



CHAPTER 63

The Pioneers Go to the Salt Lake Valley

April–July 1847



The first group of pioneers left Winter Quarters in April 1847 to begin the journey west. Led by Brigham Young, the group had 143 men, 3 women, and 2 children.



During the first of the journey, the land the pioneers crossed was mostly flat and was covered with tall grass.

This kind of land is called a plain. Indians lived on the plains. There were no cities or farms.



Everyone had a job to do on the way. The women took care of the children and cooked the food. The men made trails, built bridges, repaired wagons, and hunted for food.



The pioneers traveled all day. At night they put their wagons in a circle and camped. The people and animals stayed inside the circle. They built fires and cooked their food.



Often the pioneers danced and sang. One of the songs they loved was "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Singing it helped them have courage to face their challenges. Brigham Young told the Saints to rest and to worship God on Sundays. The Saints prayed, studied the scriptures, and held sacrament meeting.



Each morning at five o'clock, a man would blow a bugle to tell the pioneers it was time to get up. They were to pray, eat breakfast, feed the animals, and be ready to go by seven o'clock.



The pioneers traveled for four months across the plains. They met a few other people on the way. Some of them were trappers who told Brigham Young not to go to the Rocky Mountains because it would be hard to grow crops there.



Other people told Brigham Young to take the Saints to California because the soil was rich and the weather was mild. But Brigham Young said the Lord had shown him where the Saints should go.



At last the pioneers came to the Rocky Mountains, where it was very hard to travel.



Brigham Young got sick and could not travel very fast. He chose some men to go ahead to the Great Salt Lake Valley and begin to plant crops.



The men took their wagons over the mountains. They went down into the valley and camped by a stream.



They dedicated the land and asked the Lord to bless the seeds they were going to plant. Then they planted the seeds.



Three days later, Brigham Young and the rest of his group came out of the mountains and looked down on the valley. When Brigham Young saw it, he knew it was the place where the Lord wanted the Saints to live. He said, "This is the right place. Drive on." The Saints drove their wagons down into the valley. It was 24 July 1847.

After traveling 1,000 miles across the plains and mountains, the Saints had finally found a place where they could stay. They were grateful that God had led them to a place of peace and safety, even though they knew there would be many more challenges to overcome.