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THE JUANITA BROOKS LECTURE SERIES

*presents*

The 26th Annual Lecture

Revisiting the Massacre  
at Mountain Meadows

by Glen M. Leonard

*St. George Tabernacle*

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Juanita Brooks was a professor at [then] Dixie College for many years and became a well-known author.

She is recognized, by scholarly consent, to be one of Utah's and Mormondom's most eminent historians. Her total honesty, unwavering courage, and perceptive interpretation of fact set more stringent standards of scholarship for her fellow historians to emulate. Dr. Obert C. and Grace Tanner had been life-long friends of Mrs. Brooks and it was their wish to perpetuate her name through this lecture series. Dixie State College and the Brooks family express their thanks to the Tanner family.

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Glen M. Leonard is an independent historian living in Farmington, Utah. He earned a Ph.D. in history and American Studies at the University of Utah in 1970. He has worked as a journalist, a publications editor, and a research historian, and retired in April 2007 after 26 years as director of the LDS Church History Museum in Salt Lake City. Leonard is author or coauthor of four books and numerous articles on Utah, the Mormons, and the American West. His comprehensive study *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise* (2002) received two best book awards. His latest work, with co-authors Ronald W. Walker and Richard E. Turley Jr., is *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, published last August by Oxford University Press. Glen and his wife Karen have three sons, two daughters-in-law, and eight grandchildren.

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# Revisiting the Massacre at Mountain Meadows

By Glen M. Leonard

For twenty-eight years, Juanita Brooks served on the Board of State History, an advisory group to the Utah State Historical Society. Her colleagues on the board and the Society's directors valued her willingness to defend the Society's emphasis on programs that treated subjects across the full spectrum of Utah's past. Ever since its organization in 1897, the Society reached out beyond the Mormon history to include otherwise neglected topics.<sup>1</sup>

My first exchange of ideas with Juanita took place during a meeting of the board in the early 1970s. By then she had served more than two decades. In my relatively new position as managing editor of the *Utah Historical Quarterly*, I had proposed creation of a history magazine for fourth and seventh grade students. The name I proposed was *Beehive History*. At some point during the board's discussion Juanita expressed concern that the word *beehive* might be seen by some as too Mormon. In the ensuing give-and-take, we reviewed the beehive's varied symbolic uses over time. The board noted a theocratic approach to life in pioneer times. Twentieth-century uses of the beehive — in religious, educational, political, and commercial settings — seemed sufficiently diverse to adopt the title *Beehive* (meaning *Utah*) *History*.

The first issue of the illustrated youth magazine appeared after I left the Society to join Leonard J. Arrington's staff in the Church Historical Department. From the first issue in 1975 until the final number in 2002, *Beehive History* remained true to its sponsor's desire to range widely through Utah's divergent past.<sup>2</sup>

Western and Utah historian Dale Morgan had recommended Juanita's appointment to the history board in 1949. "The

Society is badly in need of people like you," Morgan wrote, "[people] who have its interests at heart and will stand up and fight for it when need be." For several years, Morgan had been coaching Brooks in her work on the Mountain Meadows Massacre, a story that Juanita's biographer concluded "she was born to tell."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Juanita Brooks was first of all a storyteller. She began writing about southern Utah in the 1920s. She understood local people and frontier life. This, and an independent spirit, prepared Brooks to write the massacre's history. It would become her best known and arguably her most important book.<sup>4</sup>

For nearly a century, her people in Utah's "Dixie Country" had been troubled by half-silence. As Charles S. Peterson put it, "Generations had come and gone in whispered restraint. Mormon historians regarded the subject to be 'forbidden ground' and ignored it or passed it off as an Indian depredation in which the limited role of white men was justly punished by the excommunication and eventual execution of John D. Lee, one of the participants."<sup>5</sup>

For too long, the roles played by Lee and the Southern Paiutes had been unfairly exaggerated, the involvement of others neglected. Brooks challenged the old story. First, she let her readers know that she approached the subject as "a loyal and active member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Her desire, she said, was "to view this tragedy objectively and dispassionately, and to see it in its proper setting." Her book, she said, was "not designed either to smear or to clear any individual; its purpose is to present the truth. I feel sure that nothing but the truth can be good enough for the church to which I belong."<sup>6</sup>

Juanita stood firm in her belief that candor should guide the writing of Latter-day Saint history. Her determination was not unlike that of Mormon historian B. H. Roberts who said that frankness was "another name for fairness." He wrote his multi-volume *Comprehensive History of the Church* with that standard in mind. "I was of the conviction," Roberts said,

“that to have this history both advocate and defend this New Dispensation, it must be kept honest and fearless and full as well when the tide of events were not favorable for the church and also when the tides seemed to run against it.”<sup>7</sup>

It took courage for Juanita to move forward with a project that would bring both censure for its frankness and praise for its fairness. Stanford University Press published the first edition of *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* in 1950; the University of Oklahoma Press issued a new edition twelve years later and released the first paperback printing in 1991.<sup>8</sup> In 1974 I purchased a copy of the fifth printing of the Oklahoma edition. In March 1977 Juanita Brooks stepped down from the Board of State History after moving from her Salt Lake home to St. George, where she spent her last dozen years.<sup>9</sup> I don't remember when Juanita autographed my copy of her landmark treatise, but it remains a treasured reminder of her significant contribution.

Nearly seven years ago I bought a paperback edition that I could mark up as I began an intensive study of the massacre with two colleagues. We called our book *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*.<sup>10</sup> In response to Doug Alder's suggestion, I explain how new sources and fresh approaches have allowed us to build upon the foundation laid by Juanita Brooks some sixty years ago. There are many parallels in our purposes, many differences in our facts, lots of agreements in our conclusions.

My involvement in the history of the massacre began with an invitation. So did Juanita's. Let me first review her story and introduce the man whose desire to tell what he knew of the massacre launched her quest for understanding. His attempts to preserve the truth would help us as well, as we tried to understand one of the darkest events in Mormon history.

In the spring of 1919, Juanita Leavitt was twenty-one years old, newly engaged to Leonard Ernest Pulsipher, and teaching school in Mesquite, Nevada. Near the end of the school year, patriarch Nephi Johnson visited Juanita's schoolroom. “I want

you to do some writing for me," he said. "My eyes have witnessed things that my tongue has never uttered, and before I die I want them written down. And I want *you* to do the writing." Juanita promised to respond at a more convenient time, after the school year closed.<sup>11</sup>

In late May, Miss Leavitt moved home to nearby Bunkerville. Soon afterward she received word that the 86-year-old Nephi Johnson was "quite sick...[and] calling for the little schoolteacher." She arrived early the next morning to find Johnson rambling "in delirium — he prayed, he yelled, he preached, and once his eyes opened wide to the ceiling and he yelled, 'Blood! BLOOD! BLOOD!'" Johnson seemed relieved at her arrival, but did not rally enough to tell his story. "He acts like he is haunted," Juanita told her uncle. "Maybe he is," he said. "He was at the Mountain Meadows Massacre." Juanita had not known that. Seldom did anyone in southern Utah talk about that horrid event. "I had missed my chance," Brooks said.<sup>12</sup>

During the eighteen months following Johnson's death, Juanita married, bore a son, and buried her husband, Ernest Pulsipher, after his year-long battle with cancer. It would be thirteen years before Juanita Pulsipher married Will Brooks, the widowed sheriff of Washington County. Juanita Brooks began untangling the story Nephi Johnson wanted to tell after learning in 1944 that the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California, had acquired some of John D. Lee's diaries. The Library granted her access.<sup>13</sup> Working quietly over the next five years, Brooks gathered sources, evaluated them, and wrote her path-breaking account of the massacre. Afterwards, she and a collaborator finished their editing of Lee's diaries, which appeared in 1955, and then, in 1961, she published a highly praised biography, *John D. Lee: Zealot, Pioneer Builder, Scapegoat*.<sup>14</sup>

Juanita learned later on that publication of the diaries had "helped to change the attitude of [Lee's] family from one of apology to one of militant pride."<sup>15</sup> Brooks, too, had come to



know the complicated man John D. Lee. Her writings lightened the burden of guilt that history had placed on him. She learned about others present at the Meadows, among them her own grandfather, Dudley Leavitt; and she greatly diminished the culpability of the local Southern Paiutes. Brooks concluded that Brigham Young “did not order the massacre, and would have prevented it if he could.” Even so, she decided, Young “was accessory after the fact, in that he knew what had happened, and how and why it happened.”<sup>16</sup>

In September 1955, Juanita Brooks accepted an invitation to speak to the Arkansas relatives of the massacre’s victims. Five hundred people had gathered, in Harrison, Arkansas, to dedicate a memorial to their families. Nervous, but confident of her message, she told of her experience with the dying Nephi Johnson, and how that awakened a desire to “understand how such a man could possibly have been involved in anything so horrible.” She explained the setting for the massacre — the Mormon persecutions in Missouri and Illinois and difficult times in Utah. The men at the Meadows, she concluded, “carried out one of the most despicable mass murders of history. It was tragic for those who were killed and for the children left orphans, but it was also tragic for the fine men who now became murderers, and for their children who for four generations now have lived under that shadow.... It is given to God alone to understand *all*, but as His children we may strive toward understanding, and that is our only purpose here today.”<sup>17</sup>

Shortly after her visit, J. K. Fancher wrote, “You impressed the people most favorably, ...and your coming has done much to establish a spirit of love and forgiveness. The Mormon Church owes you much because now the people in this section feel much better toward the Mormon people.”<sup>18</sup>

A quarter century later, Juanita’s desire to promote understanding underwent a rebirth in others. Descendants of emigrant families, representatives of the Lee family, and other interested parties joined with institutional sponsors in erecting two new monuments to remember those killed at Mountain

Meadows. The descendants “wanted to foster some healing, and they wanted to bring closure.”<sup>19</sup>

In the initial effort (concluded in September 1990, the year after Brooks’s death), a Steering Committee headed by Utah State Senator Dixie Leavitt built the Mountain Meadows Monument atop a hill overlooking the valley. Etched into the Vermont granite face are the names of eighty-two known victims and seventeen surviving children. At the same time, the John D. Lee family achieved its goal of correcting errors on a plaque attached to a native stone enclosure sponsored by the Utah Pioneers Trails and Landmarks Association in 1932. At a dedicatory meeting for the granite monument, attended by twelve hundred persons in Cedar City, three spokesmen for the emigrants joined hands with a John D. Lee descendant in an unforgettable demonstration of their desire for reconciliation. “Until now,” Juanita’s son Karl Brooks told the *Washington Post*, “it’s been a massacre site, but beginning today, it’s a memorial site.”<sup>20</sup>

Nine years later, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints replaced the 1932 enclosure with a new Grave Site Memorial. At the invitation of President Gordon B. Hinckley, emigrant families helped select design features. The rebuilt enclosure surrounds a twelve-foot-high stone cairn, recalling the one built by U.S. troops in 1859 over one of several places where the soldiers had re-buried scattered human remains. Hinckley told the planning committee, “No one knows fully what happened at Mountain Meadows. I don’t, nor can it be explained, but we express our regrets over what happened there.” In his dedicatory prayer offered at the site in September 1999, the president expressed the desire of those present: “May we honor those who died here by extending the hand of friendship toward those of this generation who are innocent of the past and have shown their desire to heal the wounds of bitterness.”<sup>21</sup>

Juanita Brooks had hailed the 1932 monument as an appropriate remembrance. Yet when neglect followed the initial

endeavor, she created a “to-do” list for the site. Forty years would come and go before the needed improvements were accomplished. The work was done through the cooperative efforts of state, county, church, private groups (in Utah and Arkansas), and the continuing service of many volunteers.<sup>22</sup>

### **A Fresh Look at Old Sources**

During the decade that the two monuments were being planned and built, I spent countless hours working with the sponsoring committees and organizations. I resisted the opportunity to immerse myself in the massacre’s history. Juanita Brooks had told the story well enough. With other projects waiting, I didn’t want to enter the briar patch. Then, in the fall of 2001, Richard E. Turley Jr., managing director of the Church Historical Department (and now Assistant Church Historian), told me of his wish for a new history. After Church leaders agreed to support Turley’s proposal, the two of us and Ronald W. Walker, then a history professor at Brigham Young University, joined in a collaborative effort. We were granted professional time to research and write, given freedom to make our own judgments, and allowed to draw upon the expertise of colleagues in the department.<sup>23</sup>

As we set about our work, we remembered Arkansas Judge Roger V. Logan Jr.’s comment to a reporter following the dedication of the Grave Site Memorial. “While great strides have been made in recent years,” he said, “until the church shows more candor about what its historians actually know about the event, true reconciliation will be elusive.” We set a standard for our book. It recalls the spirit of B. H. Roberts and Juanita Brooks. It is: “Only complete and honest evaluation of the tragedy can bring the trust necessary for lasting good will. Only then can there be catharsis. Thoroughness and candor [will be] our ideals in writing this book.”<sup>24</sup>

At the outset, we set aside previous explanations and decided to let the sources speak to us. We gave preference, whenever possible, to the early accounts. As we studied the

documents and evaluated conflicting evidence, we created profiles of the major players in the drama and identified individual emigrants and settlers. We explored the political, religious, and cultural strains that made the massacre possible. We sought out new evidence, and consulted with specialists as needed. The story we now tell creates a context of tense times in territorial Utah, and then it follows the emigrants from Arkansas to the Meadows in a narrative that becomes a day-by-day unfolding.

Previous writers had left much to be untangled, and the sources themselves contained confusing contradictions. Over time, we patched together the scattered pieces of the puzzle. We sorted out the thread of truth in John D. Lee's self-serving story of the massacre. Early newspaper articles, diaries, and minute books yielded valuable data. Later affidavits and reminiscences provided confirming details. We revisited trusted original documents and discovered new ones. The militiamen who testified against Lee in two trials that began eighteen years after the massacre offered much useful information. These reticent witnesses left still more unsaid. Previously unavailable documents enhanced our story.

John D. Lee had been at the center of previous histories. We needed to understand him and others if we were to close the gap in understanding. One of the must-see sources was *Mormonism Unveiled; or The Life and Confessions of...John D. Lee*. Lee wrote the book while awaiting execution. His defense attorney William W. Bishop edited the work and published it in 1877, six months after Lee died by firing squad at the Meadows. Lee wrote of the massacre and its aftermath in a statement published as two chapters in the book. Three shortened versions of the confession appeared in newspapers immediately after Lee's death. Lee had given the earliest of these accounts to prosecuting attorney Sumner Howard prior to the first trial. Bishop released the other two, identifying them as extracts from the full-length confession. As we compared the confessions we discovered a progressive

embellishment of the text from Howard's version to the longest statement in *Mormonism Unveiled*.<sup>25</sup>

As the title suggests, Bishop packaged *Mormonism Unveiled* as an exposé, designed to sell books. Bishop said that he made no changes in the manuscript. Some writers accept that assertion, while others find Bishop's hand in the text as editor. Juanita Brooks drew heavily from the book, even while expressing concern about possible tainting. She told a friend, "I should like to determine, if I can, how much was written by Lee himself and what part was filled in by the Attorney, Bishop, from notes and conversations with Lee." Bishop left a single clue that may explain incompatible interruptions to Lee's familiar narrative voice. In an 1875 letter, Bishop explained, "Lee, aided by myself and associates, prepared a full and detailed account of the case."<sup>26</sup> Chad Orton, an archivist at the Church History Library, is analyzing the text with Bishop's admission in mind. Orton's preliminary findings reveal in *Mormonism Unveiled* "a pervasive pattern of inconsistencies, contradictions, and modified vocabulary."<sup>27</sup>

The story Lee told required that he not arrive at the Meadows until Tuesday (or, in some accounts, Wednesday). He did not want it known that he was with the Indians for their initial attack on the emigrant camp early Monday morning. Consequently, his attempt to adjust the calendar created a week with two Wednesdays (one of them not dated)! Most writers did not fuss over such details; they began with Monday morning's Indian attack on the emigrants, then mentioned the intervening siege, and, lastly, focused on Friday's mass murder. Juanita Brooks gave Lee's dating priority in her first brief overview of the story. Then, because Lee's favored account was more complete, she let him tell his version before she considered in turn the affidavits of Nephi Johnson and three other participants. Brooks used Johnson and the others to confirm Lee's story and to add additional details. While she did not attempt to correct Lee's confused dating, she pointed out differences and agreements on major elements of the story, and noted

evidence of deception. Brooks concluded, "Certainly the final responsibility must rest squarely upon the Mormons, William H. Dame as commander and those under him who helped to form the policy and to carry out the orders." We would add that Dame agreed to Haight's plan only after Haight isolated Dame from his close advisors. The next morning, Dame tried to stop the carnage.<sup>28</sup>

As we worked to untangle Lee's chronology, we found that other accounts suffered from similar problems. Many of the participants who testified against Lee and some who told their stories in succeeding decades did not supply the information we sought or simply misdated events. Our calendar for those crucial ten days, a work in progress over many months, eventually fell into place.<sup>29</sup>

Sometimes sources that we felt were reliable challenged the conclusions of our preliminary drafts. For example, Lee's wife Rachel Woolsey Lee knew exactly when her husband left their home in Fort Harmony and the date of his return. Juanita Brooks and others have quoted the Harmony Branch minute book kept by Rachel to establish this fact.<sup>30</sup> The minute entry for Sunday, September 6, says that "Bro. J. D. Lee went on an expedition South." A week later, on September 13, Rachel wrote that her husband and "a great number of Indians returned from an expedition South west." While these entries establish the dates for Lee's presence at the Meadows, they differ in two minor details. The first entry has him leaving with no mention of Indians and the second entry notes his return with "a great number of Indians." The first says he left Harmony on "an expedition South" and the other that he "returned from an expedition South west."<sup>31</sup>

An examination of the cryptic September 6 entry allows a reading consistent with other reliable sources. In the original minute book, Rachel's handwritten entry that tells of Lee's departure on an "expedition South" is written along the bottom edge of the page. The sentence ends abruptly. What once was there has been broken or cut away. A close look at



the word *south* reveals these letters: *s-o-u-t-h* and then a *u* or the first half of the letter *w*. Knowing what Rachel wrote one week later, we considered it likely that the incomplete sentence originally read, "Bro. J. D. Lee went on an expedition Southwest with a great number of Indians."<sup>32</sup>

Other evidence supports our conclusion that Lee left for the Meadows on Sunday with the Ash Creek Paiutes. Annie Hoag testified at Lee's first trial that she had seen him at Harmony that day encouraging the Indians to join him. When they returned together a week later, she heard Lee talk publicly about what happened at the Meadows. Another witness at Fort Harmony was Peter Shirts, whose son Carl had recently married one of Lee's daughters. Peter's statement directly confirmed Rachel Lee's brief notes. Shirts wrote, "About 12 o'clock on Sunday I saw John D. Lee in the town of Harmony with about 45 Indians mustered in, in military style. The following Sunday he returned with the same Indians." In a private conversation a few days later Lee told Shirts that "he had made arrangements with the Indians...to attack the emigrant party before daylight when [i.e., before] they could awake and arm themselves."<sup>33</sup> Newly available reports of interviews with Elliot Willden and Samuel Knight confirm Lee's presence at the Meadows on Monday.<sup>34</sup>

Another minute book challenged our conclusions. It has an entry placing Lee at Fort Harmony on Monday. Harmony's congregation had rejected Lee as their presiding elder a year earlier. Lee retained his post as militia major, his church assignment to help the Paiutes with their farming, and his job as justice of the peace. The hand-written justice record says that on Monday, September 7, the court convened at 9:00 a.m. at the "court house" in Harmony, with Lee and two other members present. The meeting soon adjourned for lack of business.<sup>35</sup> The most likely explanation for this improbable report rests upon a simple, physical clue. A page has been removed from the minute book. Apparently, an entry noting Lee's absence was removed and a rewritten report of his presence at Monday's court added.

Lee and his defense attorney did not want any official record to prove his departure from Harmony on Sunday nor his presence at the Meadows on Monday. Nor did they want the jury to know he had recruited and accompanied a large number of Paiutes to the Meadows. Newly available sources now suggest that Lee also met with Coal Creek Paiutes in their camps at the Cottonwoods, a few miles northwest of Cedar City. On Saturday, September 5, following a Friday night conversation with Isaac C. Haight, Lee was seen leaving Fort Cedar on a recruiting mission. In 1892, Mary S. Campbell told Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson that she saw Lee and Haight pass “by the end of her house” inside the fortified city plat with Phillip Klingensmith and John M. Higbee. The four men left through the northwest gate, she said, and “held a consultation” at the camp of the Coal Creek Paiutes. That same evening, Campbell said, the Paiute men left for the Meadows and some Paiute women “came into the fort...and said the Indians were going to kill the ‘Mericates’” (Americans) a Paiute word for non-Mormons.<sup>36</sup>

As Lee’s execution date drew near, he admitted that as he left Cedar City that Saturday evening to return to Harmony, he met “a large band of Indians under Moquetas and Big Bill, two Cedar City Chiefs.” They invited him “to go with them and command their forces.” Lee told them he must first fulfill Haight’s orders “to send other Indians on the war path to help them kill the emigrants.” He invited the Coal Creek Indians to camp near the Meadows and said he would “meet them the next day [that is, Sunday] and lead them” — which is exactly what he did.<sup>37</sup>

### **Problems with Sources: The Trial Transcripts**

Of the nine men indicted by a grand jury for their involvement in the massacre, John D. Lee was the only one convicted and executed. Lee’s first trial, conducted in Beaver in July 1875, ended with a hung jury. The following year, a second jury convicted Lee of murder. The reports of Lee’s trials con-



tain vital information about the events leading to Friday's mass murder and about the massacre itself. In a Juanita Brooks Lecture seven years ago, California attorney Robert H. Briggs stated that the testimony of the militia witnesses form "the foundation of our knowledge" of the massacre. Briggs identified forty-three "key admissions drawn from eleven witness that," he said, "cover all aspects of the massacre." Witnesses often mis-remembered details or confused the precise timing of events that happened nearly twenty years earlier. Yet, Briggs observed, "the norm [in their testimony] is...a statement that is substantially accurate yet distorts certain elements to avoid self-incrimination." Those distortions can be significant, and are usually found in comments "that excuse oneself or blame one's accomplices."<sup>38</sup>

Among the twenty people called by the prosecution as witnesses in Lee's first trial was Bishop Phillip Klingensmith, who had turned states' evidence. Klingensmith had much to tell. His testimony fills nearly thirty percent of the four-hundred-page typewritten transcript. Brooks appropriately focused on his words in her brief account of the trial, and she understood what was happening. "The prosecution," she wrote, "while intent upon convicting Lee, was also eager to extend the guilt to others and to show that the whole thing was church inspired, with the guilt going all the way back to Brigham Young and his immediate subordinates."<sup>39</sup>

A different prosecutor with a new agenda presided at Lee's second trial in September 1876. Brooks's perspective on that trial followed a thread later expanded in her biography of Lee; namely, that Lee was a scapegoat, sacrificed for his role in the massacre. Prosecuting attorney Sumner Howard had one goal in mind, she concluded, and that was to convict Lee of murder. Eyewitnesses Nephi Johnson, Samuel Knight, and Samuel McMurdy had seen Lee kill emigrants. Their testimony helped the jury reach a unanimous decision. Brooks noticed that Johnson "was kept on the stand longer than others;... he pictured Lee as the dominating figure on the ground. His

whole story,” Brooks wrote, “was clearly an effort to center all the responsibility upon...Klingensmith, the apostate; and Lee, whose conviction would clear all others.”<sup>40</sup>

We agree that Howard set aside the first trial’s attempt to indict top Church leaders and narrowed his focus to one man. The first trial had tried to prove a conspiracy — only one aspect of the formal indictment against Lee. The second trial addressed a second charge, that of murder. Brooks felt that an agreement existed to hand Lee off as a “scapegoat” and to indict no other leaders. Yet a grand jury had indicted nine men, most of whom were arrested. Following legal consultations, four were released for lack of evidence. Isaac Haight, John M. Higbee, and William Stewart spent some later years in hiding. Haight fled to Mexico, and eventually died in Arizona. He escaped trial because he could not be found.<sup>41</sup>

For more about what we learned about Brigham Young’s knowledge of what happened at the Meadows and his role in the church investigations and Lee’s trials, watch for a second volume, now in preparation. Meantime, you may want to consult a talk exploring the church’s early investigations that Thomas G. Alexander presented at Utah State University in September 2006. His talk was part of the Leonard J. Arrington Mormon History Lecture Series and is available through USU Press.<sup>42</sup>

Two court reporters using Pitman shorthand took notes during Lee’s trials. An official court record was kept by Adam S. Patterson for Fifth District Judge Jacob Boreman. A second transcript was created by Josiah Rogerson for the LDS Church.<sup>43</sup> While we found the transcripts useful, as did Juanita Brooks, we noticed inconsistencies and some confusion, not just in the testimony, but in the record itself. According to Richard Turley, “Nearly every scholar who has used the transcripts has accepted them at face value, not really understanding their complex history and nature.”<sup>44</sup>

To test the reliability of the record, we commissioned LaJean Purcell Carruth, a specialist in Pitman shorthand, to

create two new transcripts. One of Carruth's first discoveries was that the two reporters "recorded or omitted slightly different aspects of the trial." As Rogerson transcribed his notes from the first trial, he edited and condensed his reports. He "changed numbers, and altered dates. He changed names, often omitting Isaac C. Haight's name in an apparent effort to protect him. At the same time, he sharpened the focus on Lee." Like its counterpart, the Boreman transcript contains alterations, additions, and deletions; and the transcript simply ignores substantial portions of the legal preliminaries and arguments. Our conclusion was that both transcriptions failed to reflect an accurate rendition of the shorthand notes. Having more reliable transcripts available helped us in telling the massacre story and will provide a solid foundation for understanding the trials.<sup>45</sup>

### Naming and Numbering the People

In the early 1920s Juanita Leavitt Pulsipher stood for a few moments atop the hill where the granite monument now sits. She was on her way north to Enterprise in a covered wagon. The step-by-step motions of the horses and the quiet isolation of the site brought to mind Nephi Johnson's request. "I was remembering that it was the Mountain Meadows massacre that was troubling this old man," she told friends. "I could see that if the Mormon men came, they came because they were sent, and they came in a group; they didn't come by accident. If Nephi Johnson was there, he was sent there.... He'd have no reason to go unless he were sent. And so that's where I began with *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*."<sup>46</sup>

Nephi Johnson's story eventually became John D. Lee's story and the story of four dozen or so other Mormon settlers sent to the Meadows on a mission that contradicted their usual goodness. Who were those men? Why did they go? Who were the people they killed and the Indians invited to help? What brought about that tragic ending? These are questions we all want answered.

As Brooks searched surviving documents, answers to the question “Who?” began to emerge with numbers and names. Juanita found names for militiamen and tentative numbers to quantify the loss of life. Her best source was John D. Lee’s list of militiamen and the names of victims on the Arkansas memorial.

Historians have seemed reluctant to draw attention to the rank and file militiamen, focusing instead on planners and leaders. We decided to identify them all so that lingering questions from southern Utah families would have answers. John D. Lee’s list, the most commonly used source, names fifty-four persons. Some of those names match no one in the region and may be fabrications. In our evaluation of the evidence, we compared existing lists and examined family histories, eyewitness accounts, arrest warrants, criminal indictments, and newspaper articles.<sup>47</sup>

When we compared our final list with the official October 1857 militia roster of the Iron Military District, we learned that only fifteen percent of the district’s militiamen were involved. Most of them were officers. In all there were about forty-five individuals who planned, authorized, participated in, or witnessed the killing of immigrants. In our roster, we distinguish between those for whom there is strong evidence to include them in the list and those for whom the evidence is inconclusive. Our alphabetical listing, in an appendix to our book, includes three men who were involved in the planning but stayed away from the Meadows and forty-two who either participated in Friday’s killing or witnessed it. We include another twenty-three men whose involvement cannot be reliably confirmed. Some have asked where these men lived. About thirty of the men on our list came from Cedar City, a dozen or so from Washington, a few from Santa Clara, two from Harmony (John D. Lee and Carlos Shirts), and one (Nephi Johnson) from Fort Johnson. Colonel Dame sent no one from Parowan. All but a few of the men went to the Meadows because they were recruited. Most of them were married men,

twenty-five years or older. Around a dozen were in their twenties; three were teenagers.<sup>48</sup>

Finding the names and numbers of emigrants killed was a more difficult task. Conflicting reports left no easy way to resolve the question. Juanita Brooks would have appreciated the reliable list of names engraved on the Mountain Meadows Monument and our refinement of that list. Originally she had relied for numbers on the marker placed at the Meadows in 1932. That bronze plaque said 123 were killed. Adding 17 survivors would bring the total number of emigrants to 140.<sup>49</sup> Later, with new information, Brooks reconsidered the evidence and accepted Lee's estimate of 96 deaths. Even with this new evidence, Juanita concluded, "The total number remains uncertain. We can be sure only that, however many there were, it was too many."<sup>50</sup>

The hilltop monument identifies eighty-two people "believed to have been killed at or near the Mountain Meadows," seventeen young children who survived, and another nine individuals plus three families associated by some with the caravan, but whose presence at the Meadows had not been proven. The number of known victims and survivors included on the marker is ninety-eight, plus fifteen or more unproven victims.<sup>51</sup>

Our research in genealogical and historical sources led to several adjustments. The monument's list of seventeen surviving children who were returned to relatives in 1859 ends by noting that "at least one other survivor remained in Utah." Some stories say the child or children disappeared after identifying the killer of a parent. Other families preserve stories about raising a missing child. Twelve years after she published *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, Brooks observed that "so much evidence has come in that a baby girl saved from the massacre grew up a Mormon and married a Mormon husband that it seems now an established fact."<sup>52</sup>

Research conducted since 1962 now shifts the evidence in the other direction. We say, "None of these stories had

numbers on their side. A Mormon source shortly after the massacre recorded that seventeen children had been saved. The same number of children were later turned over to federal authorities in 1859, including John Calvin Miller, the boy supposedly killed for knowing too much." We tracked the seventeen orphans to their first homes in southern Utah. "Some of the surviving children were moved from one location to another. These transfers were one reason for later rumors of children being 'put out of the way.' Neighbors saw them disappear from the old surroundings and assumed the worst."<sup>53</sup>

In addition to resolving questions about surviving children, we refined the list of victims. Those from Arkansas are well known; others who joined their party are seldom located. We corrected a few spellings or ages on the basic list of emigrants. We found names for two unidentified sons of the widowed Saladia Huff and added an eleven-year-old daughter and another unnamed son. We dropped Charles Stallcup and Alf Smith from the list; they had left the wagon train and survived. So had the Poteet family. We found them in California and later in Texas. A man known as the "Dutchman" or the "German" was probably John Gresly, 21, who was born in Pennsylvania to German immigrants. An obituary for one of John's brothers mentioned his death at the Meadows. We found that William H. Tackitt, 23, whose name appears on the monument in Harrison, Arkansas, had been excluded from Utah lists and we added him. Finally, we found two families never before considered. Twenty-seven-year-old Edward Coker had been ranching in Texas. Coker, his wife Charity, and their two children joined the emigrant company. So did William and Abby Cooper, both 29; William had been a carriage maker in Dubuque, Iowa.<sup>54</sup>

How close did this bring us to accounting for the complete emigrant party? In 1859, federal investigators said the estimates of southern Utahns ranged from 120 to 140 people in the party. Jacob Hamblin told Major James H. Carleton that

he had re-buried the remains of about 120 victims the previous summer. Brooks accepted these numbers in her initial estimate.<sup>55</sup> U.S. Indian Superintendent Jacob Forney counted skulls and other remains and concluded that “115 is probably about the correct number” of persons killed.<sup>56</sup> Our list now includes names for 91 victims: 38 men, 15 women, and 38 children under eighteen. Adding the seventeen surviving children brings the company’s size to 108. If the company included 120 people (the most likely number), we have not accounted for 18 of them; if there were 140, we have not located 38. We agree with Juanita Brooks, that a precise accounting may never be possible. The monument remembers those yet unidentified with the simple inscription: “Others Unknown.”

The people of the Arkansas Company are more than names and numbers to their relatives living today — and to us. We devote an entire chapter discussing them as individuals and as families. We profile emigrant leaders Jack T. Baker and Alexander Fancher and place the known families into their geographical and cultural setting. We follow the Bakers, Camerons, Dunlaps, Fanchers, Mitchells, and Tackitts, and other related families and friends, on their journey from northwestern Arkansas along the Cherokee trail and north through modern Colorado to the overland trail and on into Utah. All of these families did not leave Arkansas together. Some joined the informal company at points along the way. Others outside these core families traveled for a time with the combined party, and some of them continued on to the Meadows.<sup>57</sup>

Juanita Brooks puzzled over the confusing reports from the militiamen on the number of Southern Paiutes assembled at the Meadows. We faced the same question, but with the advantage of new information that gave us additional options, but that led to no consensus. Mormon participants suggested a range from a low of forty to a high of three hundred to six hundred.<sup>58</sup> The question is complicated because the Paiutes were coming and going during the week. Observers at Fort



Harmony remembered forty to fifty, or as many as seventy-five Paiutes in the party that left with Lee on Sunday. According to Peter Shirts, that higher estimate included some Indians recruited the day before — Saturday — in Cedar City.<sup>59</sup> These numbers do not include men recruited from the Santa Clara area who arrived at the Meadows early in the week; perhaps another twenty-five. Nephi Johnson, who issued the orders to the Paiutes on Friday, set the number that day at around one hundred fifty.<sup>60</sup>

The Southern Paiutes focus on the issue of participation, with an occasional mention of numbers. “Some Paiutes later said that none of their people participated in the killings. If they were present, they merely watched from the surrounding hills. Others acknowledged Paiute participation but portrayed it as minimal. Understandably, none relished the odium that white leaders from the beginning had planned to fix on them. One contemporary Paiute who knew massacre participants concluded, ‘All the Indians there were not more than one hundred.’”<sup>61</sup> That upper limit seems reasonable. Very few documents identify Paiute participants by name. We found twenty-five names associated with the Massacre. For fifteen of them, strong evidence suggests that they participated in or witnessed the killing of emigrants. The evidence is inconclusive for the other ten.<sup>62</sup>

Most writers, including Brooks, agree on another important point. After talking with Paiutes in 1857, non-Mormon Indian agent Garland Hurt said, “[They] acknowledged having participated in the massacre of the emigrants, but said that the Mormons persuaded them into it.”<sup>63</sup> A modern Paiute history says “that although local Nuwuvi [Southern Paiutes] were involved, they played a secondary role to the local settlers in the actual murders.” Indeed, according to anthropologist Martha Knack, “Southern Paiute culture, political structure, and economy could not have produced an action like the Mountain Meadows Massacre without Mormon stimulus and support.”<sup>64</sup>



### **New Light on Old Stories: Poisoning and “Wild-cats”**

Mormon leaders who planned the massacre placed full responsibility on the Southern Paiutes. Their story offered a simple but false explanation for the Indian attacks. One thread in the story said wrongs committed by the emigrants triggered the killing. Supposedly, a group of Paiutes had been visiting Pahvant Indians at Corn Creek, near Kanosh, in Millard County. The emigrants poisoned the carcass of a dead ox and a livestock watering hole. Several local cattle died. Some Indians who ate the ox meat and a young settler who skinned another dead ox died. The offended Paiutes, the story concludes, reacted by following the emigrants to the Meadows and killing them.<sup>65</sup>

John D. Lee told the poisoning story to Brigham Young. George A. Smith’s visit to southern Utah in 1859 confirmed the story. For Isaac Haight and others it was the official explanation. The cover-up account spread — first in Utah, then in California, and from there in newspapers elsewhere. But the story of poisoning and of a mass killing orchestrated by Southern Paiutes met skepticism in California and in Utah.<sup>66</sup> In 1859 Jacob Forney, who was the territory’s superintendent of Indian Affairs, conducted his own investigation among the Pahvants at Corn Creek and the Paiutes farther south. He found no basis for the story. Forney said he could understand that settlers along the route south may have confused perception and reality. “Those persons...who believe that a spring was poisoned with arsenic, and the meat of a dead ox with strychnine...,” he said, “may be honest in their belief, and attribute the cause of the massacre to the alleged poisoning.” But it was not true. Forney believed the cattle had died from eating a poisonous weed common to Utah’s rangelands.<sup>67</sup>

Juanita Brooks adopted Forney’s skeptical evaluation of the poisoning. We, too, dismissed the original explanation after reviewing early reports. We then turned to physicians whose comments led us to the finding that “microbes, not poison, caused the reported sickness — a disease borne by cattle

and passed to humans. Arsenic and strychnine, the typical poisons of the time caused symptoms different from those described in the Corn Creek area." The incubation time was too long; poison would have caused immediate symptoms. The most plausible explanation was anthrax. "Anthrax can pass from animals to humans as victims breathe its spores, eat diseased meat, or take in spores through a cut or sore in the skin." Symptoms matching those caused by anthrax were reported among cattle in Utah, on the plains in 1857, and in humans in the Corn Creek area. "No one in America at the time understood germ theory, spores, bacteria, or viruses — and they certainly did not understand anthrax. With no other way to explain the Corn Creek illnesses, the local people assumed the worst about the emigrants and saw poison as the cause. Their reaction fit the times, as poison in America had become a popular catchall."<sup>68</sup>

Another element of the early cover-up story involved reports of troublemakers traveling with the Baker and Fancher wagon trains. As the Arkansas Company made its way from Fort Bridger to Salt Lake City, the Fanchers, Dunlaps, and Camerons moved out ahead. The Baker group, with several hundred head of loose cattle, followed behind. Eli Kelsey, a Mormon Indian missionary, joined this group at Fort Bridger. He described the Arkansas party as "an exceedingly fine company of emigrants." But Kelsey spoke of a boisterous group of men who had joined the company along the way. He called them "Wild-cats" from Missouri and said they spoke harshly against the Mormons.<sup>69</sup>

Some writers have the "Wild-cats" continuing on to the Meadows. Kelsey said he encouraged the Arkansas emigrants to keep their distance, and some early evidence leaves open the possibility that the Missouri "Wild-cats" took the northern trail to California. If that is so, "other Missourians were already camped with the south-bound Fanchers, Camerons, and Dunlaps before the Bakers arrived to join them. These Missourians 'fell in with' the three advance Arkansas compa-

nies, according to California-bound emigrants passing through the valley at the time.”<sup>70</sup>

Utah residents who met the emigrants as they moved along the southern road from Salt Lake City to the Meadows described two kinds of people. Jacob Hamblin, who talked with one of them at their camp along Corn Creek, said, “The people seemed to be ordinary frontier ‘homespun’ people as a general thing; some of the outsiders were rude and rough and calculated to get the ill will of the inhabitants.... The most of these men seemed to have families with them.” Nephi Johnson was visiting Fort Cedar when the wagons passed through. In a statement written in 1908 (which Brooks did not see), Johnson said that “the company was of a mixed class, some being perfect gentleman, while others were very boastful, and insulting, as they said that they were coming back, and assist the army to exterminate the Mormons.” Johnson continued, “I did hear Capt. F[a]ncher, who was the leader of the emigrants, rebuke the boastful ones of the company, for making these threats.”<sup>71</sup>

At several points along the southern road between Salt Lake City and Meadows, early documents mention rude or threatening behavior by a few of the emigrants. We placed those encounters into three categories. Some of the incidents definitely involved the Arkansas train, while others clearly took place between settlers and a second group of emigrants known in Utah as “the Missouri Party.” This company trailed behind the Arkansas train by two weeks. It was a loose combination of California-bound travelers, including the Nicholas Turner party from Missouri, the William Dukes wagon train from Arkansas, and the Wilson Collins group from Texas. In our third category we put reported incidents that cannot be assigned to either party with certainty. Our evaluation of the incidents led us to conclude that “the conflicts on the road had been two-sided....It is also true that the Saints later exaggerated the emigrants’ acts.” But most of the incidents involved “nothing more than taunting words or, at the very worst, small acts of vandalism....All the purported wrongs of the emigrants

— even if true — did not justify the killing of a single person. The best that could be argued was that during a time of uncertainty and possible war, some of the Mormons, like other men and women throughout history, did not match their behavior with their ideals.”<sup>72</sup>

Our feelings echo the sentiments of Juanita Brooks. “Whatever the details,” she wrote, “the fact remains that the entire company was betrayed and murdered, an ugly fact that will not be downed. Certainly when the facts are marshaled, there is not justification enough for the death of a single individual. Certainly, too, once it was over, all the participants were shocked and horrified at what had been done.” “Our history is our history,” Brooks said, “and that, with all its dark spots, we will accept it as it is. We will let the accomplishments of the Mormon pioneers weigh against their mistakes without apology.”<sup>73</sup>

### **Nephi Johnson and the Cover-up**

As noted above, Nephi Johnson was one of several pivotal witnesses in John D. Lee’s second trial. From Johnson’s vantage point on a hillside near the Rim of the Basin — a mid-point in the Meadows — he watched as Lee and others killed the wounded and older adults and children in the wagons at the head of the column. Probing questions drew from this unwilling eyewitness words that influenced the jury to rule against Lee.<sup>74</sup> Isaac Haight sent Johnson to the Meadows because of skills Johnson gained as a teen working with his father and young Paiutes. Johnson was one of the first whites to gain a working knowledge of the Paiute language, and he became their friend. In 1853, Apostle Erastus Snow called Johnson as a missionary to the Southern Paiutes. “I was often called upon to interpret for the Indians,” Johnson said.<sup>75</sup> They trusted Johnson. “I was always kind to them,” he said, “and when I was present was successful in settling difficulties with them without killing them.”<sup>76</sup>

As a peacemaker and interpreter at the Meadows Johnson negotiated differences between the Paiutes and John D. Lee.

Johnson helped them agree on how to carry out the massacre. Johnson said, Lee “wanted me to talk to the Indians in a way I didn’t want to.” Though reluctant, Johnson translated Lee’s message “and the Indians agreed to assist in killing the emigrants.”<sup>77</sup> Nearly thirty years later, in private conversation with Apostle Francis M. Lyman, Johnson admitted that it was he who “gave the word to the Indians to fire.” That word launched the killing of the women and older children. The 92-year-old Johnson’s dying hours — when “he sang bits of Indian songs, ...preached in the Indian tongue,” and “opened his eyes wide to the ceiling” and cried out in a voice that left Juanita Leavitt “shaken” — take on new meaning when placed against the background of Johnson’s youth.<sup>78</sup>

Juanita Brooks did not learn of Johnson’s conversation with Lyman, who had summarized it in his diary. Nor was she aware that Johnson had talked about the massacre in 1917 with Anthony W. Ivins, another member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Ivins recorded his conversation in a typewritten note.<sup>79</sup> “Some of the details” that Johnson shared with Ivins were “too dreadful to write,” Ivins said. “I do not care to repeat them.”

John D. Lee’s face-to-face report to Brigham Young in late September 1857 placed full responsibility on the Paiutes. Lee also falsified his own involvement. He told Young he went to the Meadows to end the resulting siege, but left without accomplishing his mission because he feared for his own life.<sup>80</sup> During the next few years, additional information came to Brigham Young pointing to extensive white involvement in the affair. In 1870, Young became aware that Nephi Johnson had personal knowledge of Lee’s role. That fall, Erastus Snow escorted Young to Nephi Johnson’s home in Virgin, where, Johnson said, he told Young “all I knew of the whole affair.” It was during this conversation that Young told Johnson “that the young men who took part in the massacre would not be held responsible [*sic*], for they were young, and under orders, but there were some who were responsible and he would hold

them responsible." Johnson's disclosure soon impacted those responsible for ordering the killing.<sup>81</sup>

A month later, Brigham Young met with his counselors and the Twelve Apostles. The council excommunicated Lee and Haight. One of those present said Lee was cut off for "extrem wickedness."<sup>82</sup> Within four years, Isaac Haight was reinstated to full fellowship, apparently through the argument that he had been censured only for "failing to restrain" Lee. Lee protested his exclusion, to no avail. It would be years before President David O. McKay, in 1961, responded to descendants' requests by restoring John D. Lee's blessings. Brooks reported Lee's reinstatement in the 1962 editions of her massacre history and Lee's biography.<sup>83</sup>

Nephi Johnson's conversation with Brigham Young, which he mentioned only in the 1908 affidavit, and Johnson's subsequent testimony at Lee's second trial were not the only times he shared his experience. When the prosecuting attorney asked Johnson, whom he had talked with before 1876, Johnson mentioned his father, his brother-in-law James H. Martineau, and two of Lee's sons-in-law. No written record of these conversations has been found.<sup>84</sup>

A decade before Johnson died he recorded his conversations with Isaac Haight. In the July 1908 affidavit, Johnson said that on Monday Haight told him of the previous Friday night's meeting with Lee, and of the letter Haight had written seeking advice from Brigham Young. Johnson said he urged Haight to wait for Young's response, "as it was a great responsibility to kill so many people." Haight shrugged off the counsel. Johnson told the rest of his story in both the 1908 affidavit and the second one written in November 1909.<sup>85</sup>

Brooks did not get Nephi Johnson's story from his lips. But she did consult the record of Lee's trials, which includes Johnson's testimony. She had a copy of the affidavit that Johnson wrote and signed in 1909 in the presence of St. George Justice David H. Morris.<sup>86</sup> She knew that Morris had a second John-



son affidavit and one written by Samuel Knight. Morris invited Juanita to examine his collection, but, despite her subsequent requests, he died without granting access. Morris's daughter delivered the file to Salt Lake City in 1938. Brooks later made a valiant effort to see them, but again was denied permission. The Morris documents, including a number of letters dealing with John M. Higbee's indictment, remained in the First Presidency's archives until made available for our use.<sup>87</sup>

Another important collection of witness accounts contains handwritten notes and expanded reports of interviews conducted in 1892 by assistant Church historian Andrew Jenson. Jenson's interviews were collected for use in Orson F. Whitney's *History of Utah*. Whitney acknowledged that his account of the massacre drew from "the most reliable sources, — some of which have never before been drawn upon," but, as was customary at the time, he did not identify his sources.<sup>88</sup> Some of the notes, written in pencil on scraps of paper and a few of the full reports were housed in the Church Historian's Office. They have been available to historians off and on for thirty years. Other notes, and most of the expanded reports of the interviews used by Whitney, were preserved by the Office of the First Presidency and just recently released for use.<sup>89</sup> A selection from the Morris and Jenson collections appeared in a recent issue of *BYU Studies*. All of the documents will be published in a book titled *Mountain Meadows Massacre Documents: The Andrew Jenson and David H. Morris Collections*, forthcoming from Brigham Young University Press.<sup>90</sup>

As we worked with the many variant explanations of events, we found reinforcement for the notion that the massacre was itself a coverup. For the public, the massacre's leaders blamed the killings on the Paiutes. In private conversations they explained away their decisions and actions as a necessary act of self-defense. Isaac Haight ordered the killing of innocent men, women, and children to protect himself, Lee, and their supporters from the consequences of the bungled first attacks and the willful killing of as many as a dozen emigrants on

Monday and Tuesday. The unwritten orders that John M. Higbee carried to the Meadows and that Lee implemented were to kill all who were old enough to talk about Mormon involvement in those first killings. William H. Dame told Jacob Hamblin that “L[ee] & the Indians had commenced it and it [i.e., the final mass killing] had to be done. For if it should come to the ears of President Bucanann,” Dame said, “it would endanger the lives of the Bretheren [sic].”<sup>91</sup>

John D. Lee held to a similar explanation. Two months after his excommunication, Lee visited with Brigham Young in St. George in an attempt to restore good feelings. Lee told Young that he had withheld only one truth “and that was that I suffered the blame to rest on Me, when it should rest on Persons whoes Names that has never been brought out.” Lee added, “I declared my innocence of doeing any thing designedly wrong.” (Lee didn’t *intend* to do wrong.) Lee’s request for a rehearing of his case was considered and later denied.<sup>92</sup> In his last speech, standing before his coffin at the Mountain Meadows, and moments before his execution, Lee repeated “the phrase that had been his salve for nearly twenty years.” He said, “I have done nothing designedly wrong. My Conscience is clear before God and man. I am ready to meet my Redeemer.”<sup>93</sup>

### Conclusions

“One of the bitter ironies of Mormon history is that some of the people who had long deplored the injustice of extra-legal violence became its perpetrators.”<sup>94</sup> How was it that good men with ordinary weaknesses could set aside their principles of faith and commit atrocities? Juanita Brooks pondered the question and concluded: “That this particular company met disaster was due to a most unhappy combination of circumstances.” One of those factors, Brooks said, was the social atmosphere created by sermons preached by church leaders. Another was the attitude of certain emigrants. Brooks concluded, “Perhaps, when all is finally known, the Mountain



Meadows Massacre will be a classic study in mob psychology or the effects of war hysteria.”<sup>95</sup> “Exaggeration, misrepresentation, ungrounded fears, unreasoning hate, desire for revenge, yes, even the lust for the property of the emigrants, all combined to give justification which, once the crime was done, looked inadequate and flimsy indeed.”<sup>96</sup>

“Since the time Brooks wrote these words, scholars of religious or ethnic violence have described the step-by-step process that leads to mass killing.” These researchers found that “episodes of violence often begin when one people classify another as ‘the other,’ stripping them of any humanity and mentally transforming them into enemies. Once this process of devaluing and demonizing occurs, stereotypes take over, rumors circulate, and pressure builds to conform to group action against the perceived threat. Those classified as the enemy are often seen as the transgressors....When these tinderbox conditions exist, a single incident, small or ordinary in usual circumstances, may spark great violence ending in atrocity.”<sup>97</sup>

Other conditions prepare the way for violence against perceived enemies. “Usually there is an atmosphere of authority and obedience.... Atrocities also occur...when their culture or messages from headquarters leave local leaders wondering what they should do. Poverty increases the likelihood of problems by raising concerns about survival. The conditions for mass killing — demonizing, authority, obedience, peer pressure, ambiguity, fear, and deprivation — all were present in southern Utah in 1857.”<sup>98</sup>

While these historical models or patterns help us understand, we cannot neglect the role of individual choices. “We believe errors were made by U.S. president James Buchanan, Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders, some of the Arkansas emigrants, some Paiutes, and most of all by settlers in southern Utah.... At each point along the chain of acts and decision...a single personal choice or policy might have brought a different result.... We also acknowledge an element of the unknowable. A citizen who did not take part in the

killing but lived in southern Utah in 1857 later told his son: 'You would not understand if I told you. You know nothing about the spirit of the times.... You don't understand and you can't understand.'"99

We may not be able to fully understand, but as historians we are in the business of trying to make sense of the past. In 1950, Juanita Brooks said her reason for adding her name "to the long list of those who have given time and thought" to the subject of the Mountain Meadows Massacre was "that I have some new material to present which should add to the general understanding of what went on, and why." Our preface includes a similar comment on sources. We began our research intent on "a fresh approach based upon every primary source we could find." Our effort yielded "a rich body of historical material." We wanted to share that new information for what it could do to increase understanding.<sup>100</sup>

At the end of Nephi Johnson's first affidavit, he explained that he wrote it, "not for publication, or for general circulation, but that the truth may be put in writing, that in the event of it being needed to refute error in the future, and after the eye witnesses have passed away, it may be used for that purpose." Juanita Brooks published Johnson's 1909 affidavit as the first appendix in her history of the massacre. We have now published Johnson's 1908 affidavit — his first — and used them both "to refute error."<sup>101</sup>

Johnson signed his first affidavit on the twenty-second of July 1908. A century later, on the twenty-ninth of July 2008, I opened an advance copy of our book, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*. During the six or more years that my colleagues and I worked on that book, we came to appreciate Johnson's desire "that the truth...be put in writing." We learned from the old patriarch and from others of his generation and from descendants and relatives of the militia, the Paiutes, and the emigrants in our own time that "the burdens of the massacre would linger far beyond what anyone imagined on the night of September 11, 1857."<sup>102</sup>

Our hope is that we have met the conditions that Judge Roger V. Logan Jr. identified as a necessary next step — that our candor in telling the story will result in a true reconciliation. We join with the late Rex E. Lee, who suggested that for those of us now living, the Meadows should symbolize “not only tragedy and grief, but also human dignity, [and] mutual understanding.”<sup>103</sup>

It is our sense that Juanita Brooks shared in those hopes.<sup>104</sup>

## Endnotes

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3. Peterson, *Juanita Brooks*, 196 and 173.
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5. Charles S. Peterson, introduction to *Quicksand and Cactus*, xxx, and see xxxvi.
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7. Gary James Bergera, ed., *The Autobiography of B. H. Roberts* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 229.
8. *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1950; 2nd ed., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962; new preface, 1970; first paperback printing, 1991).
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15. Brooks, *John D. Lee*, 2nd ed., 371.
16. Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 219, 189.

17. Juanita Brooks "Speech Given at the Dedication of a Monument Honoring the Victims of the Massacre at the Mountain Meadows," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 24 (January 1956): 71-77, reprinted in William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, eds., *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), 315-320).
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19. *Late News from the Meadows; Official Newsletter of the Mountain Meadows Association* 2, no. 1 (April 1999): 1.
20. *Mountain Meadows Newsletter: Published for the Mountain Meadows Monument Committee* 1, no. 2 (April 1990): 2; *St. George (UT) Daily Spectrum*, September 16, 1990; Cynthia Gorney, "Legacy of Death, Laid to Rest," *Washington Post*, September 17, 1990, B1-2. Both papers featured a photograph of the linking of hands taken by Nancy Rhodes.
21. *Millard County (UT) Chronicle*, September 15, 1932, 1-2; *Late News from the Meadows*, 2, no. 1 (April 1999): 1-2; Gordon B. Hinckley, "Mountain Meadows Monument Rededication, Saturday, September 11, 1999: Remarks and Dedicatory Prayer," typescript, 5, copy in author's possession.
22. Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, xxiv, 220-222, 291. Brooks' "to-do" list included: "grade and widen the road, erect a foot bridge across the gully, plant trees and grass, and put in benches and comfort facilities." The list first appeared in Author's Statement-II, added in the fourth printing of the second edition in 1970.
23. Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, xi, xv-xvi.
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25. Sumner Howard version: "Lee's Confession," *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, March 24, 1877; William W. Bishop versions: "Lee's Last Confession," *San Francisco Daily Bulletin Supplement*, March 24, 1877; and *Pioche (NV) Weekly Record*, March 24, 1877; William W. Bishop, ed., *Mormonism Unveiled; or The Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee; (Written by Himself).... Also the True History of...the Mountain Meadows Massacre* (St. Louis: Bryan Brand & Co., 1877).
26. Juanita Brooks to Leslie E. Bliss, May 26, 1946, Juanita Brooks Correspondence, Huntington Library, quoted in Richard E. Turley Jr., "Problems with Sources," in Richard E. Turley Jr. and Ronald W. Walker, eds., "Mountain Meadows Massacre Documents," special issue, *BYU Studies* 47, no. 3 (2008): 147; W. W. Bishop, July 21, 1875, in "The Lee Trial," *Pioche (NV) Daily Record*, July 25, 1875; Turley, "Problems with Sources," 149.

27. Turley, "Problems with Sources," 147 n. 30; Chad Orton, "W. W. Bishop Unveiled: An Analysis of John D. Lee's Confessions," unpublished manuscript presented at Mormon History Association Annual Meeting, Sacramento, Calif., May 23, 2008, copy in Turley's possession.
28. "Lee's Confession," *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, March 22, 1877; "Lee's Last Confession," *San Francisco Daily Bulletin Supplement*, March 24, 1877; Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 69-96; William Barton, interview, January 1892, in Mountain Meadows file, Andrew Jenson, Collection, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT (hereafter CHL); Elias Morris, statement, February 2, 1892, Collected Materials relating to the Mountain Meadows Massacre, CHL; Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 177-179, 211.
29. For a chronology built from testimonies given in John D. Lee's trials, see Robert H. Briggs, *The Tragedy at Mountain Meadows Massacre: Toward a Consensus Account and Time Line*, Juanita Brooks Lecture Series, March 13, 2002 (St. George, Utah: Dixie State College of Utah, 2002), 20-32.
30. Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 76. Brooks used Rachel's dating to confirm Lee's statement that he was in Cedar City on Sunday evening, overlooking the fact that Rachel was recording Lee's departure for the Meadows.
31. Harmony Branch, minutes, [September] 6 and September 13, 1857, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif. (a typescript is at L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT), sometimes mis-identified as Rachel's diary; Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 66-67, 299; Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 153-154.
32. Harmony Branch, minutes, [September] 6 and September 13, 1857, Huntington Library (italics represent restored text). We examined a photocopy of the original.
33. Annie Elizabeth Hoag; testimony, *United States v. John D. Lee*, First Trial, Jacob S. Boreman Transcript, Jacob S. Boreman, Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA, book 4:28-29; [Peter Shirts], statement, ca. 1876, manuscript 3141, Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives, Suitland, MD.
34. Andrew Jenson, notes of interviews with Elliot Willden and Samuel Knight, January-February 1892, Mountain Meadows file, Andrew Jenson, Collection, CHL; Samuel Knight, affidavit, August 11, 1904, First Presidency Cumulative Correspondence, CHL; Ronald W. Walker and Richard E. Turley Jr., "The Andrew Jenson Collection," in Turley and Walker, "Mountain Meadows Massacre Documents," 28; Walker and Turley, "The David H. Morris Collection," in *ibid.*, 119. Gilbert Morse reported that after soliciting ten day's provisions from the people at Harmony, "Lee, at the head of the Indians...set out on the expedition against the emigrants." "Gilbert Morse," *Salt Lake Daily Tribune*, September 28, 1876; Benjamin Platt, reminiscences, 1899-1905, typescript, 5-6, CHL.

35. Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 66-67; Washington County, Court Records, Book A, 1854-1872, page 21, film no. 484840, Family History Library, Salt Lake City. Only Richard Robinson was absent.
36. Andrew Jenson, notes of interview with Mary S. Campbell, January 24, 1892, Mountain Meadows file, Andrew Jenson, Collection, CHL; also in "Selections from the Andrew Jenson Collection," in Turley and Walker, eds., "Mountain Meadows Massacre Documents," 49; Andrew Jenson, report of interview with Mary S. Campbell, January 24, 1892, Archives of the First Presidency, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, UT; Walker and Turley, "The Andrew Jenson Collection," 16-17.
37. Bishop, ed., *Mormonism Unveiled*, 226; "Execution of Lee!" *Pioche (NV) Weekly Record*, March 24, 1877; Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 147-148.
38. Briggs, *The Tragedy at Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 9.
39. Robert H. Briggs, "'You Are Here Trying to Hang a Man and I Want What Was Said': Mining the Militia Narratives of the Mountain Meadows Massacre for Confessions, Evasions, and Moonshine," paper presented at the Mormon History Association conference in Cedar City, UT, May 17-20, 2001, typescript, in possession of author, 6-7 (Briggs's 2002 Juanita Brooks Lecture was condensed from this longer paper); Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 191-194.
40. Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 193-198, quotation at 198.
41. *Ibid.*, 194-198, 219-220; Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 230.
42. Thomas G. Alexander, *Brigham Young, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the Latter-day Saint Investigation of the Mountain Meadows Massacre*, Leonard J. Arrington Mormon History Lecture Series, No. 12, September 12, 2006 (Logan, UT: Special Collections and Archives, Merrill Library, Utah State University, September 2006).
43. Adam S. Patterson, shorthand notes and Boreman Transcript of the Trials of John D. Lee, Jacob S. Boreman Papers, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California; and Josiah Rogerson, Transcript and Notes of John D. Lee Trials, 1875-1885, CHL.
44. Richard E. Turley Jr., "Problems with Mountain Meadows Massacre Sources," in Turley and Walker, eds., "Mountain Meadows Massacre Documents," 145-47. An earlier draft of this article was presented at the Mormon History Association Annual Meeting, Provo, UT, May 22, 2004.
45. *Ibid.*, 144-147.
46. Bitton and Ursenbach, "Riding Herd," 28.
47. Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 255.
48. *Ibid.*, 190-191, and appendix C: The Militiamen, 255-264. For an expanded explanation see our web page, [www.mountainmeadowsmassacre.org](http://www.mountainmeadowsmassacre.org).



49. Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 45-46.
50. Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, author's statement-II, xix, xxiii-xxiv. This statement was added in the fourth printing of the second edition in 1970.
51. "Inscription on Mountain Meadows Memorial Dedicated September 15, 1990," in *Mountain Meadows Memorial Dedication Ceremonies*, held in the Centrum, Southern Utah State College, Cedar City, UT (Cedar City: Mountain Meadows Memorial Steering Committee, 1990), 2-4.
52. Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 104-105, xxii. Brooks mentioned claims from three families, but named only the Macfarlanes. Priscilla Klingensmith Urie as a possible survivor is evaluated in Anna Jean Backus, *Mountain Meadows Witness: The Life and Times of Bishop Philip Klingensmith*, Western Frontiersmen Series XXV (Spokane, WA: Arthur H. Clark, 1996), 16-21.
53. Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 216-221.
54. *Ibid.*, appendix A, 243-249.
55. William H. Rogers, "The Mountain Me[a]dows Massacre," in *Salt Lake City Valley Tan*, February 29, 1860; Jacob Hamblin in James H. Carleton, *Report on the Subject of the Massacre at the Mountain Meadows, in Utah Territory, in September 1857....* (Little Rock, AR: True Democrat Steam Press, 1860), 8; Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 266
56. Jacob Forney to Kirk Anderson, May 5, 1859, in *Salt Lake City Valley Tan*, May 10, 1859; Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 263-264.
57. Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 74-88.
58. Joel White gave the low estimate in Lee's First Trial, Boreman Transcript, 3:124, 127-128. John M. Higbee's estimate is in a document written for his family, Bull Valley Snort [Higbee], statement, February 1894, 3, Collected Material concerning the Mountain Meadows Massacre, CHL; and see John M. Higbee, affidavit, June 15, 1896, Collected Material, CHL.
59. John Chatterley to Andrew Jens[o]n, September 18, 1919, Mountain Meadows file, Andrew Jenson, Collection, CHL; [Peter Shirts], statement, ca. 1876, Smithsonian Institution; Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 153-154.
60. Nephi Johnson, affidavit, November 30, 1909, Collected Material, CHL; Nephi Johnson, *United States v. John D. Lee*, Second Trial, Jacob S. Boreman Transcript, Jacob S. Boreman, Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA, 1:72.
61. Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 192-193; "The Lee Trial: What the Chief [of] the Beaver Indians Has To Say About It," *Los Angeles Star*, August 4, 1875.
62. Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, appendix D, 265-270.
63. Garland Hurt to Jacob Forney, December 4, 1857, in *Executive Documents Printed by Order of the House of Representatives during the First*



*Session of the Thirty-Fifth Congress, 1857-1858*, 14 vols. (Washington: James B. Steedman, 1858), Doc. 71, 10:203; Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 193.

64. *Nuwuvi: A Southern Paiute History* (Salt Lake City: Intertribal Council of Nevada, 1976), 80; Martha C. Knack, *Boundaries Between: The Southern Paiutes* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 79-80.
65. John D. Lee, reported in Wilford Woodruff, *Journals, 1833-1898*, July 29, 1857, CHL; Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 140-141, 214-215.
66. Woodruff, *Journals*, July 29, 1857; George A. Smith to Brigham Young, August 17, 1858, in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 245; George W. Armstrong, Provo, Utah, to Brigham Young, September 30, 1857, Utah Superintendency of the Office of Indian Affairs in the National Archives, in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 141 n. 3; "Horrible Massacre of Emigrants," *Los Angeles Star*, October 10, 1857; reprinted with additional information in *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, October 12, 1857.
67. Jacob Forney to A. B. Greenwood, August 1859, in U.S. Congress, Senate, *Message of the President...in Relation to the Massacre at Mountain Meadows...*, 36th Cong., 1st sess., 1860, S. Doc. 42, 74-76; Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 254-255.
68. Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 119-124.
69. T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints: A Full and Complete History of the Mormons...* (New York: D. Appleton, 1873), 427-428. Stenhouse did not name his informant, but his wife did. Fanny W. Stenhouse, *"Tell It All": The Story of a Life's Experience in Mormonism* (Hartford, CT: A. D. Worthington, 1874), 325.
70. Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 87-88; P., October 14, 1857, in "The Immigrant Massacre," *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, October 17, 1857; and see Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 219.
71. Jacob Hamblin, statement, in Carleton, *Report on . . .the Massacre at the Mountain Meadows*, 6; Nephi Johnson, affidavit, July 22, 1908, First Presidency, Cumulative Correspondence, 1900-1949, CHL.
72. Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 105-106, 114-115.
73. Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 108 and xxvi.
74. Nephi Johnson, testimony, Second Lee Trial, Boreman transcript, 1:43-85.
75. Nephi Johnson to Anthon H. Lund, March 1910, Collected Material, CHL; Nephi Johnson, Affidavit, July 22, 1908, CHL.
76. Nephi Johnson to Anthon H. Lund, March 1910, Collected Material, CHL.
77. Ronald W. Walker and Richard E. Turley Jr., "The David H. Morris Collection," in Turley and Walker, "Mountain Meadows Massacre Documents," 122; Nephi Johnson, testimony, Second Lee Trial, Boreman Transcript, 1:76-77.

78. Francis M. Lyman, Journal, September 21, 1895, "Diary Excerpts of Francis M. Lyman, 1892-96," typescript, in *New Mormon Studies CD-ROM: A Comprehensive Resource Library* (Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates, [1998]); Brooks, "Speech," in Mulder and Mortensen, *Among the Mormons*, 317.
79. Anthony W. Ivins, untitled notes, Kanab, Utah, September 2, 1917, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, UT.
80. Wilford Woodruff, Journal, September 29, 1857, CHL.
81. Jesse N. Smith, Journal, September 3-5 and 13, 1870, CHL; Nephi Johnson, affidavit, July 22, 1908, First Presidency, Cumulative Correspondence; and see Walker and Turley, "The David H. Morris Collection," 122 n. 61, 123 n. 64; and Alexander, *Brigham Young*, 26-27.
82. Wilford Woodruff, Journal, October 8, 1870, CHL; quotation in Joseph F. Smith, Journal, October 8, 1870, CHL; Walker and Turley "David H. Morris Collection," 123; Alexander, *Brigham Young*, 26-27.
83. Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 184-87, 223; Alexander, "Brigham Young," 26-29. For the story behind inclusion of the reinstatement report in Brooks, *John D. Lee*, see Levi Peterson, *The Saving Virtues, The Pardonable Vices*, Juanita Brooks Lecture Series, April 28, 1989 (St. George: Printing Services, Dixie College, ©1991), 10-13.
84. Nephi Johnson, testimony, *United States v. John D. Lee*, second trial, Boreman transcript, 1:82-84; Walker and Turley, "David H. Morris Collection," 123 and 123 n.65. Lee's sons-in-law who talked with Johnson were Marcus Henry Darrow and Hyrum B. Clark.
85. Nephi Johnson, affidavits, July 22, 1908, November 30, 1909, First Presidency, Cumulative Correspondence, CHL. Johnson repeated some of what he had said in 1908 in a letter, Johnson to Anthon H. Lund, March 1910, Collected Material, CHL, as background to the 1909 affidavit that he enclosed.
86. Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, appendix I, 224-226. Brooks dates the affidavit as 1906, possibly a typographic error or misreading of the manuscript. For a full explanation of multiple copies of the 1909 affidavit and their differences, see Walker and Turley, "David H. Morris Collection," 124-125.
87. Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 217 n. 9; Levi Peterson, *Juanita Brooks*, 158-159; Walker and Turley, "The Morris Collection," 113-115.
88. Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons, 1892-1904), 1:692; Walker and Turley, "The Andrew Jenson Collection," in Turley and Walker, "Mountain Meadows Massacre Documents," 32.
89. Walker and Turley, "The Andrew Jenson Collection," 32-33, and "The David H. Morris Collection," 112-115, 121-126. Donald R. Moorman examined the Jenson notes for his study *Camp Floyd and the Mormons: The Utah War*, written with Gene A. Sessions (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992).

90. Turley and Walker, guest editors, "Mountain Meadows Massacre Documents," special issue, *BYU Studies* 4, no. 3 (2008). The book announcement is on page 5.
91. Extracts from Jacob Hamblin's journal, in Jacob Hamblin to Brigham Young, November 13, 1871, General Office Files, President's Office Files, Brigham Young Office Files, CHL.
92. Cleland and Brooks, eds., *Mormon Chronicle*, 2:151-154 (December 29 [22], and 27-28, 1870); Alexander, *Brigham Young*, 28-29.
93. Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 230; Josiah Rogerson, "Speech of John D. Lee at the Mountain Meadows," Collected Material, CHL.
94. Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, xiii-xiv.
95. Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 218-219; and see xii-xiv, 3, 13-14, 30-31, 58-61.
96. *Ibid.*, 59.
97. Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 127 and xiv.
98. *Ibid.*, xiv.
99. *Ibid.*, xiv-xv; William R. Palmer to Joseph Anderson, October 16, 1959, William R. Palmer Material, First Presidency, General Administration Files, 1923, 1932, 1937-1967, CHL.
100. Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, xxvi; Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, xx-xi.
101. Nephi Johnson, affidavit, July 22, 1908, CHL; Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 224-226; Walker and Turley, "The David H. Morris Collection," 138-141.
102. Walker, Turley, and Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, 209.
103. *Ibid.*, x.
104. Brooks, *Mountain Meadow Massacre*, xxv-xxvi; Brooks, "Speech," in Mulder and Mortensen, *Among the Mormons*, 320.

