

MOUNTAIN MEADOWS MASSACRE

LESSON PLAN  
WITH PRIMARY SOURCES

By Dr. Jeffrey D. Nokes  
Associate Professor  
Department of History  
Brigham Young University  
(2017)

## Mountain Meadows Massacre Lesson

### Background

The Mountain Meadows Massacre is not only a significant event in the westward expansion of the United States, but it provides an interesting study of group psychology and on getting along with people of different cultures. In addition, the process of sifting through conflicting accounts can help students develop critical reading and historical thinking skills. Continued debates about the event provide students with space, within which to develop their own interpretations.

### Objectives

1. Students will use sourcing, corroboration, and contextualization to analyze evidence.
2. Students will use evidence to develop an interpretation of the causes of the Mountain Meadows Massacre.
3. Students will consider strategies for settling disagreements civilly.

### Time

These materials are expected to take approximately 90 minutes of instructional time. Teachers could reduce the time required to teach this lesson by assigning students to read the background material outside of class or by using fewer documents than the 11 included.

### Materials

1. *Student Background Information*: This provides students with simplified background information needed to analyze the documents related to the Mountain Meadows Massacre. The information is presented as eight items that most historians would agree on and four competing interpretations of the causes and specific events of the massacre.
2. *Student Graphic Organizer*: This worksheet is designed for students to keep a record as they analyze documents, supporting their use of sourcing.
3. *Document Packet for Students*: A collection of eleven documents related to the Mountain Meadows Massacre, six written by LDS sources and five by non-LDS sources. These documents have all been translated into simpler language, written at the 7<sup>th</sup> grade level.
4. *Teacher Background Materials*: These materials mirror the Student Background Information, however the teacher materials are written in a more complex way and describe events and conditions in greater detail than the simple materials given to students so that teachers will have a deeper understanding of the event.
5. *Original Documents*: This is a collection of unedited excerpts of the eleven documents included in the students' document packet. These are made available in case students or the teacher want to compare the modified documents given to the students to the original documents.
6. *Teacher Materials for the Debriefing*: These materials provide additional information about historians' most recent interpretations of the causes of the massacre, used to guide students' during their development of interpretations and during the debriefing.

### Preparation

- Review the teacher materials to build background knowledge on the massacre.
- Make a classroom set of the *Student Background Information* papers and the *Document Packet for Students*.
- Make a copy of the *Student Graphic Organizer* “What caused the Mountain Meadows Massacre?” for each student.
- Consider appropriate groups of students that would allow those with greater skills in reading and historical thinking to help those with weaker skills. Also consider the sensitive nature of the topic in forming groups.

### Procedures

1. Provide students with background knowledge on the Mountain Meadows Massacre. This can be done through a brief lecture with the accompanying PowerPoint slides, or it can be accomplished by having students independently read and discuss their *Student Background Information* sheets. Be certain that students distinguish between (a) the eight things almost all historians agree on and (b) the four interpretations that historians debate.
2. Explain to students the instructions for completing the *Student Graphic Organizer*. These instructions are found in the paragraph directly above the graphic organizer. Model for students your thought processes as you analyze the source of the first document, showing them how to complete the graphic organizer as you do. For example, as you start by reading the source, you might say:

*“Let’s think about this statement that comes from Sarah Baker. She was one of the 17 survivors of the massacre. She was just 22 months old at the time of the massacre, and she did not give her account until she was 86. That is 84 years after the massacre occurred. This gives me some doubts about the source because I wonder about her memory of the event, especially because she was so young when it happened. Then again, this source has value because it is one of the few non-Mormon accounts of what happened from an eye witness. And I think an experience like that might stick in your memory forever.”*

3. You might model completing the graphic organizer by projecting something like this for students to see:

document	source, audience, purpose	strengths of the evidence	weaknesses of the evidence	How does this evidence support any of the theories	How does this evidence weaken any of the theories
Doc 1	Sarah Baker Mitchell, surviving child, to a MA. Newspaper to tell her story before she died.	Eye witness non-Mormon	84 years later 22 months old at the time.		

4. Continue reading the document, pausing to analyze it as you go. For example, you might make the following observations for students:

- When Mitchell talks about the history of Mormon persecution in Missouri and hardships crossing the plains these are events that she was not an eye-witness of so she is sharing things she has learned after the massacre took place.
- Mitchell’s statement includes things that a two-year-old would not pay attention to or know about—things she would have learned about from others after the massacre. For these things, she is a secondary source rather than a primary source.
- Mitchell is surprisingly sympathetic to the Mormon’s experience—she is not bitter toward them. This makes her account seem less biased.
- She admits that some of what she talks about is “what she was told growing up.”
- She encourages the reader to make up his/her own mind about what happened.

5. You might project this information to show how students can complete their graphic organizer.

document	source, audience, purpose	strengths of the evidence	weaknesses of the evidence	How does this evidence support any of the theories	How does this evidence weaken any of the theories
Doc 1	Sarah Baker Mitchell, surviving child, to a MA. Newspaper to tell her story before she died.	Eye witness non-Mormon. She doesn’t appear bitter toward Mormons.	84 years later 22 months old at the time. Much of her account is “what she was told”	Rich wagon train theory	It doesn’t

6. Depending on the students’ reaction to the first document and their understanding of the process of historical analysis, you can model the analysis of the second document as you did the first one. Or you might have students work with a partner to analyze the second document, then regroup as a class and discuss what they came up with. You might display the next line of the graphic organizer and see whether the students came up with the same ideas you did.

document	source, audience, purpose	strengths of the evidence	weaknesses of the evidence	How does this evidence support any of the theories	How does this evidence weaken any of the theories
Doc 2	LDS historians Turley, Walker, and Leonard in 2008. Give the modern Mormon perspective	Trained historians with access to more evidence. Say Mormons did “terrible things” (less biased)	LDS employees may not criticize LDS leaders. Not eye-witnesses.	Anger and Fear Theory, Rich Wagon Train Theory	It doesn’t

7. Once you are confident the students understand the process you can give them time to work in teams on the remaining documents, circulating as they work to give support as needed. Give students time to answer the question at the bottom of their graphic organizer about what caused the massacre.

8. After all of the documents have been analyzed, bring the entire class back together for a debriefing session. Ask the students questions like the following and allow them to discuss and respectfully critique others' responses.
  - Which theory do you agree with most, or do you have a different theory about what caused the Mountain Meadows Massacre?
  - Which documents did you trust the most? Which did you trust the least? (You could even have them rank the documents from 1 to 10 in trustworthiness).
  - What were some of the things that made documents seem more trustworthy to you? What made them see less trustworthy?
  - Why does so much controversy still surround the Mountain Meadows Massacre? What is it about the evidence that makes this event hard for historians to study?
9. At the conclusion of the debriefing, you might point out some of the findings of the most recent scholarship on the Mountain Meadows Massacre, included in the *Teacher Materials for the Debriefing*.
10. Conclude the activity with a discussion about the importance of getting along with people who differ from us in politics, culture, religion, race, etc., and the dangers of a mob mentality. Talk about possible solutions for the disagreements between the Mormon settlers and the emigrants, even when they both wanted the same grazing land or supplies. Talk about specific strategies that can be used in current situations where disagreements exist, such as building on common ground, being as vigilant in defending others rights as we are in defending our own, listening—really listening to others' opinions, recognizing that smart and moral people sometimes disagree, avoiding “othering,” etc.

### **Assessments**

1. Use the first three columns of the graphic organizer to assess students' sourcing—their ability to use source information to critically analyze the content of a document, and corroboration—their ability to cross check information across multiple sources
2. During the debriefing session assess the students' ability to engage in contextualization—the ability to understand the physical context (the distance between Salt Lake City and Cedar City), the historical context (travel was difficult and slow) and social context (the uneasiness about the approaching US troops) of the massacre.
3. Use the students' answer to the question on their graphic organizer to assess students' ability to use evidence from the documents to support an interpretation.
4. During the analysis of evidence, observe students' ability and tendency to discuss civilly with other class members, particularly those who have a different opinion.

### **Adaptations/Extensions**

1. For students who have trouble writing, instead of having them fill out the graphic organizer you might have them highlight the documents with different colors for those parts that support each of the four interpretations or a different interpretation. They could also take notes in the margins of the documents.
2. For excellent readers, you could make packets of the original documents (rather than the simplified documents) and let them analyze the original texts.

## **Teacher Background Materials**

### **What Caused the Mountain Meadows Massacre?**

One of the most tragic events in the history of the western United States occurred in a quiet upland mountain meadow in southern Utah on September 11, 1857. A pioneer company from Arkansas and Missouri, on their way to forge new lives in California, was slaughtered by a group of Mormon men aided by Paiute Indians. About 120 individuals, most of them women and children, perished in the brutal attack. The objective of this lesson is to identify why this group of Mormons, men who lived relatively peaceful and law-abiding lives both before and after the attack, would engage in such a violent and barbaric act.

Historians continue to debate much about the event because the available evidence presents challenges. Few of those who perpetrated the murders spoke or wrote much about what had happened. Mormon communities spread rumors about massacre victims in order to rationalize their actions, rumors that became confused with historical evidence. The only survivors of the attack were so young that their accounts of the massacre are sometimes questioned. Anti-Mormon writers, common throughout the United States even prior to the attack, made wild accusations that implicated Mormons in imagined atrocities throughout the West and called for their extermination. Their stories blamed the massacre on the upper echelons of the leadership of the LDS church, including Brigham Young, the president of the church and the territorial governor of Utah. All historical evidence is influenced by the perspectives of those who produce it, and in the case of the Mountain Meadows Massacre almost all evidence comes from sources highly motivated to spin the incident in a specific way. Still here are eight parts of the story that almost all historians agree on:

1. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, commonly referred to as the Mormon Church, was organized in the eastern United States in 1830. Mormons gathered in communities that faced increasing opposition as their numbers grew. Mormons fled what they and most historians term persecution in New York and Ohio and eventually built communities around Independence, Missouri and in Nauvoo, Illinois. Joseph Smith, the founder of the LDS Church, was killed, and as persecution increased, Brigham Young, the new leader of the church, determined to lead a Mormon migration into the West. It should be noted that a handful of historians claim that Mormons overstated the “persecution” they faced. These historians highlight, instead, the actions Mormons took that provoked their neighbors. In 1847, Mormon pioneers began to settle in the Great Basin, in territory that belonged to Mexico. The following year the region was annexed into the United States through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In 1850, the United States officially recognized Utah as a territory and federal officials were sent to administer in the region. Brigham Young was appointed territorial governor.
2. Non-Mormon federal officials in Utah soon became frustrated by ongoing conflicts with Mormon leaders, and they accused Mormons of un-American practices. Because Brigham Young served as president of the LDS church and territorial governor they lamented the lack of separation between church and state. Converts to the Mormon Church from Scandinavia and the British Isles migrated to Utah in large numbers, raising further questions about Mormons’ loyalty to the United States. The practice of polygamy, common among Mormon men in pioneer Utah, brought further condemnation from easterners and contributed to widespread anti-Mormon sentiment. Utah’s application for statehood in 1856 was denied.
3. Instead, in 1857 President James Buchanan sent an army of about 2,500 soldiers to quell what he called the “Mormon Rebellion” in Utah. They brought with them Alfred Cumming to replace Brigham Young as territorial governor. Officials of the United States did not communicate to Mormon leaders the purpose of the approaching army. As the troops made the long journey across the American Great Plains, Mormons in Utah prepared for what they considered an armed invasion.

Brigham Young ordered that all goods be stockpiled. The approaching US army led many Mormons to fear that the persecution they had faced in the East would now be repeated in Utah. Determined to defend themselves against what they perceived was repeated oppression, Mormon leaders sent their own militia to slow the troops, destroy their supplies, burn the prairie grass needed for army stock, and do all they could to harass the troops. Some Mormon leaders, including many in southern Utah preached fiery sermons calling on Mormon men to fight to defend their faith and families.

4. That same year many emigrant groups crossed the Great Plains driving cattle and hauling belongings toward California. Included among the many companies were the Baker, Dunlap, Fancher, Miller, Tackitt and other families from Arkansas. Following the Southern Road to California, these emigrants entered the Salt Lake Valley in early August, just as anxieties were rising among Mormons about the approaching United States army. Tensions developed between Mormons and emigrants passing through Salt Lake City and other Mormon communities, with both sides contributing to the animosity. Some historians claim that the Mormons were solely to blame for the growing animosity and that evidence of the emigrants contributing to the conflict were merely rumors started by Mormons after the massacre to justify it. Most historians today believe that both Mormons and emigrants expressed harsh words as they came into conflict over the limited grasslands and as Mormons, following their leaders' orders to stockpile grain, withheld much needed supplies from the emigrants. The largest conflict occurred in Cedar City on September 3, 1857.
5. There were also many Indian nations in Utah during the time. The Mormons wanted the Indians to help them fight against the soldiers. Because the Mormons appeared friendly to Indians, emigrants didn't trust the Mormons. Still, Indians sometimes felt like the Mormons were not treating them the right way. As part of the war, Mormon leaders asked the Indians to chase the cattle away from emigrant groups and the army. As the army approached, Brigham Young announced that the Mormons would no longer discourage Native Americans from raiding emigrant companies as they had previously done. Again some historians claim, and rumors at the time were widely circulated, that the Mormons had been colluding with American Indians to attack emigrant groups after the Mormon's first arrival in the Great Basin. However, the majority of historians understand the changing nature of Mormon/Indian/emigrant relations and note the significant change in Mormon policies when the American troops were approaching in 1857.
6. On September 11, 1857, at a place called Mountain Meadows, Mormon militiamen and Paiute Indians massacred the Baker, Dunlap, Fancher, Miller, Tackitt and other families from Arkansas, along with many others who had joined their wagon train. After a few days of fighting between Paiutes, joined by a handful of Mormons, and the emigrant party, Mormon militiamen lured the emigrants from their defensive positions under a flag of truce and together with Paiutes who had been waiting to ambush them began the slaughter. About 120 people, including many women and children, were killed. A few young children who were too young to tell what had happened were spared and were taken in by Mormon families. After the massacre those who were involved took the emigrants' belongings and tried to hide what they had done. Mormons tried to blame the entire attack on the Paiutes, which wasn't true.
7. Without knowing what had happened to the emigrant wagon train, the U.S. army got stuck near Fort Bridger, (in modern day Wyoming) during the winter. This gave the Mormon leaders and U.S. leaders a chance to communicate and to find some solutions to their disagreements. Their meetings ended what is now called the "Utah War" before any real fighting happened between the Mormon militia and the army. Alfred Cumming replaced Brigham Young as territorial governor and a U.S. army was stationed at Camp Floyd southwest of the Salt Lake Valley.

8. It didn't take long before outsiders realized that something terrible had happened to the emigrants. A wagon train passing shortly behind them saw the bodies of massacre victims and reported it to California newspapers. As news of a massacre spread, various rumors circulated about who was involved. Soon the blame was laid on the Mormons of southern Utah. Rumors also spread about the involvement of Brigham Young and other high-ranking leaders of the Mormon church. Eventually, investigators accused John D. Lee of orchestrating the Native American attack as well as organizing the activities of the Mormon militia that carried out the massacre. He was later convicted of the crimes. He was executed 20 years after the Mountain Meadows Massacre at the site where the massacre had occurred. Many federal officials tried to find evidence of a direct link between Brigham Young and the attack but they were unsuccessful. (Some historians think that Brigham Young had no direct connection. Other historians think that Mormons destroyed any evidence linking Young with the attack.) Eight others, most of them local leaders of the Mormon church and the militia in southern Utah were charged with crimes. Some of them lived out their lives as fugitives from the law. The LDS church disciplined some of the people involved in the massacre and others left the church. Some of the Paiutes who were involved were shunned by others. Only Lee was tried and executed.

Several different interpretations have been made about what really happened at Mountain Meadows, including these four. They may or may not be completely true, but different people have believed them and told them as if they were true.

1. A group of trouble makers who called themselves the "Missouri Wildcats" joined the peaceful Fancher-Baker party as they crossed through Utah. The Missouri Wildcats became angry when the Mormons would not sell or trade the supplies they needed. They trampled Mormons' gardens, broke down fences, hurt Mormon women, killed their chickens, and put poison in their water. The Missouri Wildcats made fun of the Mormons, threatened them, and said they helped kill the Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith. They left behind a poisoned ox, hoping that Native Americans would eat it and die. They said they would come back from California with an army and help in the war against the Mormons. When some Paiutes died after eating the ox, the other Paiutes decided to attack the emigrants. They asked the Mormons to help them. The Mormons had little choice because they needed the Paiutes to help them in the fight against the US Army. They were also afraid of the emigrants' threats to help the army. The Mormon militia helped the Paiutes by tricking the emigrants and leading them out of their protected wagons. Mormon men killed the emigrant men and Paiute warriors killed the women and children. (This interpretation was common within the LDS community during the 20<sup>th</sup> century even after Juanita Brooks challenged it with her book, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century this general story was common within the LDS community except that the blame for the massacre fell upon the Paiute Indians and local Mormon militia leader John D. Lee. This version of the massacre is still popular within LDS communities though LDS historians, such as Richard Turley, discount much of this interpretation). (**Missouri Wildcat Theory**)
2. Mormons heard that the US army was coming about the same time that they heard that their beloved apostle Parley P. Pratt had been murdered in Arkansas. When the emigrant party entered the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young found out they were from Arkansas and he was determined to avenge the death of Pratt. He sent a Mormon apostle, George A. Smith, to southern Utah faster than the emigrants. George A. Smith told the local leaders to kill the entire wagon train when they were in a quiet area where nobody would find out. A couple of days later Brigham Young decided that he had made a mistake. He sent another messenger with a note that told the Mormons to let the emigrants pass. But before the message arrived, Mormon leaders convinced the Paiutes to attack the emigrants. After 5 days of fighting, the Mormons tricked the emigrants into coming out of their protected places. Then the Mormon militia killed the emigrants with a few Paiute Indians joining in the massacre. (This interpretation was promoted by disgruntled Mormon, Will Bagley in his book *Blood of the Prophets*.)



Many book reviews are critical of Will Bagley's selective use of evidence, his tampering with key pieces of evidence, and his anti-Mormon bias.) (**Brigham Young Theory**)

3. Arguing between the emigrants and Mormon settlers got worse as the emigrants traveled south toward Cedar City. Emigrants were angry that the Mormons would not sell them supplies. Some members of the wagon train told the Mormons they would help the US Army that was coming. After the emigrants left Cedar City some local Mormon leaders wanted to follow them, hurt them, and scatter their cattle. Other Mormons disagreed but were afraid to confront their local church leaders or to disobey orders from militia leaders. Isaac Haight, a local Mormon leader, asked John D Lee, a friend of the Paiute Indians, to lead an Indian raid on the emigrants. For five days, the Indians and John D. Lee, who was disguised as an Indian, attacked the emigrants who had circled their wagons in defense. While the fighting was going on the Mormons sent a messenger to Brigham Young to get his counsel. Brigham Young was 250 miles away. Two men from the emigrants who were looking for stray cattle and collecting pine tar to repair wagons remained unaware of the attack. While in Cedar City, members of the Mormon militia killed one of the men and tried to kill the other but he escaped and rode to the circled wagons. Now the emigrants knew that some of the Mormons were involved. Isaac Haight, John D. Lee, and other Mormon leaders decided that the entire party must die because they were afraid that the emigrants would tell other people that the Mormons had planned and been involved in the Indian attack. John D. Lee tricked the desperate emigrants into leaving their wagons and told them the Mormon militia would help them get back to Cedar City safely. But instead the members of the militia began killing them. Indians who were hiding helped the Mormons. Only 17 children who were too young to tell about what had happened were left alive. After the attack the messenger that had been sent to get Brigham Young's advice returned with the message from Brigham Young to let the emigrants pass. (This interpretation comes from the book *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, co-authored by three LDS historians.) (**Anger and Fear Theory**)
4. That emigrant party was one of the richest groups to pass through Utah in 1857. They had a large herd of cattle and other animals and one horse that was worth thousands of dollars. Mormons thought that the cattle, weapons, and other supplies of the emigrants could help them in their war with the US Army. They could share the things that they took with the Paiutes, which would win the favor of the Paiutes and help make sure the Paiutes would help fight the US Army. The massacre was planned by Mormons and carried out by both Mormons and Paiutes in order to take the emigrants' property and help them in the war against the United States. (This interpretation is a synthesis of ideas promoted in the books *Blood of the Prophets* and *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* and several non-Mormon 19<sup>th</sup> century sources.) (**Rich Wagon Train Theory**)

### Teacher Materials for the Debriefing What Caused the Mountain Meadows Massacre?

As students express their interpretations, the teacher might want to provide some input based upon the most recent and generally accepted historian-produced interpretations.

Most historians today **rule out** the following interpretations for the reasons given:

1. The poisoning of the ox at Corn Creek that killed Native Americans: The primary reason that historians discount this story is that it is simply illogical to believe that a group of emigrants could have carried enough poison with them in their limited wagon space to poison Corn Creek, a swift-moving stream flowing from a natural spring. Historians have expressed other possible explanations for the spread of the rumor that the emigrants poisoned a dead ox at Corn Creek. It appears that some Indians may have become sick and died after eating an ox that died at Corn Creek. Richard Turley and his colleagues speculate that it may have been anthrax that killed the ox, and that this would have caused sickness and death in the Indians. They also suggest that local Mormons, who had had minor disagreements with the emigrants over their use of the grass, may have misinterpreted what they saw emigrants doing near the dead ox. Once the illness broke out they may have assumed the emigrants intentionally poisoned the Indians—poisoning was a strangely common concern in 1857. The story of poisoning probably didn't travel faster than the emigrants, but it may have arrived just after the emigrants had left town, causing people in Cedar City to believe, incorrectly, that the emigrants had poisoned an ox that led to the death of several Indians. Elijah Hoopes, was the local Mormon who reported sickness and spread the idea of poison. He was a well-known gossip that frequently spread rumors. In contrast, Will Bagley argues that the Mormons intentionally spread lies about the Indians' poisoning of the ox in order to build support for the murder of the emigrants and to justify the murders after the fact. There are some accounts of 49ers so intent on reaching the gold fields before any competition—even competition from Indians—that they deliberately engaged in tactics such as poisoning water sources and burning pasture. This would have been on people's minds in 1857 when the rumors began to spread. Whether a misunderstanding or an outright lie, historians today do not believe that the emigrants poisoned an ox and left it to injure Indians.
2. The massacre was a result of Brigham Young's proclamation of martial law in the territory: Brigham Young's official proclamation of martial law was issued on September 15, four days after the massacre had occurred. Though no official proclamation had been issued, there were instructions circulating related to war preparations, not selling grain, and befriending Indians prior to the official proclamation of martial law. These war preparations may have contributed to the conflict between emigrants and Mormons but they were not a direct result of martial law.
3. Emigrants treating the Mormons with brutality: On one hand, there is ample evidence of mild disagreements between emigrants and Mormons in Provo and near Nephi, and it is likely that the emigrants felt and perhaps expressed frustration with the Mormons' unwillingness to trade with them. Emigrants might have teased the Mormons about their frontier conditions or even mocked Mormon leaders. A handful of the emigrants may have even breathed threats about supporting the army. On the other hand, historians today discount stories about severe emigrant atrocities such as "ravishing" Mormon women or causing wanton destruction of Mormon property. Most historians believe that stories of emigrant atrocities were either circulated before the massacre in order to build support for the attack or after the fact in order to justify the massacre. Today historians agree that nothing that the emigrants did came close to justifying the Mormon response.
4. Mormon leaders and church doctrines supported a culture of violence and bloodshed: This idea has been proposed by Will Bagley. However, the most recent scholarship from LDS historians show that

Utah was not any more violent than other western territories at the time of the massacre. They demonstrate that there were many other wagon trains who passed through Utah before and after the victims of the massacre who had relatively little trouble.

5. The massacre was a direct result of the Mormon's reaction to the killing of beloved Mormon apostle Parley P. Pratt in Arkansas: This is another idea proposed by Will Bagley. However, most recent historical scholarship discounts any direct connection between Pratt's murder and the Mountain Meadows Massacre. The fact that Pratt was killed in Arkansas and the emigrants were travelling from Arkansas has been deemed by many to be a coincidence.
6. The LDS church continues to deny the involvement of church members in the massacre: Today, historians for the LDS church acknowledge the leading role of local church leaders and members of the church in the massacre. They acknowledge that Paiutes who were involved had been pressured by local Mormons. They also consider the victims innocent of any actions that would have come close to justifying the massacre. In recent years, a coalition of LDS historians, some descendants of victims, and representatives of the Paiute Nation have supported signage at Mountain Meadows that describes what occurred in an even-handed manner that acknowledges all three groups' perspectives, something that would have been impossible in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **Student Background Information**

#### **What Caused the Mountain Meadows Massacre?**

One of the saddest events in the history of the western United States happened in a quiet mountain meadow in southern Utah on September 11, 1857. A wagon train of emigrants, traveling from Arkansas through Utah on their way to California, was murdered by a group of Mormon men who were helped by Indians. During this lesson, you will try to figure out why this group of Mormons, men who lived normal and mostly peaceful lives both before and after the attack, did such a terrible thing.

Many historians disagree about the event because most of the people who wrote about it in the 1800s and 1900s either really liked Mormons or really disliked them. It is hard for historians to tell the difference between good evidence and rumors that were started before or after the massacre. Still, here are eight things that almost all historians agree on:

1. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, also called the Mormon Church, was organized in the eastern United States in 1830. In 1847, Mormon pioneers began to settle in the Great Basin in part to get away from disagreements they had with people in the East.
2. After Utah became part of the United States in 1850, federal officers who weren't Mormons were sent to help lead the new territory. These officers sometimes disagreed with Mormons and told government leaders and people in the East that the Mormons were causing trouble. Many people in the East also didn't like that some Mormon men had more than one wife. Many new Mormons who moved to Utah were from Europe, and people in the East didn't think they would be good, loyal Americans. Some people thought that Mormons were rebelling against the United States.
3. In 1857 President James Buchanan sent an army of about 2,500 soldiers to stop what some people called the "Mormon Rebellion" in Utah. As the army made the long journey across the Great Plains, Utah prepared for war. The army reminded Mormons of mobs they were trying to get away from when they moved west. Mormon leaders sent a militia (volunteer army) to the Great Plains to slow down and discourage the U.S. troops. The Mormon leader, Brigham Young, told Mormons to keep all of their supplies and not sell or trade any. Some Mormon leaders made speeches that told the Mormons to prepare to fight and kill and even die for their faith and families.
4. That same year many emigrants crossed the Great Plains toward California. The Baker, Dunlap, Fancher, Miller and Tackitt families were a part of these emigrant groups. These families each entered the Salt Lake Valley in August then joined together into a large wagon train and followed the "Southern Road" into southern Utah. They happened to arrive in Utah just as the Mormons were preparing for war with the U.S. Army. The emigrants got into disagreements with Mormons over grasslands and supplies as they passed through several cities. The worst disagreements happened in Cedar City on September 3, 1857.
5. There were also many Indian nations in Utah during the time. The Mormons wanted the Indians to help them fight against the U.S. soldiers. When emigrants saw Mormons being friendly with the Indians it made them nervous. Even so, the Indians sometimes felt like the Mormons were not treating them the right way. As part of the war, Mormon leaders asked the Indians to try to chase the cattle away from emigrant groups and the army.
6. On September 11, 1857, the emigrant train was massacred by Mormons and Paiute Indians at a place called Mountain Meadows. About 120 people, including many women and children, were killed. A few young children were allowed to live. After the massacre those who did it took the emigrants' belongings and tried to hide what they had done.

7. Without knowing what had happened to the emigrants, the U.S. army got stuck near Fort Bridger, in what is now Wyoming, during the winter. This gave the Mormon leaders and U.S. leaders a chance to meet and to find a solution to their disagreements. Their meetings ended what some people call the “Utah War” before any real fighting happened between the Mormon militia and the U.S. army.
8. Many years after the massacre, the government accused John D. Lee of leading the Mormon militia and the Indians who had killed the emigrants. He was convicted and executed 20 years after the massacre at the site where it had happened. The Mormon church punished some of the Mormons who were involved. Eight Mormon leaders and militia leaders hid from law enforcers for the rest of their lives. Some Paiutes were looked down on by both Indians and others for killing the emigrants.

Several different **interpretations** have been made about what caused the massacre and what really happened at Mountain Meadows, including these four. **They may or may not be partially or completely true**, but different people and/or historians have believed them and told them as if they were true.

1. A group of trouble makers who called themselves the “Missouri Wildcats” joined the peaceful emigrant party as they crossed through Utah. The Missouri Wildcats became angry when the Mormons would not sell or trade supplies. They trampled Mormons’ gardens, broke down fences, hurt Mormon women, killed their chickens, and put poison in their water. They made fun of the Mormons, threatened them, and told them that they helped kill the Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith. They left behind a poisoned ox, hoping that Native Americans would eat it and die. They said they would come back from California with an army and help in the war against the Mormons. When some Paiutes died after eating the ox, other Paiutes decided to attack the emigrants. They asked the Mormons to help them. The Mormons had no choice. They needed the Paiutes’ help in the fight against the US Army. They were afraid of the emigrants’ threats to help the army. The Mormon militia helped the Paiutes by tricking the emigrants and leading them out of a fort the emigrants built from their wagons. Mormon men killed the emigrant men and Paiute warriors killed the emigrant women and almost all of the children. (**Missouri Wildcat Theory**)
2. Mormons heard that the US army was coming about the same time that they heard that one of their leaders, Parley P. Pratt, had been murdered in Arkansas. When the emigrants entered the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young found out they were from Arkansas and was very angry. He sent another leader George A. Smith to southern Utah faster than the emigrants. George A. Smith told the local leaders to kill the entire wagon train when they were in a quiet area where nobody would find out. A couple of days later Brigham Young decided that he had made a mistake. He sent another messenger with a note that told the Mormons to let the emigrants pass. But before the message got to them, Mormon leaders convinced the Paiutes to attack the emigrants and helped them in the attack. After 5 days of fighting, the Mormons tricked the emigrants into coming out of their protected places. Then the Mormon militia killed the emigrants with some Paiutes helping. (**Brigham Young Theory**)
3. Arguing between the emigrants and Mormon settlers got worse as the emigrants traveled south. Emigrants were angry that the Mormons would not sell them supplies. Some members of the wagon train told the Mormons they would help the US Army that was coming. Some local Mormon leaders wanted to hurt them, and scatter their cattle. Other local leaders, disagreed but were afraid to stop the attack. John D Lee, a friend of the Paiute Indians, lead an Indian raid on the emigrants. For five days, the Indians and John D. Lee attacked the emigrants who had circled their wagons for defense. While the fighting was going on the Mormons sent a messenger to Brigham Young to see what they should do. Brigham Young was 250 miles away. Members of the Mormon militia killed an emigrant man who was out looking for stray cattle. They tried to kill his partner but he escaped and rode back to the

circled wagons. Because the emigrants knew that Mormons were involved in the attack, Mormon leaders decided that the entire party must die. They were afraid that the emigrants would tell other people what the Mormons had done. The Mormon militia tricked the emigrants to leave their wagons and began killing them. Indians who were hiding helped the Mormons. Two days after the attack the messenger that had been sent to get Brigham Young's advice returned with the message from Brigham Young to let the emigrants pass. (**Anger and Fear Theory**)

4. This emigrant wagon train was one of the richest groups to pass through Utah in 1857. They had a large herd of cattle and other animals and one horse that was worth thousands of dollars. Mormons thought that the cattle, weapons, and other supplies of the emigrants could help them in their war with the US Army. They could share the things that they took with the Paiutes, which would make the Paiutes happy and make sure the Paiutes would help fight the US Army. The massacre was planned by Mormons and carried out by both Mormons and Paiutes to take the emigrants' property and help them in the war against the United States. (**Rich Wagon Train Theory**)

**Student Graphic Organizer**  
**What Caused the Mountain Meadows Massacre?**

You will be given some documents that tell us about the Mountain Meadows Massacre. You need to try to figure out **why the massacre happened**. You just heard about four interpretations that all might be partly true and partly false. To summarize them: (1) **The Missouri Wildcat Theory**: The emigrants were bad, the Paiutes wanted revenge, and the Mormons got caught in the middle of things. (2) **The Brigham Young Theory**: The emigrants were in the wrong place at the wrong time, Brigham Young asked the Mormons to massacre the emigrants, and the Mormons were to blame for the attack with the Paiutes helping. (3) **The Anger and Fear Theory**: The emigrants made some mistakes but nothing that would make it right to attack them, the attack that was planned by local Mormon leaders and supported by Paiute Indians. (4) **The Rich Wagon Train Theory**: The massacre was planned by Mormons and carried out by both Mormons and Paiutes in order to take the emigrants' property to help them in the war against the United States.

An important part of using the evidence you will get is thinking critically about it. That means that you have to think about what should make you trust or doubt the evidence and how it helps you answer the question **why did the massacre happen?** The chart gives you a place to write what you notice and think about the evidence and about how it supports or weakens different theories.

document	source, audience, purpose	strengths of the evidence	weaknesses of the evidence	Important evidence that supports any of the theories	Important evidence that weakens any of the theories
Doc 1					
Doc 2					
Doc 3					
Doc 4					

document	source, audience, purpose	strengths of the evidence	weaknesses of the evidence	How does this evidence support any of the theories	How does this evidence weaken any of the theories
Doc 5					
Doc 6					
Doc 7					
Doc 8					
Doc 9					
Doc 10					
Doc 11					



Based upon this evidence, **what do you think were the main causes of the Mountain Meadows Massacre?** You can list ideas from the four interpretations you were given or your own ideas:

Document Packet for Students  
What Caused the Mountain Meadows Massacre?

**Note: These documents have been changed to make them easier to read. Your teacher will have the original documents if you want to see them.**

**Document 1. Sallie [Sarah Francis] Baker Mitchell was 22 months old at the time of the massacre, one of few who survived because of their young age. These are her words about the massacre, given on September 1, 1940 to a Boston newspaper called the American Weekly in an article called, “The Mountain Meadows Massacre: An Episode on the Road to Zion.” (Some of the words have been changed from her original words to make it easier to read).**

A lot has been said ... about what caused the massacre. It wasn't just because we had a lot of property the Indians figured was well worth stealing. There were several other things that caused it. In the first place, the members of our party came from a part of the country not far from the place in Missouri and Illinois where the Mormons had been treated very badly. ... They were driven out of Illinois and, after suffering all sorts of hardships crossing the plains, they finally got themselves a home in Utah. So it is only natural that they should feel bitter about anybody who came from anywhere near the part of the country where they had had so much trouble. I'm sure nobody in our party had anything to do with the persecution of the Mormons in Missouri and Illinois, or anything to do with the murder of Joseph Smith and his brother. But that didn't make any difference. The word got around, somehow, that somebody in our party was bragging about carrying the very same pistol that was used to kill the Mormon Prophet, and that he even said he planned to use it on Brigham Young, who had become the leader of the Mormons. I don't think that was true, but the rumor got around right after we reached Utah, and it made a lot of Mormons very angry. Then somebody [a Mormon] started getting the Indians mad at us, by telling them our party had been poisoning springs and water holes, to kill their horses. Now that just isn't true. Nobody in our party would do a thing like that. Even if they had been mean enough, they wouldn't have been stupid enough to do a thing like that in a country filled with Indians that were not too friendly to begin with. Off and on, ever since they took over Utah, the Mormons had been fighting with the Federal Government, saying that they had a right to run everything the way they wanted. It finally got so bad President Buchanan gave an order to remove Brigham Young as governor of the territory, and having Alfred Cumming take his place. And just before we landed in Utah, the Mormons heard that Cumming was on his way to Utah with an army of 2500 men. That made the Mormons mad as hornets, so mad, in fact, that Brigham Young stood up to the Federal Government and put the Mormon militia in charge of things, but the members of our party didn't know anything about that, and walked right into the hornet's nest. When our wagon train reached Salt Lake City in August, our supplies were just about gone, and everybody was tired and hungry, and our horses and cattle were skinny and needed to rest and eat, we were told to move on and be quick about it. On top of that, the Mormons wouldn't sell us any food. That is what I was told when I was growing up and I've always believed it was true. A lot has been written about what was going on with the Mormons while our party was resting at Mountain Meadows. Both sides of the question have been talked about a lot, with a lot of arguments and evidence on each side. So anybody who wants to form his own opinion can look up the books on the subject and make his choice. Some writers say that officials of the Mormon church stirred the Indians up and kept egging them on till they attacked us, and then told their own people to jump in and help the Indians finish up the job, after tricking our men into giving up their guns. But the Mormon writers say that none of the church leaders knew what was going on until it was too late for them to stop it, even though they tried their best. They admit, though, that there were some Mormons mixed up in it, and years after it was over, blamed John D. Lee, who was a Mormon and an Indian agent. But I'll tell about that later....

Our wagon train was one of the richest that ever crossed the plains and some people have said that that was one of the reasons the Indians attacked our people to get their goods. We traveled in carriages, buggies, and wagons and there were 40 extra teams of excellent horses and mules, with 800 cattle and a stallion worth \$2,000. Altogether, the property in our caravan was worth \$70,000.

**Document 2. A part of the book, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, that was written by Richard Turley, a lawyer, Ronald Walker, a historian, and Glen Leonard, a historian, and published in 2008. The authors are all Mormons and work for the Latter-Day Saint church in its History Department. (Some of the words have been changed from their original words to make it easier to read).**

How could good people do such a terrible thing? There are no easy answers, but what historians know about violence in America in the 1800s helps us start to understand. In the early to mid 1800's, the United States could be a violent place, especially for people of different races, cultures, and religions. 1830 to 1860 has been called "The Turbulent Era," and it was this way for many Mormons. These men and women lived through violence in Missouri and Illinois, and when a U.S. army marched toward Utah Territory in 1857—the year of the massacre—they believed they would become victims again. One of the sad things about Mormon history is that the same people who had hated violence against them became violent toward others. When they carried out the Mountain Meadows Massacre, they did the same thing that vigilantes [people who hurt others thinking that they were doing good] in other places did.

People who have studied violence give other ideas about the way people think when they are in groups. Violence often starts when one group thinks of another as "the other," not thinking of them as people but changing them into enemies. After they have taken away their value and made them seem evil, rumors start to spread and the group thinks it needs to do something to get rid of the threatening enemy. People think that the enemy is acting badly, and the group starts to take steps against them. When these dangerous things exist, a single event that is not a big deal can start the violence and end in something terrible. People who study violence say that there are other things that happen when "good people" do terrible things. Usually people trust their leaders and believe in obedience so that they don't stand up to leaders who make mistakes even when they feel that the leaders are wrong. Bad things also happen when followers don't know what their leaders want them to do. When people are poor they are sometimes violent because they are worried about survival. All of these things that lead to killing—thinking of others as evil, leaders, obedience, peer pressure, confusion, fear, and being poor—were there in southern Utah in 1857.

**Document 3. A part of the book, *Blood of the Prophets*, that was written by Will Bagley and published in 2002. Mr. Bagley has studied a lot about the history of the western United States and has written many books about the West. He is a Mormon but he often says bad things about Mormon leaders. (Some of the words have been changed from his original words to make it easier to read).**

I admit that I don't have historical proof for some of the things I say, but they are simple and supported by the evidence. My ideas are based on my personal belief that the stories [Mormons told] about [the emigrants] poisoning springs and killing chickens are made-up propaganda. [Propaganda is something that is biased and misleading to affect people's attitudes]. These emigrants were innocent victims of a terrible crime who had the bad luck of being in the wrong place at the wrong time and whose story is still lied about a lot in legends that are not true and silly. The emigrants from Arkansas were probably doomed as soon as the Mormons learned about the death of Parley Pratt and that the army was on its way. The emigrants died because of Brigham Young's decision to do something violent that would show his power to control the Indians of the Great Basin and to stop travel on the most important pioneer trails. Then there is the strange letter Brigham Young sent to Isaac Haight the day before the massacre telling his military commanders not to kill passing emigrants. This strange command shows that Brigham Young had earlier given orders to attack every emigrant party in southern Utah. Even before the Fancher party left Salt Lake, George A. Smith was on his way to southern Utah to arrange their destruction at a remote and lonely spot. If he did not give clear orders to kill them he made sure the military and religious leaders in southern Utah knew that was expected.... After camping with the Fancher party at Corn Creek, Smith made up the story of the poisoned spring to give a reason for murdering the emigrants.

**Document 4. Special Report of the Mountain Meadow Massacre by J. H. Carleton, Brevet Major, United States Army, Captain, First Dragoons. May 25, 1859. Major Carleton traveled to Utah two years after the massacre to bury the bones of the victims. He interviewed people who said they knew things about the massacre. He wrote some of his report while at the place the massacre had happened (Some of the words have been changed from his original words to make it easier to read).**

When I left Los Angeles, the 23rd of this month, General Clarke, commanding the Department of California, asked me to bury the bones of the victims of that terrible massacre that took place here in September, 1857. The fact of this massacre of (in my opinion) at least 120 men, women and children, who were on their way from the State of Arkansas to California, has long been well known. I have tried to learn about it, and have the honor to share with you the following that I found out as I have asked about it:

[...] The Doctor says the train [emigrant group] had about 40 wagons; with a few tents, which the emigrants used along with their wagons when they camped. There seemed to be about 40 families, many women, some unmarried, and many children. A doctor went with them. The people in the train seemed to be respectable and rich in the world. They were well dressed, were quiet, orderly, polite; had good animals; had three carriages with them, and other things that showed that this was one of the finest wagon trains that had crossed the plains. The officers who were with the doctor then said so too. From reports that we got later, and comparing the dates how fast they would have traveled, he thinks this [wealthy wagon train] was the one that was destroyed at Mountain Meadows.

This train was certainly a very rich one. It is said the emigrants had nearly nine hundred head of fine cattle, many horses and mules and one stallion worth \$2,000; that they had a lot of money too. All this the Mormons in Salt Lake City saw as the train came on. The Mormons knew the troops were marching to Utah, and Brigham Young, Orson Hyde and other Mormon leaders led all of their people to hate in their hearts Americans and our Government, even giving speeches about it. Here was a rich train of emigrants—American Gentiles [non-Mormons]—that is, the most hated kind of Gentiles—and not only that, but these Gentiles were from Arkansas, where the good Parley P. Pratt had been killed. Don't these things give a clue to the secrets about why the massacre happened and whether or not the Mormons were part of the massacre? This train of Arkansas Gentiles was doomed from the day it crossed through the South Pass and had got down into the net of the Mormon spiders that it couldn't get away from. Judge Cradlebaugh told me that about this time Brigham Young, preaching in the churches and speaking of the trouble with the United States, said that up to that moment he had protected emigrants who had passed through the Territory, but now he would turn the Indians loose on them. It is interesting that this talk was preached at the same time that the rich train had come into the valley and was now in a trap. When Brigham Young gave a sermon it was like a command to these land pirates who listened to him as a prophet. The hint was secretly given and soon people acted.

**Document 5. The last confession and statement of John D. Lee, told just before his death in 1877 to his attorney William W. Bishop with a request that it should be published. There are several different versions of Lee's final statement and many historians believe William Bishop made his own changes to this version. It was published in a book called *Mormonism Unveiled*. (Some of the words have been changed from his original words to make it easier to read).**

[Isaac C. Haight] said, (and I believed at that time every word that he said, because I believed it was impossible for a leader of the church to lie) that the emigrants were a rough and cruel group of men. That while traveling through Utah they had been very cruel to all the Mormons they met. That they had insulted, angered, and attacked many of the Mormon women. That the terrible abuses against the Mormons by the emigrants had happened during their whole trip from Provo to Cedar City; that they had burned fences and destroyed growing crops; that at many points on the road they had poisoned the water, so that all the people and animals that drank the water became sick, and many had died from the poison. That these evil Gentiles [non-Mormons] told people that they had the pistol that the Prophet Joseph Smith had been murdered with, and had threatened to kill Brigham Young and all of the Apostles [Mormon leaders]. That when they got to Cedar City they said they would have friends in Utah who would hang Brigham Young by the neck

until he was dead, before winter. They also said that Johnston was coming, with his army, from the East, and they were going to return from California with soldiers, as soon as possible, and they would destroy the land, and kill every Mormon man, woman, and child that they could find in Utah. Haight said that unless something was done to stop it, the emigrants would carry out their threats and rob every one of the settlements in southern Utah, and that all of the Mormons were going to be killed by the troops that the emigrants would bring back with them from California. Haight then said "I expect you to carry out your orders." I knew I had to obey or die. I had no wish to disobey, for I then thought that my leaders in the Church spoke for God, and that it was right for me to obey the orders they gave me without asking any questions. Haight said to me: "Go, Brother Lee, and see that the instructions of the leaders are obeyed, and if you do this duty, you will be reward be in the kingdom of God, for God will bless those people who obey.

**Document 6. Part of a letter written by Brigham Young in Great Salt Lake City to Isaac C. Haight in Cedar City on, September 10th, 1857. Isaac Haight did not receive this letter until after the massacre had happened. (Some of the words have been changed from his original words to make it easier to read).**

I have your note that you wrote on the 7th of this month. Captain Van Vliet [leader of the US Army] is here, coming before the army to get supplies for them. We do not think that any part of the army will be able to reach here this fall. There are only about 850 men coming. They are now close to Laramie, [Wyoming]. A few of their supply wagons are closer to us [than the army]. The closest are at the Green River. They will not be able to come much farther because their animals aren't doing well. They cannot get here this season unless we help them, so you see that the Lord has answered our prayers and again blocked the punch that was aimed at our heads. Now about the emigration trains passing through our settlements, we must not get in their way until they are first told to keep away. You must not bother them. We think the Indians will do what they want to but you should try to keep good feelings with them. I don't know about any other trains going south. If those emigrants who are there will leave, let them go in peace. While we should be alert and always ready we should also be patient, defending ourselves and supplies, always remembering that God rules. He has delivered us again and he will always do this if we live our religion and be united in our faith and good works. All is well with us. May the Lord bless you and all saints forever. I remain as ever your brother in the Gospel of Christ. Brigham Young.

**Document 7. These words were given in a sermon [church speech] by George A. Smith, after returning to Salt Lake City after traveling through southern Utah. It comes from a report called "Report of a Visit to the Southern Country." This speech was given in the Bowery [a large covered meeting place] in Great Salt Lake City, Sunday afternoon, September 13, 1857. The talk was written down by G. D. Watt and J. V. Long. (Some of the words have been changed from his original words to make it easier to read).**

I visited the different settlements, until I reached Parowan, in Iron County, the first settlement in southern Utah. When I got there, it seemed like they had heard a rumor [of the US Army coming] because there was a lot going on. They seemed to be preparing for something that would happen soon. As I drove in at the gate of the city, I saw the militia [volunteer army] in the middle of town practicing, and I was soon surrounded by the "Iron Battalion," which seemed to be in good shape since it was organized there. They got together thinking that their land was going to be invaded by an army from the United States, and that they needed to prepare by checking each other's guns, and to get everything ready by preparing to move anywhere and march to the places that they might need to to do defend their homes.

You probably remember that I was the President of the group that first settled there [in Parowan]. I was welcomed with enthusiasm, and I never found them happier. They were willing any moment to burn their homes and hide in the mountains and to defend their country with everything they had.

Now, I hadn't been told to do this, but I felt in my bones that I needed to visit all these settlements in the South. Colonel Dame was organizing the military of that area like he had been told to do last winter. Because Colonel Dame was traveling around to organize the military, I got into the carriage

and went with him on a mission of peace, to preach to the people. When I got to Cedar City, I found the Battalions practicing, and Colonel Dame talked to them and helped them get organized.

The next day I spoke to the Saints [Mormons] at their church. I felt like I could talk about whatever I wanted, but I found myself preaching about war; and I told them, in case of invasion, it might be necessary to burn our property, and hide in the mountains, and leave our enemies to do their best [without any food]. People were excited about my sermon just like the people had been at Parowan. That was the same Sunday that Brother Young was preaching the same way [in Salt Lake City]; and I am sure that all the people in southern Utah agreed with our plan.

Then I went to Harmony. Brother Dame spoke to the military, and I spoke to the other leaders; and I must say that I spoke more about the military than religion. But it seemed like I was overflowing with it, and so I had to say something about it.

I then went to Pinto where I spoke to a lot of people in the evening, and then went to Cedar City the next day. They had heard a rumor that they were going to have an army of 600 US soldiers, riding horses, invade the town from the East. The Major seemed very hopeful about it. I asked him, if this rumor was true, if he would wait for instructions. He replied, that there was no time to wait for any instructions; and he was going to take his battalion and kill the enemy before they could get down the canyons; because, he said, "if they are coming here, they are not coming for any good."

**Document 8. A part of an article called "The Late Horrible Massacre" published in the California newspaper, *Los Angeles Star* on October 10, 1857. This article quoted an emigrant, P. M. Warn, who passed through Utah with a small emigrant party a few days behind the emigrants that were massacred.**

One possible reason for the massacre of this train [emigrant group] is that everyone knew it had a lot of valuable property, and this made the Mormons greedy. It was said, the emigrants had over 400 cows, mules, and other animals. They had a lot of guns and ammunition [bullets], something the Mormons thought a lot about. The train was made up of families who all seemed to be rich and because they were moving to California they probably had a lot of money with them. The [emigrant] men said a lot [of bad things] about the Mormons. What they did was dangerous, and they would do little things to bother the saints and to make them angry. They felt completely safe because they had guns and a lot of people. They were rude to all the powerful people who could fight against them. And they didn't feel the dangers that were around them, until they had no way to get help.

**Document 9. A part of an article called "The Late Horrible Massacre" published in the California newspaper, *Los Angeles Star* on October 10, 1857. This article quoted an emigrant, George Powers, who passed through Utah with a small party a few days behind the emigrants that were massacred. (Some of the words have been changed from the original article to make it easier to read).**

Mr. George Powers, of Little Rock, left Arkansas, and with his train [emigrant group] arrived in Salt Lake in August. He says:

We found that the Mormons were firmly preparing to fight the United States troops, whenever they arrived. On our way in [to Salt Lake], we met three militia groups of 100 men each, with guns and moving towards the pass above Fort Bridger [South Pass]. ... The Mormons told us that no U.S. troops would ever cross the mountains; and they talked and acted as if they were ready to fight Uncle Sam [the U.S troops].

We stayed in Salt Lake five days, and then pushed on, hoping to catch up with a larger train, which had left Salt Lake ten days before us, and which was the train that was massacred. We arrived at Buttermilk Fort by the lone cedar, 175 miles, and found the people there very mad at the train which had just passed, saying that they had hurt the Mormon women, calling them bad names, and bullying the men. The people would not sell that train any supplies,

and told us they were sorry they had not killed them there; but, they knew someone would kill them before they made it to California. They also told us that they were holding back the Indians from attacking them until their chief got there. Then he would follow the train and cut it in pieces.

We tried to buy some butter there. The women gave it to us but as we were taking it the men came running and yelling and said we could not have it or anything else because we had hurt them. They seemed to be very angry and would hardly speak to us. We couldn't get anything we needed. We only camped at this place one night.

At Corn Creek the many Indians were all peaceful and friendly. We didn't learn anything about the train in front of us, except that it had passed that place several days before us. We were happy to find out that we had gained on them. The next place where we heard about the train was when we got to Beaver [a town], 230 miles from Salt Lake. Here we found out that when the train ahead of us was camped at Corn Creek, which was thirty-five miles back, the place we found the Indians so friendly, an ox died, and the Indians asked for it. Before it was given to them, a Mormon said that he saw an emigrant go to the dead ox and cut it with his knife, and poured some liquid into the cut from a small bottle. The meat was eaten by the Indians, and three of them died, and several more were sick and would die. The people of Beaver seemed to be angry at the train, for the same reason as I said before. I asked an Indian, at Beaver, if the poisoned meat story was true. He replied in English, that he did not know, that several of the Indians had died and several were sick. He said their water melons made them all sick, and he thought that the Mormons had poisoned them.

We stayed at Beaver several days, because the Bishop told us it was dangerous for a small company like ours to go on. Our train had only three wagons, and we were hurrying on to join the larger train.

While we waited at Beaver, the train of William Mathews and Sidney Tanner of San Bernardino arrived, and I made plans to go with them. We arrived at Parowan where we learned that the train ahead of us had been attacked by the Indians at the Mountain Meadows fifty miles from Parowan. They had gone back up the road five miles to a spring, and built a fort [out of their wagons]. We then left Parowan and went five or six miles, and camped at a place that is called the Summit.

**Document 10. A part of the journal of Dimick B. Huntington. Dimick Huntington was a Mormon who served as an Indian interpreter for the church. (Some of the words have been changed from his original words to make it easier to read).**

August 30, 1857. We met Bishop C. West from Ogden with 4 wagon loads of corn and melons for the Indians. We gave them 4 beef cattle and stayed all night and never saw so good a spirit [such happiness] before. I told them that the Lord had come out of his hiding place and they had to start their work. I gave them [permission to take] all the beef cattle and horses that were on the road to California on the North route. I told them that they must chase them into the mountains and not kill anything as long as they could help it, but when they did kill an animal, kill the old ones and not kill the cows or young ones. They said [this idea] was something new. They wanted to council and think about it. Ben Simons, a Delaware Indian was there. I told him all about the Book of Mormon and he said his father had told him about the same thing that they would have to rise up and fight but he did not think it would happen so soon. He said, "Tell Brother Brigham that we are his friends and if he says the soldiers must not come, that is enough. They won't come [into the Salt Lake Valley]." He said, "Tell Brigham that he can depend upon us and I will come down to see him and if he says the same things you do, it is enough."

September 1, 1857. I gave them [permission to take] all the cattle that had gone to California on the south route. It made them open their eyes. They said that you had told us not to steal. I replied that so I have, but now they have come to fight us and you, for when they kill us [the Mormons] then they will kill you [the Indians].

**Document 11. Part of a statement given by Elias Morris to Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jensen, February 2, 1892. In 1857 Morris lived in Cedar City and was a captain in the militia. He was also a leader in the LDS Church, counselor to stake president Isaac Haight. (Some of the words have been changed from their original words to make it easier to read).**

*[Elias Morris told Andrew Jensen that one of the emigrants, while in Cedar City, insulted his mother, Barbara Morris, as she walked down the street]*

One [emigrant] man on horse-back, a tall fellow, spoke to her [Elias Morris' mother] in a very rude way, and while he waved his pistol in her face, he said the rudest and meanest things, and made the scary promise that he and his friends thought they would soon return and kill the "Mormons." John M. Higbee was the marshal of Cedar City. He tried to arrest this man, but the man would not be taken, and his friends stood by him, and dared the "Mormons" to arrest any of them. Haight and Lee talked about these things, . . . and Lee was very sure that the emigrants should be hurt very badly for their rudeness and lawlessness, and said he had enough Indians around him to kill all of them. Haight had more control of his feelings.



## Original Documents What Caused the Mountain Meadows Massacre

Note: The students will be given documents that have been modified to make them easier to read. These are excerpts from the originals without any revisions.

**Document 1. Sallie [Sarah Francis] Baker Mitchell was 22 months old at the time of the massacre, one of few who survived because of their young age. These are her words about the massacre, given on September 1, 1940 to a Boston newspaper called the American Weekly in an article called, “The Mountain Meadows Massacre: An Episode on the Road to Zion.”**

A lot has been said, both pro and con, about what caused the massacre. It wasn't just because we had a lot of property the Indians figured was well worth stealing. There were several other things that entered into it.

In the first place, the members of our party came from a section of the country not far from the district in Missouri and Illinois where the Mormons had been mighty badly treated. If you've been reading Mr. Robinson's articles in The American Weekly, you'll recall how the Mormons were driven out of Missouri into Illinois, where Joseph Smith, their Prophet and the founder of their religion, and his brother, Hyrum, were assassinated. Then they were driven out of Illinois and, after suffering all sorts of hardships crossing the plains, they finally got themselves established in Utah.

So it is only natural that they should feel bitter about anybody who came from anywhere near the part of the country where they had had so much trouble.. I'm sure nobody in our party had anything to do with the persecution of the Mormons in Missouri and Illinois, or anything to do with the assassination of Joseph Smith and his brother. But that didn't make any difference. The word got around, somehow, that somebody in our party was bragging about having in his possession the very same pistol that was used to kill the Mormon Prophet, and that he even said he aimed to use it on Brigham Young, who had taken over the leadership of the Mormons.

So far as I know there wasn't a word of truth in that, but the rumor got around, right after we reached Utah, and it made a lot of Mormons see red. Then somebody started working the Indians up against us, by telling them our party had been poisoning springs and water holes, to kill their horses. Now that just isn't so, nobody in our party would do a thing like that. Even if they had been mean enough, they wouldn't have been such fools as to do a thing like that in a country filled with Indians that were none too friendly to begin with.

Off and on, ever since they took over Utah, the Mormons had been bickering with the Federal Government, insisting that they had a right to run everything to suit themselves. It finally got so bad President Buchanan issued an order removing Brigham Young as governor of the territory, and appointing Alfred Cumming to take his place. And just before we landed in Utah, the Mormons heard that Cumming was on his way out, backed up by an army of 2500 men. That made the Mormons mad as hornets, so mad, in fact, that Brigham Young issued a proclamation defying the Federal Government and proclaiming martial law, but the members of our party didn't know anything about that, and walked right into the hornet's nest.

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

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

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

Our caravan was one of the richest that ever crossed the plains and some people have said that that was one of the reasons the Indians attacked our folks to get their goods. We traveled in carriages, buggies, hacks and wagons and there were 40 extra teams of topnotch horses and mules, in addition to 800 head of cattle and a stallion valued at \$2,000. Altogether, the property in our caravan was valued at \$70,000.

**Document 2. Words from the book, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, that was written by Richard Turley, a lawyer, Ronald Walker, a historian, and Glen Leonard, a historian, and published in 2008. The authors are all Mormons and work for the Latter-Day Saint church in its History Department.**

How could basically good people commit such a terrible atrocity? There are no easy answers, but the professional literature dealing with nineteenth-century American violence offers a starting point. In the early to mid 1800's, the United States could be a violent place, particularly for racial, ethnic, and religious minorities. The period from 1830 to 1860 has been called "The Turbulent Era," and indeed it was for many Mormons. These men and women experienced violence in Missouri and Illinois, and when a U.S. army marched toward Utah Territory in 1857--the year of the massacre--they believed they were about to become victims again. One of the bitter ironies of Mormon history is that some of the people who had long deplored the injustice of extralegal violence became its perpetrators. In carrying out the Mountain Meadows Massacre, they followed a familiar step-by-step pattern used by vigilantes elsewhere. Scholars who have investigated violence in many cultures provide other insights based on group psychology. Episodes of violence often begin when one people classify another as "the other," stripping them of any humanity and mentally transforming them into enemies. Once this process of devaluing and demonizing occurs, stereotypes take over, rumors circulate, and pressure builds to conform to group action against the perceived threat. Those classified as the enemy are often seen as the transgressors, even as steps are being taken against them. When these tinderbox conditions exist, a single incident, small or ordinary in usual circumstances, may spark great violence ending in atrocity.

The literature suggest other elements are often present when "good people" do terrible things. Usually there is an atmosphere of authority and obedience, which allows errant leaders to trump the moral instincts of their followers. Atrocities also occur when followers do not have clear messages about what is expected of them--when their culture or messages from headquarters leave local leaders wondering what they should do. Poverty increases the likelihood of problems by raising concerns about survival. The conditions for mass killing--demonizing, authority, obedience, peer pressure, ambiguity, fear, and deprivation--all were present in southern Utah in 1857.

**Document 3. Words from the book, *Blood of the Prophets*, that was written by Will Bagley and published in 2002. Mr. Bagley has studied a lot about the history of the western United States and has written many books about the West. He is a Mormon but is a very vocal critic of Brigham Young.**

Any historian must be careful not to let his or her fascination with a single subject obscure the larger picture. Mountain Meadows was only one event in the history of Mormonism and a single incident in the long career of Brigham Young. I have tried to avoid making more of the topic than the record justifies, but LDS scholars have dismissed early Mormon religious violence too blithely and have neglected the devastating impact the crime and its cover up had on the LDS church and Brigham Young's reputation. His daughter Susa Young Gates noted in 1929, "Our father had his faults and failings, no doubt of that. There were plenty of people in his life-time, and there are people even today, who will tell you about that." Yet devout Mormon historians hesitate to acknowledge even the most minor imperfections in the great man and, like Mrs. Gates, prefer to ignore his failings: "His family and friends loved him so well they forget to remember anything about him but his shining virtues." This is a disservice to Young and to history. A balanced assessment of this complex man must recognize his many achievements, but apologists have dismissed difficult questions about Young that a careful historian must consider. No one should attempt a credible evaluation of Young's life without mentioning Mountain Meadows (as several recent publications have), just as no one should write Richard Nixon's biography without noting Watergate or hope to understand modern German history without considering the Holocaust.

Some of the following conclusions are admittedly beyond historical proof, but they are simple and consistent with the evidence. They rest on a personal conviction that the tales of poisoned springs and murdered chickens are fabricated propaganda. These long-dead people were innocent victims of a terrible crime who had the misfortune to be at the wrong place at the wrong time and whose memory continues to be gratuitously slandered by baseless and ridiculous legends.

The party from Arkansas was probably doomed from the moment the Mormons learned of the death of Parley Pratt and the approach of an American army. The emigrants fell victim to Brigham Young's decision to stage a violent incident that would demonstrate his power to control the Indians of the Great Basin and stop travel on the most important overland roads. Then there is the curious letter Brigham Young sent to Isaac Haight the day before the massacre directing his military commanders not to kill passing emigrants. Such an odd injunction suggests that until Young's meeting with Captain Van Vliet, there were standing orders to attack every emigrant party in southern Utah.

Even before the Fancher party left Salt Lake, George A. Smith was on his way to southern Utah to arrange their destruction at a remote and lonely spot. If he did not give explicit orders to "use them up," he made sure the region's military and religious leaders knew what was expected of them, much as four years later Brigham Young could direct the desecration of Carleton's cairn without uttering a word. After camping with the Fancher party at Corn Creek, Smith invented the tale of the poisoned spring to provide a motive for murder and sent Silas S. Smith south to rouse the population.

One of the puzzles of the Mountain Meadows story is, why the Fancher party? It was no mystery to the press in California, for less than a month after the massacre a newspaper noted, "The blow fell on these emigrants from Arkansas, in retribution of the death of Parley Pratt." John D. Lee explained, "As this lot of people had men amongst them that were supposed to have helped kill the Prophets in the Carthage jail, the killing of all of them would be keeping our oaths and avenging the blood of the prophets." At Mountain Meadows the killers fulfilled their sacred vows of vengeance.

**Document 4. Special Report of the Mountain Meadow Massacre by J. H. Carleton, Brevet Major, United States Army, Captain, First Dragoons. May 25, 1859. Major Carleton traveled to Utah two years after the massacre to bury the bones of the victims. He interviewed people who said they knew things about the massacre. He wrote some of his report while at the place the massacre had happened.**

This train was undoubtedly a very rich one. It is said the emigrants had nearly nine hundred head of fine cattle, many horses and mules and one stallion valued at \$2,000; that they had a great deal of ready money besides. All this the Mormons in Salt Lake City saw as the train came on. The Mormons knew the troops were marching to their country, and a spirit of intense hatred of the Americans and toward our Government was kindled in the hearts of this whole people by Brigham Young, Orson Hyde, and other leaders, even from the pulpits. Here, opportunely, was a rich train of emigrants—American Gentiles—that is, the most obnoxious kind of Gentiles—and not only that, but these Gentiles were from Arkansas, where the saintly Pratt had gained his crown of martyrdom. Is not here some thread which may be seized as a clew to this mystery so long hidden as to whether or not the Mormons were accomplices in the massacre? This train of Arkansas Gentiles was doomed from the day it crossed through the South Pass and had gotten fairly down into the meshes of the Mormon spider net, from which it was never to become disentangled. Judge Cradlebaugh informed me that about this time Brigham Young, preaching in the tabernacle and speaking of the trouble with the United States, said that up to that moment he had protected emigrants who had passed through the Territory, but now he would turn the Indians loose upon them. It is a singular point worthy of note that this sermon should have been preached just as the rich train had gotten into the valley and was now fairly entrapped; a sermon good, coming from him, as a letter of marque to these land pirates who listened to him as to an oracle. The hint thus shrewdly given was not long in being acted upon.

**Document 5. The last confession and statement of John D. Lee, dictated just before his execution in 1877 to his attorney William W. Bishop with a request that it should be published. There are several different versions of Lee's final statement and many historians believe William Bishop edited this version. It was published in a book called *Mormonism Unveiled*.**

*(speaking of Isaac C. Haight)* He said (and I then believed every word that he spoke, for I believed it was an impossible thing for one so high in the Priesthood as he was, to be guilty of falsehood) that the emigrants were a rough and abusive set of men. That they had, while traveling through Utah, been very abusive to all the Mormons they met. That they had insulted, outraged, and ravished many of the Mormon women. That the abuses heaped upon the people by the emigrants during their trip from Provo to Cedar City, had been constant and shameful; that they had burned fences and destroyed growing crops; that at many points on the road they had poisoned the water, so that all people and stock that drank of the water became sick, and many had died from the effects of poison. That these vile Gentiles publicly proclaimed that they had the very pistol with which the Prophet Joseph Smith was murdered, and had threatened to kill Brigham Young and all of the Apostles. That when in Cedar City they said they would have friends in Utah who would hang Brigham Young by the neck until he was dead, before snow fell again in the Territory. They also said that Johnston was coming, with his army, from the East, and they were going to return from California with soldiers, as soon as possible, and would then desolate the land, and kill every d—d Mormon man, woman, and child that they could find in Utah. Haight said that unless something was done to prevent it, the emigrants would carry out their threats and rob every one of the outlying settlements in the South, and that the whole Mormon people were liable to be butchered by the troops that the emigrants would bring back with them from California. Haight then said “I expect you to carry out your orders.” I knew I had to obey or die. I had no wish to disobey, for I then thought that my superiors in the Church were the mouth pieces of Heaven, and that it was an act of godliness for me to obey any and all orders given by them to me, without my asking any questions. Haight said to me: “Go, Brother Lee, and see that the instructions of those in authority are obeyed, and as you are dutiful in this, so shall your

reward be in the kingdom of God, for God will bless those who willingly obey counsel, and make all things fit for the people in these last days.”

**Document 6. Part of a letter written by Brigham Young in Great Salt Lake City to Isaac C. Haight in Cedar City on, September 10th, 1857. Isaac Haight did not receive this letter until two days after the massacre had happened.**

Your note of the 7th inst is to hand. Capt. Van Vliet, acting Commissary, is here having come in advance of the Army to procure necessaries for them. We do not expect that any part of the Army will be able to reach here this fall. There is only about 850 men coming, they are now at or near Laramie. A few of the freight trains are this side of that place, the advance of which are now on Green River. They will not be able to come much if any farther on account of their poor stock. They cannot get here this season without we help them, so you see that the Lord has answered our prayers and again averted the blow designed for our heads. In regard to emigration trains passing through our settlements we must not interfere with them until they are first notified to keep away. You must not meddle with them. The Indians we expect will do as they please but you should try and preserve good feelings with them. There are no other trains going south that I know of if those who are there will leave let them go in peace. While we should be on the alert, on hand and always ready we should also possess ourselves in patience, preserving ourselves and property ever remembering that God rules. He has overruled for our deliverance this once again and he will always do so if we live our religion, be united in our faith and good works. All is well with us. May the Lord bless you and all saints forever. I remain as your ever brother in the Gospel of Christ. Brigham Young.

**Document 7. These words were given in a sermon [church speech] by George A. Smith, after returning to Salt Lake City after traveling through southern Utah. It comes from a report called “Report of a Visit to the Southern Country.” Delivered in the Bowery, Great Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, September 13, 1857. The talk was written down by G. D. Watt and J. V. Long.**

I visited the different settlements hurriedly, until I reached Parowan, in the county of Iron, the place of the first settlement in the southern part of the Territory. When I arrived there, it appeared that some rumor or spirit of surprise had reached them; for there were active operations going on, seemingly preparing for something that was near at hand. As I drove in at the gate, I beheld the military on the square exercising, and was immediately surrounded by the "Iron Battalion," which seemed to have held its own very well since it was organized in that place. They had assembled together under the impression that their country was about to be invaded by an army from the United States, and that it was necessary to make preparation by examining each other's arms, and to make everything ready by preparing to strike in any direction and march to such places as might be necessary in the defense of their homes.

As it will be well recollected, I was the President of the company that first made the settlement there. I was received with every feeling of enthusiasm, and I never found them in better spirits. They were willing any moment to touch fire to their homes, and hide themselves in the mountains, and to defend their country to the very last extremity.

Now, there had been no such preaching as that when I went away; but the Spirit seemed to burn in my bones to visit all these settlements in that southern region. Colonel Dame was about organizing the military of that district under the law of last winter. As the Colonel was going along to organize the military, I got into the carriage and went on a mission of peace, to preach to the people. When I got to Cedar, I found the Battalions on parade, and the Colonel talked to them and completed the new organization.

On the following day, I addressed the Saints at their meetinghouse. I never had greater liberty of speech to proclaim to the people my feelings and views; and in spite of all I could do, I found myself preaching a military discourse; and I told them, in case of invasion, it might be necessary to set fire to our property, and hide in the mountains, and leave our enemies to do the best they could. It seemed to be hailed with the same enthusiasm that it was at Parowan. That was the same Sabbath that brother Young was preaching the same kind of doctrine; and I am perfectly satisfied that all the districts in the southern country would have given him their unanimous vote.

I then went to Harmony. Brother Dame preached to the military, and I to the civil powers; and I must say that my discourse partook of the military more than the religious. But it seemed that I was perfectly running over with it, and hence I had to say something about it.

I then went to Penter, and there addressed a houseful of people in the evening, and then proceeded to Cedar the next day. They had heard they were going to have an army of 600 dragoons come down from the East on to the town. The Major seemed very sanguine about the matter. I asked him, if this rumor should prove true, if he was not going to wait for instructions. He replied, There was no time to wait for any instruction; and he was going to take his battalion and use them up before they could get down through the canyons; for, said he, if they are coming here, they are coming for no good.

**Document 8. Excerpt from an article called “The Late Horrible Massacre” published in the California newspaper, *Los Angeles Star* on October 10, 1857. This article quoted an emigrant, P. M. Warn, who passed through Utah with a small emigrant party a few days behind the emigrants that were massacred.**

Mr. Warn says according to his memorandum, on the 5th of September we encamped at Corn Creek. Here I had conversation with the Indian agent, concerning the poisoning of the ox. He said that six Indians had died; that others were sick and would die. Upon one of them, the poison had worked out all over his breast, and he was dead next morning, as reported. Afterwards, I conversed with an Indian, said to be the war chief Ammon, who spoke good English. I inquired how many of his tribe had died from eating the poisoned animal. He replied not any but some were sick. He did not attribute the sickness to poison, nor did he give any reason for it. His manner, and that of all his people towards us, was not only friendly, but cordial; and he did not mention the train which had been doomed. Besides the Mormon train, there were camped at this place two or three emigrants trains, amounting to fifteen or eighteen wagons, with whom the Indians were as friendly as with ourselves. From Corn Creek, nothing of importance occurred more than is related by Mr. Powers, until we arrived at Cedar City. Here the four men, spoken of by Mr. Powers, (and among whom I recognized Mr. Dame), arrived at our camp; they wished to get fresh animals, that they might go on that night to the besieged party. This was on Friday night, the night on which the slaughter was completed. They rested an hour or two, and took refreshments. In the conversation which ensued, one of our party said, be careful, and don't get shot, Mr. Haight. Mr. H. replied, we shall have no shooting; emphasizing the *we*, and throwing up his head, as if he meant to imply that the shooting would be all over before he arrived. They left us in good spirits.

One reason that may be assigned for the massacre of this train, is, that it was known to be in possession of considerable valuable property, and this fact excited the cupidity of the Mormons. It was said, they had over 400 head of stock, besides mules, &c. They were well supplied with arms and ammunition, an element of gain which enters largely into all Mormon calculations. The train was composed of families who all seemed to be in good circumstances, and as they were moving to California, their outfit indicated that they might be in possession of considerable funds. The men were very free in speaking of the Mormons; their conduct was said to have been reckless, and they would commit little acts of annoyance for the purpose of provoking the saints. Feeling perfectly safe in their arms and numbers, they seemed to

set at defiance all the powers that could be brought against them. And they were not permitted to feel the dangers that surrounded them, until they were cut off from all hope of relief.

**Document 9. Excerpt from an article called “The Late Horrible Massacre” published in the California newspaper, *Los Angeles Star* on October 10, 1857. This article quoted an emigrant, George Powers, who passed through Utah with a small emigrant party a few days behind the emigrants that were massacred.**

Mr. George Powers, of Little Rock, left Arkansas, and with his train arrived at Salt Lake in August. He says:

We found the Mormons making very determined preparations to fight the United States troops, whenever they may arrive. On our way in, we met three companies of 100 men each, armed and on the road towards the pass above Fort Bridger. I was told at Fort Bridger, that at Fort Supply, twelve miles this side of Fort Bridger, there were 400 armed Indians awaiting orders; they also said that there were 60,000 pounds of flour stored at Fort Bridger for the use of their army. We found companies drilling every evening in the city. The Mormons declared to us that no U.S. troops should ever cross the mountains; and they talked and acted as if they were willing to take a brush with Uncle Sam.

We remained in Salt Lake five days, and then pushed on, hoping we might overtake a larger train, which had started ten days ahead of us, and which proved to be the train that was massacred. We came on to Buttermilk Fort near the lone cedar, 175 miles, and found the inhabitants greatly enraged at the train which had just passed, declaring that they had abused the Mormon women, calling them whores, &c, and letting on about the men. The people had refused to sell that train any provisions, and told us they were sorry they had not killed them there; but, they knew it would be done before they got in. They stated further, that they were holding the Indians in check until the arrival of their chief, when he would follow the train and cut it in pieces.

We attempted to purchase some butter here; the women set it out to us, and as we were taking it away, the men came running and charging, and swore we should not have it, nor anything else, as we had misused them. They appeared to be bitterly hostile, and would hardly speak to us. We were unable to get anything we stood in need of. We camped at this place but one night.

At Corn Creek, we found plenty of Indians, who were all peaceable and friendly. We learned nothing of the train, except that it had passed that place several days before, and we were glad to find we had gained so much on them. The next place where we heard of the Train was on our arrival at Beaver, 230 miles from Salt Lake. Here we learned, that when the train ahead were camped at Corn Creek, which was thirty-five miles back, and at which place we found the Indians so friendly, an ox died, and the Indians asked for it. Before it was given to them, a Mormon reported that he saw an emigrant go to the carcass and cut it with his knife, and as he did so, would pour some liquid into the cut from a phial. The meat was eaten by the Indians, and three of them died, and several more were sick and would die. The people of Beaver seemed also to be incensed against the train, for the same reason as before reported. I asked an Indian, at Beaver, if there was any truth in the poisoned meat story; he replied in English, that he did not know, that several of the Indians had died and several were sick; he said their water melons made them all sick, and he believed that the Mormons had poisoned them.

We laid by at Beaver several days, as the Bishop told us it was dangerous for so small a company as ours to go on. Our train consisted of only three wagons, and we were hurrying on to join the larger one.

While waiting here, the train of Wm. Mathews and Sidney Tanner of San Bernardino came up, and I made arrangements to come on with them. We came on to Parowan, and here we learned that the train ahead had been attacked by the Indians, at the Mountain Meadows, fifty miles from Parowan, and had returned upon the road five miles to a spring, and fortified themselves. We then drove out of Parowan five or six miles, and camped at what is called the Summit.

**Document 10. Words from the journal of Dimick B. Huntington Journal. Dimick Huntington was Mormon who served as an Indian interpreter for the church.**

We met Bishop C. West from Ogden with 4 waggon loads of corn & mellons for the Indians. We gave them 4 beef cattle & stayed all night & never saw so good a spirit before. I told them that the Lord had come out of his hiding place & they had to commence their work. I gave them all the beef cattle & horses that was on the road to Calafornia, the North rout, that they must put them...

p. 11 .... into the mountains & not kill any thing as long as they could help it, but when they do kill, take the old ones & not kill the cows or young ones. They said it was some thing new. They wanted to council & think of it. Ben Simons, a Delaware Indian was thare. I told him all a bout the Book of Mormon & he said his father had told him about the same thing that they would have to rise up & fight but he did .....

p. 12 .... not think it was so near. He said tell Brother Brigham that we are his friends & if he says the soldiers must not come, it is enough, the[y] won't come in. He said tell B that he can depend upon us & I come down to see & if he talk as you do, it is enough.

**Document 11. Excerpt from a statement given by Elias Morris to Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jensen, Feb. 2, 1892. In 1857 Morris was a resident of Cedar City and a captain in the militia. He also held a leadership position in the LDS Church [counselor to stake president Isaac Haight].**

*[Elias Morris told Andrew Jensen that one member of the company while in Cedar City insulted his mother, Barbara Morris, as she walked down the street]*

One man [from the emigrant party] on horse-back, a tall fellow, addressed her [Elias Morris' mother] in a very insulting manner, and while he brandished his pistol in her face, he made use of the most insinuating and abusive language, and with fearful oaths declared that he and his companions expected soon to return to use up the "Mormons." John M. Higbee was the marshal of Cedar City, tried to arrest this man, but he refused to be taken, and his companions stood by him, and dared the "Mormons" to arrest any of them. These matters were being discussed by Haight and Lee, . . . and Lee seemed very determined that the company should be made to suffer severely for their impudence and lawlessness, and said he had Indians enough around him to wipe the whole of them out of existence. Haight seemed more moderate in his feeling.

**Notes:**

Some of these, and other primary and secondary sources are available at [http://mtn-meadows-assoc.com/primary\\_sources.htm](http://mtn-meadows-assoc.com/primary_sources.htm)

An article published in the LDS magazine, *The Ensign*, gives a summarized account of the massacre and might be helpful if Mormon students or parents struggle with the inclusion of the event in the curriculum. The article can be found at <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2007/09/the-mountain-meadows-massacre?lang=eng>