone. All the Mormons had “gone south,” determined to burn all and retreat into the wilds of southern Utah rather than submit to treachery as they had in Illinois. It gave Matt an eerie feeling to be in this land, prepared to fight soldiers he had found to be friendly human beings just two years before.⁶⁹

No danger threatened when Matt neared his home in North Ogden (17th Street is not now North Ogden. In the day of horse and buggy it was, but not today) so Captain Cunningham permitted Matt to ride up to his cabin to see that everything was all right. All was in order, including the straw put there to fire the building in case of the ultimate emergency. On the return to Salt Lake, Matt was not allowed to go to his family, but was held in readiness for the expected problems.

Johnston's Army

The tension built. On one side were the Saints and on the other was General Albert Sidney Johnston, a southerner in charge of the “invading army.” In the middle trying to reach peace was Governor Cummings. Sent from the east with orders to replace Brigham Young as Governor, he was soon convinced that the Mormons had been misrepresented. Even within

⁶⁴ This was the rifle built by his father just before they left Nauvoo eight years before. It was the only memento Matt owned from his father's legacy. At the end of the trouble, when Matt asked for it back, he was bitterly disappointed when it was not returned.

⁶⁵ The Salmon River Colony was started in June, 1856.

⁶⁶ They traveled up Malad valley, crossed over into Curlew valley at Ireland Springs, went over the pass into Arbon Valley, down to Bannock Springs, and ferried across the Snake River on McArthur's dilapidated ferry.

⁶⁷ Andrew Quigley, who had married a daughter of Daniel A. Miller, was badly wounded in the shoulder and beaten about the head. Quigley later received a silver plate in his head and recovered, though he had severe headaches during his lifetime. Quigley's brother-in-law, James Miller, whom Matt regarded as one of his best friends, had been killed and was left out in the snow.

⁶⁸ Lake was in Matt's company crossing the plains. The dead man was packed in snow and loaded into the wagon with Andrew Quigley. Upon arrival in Salt Lake he was buried in his family plot. Matt said he shot at several of the battle-crazed savages.

⁶⁹ Matt had freighted and scouted with Colonel Steptoe.

General Johnston's army were many supporters of the Mormons such as Colonels Thomas L. Kane and Philip St. George Cooke.⁷⁰

At last a truce was agreed to and Matt was released to go south and join his family. He found Jane with her folks, the Gibsons, camping along a creek which runs between Spanish Fork and Payson. They were glad to be together and lost no time in loading up for the journey northward. Travel was very hard because of spring rains, but they knew their crops in Weber valley were not parching.

Captured by Indians

During the drought of 1855, livestock belonging to the Mormons was sent to graze in Cache valley. The Redmen thought this natural paradise should be their hunting ground and killed cattle when very hungry. During the "war" the settlers had other more important problems and ignored the few head they lost. But with the war over, when any animal was killed the militia was called out. On one of the militia call-ups, Matt chased some Indians up Ogden canyon.⁷¹ While out scouting in the underbrush, Matt and a companion were suddenly surrounded by about ten Redmen and were then carried to a large encampment. The arrival of the war party with two prisoners created much excitement. A huge fire was lit and a dance began with the usual war hoops. Tomahawks, arrows, and guns were brandished. The arrows shot in their direction came close to hitting both men. Children in the circle spit in their direction.

Matt expected death and wondered what would become of his family. He knew the Gibsons would see that they had enough to eat and his neighbors would also help. But clearing land, building bridges and roads, and all the other work required in this raw pioneer land would limit the help his poor relatives and neighbors could provide.

Then two braves came riding into the camp. One held up his hand and the dancing stopped. With his knowledge of the Indian tongue, Matt gathered that there had been a talk between Chief Washakie and Brigham Young. One of the Indians unbound their hands and led them to a wickiup where blankets had been spread to sit on. An English-speaking Indian told them how brave they had been, so brave that the tribe had decided to make them members of the Shoshone tribe with the privileges of taking as many Indian wives as they wished. Soon two grinning young squaws brought steaming food into the wickiup. Seating themselves by the white men, the squaws made preparations to feed them. The whites recognized in the dish the unborn of a deer, a choice viands among the Indians. Matt had great difficulty hiding the gagging his stomach did. Faced with fear of offending the hosts, Matt determined to eat everything offered him.⁷² His oft-spoken motto "Beggars can't be choosers" stood him in good stead this time.⁷³

⁷⁰ Colonel Kane had been a friend of the Mormons from Nauvoo times. Colonel Cooke shared hunger, thirst, cold and fatigue as he led the Mormon Battalion across the desert from Santa Fe to San Diego. As he rode through the streets of Salt Lake he always took off his hat to honor the Battalion men he saw.

⁷¹ Scouting in the meadows where Jefferson Hunt later founded the town named in his honor (Huntsville, Utah).

⁷² Nothing offended the Indians as much as the refusal to eat with them. Later Matt said that if he had known what the meat was, he would have enjoyed it, as he did the horse-meat he had eaten in California.

⁷³ Matt had been an Indian captive once before. On his return from California in 1850, Indians had taken him one cold morning when he searched for his horses among the willows along the Humboldt River. On that occasion, they were friendly and offered him cooked rattlesnake. He said it tasted much like fish. After he had eaten, he was freed and he gave his captors some presents for which they helped him find his ponies and directed him back to his company.

Then the cause for the change came. Into camp rode Chief Washakie at the head of a large group of men. After a conference with some of the tribe, Chief Washakie came to the wickiup where the captives were being fed by the squaws. He bade them welcome and told them they could have their pick of the young girls in the encampment. When the captives explained they already had wives, Washakie laughed. "It makes no difference; both Mormons and Indians take as many wives as they wish. Why not? Only white wives are not much good. They demanded too much and won't do the work Indian women do, without much complaining." Soon the young squaw who had been feeding Matt disappeared, and that suited him.

Sacajawea

Before long, a wrinkled old squaw came to the white men. She opened a dirty buckskin bag and showed them a medal and a letter of recommendation from the great white Captains Lewis and Clark. She said she had showed them the way from the Muddy waters to the shining sea, many years before. She spoke fair English but it was interspersed with much French, which Matt recognized because of his time among the French-Canadian lumberjacks as a boy in "York" state. The Bird Woman was the guide of Lewis and Clark in 1806 in that expedition across the continent.⁷⁴ She made a great impression on Matt with his love for history and the unusual. He talked with her for several hours. In spite of the place this woman holds in American history, to her tribesman she was just an old, worn-out squaw of no importance, she was doomed to a life of further servitude like the rest of her native sex.



U.S. Sacajawea coin

Chief Washakie had a frank, friendly manner. His skin was much lighter than other braves of his tribe. He said his father was a fur-trader who deserted his Indian mother when he quit trapping.⁷⁵ Next morning, Indian escorts rode back with Matt and his companion to the spot where they had been taken captive.

Rescue of the Handcart Companies

In spite of the neglect of the fields and gardens during the Johnston's army invasion, crops were good. Weeds did not have much of a foothold and the rains of the season had watered the plants at times that made for excellent yields. All of Matt's crops were gathered and put in dry storage, and not a bit too soon. A request came from his old Captain, Daniel A. Miller at Farmington, for Matt to go east to fetch in some stranded handcart immigrants out beyond Green River. There was frost in the ground, but no snow. Hitching his team to the wagon he was soon on his way, with the wagon bed loaded with supplies and food brought by neighbors of the First Ward.

The first snow they ran into was on top of the divide going down into Bear River valley, where Evanston now stands. From then on, the cold was much more severe and the snow deeper than usual. The road was good as the passage of the many freight wagons, both Mormon, 49er's, and army had improved the route and made it easy to follow. Feed was rather scarce for his oxen, and he baited them morning and evening so they wouldn't stray far. When he reached the

⁷⁴ Her son, Baptiste Charboneau had been a guide for the Mormon Battalion across the desert.

⁷⁵ This was a usual occurrence. Any Indian woman who could catch a white man, even for a few months, was much envied by other squaws. Wives of these mountain men had more gee-gaws, finery and even had horses of their own, although their husbands usually returned to civilization without them.

site where Byron had been at Fort Supply, he shook his head at the waste of burning the huge establishment, sacrifices that were necessary to win the war.

Two days journey further on, Matt's wagon train met a group which made their hearts ache. Children with frozen hands, ears and feet, crying from the cold and hunger. They were in that part of the high wind-swept plateau east of Rock Springs where there was little for fuel or shelter. That night he got much satisfaction from hearing the chuckles of the children, and the blessings anxious mother heaped on the rescuers. His own discomfort and privations were largely forgotten.⁷⁶ This company, however, was not in the sorry plight the Willie and Martin handcart company had been in the year before. He pulled his wagon into Pioneer Square about the first of December, and went on home as soon as possible. On his arrival in Ogden, Matt found his wife and family living at one of his neighbor's cabins as his supply of wood had run out. Fuel of any sort was scarce even in the earliest days and the two families were conserving it. Not one to impose himself on his neighbors, Matt got busy at once and cut up the supply of willows he had planned to use to roof over a shed he was planning on building.

The Turning Point 1859

The Johnston's Army campaign was a turning point of the Mormons in Utah. As Johnston's Army left, the large quantity of food and supplies they brought to Utah was sold at prices the Mormons could afford. Irrigation reservoirs and the required ditches and dams were finished. The seeds of vegetables and fruit that could survive in the high, cold, dry desert became in plentiful supply. There were enough animals so that everyone could get a start and raise his own. This marked the turning point from their meager existence. The Mormons now knew they could live in the desert if they worked and conserved their resources.

Timber shortages in Weber valley led to a community project; making a wagon road up Ogden canyon. At the start it was passable only by horse and cattle because of the many large boulders in the bottom of the canyon. Improvements were made by the dangerous process of splitting the rocks.

In July of 1859, Matt went with 41 others to quell the Indian raids in Cache valley. Matt enjoyed the beauty of Cache valley, and resolved to move there if it became available to the whites for settlement. He did not mind the cold winters.⁷⁷ The lush grass, the timber in the mountains, the black soil and abundance of water all stayed with him. He liked his home in Ogden but he saw opportunities in Cache valley.⁷⁸

Julia Ann was born August 1, 1859. Jane's health was poor following the birth. Pains in her lower right abdomen kept bothering her. Neighbor women who came in called it "inflammation of the bowels," but at that time no one knew anything to do for it except by giving various herbs and the laying on of hands. Matt stayed near the place and spent much time clearing land and building sheds, fences and making other improvements. Church authorities passing the place often stopped to comment on his fine crops and gardens. One of his neighbors jokingly said "You'll be getting a call if you don't watch out, Matt." To which came the reply, "If I do, I hope it's up to Cache Valley." That sort of conversation led to the term "Cache Valley fever."

⁷⁶ Before going to sleep, he mused about his trip over this same route ten years before. The weather then was so hot he could hardly stand it.

⁷⁷ Matt had grown up in the cold of Vermont and New York where it often snowed to depths of 3-4 feet.

⁷⁸ Matt's house in North Ogden was located at about 17th street and west of Washington Boulevard.

Under the advent of Gentile law, there was an increase in crime.⁷⁹ While Governor Cummings cooperated with church officials to the best of his ability, there was a sharp increase in murder, theft, rape, and other felonies. About this time a Delow Gibson killed James Johnson in May 1869.⁸⁰ No details of this event are available.

Almira Jane's Death

Inflammation of the bowels hit Matt's wife again. No skilled doctor was near and though all sorts of remedies were tried, the excruciating pain did not end, and the high fever grew higher. The attending sisters knew the end was near and she died October 28, 1859.⁸¹ Matt was left alone with three little girls, ages five, two, and one. An elderly woman, Mrs. Warner (Priscilla Gifford) Hoopes, took care of the girls during the days, and Matt did his best for them at nights. Matt's sister-in-law Lucy Fifield offered to take the girls. Byron had two children of his own, both boys, but they lived in Huntsville and Matt felt he had to have someone in his grief, so he decided to pay for their keep in Ogden. His in-laws, the Gibsons, helped as best they could, but they didn't have much room for their large family and couldn't be imposed upon too much. Shortly after Jane's burial one of the worst storms in Matt's life time struck Ogden. The roof was blown off his cabin, exposing his three babies to the terrific wind and snow, and he had trouble keeping them covered. For a time he feared they wouldn't survive. But thanks to the experienced nursing of Mrs. Hoopes they recovered.



The Pony Express

Then came a chance to ride for the "Pony Express". Matt's friend, Billy Fisher, urged Matt to apply, but when Matt weighed in, he was a few pounds too heavy. Billy was not and became a famous rider. Indians came in great numbers for food. When snow was deep and food scarce, they were "good Mormonie", very humble, and Matt shared with them as he felt he could. But most of his supplies were taken to the Hoopes family home to help feed his daughters. When winter weather prevented outside work, he made quaking aspen and raw-hide bottom chairs, the typical furniture of the pioneers.

In February 1861, Matt helped his brother-in-law Henry E. Gibson move up to Richmond and looked around for a place for himself. A group called the Morrisites came by to tell Matt of their revelations and messages from God. Matt was happy when they moved over to some land on the Weber River and stopped visiting him. Matt met a son-in-law of the Hoopes family, Billy McCarry, and told him of the places that needed good farmers. Without waiting further, Billy hitched up the next day, drove to the spot Matt had told him about and settled down for life. He was married to Melissa Hoopes who helped to care for Matt's daughters.

⁷⁹ Lawlessness had been kept at a minimum under "Old Brig" and his chief Danites, Bill Hickman, and Port Rockwell. Writers coming to Utah had paid high compliment to the way the Mormons kept the peace.

⁸⁰ It is unknown if Delow Gibson was a relative of Almira Jane Gibson.

⁸¹ She was supposed to be buried in the Ogden cemetery but a search was made in 1960 and her grave could not be found. The church and its records were burned and it was impossible to locate anything.

The Hoopes family⁸² was having trouble with their daughter, Rebecca Ann, who was determined to marry a sick man, Charles Lincoln. Billy advised Matt to beat Lincoln's time and although he had a mind to do it, he was never one to enter into family affairs. Going to Bountiful on the pretense of getting work, Becky went ahead and married Lincoln on February 26, 1860. Later in the same year, Lincoln died at Bountiful on December 11.⁸³ Two weeks after his death on December 31, 1860 Priscilla Lincoln was born.

Richmond Utah

Marriage to Rebecca Ann Hoopes 1862

In 1861-1862 we find Matt at Richmond, having sold his holdings in Ogden. He may have gone there to be with the Hoopes and McCarry families who were taking care of his three girls. He also had a brother-in-law Henry E. Gibson at Richmond. On March 30, 1862, Matt married Rebecca Ann Hoopes Lincoln, a widow with a daughter a little over a year old. This made him the sole support of a family of six, four of whom were daughters. Becky (as Rebecca Ann Hoopes Lincoln Fifield was called) was a human dynamo with lots of good judgment and ambition. She had high standards of living, and was zealous in her religious activities. They may have lived with her family, the McCarry's, or in a government wagon Matt owned at that time. He likely had a good garden, worked at odd jobs, freighted, or had a piece of land which he farmed. Living standards were "we're lucky if we have enough to wear and eat."



The Battle at Bear River

From time immemorial the land, game, water, and resources of this land had been the property of the Indians. They couldn't understand what they had done that caused their Great Spirit to deprive them of it. They felt they had the right to take the livestock from the whites to replace the deer, elk, and antelope which the white man had depleted.

Immigrants going to Oregon and California were constantly being attacked, and the herds in the Cache valley were raided. Then in the winter the Mormons had to feed the Redmen. General Pat Conner (stationed at Ford Douglas in Salt Lake City) decided to put an end to this state of affairs and sent several forays against them, but the Indians always escaped. Under Chief Tootiwanna a large band had camped on Bear River about four miles north of what is now Preston, Idaho. His braves built a cottonwood log fortification across the mouth of a large wash, so located that oncoming troops could easily be seen and held off while the Indians escaped from the upper end of the wash. Riding at night so the Indian scouts wouldn't learn of his plans, General Conner set out in cold weather to make "good Injuns" of them. Camping in about two feet of snow about Richmond, he was at Bear River early in the morning of January 29, 1863. The temperature as well below zero and there was much frostbite and frozen hands and feet. The Mormons at Richmond were asked to send sleighs with clothing, food, and supplies. Matt and others complied.

The plan was to have the soldiers cross the ice on the river and get behind the Indians during the night. But there hadn't been time for ice to form all the way across. The thin ice, and

⁸² Later, one of the Allen family married a sister of Rebecca Ann Hoopes and moved to Mesa Arizona.

⁸³ Family tradition is that he had tuberculosis.

slippery rocks on the river bottom was a hazard to the mounted cavalry men; so they delayed their plan to cross. Just as the sun was rising, the troops started fording the river. The Indians soon discovered them, but enough were successful to make a block that kept the Redmen from escaping in large numbers. Cold as it was, the insolent braves bared their buttocks and slapped them in defiance at the troops. "Come on, you Californy sons of b___s, we ain't afraid of you," Matt heard them call. Conner was a good soldier and bided his time, even though the Redskins began sniping. After Lieutenant Darwin Chase gave the signal that all was in readiness at the head of the wash, Conner's men began the battle.⁸⁴

Finding all chances of escape cut off, the Indians battled desperately. The Indians lost. Three chiefs, 225 braves, and about 90 squaws and papooses were killed.⁸⁵ Fourteen whites, including Darwin Chase, also paid the price with their lives. Four officers and 49 men were wounded, and later 1 officer and 7 men died. As a result, Indians in southern Idaho and northern Utah learned they were no match for the whites and let their white brothers have their own way, much as they disliked it.

When the fighting stopped, the Mormon settlers went to see what they could do to relieve the suffering on both sides. Matt found one young squaw hiding in the water in a copse of willows, holding her papoose high above her head to save it's life. Helping her out, he took her near a fire, fetched her dry clothes and warm food.⁸⁶ The wails of the squaws for their dead was most heart-rending. They tore their hair out, slashed themselves with knives and sharp sticks and refused to eat. Knowing they couldn't help much, the whites went away, leaving them all the supplies they had. One squaw and three young children were take to the Franklin, Idaho and raised there.

Bear Lake Mission Settling Paris, Idaho 1862

By this time so many immigrants were coming into Utah that Brigham Young knew he'd have to spread out his colony in order to feed them. Two Apostles, Amasa M. Lyman and Charles C. Rich returned from a mission to Europe. Hardly home, Rich was called to pioneer the settlement of Bear Lake valley.

Charles Eugene Fifield was born on February 7, 1863 at Richmond, 8 days after the big battle. On August 11, 1863, six months later, Charles died.

In September, Apostle Rich rode to the head of the valley with Captain Hunt. Later in the months as he rode through Cache valley, he stopped at Richmond and renewed his acquaintance with Matt and asked him to go with him into Bear Lake valley. Just six weeks after the death of his son, Matt loaded his wife and four girls into his government wagon and taking what supplies he had, he joined the other eight wagons to pioneer a new area. Starting at what is now Franklin, they set out to travel through what was then called Immigration canyon, going into Bear River canyon, and then through Mink Creek. They made a dug-way to get over the summit, they cut brush and timber out of the way in Immigration canyon and camped at a swamp near the mouth.

⁸⁴ Darwin Chase had been a member of the Mormon Battalion.

⁸⁵ The three chiefs killed were Lehi, Sagwitch and Bear Hunter.

⁸⁶ Matt said that when the squaw he helped later came to his place in Weston, she recognized him as her benefactor.

Next morning, Charles C. Rich's wagon got stuck in the mire. While waiting to get it out, Matt's girls went up on the mountainside and picked the fall-blooming blue asters that grew wild there. While picking flowers on the mountain, Orrelia spied a bear. She ran at once to her father, who was able to bag the animal. The valley was named for this once abundant animal. The bear furnished much of the meat for the pioneers in the early settlement of Bear Lake.⁸⁷

The Rich wagon was really stuck and seeing that it would take a long time to pull his wagon out, Rich told Matt to go ahead and camp at what seemed a likely place for a settlement. Matt forged on and as a result, he was the first man to pull a wagon into Bear Lake valley. When the other wagons came up, Matt had a fire to light them to a place where there was wood and a good water supply. The site for the first town, Paris, was not far from where Matt camped that first night.⁸⁸ Large straight quaking aspen grew near the site chosen. There were cut and built into log cabins, chinking them with split pieces of limbs and then daubing them with mud from the lake and creek bottom. It was not long until habitable places were finished for the nine families in the first company. The winter was open with little snow.⁸⁹ Both trout and suckers were easily caught through the ice. Deer were not too plentiful, but there was beat to go along with the hominy, corn bread, and potatoes which had been brought from Cache valley.⁹⁰

Alexander Alma Allen often remarked on how envious he was of Matt Fifield in those days.⁹¹ Matt had a good wagon, a fine family of pretty girls, and most of all he had a good wife who could make an appetizing meal of almost nothing. "Which puts me in mind," Grandfather would add with a merry twinkle in his brown eyes, "of Becky's recipe for rock soup—the best dish she ever made."

Rock Soup

Curious to know how to please him, the women always asked for it. "Take a sizeable rock, one about the size of my fist, scrub it good and clean, and put it in a pot of water. Then add a chunk of good fat meat and plenty of carrots, potatoes, onions, parsley, and other vegetables you lie, and bring it to a boil. Season with salt, pepper, and other spices and you'll have—well, you don't know how good it will be."

"But the rock, Grandpa, what does that have to do with it?"

Those who knew him well can hear his chuckle before he said, "The rock! That's to give it a name."

Becky was the sort of woman who thought the best husbands were busy ones, so she started Matt on the tasks a pioneer man used to fill the short, cold winter days. When he could

⁸⁷ Bear grease was especially sought after as a frying fat. It has none of the objectionable odor of lard or tallow. But Matt always thought he "could taste the hair" when he ate bear meat.

⁸⁸ Fred Perris was the man after whom the town was named. Since those who knew how to spell always used the French spelling "Paris", it has persisted.

⁸⁹ What snow there was fell late. Expecting heavy snow the men took their scythes out on the ice and cut grass and rushes as it came through the ice. It was stored near their cabins where it could be fenced and used by their animals in case of need.

⁹⁰ Those with foresight to pit the potatoes when they arrived had little trouble. Those who left them in their wagons too long found that they were unusable until they thawed out and then the taste was horrible.

⁹¹ Grandpa (Alexander Alma) Allen often told how Matt would tell stories around the fires or in the cabins and remarked on the nature of some of them, their appropriateness to an occasion, and how Joseph C. Rich, another born story-teller would make Matt's tales part of his own repertoire. Grandpa Allen was there with his sister Amorett and brother-in-law Lewis (Doc) Ricks. He has 18 at the time and had left home after his mother married Joel Ricks.

work outside he split the quaking aspen wood⁹² or leached the ashes collected from their fires.⁹³ Inside work included making wooden bowls, looms, spinning wheels, and other pioneer needs. Or he could make furniture, chairs with rawhide bottoms, or bedsteads with woven rawhide springs. Matt was proud of the excellent fireplace he built that winter. He found a kind of stone which didn't chip when heated and cooled. He laid up a fireplace that always "Drewed without smoking us out," as he termed it. It was his plan to tear down the quaking aspen makeshift put up for the winter and build a real comfortable house of good, fir logs around that fireplace. When spring came Matt had planted his usual garden.⁹⁴

A Visit from Brigham Young

It was in May 1864 that President Brigham Young's party roused the sleepy little settlement at Winn's Creek late one night. They left Franklin early and before they got very far it began to rain. Wilford Woodruff tells the story as follows:

"On our arrival at the summit, the animals were nearly exhausted. We found the way wet and muddy. After proceeding about a mile we encountered a mud hole six miles long, the worst I ever saw in my life. I could not compare it any better than by taking all the mud holes I ever saw in my life and placing them in a line. It was worse than Illinois mud-holes as they were nothing but mud; this was full of tree stumps and brush. Horses and mules struggled fearfully, belly deep in the mud to make headway. Occasionally a pair of horses would fall and be buried all over except their heads. We reached Paris at 3 o'clock in the morning of the 20th of May. The distance was about 20 miles."

A hardship was imposed on the settlers when Brigham went into a new settlement with his large escort. In this case there were more in the party than there were in the settlement. Food was scarce, but the problem was solved when Matt went out and fetched in some 10-12 pound trout. Becky had a knack of frying these and they suited the taste of the "high muck-a-mucks" to a tee. Matt had to take Wilford Woodruff out to where he caught them.

Settling Montpelier, Idaho

Charles C. Rich gave him a "call" to go and settle at Montpelier, about 10 miles north—farther up the Bear Lake valley. Rich let him have some ponies in payment for his land rights and the cabin. In a few days the Fifield family was rolling again. The government wagon pulled up among some willows on Bear River. Most of Matt's seeds had been planted back on Winn Creek, so he borrowed what he could get from others, chiefly turnips and potatoes. He planted these for trade with the California immigrants who he knew would be along before summer got going. Matt didn't build a cabin here. Becky said she'd rather live in a wagon box so there would be no ties when the mission was over. That suited Matt fine. He had few illusions about the hardships of building up the kingdom.

⁹² When frozen, quaking aspen split easily into straight thin pieces useful in furniture. It was easy to work with either knife or auger.

⁹³ The paste resulting from the leaching of the ashes was used to make soap and dye clothes.

⁹⁴ For all of his life, Matt was always known far and wide for his excellent gardens.

Trade with the immigrants was brisk and quite profitable in 1864. While there weren't too many, it was good while it lasted.⁹⁵ Naomi Adelaide Fifield was born Sept. 2, 1864, here at Montpelier, the first white child born in Bear Lake valley.

When immigrants stopped passing through, the couple settled down to this lonely frontier life. But the sacrifice the Fifield family was making did have some side benefits. There was trout, venison, antelope, corn meal, and flour which he obtained in trade from immigrants. All these helped make bearable the loneliness and hardship. That spring at conference, Matt was released from his "mission" and allowed to go back to Cache valley. Before the snow was gone from the bottom of Immigration canyon, Matt's wagon and livestock passed over the summit, down the dug-way into Mink Creek and then up to the cabin of Warner Hoopes. Becky cried for joy when she looked down on the green fields and the lush meadows of what was to be her permanent home. Her parents and two of her sisters were near, increasing her joy. Matt had lost his rights to the place he had settled on in Richmond by going to Bear Lake.⁹⁶

Cache Valley

Homesteading in Cache Valley

Four families made their way across the valley to the mouth of a big canyon through which John C. Fremont had traveled twenty years before. Matt's family of six females and one male forded the Bear River and pulled "up the creek." His father-in-law was with him. Warner Hoopes was a charcoal burner and he saw in the cedar (juniper) covered hills a chance to make a living working at his trade and selling the indispensable charcoal to black-smiths in Salt Lake City. Soon additional families joined the first four and resulted in "nine Scandinavians and five white men" as Chris Funk jokingly put it. Besides the Fifields and Hoopes, there was Chris and Hans Funk, Niels Jorgenson, Soren Hansen, J.C. Jensen, Hans Koefoed, John Maughan,⁹⁷ Carl, J.C., and Rasmus Nelson, Wilson Robbins, and Samuel Rogers. One of the Scandinavians said, "Aye ban in diss country Tree yars, aum aye speak English so gute no vun would know ay vas born in Svayden." Matt had much admiration for these people, their industry, and thrift.

Damming the Bear River

Locating a spot where it would be easy to divert water from the creek the group worked together to clear and plant enough land to raise vegetables and grain for the coming winter.⁹⁸ The alluvial soil was very fertile and easy to till, once the tall black sage was out of the way. Their seed planted, the next problem was getting water out of the creek to irrigate. Experience had them first dig a ditch away from the proposed diversion dam. All they had was sharpened log pulled by oxen.

Then they began the task of building an earthen dam. The organic soil near the creek would float away like fine straw if placed in the creek, so clay had to be used. The only clay

⁹⁵ There are flat irons passed down to Matt's descendants, which he obtained in trade so Becky could iron her clothes. By the time immigrants traveled this far, irons were too heavy to continue the trip to the coast. Ethel Herrerger Allen Bradford Gunnell now has them. How Becky used them in her work before she got a stove is puzzling to us now, but these pioneer women were very ingenious. In 1864 the Civil War was on in full force.

⁹⁶ The federal government in Washington still controlled these territorial lands. No survey had been made, so titles could not be guaranteed, and squatters lost their rights when they moved off to another place.

⁹⁷ John was a son of Peter Maughan, the Church authority in Cache valley.

⁹⁸ This first farm was located near the old Georgeson farm which belonged to Wesley Fifield's family until the death of his widow.

available had to be fetched some distance. There were no scraper available so animal-drawn implements were out of the question for moving dirt. It had to be done by hand. Weaving willow hampers and attaching them to poles so tow men could carry them when filled with clay proved the best manner of getting enough material to hold back the water. With a will, these fourteen men went at their task and soon had enough clay on the banks of the creek to make a dam which would serve their purpose. When they shoveled in the clay they had poled up, there was no wash-out. Puddling the clay with bare feet made a surface dam face that held like "all get out."

Rocks were hauled from the nearby hills and placed in the creek to raise the general water level. To the joy of all it was found that after the rocks had been put in the creek, beaver had come to the aid of the pioneers. During the night these animals dug mud from the bottom of the creek and helped to raise the water level. To the devoutly religious it was a sign that God was on the side of the Mormons. The final step was to use shovels to dress out the posts where the logs hadn't lowered the bottom of the ditch to the point where water would flow.

The families lived in wagon boxes and camped out while the men did the obviously more important work of planting and engineering for irrigation. The women, always the most self-sacrificing of the two sexes, were anxious for security for themselves and their children and urged their men to make a place where they would be safe from the vengeance-filled Lamanites, as the pious insisted on calling the Indians. Three years after Conner's win at Battle Creek, little bands of Indians started to harass the whites, especially those in small groups. The Mormons in the "western settlement" as it was called, were particularly susceptible to attack, located as they were at the mouth of the Big Canyon with brush and tree-covered hills on all sides.

The Dug-out

Following the dam, work was started on the usual pioneer's first home, a dug-out. This was a hole in the side of a hill with poles used to form the front. Then a roof of ridge-poles with willow, straw and dirt laid on to keep out the rain. These dug-outs were warm in winter and cool in summer. Dirty as they were, they were better than "the big blue tent," wikiup, or wagon living. Whenever the weather would permit, the cooking was done outdoors in a dutch-oven. The women longed greatly for a good stove, a luxury afforded by few in those days.

Work always stopped whenever there was wild fruit to harvest. Men, women, and children all went up the canyons to pick wild gooseberries, mountain currents, and service berries. Even the hawberries with their over-supply of seed were better to eat than snow-balls. These fruits were mixed with tallow, Indian fashion, and became a luxury when winter came. The food was called "pemmican" and seemed to stave off scurvy. The crops grew fast. Rain came and not much irrigation was needed that summer. Just before harvest time crickets came to try the souls of the faithful, but enough was left so there was food for those who stayed to harvest it. The Weston settlers seem to have fared about the same as those in other parts of the valley.

Matt cut much cedar for his father-in-law to burn into charcoal. Some of it he freighted north to sell to the California and Oregon-bound immigrants. Other portions of it went to Ogden and Salt Lake. Trading charcoal for needed articles of clothing or food made it possible to live better than usual, the "usual" being barely enough to keep warm and the stomach from "rattling around." By this time freight was going from Salt Lake City to the gold mines in Virginia City, Montana. Weston-ites found it possible to trade for supplies from these freighters, who also, on their trips south, took mail to friends and relatives in the southern settlements. Realizing the need for a site where a real town could be built, where Indians couldn't sneak up on them, also

nearer the freight road, the settlers voted to move about two miles to the present location of Weston. The name, it seems, was shortened from West-Town to Weston, in honor of John Maughan's wife, Mary Ann Weston.

Weston, Idaho 1864

The Log Cabin

At that time it was thought the town was in Utah, but a later survey showed it to be part of the Oregon territory. No land grants could be certified as the government had not surveyed the Territory for settlement, even though the Homestead act had been passed. John Maughan, who had succeeded Christopher Funk as presiding elder, parceled out the places where men could build. Matt's allotment was on the brow of a hill, looking southward into the valley of the creek, and located on the same street as the church building stood in 1960. The soil was gravelly but rich. Since he had a priority on water, Matt was able to raise a good garden there. He built a two-room log cabin, again with a dirt roof. One of his main projects was to get it shingled as soon as possible. The pace was a natural for rattlesnakes.⁹⁹ Orrelia, about ten at this time, was sent to the cook shed to watch a bake kettle. Feeling something hitting her leg, she screamed! "Something I couldn't see was hitting my leg" she sobbed when her father came. He reproved the girl for her vivid imagination, but felt he should inquire into her fears. Lifting the kettle, he saw a rattler wriggle out from under it. Its tail had been striking the girl's leg.

Today doctors scorn the story that mothers carrying babies can mark them, but "birthmarks" were a part of the folklore of that time. Ellen Koefoed was carrying willows in her arms just a day or so before her baby was born, and a rattler slithered down her arm. The fright she got caused her child to be born paralyzed, a tale oft repeated and handed down from generation to generation. Matt often related the story of how a whole family of boys died. The father died first from rattlesnake bit. Then the oldest son (who had inherited his father's responsibilities and clothes), then the second, then on to the third, and even the fourth. Finally, someone noticed that each had been injured in the same place in the same leg. An examination of the father's boot found a rattlesnake fang that had been imbedded in the leg of that boot, and injured each person as they put on the inherited boot.

Trees and Flowers for the Cabin

Raised among tress, Matt's yearning of them led him to get cuttings of the fast growing Balm of Gilead which he planted around his cabin. At his first opportunity, he also got scions from the stock of Lombardy poplars Orson Hyde had brought to Utah from Italy. These latter trees were very popular as they didn't shed "cotton" as did the Balm of Gilead. Box elders, native to the west, were also planted along the ditches. But because of the bugs which came with them, they were not desirable near the house. But, they were shade, and "beggars shouldn't be choosers," as Matt often said.

Another passion Amy Tracy passed on to her son was his love of flowers, and he in turn passed on to his children, Orrelia, in particular. Almost before his log house was habitable, he had dug wild plants in the canyons, native currants, wild iris, etc. and planted them near the

⁹⁹ Rattlesnakes were accepted as part of pioneer life. As a means of protection, everyone who could get them wore high-topped boots as the snake's fangs could not penetrate them. Girls as well as boys were taught to recognize the rattle of this viper and how to kill one. During the season from early June until late August, when the snakes were apt to be blind from shedding their skins, children were especially careful.

place. On freighting trips to Salt Lake, he brought back ribbon grass, old man and old woman herbs, pepper-mint, spearmint, coriander, dill, catnip, hyssop, holly hocks, and various other shrubs to grace the barren hill where his family was growing up. Becky was famous for cookies which were sprinkled with coriander and sesame. Her food was always tasty. Becky insisted that the house be made comfortable and her husband chinked the cracks of the log house. Later a good quality clay was found down on the flats where he cut fox-tail for hay. That fall, extra effort was spent daubing all the cracks in the house with the clay until it was the most comfortable house in Weston.

The town grew, and it started to enjoy the benefits of civilization. James Mack started a flour mill using machinery from the Thatcher mill in Logan. A big welcome was given William Gill, a Scotch mechanic, when he set up a saw mill. Gill had a circular saw that could rip boards.¹⁰⁰ Gill also had a turning lathe, drill, grindstone, and various other devices to expedite wood-working. One of Gill's first orders was for another spinning wheel so that Amy, now twelve, could assist Becky in spinning. The other girls, Orrelia and Julia were of an age to learn too. That fall James Davenport brought his threshing machine from Richmond to help the farmers get their grain ready for market.¹⁰¹

Extra time also was put in getting the log building on John Maughan's lot ready for a meeting house. The custom of holding church at the homes of carious people could not be continued as there were too many in the settlement. The building was 16 by 16 feet and built of logs from the canyons west of the settlement. Seats consisted of heavy slabs brought over from the High Creek mill.¹⁰² Auger holes were bored on the round side, and birch pegs put in for legs. It was tiresome going to church and sitting on such seats, and many women would rather stay home than wrestle with their children and listen to the solemn discourses delivered by the devout brethren.

Weston Grows

People began thinking about their children getting a little "learning." At first, William Dees taught some of the children whose parents could afford to pay for their tuition in vegetables, butter, eggs, meat, or grain. He was glad for the food and they for the instruction.

There was an occasion to choose a place for the cemetery this year. On July 24, Niels Oliver Jorgenson, son of Niels Senior died at the age of two. There was a major discussion as to where to establish this graveyard. Matt wanted it put on the opposite side of the creek. "There," he said, "would not be a chance of water pollution." But he was voted down.¹⁰³

The population of Weston doubled in the spring of 1868. The newcomers settled on the fields south of town where they planted crops as soon as they could. A dam was put in the creek to get water out on the crops as soon as possible. The early settlers still farmed "up the creek," but they donated teams and labor to build a ditch so land could be worked south of the creek. This time beavers worked against the pioneers, and as a result it was rather late by the time water was brought upon the crops. Nonetheless a good crop resulted. Matt noticed that crickets hurt the early crops more than they did the late crops and planted accordingly.

¹⁰⁰ The new saw put an end to the old-style saw pit in which one man had to stand below the material being sawed while his helper stood above.

¹⁰¹ James Davenport was the father-in-law of the presiding elder, John Maughan.

¹⁰² Chris Miller managing Mack's mill obtained them from timber cut on the east side of the valley.

¹⁰³ Eventually Weston became a typhoid trap with a high death rate and epidemics of typhoid fever swept the town regularly, only to be stopped by a sanitary water supply piped into the town in 1912.

Two boys had been born on the site of the first settlement, Lorenzo Robbins and John Koefoed. The first child on the new site was Peter Davenport Maughan who came March 15. No school was held because there was no place large enough. Matt had a freighter get him a spelling book from Salt Lake City and set about to teach his girls to write and spell. Above the town was a deposit of slate and poor as it was, Matt got out several pieces to write on.

Good news was received. The railroad was completed to Laramie, Wyoming. This meant each town would be relieved of sending teams and teamsters east to fetch immigrants to Zion, as had been the practice for more than 20 years. This June the “call” came for Weston to furnish four yoke of oxen, a wagon and teamster to go only to Fort Laramie for immigrants. Peter Christensen went as teamster and Matt furnished a yoke of oxen. This was the last time such a call was made. Donations were now started to be taken to bring the Lord’s poor from Europe. Greater stress than ever was placed on the observance of “The Word of Wisdom.” Matt, who had learned to like tea from his mother and his step-mother, had little difficulty in “giving up” his indulgences. One old lady when taken to task said, “Does the devil have all the good things, all the comforts of life?”

Crickets were especially bad in 1868 in Salt Lake City and Weber valley. To get food for their families, men went to work building railroad grade. On May 27, 1868, Daniel Lewis Fifield was born. This made a family of seven. Infant mortality was high in those days when water was dipped from ditches. In the Fifield family, however, one of the chores the girls had to do was carry drinking water from a little spring near the creek. Naomi told how each week it was the duty of each girl in turn to see there was plenty of clear drinking water in the house. Even with this precaution, death occurred. Two sons (Charles Eugene and Daniel Lewis) were taken from the Fifields about 1869 when they contracted diphtheria. The blow was severely felt in the pioneer society where male help was needed.

Jane Almira Marries

Jane Almira was getting to be quite a young lady at this time. At age 16, she was of an independent nature and when her stepmother would scold her, as she often did, Jane would threaten to run away from home, or marry a polygamist. About this time Andrew Quigley visited the Fifield home.¹⁰⁴ Whether in a huff because she wouldn’t be bossed by her stepmother or not, Jane went to Clarkston and married Quigley. Naturally that made her father grieve.¹⁰⁵

Matt’s brother Byron came to Weston. He and his wife and four children lived with Matt, and crowded the place even though part of them lived in a tent and some in a wagon box. Lucy’s easy going ways irked Becky; the spats they had led Matt to say “two women should never be forced to live in the same house.” A man handy with tools and at repairing broken items, Byron went to work in Will Gill’s shop down the creek. Later he moved there and lived in a tent and dug-out until he filed homestead claims on his place some few years later.

It was a happy day when Wilson Robbins brought a W.A. Wood mowing machine to Weston. In short time everyone who could afford it either hired his hay cut or invested in a machine for himself. It put an end forever to the back-breaking swinging of the scythe, which looked so easy. When an Indian was asked what was the hardest work he had ever done he said,

¹⁰⁴ Andrew was only two years younger than Matt and had married one of Daniel A. Miller’s nieces, Elizabeth, for his first wife, and two others later. He had a scalp wound received at Bannock Creek, associated with the Salmon River expedition and because of the resulting headaches, he drank heavily.

¹⁰⁵ The age difference was enough to make such a polygamous marriage difficult. They made their home at Oxford and were the parents of three children.

“sit on a fence and watch a white man mow hay.” During one of the hard winters, Matt, foreseeing a need for forage and endowed with an urge to be doing something, cut a lot of fox-tail from the flats below town. With this he was able to feed his horses through the winter. This laid the basis for much of the stock and resulting wealth he had. Having been first to cut the hay from these flats, he established a right to them, a right respected by the villagers.

Weston Matures

There was school again this year, with John H. Clarke as teacher. He took chips and old whetstones for pay, otherwise there would have been no school. The Bible, Book of Mormon, and a few spelling books brought across the plains were the textbooks. With only three months of “larnin” it’s miraculous that any of them learned to read. This year Matt taught his brother Byron and his brother-in-law to read. When the post office was established in Weston in 1869, there was much rejoicing. Previous to this, all mail had to be fetched from Franklin. The railroad came to Utah this year, and with the driving of the golden spike at Promontory Point, many changes also arrived, some for the good, a few for the bad. One job Matt detested was black smithing. Having inherited his father’s tools, he was sought out constantly by people who wanted a little iron work done. It was a happy day when Old Man Fredrickson opened a shop for custom work in Weston. This Dane was a skilled smith and wanted trade.

For some reason Weston seemed to attract Scandinavians, so much so that it was often dubbed Little Denmark. Danish was used freely in church because there were more who could understand Danish than there where who spoke English. One who came was an old sailor called Buckskin Petersen. A group of rowdies, bent on what they called fun, harangued him until his patience wore thin. Asking the men near about to disarm his annoyers, he offered to have his arms tied behind his back and take on all four of them. The rowdies left him alone. Lars Fredrickson whispered around that “Pete” had whipped 20 German sailors when he came to America the year before.

Although it was expected that the coming of the railroad would bring lower prices, there was little change. Discovery of metals in the Oquirrh mountains (west of Salt Lake City, Utah) caused a large influx of people to work in the mines. This kept demand greater than supply, especially for vegetables and fruits. That year Matt had a fine melon patch. During the night rowdies raided his garden. What hurt Matt more than the loss of his melons (though he had a very good market for them) was the fact that he had hired these same boys to work for him when he could have gotten along without them. The leader of the gang, he said, was John Dees.

On April 10, 1870, a son named William Phelps Fifield was born. After the death of his brothers just a short time before, he was given very special care, not only by his parents but by his four sisters. Everything he wanted was his. His father let him ride on his back when he plowed, and brought him fancy, red-topped boots. His mother made him the finest clothes she knew how to make, and he was fed choice tidbits from the table.

Crickets were very bad in 1870, taking half of the crops. They did leave enough for seed and to feed the people. The south field was doubled in size, and the water for irrigation began to become a problem for the first time, so much so that Walter Thompson, was made first water-master.¹⁰⁶ For a detailed discussion of the water problems in this desert area see endnote 2.

Corinne, over the hill from Cache Junction, became a trading center for most of Cache valley. Supplies were brought up Bear River by boat and sold by Gentiles for considerably less

¹⁰⁶ As a young man, Walt used to go to Bishop Allen’s home and carry Rettie around in his arms. Later when he lived in Rockland, he used to “josh” her husband Will by saying, “I held her in my arms before you ever knew her.”

than the Mormon-run store would sell them at Logan. A freighter by the name of Burton made Weston his home and he would haul grain to Corinne for the farmers and shop for them with no commission for his services. The Deseret Telegraph reached Franklin, which brought news from the nation much faster than had hitherto been possible. Scriptures were quoted to prove that the last days were near at hand when the people would learn of wars, famine, earthquake, rumors of wars, and comets. It was held that there was little room for improvement now with railroads run by steam. People were told to prepare for the Ten Tribes who would soon come marching down from the north lands.

Selling Grain

To the Weston farmers, while life was much improved, there were still many hardships. There was always a shortage of equipment to till their land. They had a lack of posts and fencing material and the logs used to build cabins were no 50 to 75 miles distant. Crickets ate up crops, the food they both depended on for their own food, as well as their only source of revenue. They had no way to educate their children. Their wives continued cooking amid the ashes of an outside campfire when the weather permitted, or with their eyes stinging from standing over a fireplace when the weather was bad. Weston was still a pioneer country, and the pioneer conditions still existed for the most part. When Lars Fredrickson raised enough grain to bring him \$40, he went to Corinne, bought a stove for \$37.50 and shoes for the other \$2.50. When Matt heard of it, he got his grain crop ready, hauled it to the gentile town on the Bear river, and bought a stove for Becky, as well as other items. For an in-depth review of the harvesting process see endnote 1.

About July 4, 1871, Brigham Young, George A. Smith, and a retinue of nearly 100 body guards, women and members of families came to Weston. There were more people in the procession than were in the little village, and it was difficult to find places where they could be sheltered as the usual July rains were falling. The log church-school house on John Maughan's lot was pressed into service. Hay, fresh from cutting, was put on the floor and the group expressed much appreciation for the hospitality shown. Becky spent lots of time preparing choice food for the Authorities. The party was en route to Soda Springs and Bear Lake, and returned to Salt Lake City in the latter part of July. While at Weston, President Young held a meeting and discussed the idea of a co-operative store. A committee was appointed to investigate the prospects. But Weston didn't get its co-operative store until Alexander Alma Allen came to the ward as Bishop.

A Bridge Over Bear River

The bridge over the Bear river was washed out, and the town decided as a co-operative effort to replace the old one with a proper one. Fredrickson offered to get a pile-driver from Battle Creek and Matt furnished the teams and wagons to haul the needed long timbers from the Mink Creek area. The hammer used to drive the piles into the river bed weighed 1,500 pounds. The bridge was complete in 1872.

With the cricket scourge in 1871, Gill and Fredrickson decided to stop them. Noticing that the block monsters couldn't jump across a water ditch, they put in a water wheel and attached it to rollers over which the cricket-laden water had to pass. What resulted was a black, stinking pulp of mashed bugs, but there were still plenty of the devil's insects to eat the crops of the faithful. Matt and two others planted late that year and so suffered less destruction. They harvested enough grain to feed the colony and have seed for the next year. Matt let his grain out

on credit to whoever needed it, but even at that, more than half of the colony moved away during the winter months. There was no school either.

That fall, Matt hauled loads of potatoes, vegetables, and grain north to Soda Springs to trade with the Morrisites. With their location on the Oregon Trail, they had good opportunity to obtain items by trading with the immigrants, or by going east to dumps where heavy items had been discarded to lighten loads. As a result, Becky owned kitchen utensils and Matt acquired tools which only very few had.

On February 23, 1872 Joseph Lewis was born and then died. Frontiers are essentially rough and require much manual labor. The loss of another male caused Little Will to be even more pampered. He expected more attention than he received and learned to demand it by skulking, an especially effecting method with his doting sisters and mother.

Homesteading 320 Acres

With the telegraph already in Franklin, federal surveys put both Weston and Franklin north of the Utah boundary. With the surveys completed it was possible to file on land under the Homestead Act which had been passed many years before.¹⁰⁷ Matt went to Oxford and filed on 160 acres for a homestead and 160 acres under the timber claim.¹⁰⁸ The half-section was one-half mile wide and a mile long, the northern half being the homestead. At the same time Matt's brother Byron filed on 160 acres directly east of Matt. The two worked together to build log cabins on their claims. To get cash for their needs, Matt furnished horses to Byron, who made them harness-wise and then sold them to construction camps. Byron also worked at grading the roadbeds. He had prepared himself to become an Indian interpreter, but most of the Indians had learned enough English by this time to take care of their needs.

Badly in need of cash, many young men came to Matt for teams to be broken so they could work on the railroad that was being constructed from Logan to Franklin, the Oregon Short Line it was called. Brigham Young and sons had taken the main contract and sub-let much of this work to Merrill and Hendricks.

Improving the Homestead

Weather was good this year until after the holidays. Matt had cut a lot of fox-tail hay from his flats, and was kidded about this useless task of mowing fox-tail for hay. "God has blessed this country so the weather won't be so severe. We ain't goanna have the snow and cold we used to have." But in early January snow fell to the depth of two feet, and laid there until late spring. Those who had horses on the range saw many of them starve and freeze. Matt's horses ate his fox-tail hay and it pulled them through the winter. "Any kind of hay is better than a snow-bank," he used to say. To prove his claim on the timber land Matt had to have 2,000 or more trees growing at the end of three years. Hustling around he found cuttings of poplar and Balm of Gilead. He planted Box Elder seed along the ditch-banks for windbreaks. Going to Weber County he got pits from the blue Orleans plums, green gage plums, and German and Italian prunes. He planted walnuts, silver-leafed maples (that are really poplars), weeping willows, lilacs, mock orange, and Pottawattamie plums. In fact, he planted any kind of tree that would grow in the frigid climate with little water. Such small fruits as gooseberries, raspberries,

¹⁰⁷ Until the survey, "squatter's rights" was the only claim a person had to the land they worked and improved.

¹⁰⁸ The Federal Land Office was established in Oxford, Idaho.

native currants, English currants, the black (bedbug) currants with the rich flavor, rhubarb, ground cherries,¹⁰⁹ all these and more too became part of the Fifield fruit farm.

Matt next planted wealthy, winter banana, and golden transparent apples, pears, and other fruits of all sorts. He sold much of his crop to Bear Lake residents whose climate was too cold to raise them. Often he'd load up a wagon and haul it loaded with fruit to Bear Lake and return with cheese, butter, and fish. The residents around Bear Lake also loved to come to Cache valley to pick fruit. The trees were a haven for birds, the cool shade was a relief from the scorching desert sun, and the fruit so tasty and sweet.

One of the projects on the farm was digging a well. At a depth of about 20 feet plenty of water was found. Though the water was high in limestone and very hard, it was potent and palatable. From this well the water was drawn in two oaken buckets on the ends of a rope which passed through a pulley hitched to a crossbar overhead. Travelers passing by would often stop to get refreshed. Because a large number of horses and livestock were watered here, the water was always fresh. There is no record that it ever went dry.

The Homestead Cabin

Just south of the well, Matt built his first cabin. It was typical of all pioneer cabins. The logs were peeled and laid up to about eight feet high. The cracks between "chinked" with split triangular poles and clay daubed in to keep out the wind and storm. At first there was a dirt floor on which sand and straw were sprinkled and then removed when dirty. Two small windows and a home-made door through which tall people had to duck let in light and fresh air. It was heated with a fireplace, but the cooking was done on a stove. It is likely that Edwin Willard was born here, on March 27, 1874.

This was an age of dried fruits. Meat was either jerked, sun-dried, or pickled in salt brine. Squash, pumpkins, apples, plums, grapes, even beans, and corn were scalded and put out in the dry air and hot sun to dry. There were no screens to put over them, but Becky sensed the danger of having flies crawl over them and spread flimsy cloth. Because squash got ripe too late in the fall to take advantage of the hot sun, it was cut in rings and hung on cords in the attic.

The Melon Raid

While the family was still at the town place, the girls took some melons raised by Pete Christensen on his north lot. The girls disliked Pete because he was always telling tales about them which resulted in reprimands from their father. The loss of his prize melons brought Pete over to the Fifields. At first the girls denied eating them; but then Priscilla owned up. Pete chuckled. Now he had something on these brown-eyed little scamps who reveled in tormenting him. When Matt didn't promptly whip the girls, the old Dane complained that they were being spoiled. Matt wanted the offenders to meditate on their deed and the coming justice he would mete out, so their punishment was postponed. That was characteristic of Matt Fifield. Punishment given immediately after discovery and while the offended was angry was of little value. Often it was too severe and the nature of the punishment was not commensurate with the sin. "Let 'em fret; it'll do 'em good," was his usual method. Although Pete asked every day about the reaction of the girls to their fate, it was about two weeks before the girls were sentenced for the crime.

¹⁰⁹ Ground cherries were used to make preservers that have a sickly taste, but were highly desirable because they bore a crop every year.

Matt told them to fetch some diapers which he tied to a willow so they'd hang like a flag. "Now bring me an old tin pan." Naomi complied. Giving her a stick to beat it with, he had Julia and Orrelia and Priscilla hoist the diapers about their head as a sign of truce while Naomi walked behind beating on the tin pan. Tears streamed down the faces of these girls as they walked around Pete Christensen's house three times, chanting, "We won't do it any more." This satisfied the neighbor. "It ban better dan a whoppin', Matt." And everyone laughed except the offenders.

Fifield Punishments

As a boy, Will would run away from home. It didn't bother him that the entire family had to drop everything and scout the village for him. Levi Fifield had punished his boys by putting them in a sack (except for their head); so Matt treated Will the same way. One day Will boasted that, "It don't hurt me none." His father overheard the remark and responded, "We'll soon fix that." He put the boy, head and all, inside the sack and tied it. That was effective. Later, Will used similar methods on his own sons.

Female Jobs on the Farm

One of the best sources of a constant cash income was butter and cheese. Accordingly, 10 to 20 cows were milked, and the Fifield girls did much of the milking. The milk was then strained, set in shallow pans and put in a cool place like a cellar so the cream would rise. Every morning someone had to skim off the cream and put it in a jar. The remaining milk was carried to the pigs and calves. The 20 to 50 milk pans were then washed and scalded every day. Churning had to be done, sometimes every day with a large herd. This task was also done by hand and took from one-half to two hours, depending on the kind of feed the cows were grazing on. Then the butter had to be worked, salted, and put in firkins until it weighed 50 pounds. When one was full it was hauled to market at Franklin, Logan, or Corinne. Sometimes cash was paid, other times the value was taken out in trade.

One of Naomi's first chores as a girl was the task of washing 40 milk pans every morning. In her childish reasoning she felt that if there were no pans, they wouldn't have to be washed, so she hid 20 of them in the tall wheat grass that grew north of the house. It didn't take much deduction to know what had become of them. With a little pressure a confession was obtained. Becky thought a punishment should be administered, but her more indulgent father said to let it pass. He seemed to sense that it takes age instead of punishment to make maturity in children.

Matt also kept a few sheep. These were sheared in the spring, and when the women weren't busy with the dairy efforts, they were washing, carding, batting, spinning, and weaving wool.¹¹⁰ Sometimes it was sold, but usually it was kept for use by the family. There was also the job of harvesting flax, soaking, and breaking it, combing the fibers, and spinning that into thread. These two raw materials could be combined by the farmer's wife and daughters into linsey-woolsey cloth, a drab-colored, scratchy cloth that almost never wore out. This was the typical material of the time. To vary the colors, Becky used all sorts of dyes; including rabbit brush flowers, saleratus,¹¹¹ uric acid, saffron, indigo, and other pioneer dyes. Almost always the

¹¹⁰ In 1875, Samuel Preston set up a wool factory on the creek in Weston (he had learned his trade in England before his conversion and immigration to Utah). In the new factory he did the washing, carding, and batting by machinery. This saved the women much time and they were glad the little Englishman had come to join the.

¹¹¹ Saleratus is a raw form of sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) found in alkali springs.

vegetable dye colors faded in the sun, and resulted in a drab dirty-colored grey. But to have something different, women were willing to do extra work. With the advent of the railroad, factory-made goods made their way into western homes. People with cash incomes discarded home-made furniture. It was considered a mark of distinction to be able to afford “states made” goods, even though much of it was trashy and poorly made.

There was little to break the dreadful monotony of pioneer life but church attendance and the participation in entertainments which were put on to raise funds to support the church or school. Emulating Brigham Young, the impoverished Saints in the settlements put on theatricals, dances, programs, and improvement meetings for which entrance fees were asked. If those wishing to attend didn't have the cash, they brought whatever they had. Hens, eggs, squash potatoes, and butter were used for entrance, then later exchanged for funds at the store.

The Fifield Family

No one who knows human beings doubts that there was real or imagined favoritism in the Fifield family. Jane, Orrelia, and Julia were “your children.” Priscilla was “my child.” Naomi, Willie, and Eddie were “our children.” Those who knew Becky reports she was very prone to jealousy, so it can't be doubted that “my child” and “our children” were favored more than “your children.” Since Matt and Becky were both married to other partners “for eternity,” they were never sealed to each other.

Alfalfa

Matt's usual trips to Salt Lake City for conference were one event which gave zest to his life. There he met old friends and acquaintances, talked about old times, and most important, got new ideas about farming. On one trip, he saw a new kind of plant growing on the farm of Christopher Layton.¹¹² The Fifield curiosity led him to the door to ask for a drink. And in the course of talk, Matt asked him about the plant and its purpose. “It's called lucern,” Layton said. “I have a little seed I'll sell you, if you'd like some, seeing as how you are Joe Fifield's son, it'll grow anywhere, produce many times the hay as clover or grass. It will come up two or three times every year, starting right away after it's cut.” Having an extra dollar in his pocket, Matt handed it to him, and Layton measured out a tablespoonful, and a little extra for “old time's sake.”

After preparing a plot of ground, the lucern was planted according to the directions Layton gave him, and in due time almost every seed came up. Next spring it really flourished and fulfilled every claim that had been made for it, though no seed was produced. Matt thought that if the “tarnal stuff ever did make seed” he'd have a lot of it.

Matt increased his willow fence even higher but that fall after cutting a nice crop of hay off the little plot, a neighbor's cows mashed down the fence one frosty morning and glutted themselves with the usual consequence, bloat and death. Matt felt he should share the blame, and after taking a hoe and cutting out every stalk of the alfalfa, or lucern as he called it, he gave the neighbor a choice cow so his little children would have milk. Later his entire south field was planted in the wonder crop. Alfalfa produced as much as 200 tons of hay to the acre, and soon his neighbors also planted fields of it. It became the basis for much of the stock industry in Cache Valley.

Idaho Politics

¹¹² Layton had been in the same Mormon Battalion company as Matt's father.

The territorial legislature of Idaho passed a law denying the vote to everyone who held to the Mormon faith.¹¹³ Those who knew the Constitution maintained the statute was unconstitutional, but few Mormons had the means to take it to court. To circumvent a shameful example of taxation without representation, church authorities advised its members in Idaho to have their names taken off the Church rolls, long enough to vote, then to be re-baptized again after every election. Matt scorned the subterfuge. "They're scallywags on both tickets; why vote at all?" Byron and others followed this feeling.

In the fall of 1875, Orrelia got a job teaching school in Mendon, a town about 20 miles south of Weston. She was 18 and easy to look at, a bright, vivacious girl with plenty of good sense. Early in the winter, men started coming to the Fifield farm, ostensibly to buy fruit, but many had other ideas. One middle-aged brother from Newton began taking up a liking for Becky's cooking, but he soon revealed his other motives when he asked Orrelia to go out with him. Orrelia decided she wanted to stop this interest, so she asked "Can you skate, Brother Christiansen?" "Oh yes, I'm a good skater, will you go skating with me?" She consented saying, "I'll never marry a man unless he is a good skater." Next morning her suitor could scarcely get out of bed. She had led him to exert himself to prove his prowess as a skater, and he had fallen or been tripped so many times that he could hardly move his sore muscles. That evening Orrelia asked him to go skating again, but he pleaded inability and she went with a younger man. The next morning, though he was hardly able to mount his horse, he rode south toward Newton.

After six years of marriage to Andy Quigley, and bearing him three children, Jane was having difficulty. Matt sent supplies and hired others to get her wood. On one of his trips to Oxford to visit and help Jane, he was involved in a situation that became a story he told often.

The Wet Marriage

Matt's story goes as follows: A girl dipped water into a gourd for a drink. As she did not drink all of the water, she threw the remainder outside the open door of the shanty which served as a kitchen during the summer months. At that instant, a strange young man rounded the corner and caught the water full in the face. Unable to control himself, he grabbed a pail with a little water in it and dashed it on the girl. She, in return, grabbed a second pail almost half full of water and threw it on him. Those present were laughing and urging each participant to further activity. The stranger picked up another pail half full of buttermilk and threw it on the girl. Both were drenched.

"A fine-looking couple you are," said the girl's mother. Hoping to add humor to the situation someone present suggested they should get married. "He's not going to get the best of me," she said, her face breaking into a grin. "Me neither," the lad replied. "If only Captain Hunt was home, he could do it," someone suggested. Matt was on his way to see Captain Hunt and volunteered to go for him. Sure enough he was at his large house and Matt discussed his business as they returned to the scene of the wedding.

Soaked as they were, one with water, the other with buttermilk, the two stood and were married, to the great amusement of the small crowd of onlookers. "And don't you know," Matt was wont to say after telling this story, "they were as happy and contented as if they had courted for years. Which goes to prove that if a couple has the right stock in 'em, they can make a go of married life."

¹¹³ Although not enforced, this law remained on the books until 1980 when it was repealed.

The Nursing Birds

Another of Matt's stories was about an English girl who was wondering why her baby chicks, which were lively and pert when hatched, died after a day or two. "What do you feed them?" a sympathetic listener asked. "Feed them?" she replied, "I always thought a healthy young hen gave enough milk to take care of her babies."

There was never any end of work for the pioneers. Fencing was always a much-needed task. Leaning "rider" fences were used as scratching places for cows and horses, and the poles were rubbed off onto the ground. Willow fences were constantly settling, and cattle and horses never hesitated to jump over them. A major change came to the west with the introduction of barbed wire. This was an invention that reduced the farmer's work greatly. Once it was installed, and the cattle learned about it, the fences kept cattle where the farmers wanted with the only maintenance required the replacement of rotted fence posts. The men went into the mountains near and far to get cedar (juniper) posts for fencing as cedar would last 30-50 years. Matt now regretted using cedar for charcoal-making 20 years before.

Wood for fuel was always a problem, and no occasion for getting this item was ever passed up. An Indian bargained to go to the hills for a load of wood, the trip to take three days.¹¹⁴ Knowing the Indian had no food, Becky prepared enough grub to last a white man for three days with plenty to spare and took it to where he was hitching the horses. "What's that for?" asked the Indian. "Food for the trip" Becky replied and set the box on the running gears of the wagon. "Me fix him," the Indian said. Leaving the horses partly hitched, he sat down on the wood pile, ate all that was in the box, tossed the box aside, finished his hitching and was gone for three days.

Matt's Mower Lesson

Branches of the ZCMI were set up in strategic Mormon settlements, the northern most location being in Franklin.¹¹⁵ These were cooperative stores with share that sold for \$25.00. The manager of the store at Franklin was Samuel R. Parkinson.¹¹⁶ Matt bargained for and bought a Walter A. Wood mowing machine. He delivered a firkin of butter, several skeins of yarn, a heifer, and some cash to boot. He loaded the machine, and put the receipt in his pocket. Mr. Parkinson reminded him to keep the receipt where he could find it. A few months later one of Parkinson's sons called to get what was due on the mowing machine. Matt told him it had been paid for and that he had a receipt for it. "Will you let me see it?" came a request. Matt fumbled through his pockets, with a thought in his mind that maybe Becky had removed it when she washed his pants. He asked Becky, "Did you see a receipt in my pockets when you washed my striped brown pants?"¹¹⁷

Young Parkinson snorted and Becky laughed her indulgent chuckle. "I cleaned out your pockets, it that's what you mean; you know I always do." But the receipt was nowhere to be

¹¹⁴ Indians cultivate Matt's acquaintance because his brother Byron was the Indian interpreter. Matt also had the ability to make himself understood. Matt tried to help them by providing jobs so they could get things they needed. Matt's judgment and experience taught him a white man would do more and better work for the same pay, and that Matt's horses would come back in better condition. Still, his compassion for the down-trodden led him to hire Indians if he felt he could, especially when they were trying to adapt themselves to a white man's civilization. His better judgment was no match for his soft heart; for this he was a much loved man, but he also had people take advantage of him.

¹¹⁵ ZCMI was Zion's Cooperative Mercantile, Incorporated

¹¹⁶ Samuel Parkinson came from Kaysville, Utah.

¹¹⁷ Matt always complained when Becky washed them. He supposed it was just an excuse to go through his pockets.

found. The collector was sent on his way with the promise that the receipt would turn up and Matt would be in to settle-up. There was a smugness in Becky's manner that made her husband suspicious. It was her wont to teach him a lesson. He realized he needed lots of lessons, growing up as he did, practically an orphan. In a short time, another Parkinson called to collect with the same result: an assurance that the mower had been paid for and that Matt had a receipt, but that it couldn't be found right then. Finally Brother Parkinson himself came. Matt became angry. He knew Brother Parkinson was aware that he paid for the mower. He fretted about it and didn't intend to pay twice for the same mower.

No receipt could be produced, and Matt finally had to deal with the problem at a Bishop's trial. Parkinson said he knew Matt's reputation for honesty was unchallengeable, but supposed that Matt had forgotten there was a balance because it was his custom to pay in full for all he bought. Bishop John Maughan said the Fifield's had a good name and regretted that the case had to come before him. Finally, Becky produced the receipt. Everyone was sorry and hands were shaken all around. Matt, admitting he had a lesson coming to him, took his wife over to Isaac Nash's new store and bought her a dress.

The Weston ZCMI

While trading with Nash, one of the members of the high council came up to Matt and asked why the people of Weston had not established a co-op of their own. Becky immediately took up the issue, and the idea pleased her greatly. Before leaving the store, it had been arranged that someone would call at Weston for the purpose of organizing a store. Back in Weston, Matt began to talk up the idea at all meetings and soon there was considerable interest. While it took some time to organize the Weston Co-op, when it was completed Matt bought a large amount of stock.¹¹⁸ Bishop Allen was president at first, but after three years he withdrew. While the store was convenient to the people of Weston, the items purchased often exceeded the price of the item at Corinne and Weston-ites saved their big purchases for the trip to Corinne. It was hard for their business to keep the finances in good condition, when the cost of items wholesale through the ZCMI system was more expensive than the retail cost of the same product on the shelves at Corinne.

The cold weather in Cache valley made sheds a necessity. Matt's shed was built with standing uprights and faced the slabs nailed to horizontal poles. Across the top poles, aspen poles were laid at regular intervals, willows then laid crosswise and then straw piled high and deep over this, with willows used to finish the roof. When the English sparrow invaded America, they burrowed up into the straw and made nests from which a brood would be hatched every month of the year. These sheds were warm in winter and cool in summer. Furthermore, the roofs could be used for forage when hay ran short, which it often did in pioneer Idaho.

Morning-glory Plants

Malicious grins grace the faces of Weston historians who write, "Matt Fifield was the first to bring wild morning glory to Weston." In defense, the plant was introduced to solve a long-standing problem of the farmer. In those days it was customary to cut grain with a cradle and then bind it so it could be hauled into the stack to "sweat" or cure. Straw could not be used.¹¹⁹ Twine was not available and no one had money to buy it anyway. "Bindweed" is a

¹¹⁸ Even though it was a good idea, few people in Weston at that time had the \$25.00 required to buy membership.

¹¹⁹ Since grain was apt to grow short in that dry country when drought appeared, the straw was too short to use to tie the stalks into bundles.

term for morning-glory and goes back to the time when it was planted for the purpose of binding grain. Since it grows easily without water, the logical solution to the lack of material to bind their grain was to plant it in the fields. It was not practical to raise more than an acre or so of grain per man, all the grain had to be cut by hand with a cradle and few men could “cradle” more than a half acre a day. (For a detailed discussion of the harvesting process refer to endnote 1.) There was also no way to thresh large quantities. Planting “bindweed” was the answer. In addition to its use for binding grain, the morning-glory had a sweet, succulent root which pigs relished. After harvest the pigs were turned in to the wheat fields and they were able to control the weed’s spread. The field was thus prepared for the inadequate plows of the pioneer. With the heavy harrowing and then leveling with a go-devil, a new crop of grain could be planted. Today, with large fields and no pig assistance, the spreading morning-glory has become a major problem for today’s farmer.

Farm Equipment Improvement

After the mowing machine was invented, little genius was required to put a side rake together.¹²⁰ After the side rake came the wire binder, which was termed the last great invention possible.¹²¹ But careful as the farmer tried to be, wire found its way into threshing machines where it was chopped into short pieces and then into the bales and finally into the stomachs of cattle. After the death of many live stock, the wire binder was discarded. Farmers went back to the side rake until the twine binder was developed. As usual, Matt Fifield and the Fredricksons, who lived above town, were the first owners.

After the practice of dry-farming was proved practical by Christopher Layton¹²² and major improvements in farm machinery, larger grain fields became common. The “north field” homestead section was plowed up and planted into wheat. Later a new improvement called the header was introduced. This made possible cutting the heads from the short grain stalks, and lifting it into “header boxes” from which it was unloaded and sacked. It was considered the “ultimate” in grain harvesting.

Little Denmark

Weston was still the haven for Scandinavians. In the early days the town was called Little Denmark, and much of the preaching was done in Danish, even though the presiding elder was unable to understand it. It was a Dane himself who said “A Dane ban just so goot as a vite man so long as he behaves himself, yah?”

One Fast Sunday meeting, a devout brother rose to give thanks to God for his goodness. He had come before 1869 when the railroad made travel easy. The gist of the story runs like this. When he and his bride arrived in Iowa City to start the trek west to Zion, they purchased a wagon and yoke of oxen. With the wagon was a box of Lightning axle grease. The dealer showed Ole how to lubricate his wagon and told him to put some of the axle grease on the hub every day, and if he did, there should be no trouble. Ole had no experience with a wagon and the lubrication required. The language barrier made the instructions not too understandable. In the

¹²⁰ A reel was added which swept the cut stalks onto a table and then, every so often, the driver would touch his foot to a lever and the rake would sweep the accumulated stalks off the table to the ground. People called binders would then pick up the bundle and tie it, stacking the bundle into piles, with the heads of grain off the ground for curing.

¹²¹ This device bound a wire around the cut stalks before they were kicked out of the machine, setting them in rows with the heads up for drying.

¹²² This Mormon Battalion veteran introduced the idea of summer-fallow as a means of storing two years supply of moisture for a one-year crop.

excitement of starting the trip Ole forgot to lubricate the axle. After a couple of days on the prairie, the wagon began to squeak, so Treena told Ole he'd better pray to the Lord for the wagon to stop squeaking. But Ole's prayers were not effective and he asked Treena to use her influence, again to no avail. Concerted prayers together were no more effective, and the wagon went on squeaking. Then Treena say, "Ole, why you don't put some Lightning grease on the wagon?" He did and the wagon stopped squeaking. "Now, Brothers and Sisters, that is how I know the gospel is true."

The winter of 1875-1876 was very severe, and snow accumulated to the depth of 30 inches. It was more than three months before winds blew the snow from the south slopes and allowed the cattle to forage. Again this winter, Matt's cuttings of fox-tail and bunch grass hay put him ahead. The neighbors who laughed at his "Yankee stinginess" became envious, and when spring came, he had nearly his entire herd in good condition. As the other farmers were unprepared for the long feeding requirement, they lost many livestock and the rest were skin and bone and took most of the summer to recover.

That year Becky's mother died. Priscilla Gifford Hoopes was a woman of strong character and Becky depended on her to make decisions. Her influence over Matt was decidedly for the good, almost a mother to him, and he too grieved her loss.¹²³ But time reconciled them to that great loss.

Alexander Alma Allen

John Maughan, the presiding elder of the church at Weston, was called to go on a mission in Arizona. It was announced that Weston would be made a full ward, and a young policeman, Alexander Alma Allen had been called to move to Weston and was named as Bishop. Matt had become acquainted with Bishop Allen when Alex was living with his stepfather, Joel Ricks, in Farmington. He had also worked with Alex at Bear Lake, when Alex was living with Lewis Ricks, a son of Joel Ricks. Early in the spring, Bishop Allen arrived in Weston, seeking a place to put his family. Alex was tall and handsome. His personality, with a sincerity in his manner, won the confidence of everyone and allowed him to tackle the problems in the town. Water rights were the main problem, with the very early settlers claiming priority. "When we have enough for our crops, we'll let you have some," was their attitude. To unite them, Alex set about to build a new building for the Ward, the one they were using was very rough and too small. Lumber was bought from Charles O. Card's mill in Logan. Everything seemed on the mend and a good spirit prevailed. The genial disposition of the bishop's wife, Maria, completely won the confidence of almost everyone.

During that summer Weston was almost deserted. Many freighted to the mines in Montana,¹²⁴ other worked in Dunnville, Idaho, a temporary railroad terminal west of what is now Clifton. Eastern goods became available in Dunnville and were purchased there. Pressure was applied to Bishop Allen to direct the Westonites to buy at Logan, but his reply was, "You can't expect them to buy in Logan for the same price then can get it at Dunnville."

When the people of Weston learned General George A. Custer had been massacred on the Little Big Horn they were apprehensive. "What if the Indians (to escape the almost certain punishment of government troops) should come this way?" they worried. When news reached

¹²³ She is the same person who had taken care of Matt's three girls, Jane Almira, Orelia, and Julia Ann, when their mother died seventeen years previously.

¹²⁴ The gold mines at Virginia City, Montana were booming and there was a market for almost anything the Weston farmers had for sale.

them that Chief Joseph was on his way southward from the Montana “Big Hole” country, the fear became greater.¹²⁵ Indian near-about began to get saucy, and though Matt was 47 years old, he was called out to drill again. Being away from his farm twice a week greatly affected his farming operations.

That year’s crops were a total failure. Crickets and grasshoppers ate up everything that came up. Matt was saved from disaster by selling his good sized herd of sheep to the gold miners. His horses were sold down to just breeding stock; his cattle went for beef. The frugality of Becky and her stores of dried fruits from the previous years, made it possible for Matt to get along without undue hardship. What spare time he had, was spent in freighting what he raised to Montana and selling to the Oregon-bound immigrants.¹²⁶

Matt’s success in farming the clay bottoms east of town induced others to settle east of town. Adam Campbell, who had come from “Dixie” (southern Utah was called Dixie after the settlers tried to establish cotton) because of the hard scrabble there, took land south of Byron’s. Dan Hoopes filed on a claim south of that. Before long there was no place to run the cattle except the “school section,” a mile north of the place.

Brigham Young Dies

In August, Brigham Young died. Persecution for polygamy was acute and severe. John Taylor was president of the Quorum of the Twelve and he was “in hiding.” While Matt was not affected by the cloud of polygamy, many of his neighbors were dodging the persecution of the “Feds” as the U.S. Marshals were called. During the polygamy hunt the federal government paid marshals by giving them a bounty for catching a “co-hab,” the term they used for anyone living with more than one wife. Many of the local marshals had a personal friendship with polygamists and did not arrest them; indeed, some sent word to offenders when other marshals were near and aided them to escape. Matt’s nephew, Charlie Fifield, enjoyed this protection. Although the founders of our country had railed against “taxation without representation,” their descendants saw nothing wrong in denying the vote to Mormons via the Edmund-Tucker anti-polygamy law. To get complete control in Idaho, legislation was passed to disfranchise (which prohibited voting) for anyone who believed in a creed which taught bigamy.

In general, Matt stuck to farming. There was a good market for butter, beef, and pork. Since a by-product of fairy farming was skim-milk, and that was good for fattening pigs, Matt intensified his efforts in this line. The pork would be killed, salted down, and sold in the form of salt pork.

June 29, 1877 Albert Moroni was born to Becky and Matt. Will was now seven and able to ride the hills north of the place for horses and to do many chores about the farm. Still most of the work fell on the girls Naomi, Priscilla, and Julia Ann, and dairy work in those days was heavy work. Since Matt had so much work to do, he hired men to plow and to work in the hay and harvest fields. September 26, 1877, Julia Ann married John Henry Campbell at Clarkston, Utah. He was the son of Grant Campbell and Ellen Hawks. John Henry was six foot two, and often worked in the mines. Although he was not a member of the Church, he was respected by everyone. Whenever troubles struck Weston, John Henry was there to help. Julia bore him 16 children, including two sets of twins.

¹²⁵ Chief Joseph fought and won the Little Big Horn battle in Montana.

¹²⁶ Despite the availability of the railroad, homesteaders still used wagons to get to the west coast. They had to get their stock and household goods to their destinations and though the trip was long and difficult, they found it better to use wagons than to spend all their cash on railroad fares.

Weston United Order

When the meeting house was completed it unified the people.¹²⁷ The Weston United Order was inaugurated at the time of the dedication. Matt did not enter into this group after his experience signing over property in Ogden. The Ward bought an old threshing machine and a power unit was installed to replace the horse powered sweeps. Two weeks later the power unit broke, but John Bird an old time thresher man was able to get it going again and they threshed all the grain around.

Water Problems Resolved

Water continued to be a problem. To solve it, a reservoir project was begun south of town, with Bishop Allen as consulting engineer. When it was about half full of water the dam broke; so, the water problem did not go away. The early settlers felt they should have a priority for the water. Bishop Allen pushed to divide the water between all the needs of the valley. When the court in Malad settled in favor of the old timers, the old timers agreed to give water to those who needed it for gardens but not for fields.¹²⁸ Later a storage reservoir was built up Big Canyon. Then the heavy spring run-off of water from Big Canyon led to the building a second reservoir at the narrows. All work was voluntary. Because he had plenty of horses, Matt lent several of them to the ward, as well as plows, scrapers, fresno and other equipment for moving dirt. Not only did he go himself, he also sent Will, who was only twelve but did the work of a man. (For a complete discussion of the water problems refer to endnote 5.)

The Fancy House

Becky prevailed on Matt to build a new house, with a cellar and a shingle roof.¹²⁹ Matt made a trip to Bountiful to buy more fruit trees for the property. Becky was beginning to put on lots of weight and was not well. Those who know symptoms felt she was developing sugar diabetes. She was having her children fast, working too hard, and eating too much rich food. She was giving Matt trouble. There were times when he lived at Byron's all the time, working on his place during the day, but eating and sleeping at Byron's house. Matt got his north field into cultivation by plowing and grubbing sage brush off by hand. He had only the "foot-burning" hand plow pulled by two span of ponies. On March 31, 1879 Becky gave birth to a daughter whom they named Melissa.¹³⁰

Barbed Wire Fences

¹²⁷ The meeting house cost the little ward \$800 plus the labor and materials that were donated.

¹²⁸ When the water question came to court in Malad, Matt was called to be a witness. After spending all the day in the court room, he decided to ride back to Weston that night by moonlight. After crossing the divide into Big Canyon he became thirsty and decided to ride down to the creek to water his pony. The horse snorted as he neared the stream, so he tied it and went down the bank where he lay flat and drank from the stream. A large service bush was near; and as he liked the sweet, succulent fruit, he picked a handful and ate them. Finding them scarce, he walked around the bush and stood face to face with a mother bear and her two cubs. She paid little attention to him, going on with her work of getting berries into the mouths of her babies. Glad of her indifference, Matt went up the hill, mounted his pony, and gave her full rein.

¹²⁹ The old house was south of the well and had an earth roof. The new one was built toward the brow of the hill with a slope on the north side; north and west from the old house.

¹³⁰ Melissa was named after one of Becky's sisters.

In those days of willow and pole fences, much trouble took place between neighbors whose cattle would get in each other's places and destroy the grain and other crops. After lucern became a common forage crop, cattle would mash down the willow fence, get in the fields and eat until they bloated. This caused ill feelings, with one side blaming the other. When barbed wire was introduced, it cost 13 cents a pound with staples 3 cents. Since wire ended much of the trouble, people willingly paid for it. However horses were unfamiliar with barbed wire and would sometimes run full speed into the fences and cut themselves to pieces. Hoping to avoid this, Matt tied poles to the top of his fences. While it was a costly tedious task, he saved enough horses to more than pay him for his time.

There was little that was of great interest in the next few years. Barbed wire came into general use, timber became more scarce, dry farming became a more general practice. Circular saws were introduced. Andrew Quigley was the first person to use the saw in Cottonwood canyon. The Utah and Northern railroad reached Black Rock on Portneuf River. One spring high water washed away a section of the soft roadbed near Weston, allowing the local men to pick up extra money by regrading it. Matt worked along with other men from Weston, cutting ties on the mountains near McCammon. They boarded themselves and made \$2.00 per day.

1881 was a dry year, and there was considerable unrest because of Mother Shipton's prophecy that "the world unto an end will come, in 1881." Since all of her of her prophecies in rhymed couplets came true, many of the superstitious believed this one would also. They cited Joseph Smith's prediction that if he could live to be 80 years old, he would be able to see the face of Jesus. One who took great stock in this was Matt's sister-in-law, Lucy Hardy Fifield, Byron's wife.

The Hoopes Family

In 1882, Becky's grandfather Gifford died. He had come to Weston in 1865. Warner Hoopes sold his holdings in Weston and went to Arizona where his sister and her husband Levi Allen had gone to live previously. Jonathon Hoopes was an uncle of Becky's. It seems he was gambling in Fort Hall and in an altercation pulled his gun to get back the wages he had lost. The result was three men dead. Jonathan rode to Mendon and got in an Arizona-bound wagon. He rode clear to Salt Lake City under cover. While the wagon was stopped in Salt Lake City, he peeked out and saw a man he despised. So he jumped out and gave the man a terrific beating, then got back in to his hiding place and went on to Mesa, where he became a respected and religious man. In the life of Charles C. Rich, Jonathan is mentioned as a man with undaunted courage. As the report is written, Joseph C. Rich called for men to go after outlaws, and Jonathan was the first to volunteer. After locating the seven tents comprising the "robber's roost," Jonathan and a man named Wilson crept into the tents while the thieves were asleep, and took all their guns making capture easy and safe. Jonathan is also mentioned several times in the story of the White Indian Boy, by Nick Wilson and Howard R. Driggs. Legend tells us they were related.

The Economy Improves

With the coming of railroads and mines, a market was provided for what the Mormons had to sell. Grain and hay could be sold to the numerous freighters who hauled ore to the railroad terminals. Beef was in as much demand as butter, eggs, pork, and dried fruits. As a result they were able to increase their comforts. One of Matt's slogans was, "no one is so far from market as the man with nothing to sell." His farm was stocked with ducks, geese, turkeys,

goats, sheep, guinea fowls, pigeons, and all sorts of other fowl, even peacocks. He laid it out after the manner of the southern states plantations. Visitors were much impressed.

On April 16, 1881, a daughter named Rebecca Ann was born.¹³¹ On July 10, 1833 Thomas Alma Fifield was born. While still a boy, he lost an eye in an accident. Becky's daughter Priscilla married Benoni Campbell.¹³² Oneida Stake was organized with headquarters in Preston. Now near enough to attend conferences, Matt began to pay more attention to his church duties. He was 53, a man of substance with a large family and able to take time out for public duties. Matt was a Republican, spoke well on his feet and had a reputation for square dealings.¹³³ While there were some hard feelings between Matt and the stake president, George C. Parkinson, he was made a member of the stake high council.

Becky prodded him into looking after those who were unfortunate, but her jealous disposition caused him grief if he went himself to help a widow, or even one of his daughters by his first wife. Since his son-in-law, John Henry, was ever on the look-out for extra money, Matt often furnished horses and equipment to plow gardens, fields, or to get wood, and paid his son-in-law for doing the work. It gave him a way to help Julia too. One widow across the valley, Mrs. Lameruau, had Matt's three plows pulled onto her place and plowed the entire field. He lent her seed to plant, and let her buys use a team to work the ground after broadcasting the seed. Years later one of her sons commented to the family that "Grandpa Fifield is as much my grandpa as he is yours!" he explained. "After my own father died, Grandpa Fifield made it possible for Mother to hold on to her farm and raise a family by his generosity and advice. Our whole family called him grandpa."

With his family of boys to educate, he took an active part in schools. His girls by his first wife had been taught to read at home. Yet Orrelia taught school, and Naomi was preparing to teach, taking the necessary examinations given by the local school boards who hired them. One of the Fifield pastimes was a spelling class, carried on while carding wool or doing other routine tasks. By such hit-and-miss ways, many of the teachers of that period were prepared, it was the only way to get any education.

In 1885 Matt's father-in-law, Warner Hoopes, returned from Arizona. The hot summers were too much for him. Samuel Preston built a carding mill on the creek. This put an end to "carding bees."

Much of the Mormon commonwealth depended on water, although at this time the practice of dry-farming was easing the complete dependence on irrigation. Some men saw a future in raising wheat as a means of supporting their families.

Tired of fording Bear River, and foregoing travel during high water, Matt urged rebuilding the bridge below the Jonathan Hoopes place. The pressure to attend stake conferences, contribute to build temples, stake headquarter, stake academies, schools, and colleges kept pocketbooks empty.

¹³¹ Rebecca Ann later married Ethan John Allen, son of Bishop Allen and Elizabeth Clarke.

¹³² Benoni was supposed to be an orphan who lived with Adam Campbell. Adam came to Weston from the southern Utah town called Pocketville or Virgin. There was much confusion about his parentage. Adam's wife claimed he was her son, but Adam said otherwise, that another boy was her son. The matter came to court and while the woman was on the witness stand, she fell over dead. Adam had a place south and east of Matt's and north of Dan Hoopes. Benoni and Priscilla had no children of their own. They adopted one of Jane's children, Edward, when she broke up with her first husband. It is said that they were not good to him and he ran away from them one night and went back to Oxford where his mother lived.

¹³³ At the time, the Republican Party was fighting against the union of the Mormon Church and the state.

There was much speculation when it was learned that a national company had bought the interests of the Utah and Northern railroad on the east side of Cache valley and intended changing the route to the west side. Land values rose in Weston when surveyors began running lines and planting stakes through fields. The survey crews were made up of strange young men, mostly non-Mormons. When their day's work was done they went into the different towns and tried to make friends with the young people. Matt went against the Mormon custom of shunning outsiders. He was always tolerant and trusting.

In 1997, Becky's father died and caused her much sorrow. But she had all her family by now. Her youngest, Jess Harold was born September 22, 1885. Wesley Andrew Fifield was born 21 Dec, 1875. Naomi, her oldest was now 21 and teaching in a school in Utah. During the winter months, nearly all the young men who couldn't find work went to school along with little tots half their age. Miss Nellie Merrick from Malad had a reputation for knowing the three R's better than anyone. As a school patron, Matt had induced her to apply and get the job as teacher, and she proved to be a good one, sympathetic to the needs of the community.

The Pig Pasture

The new railroad, taking off at Cache Junction and uniting with the road again at Oxford, cut off a piece from the Fifield homestead. It was about three acres in a triangular shape and not suited to farming. The town of Weston needed such a piece of land, one with water running through it and far enough away from town so none of the stench of petrifying meat and offal would offend. A committee composed of the town fathers called on Matt and asked him for the land. While his reputation for donation was well known he chose not to this time. "How much will you pay me?" he wanted to know. "We supposed you'd donate it," Peter Michelsen, spokesman for the group said.

"Well, I have a use for that land; I'm planning to make a pig pasture of it." Piqued at the rebuff, Michelsen said, "Matt Fifield, if you owned all the land in the world, you'd want a corner of hell for a pig pasture." "Yes," retorted the alert farmer, "and you'd be the first pig I'd put in it."

By this time practically all spinning, carding, weaving, dyeing, and other similar home industries had ceased. Cloth was bought from stores and made into garments by the women. With his love of bargaining, Matt bought much that irked Becky. Once he bought a plaid pattern which pleased her very much. Hoping to please her more, he went back and got the entire bolt. Imagine the chuckle of the church members when the entire Fifield family walked into church all dressed in the same plaid. Another time Becky wanted a five-gallon tin can. Matt bought her a dozen, because he could get them cheap.

Often when the early pioneers had no use for articles and they needed something the Indians had, they would trade it off. One of Matt's statements, when one of his children or grandchildren did something he didn't approve was, "We'll trade you off to the Indians." Another of his terms for an item of no use, "It ain't worth shucks," was often used. He liked to say, when he had paid for something in various ways, that he had obtained it by trading it "for chips and whetstones."

In 1890 Will and Thomas Preston opened a store, with John H. Clarke as manager. He had been a manager of the Weston Co-op, a branch of the ZCMI and always contended that in buying from the main store, the Co-op was over-charged. Even though Matt owned stock in the co-op, he'd go to Franklin and buy because he could do better. In a short time the Preston

brothers had nearly all the business, and the stock holders of the Co-op had a white elephant on their hands. Matt almost gave his stock away.

Idaho Statehood

In 1890 Idaho became a state. Because the Democratic president, Grover Cleveland, had granted a full pardon to all the polygamists, many of the Mormons became Democrats in party affiliation. It was in Idaho that most of the persecution of the Mormons was put on them by the Republican presidents. They appointed political hacks who sought to gain favor by meting out injustice to these poor people. Although the Church authorities advised the Saints to split about half-and-half into the political parties, most of the Mormons in Idaho joined the Democrats who then controlled the state.

In 1891 someone put a charge of powder in the dam up Big Canyon and willfully blew it up. It was a year of severe drought and those with prior water rights were blamed. Those with later water rights claimed it was done so the old timers could buy land from the late comers at a low price.

To win the Mormon vote, the Republicans appointed Stake President George C. Parkinson to the board of regents for the University of Idaho. Groaning under taxes to build rural schools, the Mormons were also asked to donate for the Salt Lake Temple, the Logan Temple, the tabernacles, and meeting houses. It was a heavy burden in those days of so little cash. Most of them had plenty to do to keep the “wolf from the door.” Believing in education, Matt supported these institutions with generous gifts, both in money and labor.

Naomi married Henry C. Heninger on October 19, 1887 and become the mother of Lorin, Elmer and Ethel. They lived west of Millville, near the Logan Sugar factory.

The Fancy New House

Becky and Matt still had six boys and three girls at home to raise and educate. He decided to build a large home. He made a contract with Jens Christophersen, a Danish carpenter to build this house. Lumber was plentiful, labor was cheap and Matt had the means to make the most of these factors.¹³⁴ The house had bedrooms upstairs over the parlor, living room and north bedroom.¹³⁵ The space of the kitchen was used as a storeroom. The girls had the south bedroom, Tom and Jess the north, the east bedroom upstairs was for Wes and Bert.

The lot was fenced in with a picket fence, making it proof against chickens, pigs, goats, and other farm animals with which the farm was stocked. Planting of roses, lilacs, mock oranges, various perennial, and annuals grew in abundance. Herbs and spices Becky needed grew everywhere for her famous cooking. Anise, mints of several kinds, coriander, dill, hyssop, and all the medicinal plants that were used in home therapy by housewives grew on the lot. Currents (both English and domestic varieties), raspberries (red, white, and yellow), gooseberries, a long row of rhubarb, and ground cherries grew like weeds in the lot.

¹³⁴ It was during the depression of President Grover Cleveland.

¹³⁵ Unfortunately, the lumber was not too well seasoned, insulation was not used, and the planning was hurried. It had the high ceilings of the time, the walls were plastered and under modern standards it would leave much to be desired. But at the time (and with the background of covered wagons, tents, and log shacks) situated as it was amid plantation-like trees with well laid-out walks, shrubs, drives, and ditches, it was one of the show places of northern Cache Valley.

Log chicken coops, slab sheds with straw tops, and a two-by-four granary with a machine shed slope on the south, were west of the lot. The stockyards were west of the barnyards and held about 200 tons of hay annually.

Knitting at Church

Matt was a member of the Stake High Council and owned good traveling horses and a light rig to visit the wards. One spring morning just after they moved into the new house Becky was upset because the men folks had tracked up her freshly scrubbed floors with the red, sticky clay from the new yard. She berated Matt for selling the town place. "At least I could keep a clean house and could get the young ones to church without having them all stuck up with mud." Matt covered the wheels on the spring wagons so as they rode to church she wouldn't get her skirt dirty. When they reached the place where the ruts in the ungraded roads were so deep that even a strong team couldn't pull the wagon out, Becky discovered she had left her knitting at home. Matt said he was pleased. "You'll get a minute's rest," he commented, but she would have none of it. "What will all the sisters think of me?" she fumed. "That lazy, no-good Matt Fifield Matt married, they'll whisper, if I'm just sitting and listening." So Matt gave a dollar to an old almost blind Scotch lady to lend Becky her knitting for the services. That Sunday Brother Hendricksen of Logan preached against working on Sunday. "The Lord, if he looked on this congregation, would think it was a knitting factory."

A Letter from New Hampshire

After Matt's death this letter was found among his papers:

June 25, 1892
East Plainfield, New Hampshire

Mr. Fifield,

Dear Sir, we received your letter after much delay by being directed wrong but will now answer it first will tell you who I am the wife of George W. Fifield, he being Samuel Fifield's son my husband is 72 years old his health is very poor has been unfit to do any work for nearly 5 years but does some chores and does some trading in the way of speculating in most any thing he can make a Dollar now I will tell you of your Father's Family.

Your father was one of nine children five girls and 4 boys. Samuel, David, Calvin, Levi were the names of the boys Rosamond married William Forest has been dead a good many years Lois married Jerry Philips and Nancy married Gardner Philips, were twins and married brothers they lived in Ohio the last we new of them Betsy married a Brooks Ben dead a long time Polly was the youngest Child and married Elijah Whiting lived at Beaver Meadows, Vermont one year and then died some 45 years ago. There were more or less Children but all are dead except three my husband and his sister and one daughter of David's there are 3 cousins of yours living in this place that is all that I know of your grandfather has been dead about 50 years the last Your grandmother about 35 years the last anyone heard of your father was over 50 years ago they heard he joined the Mormons and had gone to Salt Lake that was the last account until we got your letter which we were very glad to get.

Now the questions we would ask is for you to give us a little history of the family since your Father went west and how he fared in the gold fields and all you think we

would like to know and I will write and tell you again and give you more minute details of the family if it would be interesting to you to hear of if health and circumstances will permit come and see us and the old New Hampshire Hills among which was the Birthplace of your Fathers.

very Respectfully yours
Mrs. G. W. Fifield
East Plainfield
Sullivan County
New Hampshire

So far as it is known this is the only letter he had from his relatives. Matt went to the Church authorities and asked to go on a mission so he could collect genealogy, but he was not called. His four sons were called on missions but none went to New Hampshire.

The fall of 1892 was devoted to visiting the Salt Lake Temple prior to its dedication. The completion of the railroad made it an easy trip for the Fifields as there was a whistle stop in Cornish. Matt took his entire family and Byron took care of the farm during their absence.

Will was 23 and had ideas about getting married, so Matt allowed him to learn the stone mason's trade.¹³⁶ Matt had traded his flock of sheep for part of a block in Weston and thus freed one of the boys from that ever-constant job of sheep tending. Since Will was planning to attend the school at Preston, Matt had allowed him to work with a team and wagon, putting in the fill on the "Big Slough" north of Weston. Will also herded sheep for the Hatch brothers of Franklin. "A boy needed to get some experience and money of his own," Matt contended, although he could have used him on the farm.

Edwin was his mother's "Pet." When there were chores to be done, Ed would grab the Bible and begin to read. Seeing her son busy pursuing the word of the Lord, Becky would call one of the other boys to do the chore she had in mind. If they protested, she'd call her husband to enforce her command. In the meantime, Ed sat with his nose in the Bible, grinning at his skill in avoiding the galling farm chore. When it came time to go to Logan to school Eddy got the first chance on the grounds that he was more interested in learning than Will or the other boys. Later in life, this preference and partiality was held against Ed.



Edwin Fifield

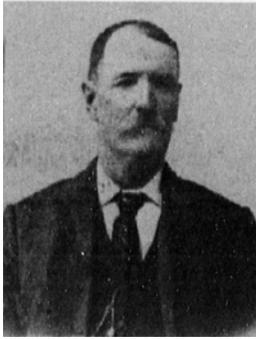
Will Marries

Will married unexpectedly that fall. Cleaning up the "old log house" out by the well, he moved his bride Rettie Allen into it.¹³⁷ Times were very hard, but the Mormons were used to that. They never had much from the time the church was formed, and nothing but hard times after leaving Nauvoo. At least there was now plenty to eat and usually enough to wear. They even had Edwin at the Brigham Young College in Logan.

Byron's Death

¹³⁶ Stone masons were in high demand for good wages in the days prior to the wide use of Portland cement.

¹³⁷ It had been in use as a chicken coop for four years following the finishing of the new house.



Byron Fifield

Tragedy struck in 1895. Byron was adding straw to the top of his shed to stop leaks and fell through and was hurt internally. Aunt Lucy sent for Matt to come and administer to him, but it was too late. Matt's most constant companion through life passed on to immortality January 24, 1895, leaving Lucy and a family of four sons and four daughters.

Becky was getting heavy on her feet, and although she worked hard and long hours she seemed to get little done. Her temper would flare up with little excuse. Matt asked her to take life easier, but she felt that if she worked harder her weight would get less. Asthma had always bothered her. Indeed, on doctor's advice, she kept a box of snuff in the clock and used it, much as she dreaded it.

Missions for the Boys

By working hard, Edwin finished a four-year course in three; no sooner had he graduated, and he was called on a mission to Hawaii. Naomi's husband Henry had been called to preach in Virginia. Like her father, Naomi was self-reliant and provident, but her father saw to it that she had plenty of coal, flour and other staples of subsistence. In short order, Will, father of three was called to a mission in Virginia. Box "B" then sent a "call" for Wesley and a short time later a call for Albert.¹³⁸ A request from Salt Lake came for Ed's wife, Margaret Cowley, to go to Hawaii to help him teach in the church schools there.

On one of his trips to Logan, Matt had seen a riding plow. When Alonzo Farrell of Smithfield asked for his opinion of it, Matt said, "When I get so tarnal lazy that I have to sit down to plow, I want to die." But Farrell and Fifield were two of the first owners of sulky plows in Cache Valley. At this time Matt was approaching seventy years of age. With six of the family on missions he continued to work very hard to further the cause of the Kingdom of God.

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

Matt always felt that hired help was unreliable. As the Cleveland depression ended, young men found work elsewhere than on farms. If the work was to get done, Matt had to do it. The spring of 1899 was wet and cold, so Matt mounted his sulky plow so he could get a crop to help his sons and in-laws in the mission field. During his handling of the animals, a wood tick crawled off one of them onto him. One was also found stuck to Becky one morning. After a week or so, the couple complained of severe headaches and of being tired. When they could go no longer, they took to their beds. A doctor gave the prognosis of rocky mountain spotted fever and treated them. They got no better and the town came to do the chores and unfinished farm work. No one who knew the symptoms of the disease gave either one any hope and all the children not on a mission were sent for.

Becky's death

Becky asked to have Matt come to her; he was in the parlor, she in the north bedroom. Both knew her end was near. She sang in a clear loud voice, "We Thank Thee, Oh God, for a Prophet." Then she sank back into a coma, and at four the morning she died. It was June 23, 1899.

¹³⁸ Box B was the Salt Lake City Post Office box that was the return address for all mission calls.

With Becky dead and Matt ill with fevers of 106 degrees; conditions at the Fifield home

were in bad shape. Wesley was released from his mission, but until he arrived home Rettie helped all she could. She did the cooking, dish-washing, and supervision of the house but with Will still on his mission, she had her own cows to milk, and her own chores to do. She would walk the mile-and-a-half between the two places pushing her baby Matthew. While others of the family tried to help, Matt would let no one but Rettie wait on him; she was the only one he trusted in his fever-ridden mind. He was finally sent to the Sanitarium at Blackfoot, Idaho. Here the change of scenery, plenty of nutritious food and occupational therapy soon brought him back. After about two months, Wesley got back from his mission and brought him home. With Wesley home, the farm was being run so Rettie moved into town and Melissa started cooking for the large group of hired men needed to run Matt's large farm.¹³⁹ Matt was still not interested in the farm so he went to Logan to work in the temple. He lived with his daughter Naomi and her five children (Henry returned from his mission). Matt continued to gain strength and grew active again. Naomi was much like her father and under her guidance and encouragement, he went fishing, ventured into genealogy, and tried salesmanship.



Becky late in life

Dividing the Farm

With the loss of Becky, Matt was upset whenever he returned to the "home place," so he decided to sell the farm to his boys. Accordingly the place was divided into six equal parts. Will was apportioned 30 acres on the extreme north and south ends. Ed took the next thirty. Wes, Bert, and Tom each getting their portion accordingly. Jess had sixty acres in the middle. It was poor land for farming and full of hollows but had the house, orchards, and yards to compensate for the untillable land. Each was supposed to pay their father something for the land. The girls were given the household furniture. Matt stayed away from the farm for several years. When his youngest daughter Ann married Ethan Allen and went to Logan to live, Matt went with them and spent much of his time getting their property improved. When he wasn't working in the temple, he was fishing with his old neighbor, Alex Allen.¹⁴⁰ As pioneers first of Bear Lake area and then of Weston from 1876 to 1900, they had much in common, though there were 16 years differences in their ages. While they had been on opposite sides of questions arising in town policies and politics, they became good friends.

Matt obtained some fine horses and hitched them to a smart carriage. He drove to Millville, Mendon (to visit Orrelia), or to Weston and all about the Cache valley calling on numerous friends and family. On one trip Ann and his granddaughter Zelda were riding with him on a road that paralleled a railroad track. As the buggy approached a crossing, a whistle sounded from a train approaching from the rear, and the horses; overfed and under worked, lunged into a run and got out of control. Seeing danger, Ann tossed her one year old baby to safety and attempted to help the 70 year-old Matt regain control.¹⁴¹ In the hassle, the buggy

¹³⁹ Melissa married Ambrose Maughan March 21, 1895 (when she was 16).

¹⁴⁰ Alexander Alma Allen was the father of Ethan and Rettie.

¹⁴¹ The baby Zelda was unhurt with only minor bruises.

tipped over throwing them both out and away from the rig. The impact broke Matt's right leg at the hip.

Workers nearby rushed to help, and recovered the baby. Dr. Budge was called to set the bone. As he examined Matt he commented on an old body in superb condition, but that the break was so severe that Matt would require crutches for the rest of his life. Matt was a rebel, and to show the doctor he struggled and was soon able to walk with help and by the holidays was only requiring a cane.

Bill Fifield

One morning in early summer a stranger appeared at the Fifield home. He introduced himself as Matt's brother. He was 26 years younger, but looked much like Matt except he had blue eyes and darker hair. Matt had last seen Bill when he was taken east by his mother 50 years earlier. There had been no correspondence at all and Matt had believed Billy lost his life in the Civil War. Bill was slightly larger in the frame than Matt, but he had a very similar disposition. While Bill was a "man of the world" and therefore used tobacco and liquor, he found life at his brother's home very pleasant. When he saw Rettie, he complimented Matt on his "young, good-looking wife" but Matt soon put him straight. Like Matt, Bill had a fund of humorous stories, was jolly and everyone liked to be around him. The brothers went fishing together and developed a congenial relationship.

Evidence has been found that Uncle Bill enlisted in the Fifth Iowa Cavalry, Troop A, February 28, 1864 and served until August 1, 1865 with the rank of private. There is no evidence that he ever saw action.¹⁴² His captain was Marion A. Hinds.

August 3, 1879 he was married to Mercy Ward at Council Bluffs Iowa.¹⁴³ While Uncle Bill was visiting his brother, Mercy filed a petition for half of Bill's pension.¹⁴⁴

While in Idaho, Uncle Bill went to Butte, Montana. He also went to the Thunder Mountain diggings when the gold rush was on but returned broke from both places.¹⁴⁵

A Tour of Early History

Matt was now 75, but still spry and alert. He bought a white-topped buggy and in July after the hay was in the stack, he took his family up through Gentile valley. They visited the ice caves where freighters stored perishable produce in the hot summer months. They saw an almost extinct geyser on the banks of the Bear River west of Soda Springs.¹⁴⁶

When they camped at Soda Springs, Matt pointed out where General Conner had settled the Morrisites. Next the family went to Montpelier and Matt pointed out the place his wagon stood when Naomi was born, the first white child in Bear Lake valley. After rowing across the

¹⁴² The Civil War ended April 9, 1865.

¹⁴³ From the marriage license application and other sources the following information was gathered. They made their home at 199 Wet Pierce Street in Council Bluffs, Iowa. He gave his occupation as a teamster. Neither had been previously married. His wife was born in 1850 and they had no children. She was 29 and he was 34 at the time of the marriage. At one time he worked at Hill City, South Dakota.

¹⁴⁴ The petition was filed on April 4th, 1905. The pension of \$8.00 a month was granted him on February 8, 1892. The pension application indicated rheumatism that resulted in a diseased heart, deafness and impaired eyesight. His address was Ogden Iron Works, Council Bluffs.

¹⁴⁵ Bill died March 14, 1905 of "Organic Heart trouble due to rheumatism." Mercy lived until February 27, 1923 at Council Bluffs. The signature of each gives evidence that they had little formal education.

¹⁴⁶ Matt said the geyser was much stronger when he first saw it, and his theory was that passing emigrants had thrown rocks into the hold and obstructed its gushing.

lake, taking a bath in the hot springs and visiting with some of his acquaintances there, the family drove up Immigration Canyon.

Selling the Homestead

Sensing the economic problems facing his sons, Matt felt it would be better to sell and start afresh where opportunities offered more. On July 3, 1908, the house passed from Fifield ownership to Isaac Jorgensen of Spanish Fork, Utah. Matt and Jesse drove a wagon toward the Rockland Valley where Edwin had induced them to buy a home.

Rockland Idaho 1899

Retirement?

In Rockland, Matt lived at Will's place in a room of his own. He improved on the place by supplying the know-how while the younger generation did the work. He saw to it that plenty of firewood was always on hand, not so much by sawing and splitting it, as by urging the grandchildren to do it.

A chicken fancier, Matt bought eggs from hatcheries and set out to brood a strain of Rhode Island Reds, keeping his chickens away from Will's chickens. He fed them well, and used the young ones to sell through the valley. He bought and stocked the place with geese and ducks. Determined to get more egg production, he went into a strain of Leghorn, but always lost money on this venture. The feed was unbalanced or the hens were allowed to run too much.

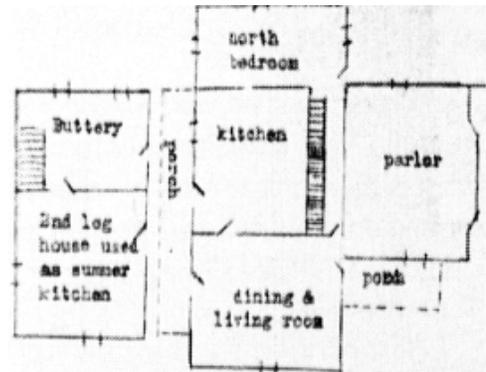
Matt liked Will's wife, her simple cooking, her patience in putting up with his foibles and fancies. He rewarded her by taking charge of tending her babies. One domestic picture ever to be remembered was his position near the stove with a baby on his knee, and his song:

“Hark, hark, hear the dogs bark. Beggars are coming to town.
Some in rags and some are in shags and some are in old patched gowns.
Go way, old dogs, go way. Go way, old dogs, go way.
You'd better go way or I'll feed you on hay, Go way, old dogs, go way.”

He set about building a fence around the place he chose for his garden. As there was plenty of water in Rockland, he bought choice seeds and became known as the best gardener in Rockland valley. Whatever he sold was his, and of course there were plenty of vegetables for the table. When Will got ready to build his house on his homestead up Sand Hollow, Matt went with him. At 80 he could still swing an ax; indeed his muscular activity kept him in the splendid physical condition that became well-known through the valley. Everyone called him Grandpa Fifield.



Rockland House



Floor plan

The Spelling Lesson

One old folks day, Matt was called extemporaneously to give a stump speech. It went something like this:

I never heard but one stump speech in my life. A fellow was shingling his house and slid off and hit a stump on the way down. What he said is not fit for a splendid congregation like you, so I won't repeat it. But if you don't stop me I'll show you how we learned to spell back in Vermont when I went to school. The school master felt his pupils should be able to spell not just a word; he ought to know how to spell an entire sentence. One of these was 'The abominable bumble bee with his tail cut off stumpy.'" This he made us do a syllable at a time and then put them together. It goes like this:

- a- there's your 'a'
- bom- there's your 'bom'; there's your 'a-bom'
- in- there's your 'in'; there's your 'bom-in';
 there's your 'a-bom-in'.
- able- there's your 'able'; there's your 'in-able'
 there's your 'bom-in-able';
 there's your 'a-bom-in-able'
- bum- there's your 'bum' there's your 'able bum';
 there's your 'in-able bum';
 there's your 'bom-in able bum';
 there's your 'a-bom-in-able bum'
- ble- there's your 'ble';
 there's your 'bumble';
 there's your 'able bumble';
 there's your 'in-able bumble';
 there's your 'bom-in-albe bumble';
 there's your 'a-bom-in-able bumble';

Etc, etc, until the crowd actually fell off the benches laughing at this 80 year old man.

The party was a riot. At another town function, he was asked to retell the same story, but he said no, that by now every kid in town knew how to spell the old-fashioned way better than he did; but he would show them how he learned to dance.

Heber Wood played the fiddle and Marie Allen danced with him. The grace of this old couple was the feature of the day. The crowd was enthusiastic and his performance was the topic of conversation for a long time whenever any of his family met anyone who had seen it.



Grandpa with William & Amorett Fifield family in 1913

Bear Lake Jubilee

In 1913 at the age of 83, he read of a Bear Lake valley 50th Jubilee year celebration and decided to go. Matt went the distance alone, and became the “King of the Celebration” when they found out he was the first man to drive a wagon with a family into Bear Lake valley.

When asked to speak at Church, Matt’s subject was always “the Word of Wisdom.” He said it was “the only principle of the Gospel that I know anything about.” At this advanced age he was drinking a morning cup of tea. If any of his grandchildren questioned the practice, he mildly answered “The Lord made tea for a purpose. When you get as old as me, you’ll probably know that that purpose is.”

Harvesting Wheat

In 1915, Will bought a combined harvester and set it up on the town place where there was a crop of wheat. Climbing the high hill south of the house, Matt asked if he could work on it. “I’ll tell you what for,” he said. “When I was a kid I cut grain with a sickle; later on I used the scythe with a cradle; then we used the side rake, the wire binder, the twine binder, then the header. I don’t reckon anything better than this rig will ever be hatched up for harvesting, and I’d like to have it said that I had harvested grain every way that was possible.” He took his turn driving the team, punching the header and sewing sacks, quite an achievement for any man of 85 years. (See endnote 1 for a discussion.)

One item he used to take pride in was his dog “Turp.” Although Turp was a family dog, he followed Matt on all his trips about the place. If a chicken was wanted, Matt would point out the desirable fowl, and say, “Catch her, Turp.” The dog obliged without much more damage to

the bird than ruffled feathers and much to the amazement of strangers who came to buy chickens. The family was always listening to someone's recital of Matt's skill in training dogs.

On his 90th birthday, his sons Ed and Will gave him a newspaper article to read. He didn't have his glasses, but holding it at arm's length he could read it. He commented, "I reckon I'm in my second childhood, and my eyesight is coming back," but it wasn't. He walked more carefully and slowly. "My eyes won't see and my feet trip over my shadow," he complained without rancor. "All the men and women are gone who were kids when I was, why should I have to wait so long?"

When the weather would permit, he leaned the back of a chair up against the sunny side of the house and spent hours basking in the sun. During the influenza epidemic of 1918-19, he tried to keep the house stocked with wood for the fires, carrying it in a few sticks at a time. "I reckon I can help you, Rettie, when you need help so badly. You was the only one I could trust twenty years back when I needed your help so badly," referring to his spotted fever bout in 1899.

His almost infallible memory gave signs of lapses. He'd forget where he left his false teeth. Always tidy in his eating, little dribbles of gravy began to show on his always-present vest. He had always prided himself on his ability to give the correct time, but now forgot to wind his watch.

Matt insisted that a garden be planted, but he couldn't keep the weeds down without a great deal of help. In late September, he took to bed and though his grandchildren would joke with him when they visited, the old spirit was lacking. There was no pain, nothing to bring sorrow except memories that would linger forever; memories of a life lived to fetch joy and happiness whenever possible to those whose lives he influenced.

Matt's Death

At the age of 9 years, 3 months, and 12 days, the end came peacefully; like a candle whose wick had burned to the end, leaving only a little of the wax on the side of the candle-stick holder. Compliant to his wish, he was buried beside Becky and their sons in the Weston cemetery. The following obituary appeared in the DESERET NEWS, October 5, 1920.

Matthew Phelps Fifield was born June 18, 1830 at New Haven, Vermont near Lake Champlain. He moved with his parents to New York; then on to Illinois in the early part of 1840 and settled in Nauvoo, Hancock County. He saw the bodies of Joseph and Hyrum Smith after the martyrdom. Just before being driven from his home in Nauvoo, his mother died.

He offered his services to the Mormon Battalion, but was refused. His father enlisted and was one of the three men to discover gold in California.

Mr. Fifield drove four yoke of cattle across the plains from Iowa to Salt Lake City, landing in the summer of 1848. In 1849, he went to California and worked in the gold fields for a year.

Mr. Fifield married Almira Jane Gibson at Bountiful, April 5, 1852. To this union five children (four girls and one son) were born. Two girls are still living. In 1862, he was married to Rebecca Ann Hoopes Lincoln, his first wife having died the year previous. To this union ten sons and three daughters were born. Living children are: Mrs. Orrelia Bird of Mendon; Mrs. Julia Campbell of Weston; Mrs. Naomi Heninger of Millville Utah; William P. and Edwin W. Fifield of Rockland; Wesley A., Thomas A.,

and Jesse H. Fifield of Weston; Melissa Maughan of Pocatello; and Albert M. of Malad, Idaho.

He was one of the first settlers of Richmond, Utah, Montpelier and Weston, Idaho where he resided for more than forty years. He presided over the High Priests' Quorum of Oneida Stake and acted as a member of the High Council until released on account of his health. Although he was ninety years old, his health was good and he enjoyed full use of all his faculties until the end, and raised a good garden up to the last year. He died September 30, 1920, at Rockland, Idaho.

Life Story

Matt wrote his own life history as given below, misspelled words and all.

Matthew Phelps Fifield was born at New Haven, Vermont, June 18, 1830 his mother's native state, his father's native state being New Hampshire they lived in Vermont and New Hampshire and New York until he was 11 years old, the last four years in the town of Crownpoint N.Y. where they first herd the Gospel of the Church of Jesus of Latter-day Saints.

Gathered to Nauvoo in the fall of 1841 first saw the prophet Joseph Smith and herd him speak the first Sunday in Sept. 1841 afterward became intimately acquainted with him and his Brother Hyrum. They both having eaten at my Father's table many times. I also eat at the prophets table. Was present when he started to go west and saw him on his return. Also saw him start for Carthage to his martyrdom. Heard his last sermon and saw the bodies of the Martyrs brought into Nauvoo followed them to the Mansion with the large crowd. Was present at the funeral of the Martyrs.

I was present when Sidney Rigdon claimed the right to the Leadership of the Church, also when Brigham Young was accepted as President of the Twelve Apostles of the Church. Was present and saw the Mormon Battalion enrolled, in which Father enlisted and served until discharged to return home, which he did by way of San Francisco, Sutter's Fort, Sacramento Etc. Worked in the mines to get outfit, to come home, arriving in Salt Lake in the fall of 1848 where I met him having crossed the plains in Daniel A. Miller's ten for whom I drove a team across the plains.

Went back in company with Jedediah Grant and helped bring in Willard Richards Company in 1848. Hired to and drove cattle for Kincaid, Brigs and Burris (Mountaineers) to California returned in 1850 settled in Mill Creek in 1849; Ogden 1851 where my Father died August 16, 1851 from skinning an Ox poisoned on wild parsnip. I was married to Almira Jane Gibson at Salt Lake, April 5, 1852 who died Oct 28 1860 at Ogden she was the mother of 5 children 1 boy and 4 girls.

Went to Echo Canyon to meet Johnston's army, went with the move south as far as Payson, was kept on what was known as the Detail and in the standing army I went to the relief of the Salmon River People, July 1849.

Came to Cache Valley with 42 in Company with David Moore, George Hill, D.B. Dilly, Lieutenant Cyrus Durfee, Captain Francillo Durfy of the Mormon Battalion and others after Indians in July between 4 & 24, in 1849.

I was married to Rebecca Ann Hoopes Lincoln at Richmond Utah, March 30, 1862 who was the mother of 13, 3 girls and 10 boys. I was called to settle Bear Lake went with the first

Company, lived in Paris the first winter, in Montpellier the second winter. Moved from there to Weston in 1864 where my wife died June 23, 1899 at one o'clock in the morning.

Few questioned his material of spiritual integrity. If he doubted a religious tenet, he was frank about it. If he differed in an opinion either religious or political, he frankly told the person. Though advised to take plural wives he was not in sympathy with the practice and refrained from it, but he did not censure those who did participate.

In Remembrance

Like millions of other Americans who helped found a nation, a civilization, a commonwealth, and a church, he expected no fame or fortune. His life was lived by adding to, rather than draining the cup of life. He may never be called great, but no one can say he wasn't honest. He was neither servile nor overbearing. He faced life without cavil or fear. He regarded the lowly and the great as his equals and treated them as such.

In appearance he was about 5 feet, 7 inches tall; weight about 140 pounds. His complexion was ruddy; his hair in youth auburn. He said he host his hair before he was thirty and he always wore a beard. Extremely active physically, he was supple and strong. In every way he felt competent to take care of himself, asking no favors nor serving no special interests.

End Notes

1. Grain Harvesting

Harvesting the grain produced required a long laborious process to get it to the mills. During Matt's lifetime the introduction of machines changed this process from a totally hand effort to a process that machines helped, but still required much manual, heavy labor. Continued improvement after Matt's death has made the harvest effort almost totally machine processed except for the driver-operator, who can sit in an air-conditioned cab, listening to fine music on his compact disk, or talking on his cellular phone, using GPS to know where he is located. It is still hard work, but not like it has been. Matt's harvesting effort followed this process.

Cutting. The growing grain was accomplished by swinging a sickle. When cut the grain stock would fall to the ground. So to prevent the kernels from being knocked loose, the grain was cut before it was ripe. A good cutter could cut 2 acres a day.

Bundling. The stocks were gathered together and bound into a shock until it dried and ripened. Then they were brought into the barn.

Threshing. The kernels were then removed from the hay stock by the use of a flail to knock loose the kernels. This also broke up the stocks.

Winnowing. The kernels and chaff (the broken bits of straw) could then be separated by tossing the mixture in the air, and allowing the wind to carry off the chaff, while the heavy kernel fell to the floor. The remaining straw could be used to feed the livestock, be mixed with mud for bricks, or used to make furniture.

Transportation. The final step for the farmer was to deliver the grain to market place, or to a mill to be ground into flour. Even here, the pioneer farmer had to transport the grain long distances, over poor or non-existent roads, by hand or in an animal pulled wagon. This trip often took several days for each load requiring camping out.

Changes went from 2 acres a day to just cut the grain to horse-drawn machines (with 20 horses) that allowed the farmer to cut and stack 8 acres a day. Today's combines can do an acre in 6 minutes, with improved productivity and comfort.

2. Number 338 Tragedy Springs

Of special interest to the William Phelps Fifield descendants is the fact that Levi was in the group that discovered and helped bury the remains of another of their ancestors, Ezra Heely Allen. As vanguard and pathfinder, Ezra and two others had gone ahead to pilot the way for the first west-to-east wagon crossing of the rugged Sierras. They made the road (through what is now called Carson Pass) that was used by all traffic for years, but were believed to be killed by Indians at Tragedy Springs, California just as they found the pass through the mountains.

“This campsite on the Kit Carson emigrant trail was a resting place for California settlers. It was named by members of the Mormon Battalion en route to Salt Lake Valley. Three of their men, serving as advance trail scouts, were murdered here by unknown persons June 28, 1845. Battalion friends arriving a few days later buried them in a common grave and carved their names ‘Henderson Cox, Ezra Allen, Daniel Browett’ on a nearby tree thus preserving the grave’s location.”

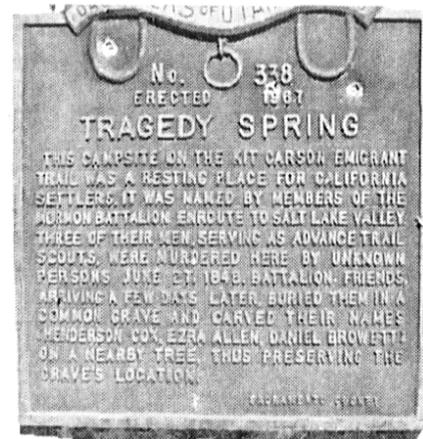
“When members of the Mormon Battalion camped here, they noticed arrows and a newly made mound. Upon opening it they found the mutilated bodies of their three friends. They re-buried them, building a cairn to protect the grave. They also found Allen’s gold pouch, filled with gold dust and carried it to his widow in Iowa.”

3. Mormon gold coins.

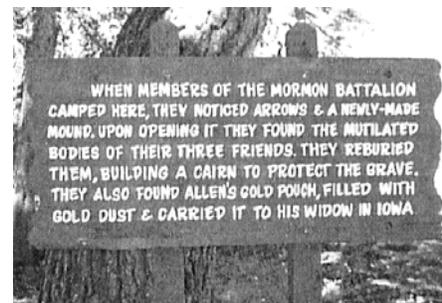
The Deseret Mint was established in a small adobe building in Great Salt Lake City in December 1848. It began producing ten-dollar gold pieces (dated 1849) that same month, based on designs provided by Brigham Young. The design of these earliest Mormon gold pieces are generally recognized by numismatists as being among the homeliest coins ever produced.

That they were produced at all is an extraordinary feat in and of itself. It had been barely a year since the first pioneers had entered the valley in wagons and on horseback. They had just suffered a devastating crop loss of their first planting season, and all were almost exclusively preoccupied with the day-to-day problems of survival. They were isolated in the middle of the vast Great Basin, 1,500 miles from the nearest civilization, with no major roads or communication routes to or from anywhere, no coast or seaport, and no industry. And yet they were able to allocate resources, develop tools, and determine the procedures necessary to produce a credible coinage; all several months before the first private gold coins would even begin to be minted in California.

Only 46 coins were struck that December before the melting crucibles cracked. Production was suspended until replacements could be obtained from the east, and when coinage



Marker at Tragedy Springs CA



Signboard at Tragedy Springs CA

resumed the following summer the ten-dollar piece was joined by the two-and-a-half, five and twenty dollar denominations.

The vast majority of Mormon gold pieces were used to purchase goods and provisions from the east, rather than remaining in the territory to circulate as money. They quickly disappeared as the eastern banks converted them to bullion by sending them to the United States Mint, where they were melted. Many anti-Mormons spread rumors that challenged the content and weight of the coin and which made it hard to use. Persons with the ability to test the coin did not find any problems, but most people did not have those tools. Very few of those (less than 24) coins remain in existence today, and they are highly coveted by collectors. On the rare occasion when one is offered for sale, they command an extremely high price. In 1997 one was sold for over \$150,000.

Reproductions are being minted in 1998 by Charles M. Larson in Orem Utah, using methods and equipment very similar to those used in the middle of the nineteenth century. All of



Obvious Side of Gold Coin



Reverse

the various punches, including the lettering stamps used to create the reproduction dies were meticulously processed involving constant comparison and reference to the original coins and dies. Even the striking of the reproductions was performed by use of a gravity hammer, the same sort of primitive tool that was employed out of necessity by the Deseret Mint in order to assure that the essential fabric of the original coin was duplicated. Such efforts have resulted in not

only an uncanny accuracy, but a certain amount of risk as well. Larson's reproductions are so nearly identical to their genuine counterparts that they could almost be classed as numismatic forgeries and therefore additional features were added to define they are reproductions! Much of the information about the coinage was extracted from the brochure that accompanies the reproduction coins designed and manufactured by Charles M. Larson.

The composition of the Mormon gold coins was not actually "pure" (in the sense of being refined to 24K purity), as the Deseret Mint did not have the capability in 1848-49. Rather, it meant that the raw, placer gold used was "pure." (Actually, after the first few coins were struck from placer, it was decided to add a bit of silver to the composition of the metal to help "stretch" the life and quantity.) While the actual gold composition of Mormon coins varied from batch to batch (as the assay of different placer deposits varies), on average, Mormon gold coins contained just about as much gold as those issued by the United States Mint at that time. Even in 1998 most gold coins contain a small amount of silver to improve the life of the coin.

The coin is 27 millimeters in diameter. On the obverse side, the symbol of the Mormon Priesthood (circa 1840s), consisting of the All-Seeing-Eye of Jehovah capped by a three-pointed Phrygian crown, and surrounded by the motto "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." The reverse side shows clasped hands of fellowship, symbolizing unity, surrounded by the legend "PURE GOLD" and the denomination "TEN DOLLARS."

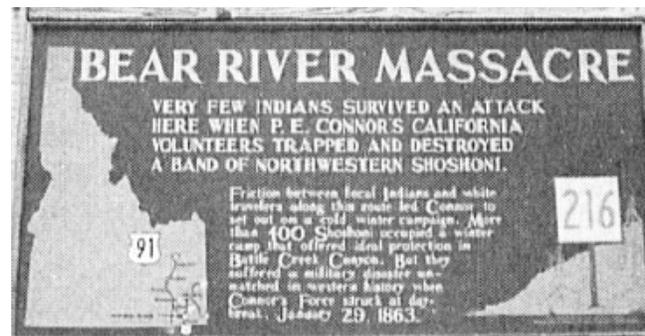
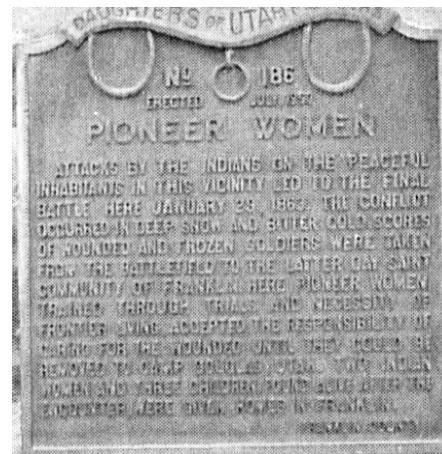
4. Bear River Massacre

About 4 miles north of Preston, Idaho stands a monument denoting the Bear River Massacre. In 1998 there were three placards remembering this battle. The #16 bronze placard on the east side of the monument was dated 1932. The #186 bronze placard on the west side of the same monument was 1953, and the #216 painted sign to the north of the monument was undated but must have been in the 1990s. While most of the facts on these placards are the same, the verbage reflects a shift in political thinking, and is an interesting example of the Orwellian New Speak.

#16 The Battle of Bear River was fought in this vicinity Jan. 29, 1863. Co. P.E. Connor leading 300 California volunteers from Camp Douglas Utah against Bannock & Shoshone Indians guilty of hostile attacks on Emigrants and settlers engaged about 500 Indians of whom 260 to 300 were killed or incapacitated including about 90 combatant women & children. 14 soldiers were killed 4 officers and 49 men wounded of whom 1 officer and 7 men died later. 79 were severely frozen. Chief Bear Hunter, Sagwitch, and Lehi were reported killed. 175 horses and much stolen property were recovered. 70 lodges were burned.

#186 Pioneer Women. Attacks by the Indians on the peaceful inhabitants in this vicinity led to the final battle here Jan 29. 1863. The conflict occurred in deep snow and bitter cold. Scores of wounded and frozen soldiers were taken from the battlefield to the Latter Day Saint community of Franklin. Here the Pioneer women trained through trails and necessity of frontier living accepted the responsibility of caring for the wounds until they could be removed to Camp Douglas, Utah. Two Indian woman and 3 children were found alive after the Encounter and were given homes in Franklin.

#216 Bear River Massacre. Very few Indians survived when attacked here, when P.E. Conner's California volunteers trapped and destroyed a band of Northwestern Shoshone. Friction between local Indian and white travelers along this route led Conner to set out on a cold winter campaign. More than 400 Shoshone occupied a winter camp that offered ideas protection in Battle Creek Canyon, but they suffered a military disaster unmatched in western history when Connor's force struck at daybreak Jan 29. 1863



5. Irrigation.

So little rain fell in this land that it could not be counted upon, so irrigation became necessary if the people were to survive. It started with a lack of knowledge, but a big need. By trial (very long and hard manual labor) and error (heartbreaking disasters, resulting often in the loss of life) the critical knowledge was obtained. To build an irrigation system it was necessary to build dams, reservoirs and water ditches necessary to catch the water where it was, store it for later use, then transport it to where it was needed, when it was needed.

With the crude tools and machines of the day, this amounted to hard physical labor. To further compound the problem, they built these projects without the engineering knowledge necessary to design an economical, but robust system. As a result, weak dams collapsed when only half full, or reservoirs wouldn't hold enough water to get through a dry season. The changed water flow sometimes led to floods or washouts. Often the opposite problem occurred. The dam was many times the strength required or a reservoir was so big the water supply could not fill it. These engineering errors required large expenditures of work and materials in an area where there was never enough time of manpower to get everything done that had to be done. Of course, the water system must come before even housing.

Water laws. Most of the people came from areas where water was seldom a problem, and it was never a life or death condition. Water and the rights to water became a more valuable commodity than the land. There was lots of land but limited water. A new series of laws were necessary for controlling water rights. Even with laws and agreements, water measurement, regulation, control and use it difficult. It was easy to use an extra five minutes of water flow, or to think your neighbor used some of your time. While these people belonged to the same church, and were taught to obey the Christian ethic, the availability of water meant death, a meager living, or the good life.

This was an area of rapidly swelling immigration and people new to the area were not aware of the importance of water. This made them vulnerable to scams and swindles. Being there first, developing the land and obtaining the water should allow you to sell improved land for some profit. But there is a fine line between an ethical profit and taking advantage of your fellow human being.

Even in a fair, equitable situation, well defined and with everyone trying hard to do the right thing, the amount of water available changed. Just because it had been ample forever (the 10-year history of this area) didn't mean there would be enough for the next 20 years, and when there was not enough water for everyone, who got the water, and whose crops and livestock died from lack of water? How you made that decision and what you did for the people who could lose everything, perhaps even their lives because of the lack of water was not defined. Having made the decisions, how did you then control the water and the people? If you compare the water problems of the Mormon settlements to the land problems (cattle ranchers opposing farmers opposing sheep ranchers) a few years later, the water problems just didn't produce the plots for good shoot-em-up movies the land wars did, though the potentials were there. The Church's influence and teaching allowed for a peaceful solution as compared to the range wars to follow in other areas of the west. That is not to say that many people did not have hard feelings about what their neighbors did, or what they thought their neighbors did. These problems had a strong influence in Matt Fifield's life and work.