

SEPTEMBER 7-11, 1857

# Mountain Meadows MASSACRE



A WHITE FLAG DISGUISES JOHN D. LEE'S INTENTIONS FROM THE BESIEGED ARKANSAS EMIGRANTS, WHO STEP OUT FROM BEHIND THEIR WAGONS AND INTO AN UGLY, BLOODY CHAPTER IN UTAH HISTORY

**1857 JULY**

**President Buchanan** sends 2,500 troops to Utah to unseat Brigham Young.



Buchanan

**SEPT. 3\***

**Arkansas emigrants** in the Fancher-Baker wagon train stop to rest and regroup their cattle at Mountain Meadows, a valley outside Cedar City in southern Utah. Local Mormons, fearing the arrival of U.S.

troops, refuse to sell grain or other products to the emigrants as part of a territory-wide policy. Tensions arise between the two groups. Some alleged insults against the Mormons are spoken.

**SEPT. 4\***

**Cedar City's mayor, militia major, and LDS stake President Isaac Haight** send a message to district militia commander William Dame, who lives in nearby Parowan, citing grievances against the emigrant men and requesting permission to call out

the militia to arrest the offenders. Dame calls a church council, which denies the request.

**SEPT. 5\***

**Haight and another leader, John D. Lee,** hatch a plan to encourage the local Paiute Indians to give the wagon train a "brush," in essence attacking the emigrants and stealing their cattle.



Lee

**SEPT. 6**

**Haight involves** the Cedar City Stake High Council to discuss an attack on the emigrants. The council insists on asking President Brigham Young for his counsel and also decides to send a letter to Lee, urging him to hold off on any attack.

**SEPT. 7**

**Haight sends** the letter late in the day, but Lee and the Indians attack earlier than planned, killing seven and wounding 16. The Fancher-Baker company, however, is able to repel the attackers. The emigrants quickly pull their wagons into a tight circle, holing up inside. Two other attacks follow over the next two days.

**SEPT. 8**

**Outside the circle** of wagons, several Mormon militiamen fire on some of the emigrants, killing one. The others return to report that white men, not Indians, were doing the killing. Local leaders believe that if the wagon train is allowed to continue, survivors could report the Mormon involvement.

**SEPT. 9**

**Haight again** seeks Dame's permission to send the militia on an attack. A council of Mormon leaders in Parowan votes to allow the emigrants to proceed. But when Haight speaks personally with Dame, Dame changes his mind.

**SEPT. 11**

**Lee walks** into the encircled wagons, waving a white flag. He offers to escort the emigrants past the Indians if they will surrender their possessions. The emigrants, with little choice, agree. The youngest children and wounded are carried in two wagons. Next come women and older children on foot. Finally, about 50 men and older boys walk single file, each paired with an armed militiaman. They walk for about a mile, when one leader gives the signal, "Halt," and each soldier shoots the nearest emigrant. The Paiutes, according to reports, emerge from hiding and kill women and older children. Finally, militiamen attack the wounded. In the end, 120 lay dead. Only 17 children, younger than 7, are spared.

**SEPT. 13**

**A message from Brigham Young,** dated Sept. 10,

arrives. It says, in part, "In regard to the 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."



Young

**AUGUST**

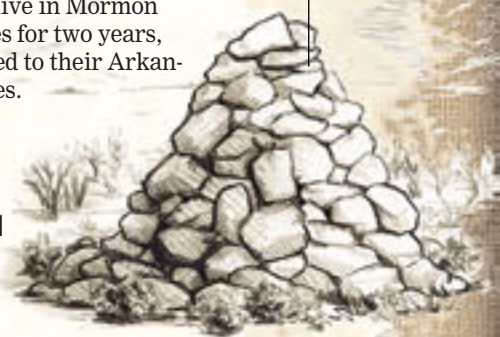
**Major J.H. Carleton,** with the help of other U.S. soldiers, gathers victims' remains and buries them. Some of the bones are placed in a memorial rock cairn.

**1859**

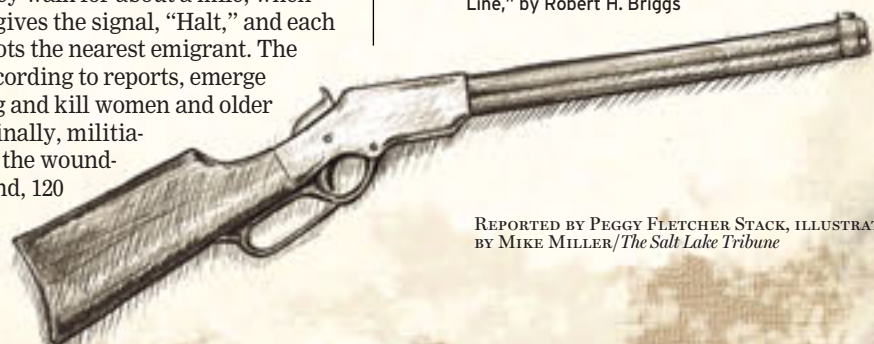
**MAY** The surviving children, who live in Mormon homes for two years, are returned to their Arkansas relatives.

**1870**

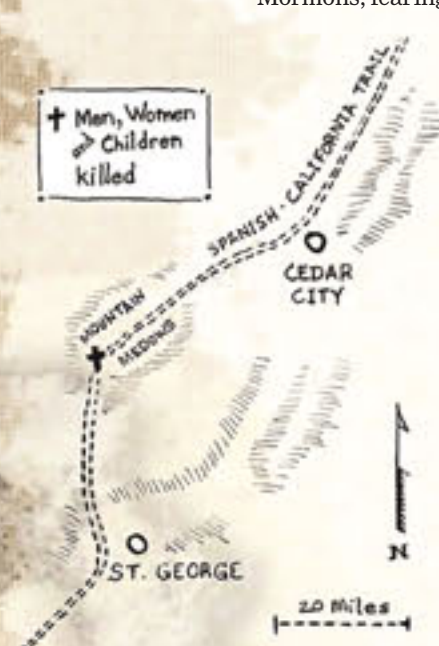
**Haight and Lee** are excommunicated from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Seven years later, Lee, the only person convicted of the murders, is executed at Mountain Meadows by a firing squad.



Sources: "The Tragedy at Mountain Meadows Massacre: Toward a Consensus Account and Time Line," by Robert H. Briggs



REPORTED BY PEGGY FLETCHER STACK, ILLUSTRATED BY MIKE MILLER/The Salt Lake Tribune



Men, Women & Children killed

\* Date in dispute