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Raphael Semmes, captain of the Confederate warship the CSS Alabama, August 1863. During the Civil War, Confederate warships were a threat to ships carrying immigrating Saints across the Atlantic. The Alabama was responsible for sinking a total of sixty-five Yankee ships, one of which had just landed several hundred Saints safely in New York. Captain Semmes is pictured standing by his ship’s formidable 110-pounder rifled gun. Courtesy Naval Historical Center, Washington Naval Yard. (NH 57256)
East to West through North and South: Mormon Immigration during the Civil War

Fred E. Woods

When LDS immigrants\(^1\) on their way to Utah crossed the Atlantic Ocean or the Eastern United States between 1861 and 1864, they encountered the difficulties of traveling in a nation at war. Their first-person accounts paint a vivid picture of the obstacles faced by these Saints as they journeyed to Utah during the U.S. Civil War.\(^2\) The narratives also depict an effective immigration system directed by Brigham Young and operated by dedicated immigration agents and other faithful Mormons who assisted immigrants along their journey.

U.S. Government and the Beginning of Mormon Immigration

Some background history of the Latter-day Saints and their dealings with the U.S. government is vital to understanding the tide of Mormon immigration during the early 1860s. The Saints’ appeals to Congress for redress after their expulsion from Missouri had gone unheeded.\(^3\) For years following their exodus from Illinois, the Saints had been generally condemned by the government and general populace of the United States. The 1856 Republican platform denounced “the twin relics of barbarism,” slavery and polygamy—a direct attack on the Mormon practice of polygamy. The following year, after receiving negative reports concerning the situation in the Utah Territory, President James Buchanan sent twenty-five hundred soldiers to install a new governor in Utah.\(^4\) These unwelcome soldiers remained in Utah until the outbreak of the Civil War, and during their stay, more tension developed between the U.S. military and the Saints.\(^5\)

Foreign converts learned of political conditions in Utah from Mormon periodicals prior to their departure for the States. For example, an extract from a letter to George Q. Cannon from Utah congressional delegate William Hooper appeared in the *Millennial Star* published in Liverpool on January 12, 1861. Hooper reviewed his efforts in the House of Representatives to rally support for the admittance of Utah as a state in the Union, arguing pointedly that “we show our loyalty by trying to get in [to the Union] while others are trying to get out, notwithstanding our grievances.”\(^6\) Because Utah had come under United States control as a territory, the Saints were willing to set their grievances aside in order to gain statehood, which would free them from the strict federal government control imposed on territories,
grant them more independence and power, and allow them to wield more influence in Washington.

However, reminders of those hard-to-forget grievances surfaced a few months later—less than a week before the Civil War broke out—in sermons by members of the First Presidency delivered in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on April 6, 1861. For example, Second Counselor Daniel H. Wells castigated American political leaders, “I do not think there is a more corrupt government upon the face of the earth... They paved the way for their own destruction.”\(^7\) A week later, Brigham Young voiced his gratitude that the Saints were in the mountains rather than in the East where the war was taking place.\(^8\)

Such statements were rooted in the Saints’ belief that the Civil War was a direct result of the nation’s rejection of the gospel.\(^9\) These statements also seem to reflect the Saints’ disgruntlement concerning their earlier petitions for redress. Nearly fifteen years earlier at Winter Quarters (January 1847), Brigham Young had received a revelation:

> Thy brethren have rejected you and your testimony, even the nation [the United States] that has driven you out; And now cometh the day of their calamity, even the days of sorrow, like a woman that is taken in travail; and their sorrow shall be great unless they speedily repent, yea very speedily. For they killed the prophets, and them that were sent unto them and they have shed innocent blood which crieth from the ground against them. (D&C 136:34–36)

Many Mormons believed that the Civil War was a fulfillment of this prophecy. This conviction seems to have influenced foreign converts abroad. A *Millennial Star* headline published just one month after the war commenced read, “CIVIL WAR IN AMERICA—ITS IMPORTANCE AS A WARNING TO THE SAINTS.” After recounting the war’s commencement in South Carolina, the article pointed to the event as the fulfillment of Joseph Smith’s prophecy given nearly three decades earlier, which declared that a war beginning in South Carolina would be “poured out upon all nations.”\(^10\) The article then stressed that those gathered out West in Zion “shall be the only people that shall not be at war,” and those who journeyed Zionward would be nestled “in the bosom of a vast continent, far removed from the scene of strife, and encompassed by lofty mountains and interminable deserts and plains, the country they inhabit will be but little affected by the battles and dissensions of the outer world.”\(^11\)

Perhaps this account had an impact on the Saints abroad, for, in the following year (1862), more LDS converts immigrated to America than in any previous year.\(^12\) The increase in immigration during this period may have been also influenced by the immigration system itself, which had become more effective. In 1863, Mormon immigration reached its highwater mark for the Civil War years.\(^13\)
Challenges at Sea

Perhaps because they took to heart the promise of safety in Zion and trusted that the Lord would protect them as they traveled, the immigrants' first expression of concern was not the fear of traveling to a country in the midst of a bloody civil war. Instead, their accounts indicate that their first adversity was the same as that of immigrants of every era—separation from home and loved ones. Mary E. Fretwell Davis recalled that in June 1863, "I bid farewell to my father, brothers and sisters and sailed on the "Amazon" from the London docks. I felt very sad as we sailed away, to see old England fading away out of sight, and those I loved and did not know that I should ever see them again."14 Caroline Martine Anderson, who voyaged across the Atlantic a year later, had similar feelings. She anguished, "My heart is filled with pain when I think of those that are left in Babylon, and also that there are my relatives."15

Other challenges common to most immigrants crossing the Atlantic were seasickness, disease, and the threat of angry storms. However, at the time of the Civil War, there was also the additional threat of Confederate warships. In 1864, David Coombs wrote that the captain of the General McClellan had sailed out of his course, far north among icebergs, for fear of meeting a Confederate ship at sea.16 Richard Crowther, who voyaged on the same vessel, wrote that after safely crossing the Atlantic in his company of 802 Saints, he received news that the General McClellan had been sunk on its return voyage to Liverpool.17 It was taken down by the Confederate warship Alabama, which would eventually sink a total of sixty-five Yankee ships—more than any other Confederate vessel.18 The crew of the Alabama may have taken particular notice of a ship bearing the name of a Union general—George B. McClellan.

Less than two weeks after the General McClellan left England on its 1864 voyage, the ship Hudson, with 863 Saints aboard, had a threatening encounter on the Atlantic. A Confederate warship pulled alongside the Hudson to determine what kind of freight it was transporting. The sailors aboard the warship yelled out, "'Say your prayers, you Mormons, you are all going down!'" Fortunately, nothing came of the boastful threat. At least two Mormon passengers aboard the Hudson reasoned that they were spared because the passengers were from foreign countries. Charles Will... Symons's recalled:

The Confederate gunboat Georgia hailed us and brought us to a standstill, for be it remembered the War of the Rebellion was now in full sway. After inquiries from our captain we were permitted to move on for they ascertained that 1100 British subjects were on board. Consequently they had no means of handling that many persons and the would-be prize was given up, the gunboat's band playing a farewell.19
The Confederate warship CSS Alabama. From a woodcut that appeared in the popular Harper's Weekly during the Civil War period. During this time, Confederate warships posed a threat to the passenger ships carrying immigrating Saints to U.S. ports.

In spite of dangers at sea, over eleven thousand foreign converts sailed on thirty-two known voyages to eastern American ports during the war years, departing February 1861–June 1864. And indeed, not one immigrant ship carrying Latter-day Saints was ever lost crossing the Atlantic.

Arrival at American Ports

As a result of an 1854 decision by Brigham Young, the primary port of arrival was changed from New Orleans to select eastern ports. That year, Elder Franklin D. Richards, an LDS emigration agent in Liverpool, was instructed as follows:

You are aware of the sickness liable to assail our unacclimated brethren on the Mississippi river, hence I wish you to ship no more to New Orleans, but ship to Philadelphia, Boston, and New York, giving preference in the order named.

However, by the commencement of the Civil War, the order of preference had changed. Of the thirty-two vessels that took companies of Saints across the Atlantic, none arrived through Philadelphia, three South African voyages came to port in Boston, and the remaining twenty-nine voyages, carrying mainly British and Scandinavian converts, first touched the American shore in New York, where the Castle Garden immigration depot was located. The Mormon immigrants were well-chaperoned—priesthood leaders saw them off at the Liverpool docks when they departed, returning missionaries accompanied them on the trans-Atlantic voyage, and immigration agents awaited them at the ports as they reached the East Coast.
Elders Nathaniel V. Jones and Jacob Gates were assigned to posts as immigration agents just as they were returning from missions to England. Gates recorded that he had received word in late 1860 that he was to supervise immigration at Florence (North Omaha), Nebraska Territory, while Jones was to be the first immigration agent assigned to New York City during the Civil War. By February 1861, they had arrived from England at the port of New York.  

Jones remained in New York for some time in order to assist the arriving immigrants. He describes the situation there in a letter to his wife, Rebecca, on April 22, 1861, just ten days after the Civil War began, “Things here are in a very alarming condition while I am writing this. They are without doubt fighting in Baltimore & Washington. They have been skirmishing in the former place since yesterday but of this you can read from the Papers which I will send with this.”

**Arrival at Boston.** The first group of South African converts to gather to Zion during the war selected Boston as their port. While the procedures for all immigrants at New York’s Castle Garden immigration depot are well documented, the immigration experience at the Boston port, which received less LDS immigration activity, is not as familiar. Eli Wiggill, an LDS convert who immigrated to America from South Africa, provides an interesting account of his experience in Boston after he and thirty-two of his companions (including a small, Black African boy named Gobo Fango, who was smuggled through customs) arrived at Boston on April 19, 1861.

Wiggill explained that just before the passengers stepped on shore “the Pilot came on board and brought papers and also the news that the War had broke out in the United States.” Wiggill indicated that on arrival they were welcomed by the local Saints. He noted that the Bostonians were surprised by the color of the South Africans’ skin, as they did not know there were any white people in Africa. Wiggill also explained that as soon as the ship docked, the local Boston branch president telegraphed Nathaniel V. Jones was the Mormon immigration agent in New York City when the Civil War broke out.
Jones for instructions on how to proceed. Jones told them to wait in Boston until a ship of Saints came into New York, then the South Africans were to continue on to New York before heading west.

While the Saints stayed in Boston for nearly a month, "it was all comotion with the Bands of Music Fife and drum and recruiting parties and Flags Flying in every direction it being the commencement of the War of 1861 between the North and the South." Wiggill later noted that after they reached New York and journeyed west by train, free Black men spotted the young Black boy traveling with the South African Saints and mistakenly assumed he was being taken into slavery. The child was therefore in danger of being abducted. The Talbot family, who were caring for the boy, hid him by disguising him in a girl’s dress and bonnet; they had to later conceal him under a woman’s large petticoat.

**Arrival at New York.** The first ship to bring seagoing Saints to New York during the Civil War was the *Manchester*. John McAllister, a passenger aboard the *Manchester* in 1862, recorded in his journal that he “read to Capt. T[rask] Joseph Smith’s views on the p[ol]icy and Govt. of U.S.” This conversation seemed to have made a great impact on Captain Trask, who three days later assembled his passengers on the quarter-deck and addressed them: “Assembled Soldiers of Zion—assembled because you are Mustered, if not Soldiers in reality you are Soldiers in embryo hence you are seed mustard. Seed of Zion, to you I would Say be strong and Steadfast.” In his speech, Captain Trask suggested that the Saints had a greater mission to fight than the one going on in the States between the North and the South. The Saints enjoyed not only his speech but also his overall conduct on their voyage. They drafted a resolution to show their appreciation to Captain Trask, wherein they praised him for his “gentlemanly and courteous bearing, liberal acts, and solicitous spirit” and then presented it to him just as the pilot stepped aboard prior to their docking in New York.

On the previous voyage of the *Manchester* in 1861, the passengers had encountered men of a different spirit gathered in New York at the time of their arrival:

> We had our luggage all packed and ready for starting immediately by Steamer for Castle Garden, but Bro. N. V. Jones, who was Emigration Agent, visited us, and on account of the above place being occupied by U.S. Troops, he deemed it wise for all hands to to [sic] remain on board ship. Counsel was given to the company to that effect. On account of the dreadful, warlike attitude of the North and South, these troops were collected there. They were a very mean set, too, and Bro. Jones had informed the proprietors, that unless the Garden was cleared of them, he should not land his people there.

F. W. Blake, who arrived on the ship *Underwriter* a week later, reported a less intimidating but more boisterous arrival:
The hour arrived for the crowd of Saints & stock of Luggage to be removed from the ship & it became my unfortunate lot to stay on board while the large vessel was drawn towards shore. Handkerchiefs and hats were waving & loud hurrahs were heard sounding over the waters competing with those engaged in the national cause. (they were frequently making the air echo with the power of their voices).33

Elijah Larkin described the arrival of the Amazon in the New York harbor two years later on July 17, 1863:

A stream [sic] troop ship passed us at 8 a.m. . . . Sighted Fire Island at 6 p.m. A pilot came on board at 6.30 the New York Papers were read on board informing us of the Riots that were going on there, which caused great excitement on board. Port Hudson was taken by Federals. . . .

18th. . . . A transport loaded with Troops for the City passed us, & we were informed there was 4500 Troops already there to quell the Riot. we anchor'd in the harbor about P.M. Our Band played the Star Spangled Banner, & we gave several hearty [cheers].34

The Journey from Port to Post

Routes through the Eastern States. Barry Wride, another Mormon immigrant aboard the Manchester in 1861, wrote concerning their arrival in New York and travel to Florence, Nebraska:

We landed at New York on the 15th of June 1861. We were met by Apostle Erastus Snow, N. V. Jones, Thomas Williams and others from Utah Connected with the Emigration. We arranged for our passage from N.Y. to Florence, fare about $15.00. Our passage through the States was slow. Had a good chance to view the Country and new scenery to us, towns and villages very different to the Old Country; much timber, Wild and uncultivated at that period.35

Not only was the scenery "very different" for these British LDS immigrants, but also the entire westward journey that lay ahead of them would prove to be a new and challenging experience. Wride’s company was headed...
Primary land routes of LDS immigrants to Zion during the Civil War, 1861–64
Primary sea routes of LDS immigrants to Zion during the Civil War, 1861–64
toward the outfitting post of Florence, where they prepared for the westward wagon trek. Beginning in 1861, Brigham Young sent wagon companies known as Church trains out of Salt Lake City to meet the incoming Saints at the appointed frontier outfitting posts and return with them to Utah.36

However, before these converts arrived at the outfitting posts where they would be met by immigration agents37 and the captains of Church trains, they had to cross the eastern United States by steam locomotives and riverboats. Such a journey often proved an arduous task, much different from a wagon ride West with experienced wagon captains to assist them.38 Various immigrant accounts recorded during this port-to-post segment provide a glimpse into what appears to have been quite a dangerous ride, one with numerous stops and transfers.

The following accounts depict a composite sketch of the journey from New York to Florence between 1861 and 1863. Scandinavian convert Olaus Johnson, who gathered to America in 1862, wrote, “Due to the Civil War at the time, we were transferred several times to several trains a day, sometimes being forced to ride in cattle cars.”39 Concerning his travel across the eastern United States the same year, LDS immigrant William Probert Jr. recalled, “After we left New York State, we were often stopped to see if we had any arms on board, or any rebels. Sometimes in the night we were stopped and had to face a field battery until morning, and then to be inspected before we could move on. Sometimes we were piled into cattle cars.”40

Tales of riding in cattle cars during the Civil War period are common in the immigrant accounts. William Ajax noted that “some of us [were] packed in cattle-cars, as though we were but beasts.”41 William Wood recalled the terrible stench his company experienced as they rode in the beastly boxes: “The dust from the hog excrement was something very unpleasant; we could smell and taste hogs for two or three days afterwards.”42 Mary E. Fretwell Davis, who journeyed to the West in 1863, remembered, “We rode three days shut up in cattle cars with nothing but straw to sit on.”43 An immigrant from another 1863 company described her experience:

All of the passenger cars had been burned as [so] they locked us up in cattle cars which had straw on the floors. There were no seats. We passed a soldiers’ camp and it was here we ran into a place where logs had been placed to derail the cars. I happened to be standing up when the cars struck the logs and the jolt threw me head foremost to the other side of the car among the women and children. Everyone was crying and screaming. A few were hurt.44

Although the cattle cars were at times dangerous, they were actually safer than the passenger cars, which carried Union soldiers and thus became the constant target of Confederate attack. However, railway passage through the North did not carry the threat of combat that was found in Missouri, which was a hotbed of guerrilla warfare.
The rail route for 1861, which commenced on the New York and Erie Railroad, took LDS immigrant companies from New York to Dunkirk (western New York). From Dunkirk, the Saints traveled on the Lake Shore Railroad (which ran along the south shore of Lake Erie) through Cleveland to Toledo, where they changed cars and continued their journey on the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana Railroad to Chicago.⁴⁵ William Yates, who traveled the route in 1861, recalled:

We Started by a Special train for Dunkirk, 474 Miles, where we changed for Cleveland, 142 Miles . . . and changed for Toledo, 113 miles. . . . We had quite a long talk with a Number of the inhabitence [sic] of Toledo who came out to see us. They were very kind & treated us respectfully and asked us a great many questions about Mormonism. We then came on to Chicago, 244 miles. Provisions Were very cheap in this Place. But here we found quite a bitter Spirit against Mormonism, much more then anything we had before seen.⁴⁶

From Chicago, the Saints took the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy (CB&Q) Railroad to Quincy, and from there they took a short twenty-mile steamboat ride to Hannibal.⁴⁷ From Hannibal, they crossed the state of Missouri on the not-quite-finished Hannibal and St. Joseph (H&StJ) Railroad to St. Joseph, which was then the national railway system’s westernmost point—a ride reported by one immigrant in 1861 to be the roughest he ever had.⁴⁸ From St. Joseph, the Saints took a steamboat up the Missouri River to the frontier outfitting post at Florence (1861–63) and later Wyoming, Nebraska Territory (1864–66).⁴⁹

Steam engine on the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad, ca. 1868. Many immigrating Saints crossed war-torn Missouri on this railroad.
Mormon Immigration during the Civil War

While the rail route from New York to Chicago was generally quiet, the railroad through Missouri certainly received much attention from federal soldiers, as evidenced by one 1862 immigrant who noted that passing through Missouri

presented a mournful picture. In many places houses were burned down, fences destroyed, and crops unattended. All the bridges were well guarded by Union troops to prevent Secessionists from burning them. The fulfillment of Joseph Smith’s prophecies, concerning Missouri can be visibly seen in passing through the State.50

Another eyewitness wrote, “Squares of Soldiers [are] at all the Bridges to—prevent the destruction by Rebels.”51 Mormon immigrant John Penman recalled that just one year later “the [Missouri] bridges [had] been destroyed by the soldgers as the war was ragin very Strong.”52 Ola Nelson Stohl, who also immigrated in 1862, noted that “many soldiers came up to [the Mormon immigrants] at whistle stops, but did them no harm.”53

Others who voyaged on the ship Hudson in 1864 were dealt with in a harsher manner as they traveled to Nebraska. Mary Ann Rawlins wrote:

Some of the troops encountered by the emigrants on the way to the Outfitting Camps in Wyoming manifested bitterness toward our company of Saints. At one point they drove us through a river, with rain falling in torrents, which exposure caused much sickness and many deaths in the company.

Expostulating with the soldiers on their conduct, Elder [John M.] Kay said to them: “If you have no respect for the living, will you not look with mercy on the sick and the dying, and consider the sacred dead?”

“If you say another word, I will rip you up, even if you were Jesus Christ, Himself!” one of the soldiers replied.54

Another immigrant remembered a close call for those riding in a passenger car during one trip through Missouri:

Just before we arrived in St. Joseph, Missouri, the rebels, or bushwhackers, fired two cannon balls through our train, one shot went through the passenger car exactly eight inches above the peoples’ heads and the other through a baggage car destroying a great amount of baggage. We stayed in St. Joseph three or four days, afraid to go on because of the rebel soldiers being all through the country. While we were there, some fifteen rebel soldiers were taken prisoner, right from among [meaning near] our company, by the northern soldiers. Two companies of Union soldiers surrounded the depot and made the rebels surrender or they would have killed them. I can truly say I saw a little of the war between the North and the South.55

Elizabeth Staheli Walker, who also saw a little of the war, wrote of her experience traveling from the East to the West:

We could hear the boom of the cannons and firing of guns as we rode along. Shutters were up at the window and the people on the trains were asked to be very quiet.
When we passed through Missouri the people were very bitter against the Mormons and set a bridge on fire to retard our progress.\textsuperscript{56}

Mary Ann Ward Webb, who immigrated in 1864, told of a young Dutch sister in St. Joseph, Missouri, who was stolen by the soldiers but fortunately retrieved by the elders.\textsuperscript{57} In 1863, Thomas Henry White also reported an abduction—a girl taken from their company by the soldiers.\textsuperscript{58}

White wrote of his company’s encounter with soldiers while crossing Missouri and at St. Joseph:

At every station the soldiers would ask: “When are those Mormons coming through?” No one seemed to know. This was during the time of the Rebellion war. The emigrants were in danger, especially the boys, of being drafted into the army.\textsuperscript{59}

At St. Joseph, White learned that the Union soldiers could collect one dollar for each man or boy on whom they could pin a ribbon—a successful ribbon pinning designated that the recipient of the pinning was now in the army.\textsuperscript{60}

Charles Henry John West, recalling his memorable journey across the States, implied that after a rough train ride, the boat ride up the Missouri was not much better:

We traveled by cars day and night for seven days. On account of the Civil War going on we had to rough it, traveling part of the time crowded in sheep cars. They said they were afraid of their good cars being burned by the Confederates. We took a steamer up the Missouri River. . . . It was a flatboat and we were very crowded.\textsuperscript{61}

Another LDS immigrant recalled how heavy military equipment influenced the trip up the Missouri:

The boat being heavy loaded with government freight for the soldiers, and the water being low, made it quite difficult for the boat to get up the river.\textsuperscript{62}

**The Route through Canada.** While the Saints who immigrated in 1861 traveled only within the boundaries of the United States, the route for many LDS companies who immigrated to Zion during the remaining war years took them across the border into Canada. From New York, the Saints traveled to Albany either by steamboat up the Hudson River or by the Hudson River Railroad. From Albany they took the New York Central Railroad to Buffalo and then traveled north to Niagara, where they crossed the Suspension Bridge into the Canadian province of Ontario before changing cars to the Great Western Line. This Canadian route took them to Windsor, Canada, where they crossed by a ferry steamer over the Detroit River and back into the States at Detroit. From Detroit to Chicago, they traveled on the Michigan Central Railroad. At Chicago they followed the same route that the 1861 LDS immigrants had taken, along the CB&Q and H&StJ railroads to St. Joseph.\textsuperscript{63}
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Christopher Alston, an LDS immigrant on the General McClellan, concluded that the diversion of the Mormon immigrant route outside the boundaries of the United States through Canada was an attempt to scoot around the war, avoiding the risk of traveling through war zones in the eastern states:

We arrived in New York June 23rd, 1864. There we took steamer and traveled up the Hudson River into Canada to avoid the Armies of the Rebellion, broken bridges, upturned railways, etc. incident to a war, which was raging in the States between the North and the South, with blood and rapine in all the land.64

For rail travelers, the threat of bridges being destroyed was very real, but as previously noted, the threat was not a serious one between New York and Illinois or through Canada but rather became so only when the immigrants reached Missouri. The immigrants may have been sent through Canada because of the risk of confiscation of railcars in the States and the availability of passenger trains in Canada, but a more compelling reason seems to have been the cost. In letters written in March 1862, Brigham Young advised George Q. Cannon (acting as Liverpool agent) to direct the Saints to take “the cheapest route to Florence” and then a week later directed Cannon to use “the most accommodating and cheapest route to Florence.”65 Since the Canadian route was chosen, it appears to have been less costly, and the decision to use that route was likely more a matter of economics and convenience than an escape from the threat of warfare.

The Frontier Outfitting Post and the Wagon Trek West

Although immigrating companies were relieved to reach LDS frontier outfitting posts, such as Florence, it appears that the troubles caused by the Civil War had reached the western border—they could still literally hear the sound of war. George Francis Wall, who crossed the United States in 1863, wrote, “We heard cannons of the Civil War while we were at Florence.”66 Another 1863 LDS immigrant added, “Although Florence was some distance from roaring cannons and shooting guns, the people were in a state of excitement and confusion.”67

Upon arriving at the frontier outfitting post, the Saints must have been comforted to meet the Church’s appointed immigration agents and wagon train captains. However, Thomas Henry White explained, the war was not the only hindrance presented to the immigrating Saints: “While sailing up the river to Florence, Nebraska, we met many Josephites68 who were eager to tell us what would happen to us if we went to Utah and did not do as we were told.”69 When Amos M. Musser had passed through Florence in 1857, he reported, “Apostates are becoming as thick in this country as the lice were in Egypt in the days of Pharaoh.”70
By 1864, the outfitting post had been moved from Florence to Wyoming, about forty miles south. The presence of numbers of apostates near Florence who tried to cajole the immigrants into not going to Utah may have presented one reason for moving the post. Immigrant H. N. Hansen reasoned:

In previous years the starting point had been Florence, Nebraska about 40 miles farther up the river, and about four miles from Omaha. Perhaps the principal cause for this change was the fact that this latter place having so long been on the line over which the mormons ... traveled, ... many of the citizens of Omaha and Florence were apostate mormons. Some having refused to journey any further having become weak in the faith before reaching the mountains, and others after having gone there had become disgusted and returned and located at these places. It was not desirable by the leaders of the mormon emigration to take the people where they would be so close in contact with these apostates, as they might bring them such information as would not be desirable for them to obtain, thus leading perhaps others to apostatize.71

Other practical reasons existed for moving the frontier outfitting post. By 1864 the transcontinental railroad tracks had moved farther west,72 and the distance to Wyoming was shorter for river steamers that commenced their trips from St. Joseph.73

The immigration agent at Wyoming for 1864 was Joseph W. Young, who provided welcome relief to the weary travelers. As one immigrant noted, “Immediately on our arrival at Wyoming we received provisions from the church agent, consisting of flour, pork, dried apples, rice, sugar, and also soap for washing.”74

Notwithstanding his hospitality, Young, for practical reasons, was eager for the large groups of immigrants to move on. Elder John T. Gerber noted that by late June 1864 “about a thousand Scandinavian Saints and one or two hundred Saints of other nationalities” were encamped at Wyoming.75 Soon thereafter, on July 4, Joseph Young wrote a letter to the LDS agent in New York in which he said, “Gen. McClelland’s company came up last night, and oh! my soul and all that is great, ain’t we rather busy and noisy today. I shall send these people off regardless of everything else. They will eat us up here in three weeks.”76

Even after leaving the war zone, the immigrants were not free from encounters with soldiers. Mary Hebden Holroyd presented what appears to be a fairly common view—that the Saints traveling west actually feared the soldiers more than they did the Indians. She and her company were instructed by their leader, Captain Joseph Horne, to be as quiet as possible so they could pass by the soldiers at Fort Laramie undetected.77 On occasion, soldiers searched the immigrating Saints for gun powder78 and even forced some to alter their journey and backtrack to Fort Bridger, where they were made to swear an oath of allegiance to the Constitution before being allowed to continue on to Utah.79
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On the other hand, Alma Felt recalled that on one occasion his father played fiddle for a company of soldiers all night before returning to camp, and William Priest recorded that when his wagon company crossed the Platte River, he remained behind to help U.S. soldiers repair the bridge. He caught up with his wagon company later. These were definitely the exceptions to the general rule of tension between the Saints and the soldiers.

Conclusion

The Saints gathering to Zion during the years of the Civil War endured the threat of wartime violence from the time they left their homelands. They encountered warships on the seas and the agitation and commotion of troops in the cities once they landed. They withstood cramped and odorous journeys in cattle cars, endured searches and inspections by troops, and were subjected to the unnerving sound of nearby battles. They experienced delays, crowded conditions, and short supplies. They bore the antagonism and taunts of soldiers and faced the possibility of abduction or conscription. However, despite the danger, apprehension, and inconvenience caused by the war, it did not become a major hindrance to the Saints’ immigration. In fact, the war probably enhanced their sense of urgency to gather to Utah, where they could find security and safety. In spite of obstacles created by the conflict, the Saints continued to gather to Utah at a steady pace and under the Lord’s watchful eye.

The Saints who came to the Salt Lake Valley during the Civil War had come face to face with the Lord’s promise in Brigham Young’s immigration revelation: “Fear not thy enemies; for they shall not have power to stop my work. . . . Fear not thine enemies; for they are in mine hands and I will do my pleasure with them” (D&C 136:17, 30). In 1842, Joseph Smith had proclaimed, “No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; . . . armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth.” The courage and determination of these gathering Saints, passing through the fires of the calamitous American Civil War, put flesh and blood behind Joseph’s bold declaration.

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1. *Webster’s Dictionary of English Usage* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1989), 389, notes the following: “Emigrate and immigrate make a case in which English has two words where it could easily have made do with only one. The two words have the same essential meaning—to leave one country to live in another—and differ only in emphasis or point of view: emigrate stressing leaving, and immigrate stressing entering.” However, to further complicate things, emigrate is used once the immigrant has arrived in the new country and begins to emigrate to the West. It should also be noted that sometimes the foreign immigrants were joined by Saints who gathered from the Eastern Coast of America or they merged with other LDS companies at frontier outfitting posts. These Saints would be properly termed *emigrants* as would those agents who assisted them. Thus, we have the title “Perpetual Emigrating Fund.” Yet for the sake of clarity and readability, the words *immigrate/immigration/immigrant* and *emigrate/emigration/emigrant* will be used synonymously throughout this paper.

2. Nearly all of these primary immigrant accounts are identified in “Mormons on the High Seas,” a finders’ aid compiled by Melvin L. Bashore and Linda L. Haslam (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1990) located at the Library Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Library). These narratives are listed in alphabetical order according to the name of the various vessels and the year they crossed the Atlantic. Furthermore, the 1997–98 *Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1996), 162–63, lists twenty-nine LDS voyages made during the Civil War years. I have identified an additional three voyages, yet little is known of each of these independent voyages. Over eleven thousand LDS converts voyaged to America on these thirty-two voyages. Of this number, there are about 140 known first-person immigrant accounts.

3. Hundreds of examples of appeals for redress are found in Clark V. Johnson, ed., *Mormon Redress Petitions: Documents of the 1833–1838 Missouri Conflict*, Religious Studies Monograph Series, vol. 16 (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1992). However, it should be noted that appeals for redress were not necessarily denied solely from animosity but rather from the hesitation of the federal government to intervene in the affairs of individual states. The provisions of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution were not extended to the states until after the Civil War. One notable exception was President Polk’s agreement to extend a call to the Mormon Battalion, which proved to be a blessing to the Saints.


6. “Extract of a Letter from Hon. W. H. Hooper [December 16, 1860],” *Millennial Star* 23 (January 12, 1861): 30. As noted above, such grievances found their roots in the Saints’ unsuccessful petitions for redress from the Missouri persecutions and the intrusion of U.S. soldiers into Utah Territory as a result of Buchanan’s order.


9. For a discussion of public statements made by Church leaders about the Civil War, see Richard E. Bennett, “This Awful Tornado of Suffering: Mormon Interpretations of the Civil War, 1861–1865” (paper presented at the annual Mormon History Association meeting, May 1999, Ogden, Utah).
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10. See Doctrine and Covenants 87 and 130:12–13. This prophecy was given on December 25, 1832, at the time of a political controversy known as the “Nullification Crisis.” This crisis was rooted in the South, where people felt that they did not have the same advantage as the Northerners, due to the costly protective tariff passed in 1823. This state of unrest centered in South Carolina. It was in this setting that Joseph Smith received this prophecy on war. See Donald Q. Cannon, “A Prophecy of War,” in Studies in Scripture, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson, 8 vols. (Sandy, Utah: Randall Book, 1984), 1:335–36.


12. The Church Emigration Book, 1862, LDS Church Library, indicates that about thirty-six hundred European Saints gathered West in 1862.

13. The Church Emigration Book, 1863, LDS Church Library, lists 3,646 Saints who gathered that year. During the years immediately preceding the war (1858–60), only 2,397 LDS immigrants gathered to Zion and only about 2,000 in 1861—after the war commenced. As stated above, there were about 3,600 in 1862 and 3,646 in 1863. The number declined to 2,633 in 1864 and then dropped dramatically to 1,301 in 1865 after the Civil War ended. See Church Emigration Book for the years 1858–65, LDS Church Library.

14. Mary E. Fretwell Davis, Autobiography, 1, Archives Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).


19. Charles William Symons, Autobiography, in Carley Budd Meredith and Dean Symons Anderson, The Family of Charles William Symons and Arzella Whitaker Symons (privately printed, 1986), 6. See also James T. Sutton, Autobiography, in Carter, Our Pioneer Heritage, 17:297. Symons indicated that the ship the Hudson encountered was the Georgia, yet James Sutton reported that it was the Alabama. However, according to Ward, Burns, and Burns, Civil War, 326, the Alabama sank in June 1864. Since the Mormon immigrant accounts indicate that this particular contact with the Confederate vessel occurred on July 8, it does not seem possible that it was the Alabama. The Millennial Star reported the incident and stated that the Confederate ship was either the Georgia or the Rappahannock. “Correspondence,” John M. Kay and others to President Cannon, July 30, 1864, Millennial Star 26 (August 20, 1864), 540.

20. See note 2.


23. “Arrivals of Saints at New York,” Millennial Star 23 (June 22, 1861): 394. Several immigration accounts also mention Jones aiding the immigration process. That his time as an agent was limited is noted by the fact that Wilford Woodruff recorded that

24. Nathaniel V. Jones to Rebecca Jones, April 22, 1861, 1, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries Special Collections, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.


27. Wiggill, *Autobiography*, 457–58. Another LDS immigrant who voyaged to New York shortly after Wiggill's group also described military music in the air: “The first thing I saw was the Military parading the streets of New York, and drumming up for volunteers to go and fight the south... All work was stopped to make men enlist, and as I had no money, it looked rather blue for me [meaning he was tempted to join the Yankees and put on their uniform], but I had faith.” William Probert Jr., *Autobiography*, in *Biography of William Riley and Hassler Ann, Probert Stevens*, comp. and ed. Orvill Allred Stevens (privately printed, 1981), 56.


36. For information on Church trains, see John K. Hulmston, “Mormon Immigration in the 1860s: The Story of the Church Trains,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (winter 1990): 32–48; and for an excellent account of the 1861 Church trains see Hartley, “Great Florence Fitout,” 341–71. Church trains were sent from Salt Lake City to both Florence and Wyoming, Nebraska, to assist the foreign Saints during the war years, 1861–64. The 1865 immigration season did not begin until the Civil War had already ended.


38. It should here be noted that not all wagon trains were Church down-and-back trains, but some were independent wagon trains that were not as well supplied with provisions for the final leg of the trip to the Salt Lake Valley.
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40. Probert, Autobiography, 57.
41. William Ajax, Diary, 109, LDS Church Archives.
42. William Wood, Autobiography, 105, LDS Church Archives.
43. Mary E. Fretwell Davis, Autobiography, 1, LDS Church Archives.
44. Mary Charlotte Jacobs Soffe, “The Story of My Life,” 12, LDS Church Archives.

For the most detailed account listing over eighty railroad stations from the East Coast all the way to St. Joseph, Missouri, see David John, Journal, 252, BYU Special Collections.

47. Several accounts specifically mention groups of immigrants taking the steamboat Blackhawk from Quincy to Hannibal. See, for example, William Ajax, Diary, 108, LDS Church Archives; Reuben McBride, Journal, 23, LDS Church Archives; John Henry Humphrey Barker, Journal, 30, LDS Church Archives; and Peter Nielsen, Journal, 358.

52. John Penman, Reminiscences, 29, LDS Church Archives.
53. Ola Nelson Stohl, Diaries, June 16, 1862, 12, LDS Church Archives.
54. Mary Ann Rawlings Averson, Reminiscences, in A History of the Richard Rawlings Family, comp. Gladys Rawlings Lemon (privately printed, 1986), 100. This incident may have taken place when the travelers encountered a destroyed bridge and were forced to cross a river on foot or perhaps when they were walking from the steamship docks to the outfitting post in Wyoming, Nebraska. See Smith, “Wyoming, Nebraska Territory,” this issue, 43.
55. William H. Freshwater, “Diary,” in Carter, Our Pioneer Heritage, 7:250. It should here be noted that Missouri chose to be a neutral state during the Civil War. Yet her land was stained by much bloodshed as a result of federal troops being forced to deal with Confederate sympathizers in Missouri who launched a series of continual guerrilla assaults. St. Joseph, Missouri, was a very hot spot during the war because it was a key railroad depot. Not only were the lives of the Mormon immigrants in danger as they traveled west, but also the lives of local Missourian civilians were continually in jeopardy. For an excellent treatment on this topic in general, see Michael Fellman, Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), especially 27–28.
58. Thomas Henry White, Autobiography, 1, LDS Church Archives.
60. White, Autobiography, 1.
63. Dozens of primary accounts mention this route through Canada. See Jens Christian Weibye, Daybook, 19–20, LDS Church Archives; John Redington, Journal, 351–52, LDS Church Archives; Martin Petersen Kuhre, Reminiscences and Diary, 44, LDS Church Archives; John Henry Humphrey Barker, Journal, 27–28, LDS Church Archives; and Elijah Larkin, Diary, 470–72, LDS Church Archives. Weber, Northern Railroads, 13, notes that at the time of the war, this Canadian route took between thirty-seven and thirty-nine hours, while the route passing through just the States from New York to Chicago took about thirty-six hours.
65. Brigham Young to George Q. Cannon, March 11, 1862 and March 18, 1862, Brigham Young Letter Books, LDS Church Archives; see also Kimball, “Sail and Rail Pioneers,” 27. In an article titled “What the Saints Must Do Who Want to Emigrate,” Millennial Star 23 (June 8, 1861): 361, Christopher Alston asserts that the Civil War had a depressing effect upon the American market, which obviously had an impact on immigration procedures. This assertion may not be entirely wrong. In April 1862, Brigham Young advised George Q. Cannon of the following: “Should any serious difficulty arise between England and America, of which events we’ll seasonably notify you, when the way is hedged up on our sea-board and in the thickly settled Northern States, you will probably be able to pass through Canada and then on some unmolested route to this place.” Brigham Young to George Q. Cannon, April 12, 1862, Brigham Young Letter Books, LDS Church Archives. Here Young is referring to the Saints entering Canada through the port of Quebec, a route Cannon had suggested in previous letters. See George Q. Cannon to Brigham Young, January 17, 1861 and February 8, 1862, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.
69. White, Autobiography, 1.
70. Amos M. Musser, Diary, July 3, 1857, 20, LDS Church Archives.
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77. Sketch of the life of Dinah Williams Holroyd, 1921, 4–5, LDS Church Archives. It is important to distinguish between Civil War soldiers and military men stationed in various parts of the West because of the threat of Indians. Soldiers at Fort Laramie and other western posts were nearly always assigned to such locations as a result of potential threats from Native Americans and Indian Wars, which reemerged in 1862 and did not subside until 1890. Furthermore, it is rather ironic that at Fort Laramie and elsewhere, the military had a primary responsibility to protect the immigrants who were westward bound. See Don Rickey Jr., *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963).

78. Lorenzo Hadley [interview], in “Utah Pioneer Biographies,” 1216, Family History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; Mary Elizabeth Rollins, “Journal,” in *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 17 (October 1926): 259.


81. William Priest, Biographical sketch and diary excerpts, 12, LDS Church Archives.

82. Interestingly, even after arriving in Utah, the Saints were not to escape war altogether. On the very day that Generals Grant and Lee met at the Appomattox Courthouse to put an end to the Civil War, another challenge emerged when hostile, hungry Indians and frustrated Saints who were tired of their cattle being stolen held a lively meeting in Manti, Utah—an event that triggered the Black Hawk War (1865–72). John Alton Peterson, *Mormons, Indians, and Gentiles and Utah’s Black Hawk War* (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 1993), 19.