

MORMON COLONIZATION SCHEME FOR VANCOUVER ISLAND

Following the death of Joseph Smith, founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and his brother Hyrum Smith on July 27th, 1844, at Carthage, Illinois, definite attempts were made at establishing Mormon colonies in the western portion of the American continent. The headquarters of the Church at that time were located in the frontier town of Nauvoo, Illinois, on the east bank of the Mississippi. The persecution and mob violence which continued after the death of the Prophet compelled the leaders of the Church to vacate Nauvoo, the beautiful city they had built up from a malaria-infested district. In seeking their new location the leaders understood that the ultimate home of their people would be in the valleys of the Rocky Mountains, so the exiles moved westward and camped on the west banks of the Missouri River.

At that time there were about 15,000 members of the Mormon Church in Great Britain, all anxious to gather with their co-religionists in America. Naturally, while conditions in Nauvoo were so unsettled, and later until colonization in the Rocky Mountains had been established and settlements placed upon a somewhat solid footing, the emigration of more members of the Church from foreign lands was not encouraged. The question of establishing colonies on Vancouver Island, being then under consideration by the British Government, it was thought that if the Latter-day Saints in Great Britain could go there, they might establish a colony or "stake of Zion" and be under the immediate jurisdiction of the leaders of the church in America. On this account a petition for assistance from the British Government to this end was addressed to Her Majesty Queen Victoria and to every member of the British Parliament. This petition taken from the *Millennial Star*, the organ of the Church in the British Mission, in its issue of November 28th, 1846, is here-with re-produced. Also there are shown here extracts dealing with the same subject taken from the March 1st, 1847, issue of the *Millennial Star*.

No definite action in the matter, however, was taken by the British Government and in January, 1849, by Royal Charter the Island of Vancouver was turned over to the Hudson's Bay Company for colonization purposes.

The documents mentioned follow :

MEMORIAL TO THE QUEEN

*Memorial to the Queen for the Relief, by Emigration of a
Portion of Her Poor Subjects*

To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty.

May it please your Majesty :

We, the undersigned, men and women of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, approach your Majesty with every sentiment of loyal and affectionate devotion to your person, and with sincere respect for the Patriotic Virtues by which your Reign has been so eminently distinguished. We feel the strongest confidence in your Majesty's deep and earnest desire for the happiness and prosperity of your people. We know, from your Majesty's own assurance, that the privations and sorrows of the unemployed and destitute portions of the community, have not in vain appealed for sympathy and compassion to your heart. We, therefore, anticipate for this, our respectful memorial, a gracious and considerate reception.

Your memorialists are moved to address your Majesty by the unexampled amount of abject, helpless, and unmerited misery which at present prevails among the labouring classes of this country. By all your memorialists this wretchedness has, to some extent, been witnessed; by all it has been deplored, and by many among them it has been bitterly felt. The sufferings and destitution of these portions of your Majesty's subjects have, in the judgment of your memorialists, reached a point at which it has become the duty of both sexes, and of all ranks, to use every constitutional means for their relief and remedy.

Your memorialists are daily the witnesses of a frightful increase of poverty and pauperism; while those who are at present in circumstances above the reach of absolute want, are constantly becoming less able to sustain the burden of supporting the poor.

Your memorialists beg your Majesty to believe that in bringing these painful facts under your Majesty's notice, and in pointing to what, to your memorialists appears a just and necessary measure of relief, they are impelled by an overwhelming sense of moral obligation and christian duty, and that no less a motive would have induced them to appear thus prominently in public affairs.

Your memorialists, without attempting to enumerate the many alleged causes of the present national distress and suffering, feel convinced that Emigration to some portion of your Majesty's vacant

territories is the only permanent means of relief left to a rapidly increasing population, which, if retained here, must swell the aggregate amount of misery, wretchedness, and want.

Your memorialists believe that, if a part of the poor and destitute portion of your Majesty's loyal subjects were sent to the Island of Vancouver, or to the great territory of Oregon, through your Majesty's gracious interference and Royal aid, they might there find a field of labour and industry, in which, after a short period, they could not only benefit themselves, but open an effectual door for the interchange of commodities with the home country, having brought into cultivation the soil that now lies untenanted and thus indirectly raise a revenue that would more than balance the expenditures of the present emigration.

It is now fully settled and determined that Vancouver's Island, with a large portion of the Oregon territory, on the Great Pacific Coast belongs to your Majesty's Empire. Their fine and extensive fisheries—their safe and commodious natural harbours for ships—the salubrity of their climate, and their remarkable similarity to the climate of the south of England—all, in the opinion of your memorialists, offer strong inducements to the surplus population of England to make that delightful section their future home .

Your memorialists believe that your Majesty cherishes the wish, and they pray your Majesty to exert all that constitutional influence and power which will effectually accomplish their removal to the distant shores of a country, the natural resources of which are waiting to be developed, to reward the hand of industry, and to fill with plenty thousands that wander here at present without employment, and consequently without bread.

Your memorialists are no less aware than your Majesty, that the Government of the United States is doing much to favour the settlement of its territories on the Western Coast, and even to settle territory now in dispute between it and the Republic of Mexico. While, therefore, the United States do manifest such a strong inclination, not only to extend and enlarge their possessions in the West, but also to people them, will not your Majesty look well to British interests in those regions, and adopt timely and precautionary measures to maintain a balance of power in that quarter—which, in the opinion of your memorialists, is destined, at no very distant period, to participate largely in the China trade.

Your memorialists, therefore, humbly but earnestly supplicate

your Majesty to take the present afflicting condition of your subjects into your prompt and gracious consideration, and to interpose your Royal aid, as far as it may be constitutionally rendered, to provide means for the immigration of your memorialists who are not able to provide for themselves—to give them employment in improving the harbours of those countries, or in erecting posts of defence; or if this be inexpedient, to furnish them provisions and means of subsistence until they can produce them from the soil.

Your memorialists further ask your Majesty to consider the propriety of sending out a small military force for the protection of emigrants against savage invaders upon that coast. And again, your memorialists ask your Majesty to favorably consider the propriety of allowing to each male emigrant, who is more than twenty-one years old, who may become an actual settler, a grant of land corresponding in extent to grants proposed to be allowed by the United States Government to its subjects, who become actual settlers in its extreme Western territories, namely, from three hundred and twenty to six hundred and forty acres.

Your memorialists are most anxious to avail themselves of the earliest opportunity to sail to the place of their future desired home, where they may begin to convert "the wilderness and the solitary place into fruitful fields," hoping, that under the blessing of Heaven, and under the gracious protection and fostering care of their Sovereign, they may soon close their eyes upon the stern and angry frowns of poverty and want, and open them to greet the smiles of peace and plenty.

Finally, the prayer, which your memorialists offer at the footstool of Him by whom Kings reign and Princes decree justice, is, that your Majesty's reign may be protracted and peaceful in the midst of a devoted and prosperous people; that the choicest of heavenly blessings may descend upon your Majesty's person, upon your Royal Consort, and upon your illustrious offspring; and that, after a long and righteous administration you may be able to say, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me, because I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness and it clothed me; my judgment was a robe and a diadem."—And thus your memorialists will ever pray.—*Milennial Star* of November 28, 1846, Vol. 8, page 142.

Correspondence on the Emigration Memorial

The Diagram affixed was attached to the printed copy of the Memorial sent to every Member of the British Parliament with the following explanation:

The squares represent each a section, or six hundred and forty acres. Should it please her Majesty to grant the Petition of her Memorialists, the even numbers might be given to emigrants and the odd numbers retained, so that in future years the improvements made upon the property of the settlers, or even numbers, would greatly enhance the value of that retained by her Majesty; and that ere long, as those districts became more densely populated, a price might be obtained for the sections represented by the odd numbers, that would go far to recompense the British Government for their present expenditure. This, not to speak of relief from starvation to many thousands of her Majesty's subjects here, should induce you to forward the desires of the industrious poor, In most schemes by emigration hitherto approved and aided by Government, great difficulty has been found to induce the people of this country to leave their native isle; but we are prepared, and shall guarantee, to send twenty thousand people of all trades, and from most districts in Scotland, England and Wales at once, or as soon as vessels can be found to convey them.—For the Memorial to the Queen, refer to No. 9, of the *Star*, Vol. VIII. Page 142.

From Dr. Bowring, M. P.

House of Commons, Feb. 8, 1847.

Dear Sir—I should be glad to see emigration called in to aid in the reduction of our existing embarrassment; but emigration to Western America is emigration of the most costly character; and how do you propose to find the funds?

I am yours,

John Bowring.

Thomas D. Brown, Esq.,
Liverpool.

From Lord John Russell, Prime Minister

Downing St., Feb. 9, 1847.

Sir—Lord John Russell has desired me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 5th instant, transmitting the printed copy

of a Memorial to the Queen, for the relief of the poor by emigration.
I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
George Keppel.

Mr. Thomas D. Brown.

Copy of Reply Sent to Dr. Bowring

6, Goree, Liverpool,
Feb. 11th, 1847.

Dear Sir—To your favour of the 8th, on the subject of emigration to the western coast of America, and how we propose to find the funds, etc., I now reply.

We shall send a mixture of men, who have some means, with the multitudes who have none; "To take charge of them at the port of disembarkation, to remove them to the fields of employment," and direct their energies when there; men who can govern, and in whom the people have the utmost confidence. But first, we want grants of land—as you will see from the printed copy of the memorial I sent you—to be subsequently paid for, by the sale of intermixed and reserved lands, which they will improve by their presence (see diagram and explanation on printed memorial). And we farther desire, that all who cannot pay for their own passage to Western America, should be provided with a free passage, or its equivalent, Ten Pounds, for each grown up person, to be repaid within six years. The locality selected is Vancouver's Island and Oregon: we have landed on ship's cargo in the Bay of St. Francisco already, containing two hundred and thirty-four souls, bearing seeds and implements with them, etc., at their own cost; and we have many more ready to go, but those already there, want labourers, mechanics, etc., who will require the above assistance to carry them thither; and we have nearly twenty thousand able and intelligent people, ready and willing to depart now, chiefly from Scotland, England and Wales. Our friends who have landed there are at present in a disputed territory, under the American flag, and are solicited to remain. The Americans offer many inducements to settlers in California, but our friends would prefer the protection of the British Nation.

Allow me here, Dear Doctor, to make a remark on the present popular scheme now before your honourable House. It is proposed to borrow Sixteen Millions from the Nation's fund, for twenty-two

years, to make railways in Ireland, and thus, for a time only, give employment to the starving poor. This surely should draw forth the approbation of Irish landlords in your honourable House, for their property will thus become more valuable, by British capital, and the sinews of the Irish labourers, but these have no inheritance there, thus permanently improved. What is their condition when the railways are made? Not permanently better. Whereas, with one sixty-fourth part of this amount, and that, too, only as a loan, to be repaid within six years, we immediately and permanently benefit twenty-five thousand people, and give a large inheritance to them, which may descend to their children's children; or with the same sum, now proposed to be lent to the Irish landlords, or expended on railways, ostensibly for the good of the poor, but really for the benefit of the soil, and of the already wealthy owners thereof, we could liberate, enrich, and elevate sixteen hundred thousand souls, in Western America, and extensively benefit the manufacturers and commerce of Great Britain; and their very presence in these wilds would so enhance the value of the lands retained as security for the loan, that the prices paid by future settlers for this land, thus improved, would in a few years immeasurably exceed the first outlay or loan for removing them thither, and even the present cost of all the lands we respectfully request Her Majesty and Government to grant.

I have the honour to subscribe myself, Dear Doctor,

Yours, most respectfully,

Thomas D. Brown.

John Bowring, L.L.D., M.P.

P. S.—Allow me to call your attention to two articles in a little periodical I send you this day—No. 4, Vol. 9, of the *Millennial Star*; one is, "American Project for Irish Emigration," the other, on "The State of Ireland."

London, 13th Feb., 1847.

Dear Sir—I do not know any resources from which the government would be disposed to vote public money for emigration to North Western America. The Railway Scheme in Ireland must be considered as rejected—but still the enormous demand upon the treasury will, I fear, exhaust its coffers—and you must be aware that it does not suffer to pay the amount of transport alone, for pauper emigrants. There must be provision made for their existence, and that is an expensive matter. Voluntary and self-supported emi-

gration I should be glad to see encouraged toward Oregon and Vancouver's Island, and I would expect such emigrants as had pecuniary resources at their disposal would meet with encouragement from the government.

Yours very truly,

John Bowring.

Thos. D. Brown, Esq.,
Liverpool.

—*Millennial Star* of March 1, 1847, Vol. 9, pages 74-75.

Extracts from a report of George Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company to the British Colonial Secretary written at Horway House, June 24th, 1848.

. . . Fears "they may direct their steps to Vancouver's Island from whence it would be quite impossible for us even if assisted by the natives to dislodge them." It is said they are favourably disposed to British interests so that they might hereafter become useful partisans in the event of differences with the United States.

Herewith I forward for your information extract from a private letter to me from Chief Trader Richard Grant dated Fort Hall, 31st December, 1847, by which it would appear that the Mormons have been in communication with H. M. Government with the view to settling on Vancouver Island and that they consider their approach as having been favorably received.

The extract from Richard Grant is lost. Search of the indexes of the *London Times* and Harsard 1848-50 produces no report of this petition but the fear of Mormon pressure appears in correspondence to the Hudson Bay House and Downing Street for sometime.

Chief Factor Douglas to W. G. Smith, H.B. House England, 31st March, 1859, acknowledging a letter from Smith, 29th June, 1858, "wherein the Hudson Bay House recommend asking for military support if they came in overpowering numbers." Also Douglas to Labouchere, 6th April, 1858, acknowledging Labouchere's advice 1st Feb., 1858, to "receive immigrant families but to enforce the law vs. polygamy and to refuse mass immigration."

J. B. MUNRO.