

Simplified Text

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.

Original Text

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