

## Application for Funding from the Student Research Committee

### **Title of Projects:**

“Oath of Vengeance: Massacre at Mountain Meadows & Brigham Young’s Involvement”

and

“Con Man or Prophet: Joseph Smith, Central New York, and The Origin of the Church of Latter-day Saints”

### **Contact Information**

Kathryn S. Hennigan

### **Letter of Support:**

My thesis mentor, Dr. Douglas Egerton, will be e-mailing you his letter of support.

### **Context of Research:**

HST-302: Historical Research and Writing

HST-495: Honors Project

### **Purpose of Research:**

“On September 11, 1857, Mormon settlers in Southern Utah used a false flag of truce to lull a group of California bound emigrants from their circled wagons and then slaughtered them. When the killing was over, more than one hundred butchered bodies lay strewn across a half-mile stretch of an upland meadow. Most of the victims were women and children. The perpetrators were members of the Church of Latter-day Saints, aided by Indians;”<sup>1</sup> yet only one man, John D. Lee, would ultimately stand trial and pay for the atrocity with his life, nearly twenty years after the fact.

The Mountain Meadows Massacre, as this tragedy has come to be known, has long been filed away in the annals of history, buried with it the extent of the Church of Latter-day Saints’ involvement. Only a handful of historians, including a few Mormon Church members risking

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, and Glen M. Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

excommunication, have begun to delve into the deeper historical significance of the 1857 Massacre and the ensuing attempts by LDS officials to rid itself of any responsibility.

These historians have begun to question the circumstances surrounding the Massacre. Was the Massacre an inevitable result of the early persecutions the members of the LDS Church experienced on their migration westward? What drove the normally peaceful members of the Mormon Church to commit mass murder? How much did Brigham Young know beforehand? How much did Brigham Young's fiery sermons on Blood Atonement and Apostasy play a role in inciting the members of the Church to action? And how did the local Mormon leaders of Cedar City persuade the peaceful, passive Paiute Indians to join them in their crusade?

In my thesis, I intend to answer some of these questions, focusing primarily on Brigham Young's involvement, a role long denied by the man himself and a long line of future LDS officials. My thesis statement is that Brigham Young was indirectly responsible for the Mountain Meadows Massacre thru his policy on Blood Atonement which was created out of fears from and the need for revenge for the past persecutions the Mormons faced on their westward migration and the ultimate assassinations of their Prophets Joseph Smith and Parley Pratt.

This summer, under the guidance of Dr. Douglas Egerton, I intend to expand my knowledge and understanding of Mormon history. Using the research I collect in Utah it is my intention to further apply the information in an honors project. I will examine the ties Mormonism has to Central New York during the time period known as the Second Great Awakening.

### **Contribution and Significance of Project:**

In his 1919 exposé on The Mountain Meadows Massacre, Josiah F. Gibbs stated, "the lessons taught by the tragedies of the past come down to us in the form of history and become danger signals along the highway of advancing civilization, and warn us of the peril that marches hand in hand with human passions, with ignorance and superstition."<sup>2</sup>

Mormon history appears merely as a footnote in the context of the larger, all encompassing history of the Second Great Awakening. Little is taught of the contributions the Church of Latter-day Saints made to the establishment of the western frontier and even less mentioned is the 1857 Massacre at Mountain Meadows.

The significance of my project is not to condemn Brigham Young or the Church of Latter-day Saints but to demonstrate why the 1857 Massacre of 120 emigrant men, women, and children must still be studied by historians and to explain how pervasive fear, miscommunication, and attitudes of intolerance can change the most docile men into mass murderers.

### **Description of Methodology:**

I have included a copy of the initial outline for my thesis on the Mountain Meadows Massacre (see Appendix A).

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<sup>2</sup> Josiah F. Gibbs, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Tribune Publishing Co., 1910).

The Church of Latter-day Saints is the only major religion with roots in the United States,<sup>3</sup> yet the origins, early history, and beliefs are mired in controversy and this controversy is only further complicated by the shroud of mystery and cover up perpetuated by LDS officials. The LDS Church has long been a secretive institution, many of its documents being unavailable to anyone outside the Church and even to many within the Church. This secretiveness is beginning to change and many LDS related documents are becoming more accessible to public scrutiny through the use of the Internet; yet there are still thousands of documents that have not been uploaded to the Internet. To gain the full scope of the Mountain Meadows Massacre and the LDS involvement, I need to review these documents for myself.

In my research of the 1857 Massacre, I have contacted one historian, Alison Wallner (the Fancher Family Historian at the Mountain Meadows Association). Ms. Wallner has been quite instrumental into my understanding of the 120 emigrants who were killed at Mountain Meadows. I would like to meet with Ms. Wallner as she has graciously agreed to share some of the primary source documents she has collected in her research, including testimonies of some of the surviving children. Through her I have “met” several of the emigrants, most notably Elizabeth Ingram Fancher, wife of Captain Alexander Fancher, one of the leaders of the emigrant train. Elizabeth Ingram Fancher was not your typical frontier wife. She accompanied her husband on several of his business trips west to California, not an easy task in the mid 1800s. It is believed she was a bit of an adventure seeker. She, along with her husband and seven of her nine children were among those who perished at Mountain Meadows.

I would also like to meet with Sandra Tanner. Ms. Tanner is Brigham Young’s great-great-granddaughter and has become quite vocal in her denouncement of her grandfather and his teachings. She, along with her now deceased husband, Jared Tanner, was excommunicated from the Church of Latter-day Saints in the 1960s. She has been helpful in providing me with copies of her newsletters on Mormon History and several primary documents, including *The Confessions of John D. Lee*. She, like Ms. Wallner, has been very helpful but there is only so much communication that can be done from a distance. It is necessary that I meet these two women in person. I have attached e-mails from both women stating their interest in meeting with me should I find myself in Utah (see Appendix B).

I have also contacted Will Bagley, author of *Blood of the Prophets*, asking to meet with him and have attached his response. I am currently waiting to hear from Richard E. Turley and Glen M. Leonard, authors of *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, and LDS historians. Bagley, Turley, and Leonard (in association with Ronald Walker) are three of the leading historians on the Massacre (see Appendix B).

The third reason I find it necessary to travel to Utah to complete my understanding of LDS History and the 1857 Massacre is to visit the many historical sites pertinent to my research. These sites include, but are not limited to, Mountain Meadows, the Mountain Meadows

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<sup>3</sup> Carol Rust Nash, *The Mormon Trail & The Latter-Day Saints in American History* (New Jersey: Enslow Publishers, Inc., 1999), 7.

Massacre Association, Cedar City, Brigham Young's home, Brigham Young University, and the Church of Latter-day Saints' Archives.

Finally, I would like to further understand and explore the LDS Church's ties to Central New York. To further my knowledge, I intend to visit the birthplace of the Church of Latter-day Saints. But to complete my knowledge of the Church, I need to understand how and why Utah became the Church's Zion and to do that, I need to travel to Utah.

### **Current Status of Research:**

I have collected the following documents:

8 complete sermons on the LDS doctrine of Blood Atonement from the *Journal of Discourses*

4 secondary sources on the LDS doctrine of Blood Atonement

15 primary source documents on the Mountain Meadows Massacre (testimonies from survivors, depositions, last wills and testaments of some of the Arkansas emigrants)

11 secondary sources on the Mountain Meadows Massacre

22 documents on the 120 Arkansas Emigrants (including several genograms I put together to illustrate the families represented at Mountain Meadows showing who died and who survived)

7 documents from the trial of John D. Lee (depositions, testimonies)

1 document on the Mormon response to the Massacre (**for further information on the LDS response, I need access to the LDS Archives in Utah**)

2 journals from prominent Mormon men living in Cedar City at the time of the Massacre (Isaac Haight and Dimmick B. Huntington)

6 documents outlining the US government response to the Massacre

Information on the Mormon Reformation and the Utah War

Theological information including LDS beliefs, and the LDS Church Hierarchy

Numerous amounts of newspaper accounts on the Massacre and its aftermath

Numerous issues of *Salt Lake City Messenger* (Sandra Tanner's newsletter on Mormon history)

Information on two Supreme Court cases between the United States and the LDS Church (Clinton v. Englebrecht and the Poland Act of 1874 relating to the Courts of Utah)

Information on the Mormon Oath of Vengeance

Information on the history of Apostasy in the LDS Church

I have also read several books on the subject, and collected *The Confessions of John D. Lee*, Josiah Gibbs' 1919 exposé on the Massacre, and the autobiography of "Wild" Bill Hickman (Brigham Young's "Destroying Angel" and Chief of the Danites).

I have completed all of the research I have access to here in Syracuse. The remainder of my research needs to be completed in Salt Lake City, Utah.

### **Budget Request and Justification:**

I am requesting \$1,516.00 for my budget. The following is a breakdown of my request:

<b>Budget Item</b>	<b>Rate/Details</b>	<b>Total</b>
Flight (Roundtrip from Syracuse to Salt Lake City)	\$350.00	\$350.00
Transportation (Rental Car)	1 week @ \$250.00	\$250.00
Lodging (Hampton Inn & Suites Salt Lake City Airport)	7 days @ \$58.00	\$406.00
Photocopying	\$150.00	\$150.00
Meals	7 days @ \$30.00	\$210.00
Misc. costs (gas, entrance fees, parking fees, 2 disposable cameras, etc.)	\$150.00	\$150.00
<b>Total Budget Expenses</b>		\$1,516.00

I am requesting \$1,516.00 because my primary research in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Archives, and personal interviews with Sandra Tanner, Will Bagley, Alison Wallner, Richard Leonard, and Glen Turley are essential to fully develop my understanding of the 1857 Massacre, the extensive cover up by LDS Church officials, and the historical implications of both.

**Prior History of Funding:**

I have no prior history of funding from the Student Research Committee.

### **Works Cited**

Gibbs, Josiah F. *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*. Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Tribune Publishing Co., 1910.

Nash, Carol Rust. *The Mormon Trail & The Latter-Day Saints in American History*. New Jersey: Enslow Publishers, Inc., 1999.

Walker, Ronald W., Richard E. Turley, and Glen M. Leonard. *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

### **Bibliography**

Abanes, Richard. *One Nation Under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2002.

Bagley, Will. *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002.

Lee, John D. *Mormonism Unveiled or The Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee (Written by Himself)*. St. Louis: Bryan, Brand & Company, 1877.

## Appendix A – Initial Outline

- I. Mountain Meadows Today
- II. Thesis Statement – **BY was indirectly responsible for MMM thru his policy of Blood Atonement which was created out of fears from and the need for revenge for the past persecutions the Mormons endured and the ultimate assassination of the Prophets Joseph Smith, his brother Hyrum Smith, and Prophet Parley Pratt.**
- III. Background on founding of LDS Church / Joseph Smith / Beliefs / Church Hierarchy
- IV. Settlements in MO (1830s)
  - a. Reasons Disliked – trade, beliefs (polygamy, sealing, multiple gods, Law of Consecration and Stewardship), relationships with Natives, strong political voting bloc
  - b. Violence toward – printing press, Book of Commandments
- V. Nauvoo, IL
  - a. Violence toward
  - b. Martial Law, Nauvoo Legion
  - c. Assassination of JS / HS
  - d. Exodus
- VI. Rise of Brigham Young – “The Lion of the Lord”
  - a. Mormon Trail
  - b. Handcart Tragedy
  - c. Exodus out of IL
- VII. Fancher – Baker Party
  - a. Who were these emigrants?
  - b. Connections to assassination of Prophet Parley Pratt
  - c. Wealth
  - d. Trail – Southern Utah
  - e. Boasting – Derogatory talk
  - f. Anthrax
- VIII. Utah 1850’s & Role of Danites
  - a. Relationship with Natives – Walker War
  - b. Utah War 1857 – Martial Law and ensuing policies
  - c. Mormon Reformation
  - d. Blood Atonement / Apostasy
- IX. Mountain Meadows Massacre
  - a. Men involved
  - b. Role of Danites
  - c. Role of Paiutes
  - d. September 11
- X. Legacy of MMM
  - a. Survivors
  - b. The secret meetings between BY and the Paiute Indians in the weeks following
  - c. Trial of men involved
  - d. John D. Lee – Execution
- XI. Conclusion

## Appendix B – E-Mails of Support

Sandra Tanner show details Oct 7 (4 days ago)  
to henn7405

Dear Ms Hennigan,

Yes, I would be happy to meet with you regarding the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

If you do come to Utah you should also consider meeting with Will Bagley, author of *Blood of the Prophets*.

He lives here in Salt Lake and is a friend of mine. Here is his email.  
[wlbagley@xmission.com](mailto:wlbagley@xmission.com)

Sincerely,

Sandra Tanner  
Utah Lighthouse Ministry  
[www.utlm.org](http://www.utlm.org)

Flag this message

## Re: Question

Tuesday, June 2, 2009 3:27 PM

From:

"mtnmeadowsassoc@aol.com" <mtnmeadowsassoc@aol.com>

View contact details

To:

henniganksge@yahoo.com

Hello Kate!

What type of primary documents on the Fancher and Baker parties are you looking for? The "Fancher Train" and the "Baker Train" were two different westward-bound groups who were not traveling together until they independently joined a group of trains gathering in Salt Lake to take the "southern route" to California. The Fancher Train left from Benton County, Arkansas, while the Baker Train departed from Carroll County, Arkansas. Over the years the Arkansas Emigrants that died in the Mountain Meadows Massacre have been collectively jumbled together as one big "Fancher-Baker" Train. This is not accurate. There were other trains involved, including the Dunlap Train, and the Mitchell Train, both from Marion County, Arkansas; the Huff Train from Benton County, Arkansas, The Miller Train and the Cameron Train from Johnson County, Arkansas, and the family related Poteet-Tackitt-Jones Trains from Johnson County, Arkansas. These trains were each under the direction of their own wagon master, and all traveled independently, although some of them probably joined with some of the others during segments of the trip. It was typical to join up with a group, break off, join with another group, etc. during the journeys west. We do know that Captain Alexander Fancher was the first of these trains to arrive in Salt Lake, and that Captain Jack Baker's train was the last, arriving at least a week later. The Poteets broke off from the trains around Cedar City and escaped the Massacre. They were heading to Nevada to look for gold. All of the other trains were involved in the massacre. I have concluded there were 18 ox wagons at Mountain Meadows, which does not include carriages, and other smaller wagons used for passenger transportation. Unfortunately we have no documents regarding the Fancher Train, but here is a link to the depositions given in 1860 regarding the property of some of the other Arkansas Emigrants, including the Bakers, Dunlaps, Jones and Mitchells. Allen P. Deshazo and Milum Lafayette Rush (also included in these depositions) were traveling with the Baker Train.

We do have some survivor accounts, but with the exception of Nancy Sophronia Huff's account, the others are obviously colored by information gathered years after the massacre took place. I personally believe Nancy's account is the most accurate. Her account is particularly interesting because in 1859 she was taken back to Tennessee, and raised in Meigs County, away from any stories of the Massacre that pervaded Arkansas for generations.

Tryphena Fancher also gave a survivor's account of the Massacre in a newspaper interview. She was very young at the time, and basically said that she remembers nothing at all about it.

I don't think her account appears on our website, but if you want it, I will look through my papers.

**If you can give me an idea of what you are looking for on the Arkansas Emigrants, I'll be happy to share what I have and if you do come out to Utah I would be more than happy to meet with you.**

Regards,

Alison Wallner  
Fancher Family Historian  
Mountain Meadows Association, Board of Directors

[wlbagley@xmission.com](mailto:wlbagley@xmission.com)  
to greg.c.thompson, judy.jarrow, henn7405 show details Oct 7 (4 days ago)

Kathryn,

Of course I'd be delighted to meet with you. As far as funding the project goes, I've copied Gregory Thompson of Special Collections at the Marriott Library, who manages the Floyd A. O'Neil scholarship awarded by Special Collections and he can fill you in on the details, tho I fear the timing may not be right.

I'll be at Yale till the end of the month, and if you happen to be in New Haven, you can look me up. <g>

As for Ms. Wallner, she seems to be obsessed with proving the Fancher family wasn't French, which it obviously was. But I'm sure she can give you some interesting perspectives, as will Sandra. Also, Dave Bigler and I have recentlu finished "The Mormon Rebellion," or at least almost. It contains what after "Innocent Blood" will, I hope, be my final word on the awful tale, and I'd be glad to send you a copy.

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I find the more I find out, the more I need to find out.--Dale L. Morgan