

# The Utah Expedition

## 1857-1858

A Documentary Account of the  
United States Military Movement  
under Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston,  
and  
The Resistance by Brigham Young  
and the Mormon Nauvoo Legion

Edited, with Introduction and Notes by

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THE ARTHUR H. CLARK COMPANY

Glendale, California, U.S.A.

1958

to say who they were, knowing full well that their lives would not be safe if they did so.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

DAVID H. BURR,  
*Surveyor General of Utah.*

Hon. THOS. A. HENDRICKS,

*Commissioner of the General Land Office, Washington.*

C.

SURVEYOR GENERAL'S OFFICE,

*Salt Lake City, February 5, 1857.*

SIR: About two weeks since I was called upon by Mr. Cumming, the clerk of the United States supreme court for this Territory, Mr. Stout, the acting district attorney, and Mr. McRay, the territorial marshal. They presented a copy of my letter to the department, of the 12th May, 1856, in which I notified the department of certain trespasses on the public lands.

They asked very peremptorily if I wrote the letter. I told them I did. They did not deny the truth of the charges I had made, but asserted *the right* of doing what they did, stating that *the country was theirs*, that they would not permit this interference with their rights, and this writing letters about them would be put a stop to; that "I need not think I could write without their knowing it; that I could not send letters down in "cracker sacks" without their finding them; and if I employed persons to carry them, I had better employ those who would not betray me, &c." The object of the visit I could not divine, unless it was to intimidate me and prevent my writing.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

DAVID H. BURR,  
*Surveyor General of Utah,*

Hon. THOS. A. HENDRICKS,

*Commissioner of General Land Office.*

D.

SURVEYOR GENERAL'S OFFICE,

*Salt Lake City, March 28, 1857.*

SIR: In your letter of 17th of last October, which I received a few days since, you refer me to the act of 1830 for the remedy against the opposition that may be made to United States deputy surveyors in the progress of their work. I hope there will be no serious interference or interruption to the surveyors; should there *be*, that law will afford no relief, as there is no tribunal here to enforce it. The United States courts have been broken up and driven from the Territory, and the

Utah courts, with their usurped power, will not recognize the United States laws, and scarcely their own, when they conflict with their schemes.

Judge Stiles, the only United States judge remaining here, intends trying to make his escape from the Territory as soon as it is possible to get over the mountains, but he fears attempts will be made to "cut him off." Knowing that our correspondence through the mails was examined, he has been afraid to write an account of affairs here, but intends reporting in person if he can get away. *The fact is, these people repudiate the authority of the United States in this country, and are in open rebellion against the general government.* I have sent all of my letters, excepting those relating purely to business matters, by private hands, and believe that most of them have gone through without being opened. Brigham Young has declared openly that the surveyors shall not be suffered to trespass on *their* lands as they did the last season, and threats are frequently made that any party attempting to survey will be "cut off." In their public meetings the Mormons have been told not to engage in the service of the surveyors, for they would be destroyed. They have hitherto failed in their endeavors to excite the Indians against us, and we think will not succeed hereafter. We have from the beginning had no fear except from the Mormons.

So strong have been my apprehensions of danger to the surveyors, that I scarcely deemed it prudent to send any out; but Mr. Mogo, anxious to be at work, concluded he would venture to make the attempt. He took twenty-seven men with him, all well armed. Reports are already coming here that the party have been cut off, but I am satisfied that the reports are at least premature. If he is vigilant, with the force he has, I think he may avoid an attack.

For the last three months my friends have considered my life in danger. I have been cursed and denounced in their public meetings, and the most diabolical threats made against me. I have remained at my post, partly to protect the office, but more for the reason that I have been hemmed in by the mountains of snow, and could not get away. Several houses of "apostate Mormons" have been pulled down, and at one time an attack was contemplated on the office, to destroy its contents and "wipe me out." I got notice of it in time, and kept well guarded. Several friends volunteered to protect me. I had five or six men in the office for nearly four weeks, and have not had less than three any time this winter. The Mormons, knowing we were prepared for defence, hesitated to make an attack, and we have thus far escaped. Affairs are rather more quiet now.

We are all, "Gentiles" and Mormons, waiting the arrival of the next mail from the States with much anxiety. If it should bring us no tidings or assurance of protection from the United States, every "Gentile" officer may be compelled to leave the Territory. We find our position a critical one. We are by no means sure that we would be permitted to leave, for it is boldly asserted we would not get away alive. The same threats have been made against disaffected Mormons. We were inclined to think them idle menaces, until a few days since, when three men were killed at Springville, sixty miles

from this place, for making the attempt. They were shot, *their throats cut, and their bowels ripped open*. Another party were fired upon, and three of them wounded, one of them seriously. These outrages are perpetrated by Mormons, and we have every reason to believe by the orders of Brigham Young. No efforts are made by the authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

DAVID H. BURR,  
*Surveyor General of Utah.*

Hon. THOMAS A. HENDRICKS,  
*Commissioner of the General Land Office.*

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E.

WASHINGTON, June 11, 1857.

SIR: Having become satisfied that it was no longer safe for me to remain in Utah, without the special protection of the general government, I determined to leave; and it becomes my duty to state to the department the causes which impelled me to do so.

In common with all who do not belong to the Mormon church, I had, from my first advent among them, been looked upon by the rulers of that church and people as an alien, an enemy, and an intruder upon their rights. But while they looked upon my operations there with no friendly eye, and through their newspapers advised the people to commence suits against the surveyors for trespass upon *their* lands, no open hostility was evinced against me personally, until last February, when a copy of a letter which I had addressed to the department in the month of July preceding, charging Brigham Young with extensive depredations upon the public lands, was received there.

This accusation against the head of the church provoked their special displeasure, and I was waited upon by three prominent men, namely: Hozen Stout, acting United States district attorney; James Cummings, clerk of the United States district court, and Alexander McRay, the territorial marshal, who, after demanding whether I had written such a letter, and receiving a categorical answer that I did, told me, in the most peremptory manner, that I would not be permitted to write such letters, declaring that all my letters would be examined; and if adverse to their views and interests, should never leave the Territory, saying that I could not send them out clandestinely, for they would prevent every effort I might make to do so. These threats were accompanied by asseverations that the country, and all that appertained to it, belongs to them; that their exertions had made it what it was; that they had earned it, and were determined to keep it, and would permit no interference with their rights. From that time forward continued attempts were made to excite the populace against me. Demonstrations of mob violence and inflammatory appeals by the leaders to the worst feelings of the people were frequently made, and I was repeatedly warned by friends that my life was in imminent danger, and they advised me to seek safety in flight.