

On the Left, Mrs. J. H. McLean, Who Ran Away with Parley Pratt, the Mormon Missionary, and Whose Husband Later Murdered Pratt, Thus Adding Fuel to the Bitter Animosity That Culminated in the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

43/48

Below, Parley Pratt, Whose Returner Was One of the Factors Contributing to the Massacre.



The Mountain Meadows Massacre — an Episode on The Road to Zion

by Mrs. Sallie Baker Mitchell, Sole Survivor



A Dark Chapter in the Mormons' Epic Struggle to Cling to Their "Promised Land," as Told by One Who Lived Through the Tragedy and Can Look Back On It With Intimate Understanding and Compassion

took him at Fort Gibson, near what was then the boundary between Indian Territory and Arkansas.

But McLean didn't start shooting right away. He wanted to be law-abiding, if he could, so he got a warrant for Pratt's arrest and had him brought before John B. Ogden, the United States commissioner at Van Buren, Arkansas.

Pratt didn't testify. But Mrs. McLean took the stand and said she had followed Pratt of her own free will and become a Mormon without any special urging. That settled it. Commissioner Ogden said there wasn't enough evidence to hold Pratt and he'd have to let him go, but Pratt was so scared he asked the commissioner to lock him up in jail till morning, which was done.

In those days, Van Buren wasn't much more than a steamboat landing at the head of navigation on the Arkansas River, but it had a pretty fair tavern, and that was where Mrs. McLean and the boys put up for the night. She slipped out after supper, through, and went over to the jail, to have a talk with Pratt, about his plans for making a getaway the next morning. Practically everybody in the town was on McLean's side, and he probably could have worked up a mob and broken into the jail, if he had wanted to. But he was the kind of man who would rather deal out his own brand of justice, single handed; once the courts had turned him down.

Pratt lit out the next morning about daylight. He didn't even wait to eat any breakfast. A horse was all saddled and waiting for him and he struck out along the old stage route toward Little Rock. McLean followed him for miles and finally caught up with him deep in the woods, near a blacksmith shop run by Tealy Wynn. After shout-

ing to him to defend himself, McLean opened fire.

I've heard it said that Mormon leaders like Parley Pratt believed that bullets couldn't hurt them, but why they should entertain such notions is a mystery to me. At any rate, Pratt didn't try to get away, or defend himself, and McLean kept on shooting till his pistol was empty, without hitting either Pratt or the Mormon's horse.

Pratt could have shot McLean after that, or outrun him. But for some reason he didn't seem to want to do either thing. He just sat there till McLean galkoped up to him, pulled out a Bowie knife and stabbed him to death.

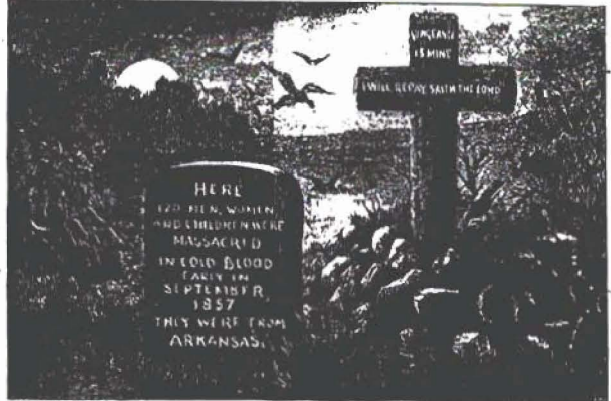
Then McLean rode back to Van Buren, got his sons away from Mrs. McLean and took the next steamboat for New Orleans.

Mrs. McLean took charge of the funeral. She got Blacksmith Wynn to order some boards, all planned and dressed, from a sawmill run by the father of John Steward, who was 16 at the time and afterwards became deputy sheriff of Crawford County, and the coffin was made out of them. Then young Steward hauled the body in the coffin out to the burial grounds in his daddy's ox-cart. They didn't have any preacher, Mrs. McLean did the only talking that was done and among other things she said Pratt had been crucified.

After that, she went on to Salt Lake City, and nobody in our part of the country ever heard anything more about her. But early in 1857, just before our party set out for California, two Mormons showed up at Wynn's blacksmith shop and asked him a lot of questions. Then they turned back north, along the same route our party followed a few weeks later, and it certainly looks like those two Mormons found out that we were figuring on passing through Utah on our way to California and told the Danites, or Destroying Angels of the Mormons, to be on the lookout for us, because we were from the same district where Pratt was murdered.

At any rate, we sure did get a mighty unfriendly reception when we finally did reach Utah. By that time, the Mormons didn't have much use for anybody who wasn't a Mormon.

Off and on, ever since they took over Utah, the Mormons had been bickering with the Federal Government, insisting that they had a right to run everything to suit themselves. It finally got so bad President Buchanan issued an order removing Brigham Young as governor of the territory and appointing Alfred Cumming to take his place. And just before we landed in Utah, the Mormons



An Old Woodcut of the Scene of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, Showing the Wooden Coffins and Gravestones Erected Beside the One Large Grave in Which the Remains of Many of the Victims of the Massacre Were Buried.

heard that Cumming was on his way out, backed up by an army of 2500 men.

That made the Mormons mad as hornets, so mad, in fact, that Brigham Young issued a proclamation defying the Federal Government and proclaiming martial law, but the members of our party didn't know anything about that and walked right into the hornet's nest.

When our caravan reached Salt Lake City in August, our supplies just about out, everybody tired and hungry, and our horses and cattle lean and badly in need of rest and a chance to graze, we were told to move on and be quick about it. On top of that, the Mormons refused to sell us any food, that's what I was told when I was growing up and I've always believed it was so.

So we had to move on down to Mountain Meadows, in what is now Washington County, Utah. Mountain Meadows was a narrow valley, lying between two low ranges of hills, with plenty of fresh water supplied by several little streams, and lots of grass for our stock to graze. So it looked like a good place for our party to rest up before tackling the 100-mile desert that lay just ahead.

A lot has been written about what was going on among the Mormons while our party was resting at Mountain Meadows. Both sides of the question have been gone into pretty thoroughly, with a lot of arguments and evidence on each side, so anybody who wants to form his own opinion can look up the books on the subject and make his choice.

Some writers say that officials of the Mormon church stirred the Indians up and kept egging them on till they attacked us, and then told their own folks to jump in and help the Indians finish up the job after trusting our men into giving up their guns. But the Mormon writers insist that nobody with any real authority in the church organization knew what was going on till it was too late for them to stop it, even though they tried their best. They admit, though, that there were some Mormons mixed up in it, and years after it was over, they laid most of the blame on John D. Lee, who was a Mormon and an Indian agent. But I'll tell about that later.

On the morning of September 7, our party was just sitting down to a breakfast of quail and cotton-tail rabbits when a shot rang out from a nearby gully, and one of the children toppled over, hit by the bullet.

Right away, the men saw they were being attacked by an Indian war-party. In the first few minutes of fighting, twenty-two of our men were

