
“A Room of Round Logs with a Dirt Roof”: Ute Perkins’ Stewardship to Look after Mormon Battalion Families

Eugene H. Perkins & Waldo C. Perkins

On 17 July 1846, one day after Captain James Allen had mustered in the Mormon Battalion, U.S. Army of the West, Brigham Young called eighty-nine bishops¹ to look after the wives and families of the Mormon Battalion.² Among the group called were Ute Perkins (1816–1901), a thirty-year-old member of seven years, his uncles, William G. Perkins and John Vance, and his first cousin, Andrew H. Perkins.

Until Nauvoo, the Church’s two general bishops, Bishop Newel K. Whitney in Kirtland and Bishop Edward Partridge in Missouri, bore as their major responsibility the challenge to care for the poor and needy. In Nauvoo, in addition to the general bishops, the Church initiated the practice of assigning bishops to aid the poor within Nauvoo’s municipal wards—hence the beginnings of ward bishops. During the trek west, as the calling of these eighty-nine bishops shows, the commitment to calling local bishops to care for small membership groupings was underway and became enough of an established practice that in Utah it became standard Church administrative practice—a presiding bishopric at the general level and ward bishops at the local level. Therefore, study of the bishops’ work during the Winter Quarters period deserves historical attention, to which effort the following material contributes.³

Ute Perkins lived in a temporary Mormon encampment called Pleasant Valley, where his father Absalom was the branch president. Pleasant Valley

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was one and three-fourths miles east of Macedonia, another temporary settlement, twenty miles east of present-day Council Bluffs, Iowa. John Vance lived across the Missouri River in Winter Quarters.



Ute Perkins

Courtesy of International Daughters of Utah Pioneers

P r e s i d e n t Young, after asking the Battalion volunteers to donate their pay for the benefit of their families, directed the bishops “to keep a correct account of all money and other property received by them, and how disposed of at the risk of being brought before the council and reproved.”⁴ It should be pointed out that these bishops had a very limited calling. They were called specifically to look after wives and families of the Mormon Battalion and not, as we tend to think of them today, to oversee a large ward. Some of these bishops had dual callings—for example,

John Vance, Daniel Spencer, Abraham Hoagland, and Abraham O. Smoot were called with these bishops and in addition were called as bishops of the realigned Winter Quarters wards in December of 1846.⁵

A full study of the stewardship of these bishops would necessitate delving into the Pottawattamie High Council books and the minutes books of the various branches, located in the LDS Church Archives, all of which have restricted access at the present time. A thorough search of reminiscences, letters, and journals, written by members and bishops of the Iowa branches, would probably shed light on the care given to Mormon Battalion

families in their midst.

Recently, a few legible pages from two small, coverless, pocket record books (one three by five inches and one four by six inches) written in Ute Perkins' own hand, have come to light, preserving some details of how Ute fulfilled his stewardship as one of the appointed bishops.⁶ Presented here is a transcript of those recordings that apply to his calling. Other entries are not included in this paper. The spelling is exactly as Ute spelled the words. By way of explanation, there is an archaic accounting term used in Ute's day that is not well known to present readers. The word *to* signifies a debit or a drawing out from a store or business. *To* is found on pages two to eleven. On the very first page of the smallest book, dated "January the 5, 1846" (1847), is recorded the following:

Jan. 5	2 teams drawing wood & rails 11
6	2 teams halling [hauling] wood 11
7	2 teams halling wood and rails 11
8	2 teams halling wood and rails 11
9	2 teams halling wood 11
10	2 teams halling wood 11
11	Sunday
12	2 teams halling wood 11
13	1 team halling wood 11
14	1 team halling wood 1 1/2
15	2 teams halling rails 11
22	2 teams halling wood 11
23	2 teams halling wood 11
26	2 teams halling wood 11
27	2 teams halling wood 11
28	2 teams halling wood 11

Ute was not a diarist, so we know from what follows on the weather-worn and faded pages of these books that this record reveals his efforts to follow President Young's counsel. In the above listing, Ute listed the days from 5 January through 28 January (1847). He also differentiates between hauling wood and rails. The wood was probably logs for the building of log cabins or for fuel during this very cold winter, while the rails were used for corrals, fences, sheds, and other building purposes. It would take a lot of wood for building purposes and for keeping the families warm and protected from the cold. It is not known the meaning of the numbers 11 and 1 1/2. They remind us of a method of counting where four perpendicular lines are marked and then another line is drawn diagonally across them to represent the number five. Indeed, Ute and his contemporaries later often used this method for keeping track of large, accumulating numbers.

Following this first page, there are eight pages from the same three- by five-inch record book, which give more detail. Unfortunately, the only date given is 1847, so we cannot place the pages in the proper months of the year, except for a few entries where the names of individuals provide some clues. However, on page eleven, a date of “August 29th” is given where Hannah Marsh is provided with wood and provisions. Words in brackets have been inserted behind a word that, today, better expresses what Ute meant—and also for authors’ corrections. If the preceding page is designated as page one, then the following entries are from pages two to nine:

Ute Perkins 50 rails for Mrs McCartia [McCarty] and one day and a half planting corn
 Absalom Perkins 50 rails for Mrs Macartia and one day making fence
 William L Perkins 50 rails for Mrs Macartia and one day making fence
 Ute Perkins one day making fence, cutting corn half day
 Absalom Perkins to cutting corn, one-half day for Mrs. Macartia
 Ute Perkins and Absalom Perkins William L Perkins to breaking 60 acres of ground for Nelson Macartia
 John Shipley 50 rails for Mrs. Macartia
 William E Hickembotom [Higginbotham] 50 rails deto [ditto]
 Adam Riter 50 rails deto
 Lewis Whitesides 50 rails deto
 John Wakley 50 rails deto
 John Shipley to planting corn one day for Mrs. Maccartia
 John Wakley and John Woodland, to one day braking ground for Mrs Maccartia
 Lewis Whitesides, to cutting corn half day
 Ute Perkins to halling house logs too [two] days, to four days work for Levi Hancocks wife on her house
 William [L.] Perkins to halling house logs too days for Levi Hancocks wife to one days work on her house
 Absalom Perkins to ten days work for Levi Hancock wife
 George Pitkins to too days work for Levi Hancocks wife
 George Thompson to one days work for Levi Hancocks wife
 A. Cooper to one-half day work for Levi Hancocks
 Absalom Perkins to halling one load of wood for Daniel Tylers wife
 Ute Perkins to one half days work for Daniel Tyler wife on her house
 George Thompson to hawling one load of wood for Daniel Tyler wife
 Ute Perkins to halling wood (2 loads) for Levi Hancock wife
 Absalom Perkins to cutting and hauling two loads wood
 William L Perkins to halling to [two] load wood
 Ute Perkins to cutting wood for Mrs. Macarta half day
 Levi Perkins to cutting wood half day for Mrs. Maccartia
 Isaac Carpenter to cutting one half day for Mrs Maccrtia
 Lewis Whitesides to cuting wood half day for Mrs Maccartia

As there are no dates for the above entries, we suggest dates from 5

January 1847 until at least late October 1847. Isaac Carpenter is listed as the second to the last name in this group of men used by Bishop Perkins to help care for the wives and families of the Battalion men. He, Ute's brother, David Martin Perkins, and Ute's first cousin, James Madison Welch, son of Ute's aunt, Elizabeth Perkins Welch, returned from the Salt Lake Valley after their Mormon Battalion service but did not arrive at Winter Quarters until October 1847. These three men, part of Norton Jacobs' advance hunting party, "turned eastward" on 11 August. David and James Madison left the main body of the returning company on 17 September to walk through to Winter Quarters, as they were "out of bread."⁷ These three, as well as Ute's younger brother, John Calvin, all enlisted in the Battalion and were privates in Company C. Each of them became ill, and none of them completed the march to California with the main body of the Battalion. David, John Calvin, and Isaac left the main Battalion in Santa Fe with the Second Detachment under the command of Captain James Brown and arrived in Pueblo on 16 November 1846. James was with the Third Detachment, Lt. William W. Willis commanding, who, when 280 miles south of Santa Fe, left the Battalion for Pueblo via Santa Fe and arrived in Pueblo 16 December 1846 where they wintered with the two previous detachments and the Mississippi Saints. John Calvin died in Pueblo on 19 January 1847 from the debilitating effects of tuberculosis. The Mississippi Saints and Battalion members followed Brigham Young's pioneer company into the Salt Lake Valley, arriving 29 July 1847.

Ute's pocket book pages show that Bishop Ute Perkins was to look after the wives and families of Levi Hancock, Daniel Tyler, and Nelson McCarty. Levi's wife was Clarissa Reed Hancock, who, with six children ranging in age from newborn to thirteen years, was living at, or nearby, Pleasant Valley. One son, nearly two years old, would die on 4 April 1847. Daniel's wife was Ruth Walton Tyler, who, with three children from newborn to eight years of age, was under Ute's charge. Nelson's wife, Mary Jane Morris McCarty, and a three-year-old daughter were also cared for by Ute.

Levi W. Hancock was the only General Authority in the Mormon Battalion, being one of the First Seven Presidents of Seventies. He was listed as a musician (fifer) in Company E. It was in 1831 when two missionaries, Levi's brother, Solomon Hancock, and Simeon Carter, first preached to members of the Perkins family at Perkins Settlement in Fountain Green Township, Hancock County, which later became Ramus and then Macedonia, Illinois.⁸ The relationship that Ute had with Levi continued into the Salt Lake Valley and then in the Southern Utah Mission, as Ute was called there in 1861 and Levi in 1866.

Daniel Tyler was a fourth corporal in Company C of the Mormon

Battalion, the same company in which Ute's two brothers, David Martin and John Calvin, his first cousin, James Madison Welch, and his brother-in-law to be, Isaac Carpenter, were enlisted as privates. Tyler would go with the Battalion to California, return to Pleasant Valley, and later write *A Concise History of the Mormon Battalion*, for many years the definitive work on the Mormon Battalion experience.

Nelson McCarty, a private in Company B of the Mormon Battalion, is later found on the tithing rolls of the Iowa Pleasant Valley Branch.

In Bishop Perkins' larger record book (four by six inches), there is a heading on page seven that reads: "Ute Perkins appointed Bishop for the healp [help] to look after the soldiers families." This book, which has dates, has duplicate entries with the smaller book. It is not known which book had the original entries or if entries were simultaneously recorded. On pages ten through fourteen are found the following entries:

- page 10
- March the 10 1847 Absalom Perkins to fifty rails for Jane Maccartia to one day making fence to one half day cutting corn for Jane Maccartia
- page 11
- March 10 W L Perkins to 50 rails for Jane MC to one day making fence
- pages 10-13
- John Shipley fifty rails for Jane Maccartia to planting corn one day
- John Shipley William E Hickenbotom John Wakley John Woodland to brak-
ing 2 acres of land for Jane Maccartia
- William E Hickenbotom fifty rails for Jane Maccartia
- John Wakley fifty rails for Jane Maccartia
- Adam Riter fifty rails for Jane Maccartia
- Lewis Whiteside 50 rails for Jane Maccartia
- Lewis Whiteside to cutting wood half day for Jane Maccartia
- L Whitesides to cutting corn half day for Jane Maccartia
- Adam Riter to halling one load of wood for Daniel Tyler wife
- George Pitkins to two days work for Levi Hancock wife
- George Thompson to 1 day work for Levi Hancock wife
- George Thompson to hawling 1 load of wood for Daniel Tyler wife
- A Cooper to 1 half day work Daniel Tylers wife
- Levi Perkins to cutting wood half day for Jane Maccartia

On page 10, after the initial entry, recorded above, there are entries of later dates, namely October 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16 (probably 1847) as follows:

- to 8 days work for Levi Hancock wife on her house at Perkins to cutting and holling two loads wood L Hancock wife A Perkins to holling one load wood for Daniel Tyler wife.

On page 11, under date of 8 October 1847, is written:

W L Perkins to holling house logs two days for Levi Hancock wife to one day work on her house to W L Perkins to holling two loads wood for Levi Hancock wife William L Perkins to holling one load wood for Daniel Tyler wife.

On page 14, there is a single entry without a date:

Isaac Carpenter to cutting wood half day for Jane Maccartia

For the Perkins' family history, these entries are enlightening in that we have Ute's father Absalom, a branch president at Pleasant Valley, as well as Ute's brothers, William Lewis and Levi, helping with the Battalion families' needs. We also have John Shipley, Absalom's son-in-law, who with four of Absalom and Nancy's grandchildren and John's second wife, Polly Shugars, and their children are living at or closer to Pleasant Valley than any other branch of the Church. Therefore, Ute was using John to help with the families. Ute also has Lewis Whitesides assisting. On 5 May 1850, Lewis would marry Ute's sister, Sussanah (Susan), the marriage being performed by Apostle Orson Hyde at Pleasant Valley.⁹ Since it would be three years before they would marry, we conclude that Lewis, as well as the John Shipley family, was a part of the very early membership of the Pleasant Valley Branch or lived nearby.

Pvt. Isaac Carpenter returned to Pleasant Valley with Pvt. David Martin Perkins and Pvt. James Madison Welch. Isaac's father, Samuel E. Carpenter, and at least one sister had died at Winter Quarters in his absence. Ute's uncle, Bishop William G. Perkins, was given the responsibility of "taking charge of the estate of Samuel E. Carpenter, also the children according to the laws of the church."¹⁰ He placed Isaac's eleven-year-old sister, Betsy, with the Ute Perkins family.¹¹ Isaac would marry Ute's sister, Nancy Adaline, 18 April 1849, at her father's home with Apostle Ezra Taft Benson performing the ceremony.¹² James Madison Welch is not listed among those Ute had assisting the Battalion members' families. He may have gone to visit his parents' home in Macedonia, Hancock County, Illinois, but returned to Iowa and would go west in 1850 in the Warren Foote Company along with the Ute and William Lewis Perkins families.

Others helping Ute with his stewardship are William E. Higginbotham, Adam Ritter (Ritter), John Wakley (Wakely), John Woodland, George Pitkin, George Thompson, and A. Cooper. These men are assumed to be members of the Pleasant Valley Branch. Both Adam Ritter and John Wakely are listed in the membership of the Ramus/Macedonia, Illinois Stake and/or

Branch. In checking *Iowa Branch Index 1839–1859*, by Ronald G. Watt, we find John Wakely and John Woodland listed in the Pleasant Valley membership records. Of interest is the fact that Wakely would marry Woodland's oldest daughter, Polly.¹³ George Pitkin was ordained a high priest in 1848 and, at this ordination, is listed in the Pleasant Valley Branch, although he is not found in the Pleasant Valley records. George Thompson was ordained a high priest in May 1849 and is listed in the Farmersville Branch. A. (Agrippe) Cooper is listed in the North Pigeon Branch.¹⁴ Thompson and Cooper were evidently living at or nearby Pleasant Valley at the time Ute had them assist the Battalion families. In 1848, William E. Higginbotham returned to Tazewell, Virginia, hoping to raise funds to come west, but died there in 1862. His wife and children came to Utah after this date.¹⁵ In the Pleasant Valley, Iowa, tithing records of 1848, Absalom, his sons Ute, William Lewis, and David Martin Perkins are listed, as well as John Woodland and Adam Ritter and Mormon Battalion members Nelson McCarty, James Dunn, and A. J. Shupe.

The hardships of the Mormon Battalion families have been well documented. However, if the other eighty-nine bishops were as conscientious in their stewardships as was Ute Perkins, considerable help and assistance went to at least some of the families. Also, if the other bishops delegated some of the work load, as did Ute, many Saints reaped the blessings of service to those families. Ute's records show thirteen different men or heads of households who helped him fulfill his responsibility. This history of service is a story where little is known but is silently waiting to be fleshed out by descendants of the Mormon Battalion families and descendants of the Iowa Branch membership. The writings of Mosiah Ward Hancock, a thirteen-year-old son of Levi, embellish Ute's record book and add another piece to the Pleasant Valley Branch chapter of this story: "Brother Ute Perkins came with his father and brothers and put us up a room of round logs with a dirt roof."¹⁶

Appendix

Pottawattamie High Council record, dated 24 Jul 1846, as extracted by LDS Historical Department Staff.

Council Bluffs, W. Side Mo River
Head Quarters camp of Israel, July 24 /46

To President Isaac Morley & Council

In reply to yours of yesterday, per committee Phinehas Richards, I give you the following names of Bishops appointed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints at Council Bluffs July 17, 1846 To take take [sic] charge of the families left by the Mormon Battalion:

Charles Bird	Ute Perkins
John Murdock	George Coulson
Isaac Morley	James Allred
Roswell Stephens	George W. Harris
John A. Wolf	Daniel Spencer
Jonathan H. Hale	William Blackhurst
Ellis M. Sanders	Samuel Shepard [Shepherd]
Levi W. Hancock	Lewis Sobriskie [Zabrisky/Zabriskie]
Asa Davis	Seth Taft
Madison D. Hamilton [Hambleton]	Jeremiah Root
Abraham Hoagland	John S. Tanner
William Draper, Junr.	James Bean
Preddy [Priddy] Meeks	William Lemmons
Edson Whipple	George Bundy
Jacob Myers	Henry W. Miller
Isaac C. Hale [Haight]	Joseph Mecham
Caleb Hale [Haight]	Sidney Knowlton
William G. Perkins	Hazen Kimball
Andrew H. Perkins	James S. Kimball
Roland Cobb	James Huntsman
Thomas Guyman	James H. Rollins
Benjamin Willis	John Shaw
Sandford [Sanford] Holman	Samuel Parrish
John Tanner	Daniel Russel [Russell]
Sidney Tanner	Samuel M. Russel [Russell]

William Henry [Henrie]	Samuel Turnbow
James Eastman	James Dunn
John Benbow	Newman Buckley
John P. Barnard	Luther Bunnell
Charles Chapman	John Van Cott
Job Barnum	James N. Jones
Benjamin F. Bird	Isaac Houston
Andrew Burnham	Moses Clawson
Jonathan C. Wright	Samuel Snider [Snyder]
Samuel Conrad	James Lake
Erastus Root	Robert Gibson
Hector C. Hate [Haight]	Raymond Clark
James Davis	Jesse C. Little
Justin Merrills [Merrill]	Andrew Cunningham
Allen Taylor	Hiram Spencer
Alfred Randall	Daniel Hendrix
Abraham O. Smoot	John Vance
James McLellin	Evan M. Greene
Frederic Van Leuven	John Tibbets
Thomas Peirson [or Pearson]	

The Bishops will keep a correct account of all moneys & properties received by them for the benefit of those in their charge, and how disposed of, ~~under~~ and report the same when called for under penalty of being brought before the council.

By order of the council
W. Richards Clerk

Notes

1. A typescript of the Pottawattamie High Council record, dated 24 July 1846, lists eighty-nine men who were called as bishops. The appendix shows these men as listed in a letter from the High Council clerk, Willard Richards, to President Isaac Morley and the council. Another account of the bishops is found in Elden J. Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846-1847* (Salt Lake City: E. J. Watson, 1971) 261-62. Young's listing dated seven days earlier, on 17 July 1846, begins "I went to meeting and proposed that brethren be selected to take care of the families who were left by the soldiers. The following were selected to act as Bishops:" There are some differences in the two lists, some which might be attributed to the transcribers of the two records. The High Council transcript shows a William Lemmons; Watson gives his name as William Simmons. By analyzing the writing of Willard Richards in the original High Council record, the name appears to be William Lemmons. John S. Tanner (High Council transcript) and John T. Tanner (Watson) appear to be John J. Tanner in the original account. The High Council transcript and the original by Willard Richards, show John Tibbets as one of the bishops; Watson's transcription omits his name. Other names, which are known to be wrong, have been corrected in brackets.

2. Standard histories of the Mormon Battalion barely touch the subject of the families left behind and the bishops called to assist them. These include Sgt. Daniel Tyler's classic, *A Concise History of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War*, B. H. Roberts' *The Mormon Battalion: Its History and Achievements*, John F. Yurtinus's dissertation, "Ram in the Thicket: The Mormon Battalion and the Mexican War," and Norma B. Ricketts' recent book, *The Mormon Battalion: U.S. Army of the West, 1846-1848*. Richard Bennett's study of Winter Quarters provides the best discussion of the subject; see his *Mormons at the Missouri, 1846-1852: "And Should We Die."*

3. William G. Hartley, "Nauvoo Stake, Priesthood Quorums, and the Church's First Wards," *BYU Studies* 32 (Winter and Spring 1991): 57-80; Hartley, "Bishop, History of the Office," in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:119-22.

4. Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 17 July 1846.

5. Pottawattamie High Council Minutes, 20 December 1846, LDS Church Archives.

6. Ute Perkins Record Books, LDS Church Archives.

7. See Norton Jacobs Journal, 13 August-9 September 1847, and William Clayton Journal, 17 September 1847, LDS Church Archives.

8. Hancock and Adams Families Diaries, Journal and Life Sketches, "A Short Sketch of the Life of Solomon Hancock," Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; St. George High Priest Quorum Minutes, 27 April 1878; and St. George High Priest Genealogy Book I, p. 266.

9. *Frontier Guardian*, 15 May 1850.

10. Pottawattamie High Council Minutes, 14 November 1846, LDS Church Archives.

11. Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company, General Files, 1849-1898, LDS Church Archives.

12. United States National Archives, Selected Pension Application Files for Members of the Mormon Battalion, Mexican War, 1846-1848 (Isaac Carpenter). Marriage Certificates, Pottawattamie County Court, Iowa, Family History Library.

13. Susan Easton Black, comp., *Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day*

Saints, 1830–1848 (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 44:446.

14. Ronald G. Watt, *Iowa Branch Index, 1839–1859* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1991).

15. Black, *Membership*, 22:752.

16. Levi Ward Hancock Autobiography, LDS Church Archives, 52.