



Changes in the West : Mormons and the ecological geography of nationalism
by Willard John McArthur

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History
Montana State University

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Abstract:

Environmental historians have made fruitful endeavors in exploring the ways in which human communities modify the landscapes in which they live. However, nationalism is one area that has exhibited a tremendous influence on the course of modern history, yet has been little studied in its relationship to the environment. This thesis looks at the ways in which nationalism—a sense of connection to the larger nation—has influenced those modifications, and how those modifications have influenced and affected those making changes.

This thesis looks to the early Mormon migrants to the West as a case study on how nationalism has influenced environmental change. Using an interdisciplinary approach, this argument relies on the work of intellectual historians of nationalism, environmental historians, geographers, and ecologists/biologists. Using these studies as a framework, this thesis posits a method for identifying nationalized landscapes: recognizing circumscribed landscapes, simplified environments, and lands that are connected spatial and temporally to the larger nation identifies a nationalized landscape. In particular, this thesis looks at fish, trees, and riparian zones as areas of change. Using the identifying markers of circumscription, simplification, and connection has uncovered that Mormons did indeed make changes in the landscape that were influenced by nationalism. These changes made to the land, influenced by nationalism, created a redesigned nature, that in turn influenced human relationships. A feeling of nation-ness is one of the major influences in the way westerners have tried to redesign their environments.

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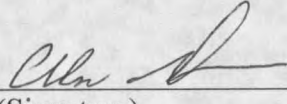
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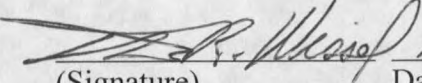
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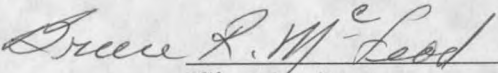
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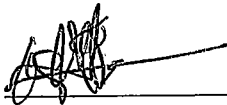
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ABBREVIATIONS

- BYU-S Brigham Young University-Special Collections. Harold B. Lee Library. Provo, Utah.
- CHC Roberts, B. H., ed. A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 6 vols. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1930; reprint, Orem, Utah: Sonos Publishing Inc., 1991.
- HC Smith, Joseph. History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Edited by Brigham H. Roberts. 2nd ed., rev. 7 Vols. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980.
- Journey Quoted in Carol Cornwall Madsen. Journey to Zion: Voices From the Mormon Trail. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1997.
- JD Journal of Discourses. George D. Watt and others eds., 26 vols. Liverpool: F. D. Richards, and others, 1854-1886.

ABSTRACT

Environmental historians have made fruitful endeavors in exploring the ways in which human communities modify the landscapes in which they live. However, nationalism is one area that has exhibited a tremendous influence on the course of modern history, yet has been little studied in its relationship to the environment. This thesis looks at the ways in which nationalism—a sense of connection to the larger nation-- has influenced those modifications, and how those modifications have influenced and affected those making changes.

This thesis looks to the early Mormon migrants to the West as a case study on how nationalism has influenced environmental change. Using an interdisciplinary approach, this argument relies on the work of intellectual historians of nationalism, environmental historians, geographers, and ecologists\biologists. Using these studies as a framework, this thesis posits a method for identifying nationalized landscapes: recognizing circumscribed landscapes, simplified environments, and lands that are connected spatial and temporally to the larger nation identifies a nationalized landscape. In particular, this thesis looks at fish, trees, and riparian zones as areas of change. Using the identifying markers of circumscription, simplification, and connection has uncovered that Mormons did indeed make changes in the landscape that were influenced by nationalism. These changes made to the land, influenced by nationalism, created a redesigned nature, that in turn influenced human relationships. A feeling of nation-ness is one of the major influences in the way westerners have tried to redesign their environments.

CHAPTER 1

A METHOD FOR STUDYING NATIONALIZED LANDSCAPES

Wallace Stegner, the great observer of western environments and Mormon culture, noted an unusual feature of the Great Basin landscape: "Wherever you go in the Mormon country . . . you see the characteristic marks of Mormon settlement." Among the marks of Mormon settlement, he listed the "characteristic trees, long lines of them along ditches, along streets, as boundaries between fields and farms." Perhaps, Stegner mused, Mormons planted these rows of Lombardy poplar to copy the "landscape of their first home."¹ Was Stegner correct in assuming that Mormons planted trees in the West in an effort to copy the landscapes they had left behind in the eastern United States? Did a sense of connection to the home they left influence the way Mormons redesigned the ecology of the West?

This thesis seeks to answer these questions by studying the connection between the construction of nationalism and the changing of environments. This study explores the ways in which nationalism—a sense of connection to the larger nation-- has influenced the ecological changes the Mormons made in the West, and how those modifications influenced and affected the people making the changes. Combining the insights from environmental history with insights from the study of nationalism provides methods for

¹Wallace Stegner, Mormon Country (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1942; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 21.

evaluating the influence of nationalism on environmental change.

Using the understandings of nationalism reveals that the Mormon sense of connection to the larger nation influenced the modifications they made to the land. It will show that those modifications have influenced and affected the Mormons. Studying three particular ecological transformations--altering fish populations, redesigning riparian zones, and changing tree populations--shows how these redesigned landscapes strengthened attachments to the larger nation. The argument is not that fish, river-trails, or trees are the most telling, or even the most important factors in the formation or cultivation of nationalism. The argument is simply this: by looking at trout, trails, and trees, we can see a strengthening connection to the East, a culture of connection that is so loaded with images and implications, not just for Mormons, but also for the whole of the American West, that it can and should be submitted to closer scrutiny.

Mormons and the United States

The Mormon church developed a problematic relationship with the eastern United States.² Since its official organization in Fayette, New York, on 6 April 1830, the Mormon church had been a church on the run.³ It became an all too familiar cycle: the Mormons would move into town and put down roots like they meant to stay until the

²The term "eastern" is used throughout this thesis to describe United States east of the Mississippi River.

³Throughout this thesis the terms "Mormon" and "LDS" are used as synonyms.

eminent chiliad, but soon the local citizenry would chafe at Mormon beliefs and practices, eventually driving them out in anger. In this manner Mormons moved from New York, Ohio, Missouri, and finally Illinois.

Anti-United States rhetoric became common as Mormons were frustrated by local, state, and federal inaction or outright complicity in mob actions. In Missouri, Governor Lillburn Boggs issued an order to drive the Mormons from the state or exterminate them.⁴ While in Illinois, Mormons sent emissaries to Washington with a list of losses and grievances, seeking redress from the federal government. They approached President Van Buren, who is reported to have said, "Your cause is just but I can do nothing for you."⁵ The audience of the Senate Judiciary Committee was equally unwilling to help.⁶ Finally, it was under the auspices of Illinois Governor Thomas Ford's promised protection that members of the state militia murdered the prophet-leader of Mormonism, Joseph Smith.⁷ In response to this treatment, Hosea Stout seemed to be speaking for the whole Mormon community when, upon hearing of the United States war with Mexico, commented, "I was glad to learn of war against the United States. I hoped the war might never end until the

⁴Wallace Stegner, The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 21; Daniel H. Ludlow, ed. Church History: Selections From the Encyclopedia of Mormonism (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), s. v. [*sub voce*—under the word] "Extermination Order," by Dale A. Whitman; Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 10.

⁵As quoted in Stegner, Zion, 76.

⁶Ludlow, s. v. "Church Historians," by Howard C. Searle.

⁷Stegner, Zion, 29, 39; Oaks and Hill, Carthage, 6-21.

States were entirely destroyed, for they had driven us into the wilderness, and now were laughing at our calamities.”⁸ Likewise, Joseph Smith’s successor, Brigham Young, in a particularly tense moment, when the Mormons had been forced off their campsites at Winter Quarters by government order, “curse[d] the United States and its people with vigor.”⁹

The Mormons had had enough. They decided to leave the United States and head west, looking for a new home. Along the trail William Clayton penned these striking words: “We’ll Find the place which God for us prepared, Far away in the West, Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid; There the Saints will be blessed.”¹⁰

Taken at face value, these words cause Mormons to appear as one of the least likely groups of people to espouse nationalist feelings or to try to maintain any sense of connection with United States. Thomas Ford, the governor of Illinois when Joseph Smith was assassinated, wrote a letter to Brigham Young, offering him some very unpatriotic advice that might have seemed promising to the Mormons:

If you can get off by yourselves you may enjoy peace . . . I was informed by General Joseph Smith last summer that he contemplated a removal west; and . . . I think if he had lived he would have begun to move in the matter before this time. . . . Why would it not be a pretty operation for your people to go out there [to California], take possession of and conquer a portion of the vacant country, and establish an independent government of your own subject only to the laws of nations[?] . . . [I]f you once cross the line of the United States territories you would be in no danger of being

⁸As quoted in Stegner, Zion, 60.

⁹Stegner, Zion, 198.

¹⁰Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1948), 13; Stegner, Zion, 64-65.

interfered with.¹¹

Yet, the Mormons never showed much interest in taking Governor Ford's advice.

Once in the Salt Lake Valley, the Mormons fervently sought to become part of the United States. After drafting a constitution virtually identical to the U. S. Constitution, Mormon representatives made appeals to the United States Congress for statehood in 1850, 1856, 1862, 1872, and 1882. Finally, in 1890, after years of wrangling with the U.S. government, including an abortive military clash in 1857, the Mormons officially ended the practice of polygamy in order to overcome the last and largest hurdle to statehood. On January 4, 1896, President Grover Cleveland proclaimed Utah the forty-fifth state.¹²

A major factor in the Mormon's willingness to "return to the fold" lies in the way they left the United States, or rather, how they left without ever quite leaving the United States. All along their 1,400 mile journey and at the places where they stopped to colonize the West, the Mormons recreated, through redesigned landscapes,¹³ ties to the homeland they had left behind. These alterations were both ecological and nation-bound,

¹¹HC 7:396-398. Ford was using the term "California" to describe, as it was commonly used at the time, the area of land between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, south of Oregon.

¹²Ludlow, s. v. "Utah Statehood," by Edward Leo Lyman.

¹³I am following James Scott's preference for the term "redesign." Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed, Yale Agrarian Studies Series, ed, James C. Scott (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 360. Scott is borrowing the term from Chris Maser, The Redesigned Forest (San Pedro: R. and E. Miles, 1988). The term connotes biological changes in an environment that are conscious, such as cutting down trees to build a house, and to some degree planned according to a scheme.

and they eventually made their return to the fold not only possible, but also strongly desirable. Nationalism influenced the modifications Mormons made to the landscape, and those modifications, in turn, shaped and affected the Mormons.

An Interdisciplinary Approach

To understand environmental change in the West, it is necessary to become expert in a large number of fields of knowledge. Efforts to comprehend human relationships with our environments have been fertile ground for producing histories fed by interdisciplinary studies. Environmental history, ecology, geography, and other areas of study have all become essential components in our understanding of people's interaction with their environment. Adding some of the methodologies and findings from the field of nationalism will enrich this stew of studies informing our understanding of environmental history.

As historians cast about for causes of modern ecological maladies, a number of well-worn American institutions have gone under the knife. Historians such as Lynn White Jr. and Roderick Nash have identified the Judeo-Christian religious ethic, which places humans at the center of an environment designed for their use, as a virus that causes environmental misuse.¹⁴ Historians like Carolyn Merchant, Annette Kolodny, and

¹⁴Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," Science 155 (10 March, 1967): 1203-1207; Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 3rd ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 7-22; Andrew Greeley, "Religion and Attitudes toward the Environment," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 32 (March, 1993): 19-28. See also Thomas Alexander, "Stewardship and Enterprise: The

Frieda Knobloch have argued that gender analysis is essential in correctly diagnosing maladaptive environmental change.¹⁵ Eugene Hargrove has identified Lockean property notions as a contagion that has prevented the healthy growth of an ecologically viable society.¹⁶ Alfred Crosby diagnosed the abused landscapes of the temperate zones of the world with a severe case of European imperialism. Europeans played a part in creating Neo-Europes: areas far away from Europe which were altered by "teams" of colonists and invading flora and fauna.¹⁷ Yet other historians in recent studies have identified the market forces of capitalism as the infecting agent, leading to environmental mismanagement.¹⁸

LDS Church and the Wasatch Oasis Environment," Western Historical Quarterly 25 (Autumn, 1994): 341-364; Jeanne Kay and Craig Brown, "Mormon Beliefs About the Land and Natural Resources, 1847-1877," Journal of Historical Geography 11 (July 1985): 253-267. As a counterpoint to these arguments see, J. Baird Callicott, "Genesis Revisited: Murian Musings on the Lynn White Jr. Debate," Environmental History Review 14 (Spring/Summer, 1990): 65-90.

¹⁵Carolyn Merchant, "Gender and Environmental History," Journal of American History 76 (March 1990): 1117-1121. Annette Kolodny, The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontier, 1630-1860 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984). For an interpretation of the development of agriculture that is heavily influenced by the theory of Merchant and Kolodny see Frieda Knobloch, The Culture of Wilderness: Agriculture as Colonization in the American West, Publication of Studies in Rural Culture, ed. Jack Temple Kirby (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

¹⁶Eugene Hargrove, "Anglo-American Land-use Attitudes," Environmental Ethics, 2 (Summer 1980): 121-148.

¹⁷Alfred Crosby, Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 287.

¹⁸Donald Worster, Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); William Cronon, Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 378; William G. Robbins, Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West, Development

Probably the most influential explanation for the root cause of environmental spoilage is capitalism and market forces. As colonization spread the gospel of world capitalism, many of the world's environments were dramatically, and often detrimentally, changed. As William Cronon noted in his seminal Changes in the Land, European colonization in New England produced "fundamental reorganizations . . . in the region's plant and animal communities."¹⁹ Indeed, one way the colonists changed the land was by "Reducing the forest[, which] was an essential step toward reproducing that Old World mosaic in an American Environment."²⁰ What motivated these settlers to change the land in an attempt to mirror the Old World? Cronon attributed the ecological changes to the "colonists' more exclusive sense of property and their involvement in a capitalist economy."²¹ Although there has been ample evidence that in many places in America colonization carried with it ecological changes influenced by Lockean property notions and capitalist modes of production, there is a danger of oversimplifying the complex reasons that humans redesign their environments.²²

of Western Resources Series, ed. Hal K. Rothman (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1994), xii.

¹⁹William Cronon, Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), vii.

²⁰Ibid., 126.

²¹Ibid, viii.

²²The glaring exception to this generalization is of course Richard White. For example see Land Use, Environment, and Social Change: The Shaping of Island County, Washington, with a forward by William Cronon (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980; reprint, 1992), 155-160.

Certainly, Mormons were influenced by Christianity, gender, colonialism, capitalism, and notions of private property. This study does not deny these influences. However, nationalism was too large an influence to be passed over. To enrich our understanding of environmental change we need also to understand the role that a sense of nation-ness has played in the modifications that are made. If nationalism is a powerful enough force to motivate people to die, kill, torture, and rape in the cause of their country, then how has this feeling influenced treatment of the environment? Many scholars are beginning to scratch the surface of this problem by recognizing the role of visions of nation-ness in changes in the land. Joachim Wolschke-Buhlmann has noted that Jens Jensen, a notable landscape architect of the early twentieth-century, used the landscapes that he redesigned to "express the spirit of America," in this case a racially purified America.²³ Conversely, Barbara Deutsch Lynch has recognized that landscapes can be used to construct countervailing notions of national identity. In looking at the fishing practices and garden making among Latinos in New York, Lynch has recognized the "political content of these symbols [fish and gardens]." These symbols are used by Latinos to redesign landscapes that express and reinforce a desire to "reconquer New York City's hostile environment," in resistance to the "physical manifestations of political and economic power."²⁴ Wolschke-Buhlmann and Lynch have pointed us in a promising new

²³Joachim Wolschke-Buhlmann, review of Jens Jensen: Maker of Natural Parks and Gardens, by Robert E. Grese, in Journal of Garden History 15 (1995): 54-55.

²⁴Barbara Deutsch Lynch, "The Garden and the Sea: U.S. Latino Environmental Discourses and Mainstream Environmentalism," Social Problems 40 (February 1993): 108-109.

direction. The works on issues such as religion, gender, property notions, imperialism, and capitalism have already done much to inform our understandings of the environment; the works on nationalism have only yet to join the pantheon.

In order to understand nationalized landscapes—environments altered according to the influence of a feeling of connection to a larger nation—it is first necessary to build a foundation on ecology. Studies of environmental history necessarily rely on the work of ecologists, and this thesis is no exception. To understand the changes that have taken place, it is first important to decide what ecological conditions were like before the change took place. This is not an easy task considering two inexorable facts: First, environments, to one degree or another, are in a constant state of flux, even without the fumble-fingered manipulations of humans. Second, as in the case of the Mormons, Euro-Americans did not travel into a pristine wilderness. The environments of the Platte River Valley and the Great Basin were altered by the Native inhabitants. Until someone comes up with a better plan, it is necessary to approximate what is going on in nature at any given moment.

Necessary caveats aside, this study uses a handful of studies on the ecology of the Platte River Valley and the Great Basin—both prehistoric and just prior to the Mormon hegira. Donald Grayson, and the synthesis of pertinent studies by Elliot West and Dan Flores are useful for understanding the general ecology of the landscapes redesigned by Mormons.²⁵ The studies of other ecologists are also useful in identifying the trees of the

²⁵On the ecology of the Great Basin see Donald K. Grayson, The Desert's Past: A Natural Prehistory of the Great Basin (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993). On the ecology of the trail, see Elliot West, who provides a solid synthesis of the available studies on the ecology of the lands that would become the river roads in The Way West: Essays on the Central Plains (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 13-

Great Basin,²⁶ and understanding fish populations of the region.²⁷

The works of geographers are likewise useful for understanding environmental change. This requires being highly selective. There are many shortcomings to the geographic studies done in the 1960s and 1970s of the Mormons and their landscapes. Often, when these studies discussed redesigned landscapes, they focused on objects of second nature: looking at towns and villages and ignoring streams and forests.²⁸ Others, like Richard Jackson, focused little on changing environments, and more on changing

50. Dan Flores, "Zion in Eden: Phases of the Environmental History of Utah," in Environmental History Review 7 (Winter 1983): 325-344, this same essay is reprinted in "Agriculture, Mountain Ecology, and the Land Ethic: Phases of the Environmental History of Utah," in Working on the Range: Essays on the History of Western Land Management and the Environment, Contributions in Economics and Economic History No. 61, ed. John R. Wunder (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 157-186.

²⁶Hui-Lin Li, Shade and Ornamental Trees: Their Origins and History (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963; 1996); Elbert L. Little, The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Trees, Western Region (New York: Albert A Knopf, 1980); S. L. Welsh and others, A Utah Flora, Great Basin Naturalist Memoirs, no. 9. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1987); United States Department of Agriculture, Trees: The Yearbook of Agriculture, 1949 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949).

²⁷Robert J. Behnke, Native Trout of Western North America, American Fisheries Society Monograph 6 (Bethesda, Maryland: American Fisheries Society, 1992); William F. Sigler and John W. Sigler, Fishes of the Great Basin: A Natural History, Max C. Fleischmann Series in Great Basin History, ed. John F. Setter (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1987); Herbert T. Boschung, Jr. and others, National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Fishes, Whales, and Dolphins (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983).

²⁸A prime example of this is Richard Francaviglia, "The Mormon Landscape: Definition of an Image in the American," Proceedings of the Association of American Geographers 2 (1970): 59-61. Francaviglia relied on such things as barns and granaries, unpainted farm buildings, and crude "Mormon fences" to identify a Mormon landscape.

perceptions about those environments.²⁹ The search for a Mormon culture region limited the scope of other studies by forcing scholars to examine unique features and suspend the search for connections and continuity, or attempts at such, with other regions.³⁰

Geography does, however, have much to offer the study of altered landscapes. First, geographers have recognized the involvement of nationalism in the conception of environments. People have, in modern times, linked place with a sense of national identity.³¹ Yi-Fu Tuan, has similarly explored the "links between environment and world view."³² This understanding of the perceptions and attitudes toward the environment have helped solidify the foundation upon which environmental history is building.³³ It is important, however, to recognize the welding of the concept of a nationalist ideology of

²⁹Richard H. Jackson, "Mormon Perception and Settlement," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 68 (September 1978): 317-334.

³⁰D.W. Meinig, "The Mormon Culture Region: Strategies and Patterns in the Geography of the American West, 1847-1964," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 55 (June 1965): 191-221; Dean R. Louder and Lowell Bennion "Mapping Mormons Across the Modern West," in The Mormon Role in the Settlement of the West, Charles M. Redd Monographs in Western History No. 9, ed Richard H. Jackson (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 135-169; Lowell C. Bennion, "Mormon Country a Century Ago: A Geographer's View," in The Mormon People, Their Character and Traditions, Charles M. Redd Monographs in Western History No. 9, ed Thomas Alexander (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), 1-26.

³¹David Hooson, ed., Geography and National Identity, The Institute of British Geographers Special Publications Series 29, eds. Felix Driver, Royal Holloway, and Neil Roberts (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

³²Yi-Fu Tuan, Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

³³On changing attitudes toward western environments see Roderick Nash, Wilderness; Anne Farrar Hyde, An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920, American Social Experience Series 17 (New York: New York University Press, 1990).

place to the actual reshaping of the land, and not just the thinking about place.

Second, geographic studies have sought to understand the idea of place. According to Tuan, the idea of place is a "salve" used to soothe the "threatening awareness of being alone."³⁴ Places can be created that give coherence to incoherent space. One method of creating places that provide coherence is to alter environments into a nationalized landscape that encourages a "sense of communal oneness."³⁵ Kenneth Olwig has recognized the creation of place as a bond of unity. Olwig has argued that the creation of national parks in America are places where we "reinvent" nature in order to "preserve both nature and national values."³⁶

Defining a Nationalized Landscape

The insights of those who have studied nationalism are also applicable to the study of environmental change. Intellectual and political historians, such as Benedict Anderson, E. J. Hobsbawm, Anthony Marx, and James C. Scott, have all provided thoughtful insights into how feelings of nationalism and nationalized social order operate in both theory and

³⁴Yi-Fu Tuan, "Place and Culture: Analeptic for Individuality and the World's Indifference," in Mapping American Culture, Wayne Franklin and Michael Steiner eds. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 39.

³⁵Ibid., 29.

³⁶Kenneth Olwig, "Reinventing Common Nature: Yosemite and Mount Rushmore—A meandering Tale of Double Meaning," in Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature, ed. William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 383.

practice. This study draws out from their work some general principles of nationalism that are, in turn, applied to environmental history.

Anderson defined the nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”³⁷ The community is *imagined* in that “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, . . . yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” Quoting Ernest Gellner, Anderson notes that nationalism is not some nascent force—waiting to be awakened by the nation—but nationalism “*invents* nations where they do not exist.”³⁸ The nation is limited in that it never dreams of being “coterminous with mankind,” sovereign in that it yearns to be free, a community in that it is conceived as “a deep, horizontal comradeship.”³⁹

For Anderson, these imagined communities are solidified through the introduction and dispersion of print capitalism and the creation of national vernaculars.⁴⁰ In focusing on these two factors, however, Anderson overlooks how powerfully ecological reconstruction can help create feelings of nation-ness based on his definition. Like Anderson’s imagined communities Mormons created, by redesigning the landscape, ties with the rest of the United States that were *limited* in that they excluded Native Americans, *sovereign* in that they determined to live free, and a *community* in that they

³⁷Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New York: Verso, 1983; reprint, 1991), 6.

³⁸As quoted in *Ibid.*, 6. Italics in original.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 37-46.

still felt strong ties to the United States.

For Hobsbawm, nationalism was born out of loyalty to certain states that was shifted to a constructed, non-state nationalism. Loyalty was shifted away from the country, toward a “particular version of that country: to an ideological construct.”⁴¹ Naturally, there would be instances where “identification with one nationality alienated others who refused to be assimilated to or eliminated by it.”⁴² Like Anderson, Hobsbawm recognizes the power of a written, national language, administered through mass education, to foster loyalty to the nation-state.⁴³ Hobsbawm ties the desire of states to foster feelings of nation-ness with the interests of a national economy.⁴⁴ He determines that in the interest of economics and nation building, expansion became important.⁴⁵ But expansion creates problems with natural heterogeneity. Economic power is maintained by creating an imagined community that ties the expansion zone with the metropole.

Ecological reconstructions, like common vernaculars, have tended to mitigate the decentralizing forces unleashed by the natural heterogeneity of such a vast expanse of land and water as the United States. Building on the philosophy of John Dewey that “the locality is the only universal,” regionalists such as David Wrobel and Michael Steiner have overlooked these mitigating factors, arguing that “the uprooting, leveling nature of

⁴¹E. J. Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality, 2nd Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 93.

⁴²Ibid., 93.

⁴³Ibid., 93-96.

⁴⁴Ibid., 28-30.

⁴⁵Ibid., 32-33.

American experience evokes a counter desire for stability and more intimate places of identity. . . . The sheer immensity of the United States engenders the need for subnational places of belonging, and regional loyalty often emerges as a conscious response to . . . the nation-state."⁴⁶ Dewey, Wrobel, Steiner, and even the perceptive Yi-Fu Tuan have all relied upon logic to come to the conclusion that our loyalties are naturally local; however, nationalism is, by its very nature, illogical and unnatural: it creates an imagined community where no real community existed. Thus, in this case, region becomes less powerful an identity as nation when loyalties are fostered that cut across region--creating an imagined community that binds heterogeneous regions together. Through ecological construction, ties to the new region are attenuated by physical reminders of ties to the migrants place of origin. Thus, Mormons might easily have maintained loyalty to their new homeland in the Great Basin, but instead they made ecological connections that cut across more localized notions of place (and time), and drew in more extensive notions of place (and time) that spread loyalties across the country.

For Anderson and Hobsbawm, part of creating a cohesive nation rests not only on creating cohesion, but also on the exclusion of others.⁴⁷ According to Anthony Marx, the construction of race is of *central* importance to the creation of a nation. As states have

⁴⁶Michael C. Steiner and David M. Wrobel, "Many Wests: Discovering a Dynamic Western Regionalism," in Many Wests: Place, Culture, and Regional Identity, eds. Michael C. Steiner and David M. Wrobel (New York: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 7. Steiner and Wrobel also appear to be drawing from Yi-Fu Tuan who contented that, "The modern state is too large, its boundaries too arbitrary, its area too heterogeneous to command the kind of affection that arises out of experience and intimate knowledge." Topophilia, 100.

⁴⁷Anderson, 7; Hobsbawm, 63-67.

sought for the stability, legitimacy, and power that foster economic growth, they have functioned under the principle of “selective exclusion,” whereby they could effectively construct definitions of race to further their goals.⁴⁸ Thus, race constructing becomes essential to the formation of nationalist feelings. Therefore, ecological changes that are influenced by feelings of nationalism are designed to draw boundaries of exclusion and inclusion. Nationalized landscapes circumscribe space in an effort to exclude the unfamiliar others.

Finally, James C. Scott, a political scientist, has recognized the efforts of states to redesign landscapes in an attempt to create a semblance of national cohesion. This unity gives the state tremendous advantage; both the power and the resources of the state increase when they know where their citizens live, have a standard of counting their goods, and can identify individuals. Therefore, states have attempted, when able, to take “exceptionally complex, illegible, and local social practices . . . and create a standard grid whereby it could be centrally recorded and monitored. The organization of the natural world [is] . . . no exception,” to the modifications made by the state.⁴⁹ As states try to “get a handle on its subjects and their environment,” they simplify landscapes which, if successful, serve the cause of creating a sense of connection to the larger nation.⁵⁰ Thus, nationalism acts to create the familiar out of the unfamiliar.

⁴⁸Anthony W. Marx, Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa, and Brazil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2-4.

⁴⁹Scott, State, 2.

⁵⁰The central premise of Scott’s book is that efforts to simplify and control social and environmental orders have often been abysmal failures.

A Nationalist Approach to Environmental History

Synthesizing the insights on nationalism from Anderson, Hobsbawm, Marx, and Scott with the insights of environmental history mentioned above, yields a generalized rubric with four general criteria that identify ecological change influenced by nationalism: simplified space, circumscribed space, spatial connections, and temporal connections. Applied to the American West, these ideas can help us understand with greater clarity the attempts to redesign western landscapes.

First, nationalized landscapes are created by simplifying the landscape. People simplify environments to allow them to focus on the familiar. This simplified space serves the power of the state by making the landscape legible. Simplified, legible landscapes appear easier to manage—they have served to mitigate naturally decentralizing forces.

To redesign a simplified landscape, it is not necessary to change every biological entity. The redesigned landscape is built with objects that act as encoded symbols. The landscape can then influence ideas because it is encoded with special meaning. For example, poplars signified a special tie to the land. A person looking at the poplar is then culturally encouraged to feel that the tree is speaking to her--telling her that she has a special tie to this land and nation.

One way that the Mormons simplified the landscape was through the planting of shade trees. Once in the Great Basin Mormons planted tremendous quantities of shade trees. Rarely mentioning these trees in connection with erosion control or windbreaks, Mormons instead made frequent mention of the aesthetic value of their shade trees in the

creation of a visible landscape. In many ways, the simplification of landscapes in the Great Basin mirrored the simplifications that Europeans had made in New England. Mormons used trees as part of an effort to replace the unusual environments with a landscape design with which they were more experienced and knowledgeable, and at the same time, connecting themselves to the rest of the United States.

Planting shade trees in the valleys simplified the landscape by visually collapsing the ecological zones that existed when Mormons arrived in the Salt Lake Valley. Rather than clearing the valleys below of timber which virtually did not exist, they brought shade trees down into the valleys, to intersperse among fields and villages. Thus, Mormons simplified the landscape into a familiar pattern, a pattern that connected them to the larger United States. Much the same as had been done in New England, they tried to change the land into a pattern of farmland, cropland, village, and wilderness.

The tunnel vision acquired in the process of simplifying the environment ignores and obscures the real complexity going on around it. This complexity applies both to the environment and to the native inhabitants of the land. What James Scott has said of social order is true of environmental order: "Designed or planned [environmental] . . . order is necessarily schematic; it always ignores essential features of any real, functioning [environmental] . . . order."⁵¹ Attempts to nationalize landscapes have always obscured the real complexity of nature. Likewise, these attempts pretend that local knowledge of the land—James Scott terms it *mētis*—does not exist, and also works to obscure resistance

⁵¹Scott, State, 6. I have substituted the word state for the word environmental.

offered by those with the *mētis*.⁵² This is especially applicable to simplified landscapes.

The second feature of a nationalized landscape is circumscribed space. In this manner, nationalized landscapes are ecologically designed, imagined communities that are artificially bounded. These landscapes are carefully circumscribed into space that both include the defining entity, such as the Mormons, and exclude others, such as Native Americans. Ecology can be designed to selectively exclude--giving stability, legitimacy, and power.

One way the Mormons circumscribed the landscape was by planting non-native fish, imported from the eastern United States. By planting non-native fish Mormons created environments that kept Indians away from the landscape of Mormon settlement. Many Mormons, like most of their contemporaries, favored the policy of keeping the Indians on carefully bounded reservations, usually placed at a convenient location away from white settlements. The introduction of nonnative fishes altered the ecology of waterways, and eliminated traditional sources of food, such as cutthroat trout and waterfowl. Planted fish also made the Indians specialized technologies developed to harvest unique breeds of western fish more problematic, and their specialized knowledge less valuable. These circumscribed landscapes acted to block the involvement of native

⁵²*Mētis* derives from classical Greek and denotes useful knowledge acquired through practical experience. Scott, *State*, 6, 309-314. For an elaboration on this theme see Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), where he demonstrates that people come to know the environment of the Columbia River through work.

tribes in a discourse about the land.⁵³ Likewise, the ecological transformations wrought by the Mormons compounded the difficulties of Native Americans in becoming involved in a discourse over such issues as land ownership, hunting and fishing rights, resource management, and a host of other ecological issues.

Spatial connections that tie heterogeneous regions into an imagined community are the third criterion for nationalized landscapes. For example, Mormons created ties through landscape that were spatial by planting millions of fish imported from New England and the upper Mid-West. These implanted fish were used to fashion a connection that bound together distant and disparate lands with a cord of familiarity.⁵⁴ The transplanted fish become a visible, tangible reminder that the new western space was home, just like the old eastern landscape was home. Colony and metropole become conflated through a common landscape. These reformations go beyond simply recreating the familiar, however, when they are consciously associated with a tie to the larger nation. The Mormons planted familiar fish, but they also stressed the connection that those fish gave them to the rest of the United States.

Lastly, nationalized landscapes create temporal connections. As Yi-Fu Tuan has noted, "objects anchor time."⁵⁵ One way the Mormon's used the landscape to create a

⁵³Cf. Alice Brittin, "Close Encounters of a Third World Kind: Rigoberta Menchu and Elisabeth Burgos's *Mo llamo Rigoberta Menchu*," Latin American Perspectives, 87, vol. 22, no. 4 (Fall 1995), 101.

⁵⁴Andrew Jenson, Church Chronology, Excerpts, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1914), under heading June 1896.

⁵⁵Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1977), 187.

temporal tie to the nation's past was through the erection of Liberty Poles. The Liberty Pole had become an important symbol of growing nationhood during the revolutionary period. People had used these poles to draw each other together in a spirit of unity against the British.⁵⁶ The second company of Mormon Pioneers on the trail planted Liberty Poles, the most famous being near the Elkhorn Ferry on the Platte River.⁵⁷ This area became known as Liberty Pole camp, and became the major staging area for leaving Winter Quarters and beginning the trek to the West.

The illusion of temporal connection to the larger nation works forward in time as well, by visually connecting space to a future scheme or sense of national destiny, such as a millennial vision of a perfected landscape that prepares the earth for a coming messiah. Not only did the Mormons alter the landscape to cement ties to the past of the larger United States, but they also redesigned landscapes to connect themselves to the future destiny of the United States. Mormons used the new landscape of the trail they helped build through the Platte River Valley to tie themselves to the future destiny of the U.S.: a destiny in which the Mormons envisioned Utah as the new head of the country, rather than Washington.

By circumscribing and simplifying space, and by creating connections to the larger United States, both spatial and temporal, the Mormons created a series of highly

⁵⁶David Hackett Fischer, Paul Revere's Ride (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 72, 156, 206, 207. Liberty Poles had were also used during the Whiskey Rebellion, see Gary B. Nash and others, The American People: Creating a Nation and Society, Volume 1: to 1877, Brief 2nd Edition (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 168.

⁵⁷Sarah Rich, "Reminiscences of Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich," Journey, 375; Joseph Hovey, Autobiography (1812-1847), BYU-S, 40.

nationalized landscapes. They began making changes in the landscape from the very beginning of their sojourn in the American West that strengthened their connection to the larger United States. Chapter 2 explores the modifications made in the environments of the Platte River Valley, the area they traveled through on their way to the Great Basin. Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the specific alterations in the landscape of the West: the planting of fish and trees. Finally, Chapter 5 will describe some of the unintended repercussions of designing nationalized landscapes, and how these difficulties continue into the present.

CHAPTER 2

TRAIL

The trail that Mormons forged as they migrated west carried them through landscapes that they had little real experience with. This chapter will examine how Mormons envisioned the trail, and the actual types of environment where the trail comprised. It will show what Native Americans were there and how they used the trail. Lastly, it will explore how the trail was redesigned by the Mormons, and how those redesigns were influenced by feelings of connection to the larger United States.

Conceptualizing the Trail

As the Mormons readied themselves to make the trek west, they worked feverishly to complete the temple they had begun building at Nauvoo. Once completed, thousands were ushered through the temple doors to receive the ultimate rites had among the LDS. But the temple also became the base of operations where the Mormon leadership planned the impending migration. Heber C. Kimball recorded in his journal on 11 December 1845 that among the items used to decorate the walls of the Nauvoo Temple: "There are also a number of maps. A large map of the world hangs on the north side wall, and three maps of the United States . . . hangs [*sic*] on the west partition. On the south wall hangs

another large map of the United States.” Nearly three weeks later Kimball noted that he and Brigham Young had examined these “maps with reference to selecting a location for the Saints west of the Rocky Mountains and reading the various works which have been written by travelers.” Hooks had been put up to hang “looking-glasses, portraits, and Maps.”¹

These maps helped the Mormons envision the space they were about to redesign, and how that space was to be altered. In the words of Thongchai Winichakul, “A map anticipated spatial reality, not vice versa. In other words, a map was a model for, rather than a model of, what it purported to represent.”² These maps helped the Mormon people envision a nationalized landscape that was carefully circumscribed and simplified, and that created ties to the eastern U.S., ties both spatial and temporal.

Among the maps used by the LDS people, three maps are important to the Mormon conceptualization of the Platte River Valley.³ The 1823 map of the Long

¹Heber C. Kimball Journal, 11 December 1845, 31 December 1845, 5 December 1845, LDS Church Archives, as quoted in Lewis Clark Christian, “Mormon Foreknowledge of the West,” BYU Studies 21 (Fall 1981): 413.

²Thongchai Winichakul, “Siam Mapped: History of the Geo-body of Siam” (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sydney, 1988) as quoted in Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New York: Verso, 1983; reprint, 1991), 173.

³All three of these maps are conveniently compiled in William Clayton, The Latter-day Saints’ Emigrants’ Guide (St. Louis: Republican Steam Power Press, Chambers & Knapp, 1848; reprint, Stanley B. Kimball ed., Gerald, MO: Patrice Press, 1983), 93-99; The Long map can also be found in Leroy R. Hafen and Harlin M. Fuller eds., The Journal of Captain John R. Bell: Official Journalist for the Stephen H. Long Expedition to the Rocky Mountains, 1820 (Glendale, CA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1957), overleaf; The Fremont-Preuss map can be found in Donald Jackson and Mary Lee Spence eds., The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont: Map Portfolio (Urbana: University of Illinois Press,

expedition was considered the best map available of the Platte Valley, until Fremont's map was made available in 1846.⁴ The Fremont-Preuss map of 1843 was definitely used by the Mormons. Stephen Douglas sent a copy of this map from Washington D.C. to Joseph Smith. This map was carried with the vanguard company, and consulted along the journey west.⁵ As the Latter-day Saints were making their final preparations for the Journey west, Brigham Young ordered from St. Louis a copy of Mitchell's 1846 map of Texas, Oregon, and California. The pioneers also carried west with them the Mitchell map.⁶

This list of maps is by no means exhaustive, but it does represent some common features that are indicative of the Mormon conceptualization of the river environments. All three maps supported a vision of the landscape that made the Platte River valley a carefully circumscribed space, with Indians placed outside of this space. On the Long map, the principal feature between Council Bluffs and the Rocky Mountain is the Platte River and its tributaries. To the north of the Platte (on the south-side of the Loup River)

1970), map 2.

⁴Although there is no definitive proof that the Mormon pioneers used this map, its popularity makes it safe to presume that they were familiar with this map. Clayton, LDS Guide, 93.

⁵George D. Smith ed., An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 317, 318; Clayton, LDS Guide, 93; Levi Jackman, "Autobiography of Levi Jackman," Journey, 337. Benjamin Johnson, who was among the first to follow the vanguard company west, felt that it was an affront to Brigham Young's prophetic abilities to suggest that it was anyone but that "Modern Moses[,] guided alone by revelation, [which] had led us to the Salt Lake Valley." Benjamin F. Johnson, Letter to George S. Gibbs, 1903, Church Archives, cited in E. Dale LeBaron, "Benjamin Franklin Johnson: Colonizer, Public Servant, and Church Leader" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1967), 343.

⁶Clayton, LDS Guide, 99.

is inscribed, "Pawnee Villages." On the south of the Platte is marked, "Oto & Missouri Vill[ages]." The only other mention of Indians on the Long map is this interesting remark, placed on the south of the river as it nears the Rockies: "The Great Desert is frequented by roving bands of Indians who have no fixed places of residence but roam from place to place in quest of game." The Fremont map thoroughly erased all vestiges of Indian life. This map is unusual in that its only principal features are those of the Platte Valley, its tributaries, and three mountain ranges: the Wind Rivers, Sweetwaters, and Laramies (Black Hills). The Mitchell map likewise makes the Platte the principal feature between the Council Bluffs on the Missouri and the Rockies. The "Cheyennes" and the "Ogallallahs" are both placed parallel to, but well away from, the Platte. The "Pawnees," who were largely perceived of as friendly, are inscribed closer to the river, but not crossing its boundaries.⁷

"Empty Trails:" The Great Illusion

The roving, homeless bands of Indians on the Long map or the disappeared natives of the Fremont map were actually an illusion. At the time the Mormons headed onto the plains, there were more Indians than in the recent history of the area. The Mormons took part in what Elliot West has termed "the story of two invasions." Not only were migrants dragging increasing numbers of heavy wagons and cattle across the prairie, but there were

⁷By 1861, the new Mitchell map moved the Pawnees even further north of the River. See S. Augustus Mitchell, Mitchell's New General Atlas (Philadelphia: S.A. Mitchell, 1864), 43.

growing numbers of Indians moving out onto the Plains. The Cheyenne and Lakota both chased grander opportunities from the northern plains out into the Platte River valley. More new-comers meant that, in spite of devastating epidemics, there were actually more Indians on the central plains.⁸

The illusion was created by a seasonal pattern of resource use that these Indians had developed. In the spring Indian pastoralists fattened their horses on the grasses growing along the rivers. There were buffalo and grama grasses, which also grew on the high plains, as well as a "mix of low shrubs and different kinds of forbs. There were also "midgrasses" and "tallgrasses," such as little bluestem, big bluestem, side-oats grama, and others. These plants were common on the lower plains of Kansas and Nebraska, but to the west, on the higher plains, they were found "almost entirely along streams, where they were protected from the harshest weather and were supported by moister soil and a shallow water table." The river valleys were "protected corridors where these dominant eastern grasses extruded much farther westward than they normally could."⁹

In the early spring, Indians' horses along the river valleys, weak from the hardships of the winter, gained strength on these early sprouting grasses. By the late spring and early summer Indians moved their animals out onto the highlands between the streams. Between these streams was shortgrass country where there grew mainly buffalo grass and blue grama. These grasses gained the height of their nutritional content by mid-summer.

⁸Elliott West, The Way of the West: Essays on the Central Plains (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 15-17.

⁹Ibid., 21.

It was on the high plains that the Indians turned the ground into a gigantic pasture. There they would congregate until the fall when they would begin to move back down onto the stream valleys. Then, in the winter, when the central plains become "one of the harshest and most dangerous environments in the United States," the Indians and their animals would stay in the shelter of the river valleys.¹⁰

At the time that migrants headed west along the overland trails, the Indians were furthest removed from the river valleys. When the Indians returned to the river valleys for the winter, the westering migrants had stopped using the trail, if they could at all avoid it. In this manner, the river valleys were subjected to a "kind of shuttle system of land use."¹¹

"The Highway of Our Future Journey." Redesigning the Trail

In his study of the central plains, Elliott West focused on the unintended consequences of the use and abuse of the riparian zones. Equally intriguing, though, are the intended consequences, the purposeful change of landscapes. The Mormons came, not just to use the trails, but literally to redesign the landscapes of the river valleys. If there was any doubt from the beginning that there would be any attempts to redesign the landscape, it quickly dissipates when we look at the inventory of Heber Kimball's outfit as he took part in the vanguard company, the Camp of Israel. His layout included, five horses, seven mules, six oxen, two cows, one crosscut saw, six axes, one scythe, three

¹⁰Ibid., 20-26.

¹¹Ibid., 27.

hoes, five log chains, one spade, one crowbar, one keg of powder, two plows, one side of harness leather, one whip saw, six pairs of double harness, and seventy-one pounds of seed (presumably for a garden and/or orchards). And, for feed for the teams and the planting of crops, he included corn, buckwheat, oats, and rapeseed.¹² Mormons like Kimball came prepared to redesign the land. They brought with them both the tools to change the landscape, and plant life to change biotic communities.

The trail leading west offered a strange new world to these Mormon migrants. Most of the early followers of Mormonism were from New England, a place radically different than their homeland.¹³ Crossing the 98th meridian, they entered a different climate, another flora and fauna, revealing curious new creatures and plants. They saw prairie dogs, lizards, antelope, and horned toads roaming the plains, and grayling in the steadily clearing water. "They killed rattlesnakes and raided eagle's nests in the bluffs, [and] dug wolf pups out of dens in the slopes." New plants like Indian soap weed, tall sage brush, bunch grass, yucca, and prickly pear sprung from the dry earth. Heavy timber gave way to millions of acres of buffalo grass in a land full of clear, dry air.¹⁴ Even with

¹²Howard Egan, Pioneering the West, 1846 to 1878 (Richmond, UT: Howard R. Egan Estate, 1917) as quoted in Wallace Stegner, The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 120; cf. Henry William Bigler, Autobiography (1815-1846), "Henry Bigler's Journal Book A," typescript, BYU-S, 15-16; Aroet Lucious Hale, Journal (1828-1856), "Journal of Aroet Lucious Hale," typescript, BYU-S, 15-16.

¹³Stegner, Zion, 17; Wilford Woodruff, The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, Homer G. Durham ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990), 319; George Washington Hill, "Incidents in the Life of George Washington Hill (1878)," Journey, 355.

¹⁴Stegner, Zion, 129, 135, 146.

the considerable body of knowledge that these early Mormon migrants brought with them, they still were frequently awed and amazed by the "newness" of the landscape.

Certainly, there were dramatic unintended changes to the river valleys. It is easy to imagine the changes wrought upon this new landscape, simply by listing the sheer number of migrants and their animals. While it remains impossible to know the exact number of Latter-day Saints migrating to Utah, the estimates, based on the latest research, stand between 60,000 and 70,000 people migrating there between 1846 and 1869.¹⁵ The large numbers represents an incredible amount of damage to the landscape just from feet, hooves, and wheels. And, this trampling of the trail was often spread out hundreds of yards wide. The image of a single file wagon train was not the norm. Migrants often traveled from two wagons abreast up to five companies wide.¹⁶ Furthermore, the Mormons brought large numbers of animals with them. The second company of Mormons, approximately 2,000 in number, took with them horses, mules, oxen, milk cows, heifers, calves and sheep numbered at 5,000 head.¹⁷ The animals of the migrants west chewed up the native grasses, and when there were not grasses or shrubs to be

¹⁵Susan Easton Black, "How Many Pioneers Died on the Migration West?" The Ensign, 28 (July 1998), 41, 43 n. 5. This estimate has been revised down from earlier estimates of 80,000 used by earlier historians. Will Bagley uses the figure of 70,000 in Will Bagley, ed., The Pioneer Camp of the Saints: The 1846 and 1847 Mormon Trail Journals of Thomas Bullock (Spokane, WA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1997), 22.

¹⁶Smith, Clayton, 300, 311. Sarah Rich, "Reminiscences of Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich," Journey, 376.

¹⁷Stegner, Zion, 174.

found, they cut down cottonwood trees as browse for their animals.¹⁸

Ecological change along the trail was often quite dramatic. Robert Utley describes in vivid detail the changes brought about on the landscape and upon Native life-ways, by pioneers using the trails to travel across the Great Plains:

Their campfires consumed entire stands of timber at favored camping places. Their stock ripped bare the valley grasses and ate their way up the benches. Most threatening [to the Native Americans], their rifles felled buffalo, deer, and antelope by the thousands to supply meat for hungry travelers. 'Since the white man has made a road across our land,' complained the Shoshoni chief Washakie as early as 1855, 'and has killed our game, we are hungry, and there is nothing for us to eat. Our women and children cry for food and we have no food to give them.'¹⁹

The ecological changes wrought along the trail were often so dramatic that their effects can still be seen today. The wagons sometimes made permanent scars along the landscape. Just a few miles west of Guernsey, Wyoming, travelers today stop to take pictures of wagon ruts, embedded several feet into the soft sandstone.²⁰

Numerous migrants, both Mormon and non-Mormon, caused these changes. There are three reasons, however, that the Mormons did the most extensive redesigning of the landscape surrounding the trails. First, Mormons used the trail as much or more than any other single migrant group. Only the "gold-rushers" going to California posted similar

¹⁸Levi Jackman, "Autobiography of Levi Jackman," Journey, 337.

¹⁹Robert M. Utley, The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846 - 1890 (University of New Mexico Press: Albuquerque, 1984), 47.

²⁰It should be noted that Guernsey lies at a point where the Mormon trail had rejoined the Oregon trail.

numbers of travelers along the trail.²¹ In addition, the 60,000 to 70,000 migrants mentioned earlier does little to represent the impact of people and animals on the landscape, because significant numbers of people and animals traveled in both directions on the trail. From the very first year of migration, many saints returned to Winter Quarters to be with family and friends as they made the journey, as well as groups or missionaries heading back to the land of potential converts. Also, church leaders in Salt Lake began sending out wagon loads of supplies to meet wagon trains as they made the arduous trek across Wyoming.

Second, for a significant portion of the journey, Mormons created a new trail. Near the Loup Fork, the Platte River branches into the North and South Platte. The Oregon trail followed the south side of the North Platte. Mormons chose however, to traverse the north side of the river.²² Eventually, 150,000 migrants of all stripes would use the two branches of the trail.²³

Third, ironically, the Mormon's fastidiousness and concern for their fellow migrants following them caused the most widespread changes. They did not just follow a trail; they saw a sacred opportunity to build a "road for thousands of saints to follow."²⁴

²¹See J.S. Holliday, The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience, (Simon & Schuster: New York, 1981), 354, 396.

²²Stegner, Zion, 122.

²³Ibid., 142.

²⁴The north side of the Platte had been used before, such as by returning Astorians, and by members of Stephen H. Long's expedition, but these passages had left "mere scratches on the prairie." Bagley, Bullock, 22; Stegner, Zion, 127, 131. Thomas Bullock could barely contain his wonder, when over the course of just two days in April, he

“It should be understood,” Wilford Woodruff noted as he was helping break trail in May of 1847, “that we are piloting A road for the House of Israel to travel in for many years to come. Therefore it requires greater care.” Woodruff clarified the prevailing vision for the role of this trail stating, “we thought it best to keep on the north side of the [Platte] river & brave the difficulties of Burning Prairies & make A road that should stand as a permanant rout for the saints independant of the old emigration rout.”²⁵ At times, concern for those who would follow took precedence in decision making over more immediate concerns. Levi Jackman noted that the vanguard company, of which he was a member, had decided not to cross over to the south side of the Platte, but instead to “continue on the north side because it would be better for our brethren who would follow.”²⁶

This was no helter-skelter dash for the riches of the West that accompanied many of the mining rushes, but the trail was carefully planned out as a permanent route, for many to follow. Before the Mormons left Nauvoo, many of them gathered at a conference at the Nauvoo temple. There, many LDS people entered into a covenant to “spend the last cent,” to enable all of their people to journey to the Zion that they would attempt to build in the West.²⁷ Therefore, Mormons simplified the landscape of the trail to create a

mentioned three times that they were blazing a “new road.” Bagley, Bullock, 133, 135, 136.

²⁵As quoted in Bagley, Bullock, 21-22.

²⁶Levi Jackman, “Autobiography of Levi Jackman,” Journey, 341.

²⁷Bagley, Bullock, 73. B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1930; reprint, Orem, UT: Sonos Publishing Inc., 1991), 2:538.

more durable highway.

Simplifying a space for a highway gave coherence to the trail. The environment of the trail was one none of the initial pioneers had experience with. The Mormons recreated the familiar, the known, the predictable in the river valleys. They built bridges across creeks and rivers.²⁸ They dug down the steepest pitches, grading hills, "Fix[ing]" ravines.²⁹ They leveled the approaches to fords and made them passable.³⁰ They put road gangs to work throwing rocks off rough stretches of the road³¹ They cut down nearby trees to make rafts to ferry the wagons across³² They built and operated ferries, aiding both Mormon and non-Mormon along the trail.³³ For the last stretch of the trail, as the entered the Wasatch range, they "cut and grubbed the abominable willows" in the canyon bottoms.³⁴ They even built entire towns like Garden Grove and Mt. Pisgah in Iowa where

²⁸William Farrington Cahoon, Autobiography (1813-1878), in Stella Shurtleff and Brent Farrington Cahoon eds., Reynolds Cahoon and His Stalwart Sons (Salt Lake City, Utah: Paragon Press, 1960), 90; Lorenzo Dow Young, "Diary of Lorenzo Dow Young," Utah Historical Quarterly 14 (1946): 139-141; Smith, Clayton, 355; Stegner, Zion, 11, 55, 84.

²⁹Bagley, Bullock, 127; Smith, Clayton, 340; Stegner, Zion, 145.

³⁰Bagley, Bullock, 128-129, 135; Smith, Clayton, 305; Stegner, Zion, 11, 55, 145.

³¹"Diary of Lorenzo Dow Young," 167; Stegner, Zion, 11, 145. Sometimes the pioneers rolled rocks off of hills and canyons simply for amusement as in, Bagley, Bullock, 228; Smith, Clayton, 358.

³²Levi Jackman, "Autobiography of Levi Jackman," Journey, 345, 346; George Washington Hill, "Incidents in the Life of George Washington Hill (1878)," Journey, 361; Smith, Clayton, 342; Stegner, Zion, 11.

³³Stegner, Zion, 11, 84, 148.

³⁴Smith, Clayton, 355, 360-61; Bagley, Bullock, 231; Stegner, Zion, 12.

they left log cabins, fenced fields, rowed gardens and orchards, and wells to act as waiting and supply stations.³⁵ The Mormons who came behind followed the "tracks the pioneers had made through the illimitable prairie."³⁶

At the same time that these migrants were dramatically simplifying the landscape, they were also creating a carefully circumscribed spaces. One way the Mormons created a circumscribed space was by traveling in tight groups, which stayed as close to the river valleys as possible. Almost to the reverse of those companies traveling on the south side of the river, whose companies broke into smaller and smaller units as the stresses and strains of life on the trail wore on, the Mormons tended to stay in much larger groups, and usually remained in these large groups until the end of their journey.³⁷ George Washington Hill believed that the purpose of staying in these large group was for "protections against Indians that swarmed in thousands over the plains."³⁸ This fear of Indians was strong enough that it overcame other antipathies. Joel Johnson, who was among a group heading east along the trail in 1857, recorded that his company agreed to the wishes of a group of apostates to join his company, for they were "afraid of the

³⁵Stegner, Zion, 54-55.

³⁶George Washington Hill, "Incidents in the Life of George Washington Hill (1878)," Journey, 362.

³⁷See J. S. Holliday, The World Rushed; Sarah Rich, "Reminiscences of Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich," Journey, 377.

³⁸George Washington Hill, "Incidents in the Life of George Washington Hill (1878)," Journey, 362.

Indians and stopped for us to come up.”³⁹ This fear also meant that young Mosiah Hancock was not the only child scolded for straying to far from the company.⁴⁰ Many cautionary tales developed, usually ending in death or other tragedy, about those who wandered to far from the trail.⁴¹ To be sure, the large groups that the Mormons traveled in were influenced by a strong communal spirit, but their cohesion was also influenced by their fear, and their desire to keep Indians away from the trail.

On all of the overland trails the problems with Indians stemmed more from the migrants own “anxieties about what *could* happen to them than from what actually *did* happen.”⁴² In a study of 103 women’s overland trail diaries Lillian Schissel noted that only 7 percent of the writers recorded attacks by Indians.⁴³ The real killers on the plains were cholera and accidents.⁴⁴ The common perception could have just as easily followed

³⁹Joel Hills Johnson, *Autobiography* (1802-1868), typescript, BYU-S, 17.

⁴⁰Mosiah Hancock *Autobiography* (1834-1865), typescript, BYU-S, 38-39.

⁴¹Sylvia Barlow, “Biography of Harriet Hales,” in Kenneth Glyn Hales ed. and compiler, *Windows: A Mormon Family* (Tucson, AZ: Skyline Printing, 1985), 40-41; Sarah Alexander, “A Little Story of the Experiences of Sara Alexander When Crossing the Plains in 1859,” *Journey*, 535-536; Emma James, from Laleta Dixon, “History of My Ancestor, William James of the Willey [sic] Handcart Co., 1856,” *Journey*, 626.

⁴²Glenda Riley, “The Specter of a Savage: Rumors and Alarmism on the Overland Trail,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 15 (October 1984): 427; Emphasis in the original.

⁴³Lillian Schissel, *Women’s Diaries of the Westward Journey*, Studies in the Life of Women Series, supervising ed. Gerda Lerner, with a preface by Carl N. Degler (New York: Schocken Books, 1982; expanded, 1992), 154.

⁴⁴J. S. Holliday, *The World Rushed*, 115; Jonathan Crosby, *Autobiography* (1807-1852), typescript and holograph, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah, 29-30; Warren Foote, “Journal of Warren Foote (1850),” *Journey*, 419; Mary Maughan, “Autobiography of Mary Ann Weston Maughan,” *Journey*, 423-430.

the reaction of Levi Jackman, who thought the Pawnees that they met "seemed very friendly."⁴⁵ The perception of fear and danger acted as a way to verbalize the need for closeness.

For the trail to be a viable artery, it would have to safely contain all the migrants within a carefully circumscribed area. The Mormons did everything they could to stay close to the river, and avoid what they thought of as the territory of the Indians. At night, when they stopped to camp, they kept cattle and horses close and guarded.⁴⁶ Their camps were most often right next to the river or a stream⁴⁷ Even in death the Mormons did not stray to far from the comfortable confines of the river valleys.⁴⁸ These action sought to place danger and the unknown, in the persona of Indians, excluded and away from the trail.

At the same time that the Mormons were creating a simplified, circumscribed space that spatially connected them to the East, they were also creating temporal ties to the nation's past that made the area of the trail not only a place set apart, but also an American place. One way the Mormon's used the landscape to create a temporal tie to the nation's past was through the erection of Liberty Poles. The Liberty Pole had become an important symbol of growing nationhood during the revolutionary period. People had

⁴⁵Levi Jackman, "Autobiography of Levi Jackman," Journey, 337.

⁴⁶William Farrington Cahoon, Autobiography, 90; Levi Jackman, "Autobiography of Levi Jackman," Journey, 338.

⁴⁷Levi Jackman, "Autobiography of Levi Jackman," Journey, 341.

⁴⁸William Farrington Cahoon, Autobiography, 90; Nancy Tracy, "Life History of Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy Written by Herself," Journey, 410-411.

used these poles to draw each other together in a spirit of unity against the British.⁴⁹ The second company of Mormon Pioneers reached back into the past of the United States and pulled forth a Liberty Pole, which they planted near the Elkhorn Ferry.⁵⁰ This area became known as Liberty Pole camp, and became the major staging area for leaving Winter Quarters and beginning the trek to the West.

To be sure, not every Mormon swelled with pride when gazing upon this Liberty Pole. Still feeling the effects of mob violence and governmental indifference, many Latter-day Saints resented the connection to the U.S. Robert Gardner, Jr., believed that the call to muster 500 Mormon men to go help fight the war with Mexico was a trap, and seeing the Liberty Pole "in the midle of an Indain country thes things made me feel like asking O liberty, and freedom, where hast though [thou] fled for this demand was made a trap."⁵¹ Gardner resented the placement of such a symbol: to him it still clearly represented a tie to the U.S.

⁴⁹David Hackett Fischer, Paul Revere's Ride (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 72, 156, 206, 207. Liberty Poles had were also used during the Whiskey Rebellion, see Gary B. Nash and others, The American People: Creating a Nation and Society, Volume 1: to 1877, Brief 2nd Edition (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 168.

⁵⁰Sarah Rich, "Reminiscences of Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich," Journey, 375; Joseph Hovey, Autobiography (1812-1847), typescript, BYU-S, 40.

⁵¹Robert Gardner, "Journal and Diary of Robert Gardner, Jr.," Journey, 269. On the Mormon Battalion see Norma Baldwin Ricketts, The Mormon Battalion: U.S. Army of the West, 1846-148, with a forward by David L Bigler (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1996).

Nationalism: A Curious Reversal

“THE STANDARDS OF ZION”

[Sung to the tune of the Star Spangled Banner]

O, Saints, have you seen, o'er yon mountain's proud height, The day star of promise so brilliantly beaming? Its rays shall illumine the world with its light, And the ensign of Zion, exultingly streaming, All nations invite to walk in its light, And join to maintain the proud standard of right-- The Standard of Zion, O long may it wave O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

Our motto is peace, and the triumph of right; And we joyfully hail the Millennia dawning, When man can emerge from a long dreary night And bask in the sunbeams of Zion's bright morning. The white flag so rare, still floating in air, Proclaims 'mid the mountains that peace is still there. Let the Standard of Zion eternally wave O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Though earth and its treasures should melt in the fire-- The planets be riven with the trumpets' loud thunder, The sunlight of Heaven wax dim and expire, And the veil of eternity parted asunder, Yet firm and unshaken the truth shall remain, And the heirs of the Priesthood forever shall reign, And the Standard of Zion eternally wave O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Parley P. Pratt⁵²

Ambivalence, and even outright hatred, did not preclude the Mormons from feeling a deep sense of connection to the United States. One way they resolved this paradox was to claim loyalty to the Constitution, but dissatisfaction with the government. In 1857 the Scylla and Caribides of this dilemma became frighteningly real when the federal government sent troops to Utah to quash a supposed rebellion. At this time the Mormon

⁵²Parley P. Pratt ed., Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985), 395. This song was recorded after the date January 1, 1856, and was most likely written in 1855.

leadership clarified the position that they hoped would lead them through these troubled waters. Brigham Young emphatically declared:

It is a pretty bold stand for this people to take, to say that they will not be controlled by the corrupt administrators of our General Government. . . . We wish the laws of our Government honoured, and we have ever honoured them; but they are trampled under foot by administrators. . . . I do not lift my voice against the great and glorious Government guaranteed to every citizen by our Constitution, but against those corrupt administrators who trample the Constitution and just laws under their feet. They care no more about them than they do about the Government of France; but they walk them under their feet with impunity.⁵³

John Taylor expressed similar thoughts, declaring, "We are not rebelling against the United States, neither are we resisting the Constitution of the United States; but it is wicked and corrupt usurpers that are oppressing us and that would take our rights from us."⁵⁴

Some LDS people even went so far as to accuse the U.S. government of being disloyal to the nation.⁵⁵ On 16 February 1860, the Utah territorial assemble drafted a "Memorial to Congress for the Election of Governor, Judges, Secretary, and other Territorial Officers by the People." In their petition they groused at the appointment of

⁵³Brigham Young, September 23, 1857, JD 5:232-233.

⁵⁴John Taylor, August 30, 1857, JD 5:188.

⁵⁵This was a tactic they were thoroughly familiar with. Stephen Douglas, whose antipathy towards the Mormons began long before their flight west, had claimed that because they continued to practice polygamy they were "alien enemies and outlaws, denying their allegiance and defying the authorities of the United States." As quoted in Gustive O. Larson, The "Americanization" of Utah For Statehood (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1971), 22-23. Brigham Young later shot back, "Liars have reported that this people have committed treason." Brigham Young, September 23, 1857, JD 5:233.

outsiders to territorial positions, and accused the U.S. government of resorting to a "relic of British Colonial rule . . . [which is] opposed to the genius, and policy of republican government. . . . [N]o persons can be so well qualified to administer justice, make laws and execute them, in a Territory as those citizens of the United States, who have reclaimed it from a wilderness."⁵⁶ The U.S. government was not really part of the nation, but the Mormons most certainly were.

Another way that the Mormon people attempted to resolve the paradox of love and connection with country existing alongside distrust and uneasy feelings toward the nation was to create another temporal tie, but in this case, to the nation's future. Conceptually, the trail that the Mormons redesigned on their flight to the West created a conduit, an artery carrying life from one part of the body to the other, in which Mormons were able to rhetorically reverse the flow: Utah becomes the head and the viscera, and the East becomes the extremities. In an Independence Day speech in 1854 Brigham Young said, speaking of the government of the United States, "The whole body is deranged; and the head, which ought to be the seat of sense and the temple of wisdom, is insensible to the wants of the body, and to the fact that, if the body sinks, the head must sink also."

In spite of this malignancy, however, the disease would not be fatal. According to Young, at a time in the future when the country would be fighting for its life, it would seem as though the constitution would fail, but he asked, "Will the Constitution be destroyed? No: it will be held inviolate by this people; and, as Joseph Smith said, 'The

⁵⁶Record Group 233, Reports of the House of Representatives, William H. Hooper, Box 326, National Archives, Washington, D.C., as quoted in Larson, Americanization, 27.

time will come when the destiny of the nation will hang upon a single thread. At that critical juncture, this people will step forth and save it from the threatened destruction.' It will be so."⁵⁷ In February of the following year Young was even more explicit:

Brethren and sisters, our friends wish to know our feelings towards the Government. I answer, they are first-rate, and we will prove it too, as you will see if you only live long enough, for that we shall live to prove it is certain; and when the Constitution of the United States hangs, as it were, upon a single thread, they will have to call for the "Mormon" Elders to save it from utter destruction; and they will step forth and do it.⁵⁸

Thus, Mormons could maintain feelings of loyalty towards America, by envisioning a day when the constitution would be rescued and the diseased organ of the federal bureaucracy would be excised.

It was not just the church hierarchy that expected this eventual reversal. Later in his life, Mosiah Hancock wrote that when he was a young boy he too had been privy to this nationalist prophetic vision.⁵⁹ Hancock recorded that while he was living in Nauvoo, Joseph Smith had spoken to him in private, saying that at some future date the U.S. would go to war, where they would fight until one half of the army would give up, while the rest would continue to struggle. At the point that the United States would be "almost ready to give up," the "boys from the mountains" would rush forward in time to save the army from defeat and ruin. Hancock reported that he was told by Joseph Smith that the army

⁵⁷Brigham Young, July 4, 1854, JD 7:14-15.

⁵⁸Brigham Young, February 18, 1855, JD 2:182. Cf. George Q. Cannon, November 20, 1881, JD 23:104; Orson Hyde, January 3, 1858, JD 6:152; John Taylor, August 31, 1879, JD 21:8.

⁵⁹Hancock was four years old when his family moved to Nauvoo, and he was ten when Joseph Smith was killed.

would say "Brethren, we are glad you have come; give us men, henceforth, who can talk with God'. Then you will have friends, but you will save the country when it's liberty hangs by a hair, as it were."⁶⁰ Although the years may have frayed the edges of Hancock's memory, it is important to note that he believed that at some future date the LDS Church would be called on to save the country from ruin—as the true patriots they believed they were.

The trail, as it was literally etched into the landscape, became a physical reminder of the nation's past, and a link to America's future. It is no longer just a reminder of LDS history, but the trail becomes a symbol of Americana.⁶¹ The trail can be viewed much like the Natchez trace, or even Mount Rushmore, as a permanent reminder that this piece of ground is America. And, in preparation for the nation's future, the trail was designed as a more durable highway.

Much like other symbols, the trail covers complexity and division. The Natchez trace obscures fissures in the connections between the North and the South and makes the country seem whole. Mount Rushmore covers hostilities and disconnections, and claims the Black Hills as America's own. The Mormon Trail gives the West a historical connection the East that makes the Platte Valley entirely American, despite it having once been a highway, carrying people out of the United States. One can now buy a guidebook and follow the trail and look at it with the same sense of awe and wonder that Mount

⁶⁰Mosiah Hancock Autobiography, 28-29.

⁶¹For example, see David J. Whittaker, ed, Mormon Americana: A Guide to Sources and Collections in the United States (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1994).

Rushmore is designed to evoke.⁶² The trail becomes part of a time line of American history

As they were designing this highway, the Mormons tried to use the landscape of the river valleys to spell out their feelings of connection to the larger U.S. nation. Hannah King, an emigrant from England, recognized this symbolic connection to the U.S. when she gazed out upon the Platte Valley. Somewhere, just beyond the Elkhorn crossing, she paused to reflect on what the landscape of the trail meant to her, as well as thousands of other Mormons: "Claudius [a friend she had recently made] gave me a glass of port wine being the 4th of July!! And asked me for a Toast for my adopted Country! This filled up my heart which was full before—I got out of the Tent and walked to the top of one of these beautiful Hills—where I sat down & prayed & thought."⁶³ Much like other LDS people who worked to redesign the landscape of the Platte valley, her feelings about the United States were intimately tied to her view of the landscape.

⁶²Stanley B. Kimball, Historic Sites and Markers Along the Mormon and Other Great Western Trails (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

⁶³Hannah King, "Autobiography and Diary of Hannah Tapfield King (1864-1872)," Journey, 486.

CHAPTER 3

TROUT

We move now to an even more specific example of environmental change. In this chapter we will explore how the Mormons redesigned native fish populations in their new home in the West. These redesigned fish populations bounded space in a community of Mormons that excluded Indians. Mormons also used fish populations to simplify waterways of the region. Further, by planting fish from the eastern U.S., Mormons increased their strengthening connections to the larger U.S. nation. In essence changing waterways, along with other environmental changes, allowed the Mormons to make the Great Basin their home, the same as the eastern U.S. had been home. By recreating familiar surroundings, ones where they had developed expertise, Mormons were able to have an advantage over the natives, whose technologies and expertise were made obsolete by the changed environment.

"The Largest and Finest Trout"

As the vanguard company of Mormon migrants, dubbed the Camp of Israel, began to make the climb from the dolorous alkali flats of central Wyoming to the tips of the forbidding Rocky Mountains, a quaint interlude took place that can be easily passed over.

But, upon closer inspection this interlude reveals an episode loaded with meaning. The pioneers approached the clear running waters of Black's fork. Wilford Woodruff, an avid fisherman since his youth, thought the water looked like there could be trout. He used artificial flies he had brought from his last mission to England. He caught twelve of what they called "spotted trout" or "salmon trout," which would have been native cutthroat trout.¹ Inspired by Wilford's success, his traveling companions joined him, catching fish as they camped along the river.²

From these rather inauspicious beginnings, there would follow thousands of other fishermen until, according to Wallace Stegner, the native cutthroat was "crowded out by the more easily propagated rainbow and eastern brook trout."³ Certainly, other Mormons like William Clayton aided this by publishing details of fishing success in the enormously popular THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' EMIGRANTS' GUIDE.⁴ Likewise, Wilford Woodruff published encouragement of both sport fishing and its ever present companion, fish planting. Later in his life, when Wilford was in his eighties, he took an excursion to the headwaters of the Weber River in the Uintah mountains where he and his party caught several large fish. He reported this excursion in a letter that was later published in *Forest and Stream* stating, "concerning the trout of Utah, I will say that [the] . . . lakes, rivers

¹Wallace Stegner, The Gathering of Zion (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 159.

²Ibid., 160.

³Ibid., 159-160.

⁴They had already fished at several camps along their journey. Ibid., 145.

and streams abound with the largest and finest trout.”⁵

As important as fishing was to become, Stegner wrongly attributed the demise of the cutthroat solely to over-fishing. Actively planned, ecologically redesigned rivers, streams, and lakes played an important part in the demise of the cutthroat. Mormon migrants played a singular role in the introduction, into western waters, of eastern species that would push out the cutthroat, as well as other native species.

Once the waters of the region had been redesigned, the church turned its attention toward strengthening a bond with the United States. In 1890 Wilford Woodruff, as president of the church, issued a statement, called the Manifesto, that foresaw the end of years of legal fisticuffs over federal power in Mormon country, saying:

Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional by the court of last resort, I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise.⁶

Why were Mormons willing to change to be included in the United States? The beginning to the answer may lie in that letter Woodruff sent to *Forest and Stream* magazine, written two years after the Manifesto. Even forty-five years after making a new

⁵A reprint of the letter, which was originally published 22 September, 1892, appears in James B. Allen and Herbert H. Frost, “Wilford Woodruff, Sportsman,” BYU Studies 15 (Fall 1974) : 113-117.

⁶In The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1986), 291-292; Daniel H. Ludlow, ed. Church History: Selections From the Encyclopedia of Mormonism (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), s. v. “Manifesto of 1890,” by Paul H. Peterson.

home in the West, the redesigned landscape Woodruff had just vacationed in gave him pause to reminisce with his pen over his origins in New England. Among his first words were these:

I was born on the 1st day of March 1807, at Avon, Hartford County, Conn., on the banks of a trout brook which had turned the wheels of a flour mill and a saw mill owned by my grandfather and father, for many years. As soon as I was old enough to carry a fish-rod I commenced catching trout, which I have continued to do, from time to time, for nearly 80 years. Several years of my life were spent in Ashland, Oswego Co., New York, on the east border of Lake Ontario. While there I assisted, one morning in catching 500 salmon.⁷

Closely connecting the fish of his New England Past, the fish of his western present, Woodruff was engaging in a process that tied redesigned landscapes of the West to a sense of connection to the larger U.S. nation. It would be one hundred years before Utah would see the uberpatriotism that raged through Mormon wards in the 1950s and 1960s, but they began to tug at the cords that bound them, ever fast, to a country that they felt connected with—by ecology and by race.⁸ The foreign environment of the West became home again, and that home was the United States of America.

⁷Allen and Frost, 114. Cf. the fond recollections that Joseph Holbrook had of his grandfather's farm in Massachusetts. See Joseph Holbrook, *Autobiography (1806-1846)*, typescript, BYU-S, 10-11.

⁸For example: "Every true Latter-day Saint throughout the world loves the USA. The Constitution of this land is part of every Latter-day Saint's religious faith. To us, this is not just another nation not just a member of the family of nations. This is a great and glorious nation with a divine mission and a prophetic history and future." Ezra Taft Benson, in an address to the One Hundred Thirty-Second Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in Conference Report, 8 April 1962 (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1962), 103.

"From Sea to Shining Sea"

On the trail coming west, some people, began to make connections between ecology, especially fish, and the eastern U.S. Emmeline Wells, one of only three woman in the vanguard company to make the crossing of the plains, frequently made connections between the ecology of the trail and New England. "I have picked some blue violets which remind me of New England," she noted one morning."⁹ Wells also noted that one "afternoon the boys have been fishing in the creek and caught some little chub fishes such as abound in the streams of New England."¹⁰ One can sense the comforts that these familiar sights gave Wells and other Mormons as they trudged through the alien environment of the Great Plains.

Once they arrived in the valley, Mormons began to espouse the tenets of the gospel of eastern, American fish, a gospel whose catechisms they had learned growing up in the United States. From the pulpit of the newly built tabernacle in Salt Lake City on April 6, 1868, George Albert Smith, a councilor to Brigham Young, preached the importance of what he called "fish culture." Speaking of the native species of fish as though they had already become extinct, he cites the precedence of species reintroduction used previously in New England: "This is being done successfully in New England, where rivers were formerly well stocked with salmon and other varieties of fish, though for many years they have become *extinct*." These New Englanders he noted "have also been

⁹Emmeline Wells, "Diary of Emmeline B. Wells," Journey, 127.

¹⁰Ibid., 126.

employed to re-stock the rivers, and in this way many *choice* varieties of fish have been again successfully introduced.” Finally, he appealed to the agrarian ideal in the minds of the members of the congregation: “The real fact is, they are as easily raised as hogs, if the proper attention is paid to them.”¹¹ Why were they as easily raised as hogs? These fish were fish that many Mormons knew. They had grown up catching these fish, and adapting their technologies and their thinking, to master their local environments.

Smith’s words did not go unheeded. During his lengthy tenure as local Fish and Game Commissioner, A. Milton Musser, was instrumental in seeing the planting of more than eleven million fish. The “white fish, black bass, sunfish, shad, eel, perch, brook trout, crappie, rainbow trout, lake trout, scale, mirror and leather carp, catfish, and gold and silver fish” had all been brought from the Northeast and the Upper-Midwest: “the Potomac, Delaware, Missouri, Mississippi and Illinois rivers, and from Lakes Michigan and Erie.”¹²

There were some attempts by the leaders of the church to encourage people to use the fish that had been planted. Commercial fishing never became important across the region in spite of the urging by church leaders.¹³ It appears that the value of planting fish

¹¹Emphasis mine. George Albert Smith, April 6, 1868, JD 12:198-199.

¹²Andrew Jenson, Church Chronology, Excerpts, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1914), under heading June 1896. See also Allen and Frost, 116.

¹³Although Utah Lake was used for commercial fishing on into the mid-twentieth century, it was only of primary importance to the immediate region during periods of want from 1850 to 1858. See D. Robert Carter, “A History of Commercial Fishing on Utah Lake,” (M.A. Thesis: Brigham Young University, 1969); William F. Sigler and John W. Sigler, Fishes of the Great Basin: A Natural History, Max C. Fleischmann Series in Great Basin History, ed. John F. Setter (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1987), 19-20.

did not reside solely in its usefulness as food or its economic value.¹⁴ The disinterest of the Mormon people to make the use of fish of primary interest stands in striking contrast to the fervor they exhibited for planting eastern fish. The value of eastern fish was as much ideological as it was economic. By planting these fish in the West, the fish that they were most familiar with, Mormons strengthened their connections to the eastern U.S., and made the landscape of the West legible.

For most of the Indians of the region, the western fish had long been made legible. Over time they had developed considerable mētis surrounding fish populations. To some degree, the Mormons were aware of the Indians' knowledge and use of western fish. Before the Mormons left Nauvoo, they had received some instructions on the Indians use of fish resources. Excerpts from Fremont's description of the Great Basin were published in the Nauvoo Neighbor. The people of Nauvoo were informed that many of the native inhabitants of the land into which they were to move often lived in communities "upon some lake or river that supplies fish."¹⁵

As the Mormons traveled west, through western Wyoming, they crossed through the territory of the Eastern Shoshone. For the Eastern Shoshone, fish was a dietary staple,

¹⁴George Q. Cannon, April 7, 1868, JD 12:222-223; James R. Clark ed., Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-1975), 291-292; Brigham Young, April 6, 1868, JD 12:192, April 8, 1848, JD, 12:203-204.

¹⁵B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1930; reprint, Orem, UT: Sonos Publishing Inc., 1991), 3:242-243.

cutthroat trout being one of the principal food fishes.¹⁶ Fish were taken primarily in the spring, from about the end of February until the beginning of June, when other food supplies had run low.¹⁷

When the Mormons entered the Great Basin, they settled on lands controlled by Western Shoshone and Utes. Among the Western Shoshone as a whole, fishing had little impact.¹⁸ Most bands of Western Shoshone lived in eastern Nevada, outside the corridor of Mormon settlement.¹⁹ However, the Gosiute—a large band of Western Shoshone people who usually congregated near present-day Tooele, who were “heavily impacted by the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” were one of the few groups of Western Shoshone people to use fish as a resource, being willing to “travel considerable distances to fish.”²⁰

The Utes also relied on fish resources. Overall, the Utes typically preferred hunting deer, but a “significant portion of their diet involved smaller land mammals and fish.”²¹ Of those bands of Utes that ranged near territory settled by Mormons, 20% to 30%

¹⁶Demitri B. Shimkin, “Eastern Shoshone,” in Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 11, Great Basin, vol. ed. Warren L. D’Azevedo, gen. ed. William C. Sturtevant, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1986), 317.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 310 fig. 2, 317.

¹⁸David Hurst Thomas, Lorann S.A. Pendleton, and Stephen C. Cappannari, “Western Shoshone,” in Handbook of North American Indians, 268.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 264 fig. 1.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 263, 268.

²¹Donald Calloway, Joel Janetski, and Omer C. Stewart, “Ute,” in Handbook of North American Indians, 341.

of their diet came from fish.²² The Utes developed highly "specialized technology," to harvest fish.²³ The Western Utes, those who came into the most contact with the Mormons, relied on a more significant portion of waterfowl in their diets (as we will see, waterfowl are tied to fish resources).²⁴

Brigham Young was present in 1865 when a treaty he had encouraged was entered into between several bands of Utes and the U.S. government. Section 1 of the treaty states that the "Indians shall relinquish their right of possession to all of the lands within Utah Territory occupied by them." Section 4 of the treaty agrees that "The Indians to be allowed to take fish at their accustomed places."²⁵ These stipulations were, on the surface, consistent with Ute tradition: key hunting and fishing sites were not owned, but access was communal and granted to all, "within both the local and extralocal Ute communities."²⁶

The Paiutes, whom the Mormons met as their settlements pushed down into southern Utah, also used western fish resources. The Paiute used fish in the spring and

²²Ibid., 337 fig. 1, 341 fig. 2.

²³Ibid., 342.

²⁴Ibid., 341.

²⁵Gustive O. Larson, "Uintah Dream: The Ute Treaty-Spanish Fork, 1865," BYU Studies 14 (Spring 1974): 361-370.

²⁶Donald Calloway, Joel Janetski, and Omer C. Stewart, "Ute," in Handbook of North American Indians, 340. Utes were reported to rendezvous at Utah Lake to fish from as far away as 150 miles. D. Robert Carter, "Utah Lake," 14.

summer to supplement their diet.²⁷ Only one band of Paiutes, the Chemehuevi, is known to have disdained the use of fish.²⁸

Overall, then, the Indian tribes in the region impacted by Mormon settlement were thoroughly familiar with the fish of their respective localities. They developed expertise, knowledge, technology, practices, and customs surrounding the use of fish resources.

In contrast to this reliance on fish, Mormons were barely novitiates in using western fish. Before migrating, the unfamiliar ecology of the West was something the Mormons had only read about. Their only experiences with western landscapes had been vicarious ones, by reading Fremont, Long, and other visitors to the West. Their actual experiences with western fish were limited. Mormons tended to use western fish resources only as a supplement, particularly when all other resources had failed. Fish from the plains had been used by some of the Mormon people as they traveled west. People preparing to migrate were instructed by the church hierarchy to take seines, hooks, and lines for each family.²⁹ Fish, however, never attained primary importance in the diet of LDS people. They did use fish frequently on the trail, but only as a "relief from fresh and

²⁷Ronald L. Holt, Beneath these Red Cliffs: An Ethnohistory of the Utah Paiutes (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), 6.

²⁸Isabel T. Kelley and Catherine S. Fowler, "Southern Paiute," in Handbook of North American Indians, 369 fig. 1, 370.

²⁹Roberts, CHC, 2:539-540. Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Brigham H. Roberts ed., 2nd edition, revised (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 7:455.

dried buffalo meat.”³⁰ Even after living in the valley for a time, for most Mormons eating fish was “considered a rarity.”³¹

As familiar and expert with western fish as the Indians of the region were, the Mormons were unfamiliar and novice. Unfamiliarity is disconcerting, leaving one disoriented. One method of dealing with the unfamiliar is to narrow your vision. Acquiring tunnel vision “brings into sharp focus certain limited aspects of an otherwise far more complex and unwieldy reality.”³² One way that the Mormons narrowed their vision was by simplifying western landscapes, using fish from the eastern United States.

To counteract the illegibility of western waters, Mormons used two strategies to simplify the liquid landscape. First, Mormons simplified the landscape by planting trout imported from the eastern United States into their new homeland—an environment much different than the one they had left behind. There are only five species of trout native to the Bonneville Basin: three species of whitefish, one species of cisco, and one species of

³⁰Roberts, *CHC*, 3:169-170; Will Bagley, ed., The Pioneer Camp of the Saints: The 1846 and 1847 Mormon Trail Journals of Thomas Bullock (Spokane, WA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1997), 133, 170, 203, 220, 228; Hannah Morley, “Partial Diary of Hannah Blakeslee Finch Merriam Morley,” *Journey*, 394; Mary Pugh Scott, “Life Story of Mary Pugh [Scott],” *Journey*, 400; George D. Smith ed., An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 275-366 passim.

³¹Aroet Lucious Hale, Journal (1828-1856), “Journal of Aroet Lucious Hale,” typescript, BYU-S, 20.

³²James C. Scott, Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed, Yale Agrarian Studies Series, ed, James C. Scott (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 11.

trout--the cutthroat trout.³³ Of these five species of trout, only the cutthroat appeared across the entire region.³⁴ The other species of trout were limited to isolated regions.³⁵

Evolution and the planting of fish worked against the native populations of cutthroat. Many of the cutthroats in the rivers and streams came from pluvial Lake Bonneville. These cutthroats became specialized to the lake environment. Lake-selected cutthroats were "ill-adapted to the stream environments left after Lake Bonneville declined." They became extremely vulnerable to the stocking of eastern trout. According to Robert Behnke, there is "no documented example of the lake-selected form persisting in coexistence with any nonnative species of trout."³⁶ Across the region native cutthroat have been pushed out by eastern trout, many of which were planted by the Mormons.

Secondly, Mormons simplified the landscape by planting carp. The common carp has become perhaps the most common fish, by weight, in the region. During the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, there was a huge push, all across America, to plant carp. Carp was "praised lavishly as a delicacy and was stocked extensively by state and

³³Donald K. Grayson, The Desert's Past: A Natural Prehistory of the Great Basin (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 187 table 7-17.

³⁴There are three subspecies of cutthroat that were predominate in the areas of Mormon influence: in Utah, the Bonneville cutthroat; in western Wyoming, and along the divide in Utah, the Colorado River cutthroat; in north-western Wyoming, the Yellowstone cutthroat. Robert J. Behnke, Native Trout of Western North America, American Fisheries Society Monograph 6 (Bethesda, Maryland: American Fisheries Society, 1992).

³⁵Sigler and Sigler, Fishes, 101-108.

³⁶Behnke, Native Trout, 23.

federal fish commissioners and private land owners.”³⁷ Carp were introduced indiscriminately across the Great Basin, but the excitement for this fish soon lagged.³⁸ The carp soon became a “serious competitor with desirable game fish in warmer waters everywhere in the area.” It is also “such a vigorous herbivore,” that it often seriously impairs the habitat of waterfowl and trout.³⁹ The introduction of the carp was one of the main reasons “for the eventual extinction of the native trout of Utah Lake.”⁴⁰

By planting carp and trout, Mormons simplified the water environments of the West and made them appear more understandable. They narrowed their vision of complicated and unfamiliar western landscapes by the placing of a recognizable element, in this case eastern fish, and then focusing on that element. At the same time, they were connecting themselves to the thinking and trends of many “Americans.”

Latter-day Saints also used fish to circumscribe the landscape, by using them to create environments that kept Indians away from the landscape of Mormon settlement. Many Mormons, like most of their contemporaries, favored the policy of keeping the Indians on carefully bounded reservations, usually placed at a convenient location away from white settlements. Wilford Woodruff voiced the concerns of many of the LDS people when he said that he wanted to “set off a piece of land for the natives and make a

³⁷Sigler and Sigler, Fishes, 155.

³⁸Ramona W. Cannon, “Patriarch Harrison Sperry,” Improvement Era 32 (May 1929): 546.

³⁹Kimball T. Harper, “Historical Environments,” in Handbook of North American Indians, 63; D. Robert Carter, “Utah Lake,” 66.

⁴⁰D. Robert Carter, “Utah Lake,” 65.

division line and have it clearly understood that they are not to intrude upon *your ground*, nor you upon theirs.”⁴¹ Unused to such rigid boundaries the Native-Americans of the Great Basin had adapted to the arid climate by adopting a system of hunting and gathering a wide variety of resources.

In the struggle for space, Indians had the upper hand. The natives *mētis* surrounding fish resources placed them at an advantage over the Mormon settlers. Changing the fish in a waterway allowed Mormons to meet the Indians in an advantaged position. With the water ways left unchanged the Indians would have remained in a greater position of power. This was their home. They adapted their expertise, knowledge, technology, practices, and customs to a particular ecology. This localized knowledge was developed over time to maximize the necessary advantage. Stocking the waters with familiar fish, allowed the Mormons to carry over their particular skills, knowledge, and even to a small degree, their technology.

The planting of fish set bounds around Mormon communities that acted to push Indians to the periphery of Mormon settlement. The introduction of nonnative fishes altered the ecology of waterways, and eliminated traditional sources of food, such as cutthroat trout and waterfowl. Planted fish also made the Indians specialized technologies developed to harvest unique breeds of western fish more problematic, and their specialized knowledge less valuable.

In a sermon given in 1866 in Springville, on the eastern shore of Utah Lake, Brigham Young publicly avowed the ability of redesigned fish populations and their

⁴¹Wilford Woodruff, July 15, 1855, JD 9:227-228; Holt, Paiutes, xv.

circumscribed placement, to excluded Indians from the area:

this is their home, and we have taken possession of it. . . . When we came here, they could catch fish in great abundance in the lake in the season thereof, and live upon them pretty much through the summer. But now their game has gone, and they are left to stare. It is our duty to feed them. The Lord has given us ability to cultivate the ground and reap bountiful harvests. We have an abundance of food for ourselves and for the stranger. It is our duty to feed these poor ignorant Indians; we are living on their possessions and at their homes.⁴²

Soon the exclusion was nearly complete. By 1890 the Indian allowance law which protected the Indians right to fish the waters of Utah lake was repealed. As fish availability decreased, laws were passed which changed the laws in favor of the white inhabitants of the area.⁴³ By 1897, to protect the dwindling populations of trout, a law was passed that made it illegal to seine any fish but carp, chub, suckers, and mullet.⁴⁴ Native tribes were both cut off from fish resources, and excluded from the decisions about how to manage such a resource.⁴⁵

Planting fish in the West both pushed and pulled the Mormons. It pushed them into a tighter bond with the rest of the United States, whose house they had left, and pulled them further away from the Indians whose homes they were now living in.

⁴²Brigham Young, July 28, 1866, JD 11:264. Cf. Wilford Woodruff, July 15, 1855, JD 9:227-228.

⁴³Sigler and Sigler, Fishes, 20; D. Robert Carter, "Utah Lake," 69-72, 77-80.

⁴⁴D. Robert Carter, "Utah Lake," 77.

⁴⁵One stipulation of the Uintah Indian Reservation Treaty (1865) was the right to "fish in their accustomed places and erect houses for the purpose of curing fish." In spite of their praise for Brigham Young in comparison to the treatment of the federal government, the tribal leaders expressed their bitterness and opposition to such a treaty. Roberts, CHC, 5:147-148.

CHAPTER 4

TREES

Lastly, we turn to another specific change to the environment in which Mormons nationalized the landscape of the Great Basin. When the LDS people entered the Salt Lake Valley, they began planting trees around their homes, and lining city and village streets with rows of shade trees in an attempt to recreate Eden. This Eden was as much an American garden as it was a biblical garden. These shade trees helped to nationalize the landscape of this western environment, by circumscribing city-scapes that excluded Indians and exemplified American ideas of liberalism. They also nationalized the landscape by simplifying the complicated ecology of the environment, and by creating connections to the eastern United States.

America and the Garden of Eden

The Mormons knew what they wanted the land of the Great Basin to look like before they left the banks of the Missouri River. They intended to recreate Eden in the West. Once in the Great Basin, church leaders constantly encouraged the people to "make these valleys like the Garden of Eden."¹ On many occasions these same leaders lauded the

¹Brigham Young, February 14, 1853, JD 1:277. The leadership of the church made numerous and frequent references to the project of making the Great Basin into an

church for its efforts to "improve the desert country, making it like the garden of Eden."²

The connection here between ecological change and religion *seems* obvious. We might simply leave our investigation there, hanging on the work of those who have noted a connection between Judeo-Christian values and the treatment of the environment.³ It seems a simple proposition, but it begs many serious questions: What did the Mormons believe a garden of Eden looked like? What did they envision when they spoke of changing the Great Basin into an Eden? Were their conceptions of an Edenic landscape connected to their previous experiences with the environment?

The Mormon people had already become adept at changing landscapes.

They had already changed the environment to Nauvoo into one they would refer to as an

Eden. For a small sampling see Brigham Young, January 5, 1860, JD 9:108-109, October 6, 1863, JD 10:268, June 13, 1864, JD 10:313, April 29, 1866, JD 11:216, April 6, 1869 JD 12:374-375, May 21, 1871 JD 14:121; Heber C. Kimball, July 13, 1855, JD 3:57, June 13, 1860, JD 8:221, January 6, 1861, JD 9:128-129, June 27, 1863, JD 10:235,

²Brigham Young, July 24, 1877, JD 19:63-64; George Albert Smith, October 7, 1865, JD 11:156-157; Orson Pratt, August 11, 1867, JD 12:91, November 27, 1870 JD 14:299, June 20, 1880 JD 21:277-278, Here Pratt makes it explicit that he believes that it was not through human effort alone that the deserts were blossoming, but that they were being helped by God; Wilford Woodruff, July 19, 1868, JD 12:280.

³See Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," Science 155 (10 March, 1967): 1203-1207; Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 3rd ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 7-22; Andrew Greeley, "Religion and Attitudes toward the Environment," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 32 (March, 1993): 19-28. See also Thomas Alexander, "Stewardship and Enterprise: The LDS Church and the Wasatch Oasis Environment," Western Historical Quarterly 25 (Autumn, 1994): 341-364; Jeanne Kay and Craig Brown, "Mormon Beliefs About the Land and Natural Resources, 1847-1877," Journal of Historical Geography 11 (July 1985): 253-267.

Eden.⁴ Brigham Young, in a sermon on August 16, 1868, declared that they were “driven from Nauvoo, after having made it like the Garden of Eden.”⁵

What made Nauvoo an Eden? For most Mormons, the principal feature of an Eden landscape was trees. According to Orson Pratt, a “garden was made eastward in Eden, in which the Lord planted a great many beautiful trees.”⁶ George Albert Smith likewise associated trees with the Garden of Eden, when on a trip to St. George he noted, “Nearly three-fourths of all the fruit trees planted in St. George have been unsuccessful, yet the place is looking like the Garden of Eden.”⁷ Whatever an Eden was to look like, one of its principal features would be trees.

While in Nauvoo the LDS people planted and nurtured shade trees, but they were also encouraged to plant trees that were native to the eastern U.S.⁸ The editor of the local Mormon organ, the Times and Seasons, declared to the people of Nauvoo that “An early attention to the planting and cultivation of fruit and shade trees, and of ornamental

⁴For a brief description of the ecology and changes made to the area see Donald Q. Cannon, “Commerce, Illinois,” in S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson eds., Historical Atlas of Mormonism (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 52.

⁵Brigham Young, August 16, 1868 JD 12:271-272; March 27th, 1853, JD 1:82. Joseph Fielding, in his diary, referred to Nauvoo, the city where he left behind a house surrounded by trees, as “the Garden of the Lord,” recalling the biblical prophecy in Isaiah 51:3: “he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord.” Andrew F. Ehat ed., “‘They Might Have Known That He Was Not a Fallen Prophet’—The Nauvoo Journal of Joseph Fielding,” BYU Studies 19 (Winter 1979): 162.

⁶Orson Pratt, November 12, 1879, JD 21:201-202.

⁷George Albert Smith, October 7, 1865, JD 11:156-157.

⁸I use the term “eastern” here to refer to the lands east of the Mississippi River.

shrubery, cannot be too strongly urged upon our citizens.”⁹ What shade trees did they plant so that they would “soon have formed some idea how Eden looked”? On that question the paper “beg[ged] leave to call the attention of our citizens to the advertisement of Mr. [Edward] Sayers in this number. . . . [who] would do well to avail themselves of his instructions and aid in the cultivation of nurseries, the planning of Gardens, &c.”¹⁰ What were Edward Sayers qualifications as an arborist? According to the newspaper, Sayer was “a gentleman who has been extensively engaged in the business of Horticulture, both in the eastern and the western country.”¹¹ His primary qualification was that he knew the trees of the United States.

To summarize, then, the Mormons conception of Eden was intimately tied to shade trees. Their vision of Eden was also connected to their previous experiences in the United States. And, the trees that made up an Eden were trees that came from the eastern U.S.

Trees and Nationalizing the Landscape of the Great Basin

Amongst their other labors of building a place to live, the Mormons, almost immediately, began to plant shade trees. In less than a month after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, Mormons had “surveyed and laid out a city, with streets running east and west, north and south.” The sidewalks, they decided, would be “ornamented with shade

⁹“Horticulture,” Times and Seasons 3 (February 1, 1842): 678.

¹⁰For the advertisement see “Gardening, Pruning, & c.,” Ibid., 669.

¹¹“Horticulture,” Ibid., 678.

trees.”¹² Probably the first tree planted by the Mormons was by John Dixon, who placed “Locust seed . . . in his lot.”¹³

Brigham Young and his counselors sent a letter of instructions from their new home in the mountains, back to those people waiting on the banks of the Missouri River. In the letter they encouraged the people to bring over from the Mid-western climes in which they had been living, “black and sweet locust [honey locust], and all flowering and shade trees.”¹⁴

Arboriculture became one of the “fields . . . [church] leaders favored interaction and borrowing, not isolation.”¹⁵ Once the city was on its feet, agricultural societies were established which imported plants and trees from eastern areas, and made available literature on planting, cultivating, and caring for all things agricultural.¹⁶ Brigham Young urged these societies to “procure the purest and best seeds, scions, fruit and shade trees,

¹²Thomas Bullock, “Letter from Thomas Bullock [to Griffith William],” January 4, 1848, Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star 10 (April 15, 1848): 118.

¹³Will Bagley, ed., The Pioneer Camp of the Saints: The 1846 and 1847 Mormon Trail Journals of Thomas Bullock (Spokane, WA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1997), 248.

¹⁴James R. Clark ed., Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-1975), 1:347.

¹⁵Thomas G. Alexander, “Wilford Woodruff, Intellectual Progress, and the Growth of an Amateur Scientific and Technological Tradition in Early Territorial Utah,” Utah Historical Quarterly 59 (Spring 1991): 165. Alexander argues that overall, “interaction rather than isolation was the norm.”

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 182-183.

shrubbery, &c.”¹⁷ LDS people could come to Salt Lake City to procure seeds and cuttings and carrying them out into the settlements. In the 1870s, William F. Rigby returned to his home in Newton carrying a large quantity of seeds and cuttings that he got from Salt Lake including, “honey locust, black locust, box elder, silver maple, Lombardy poplar and other varieties.” Rigby started a nursery that “supplied [trees] for the whole of Cache Valley.” He claimed to have given “everyone in Newton all the trees they could plant.”¹⁸

Four of the five named varieties of shade trees planted in Cache Valley are not native to the Great Basin. Honey locust, black locust, and silver maple, are all native to the Eastern U.S.¹⁹ The Lombardy poplar is not native to the Americas, but was introduced and widely planted in the eastern U.S. since 1784.²⁰ The one species of tree

¹⁷Brigham Young, April 8, 1862, JD 10:34.

¹⁸William Rigby, “Excerpts from the Diary of William F. Rigby,” in Kate B. Carter compiler, Our Pioneer Heritage (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1961), 4:257.

¹⁹On the honey locust see Hui-Lin Li, Shade and Ornamental Trees: Their Origins and History (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963; 1996), 159-160; Elbert L. Little, The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Trees, Western Region (New York: Albert A Knopf, 1980), 494-495; S. L. Welsh and others, A Utah Flora, Great Basin Naturalist Memoirs, no. 9. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1987), 384; United States Department of Agriculture, Trees: The Yearbook of Agriculture, 1949 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), 782. On the black locust see Hui-Lin Li, Shade and Ornamental Trees, 159-160; Little, Trees, 504-505; Welsh and others, A Utah Flora, 404; Yearbook of Agriculture, 782. On the silver maple see Hui-Lin Li, Shade and Ornamental Trees, 156; Little, Trees, 538; Welsh and others, A Utah Flora, 42-43; Yearbook of Agriculture, 776.

²⁰Hui-Lin Li, Shade and Ornamental Trees, 51; Little, Trees, 343-344; Welsh and others, A Utah Flora, 548; Yearbook of Agriculture, 830.

that does grow in places in the Great Basin and the eastern U.S. is the box elder.

However, the greatest concentration of box elder was from the central plains eastward to the Atlantic Ocean.²¹ Mormons rarely chose to plant any of the native trees of the West, aside from cottonwoods, poplars, and willows. Planting a majority of their shade trees from the East, became one of the ways that Mormons connected themselves spatially with the rest of the United States.

These uniquely American shade trees also gave the Mormons who planted them in rows and circles throughout their towns and villages a temporal tie to the United States. Not only were these shade trees viewed as American, but they also shared another common trait: they were all fast growing trees. The Lombardy poplar, for example frequently has a life span of under twenty years.²² Likewise, the silver maples growth has been described as "rapid."²³ Many of the trees which had been planted as saplings in the newly laid out city of Salt Lake, by 1850 had already started blooming.²⁴ By 1853, Gustave Henriod was able to record that "Shade trees had been planted on either side of

²¹Yearbook of Agriculture, 776 fig. 31.

²²Yearbook of Agriculture, 75, 830.

²³Little, Trees, 538.

²⁴Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Willard Richards, "Fourth General Epistle of the Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star 13 (February 15, 1851): 49. It is probably no accident that this item is followed with a delayed report of the Stansbury expedition, which described the area near Salt Lake as "barren in the extreme," a region "utterly destitute of timber," and plains which were "denuded of vegetation, except occasional patches of Artemesia and 'greasewood.'" "Extracts Form Captain Stansbury's Report of the Survey of the Great Salt Lake Country," Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star 13 (February 15, 1851): 55.

some of the most important streets which gave the aspect of comfort and civilization to the tout ensemble [French, "all together"] of the picturesque scenery."²⁵ Within fifteen years of settling in the Salt Lake Valley, one of the city's most visible features was its shade trees. Mary Lightner, who entered the city for the first time in 1863 noted what she thought were its most apparent features, "some beautiful houses, orchards, and shade trees."²⁶

In a short time, the Mormons were able to redesign the landscape of the Salt Lake Valley, using trees that gave the LDS people a connection to the Eastern United States. Rather than planting oaks, long the symbol of endurance and longevity, Mormons planted quick growing trees, which give the illusion of temporal depth.²⁷ In a land so recently claimed by Mexico, shade trees tied the Mormons to America's past, and gave the land the appearance of having been America for some time.

In addition to creating connections to the larger United States, shade trees were also used to circumscribe space. This was done in two general ways. First, trees were planted in straight rows along streets and ditches. These rows of trees are the exclamation point on the enlightenment belief in rational city-planning. Trees planted in rows capture

²⁵"Gustave Louis Henriod," Carter, Our Pioneer Heritage 11:331-332.

²⁶Mary Lightner, "Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner," The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine 17 (July 1926): 260; Sarah Alexander, "A Little Story of the Experiences of Sara Alexander When Crossing the Plains in 1859," Journey, 536.

²⁷In a speech in which he referred to his grandfather's New England maple tree farm as the "place of my dreams," George Albert Smith compared the faces of the older residents of his boyhood village to "ancient oaks." George Albert Smith, July 7, 1872, JD 15:93-94.

the eye to "balance horizontal lines likes [sic] bridges or walls, or certain types of buildings."²⁸

These horizontal and vertical lines stand in direct contrast to the villages of the native inhabitants of the region. The typical Shoshone dwelling reflected the mobility of their lives. They were often "temporary and unambitious affairs." The most common shapes in villages were the semicircle, the circle, and the dome.²⁹ The Utes likewise, preferred the dome, as well as conical shapes in the structures.³⁰ The shade trees of Mormon villages created space that placed natives, and in particularly native cultures, outside of LDS living space.³¹

Secondly, Mormons circumscribed space with shade trees that were planted in circles around homes. Shade trees planted in circles around Mormon homes circumscribed an individualized space, which helped connect LDS families to the more individualized American liberalism. Many people in the United States had developed a tradition that saw the individual as the fundamental unit of society. No where is this attitude more evident then in the treatment of Indian tribes. In a concerted effort to break the perceived

²⁸Hui-Lin Li, Trees, 53.

²⁹David Hurst Thomas, Lorann S.A. Pendleton, and Sthephen C Cappannari, "Western Shoshone," in Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 11, Great Basin, vol. ed. Warren L. D'Azevedo, gen. ed. William C Sturtevant, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1986), 268.

³⁰Donald Calloway, Joel Janetski, and Omer C. Stewart, "Ute," in Handbook of North American Indians, 348.

³¹Cf. the contrasting village patterns of Mormons and Omahas in Nebraska, which became a source of conflict between the two, see Lawrence G. Coates, "Cultural Conflict: Mormons and Indians in Nebraska," BYU Studies 24 (Summer 1984): 297-299.

communitary basis of Indian tribes, Congress passed the 1887 Dawes Act, which instituted the “distribution of tribally owned reservation land to individual Indians.” This act involved more than property rights: one of its major goals was to destroy tribal authority.

In much the same fashion, many Americans chafed at the cohesion of Mormon society. But, rather than having a version of the Dawes Act, applying pressure from an external source, Mormons created their own redesigned spaces that began to create chinks in the armor of LDS community. Mormons used shade trees to circumscribe individualized space that allowed them to add what James Scott called, speaking of homes in Brasilia, “distinctive touches and create semipublic spaces.”³²

Mormons were encouraged to place shade trees near their homes, but they were not specified how or what to plant.³³ Lombardy poplar did become the most widely used shade tree, but Mormons used a variety of shade trees, although usually limiting themselves the varieties mentioned above, which as noted, usually came from the eastern U.S. This pattern of planting shade trees around homes was so successful that Brigham Young was hardly exaggerating when, in 1868, he noted that “Every little cot, no matter how humble, is encircled with beautiful shade trees.”³⁴

³²James C. Scott, Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed, Yale Agrarian Studies Series, ed, James C. Scott (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 127.

³³Brigham Young, May 24, 1863, JD 10:177-178, April 9, 1871, JD 14:83-85; Orson Pratt, May 18, 1877, JD 19:33.

³⁴Brigham Young, August 16th, 1868, JD 12:270-271; Orson Pratt, May 5, 1870, JD 13:361-362, October 6, 1879, JD 20:321-323; George D. Smith ed., An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 409.

The trees, were typically placed in a ring, evenly spaced, close to the building. Occasionally the house was entirely ringed by trees, but usually, the "pattern was a rough semicircle around the front facade."³⁵ These shade trees, planted in a circle around the home, created an individualized space that set the family apart from the rest of the community.³⁶ This individualized space helped temper the community spirit of Mormons in a manner closer resembling the cities of America, than the city of God.³⁷

Planting shade trees also simplified the landscape, and at the same time created a closer connection to the Eastern United States. In many ways, the simplification of landscapes in the Great Basin mirrored the simplifications that Europeans had made in New England. The complicated pre-historic ecology of the East, and particularly of New England, can best be described as a patchwork.³⁸ The Europeans in New England, and later the Upper-Midwest, attempted to simplify the landscape into areas of farmland,

³⁵Richard C. Poulsen, The Pure Experience of Order: Essays on the Symbolic in the Folk Material Culture of Western America (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 120.

³⁶Poulsen argues that these rings of trees created a sacred space that acted as an oasis in the desert, and were thus not used for seclusion and exclusion. Although they may have created sacred space, he ignores the fact that these rings of trees were placed around private, not public dwellings. Sacred space in most cultures is usually placed in more public areas.

³⁷It was while the church was in Utah, that the attempts to create utopian communities, called "The United Order," came to an end. To be sure, the planting of shade trees was not the cause of the failure to create a utopian society.

³⁸William Cronon, Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 19-33. Isaac C. Haight, "Biographical [Autobiographical] Sketch of Isaac C. Haight," typescript, BYU-S, 10.

cropland, village, and wilderness.³⁹ The wilderness was constantly shrinking as cropland, farmland, and villages grew; its elimination a "necessary tragedy," in favor of the greater good of civilization.⁴⁰ By the mid-nineteenth century, the time that the Mormons began their move to the Great Basin, Americans had begun conflating wilderness with notions of nationalism and patriotism.⁴¹ As the wilderness shrank, many villages and towns retained a slight vestige of wilderness with a few trees in urban areas, and groves located on the outskirts and around homes.

Similarly, Mormons attempted to simplify the complicated ecology of the Great Basin into a similar pattern of farmland, cropland, village, and wilderness. Like they had done with eastern fish, Mormons used trees to simplify a complicated ecology with which they were unfamiliar. They sought to replace the unusual environments with a landscape design with which they were more experienced and knowledgeable, but at the same time connected them to the rest of the United States.

The corridor of the Great Basin in which the Mormons concentrated their settlements could best be described, not as a patchwork, but as a series of zones.⁴² The valley bottoms of the Great basin usually begin with the *Shadscale Zone*. Slightly higher,

³⁹Cf. Cronon, Changes, 156.

⁴⁰Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 3rd ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 77.

⁴¹Ibid., 67-72. Kenneth Olwig, "Reinventing Common Nature: Yosemite and Mount Rushmore—A meandering Tale of Double Meaning," in Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature, ed. William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 379-408.

⁴²These Great Basin zones were first named by W.D. Billings in 1951.

on the upper valley and lower mountain flanks, is the *Sagebrush-Grass Zone*. The first stripe of timber occurs in the *Piñon-Juniper Zone*. The upper edge of the Piñon-Juniper Zone is marked by an interruption in the trees called the Upper *Sagebrush-Grass Zone*. Finally, the uppermost reaches of mountain ranges are characterized by the *Alpine Tundra Zone*. In as little as 5000' in elevation "six classic vegetation zones" can be found in the heart of the Great Basin.⁴³

On the east edge of the Great Basin, there is a variation from this pattern, but the arrangement remains zonal in character. A chaparral of oak and bigtooth maple lies above the "sagebrush and grass on the flanks of the Wasatch Range overlooking Great Salt and Utah Lakes." Above this chaparral zone sit forests of Douglas-fir, white fir, and blue spruce. At areas above 10,000' are the subalpine conifers, which extend to the timberline. Above the timberline is a final zone of alpine tundra.⁴⁴

The Indians of the region had altered the landscape, but apparently saw no need to attempt to change the basic arrangement of zones. In early historic times, natives used fire

⁴³Donald K. Grayson, The Desert's Past: A Natural Prehistory of the Great Basin (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 32-33; Flores, Harper, and Layton do not following Billings in naming, but they do follow the zonal arrangement. Dan Flores, "'Zion in Eden': Phases of the Environmental History of Utah," in Environmental History Review 7 (Winter 1983): 328-329, and "Agriculture, Mountain Ecology, and the Land Ethic: Phases of the Environmental History of Utah," in Working on the Range: Essays on the History of Western Land Management and the Environment, Contributions in Economics and Economic History No. 61, ed. John R. Wunder (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 161-162; Kimball T. Harper, "Historical Environments," in Handbook of North American Indians, 52-55; Robert L. Layton, "Utah: The Physical Setting," in Richard D. Poll and others eds., Utah's History (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 19-20.

⁴⁴Grayson, Desert's Past, 33.

on the sagebrush-grass steppes to increase the growth of grasses and broadleaved forbs.⁴⁵ When Mormons entered the valleys of the Great Basin, the landscape of zones was still instantly recognizable.

Mormons were quick to recognize the difference in the landscape of their new home, and the landscapes of the Eastern U.S. Wilford Woodruff fairly gushed with excitement as he described the valley of the Great Salt Lake, calling it "one of the grandest & most sublime scenery Probably that could be obtained on the globe." But, Woodruff, in the next paragraph of his journal, clarifies his excitement. He saw the valley not so much for what it was, but what it could become: "the valleys would be converted into orchard, vineyard, gardings & fields by the inhabitants of zion."⁴⁶

Lorenzo D. Young, the brother of Brigham, in contrast to Woodruff, was bitterly disappointed at the appearance of the valley. His only diary entry from July 3 to August 26, records his view of entering the valley on July 24, 1847: "this day we arrived in the valley of the great Salt Lake my feelings were such as I cannot describe every thing looked gloomy and I felt heart sick."⁴⁷ Levi Jackman was equally chagrined at the appearance of the Salt Lake Valley noting, "The appearance of the country is truly forbidding. The face

⁴⁵Kimball T. Harper, "Historical Environments," 52-53; Flores, "Zion in Eden," 329, "Agriculture," 163. The exact role that natives played in the ecology of fire is still unclear. See, Kimball T. Harper, "Historical Environments," 63.

⁴⁶Wilford Woodruff, Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833-1898, Typescript, ed. Scott G. Kenney (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983), 3:234. Cf. Bagley, Bullock, 232, 238, 241; Smith, Clayton, 350-352, 362, 367, 371.

⁴⁷Lorenzo Young, "Diary of Lorenzo Dow Young," Utah Historical Quarterly 14 (1946): 163.

of the earth had the appearance of a barren desert. No grass, only on the streams or the low land. Nothing green on the remainder."⁴⁸

With valley floors nearly bare of timber, Mormons could not follow the usual pattern of clearing the land of timber, leaving a few trees as vestigial totems to patriotism. Levi Jackman immediately recognized the problem, noting that "there was a large amount of timber in the mountains, though mostly hard to get at. The timber was mostly pine and balsam with some oak brush and ash."⁴⁹ Written to her cousin in Massachusetts, Irene Pomeroy described the common elements of the landscapes of Utah and New England, and at the same time highlighted their different arrangement: "The timber is mostly on or near the mountains. . . . The are some maple trees [the bigtooth maples of the mountains] here, poplar fir cotton wood oak birch spruce and a species of hemlock."⁵⁰

Planting shade trees in the valleys simplified the landscape by visually collapsing the ecological zones that existed when Mormons arrived in the valley. Rather than by clearing the valleys below of timber which virtually did not exist, they brought shade trees down into the valleys, to intersperse among fields and villages. Thus, Mormons simplified the landscape into a familiar pattern, a pattern that connected them to the larger United States. Much the same as had been done in New England, they tried to change the land into a pattern of farmland, cropland, village, and wilderness.

⁴⁸Levi Jackman, "Autobiography of Levi Jackman," Journey, 350; Mary Scott, "Life Story of Mary Pugh [Scott]," Journey, 402.

⁴⁹Levi Jackman, "Autobiography of Levi Jackman," Journey, 349.

⁵⁰"Letters of a Proselyte: The Hascall-Pomeroy Correspondence," Utah Historical Quarterly 25 (July 1957): 244.

The "Trill of Patriotic Devotion"

The efforts of the Mormons to redesign the landscape of the West can be seen as efforts to recreate the familiar, which meant strengthening connections to the larger U.S. nation. Knowing this, then, we can see the connection between two events that might seem to hold the remotest of ties. Without investigation, little would seem to connect feelings of nation-ness with a city full of shade trees.

The first event, a patriotic speech, occurred on July 4, 1854. Orson Hyde delivered a sermon from the tabernacle in Salt Lake City in which he uttered the statement, "The very name of American causes a thrill of patriotic devotion to her best interests to quiver in the heart of every citizen of Utah."⁵¹ History records no chorus of boos as a counterpoint to Hyde's statement.

The second event, a description of the landscape of Salt Lake City, occurred in August of 1867. Orson Pratt recalled a similar thrill that he felt when entering the Salt Lake Valley:

When emerging from Parley's Canyon in the stage, I put my head out of the window to look for the city of Great Salt Lake, but it was so completely shrouded in trees that I scarcely get a glimpse of it. Now and then I caught sight of a chimney peeping out above the stately shade trees and smiling orchards; I could also see this great tabernacle that you are now building, towering up, like a little mountain; but it was impossible to get a full view of the city generally, it was so completely covered with orchards and ornamental shade trees. I thought to myself that I never saw a grander sight. Where did these trees come from? You brought them down from the mountains, then little saplings; many of you brought them on your shoulders, others piled them on their wagons, and then you set them out on

⁵¹Orson Hyde, July 4, 1854, JD 6:367-368.

land that had the appearance of being a parched desert, and in soil that to all human appearance was unproductive. And during the twenty years that have rolled over your heads, you have beautified this city, and made it a paradise.⁵²

The land was now a paradise, an Eden. It was a paradise because it was no longer the Great American Desert, no longer Indian land, no longer Spain, no longer Mexico. It was a paradise because, if one looked just right, it looked and felt like America.

⁵²Orson Pratt, August 11th, 1867, JD 12:89-90.

CHAPTER 5

THE "EXPENSIVE DREAM"¹

A river . . . has so many things to say that it is hard to know what it says to each of us. . . . I often do not start fishing until the cool of the evening. Then in the Arctic half-light of the canyon, all existence fades to a being with my soul and memories and the sounds of the Big Blackfoot River and a four-count rhythm and the hope that a fish will rise.

Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs.

I am haunted by waters.

Norman Maclean, A River Runs Through It²

Altering the land so that it spoke a sermon on connection of the American nation changed both the environment and the Mormons. This nationalistic vision of the land did not go unchallenged. Both the land and the people who inhabited it altered and shaped the redesigned landscapes in unexpected ways.

Modifying the land lead to unforeseen difficulties. The problems inherent in the creation of a landscape shaped by a sense of nation-ness are not just a provincial concern. Mormons have not been the only Westerners to create nationalized landscapes. The

¹The title is borrowed from David Emmons: "Americans in the 1840s were conjuring expensive dreams." In "Constructed Province: History and the Making of the Last American West," Western Historical Quarterly 25 (Winter 1994): 444.

²Norman Maclean, A River Runs Through It, and Other Stories (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976; Pocket Books, 1992), 110-113.

effects of a nationalized vision of the landscape continues to affect both Westerners and their environments across the West.

People and Places

The impact of a nationalistic vision upon the land that the Mormon people helped create and shape is undeniable. The trail the Mormons built to carry them west can still be seen today. The Lombardy poplar has become so ubiquitous in the Great Basin that it is often referred to as the Mormon poplar, for it almost always occurred concurrently with Mormon settlements.³ Likewise, a person fishing in the rivers and streams of the Northern Rockies should not be surprised to catch mostly eastern Brook Trout.⁴

These redesigned landscapes also affected Mormon social practices. It altered their relationships with both the Indians and the rest of the United States. The transformed land drew Mormons further away from the Indians of the region, and closer to the eastern U.S.

The alterations that Mormons made to the land mutated their relationships with the native inhabitants of the region. The Book of Mormon spoke to Latter-day Saints about

³On the widespread appearance of this tree see Wallace Stegner, Mormon Country, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1942), 21-24. A recent publication of flora in Utah has noted that Lombardy Poplar and Mormon Tree have become equal terms, adding that "The foxtail shaped trees were a mark of Mormon cities and towns, especially in the first century following colonization." S. L. Welsh and others, A Utah Flora, Great Basin Naturalist Memoirs, no. 9 (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1987), 548.

⁴Dick Sternberg, "Cutthroat Trout," Outdoor Life 203 (Summer 1999): 92-93.

their relationship with the Indians of America: they saw the Indians as a branch of the House of Israel. In light of this view of the Indians, the Mormon Church adopted the attitude of Brigham Young's famous dictum: "it was cheaper to feed the Indians than to fight them."⁵ Simplifying and circumscribing the land made this ideal harder to maintain without conflict. Simplifying the landscape aided the Mormon's transition to the Great Basin environment, but at the same time, it devalued the complex relationship that the Native Americans of the region had developed with the land and its resources.

Circumscribing the land by using the environment to create artificial boundaries further damaged the relationship between the Indians and the Mormons. Mormons circumscribed the landscape to bind themselves together in a community of Americans, and in the process, excluded Indians. As Anderson has noted, "No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind."⁶ In other words, nationalism relies on exclusion, both of people outside the boundary of the nation, and of certain non-citizens within its boundaries. Transforming trails, planting fish, and cultivating trees all served to push Indians to the periphery of Mormon settlement. The environmental changes that the Mormons made in the West made their desires for a peaceful coexistence with the Indians much harder to attain. They "found it necessary to engage in open conflict with those Indians in the Basin when it seemed that peaceful means had failed to settle Mormon

⁵Brigham Young, July 8, 1863, JD 10:231-232.

⁶Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New York: Verso, 1983; reprint, 1991), 7.

differences with them.”⁷

As the redesigned environments were drawing the Mormons away from the natives, they were also solidifying a bond with the rest of America. A feeling of nation-ness is one of the major influences in the way Mormons tried to transform their environments. The landscapes of the American West that the Mormons inhabited were redesigned in ways that were familiar to their experience and knowledge. But Mormons were more than just altering the environment to recreate the familiar. Not only were they making changes that matched their previous experiences in the eastern United States, in a sort of Neo-America, but they constantly and consistently associated those changes with a tie to America.

The deep-seated ambivalence the Mormons had held toward the United States would not last. Mormons, for the most part, had always felt uniquely connected to America. “Far away, in the West,” they were able to build physical reminders of their love for their country, far way from the mob violence, hatred, and mistrust that had sawed away at the bands of their fidelity and tested their relationship with the United States.

Mormons tried to connect the West that they made their home in with the rest of America by conflating the disparate places of East and West through the creation of common landscapes. They also used the land to tie themselves to the past of the nation, as they did through use of Liberty Poles, or to the nation’s future, as they did by redesigning the Platte River valley. These nationalized landscapes spoke to Mormons in a dialogue

⁷Lawrence G. Coates, “Brigham Young and Mormon Indian Policies: The Formative Period, 1836-1851,” BYU Studies 18 (Spring 1978): 451.

about their connection to the larger United States.

Not only did Mormons redesign the landscapes of the West to mirror their feelings of connection to the United States, but nationalism continues to influence the ways in which people change the West. Twentieth-century changes have been particularly influenced by attempts to simplify the environment. These changes, influenced both by Mormons and others, have not been as straightforward as they appear. Environmental changes are rarely made in the exact image intended by their creators. Redesigned landscapes are contested by others. And, nationalizing landscapes is the cause of unforeseen consequences.

A Distorted Image

It could easily appear that the Mormons simply came to the West and there transformed it to their own cultural specifications. But Mormons were not simply New Englanders who transplanted, whole-cloth, institutions and values from the East.⁸ Nor were Mormons capable of shaping the Great Basin environment with an unbending will to fit their prefabricated ideas and institutions. Indeed, it seems that the environment of the Great Basin became both a cultural and a "natural" one. The LDS experience in the West

⁸On the New England roots of Mormon leadership see Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958; reprint, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press copublished with the Tanner Trust Fund, 1993), 3-4 (page references are to the reprint edition); Leonard Arrington and Dean May, "A Different Mode of Life: Irrigation and Society in Nineteenth-Century Utah," in Agriculture and the Development of the Far West, ed. James H. Shideler (Washington: Agricultural History Society, 1975), 7.

mirrors the conclusion of William Cronon that "The material nature we inhabit and the ideal nature we carry in our heads exist always in complex relationship with each other."⁹ Culture married to environment met in what Paul Shepard has termed the "reciprocity in which the given and the made play complementary roles."¹⁰ In spite of the best efforts of many people, native species of plants and animals, such as the sagebrush, the Cutthroat trout, and the wolf, all continue to inhabit the contested terrain of the Great Basin.

Often the intractable realities of the West, and nature in general, made syncretism desirable and necessary for survival. These differences at once made the West an unfamiliar place, a place foreign to Mormon experience, and at the same time altered their attempts to recreate the familiar home of the Eastern United States. For Donald Worster the fundamental reality of the West that shapes and influences culture is aridity.¹¹ Indeed, Leonard Arrington and Dean May argue that institutions and traditions were shaped by the interaction between climatic and geographic realities, and unique Mormon institutions and ideas to form a "different mode of life."¹² Certainly aridity influenced Mormon institutions; for example, the aridity made it highly desirable to spread settlement out along oasis areas, rather than localizing settlement around a much smaller area as it had

⁹William Cronon, ed., Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 22.

¹⁰Paul Shepard, "Place in American Culture," North American Review 262 (Fall 1997): 29.

¹¹Donald Worster, Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 84-92, 23-34, 250.

¹²Arrington and May, 15-17.

happened at Nauvoo. This weakening of the Mormon propensity for community over the individual by spreading out settlements was also reinforced by the visual separation of families through the creation of private space with groves of trees planted around homes that were mentioned earlier.

Not only were Mormons shaped in unexpected ways by the redesigned landscape, but this vision of the land was also rejected and contested by both Indians and some Mormons. The Moquis Indians in northern Arizona, in spite of the efforts of numerous missionaries to convince them to move across the Colorado River and into Mormon-type settlements, refused to leave homes surrounded by highly successful, but thoroughly “un-American” gardens and fields. These fields were planted with a diverse number of crops, interspersed with one another, in terraced soils, in gardens and orchards conforming to soil conditions—not fence-rows.¹³ Likewise, some LDS people refused to conform to this vision upon the land. Levi Savage, in his journal, noted the sharp contrast between the villages bearing the “marks of thrift and prosperity” with their “Good crops of wheat corn oats barley potatoes and etc [which] will the feelds Showing a bountiful harvest and an ample reward for the toils of the husband man,” and some places which had “Miserable little huts ‘shingled with mud’. . . [which were] almost a universal sight in some places, fences, graneries, out-houses, yards and etc. all bear the marks of confusion and bad taste.” Savage concluded with the note that, “There are some places however whose most

¹³Norman R Bowen, ed, A Gentile Account of Life in Utah's Dixie, 1872-73: Elizabeth Kane's St. George Journal Utah, the Mormons, and the West Series, ed. Margery W. Ward, no. 14 (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, 1995), 25-27

striking peculiarities are quite opposite to those mentioned above.”¹⁴

“Fixing” the Environment

I wish . . . that every American might have the opportunity to read this book. . . . [T]he book underscores the importance of forests to our national and individual prosperity, security, and happiness. . . .

[To see the] importance of our forests, I have only to look out my windows at the stately trees that landscape architects planted to temper the summer heat, to join building and earth and sky in harmony, and to give pleasure to everybody.

These city trees bring to mind the watersheds, shelterbelts, groves, national forests, farm woodlands, community parks, and commercial forests between the eastern seaboard and the West, where I grew up. Truly, our woods and forests are one, in our lives with soil, water, animals, and food. . . .

[T]he genius of American democracy can yet restore our forests, rebuild our ghost towns, redeem our watersheds, and find new ways to fight fire and forest pests. . . .

All this embraces the conviction that a basic resource is a national trust.

Charles F Brannan¹⁵

By the end of World War II the dream the Mormons had harbored of becoming the head and heart of a truly United States began to appear an even dimmer millennial vision: the United States government had firmly within its grasp the plan and the tools for creating its own vision of the landscape of America. The 1949 Yearbook of Agriculture,

¹⁴Charles S. Peterson ed., ““Book A--Levi Mathers Savage”: The Look of Utah in 1873,” Utah Historical Quarterly 42 (Spring 1973): 13-14.

¹⁵From the foreword in United States Department of Agriculture, Trees: The Yearbook of Agriculture, 1949 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), v-vi. Brannan was the Secretary of Agriculture.

the one Brannon wished that every American would read, laid out in meticulous detail the proper way to plant and use trees. The Yearbook advocated the ideal farm scape. It is no surprise that the most noticeable feature of this ideal farm is its carefully laid out trees.¹⁶ Brannon and the Department of Agriculture felt as the Mormons had, that trees could be used to tie the country together, and that by looking at trees people could feel a deeper sense of attachment to America.

But nationalized landscapes, especially those that have been simplified, are problematic. Simplified landscapes, whomever they have been designed by, have led to unforeseen problems. The planting of trees along city streets has led to structural damage from roots and infestations of pests and disease. The planting of fish has displaced native fish and other underwater organisms such as bacteria and plants, and even effected other water-dependent organisms such as the waterfowl.¹⁷ The destruction of riparian zones has eradicated islands of habitat for species which congregate to its life-giving oasis in the parched landscape of the West. The removal of native grasses and trees along waterways has also hastened erosion.

Quite early in the west, Mormons and others began to recognize some of these problems inherent in this system of environmental tinkering. For example, it soon became obvious that the Lombardy Poplar is highly susceptible to disease once it reaches about

¹⁶Yearbook, 39-42.

¹⁷Paul Schullery, "Yellowstone's Ecological Holocaust," Montana, the Magazine of Western History 47 (Autumn 1997): 30-31.

twenty years old.¹⁸ Single species of plant (monocultures) have been highly susceptible to pests and disease: an infestation of pine beetles can eradicate an entire forest if planted in a single species of pine. The box elder and the Lombardy poplar, both used extensively in Utah, are susceptible to disease and infestations of pests. The Lombardy Poplar is subject to European canker disease which eats away at the trunk and upper branches.¹⁹ The box elder attracts box elder beetles which feed upon its sugary sap and woolly bear caterpillars.²⁰ Likewise, both species of trees have wrecked havoc on city streets and sidewalks with their expansive root systems.²¹

However, even with an eye looking toward eradicating the problems caused by these simplified landscapes, the solutions have been no less problematic. In recognizing the problems, planners have usually sought to replace these trees with other monocultural solutions. For example, J. H. Paul, a professor of natural science at the University of Utah advocated replacing the poplar and the box elder with the silver maple.²² Planting large numbers of silver maples, a tree native east of the Mississippi,²³ has only led to other problems. The silver maple has brittle branches which have proven to break under heavy

¹⁸Yearbook, 75.

¹⁹Ibid. Elbert L. Little, The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Trees, Western Region (New York: Albert A Knopf, 1980), 344.

²⁰J. H. Paul, "Let Boy Scouts Plant Trees and Shrubs that Attract Birds," Improvement Era 19 (April 1916).

²¹Yearbook, 72, 75.

²²Paul, "Boy Scouts."

²³Little, Trees, 538

snows or high winds, and it is prone to suffer from iron chlorosis.²⁴

Attempts to "fix" the problems created by the planting of nonnative fish have been no less problematic. As native fish populations began their precipitous decline the initial response was to plant more native strains of fish, albeit bred and raised in private and government-sponsored hatcheries. By the 1950s and 60s it became obvious that the planting of native fish was not working to restore the fish populations to pre-European contact levels.²⁵ Relatively speaking, the cutthroat is easy to catch, its varied diet being the source of its susceptibility. The cutthroat will eat "insects, worms and shrimp, streamers, dry flies and nymphs or, if it is big enough fish, frogs and crayfish." This means that the cutthroat has often been over fished. Fishery biologists have estimated that in some streams in Yellowstone, where catch-and-release rules apply, the average cutthroat is caught eight times a year, whereas the more elusive brown trout (which is interestingly not native to the West) might be caught once. Furthermore, the cutthroat simply cannot compete with the more aggressive brook trout.²⁶

An ingenious, or perhaps disingenuous solution was hit upon: poison the offending waterways and start over, with a clean slate. In spite of dramatic failures such as that on Green River in Wyoming, nonnative fish in many drainages have been shocked and

²⁴Ibid. Yearbook, 74. Welsh, Utah Flora, 42-43.

²⁵This is to say nothing of the efficacy or desirability of reaching this goal, in addition to the nebulous parameters of the project.

²⁶Sternberg, "Cutthroat," 92. On the brown and brook trouts see Herbert T. Boschung, Jr. and others, National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Fishes, Whales, and Dolphins (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 396-397.

poisoned for nearly fifty years. Perhaps the most ambitious attempt to clean the slate and start over has been proposed in the Cherry Creek drainage in south-central Montana. The poisoning was to be carried out (and may yet be) by biologists from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, and with representatives from a private organization whose mission is to protect endangered species. The general public reaction by area residents has been largely hostile to the program, and with good reason: in the past other poisoning projects have killed fish outside of the proposed areas, wiped-out aquatic insects, and tainted drinking water.²⁷

Efforts to "fix" riparian zones along rivers and streams have been equally fraught with damage. The denuding of riparian zones, has helped to contribute to the erosion of ground, particularly farming ground. Rather, then an organized, concerted effort, many people began independently to place objects along river and streambanks to take the place of plants and trees in holding the soil together. By the first few decades of the twentieth century, people began throwing large items in the waters that they hoped would stop the flanking march into their fields and pastures. They tossed in broken washers and dryers, chunks of concrete, rolls of fencing wire, and the bodies of automobiles. The hulking wrecks of rusting cars and trucks in the rivers and streams next to eroding fields in the West became almost as widespread as the brook trout swimming beneath the water's surface.²⁸

²⁷Frank Miniter, "Playing God With Cherry Creek," Outdoor Life 203 (Summer 1999): 49-56.

²⁸A more recent attempt to "fix" the rivers of the West has been the creation of artificial logjams. See Kathleen Wong, "Bringing Back the Logjams," U.S. News and

In general, most of the responses to the problems caused by a simplified landscape involve treating the symptoms and not the causes. This leads to many cases of the cure being as bad as, or worse than, the sickness. Most of these solutions are efforts to continue to simplify the landscape, but in new ways.

The prognosis, however, is promising. There is hope for a recovery. Historians around the world have been searching to understand the causes of this illness. Rather than just looking at the symptoms, historians have been searching for human causes of environmental change. Unfortunately, these efforts are still in their relative infancy and thus research has tended to focus on singular causes: religion, capitalism, gender, and now nationalism.

If we can do it, identifying all the major causes of environmental change holds promise for allowing us to see the way toward more friendly forms of change. Pressuring people into changing behaviors is serious business, but changing attitudes is even harder. If certain realities forced the Mormons to change their behaviors, we are left to wonder what will happen if no force is applied to us, to cause us to change our attitudes and behaviors involving the environment. We are left wondering how environments can fare in the face of the incredible inertia of habit, when no outside forces are enabling us to change.²⁹ Indeed if our treatment of the environment is a function of personal and group

World Report 127 (September 6, 1999): 60.

²⁹J. Baird Callicott has even wondered if "changed beliefs, ideals, and values actually bring about changed patterns of behavior," in "Genesis Revisited: Murian Musings on the Lynn White Jr. Debate," Environmental History Review 14 (Spring/Summer, 1990): 66.

identities, will it require us fundamentally to reconstruct our identities before we can begin to solve our environmental problems at deep and long-lasting levels?

Furthermore, we are chastened by remembering that the Mormons engaged in a protracted struggle, lasting more than forty years, over their desire to practice polygamy and to run their local government as a theocracy, practices endemic to their identities.³⁰

Can people be asked to change fundamental cultural constructs that are detrimental to nature? We can only hope that we can discover the desire to change before we are forced to make fundamental readjustments.

³⁰Gustive O. Larson, The "Americanization" of Utah For Statehood (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1971).

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