

Alma Helaman Hale:

A story of Mormon settler-colonialism as a biography of my
Great-Great-Great-Grandfather.

by nicholas b jacobsen

“One of the characteristics of trauma is the deep desire to repress it. Until you tell the story, til you face the truth of the horrors that have happened—that harm will haunt you, haunt your dreams as an individual—haunt your collective unconscious as a society.”

– Reverend Serene Jones¹

“Haunting ... is the relentless remembering and reminding that will not be appeased by settler society’s assurances of innocence and reconciliation. The United States is permanently haunted by the slavery, genocide, and violence entwined in its first, present and future days.”

– Eve Tuck and C. Ree “A Glossary of Haunting.”²

“As humans reshape the landscape we forget what was there before. Ecologists call this forgetting the ‘Shifting Baseline Syndrome’...Forgetting, in itself, remakes landscapes ... Yet ghosts remind us that we live in an impossible present—a time of rupture, a world haunted with the threat of extinction.”

– Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet³

¹ [On Being with Krista Tippett. “Grace in a Fractured World”](#)

² [“A Glossary of Haunting” by Eve Tuck and C. Ree](#)

³ [Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene. ed. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing. Nils Bubandt. Elaine Gan. Heather Anne Swanson](#)

Introduction



Collage featuring images of Alma Helaman Hale in his later years with one of his two families, including his second wife, Ellen Victoria Clark Hale, whom he polygamously married in 1865 and their 7 adult children (1906-ish?) all laid over one of Joseph Smith's seer stones.

Alma Helaman Hale lived the Mormon Pioneer story. He was the first in my direct family line to be “born in the covenant,” or born into a Mormon family, which is reflected in his being named after Book of Mormon characters Alma and Helaman. One-hundred-and-forty-eight years later I was “born in the covenant” in the Indigenous lands which he and his fellow Mormons helped to colonize through land theft and genocide. I am one out of hundreds of Alma’s descendants.

Alma moved with the self-proclaimed Saints to each of their Zions—from Kirtland, Ohio; to Far West, Missouri; to Nauvoo, Illinois; and eventually west of the Rocky Mountains (where I grew up) with the Brighamite branch. The history of Mormon settler-colonialism *is* his history. His history is my inheritance.

Through the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints's (the official name for the Mormon church) history library and the church-owned ancestry service, FamilySearch, I've found several biographies, journal entries, and short histories of Alma and his family's lives.

Through my own research I've found overlapping U.S. and Indigenous histories that have been predominantly ghosted from these Church-hosted histories.

Great Grandpa Alma's biographies are consistently framed in a Mormon-centric, faith-promoting lens. His history, as far as I have found, has never been written to include the more unsettling and less "Saintly" aspects of Mormon history which he helped create. These histories have never been written to include, as Mormon Elder Marlin K. Jensen puts it, "The Rest of the Story".⁴ So it is in the spirit of Jensen's Pioneer Day 2010 talk that I write this biography with "the rest of the story (as) an integral part of the story; (with) Sagwitch, Wakara, Washakie, and Little Soldier (in) their appropriate places in Utah's history..."

To tell "the rest of the story" well one needs an understanding of Mormon settler-colonialism — i.e. to be able to understand and emphasize how Mormonism and its adherents have attempted, and continue to attempt, to destroy and replace Indigenous Peoples in their own homes/lands. Understanding settler-colonialism can help settlers start to know our histories more completely, and thus know ourselves and our ancestral inheritances and responsibilities more completely.

"I'm not interested in anybody's guilt. Guilt is a luxury that we can no longer afford. I know you didn't do it, and I didn't do it either, but I am responsible for it because I am a man and a citizen of this country and you are responsible for it, too, for the very same reason"

– James Baldwin⁵

I want to be clear. I work to write "the rest of the (Mormon Pioneer) story" not to inspire guilt, but to address that which "haunts our collective unconscious as a society" so that we may be responsible to it and work collectively to heal that which has been ruptured—in ourselves, in this land, and in the lives of the Peoples Indigenous to these lands. The histories we as a culture have worked so hard to ignore, erase, ban, or whitewash have been ghosted from collective memory, but were never erased. These histories have and will haunt us until we integrate them into our shifting baseline realities, until we remember and reckon with who we are and what our presence in this land means.

Alma's existing biographies ignore the horrors Alma and his fellow Mormons enacted against Indigenous Peoples. Just as Alma worked to make ghosts of Indigenous families and

⁴ [The Rest of the Story: Latter-day Saint Relations with Utah's Native Americans by Elder Marlin K. Jensen](#)

⁵ "Words of A Native Son" by James Baldwin

nations, his descendants have worked to make ghosts of those unsettling stories. These ghosts continue to haunt my family; our generational traumas seeded in these histories are remade over and over again in the bodies and interpersonal dynamics of each new generation.

The introductory paragraph of Alma's biography, written by my cousin Nathan Hale Gardner,⁶ is a good example of the ways my kin attempt to make ghosts of our shared origins: *"ALMA HELAMAN HALE began this life in a humble home of goodley (sic) parents. His seventy one years took him from the home of his forefathers on the eastern coast of Massachusetts to the wild frontiers of what was then a seemingly barren wasteland, twenty five hundred miles to the west. He was called upon to suffer much persecution as a victim of the mobbings meted out to all 'Mormons'...In the valley surrounding the Great Salt Lake he found the peace and rest which all who belonged to the 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' had been seeking."*

These "wild frontiers" of "seemingly barren wasteland" where he "found peace" are the homes/lands of Timpanogos, Kuttuhsipheh (Goshute), and Shoshone-Bannock Peoples, and have been since time immemorial. As Mormon Pioneers found "peace and rest" in Indigenous home/lands, they spread their imported suffering by doing unto others as others had done unto them. Like how other US settler colonists forced Mormon settler colonists out of settlement after settlement from New York to Illinois, Mormons forced Indigenous Peoples from their home/lands. Though in reality these forced displacements cannot be compared. Mormons were forced from towns they'd spent only a few years in. Mormons forced Indigenous Peoples from lands they'd lived and died with since time immemorial.⁷ Generations of their ancestors buried beneath their soils. After Mormons were successful in their genocidal pursuit, they ghosted these stories from their histories telling instead a story of perseverance and resilience.

Cousin Nathan references another myth common in faith-promoting Mormon Pioneer narratives—the myth of the "barren wasteland." Mormon Pioneer histories repeatedly assert that these religious settler colonists arrived to a desolate desert which through hard work and industriousness they made "blossom as the rose." But this is simply false. Through Indigenous stewardship these land Mormon Pioneers arrived to was filled with grassy oases, wetlands, lakes, rivers, and streams.⁸

After 246 years of European-colonization and 175 years of Euro-Mormon-settler occupation, the grassy oases have been desiccated, native ecologies destroyed and replaced with suburbs, invasive plants, and irrigated monocrops.⁹ Indigenous animals have been threatened with extinction and replaced by European cattle.¹⁰ Wetlands, lakes, and streams have been pushed into a decades-long drought with the Great Salt Lake threatening to release

⁶ Nathan Hale Gardener is my first cousin three times removed.

⁷ ["Ice Age human footprints discovered in Utah desert," *phys.org*, by Linda B. Glaser](#)

⁸ ["Most likely pioneers didn't find desolate, barren valley," by *Deseret News*](#)

⁹ ["The Colorado River Is Shrinking. See What's Using All the Water." by Elana Shao *New York Times*](#)

¹⁰ ["Grazing." by *Center for Biological Diversity*](#)

the nearly two centuries of pollution held in the now drying mud of the lake bed.¹¹ Our colonial “Shifting Baseline Syndrome” allows us to forget that this “world haunted with the threat of extinction” was created through colonization.

The fact that my ancestors found a thriving desert grassland, tended by Peoples with millennia of experience, and then desiccated it while trying to make it “blossom as the rose” through colonial agriculture—yet somehow consistently write their histories as stories of settler success—shows how deeply my people are rooted in, and ignorant of, settler-colonialism my people are—shows how haunted we are.

Our colonial foodways have created extinction level imbalances. Humans and the mammals we raise for food (mostly cows) occupy 96% of the world’s biomass of mammals, leaving only 4% for all other mammals (like lions and tigers and bears oh my!).¹² These foodways occupy far more than biomass, too. Of all the agricultural land on earth, 77% is used for the production of meat and dairy (including graze land and monocrop fields for feed).¹³ Yet, meat and dairy only provide 18% of the human population’s calories and only 37% of our protein.¹⁴ Why do we allow industrial monocultures to occupy so much land and create so much destruction when they feed so few?

This imbalance is also found in the desiccation of the Mormon-occupied Indigenous deserts. By 1880 Mormons had dried out Sevier Lake. Now, 143 years later the Great Salt Lake is estimated to run dry in 5 years which would release high levels of arsenic and other toxins laid in the lake bed by settler industries.¹⁵ Cattle feed like alfalfa “account for 68% of the 5.1 million acre-feet of water diverted every year in Utah” despite being only 2% of the state’s economy.¹⁶ This destructive water use isn’t helped by the fact that Utah charges water consumers much less than the national average for their water.¹⁷

Indigenous Peoples, on the other hand, have millenia of experience tending their lands. Their languages are libraries of place-based ecological knowledge.¹⁸ As we abide in the sixth

¹¹ [“Drying Great Salt Lake Could Expose Millions to Toxic Arsenic-Laced Dust” by Margaret Osborne, *Smithsonian Magazine*](#)

¹² [“Humans just 0.01% of all life but have destroyed 83% of wild mammals – study” by Damian Carrington, *The Guardian*](#)

¹³ [“Half of the world’s habitable land is used for agriculture’ by Hannah Ritchie, *Our World in Data*](#)

¹⁴ [“Avoiding meat and dairy is ‘single biggest way’ to reduce your impact on Earth” by Damian Carrington, *The Guardian*](#)

¹⁵ [“As the Great Salt Lake Dries Up, Utah Faces an ‘Environmental Nuclear Bomb’” by Christopher Flavelle, *New York Times*](#)

¹⁶ [One crop uses more than half of Utah’s water. Here’s why. By Brian Maffly and Mark Eddington, *The Salt Lake Tribune*](#)

¹⁷ [“The Cost of Water in Utah by Utah Division of Water Resources](#)

¹⁸ [“Co-occurrence of linguistic and biological diversity in biodiversity hotspots and high biodiversity wilderness areas” by L. J. Gorenflo, Suzanne Romaine, Russell A. Mittermeier, and Kristen Walker-Painemilla, *PNAS.org*](#)

extinction, Indigenous Peoples globally continue to care for 80% of the planet's remaining biodiversity as only 5% of the human population on 25% of the land.¹⁹ Returning Indigenous land and water to its People is in the best interest of all life on earth.²⁰

So in that spirit, I, nicholas b jacobsen, having been born of a goodly mother and an abusive father, and taught in the ways of my ancestors, want to make a record of the proceedings of Alma Helaman Hale's days, and the events and Peoples that shaped him.

¹⁹ ["Indigenous Peoples Overview" by The World Bank](#)

²⁰ [The Red Deal: Indigenous Action To Save Our Earth by The Red Nation](#)

Origins and Childhood

From England to Wabanaki (Dawnland Confederacy), N'dakina (Abenaki), and Pennacook land; to Erie, Kaskaskia, and Mississauga land; to Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Souix), Osage, and Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo) lands; to Peoria, Osage, oθaakiwaki·hina·ki (Sauk) & Meškwahki·aša·hina (Fox), Bodwéwadmi (Potawatomi), Očhéthi Šakówiŋ, and Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo) lands; to Umoꞩhoꞩ (Omaha) and Očhéthi Šakówiŋ lands; to Timpanogos, Kuttuhsippeh (Goshute), and Eastern Shoshone lands.



Collage featuring images of Alma's parents Jonathan Harriman Hale and Olive Boynton Hale, the Hale & Boynton homesteads in Bradford, Essex, Massachusetts, (Wabanaki, N'dakina, Pennacook, Pawtucket, and Agawam land) where Alma's parents grew up, and a map of that settlement

Alma Helaman Hale was born in Dover, New Hampshire on Wabanaki, N'dakina, and Pennacook land on April 24, 1836. Alma is my Great-Great-Great-Grandpa, my mom's dad's mom's dad's dad.

Alma Hale's ancestors emigrated to these Indigenous lands from England in the 1630's. Those ancestors settled in Wabanaki, N'dakina, Pennacook, Pawtucket, and Agawam lands just after these Peoples had suffered a "Great Dying". Through biological warfare, colonists spread European diseases among the Indigenous Peoples who had no immunity to them. Wabanaki, N'dakina, Pennacook, Pawtucket, and Agawam each lost between 75-90% of their peoples. King James I (of The King James Bible fame), called this "Great Dying" a "wonderful plague" brought by "God's visitation."

From these ancestors come, Great-Grandpa Alma's parents, Jonathan H. Hale and Olive Boynton Hale. Jonathan and Olive were married in 1825 in Massachusetts. Nine years later they were converted and baptized into Joseph Smith's church.

Just weeks after Alma's birth his family moved to Erie, Kaskaskia, and Mississauga lands occupied by Kirtland, Ohio to gather with the self-proclaimed Saints there. In Ohio Alma's older brother liked to sneak into the Prophet Joseph Smith's house to look at the stolen Egyptian bodies Joseph owned and on which Smith based his Book of Abraham. Alma and his family were in Ohio when the Kirtland Bank failed and about one-third of Joseph's church apostatized.

The Hales remained loyal and followed Joseph Smith's church to the U.S. border on Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Souix), Osage, and Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo) lands occupied by Far West, Missouri in 1838. They were living just a few miles away when the Missouri Mormon Extermination Order was enforced against Mormons at the Haun's Mill Massacre.

When Alma was four-years-old, the Hale family moved again to the U.S. border in Peoria, Osage, oθaakiwaki·hina·ki (Sauk) & Meškwahki·aša·hina (Fox), Bodwéwadmí (Potawatomi), Očhéthi Šakówiŋ, and Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo) lands occupied by Nauvoo, Illinois. During their four years there, Alma's dad helped build the Nauvoo temple, served as a bishop and in the Quorum of the Seventy, went on a campaign mission for Smith's 1844 U.S. Presidential-run, and acted as Lieutenant Colonel in Joseph's army—the Nauvoo Legion. The Hales watched as Joseph's and Hyrum's blood-soaked caskets were carried into Nauvoo from Carthage in 1844. At 10-years-old, Alma and his family once again moved with their church to the expanded 1846 U.S. border along the Missouri river on Umo^hoⁿ (Omaha) and Očhéthi Šakówiŋ lands where he and his siblings became orphans. There at Winter Quarters the Hale children buried their parents and two youngest siblings in unmarked graves.

What was left of the Hale family left Umo^hoⁿ and Očhéthi Šakówiŋ lands for Timpanogos, Kuttuhsippeh, and Eastern Shoshone lands in the so-called Salt Lake Valley. On May 9, 1848, the Hales, as part of the Heber C. Kimball company, headed for Indigenous lands occupied by Mexico.

One month later, as Alma's group was a quarter the way to their destination, the Mexican-American war ended and the U.S. border crossed over Alma, Salt Lake City, and most of the so-called Southwest as the U.S. claimed all of these Indigenous lands through the Treaty of Hidalgo with Mexico.

Alma's caravan of 1,882 settler-colonists in 623 wagons²¹ arrived to the so-called Salt Lake valley with 2,012 oxen, 904 chickens, 654 sheep, 237 pigs, 234 cattle, 134 dogs, 131 horses, 54 cats, 44 mules, 11 doves, 10 geese, 5 ducks, 5 beehives, 3 goats, a crow, and a squirrel in tow. Along with all of these European animals, they brought European diseases, plants, and agricultural methods. All of which would radically alter the ecosystems of Indigenous

²¹ 662 in the [Heber C. Kimball company](#) and 1220 in the [Brigham Young company](#)

lands and lives and drive Kuttuhsippeh, Timpanogos, Diné, Nuwu, Eastern Shoshone, Shoshone-Bannock and so many other Indigenous Peoples toward mass death and starvation.

The Hale children's contribution to this parade was four settler-colonists, two wagons, four oxen, and two cows. Alma's older sister Rachel drove the one wagon and the two younger boys, Alma and Solomon, drove the other while Alma's older brother, Aroet, did the "hunting for the family". Alma, at 12-years-old, was one of the youngest teamsters of the Manifest Destiny movement.

Alma in Utah Territory

Timpanogos, Kuttuhsipneh, Eastern Shoshone, and Shoshone-Bannock lands

“When we first entered Utah we were prepared to meet all the Indians in these mountains, and kill every soul of them if we had been obliged so to do.”

– Brigham Young, 1853²²

“The poisoning of the American mind was accomplished not only by acts of discrimination and exploitation but by the exaltation of murder as an expression of the courage and initiative of the pioneer.”

– Dr. Rev. MLK Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*



Collage featuring images of “The Old Fort, Great Salt Lake City, Utah, 1848” by Hubert Howe Bancroft (1889), Timpanogos Chief Wakara, (1808-1855) by Solomon Carvalho, Timpanogos Chief Black Hawk (1830-1870) by Carol Lahoma Pettit Harding, current Timpanogos Chief Executive, Mary Murdock Meyers, Brigham Young monument, “Map of Great Salt Lake City, Utah” by Nicholas G. Morgan Sr., covered wagons, and a painting of a Timpanogos village and one of the Salt Lake valley both by C.C.A. Christensen

²² [Journal of Discourses by Brigham Young](#)

The Hale family arrived in lands shared by Timpanogos, Kuttuhsipneh (Goshute), and Eastern Shoshone Peoples on September 24, 1848 with the rest of the Heber C. Kimball Company. They set up camp just outside the walls of the “Old Fort” (now Pioneer Park) which Mormon pioneers built for “protection against Indians,”²³ in the so-called Salt Lake valley. This “Plymouth Rock of the West” was the landing spot for thousands of Mormon emigrants who poured into this land. “Within its walls Anglo-Saxon civilization was first brought to the Great Basin.”²⁴

Soon after July 24, 1847, when Mormons first descended into this valley, Timpanogos Chief Wakara told Mormon Prophet Brigham Young that he and his people were not welcome to settle on Timpanogos lands. Young ignored this and established the center of his new empire in Timpanogos, Kuttuhsipneh, and Eastern Shoshone.

In 1847 there were about 20,000 Indigenous persons living in the land now occupied by Utah. Within 20 years the Mormon settler-colonial population was triple that at about 60,000. By the turn of the century most every Indigenous Nation occupied by Mormon colonization had lost about 90% of their people to war, starvation, disease, and other consequences of Mormon occupation in their lands.

When Salt Lake City was laid out the Hale family was assigned Timpanogos, Kuttuhsipneh, and Eastern Shoshone land at the “second lot below the corner of second west on the north side of North Temple street” (approximately 134 W N Temple St). Their uncle Henry Harriman was assigned the corner lot next east of the Hales.²⁵ Heber C. Kimball was assigned ten acres (two full blocks) just two blocks east on the northeast corner of North Temple and Main Street.

Grandpa Alma and Granduncle Aroet immediately began harvesting Timpanogos, Kuttuhsipneh, & Eastern Shoshone trees for lumber, though “demands were so great that they were only able to get enough boards to make one window frame and one door frame.” They deconstructed their wagon’s endgate to make molds in which to form adobe bricks. With Timpanogos, Kuttuhsipneh, & Eastern Shoshone trees, clays, sands, and imported canvas from the wagon-cover for a door, the Hales built a “one room hut with a dirt roof and dirt floor”. Here they survived their first winter west of the Rockies.

In January 1849, just a few months after the Hales arrived, Apostle George Albert Smith commanded Utah’s Nauvoo Legion to build a second fort, Fort Utah, along the Timpanogos River (aka Provo River) in the next valley south. Apostle George A. Smith also commanded the group of Mormon soldiers to “remove the Indian people from their land,” claiming that they had “no rights” to the lands Timpanogos families have lived on since time immemorial.

²³ Sons of Utah Pioneers sign at Pioneer Park

²⁴ Daughters of Utah Pioneers sign at Pioneer Park

²⁵ From Nathan Hale Gardner’s biography on Alma Helaman Hale

As part of their efforts to “remove the Indian people from their land” the Nauvoo Legion first enacted the Battle Creek Massacre in which Mormons murdered nine Timpanogos men in front of their families in so-called Pleasant Grove, Utah on February 28, 1849.

As construction on Fort Utah ended in the spring of 1849, thirteen-year-old Alma was helping his brother Aroet to improve their Salt Lake valley home. They expanded their one room dirt floored home into four rooms with a lean-to on the back. As the Nauvoo Legion shot down Timpanogos men, Alma and his family cut down Timpanogos, Kuttuhsippeh, & Eastern Shoshone trees to lay a wooden floor and roof.

Of the Hale family life at this time cousin Nathan Hale writes:

“In addition to the home the family was allotted five acres of farmland about four miles away near where Sugarhouse is today ...

“During the summer Alma and Solomon herded cows on the benchland around the city. They had very little to eat and for their noon meal would dig Sego Lily roots and eat berrys [sic] and greens. In the evening they usually brought their pockets full of bulbs for their sister.

“As the grain began to ripen on the five acre plot there appeared from the foothills hoards of crickets. The entire community turned out in an effort to stop their progress. The Seagulls came again as they had the year before but the Hale farm was far out-on the edge of the tilled area and was devoured before they could be stopped.”

The following winter, on January 31, 1850, this church’s First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles met at Fort Utah and agreed that the only way to maintain their occupation of the so-called Utah valley was to exterminate the Timpanogos from their home/land. That day the Timpanogos extermination order, or “Special Order No. 2” was unanimously approved by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—just twelve years after the Mormon Extermination Order was signed by Missouri Governor Boggs.²⁶

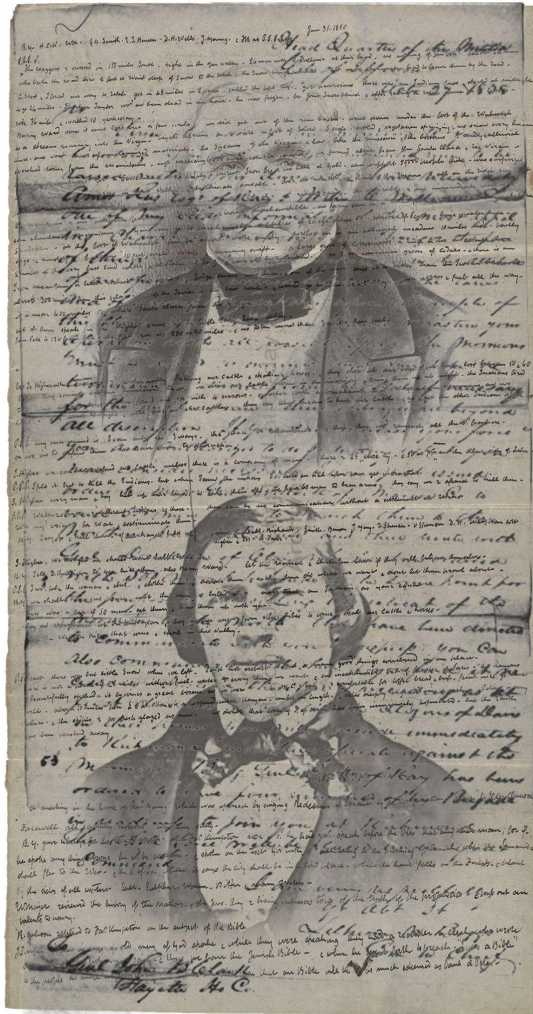
The extermination order against Mormons was rescinded by the state of Missouri in 1976. The extermination order against Timpanogos has never been rescinded. Because of settler-colonial violences and erasures like this the Timpanogos tribe is still not federally recognized and are regularly misidentified as Utes, with whom they share the Uintah Valley Reservation.

“I say go [and] kill them ... let the women and children live if they behave themselves ... We have no peace until the men [are] killed off — never treat the Indian as your equal.”

– Brigham Young of the Timpanogos Extermination Order²⁷

²⁶ [“Brigham Young orders killing of Native Americans,” B.H. Roberts Foundation](#)

²⁷ [“Timpanogos Tribe Biography: The Utah Black Hawk War,” by Phillip Gottfredson, *Black Hawk Productions*](#)



(Left) Collage of images of 1838 Missouri Executive Order 44, aka the "Mormon Extermination Order," notes from Special Order No. 2 or the "Timpanogos Extermination Order,"²⁸ Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs, Utah Governor Brigham Young. (Right) Collage of images of *Plat of the City of Zion* by Joseph Smith (1833) over *Map of Great Salt Lake City, Utah* by Nicholas G. Morgan, Sr.²⁹ (1850) over Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, over the Salt Lake City temple with a raised U.S. flag.

One week later, the Nauvoo Legion began the Fort Utah Massacre. Early in the morning of February 8th, 1850, fifty Mormon militiamen surrounded a Timpanogos village and opened fire on the sleeping families.

²⁸ [Salt Lake City, 1850 January 3. 1850 February 10. Church History Catalog](#)

²⁹ Map shows "Ariet Hale" (Aroet Hale) on lot 96 and the "Old Fort" on lot 48

“Field cannons boomed as they fired chain-shot at the unsuspecting camp, ripping open the teepees, sending women and little children running in all directions screaming in terror as the surrounding troops shot them down one by one. It is said that the chain shot ripped off the limbs of its victims, leaving them to die an agonizing death. ... The battle lasted for two days.”

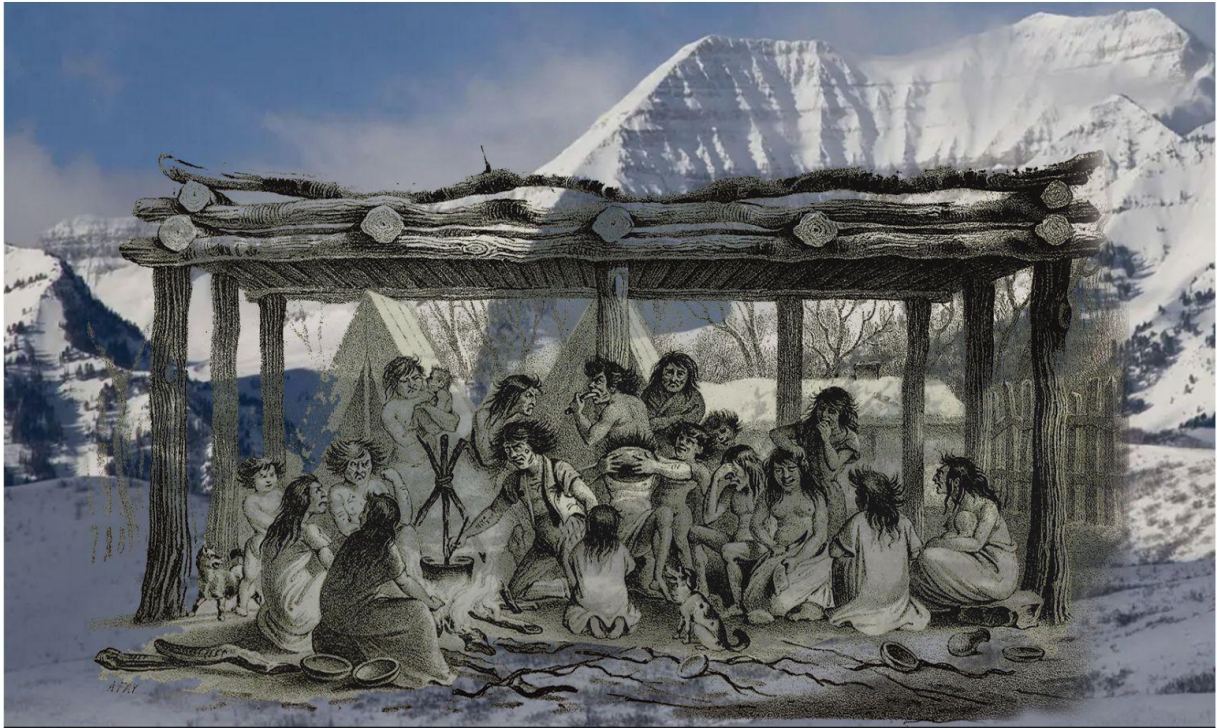
– Phillip Gottfredson³⁰

Though the battle ended after two days, the massacre went on for another week. After Brigham Young sent word to his militia to “not to leave the valley until every Indian was out” the soldiers split into two groups. One group pursued Timpanogos survivors up a canyon where they found “terrified women and children were scattering about.” They kidnapped and enslaved the women and children (and called it marriage and adoption) and continued to massacre all the men and any others who resisted.

The second group of Mormon militiamen spread out over the Timpanogos valley (so-called Provo Valley) in search of Timpanogos to kill. They attacked two more villages. After six days of being hunted and terrorized, 15-20 members of Timpanogos families surrendered to the Mormons on February 13th. Mormon General Daniel H. Wells wrote to his Prophet Brigham Young to ask what to do with the surrendered families. Brigham wrote back, *“If the Indians sue for peace, grant it to them, according to your discretion and judgment in the case. If they continue hostile pursue them until you use them up – Let it be peace with them or extermination.”*

The Militia kept the Timpanogos families prisoner overnight and in the morning Mormons lined up the Timpanogos men and executed them in front of their wives and children. Some of the imprisoned women and children tried to run for their lives. Mormons murdered them too.

³⁰ [“Battle Creek & Fort Utah Massacres 1849-50” by Phillip Gottfredson. Black Hawk Productions](#)



UTAH INDIAN PRISONERS UNDER THE COMMON PLATFORM IN FORT UTAH

Collage featuring Mount Timpanogos in the snow and “Utah Indian Prisoners Under Common Platform in Fort Utah” from Howard Stansbury’s *Exploration and Survey of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake of Utah*. This is an illustration depicting the imprisoned Timpanogos women and children who had survived the weeklong extermination of their People in the Timpanogos valley (Utah valley). Stansbury was a Captain in the U.S. Army and his *Survey* was an official publication by the U.S. House of Reps.³¹

The Mormon militia under orders from their Prophet and President Brigham Young massacred about 70-100 Timpanogos People in just a few days in order to take their home/lands from them. They kidnapped and enslaved the woman and children who survived these traumas. They stole the belongings of the dead and decapitated about 50 of the bodies with the intent to sell their skulls to white supremacist craniologists in the Eastern U.S.³²

Many Mormon readers may be surprised to read of these Mormon settler-colonial violences. In most Mormon-centric histories another of Brigham’s “Indian policies” are more commonly emphasized: “It was cheaper to feed the Indians than fight them.”³³ While Indian Superintendent Young did often make this statement (and the statement was probably accurate as Brigham’s church spent over a million dollars [about 31 million today, which was

³¹ [Exploration and survey of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake of Utah : including a reconnoissance of a new route through the Rocky Mountains by Howard Stansbury](#)

³² [“Battle Creek & Fort Utah Massacres 1849-50” by Phillip Gottfredson. Black Hawk Productions](#)

³³ [“Open Hand Mailed Fist: Mormon-Indian Relations in Utah 1847-1852” by Howard A. Christy Utah Historic Quarterly](#)

fully-reimbursed by the U.S.] fighting Timpanogos anti-colonial resistance) Young also knew that one could simultaneously feed and fight Indigenous resistance.

On this Brigham Young told his followers from the pulpit of the Salt Lake Tabernacle on April 9, 1871:

*"I will say to our government if they could hear me, 'You need never fight the Indians, but if you want to get rid of them try to civilize them.' How many were here when we came? At the Warm Springs, at this little grove where they would pitch their tents, we found perhaps three hundred Indians; but I do not suppose that there are three of that band left alive now. There was another band a little south, another north, another further east; but I do not suppose there is one in ten, perhaps not one in a hundred, now alive of those who were here when we came. Did we kill them? No, we fed them. They would say, 'We want just as fine flour as you have.' To Walker, the chief, whom all California and New Mexico dreaded, I said, 'it will just as sure kill as the world, if you live as we live.' Said he, 'I want as good as Brigham, I want to eat as he does.' Said I, 'Eat then, but it will kill you.' I told the same to Arapeen, Walker's brother; but they must eat and drink as the whites did, and I do not suppose that one in a hundred of those bands are alive. We brought their children into our families, and nursed and did everything for them it was possible to do for human beings, but die they would. **Do not fight them, but treat them kindly. There will then be no stain on the Government, and it will get rid of them much quicker than by fighting them. They have got to be civilized, and there will be a remnant of them saved.**"*³⁴

While Brigham Young was clearly lying as he claims that Mormons didn't kill Indigenous Peoples, but fed them, this statement does show that Young was as aware as settler-colonialism scholar, Patrick Wolfe, that there is little difference between militant genocide and cultural genocide when it comes to the survival of a People.³⁵ Both men understood that assimilating Indigenous Peoples to settler-colonial culture was as deadly as war.

Most historians break this Mormon war of extermination against the Timpanogos into two parts: the Wakara War (1853-54) and the Black Hawk War (1865-72). When they do so they not only erase the massacres and extermination order that predate these bracketed years, they also erase the land theft and displacement that predate any militant violence. Which is why I write that the Mormon war against the Peoples Indigenous to the lands occupied by Utah Territory started on July 24, 1847 as Mormons entered the valley.

This war began when Mormons first began to build forts, fences, and fields in Timpanogos ceremonial hunting, fishing, and burial grounds. This war began when the first Timpanogos person got measles. This war began when Mormon settlers stole Timpanogos lands and grazed their cattle on it which drove away Indigenous animals, which led to Timpanogos starvation, which led to Timpanogos eating the animals that were still living on their lands—Mormon cattle. Mormon settlers reacted to Timpanogos attempts to survive genocide with

³⁴ [Journal of Discourses by Brigham Young, Salt Lake City, April 9, 1871](#)

³⁵ ["Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native" by Patrick Wolfe Journal of Genocide Research](#)

militant violence. My ancestors couldn't or wouldn't acknowledge the contradiction in killing to protect their presumed private property when they'd been stealing Timpanogos land, fish, animals, grasses, and waters for years by that point.

This war began, not with military warfare, but with biological and environmental warfare which killed more persons than military warfare ever did. Mormon militance was a reaction to Indigenous survival against colonial violence.

But even this framing obscures the ideological roots of Mormon settler-colonial genocide. Ideologically, this war began when Joseph Smith attempted to rewrite Indigenous histories with his *Book of Mormon*.

“The Book of Mormon...is a record of God’s dealings with ancient inhabitants of the Americas...The record gives an account of two great civilizations. One came from Jerusalem in 600 B.C. and afterward separated into two nations, known as the Nephites and the Lamanites... After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are among the ancestors of the American Indians.”

- Introduction to The Book of Mormon - Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Retrieved 2023.³⁶

The Book of Mormon teaches that contemporary Indigenous Peoples are descended from white, ancient Israeli migrants who came to this land around 600 A.D. This group of settler-colonialists quickly broke into two groups: Nephites and Lamanites. The Nephites are the good guys. They're Pre-Christian Israelites, practice large scale agriculture, animal husbandry, metal smithing, and patriarchy along with many other colonial marks of civilization. The Lamanites are the bad guys. They rebel against their Christian God and their fathers. They practice hunting and gathering and other colonial marks of primitivism. For their rebellion the Book of Mormon god curses the formerly “white and delightsome” Lamanites with “a skin of blackness” in order to discourage social and sexual intercourse between these two groups.

³⁶ [“Introduction.” *The Book of Mormon*](#)



(Left) *Lamanite Warrior* - Latter Day Designs. Vinyl.³⁷ (2023). (Center) *Primary Visual Aids: Cutouts 6-16, Lamanite Warrior; 6-17, Lamanite Warrior with Bow and Arrows; 6-18, Nephi with Bow; 6-19, Young Nephite Man.* - Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Retrieved 2023.* (Right) *Nephi Action Figure* - Latter Day Designs. Vinyl. (2023). All figures are standing on Joseph Smith's official Seer Stone.

The story goes on and after Jesus dies and is resurrected he visits these Peoples in the Americas. All convert to Christianity and there follows a thousand years of peace between these Peoples. They then fall back into war and the book ends as the dark skinned Lamanites kill all the "white and delightsome" Nephites. Thus leaving these cursed, apostate-Christian Lamanites as "the ancestors of the American Indians."

But the Book of Mormon also makes a promise to these cursed Lamanites that "many generations shall not pass among them" until a remnant of their posterity will assimilate to European-culture and Christianity which will lift their curse and they'll become a "a white and a delightsome people" again.

³⁷ Product Description (from [Latter-day Designs](#)): 3" Lamanite Warrior, made out of durable vinyl. Lamanite Warriors "were lazy and idolatrous...wild and ferocious" believing in the false traditions of their fathers. They trusted in their own abilities and not in the strength of the Lord. The Book of Mormon tells that "the heads of the Lamanites were shorn, they were naked, save it were skin which was girded about their loins..." (Alma 3) They were armed with bows, arrows, stones and slings. "...They had marked themselves with red in their foreheads after the manner of the Lamanites..." These wicked warriors "...reap their rewards according to their works, whether they were good or whether they were bad, to reap eternal happiness or eternal misery..." Ages 4 and up.

“It is actually our duty to do all we possibly can to benefit, enlighten and save this dark and ignorant people.”

- Mormon Prophet Wilford Woodruff³⁸



(Left) Baptism of Shivwits (Nuwu) Indians - C. R. Savage (1875). (Shivwits Nuwu were invited to settle near the Mormon settlement St. George after Mormons committed genocide against Tonaquint Nuwu) (Center) Spencer W. Kimball "in the Southwest," from LDS.org. Spencer W. Kimball was in charge of the "Lamanite Placement Program" a Foster-boarding school program run by the Mormon Church (This Church's website does not say what People the man and children are of. I'd guess Diné as they were the People most targeted for the Lamanite Placement Program most targeted). (Right) Nuwu children forced to pose, some crying, at the Panguitch Indian Boarding School (1904-1909), Nuwu Land, Photographer Unknown (At least 12 children were killed and secretly buried at this boarding school) Background is from John Walter Scott, *Jesus Christ Visits the Americas* (1969)³⁹

“From a natural point of view it would seem that it’s the fate of the Indian as a race to be wiped out and become extinct. With nine tenths of them gone in less than four centuries, it is easy to see that it would not take long for the other one tenth to go in the same ratio; but hope lies for them in the fact that God foretold He would not permit their utter destruction... Zion is bound to rise and flourish. The Lamanites will blossom as the rose on the mountains.”

- Mormon Prophet Wilford Woodruff⁴⁰

³⁸ [“Mormon Indian Missions - 1855.” by Wesley R. Law. Brigham Young University. Department of History](#)

³⁹ [“John Walter Scott. Jesus Christ Visits the Americas \(1969\).” by Ancient Americas Appropriated](#)

⁴⁰ [“The Lamanite: Their Burden. Our Burden.” by Spencer W. Kimball](#)

Thus because settler-colonial Mormons believe that they hold the knowledge of the true history and destiny of this land and its Indigenous Peoples, they believe they have a divine duty to convert and assimilate these so-called Lamanites in order to restore them to their former state as “white and delightsome” Mormons. But Mormon leaders simultaneously taught that some Indigenous Peoples, like Timpanogos, were beyond salvation. Which is why when Brigham Young says that assimilating / civilizing Indigenous Peoples will “get rid of them much quicker than by fighting them,” he is saying that some Indigenous Peoples are so cursed saving them will destroy them.

Thus, Mormon mythologies hold an abject view of Indigenous Peoples. They are both Chosen and Cursed with only a remnant worthy of salvation. Which allows Mormons to see themselves as both savior and exterminator. On one hand the Prophet Brigham Young commanded, “I say go and kill them,” and on the other advises, “it is cheaper to feed the Indians than fight them.”



Indian War Veteran Salt Lake City, Utah. By George Edward Anderson . I'm pretty sure Greatuncle Aroet is the man on the bottom row, fourth from the left.

In July 1853, Timpanogos Chief Wakara shared his experiences of Mormon settler-colonists with non-Mormon interpreter, M. S. Martenas. Martenas had been “acquainted

with (Wakara's) country, and these Indians for upwards of thirty years". Her record shows that Wakara had tried to make peace, even offered to give Mormons the Salt Lake Valley, but they "never seemed to be satisfied" and occupied more and more land, leaving little of the Timpanogos home/land for Timpanogos People.

Wakara told Martenas that:

"(H)e had always been opposed to the whites settling (sic) on the Indian lands, particularly that portion which he claims; and on which his band resides and on which they have resided since his childhood. (W)hen they first commenced the settlement of Salt Lake Valley, they was friendly, and promised them many comforts, and lasting friendship — that (Mormons) continued friendly for a short time, until they became strong in numbers, then their conduct and treatment towards the Indians changed ... they have been driven by this population from place to place — settlements have been made on all their hunting grounds in the valleys, and the graves of their fathers have been torn up by the whites. He said he wished to keep the valley of the San Pete, and desired to leave the valley of Salt Lake, as he could not live in peace with the whites — but that the Whites had taken possession of this valley also — and the Indians were forced to leave their homes, or submit to the constant abuse of the whites. He said the Gosoke (Goshute) who formerly lived in the Salt Lake valley had been killed and driven away, and that now they wished to drive him and his band away also — he said he had always wished to be friendly with the whites — but they seemed never to be satisfied — the Indians had moved time after time, and yet they could have no peace — that his heart was sick — that his heart felt very bad."⁴¹

As Timpanogos pushed back against Mormon attempts to exterminate them, Mormons fought harder to destroy them.

The same month that Wakara spoke with Martenas, Mormon Prophet, Church President, Territorial Governor, and Superintendent of Indian affairs Brigham Young called Alma and Aroet Hale into service for the reorganized Nauvoo Legion in Utah Territory

In sharp contrast to Martenas record, my cousin Nathan Hale writes:

"On July 30, 1853 Alma, Aroet, and others were called by official order of the Militia to assist in the defense of the settlements against the raids being made by the Indians under Chief Wahkara [sic]. This tribe of Ute Indians⁴² were particularly ferocious and made forays throughout the entire Southwest stealing horses, cattle and taking slave children. Much damage had resulted to property of the Saints. Finally in May 1854 a truce was agreed upon between Brigham Young and Chief Wahkara ending the war."

Nathan implies a false innocence in our shared ancestors by writing of the "particularly ferocious" Timpanogos and the "damage that had resulted to the property of the Saints," without addressing the genocidal damages Mormons had created. He neglects to address how Timpanogos lifeways and families had experienced mass death from the "particularly ferocious"

⁴¹ ["Walker Statement." hosted on Black Hawk Productions](#)

⁴² Timpanogos are Shoshone. This error in colonial records is the reason Timpanogos are still not a federally recognized tribe.

European illnesses brought by our ancestors. Or that Mormon cattle grazing had caused “much damage” to Timpanogos lands which drove the People to starvation. Nathan doesn’t mention that Timpanogos People today consider colonial accusations of enslavement “a gross misrepresentation.” He doesn’t say anything about how the all-Mormon Utah legislature legalized enslavement of both African and Indigenous persons the year earlier in 1852 nor that when Brigham Young had told his followers to “buy up the lamanite children” in 1851. Nor does he write about the Timpanogos Extermination Order of 1850 or any of the other Mormon enacted massacres that had occurred before and after this “truce was agreed upon.”

A year and a half after this truce Wakara was killed, poisoned by Mormons. He died at 47-years on January 29, 1855.

Of these Mormon wars of extermination the Timpanogos Tribe today write:

“By the year 1909 most of our leaders were killed, many of them in the Black Hawk War. Our population decreased from approximately 70,000 to about 1,300. Today our population is close to 900. The newcomers called us the “Lamanites,” the chosen people. We were chosen to walk knee deep in the blood of our ancestors, to suffer from whitemans’ disease, to accept their ways and beliefs or die fighting to preserve our way of life.

“What choice did we have? Our ancestors’ blood covers the Wasatch and then we were forgotten. We were shoved aside in the name of progress. Yet, with all this we remain.

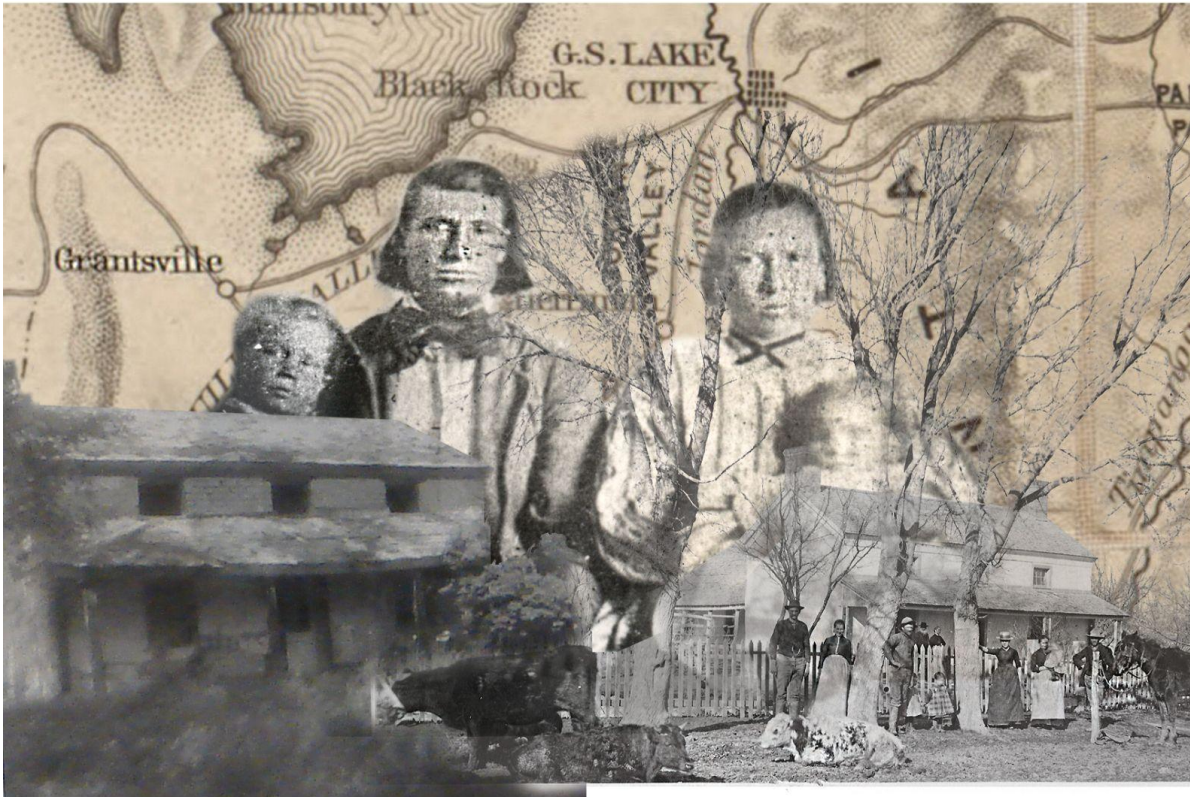
“The time has come for the truth to be spoken. We are still here. We will not be brushed aside. We the Timpanogos People are the Indigenous People of Utah, we are Shoshone. The blood of our ancestors cries out to us. They must be remembered for who they really were.”⁴³

For his service in the Wakara War, Granduncle Aroet was given 160 acres of Kuttuhsipneh (Goshute) lands and waters on so-called Willow Creek in Grantsville, Utah. In the summer of 1854, six-years after emigrating to the so-called Salt Lake valley, Aroet and Alma moved to that land to farm it. By fall, they made their move “40 miles west to again pioneer a virgin territory,” as cousin Nathan Hale Gardner put it. But Alma and Aroet were well aware that their new farm in occupied Kuttuhsipneh lands was no “virgin territory.”

⁴³ [The Timpanogos Nation website](#)

Grantsville

Kuttuhsipgeh Land



Alma Helaman Hale and Sarah Elizabeth Walker Hale, his first wife, with their two children, Alma Helaman Hale Jr. and Olive Elizabeth Hale (1861 or '62) collaged over the Hale home in Kuttuhsipgeh lands occupied by so-called Grantsville, Utah (date unknown) and that same home in 1964.

In 1852, two years before the Hale brothers moved to their so-called virgin territory, the present settler-colonists of Grantsville, wrote to Brigham Young to request that more settlers be sent to the area. These Mormon wrote to their Prophet out of fear. The colonists were outnumbered by Kuttuhsipgeh (Goshutes) whom Mormons called "very treacherous". So they requested that a dozen or more families be sent to their settlement. In the October 1852 Mormon General Conference President Young fulfilled their request and called for more families to help colonize Grantsville in Kuttuhsipgeh home/lands.

By 1854 the Mormon population had grown by 63% from 159 to 251. Grandpa Alma and Greatuncle Aroet were among these additional 92 persons.

By 1860, the Euro-settler population in Kuttuhsipgeh homelands of Tooele, Rush, and Skull Valleys was up to 1008. Ten years later only 450 Kuttuhsipgeh were left in existence.

Alma was eighteen when he and his family moved from Timpanogos, Eastern Shoshone, and Kuttuhsipneh lands of Salt Lake to Kuttuhsipneh lands of Grantsville. Two years later he married Sarah Elizabeth Walker, a fellow Mormon pioneer who trespassed across Indigenous lands of the Plains and into Kuttuhsipneh lands.

Of this Alma wrote:

"The next year after our arrival at Grantsville, I had arrived at an age which I thought suitable to search out a companion for life. My efforts were rewarded in winning Miss Sarah Elizabeth Walker for my wife. We were married April 14, 1856.

As Alma started his adult life in Kuttuhsipneh lands, Kuttuhsipneh were fighting for their own lives, lifeways, and homes/lands.

Brigham Young, serving in his capacity as Governor and Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the new Utah Territory, had already been working to create safety for Mormon at the expense of Indigenous lives. In 1850 Young wrote to Congress requesting the forced removal of all Peoples Indigenous to the lands occupied by Utah Territory. He asked that they be sent to reservations where "white men [do not] dwell."⁴⁴ But Kuttuhsipneh repeatedly refused to leave their lands for reservation, even as they'd already lost the Salt Lake valley to Mormon colonization. After refusing to leave their home/lands for 62 years, the U.S. finally established the Skull Valley Reservation where the Skull Valley band lived. Though now they were "interred on those reservations like some kind of prison."⁴⁵ Which is certainly accurate for the Skull Valley Reservation about 40 miles southeast of Grantsville as it is surrounded by seven different sources of deadly pollutants, including a nerve gas storage facility and a military chemical weapons testing site.

⁴⁴ ["Skull Valley Crossroads: Reconciling Native Sovereignty and the Federal Trust" by Lincoln L. Davies. Maryland Law Review](#)

⁴⁵ ["We Shall Remain The Goshutes" from We Shall Remain: A Native History of Utah from PBS](#)



“Four young (Kuttuhsippeh) boys playing in the snow” (1930s) and, from left to right: Kuttuhsippeh woman with a Kuttuhsippeh child, posed (date and photographer unknown), Kuttuhsippeh woman Molly McCurdy with her weaved basket (1986), and Margene Bullcreek, anti-nuclear activist and a member of the Skull Valley Band of Goshutes (between 2005 & ‘15).

The Kuttuhsippeh or Kusiutta or Goshute (“dry ash People”) teach that they’ve always lived in their lands⁴⁶ and that “the land makes the people who they are.”⁴⁷

Mormons and other European colonists called Kuttuhsippeh by yet another name—“Digger.”⁴⁸ Settlers called them this because they dug for and ate roots, tubers, bulbs, small animals, and insects. Kuttuhsippeh used at least 81 different species in their land-based lifeways before being penned into reservation. They gathered seeds from 47 different species, berries from 12 others, green from another 12, and 8 different roots.

In fact, it was Kuttuhsippeh who showed Mormon Pioneers how to survive in this land. They taught the settlers how to harvest and prepare the sego lily flower’s bulb, to gather sunflower seeds, berries, and green, as well as how to make cricket meal cakes. It was from this

⁴⁶ July 2022, archaeologists discovered about 88 human footprints on Kuttuhsippeh land that are at least 12,000 years old.

⁴⁷ [“We Shall Remain The Goshutes” from *We Shall Remain: A Native History of Utah* from PBS](#)

⁴⁸ Settler colonists also called Nuwu (Southern Paiutes) “diggers”. I don’t doubt that “digger” sounds like another horrible name European settlers used for African persons for a reason.

knowledge sharing that when Grandpa Alma and Greatuncle Solomon “had very little to eat” they knew to “dig Sego Lily roots and eat berrys (sic) and greens.” These shared Indigenous foods and knowledge caused far more Mormons to survive than would have without the help of the Kuttuhsipheh.

In honor of this cross-cultural, interspecies relationship Utahns put the sego lily flower on their state flag. In gratitude to the Kuttuhsipheh, Mormons called them derogatory names, forced them from the Salt Lake valley, and then attempted to force them from their Tooele, Skull, and Rush valleys.

Kuttuhsipheh troubles with colonists began a couple decades before Mormons invaded their home. Beginning in the 1830’s Spanish colonists and Colorado Utes began kidnapping Kuttuhsipheh women and children into Spanish enslavement. Spanish colonists also began grazing their longhorn cattle on Kuttuhsipheh’s waist-high grasses, limiting the availability of foods for Kuttuhsipheh Peoples and Indigenous animals. In self-defense Kuttuhsipheh moved deeper into their high desert lands.

Then the Mormons came to stay, occupying Kuttuhsipheh lands with cattle as well as permanent settlements. Beginning in 1849 Mormons built Benson’s Grist Mill on Kuttuhsipheh waters. They occupied reliable springs and other sources of fresh water (like Aroet’s land on Willow Creek), occupied fertile valleys displacing Indigenous plants with European crops, over-fished from Indigenous waters, and overgrazed Indigenous grasses with European cattle. Even European honeybees, the symbol of the Mormon empire, began to displace native bees. Mormon lifeways destroyed and replaced Kuttuhsipheh lifeways at every ecological level.

Mormons did not recognize Indigenous land claims as they were guided by the Christian-supremacist ideology founded in the Doctrine of Discovery. This doctrine proclaims that all land is a gift from the Christian God to His chosen people, thus labeling all land occupied by non-Christians as empty—“terra nullius”—“virgin territory”—open for Christian dominion. This doctrine is the ideological foundation for the Manifest Destiny / Westward Expansion movement—including the Mormon Exodus beyond the Rocky Mountains. Mormons, like most European settler colonists, saw the genocides they enacted against Indigenous Peoples as a divine cleansing of the Promised Land.

This doctrine of divine cleansing is illustrated well in the words of King James I, the namesake of the King James Bible. Just after “The Great Dying” of 1616-19 in which disease and warfare imported by European colonists caused the deaths of 75-90% of Peoples Indigenous to the lands that came to be occupied by waves of Puritan migrations pouring into the ports at Plymouth Rock. In celebration of this biological warfare King James proclaimed, “There hath, by God’s visitation, reigned a wonderful plague... [causing] the utter destruction, devastation, & depopulation of that whole territory.”⁴⁹ Mormons carried King James’s bible in their hands and his belief in divine genocide in their hearts and minds.

⁴⁹ [“The Charter of New England, 1620” by King James I, hosted by The Avalon Project at Yale Law School](#)

These imported Euro-Christian-supremacist ideologies were expanded on in Mormonism. As Mormons consider the melanation of Indigenous skins to be a mark of a divine curse, they also consider it to be a sign of their supposed lost birthright to their home/lands. Because the Book of Mormon is a supposed “record of God’s dealings with ancient inhabitants of the Americas” and the Book was passed to Mormon hands, this reads as proof that the Land of Promise belongs to Mormons—to the People the Mormon God has Chosen to inherit “the fulness of the everlasting gospel.”

In addition to these Christian-colonial-supremacist ideologies, Mormon-colonists also imported European illnesses into Kuttuhsipneh lands, as they did to all Indigenous Peoples whose lands they occupied. Diseases like smallpox and measles caused mass suffering and death, read by Christian colonizers as a divine cleansing, as progress. This legacy of settler-colonial biological warfare continues today with the Skull Valley Goshute Reservation bordered by toxic private and federal facilities. In tandem, the legacy of Kuttuhsipneh resistance has also been carried forward, like in the work of anti-nuclear activist, Margene Bullcreek.⁵⁰

After Kuttuhsipneh realized that their land’s isolation could no longer protect them they shifted their survival tactic. Because Mormon cattle occupied and consumed the grasses of Kuttuhsipneh hunting grounds Indigenous animals began to die off or graze elsewhere. So Kuttuhsipneh began to hunt the animals that were on their lands—European cattle. As one settler observed, “[I]t is really a matter of necessity with these Indians that they starve or steal.”⁵¹

By 1851 Kuttuhsipneh had taken about \$5,000 (about \$195,000 today) worth of cattle from their lands. In response, Mormon leaders sent the Nauvoo Legion to kill all the Kuttuhsipneh People. The Legion attacked and Kuttuhsipneh defended themselves. Kuttuhsipneh continued to survive in the limited ways left available to them. Mormons continued to try to kill Kuttuhsipneh and otherwise force them from their lands.⁵²

“In those days (the Mormon and U.S. soldiers) they were killing the people wherever they found them in their camps. They’ll just kill them for no reason.”

– Kuttuhsipneh member, Florence Steele⁵³

“That was terrorism. The old people used to say, ‘they wanted us gone.’ We were in the way of getting what they wanted.”

– Kuttuhsipneh member, Genevieve Fields⁵⁴

⁵⁰ [Margene Bullcreek, Skull Valley Goshute Anti-Nuclear Activist by Sophie Dau, *Utah Women’s History*](#)

⁵¹ [“Skull Valley Crossroads: Reconciling Native Sovereignty and the Federal Trust” by Lincoln L. Davies, *Maryland Law Review*](#)

⁵² [“Goshute Indians” by Dennis R. Defa](#)

⁵³ [“We Shall Remain The Goshutes” from *We Shall Remain: A Native History of Utah* from PBS](#)

⁵⁴ [“We Shall Remain The Goshutes” from *We Shall Remain: A Native History of Utah* from PBS](#)

It was this legacy my ancestors helped to build as we built our homes, our Zion, our Promised Land over top of Indigenous homes/lands. We destroyed Indigenous lives and lifeways in order to replace them with our own

Deseret, the Las Vegas Fort, and the Utah War

“President Young in his address to the Saints...said (U.S. President) Polk would be damned...and if (the U.S.) ever sent any men to interfere with us here, they shall have their throats cut and sent to hell, and...that our people would be connected with every tribe of Indians throughout America and that our people would yet take their squaws, wash and dress them up, teach them our language and teach them to labor and teach them the gospel of their forefathers and raise up children by them and teach the children and not many generations hence they will become a white and delightsome people and in no other way will it be done and that the time was nigh at hand when the gospel must go to that people.”

Mormon Prophet Brigham Young, July 28, 1847, from Wilford Woodruff's Journal⁵⁵



Las Vegas Mormon Fort collage

⁵⁵ [Wilford Woodruff Journal, entry for July 24, 1847](#)

Alma and his family's settler-colonial domestic bliss in Grantsville was short-lived. By the summer of 1855, just months after the Hales moved to Grantsville, Alma's brother Aroet was called by Brigham Young to serve in the Las Vegas Mission. While Alma stayed in Grantsville to care for both Hale families and farms⁵⁶, Aroet went to expand Mormon control over their growing Mormon Empire called Deseret.



Map of Deseret with Indigenous lands and contemporary state and national borders labeled.

⁵⁶ For caring for his family and land, Aroet gave his brother half of his Grantsville acreage. So, began my Hale family line's legacy of owning land stolen through genocide.

Deseret was a never-realized ethnostate built by and for Mormons. It was meant to be their Zion, their "New Jerusalem" in which to establish a society which would usher in Jesus's Second Coming. *The Las Vegas Mormon Fort* as part of this imperial project was meant to be a midpoint along the Old Spanish Trail, between the Mormon settlements of Southern Utah and San Bernardino. It was meant to militarily defend, and economically benefit from, the flow of capital along this trade route against Indigenous persons.

"Your mission is a little different from the other missions," said Territorial Governor, Indian Agent, and Church President Brigham Young. "You are called to the Colorado River Country where the Navajo Indians (Diné) claim the territory. They do not allow white men to cross their path without picking a battle."⁵⁷

Though Young states that "the Navajo Indians claim" the lands now occupied by Las Vegas, these lands are Nuwu lands and have been since time immemorial.

Nuwu are farmers, hunters, and gatherers. Their ancestors plowed fields along rivers named by colonists Virgin, Santa Clara, Ash Creek, Beaver Dam, and Muddy. They used irrigation ditches and small dams. They harvested the land's plants to make baskets used for water jars, winnowing, cradle boards, seed beaters, and cooking.⁵⁸

Their histories and identities are rooted in their lands.⁵⁹ Nuwu bury their umbilical cords in their mountains where their origin stories come from.⁶⁰ Their petroglyphs tell of millenia deep kinship with the Tuh'ee (Deer) and Nah'gah (Desert Bighorn Sheep) and map the locations of the many desert springs. Nuwu celebrate this deep-time connection to their home/land, which "bestows food, medicine, wildlife, water and the air we breathe," through song and dance.⁶¹

When Spanish colonists first wrote of the Nuwu they documented thirty-five different bands.⁶² Of these thirty-five bands, only fourteen have survived settler-colonial genocide. These include the contemporary Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians, Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, Moapa Band of Paiute Indians, Pahrump Band of Paiutes, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe, and the Paiute Indian Tribes of Utah which include: Cedar, Indian Peaks, Kanosh, Koosharem, and Shivwits Bands.

"Bringing Creation Back Together Again: The Salt Songs of the Nuwuvi," by Kim Stringfellow

⁵⁷ [Bishop Jonathan H. Hale of Nauvoo by Heber Quincy Hale](#)

⁵⁸ [Nuwuvi: a southern Paiute history, published by the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada](#)

⁵⁹ ["Unav-Nuguaint Little Springs Lava Flow Ethnographic Investigation," prepared by Kathleen Van Vlack, Richard Stoffle, Evelyn Pickering, Katherine Brooks, and Jennie Delfs, University of Arizona](#)

⁶⁰ ["Land of the Mountain Sheep & Deer Songs" by Lavan Martineau](#)

⁶¹ [Desert National Wildlife Refuge and the Nuwu \(Paiute\) by Amanda Reece, Intermountain Histories](#)

⁶² ["Bringing Creation Back Together Again: The Salt Songs of the Nuwuvi," by Kim Stringfellow. The Mojave Project](#)

After surviving near genocide from Spanish colonization, many Nuwu bands buried another 90% of their what remained of their People⁶³ in only a few decades of Mormon settler-colonial occupation.



Collage featuring Nuwu Woman posed outside of a Kahn alongside Nuwu pottery and baskets by A. Thompson in 1873 (upper left), Nuwu family outside of mud and grass hut in 1906 (upper right), three Nuwu women of the Nu-a-gun-tits tribe identified as An-ti-naints, Pu-tu-siv, and Wi-chuts in Las Vegas, Nevada by John K. Hillers in the 1870s (lower right), two Nuwu children from Back cover of "Moapa Band of Paiute Indians" booklet (lower middle), and two Nuwu elders stand beside a maplike petroglyph.

Brigham Young had called Aroet and others to Las Vegas not only to build a fort and colonized the land, but also to gather soldiers. In his farewell speech to these Vegas missionaries Brigham Young pronounced, "By and by (Indigenous Peoples) will be the Lord's battle ax in good earnest." In response, one Las Vegas pioneer wrote to his Prophet "If the lord

⁶³ ["Southern Paiute Relations With Their Early Dixie Mormon Neighbors" by Edward Leo Lyman. *The Juanita Brooks Lecture Series*](#)

bleses us as has done we can have 1000 brave warriors on hand in a short time...” referring to the 1,000 Indigenous persons these settler-colonists estimated were living in that region of the Mojave.⁶⁴

As Mormons were fighting Indigenous Peoples for domination of their homes/lands, they were also working to defend their religious empire from U.S. interference. As shown in the quote from Brigham Young at the beginning of this section, Mormons, after being forced from one state after another because of their particular style of settler-colonization and Christianity, considered the U.S. to be an enemy. When Mormons weren’t trying to exterminate Indigenous Peoples, they were trying to convert them with the intent of using them as a “shield” and a “battle ax” in a religiously motivated insurrection against the United States of America.

Because of all this, the U.S. Congress was concerned about the “Mormon Rebellion.”⁶⁵ The Republican Party was so concerned about the “Mormon Problem” that their 1856 platform fought against “those twin relics of barbarism: polygamy and slavery”, both of which were legalized in Utah Territory. So, by the mid-1850’s the U.S. and the Mormons prepared the nation’s first civil war.

This Mormon belief that Indigenous Peoples, or so-called Lamanites, will join forces with settler-Mormons is central to their American-Zionist⁶⁶ End-Times beliefs.⁶⁷ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, teaches that we are living in the End-Times, a.k.a. the “Latter-days” and that the U.S. is a choice land created for Christian dominion. Early Mormons believed that Jesus Christ’s second coming was imminent and that it was their responsibility as his Chosen People to prepare this land for him. Part of that preparation involved the establishment a Mormon Zion⁶⁸ on this continent, which they’d been struggling to do since the church’s founding. And part of creating a Mormon Zion meant saving the United States from falling into iniquity.

Mormon leaders taught that their constitutional guaranteed religious freedoms were being trampled by the U.S. government. They prophesied that “divine constitution”⁶⁹ was near destruction, “hanging as if by a silken thread.”⁷⁰ In these Last-days it was the responsibility of Mormons and converted Lamanites to come together to fight in a Holy War against the corrupt government to save the United States, and restore it to its divine purpose as a Christian Nation.⁷¹ This religious insurrection would usher in the Second Coming and its New Millennium

⁶⁴ [“Mormon Indian Missions - 1855,” by Wesley R. Law, Brigham Young University, Department of History](#)

⁶⁵ [“Utah War.” Wikipedia](#)

⁶⁶ [“White Horse Prophecy” Wikipedia](#)

⁶⁷ [Last Days, Latter Days, Guide to the Scriptures by churchofjesuschrist.org](#)

⁶⁸ [“Plat of the City of Zion, circa Early June–25 June 1833,” Joseph Smith Papers](#)

⁶⁹ [“Our Divine Constitution,” by President Ezra Taft Benson, LDS General Conference, Oct 1987](#)

⁷⁰ [“White Horse Prophecy” Wikipedia](#)

⁷¹ [“Ether 2:12,” The Book of Mormon](#)

“I tell you the Lamanites of these mountains ... these poor degraded natives ... will yet be a shield to this people if we do right.”

– Wilford Woodruff⁷²

In July of 1857, as Mormons were preparing to celebrate the ten-year anniversary of their occupation of Indigenous lands in the Great Basin, Mormon President Young was notified by his men that U.S. President Buchanan, fulfilling a campaign promise to do something about the “Mormon Rebellion,” was sending the U.S. Army to Utah Territory to remove Young from his position as both Territorial Governor and Indian Superintendent.

As news of the Utah War reached the Mormons, General Daniel H. Wells, author of the Timpanogos extermination order, called the Nauvoo Legion to service. Six-thousand men were mobilized. Aroet, having already returned from his mission in Las Vegas, was called to form a cavalry along with his brothers Alma and Solomon and other Mormon men. “The Hale brothers were expert horsemen, and men, almost lived in their saddles. They were first-class marksmen, and always kept their powder dry and firearms in good condition.”⁷³

Alma was 21 years old. His first child was born just one month ago. He spent that winter in the mountains blocking the U.S. Army from using Echo Canyon to access the Mormon-occupied Salt Lake valley.

Brigham Young ordered the Legion to “save life always when possible.” So, unlike their war against Timpanogos and Kuttuhsipheh, the Legion fought a war of sabotage with tactics including: stampeding the Army’s cattle and mules, burning miles of grasses from the roads to destroy their animals’ food, and banging pans and making ruckus all night.

In one such move, the Nauvoo Legion burned 52 wagons with supplies for the U.S. Army.⁷⁴ These wagons belonged to outfitters Russell, Majors, and Waddell who started the Pony Express. The government never reimbursed them for their losses, so in 1860 they started the Pony Express to secure a government contract to stay out of bankruptcy.

Slowly, the Army was able to advance, in spite of Mormon sabotage. By March 1858 Young called on all Mormons to flee south. He established a scorched earth policy, to burn everything in their path to destroy all resources against the encroaching army. Salt Lake was completely evacuated and the foundation of the Salt Lake temple was buried and disguised as a plowed field.

When Mormons were called to evacuate Grantsville, Grandpa Alma Hale was called to stay and protect the settlement from both Kuttuhsipheh (Goshute) and the Army.

⁷² [“Mormon Indian Missions - 1855,” by Wesley R. Law, Brigham Young University, Department of History](#)
⁷³ [“THE UTAH WAR OF 1857-58 U.S. Government Vs. Mormon Settlers” Contributed by MaryilaFlinders on FamilySearch.org](#)

⁷⁴ Another of my ancestors participated in this.

As the U.S. army slowly encroached on the Mormon-occupied territory, Congress was pressuring Buchanan to end this expensive civil war. In June of 1858, Buchanan's official peace commission arrived in Utah Territory and offered "a free pardon for seditions and treason heretofore by them committed."⁷⁵ In exchange, Mormons were required to submit to government authority and allow the army into Salt Lake City. Though the commission also promised that once the new non-Mormon governor was installed they would pull all troops from the territory "except what may be required to keep the Indians in check and to secure passage of emigrants to California."⁷⁶



Utah's Nauvoo Legion collage featuring *Triumphal Passage of United States Troops through Salt Lake City*.

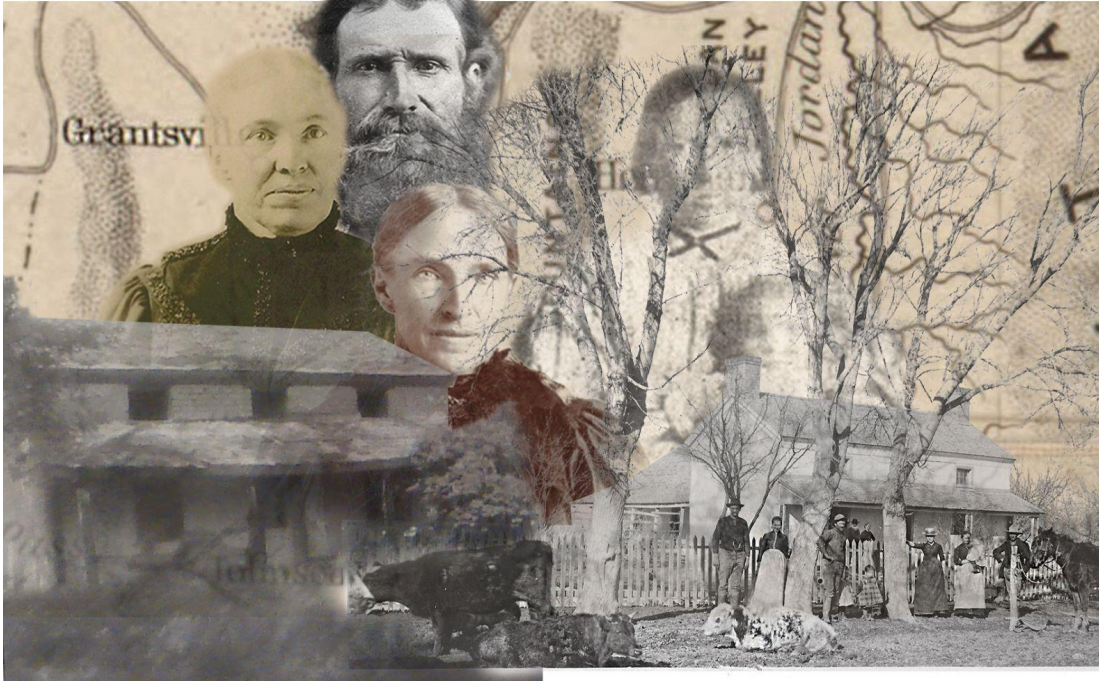
Young agreed to those terms and stepped down as governor even as he maintained presidential power over his religious empire.

⁷⁵ ["Utah War: Peace commission." Wikipedia](#)

⁷⁶ [Mormon Resistance](#), ed. LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen

Back in Grantsville

Kuttuhsippeh Land



After Sarah Elizabeth Walker Hale (right) died in 1861, Alma married sisters Sarah Annie Clark Hale (1842-1918) (left) and Ellen Victoria Clark Hale (1848-1940) (center) in Mormon polygynous marriage in 1861 and 1865, respectively.

With the Utah War ended and pardon signed Grandpa Alma and Greatuncle Aroet were allowed to return to their homestead life in Grantsville.

Even though Mormons remember this moment as another in their long series persecution stories, cousin Nathan points out how:
“The coming of the Army became a blessing in many ways. It brought a large payroll into the territory and created a market for all the surplus farm products that could be raised. Of course it was not without its problems but served mostly for good By July 1861 most of the soldiers had left and the fort was abandoned. Prior to its abandonment approximately four million dollars (about \$138M today) worth of goods and buildings were sold for something near \$100,000 (about \$3.5M today).”

Getting back to family life, Grandpa Alma and his first wife, Sarah Elizabeth Walker Hale, birthed their second kid, Olive, in 1859, and third, Enos, in 1861. Complications during the birth of Enos Eliphalet Hale on May 8, 1861 caused Sarah's death just two weeks later. Enos died soon after at four-months-old

Alma's brother, Aroet, had also just lost his first wife, Olive Amelia Whittle, (as a polygynous Mormon Aroet had married a second wife, Ada Louisa Phippen, in 1857) and under the advice of President Young both Hale brothers sought to remarry.

In the fall of 1861, Alma met and began courting Sarah Annie Clark, a recent immigrant from England. That winter the couple got married in a double wedding with Aroet and his second, second wife, Lousia Cooke.

At two-years-old and four-years-old Olive and Alma Jr. had a new mom. From 1863 to 1882, Sarah Annie Clark Hale gave birth to ten more children, seven of which lived into adulthood.

Olive Amelia Whittle Hale had given Aroet six children before her death. His second wife, Ada, birthed one. Louisa, gave birth to eight children with seven reaching adulthood. After losing a child in 1866, Aroet and Louisa adopted a son.



Sarah A. Clark Hale with her child Jonathan H. Hale (1876).

As Alma Hale shifted his attention to his family and farm, the U.S. army, who stayed in Utah "to keep the Indians in check" shifted their focus from Mormon settlers to Kuttuhsippeh People.

At the end of the Utah War in 1858, President Young stepped down as Superintendent of Indian affairs. He was replaced by Jacob Forney who, like Young, also sought to send Indigenous Peoples to reservations so that settlers could occupy their lands without having to fight them. Also like Young, Forney failed to displace the Kuttuhsipheh who refused to leave.

By 1860 the Pony Express was established by Russell, Majors, and Waddell⁷⁷ who built stations across Kuttuhsipheh land. To fight for their survival against ongoing settler encroachment in their sensitive ecologies, they raided Pony Express stations and stole supplies. Eventually the U.S. military was called in to defend the route which started the Goshute War.⁷⁸

Three years later at least 100 Kuttuhsipheh and 16 Euro-settlers had been killed in this war and the Kuttuhsipheh were forced to sign a treaty with the U.S.⁷⁹ This treaty did not require them to give up land but did require them to allow settler development and extraction in their lands. It also required Kuttuhsipheh to end their culture of hunting and gathering and to settle in place. In exchange the U.S. promised to compensate them for the loss of their foodways. The treaty was signed in October 1863.⁸⁰ The U.S. got access to the lands they wanted, Kuttuhsipheh got forced deeper into assimilation as their hunting and gathering lifeways were further eroded by settler-colonialism.

“These lands were the lands none of the white settlers wanted and this is why we got them”

– Kuttuhsipheh woman, Genevieve Fields⁸¹

During this war the United States was seeking lands where “white men do not [want to] dwell” on which to inter Indigenous Peoples into reservations. One such land was designated the Uintah Valley Reservation, established by U.S. President Abraham Lincoln on October 3, 1861. Mormon land surveyors described this land as “entirely unsuitable for farming purposes.” Other settler surveyors added that it is “one vast contiguity of waste, and measurably valueless, except for nomadic purposes, hunting grounds for Indians, and to hold the world together.”⁸² It was here the U.S. forced Timpanogos (1872) and Colorado Utes (1882) onto reservations. Today this land has been broken up through allotment, bought and sold by settlers, and punctured with fossil fuel extraction sites along with the pollution which comes with them.

⁷⁷ Russel, Majors, and Waddell were the suppliers of the US army during the Utah War. After their company lost 52 wagons filled with supplies because they were burned by the Nauvoo Legion they were left uncompensated by the U.S. government. So, in order to avoid bankruptcy they started the Pony Express with a U.S. government contract.

⁷⁸ [“Goshute, Goshute War.” Wikipedia](#)

⁷⁹ [“Skull Valley Indian Reservation.” Wikipedia](#)

⁸⁰ [“Goshute Treaty \(1863\).” FortWiki](#)

⁸¹ [“We Shall Remain The Goshutes” from We Shall Remain: A Native History of Utah from PBS](#)

⁸² [“Utah History Timeline Resource.” Uintah Basin Teaching American History Project](#)

U.S. Superintendent of Indian Affairs Forney tried and failed to force Kuttuhsipgeh onto the Uintah Valley reservation in the 1860's. Congress tried and failed in 1864 and '65. By 1871, the U.S. paid John Wesley Powell and George W. Ingalls to go to the Kuttuhsipgeh to "induce" them off of their lands onto the Uintah Reservation. They again refused. Despite their failures, for the next twenty years, the U.S consistently lied and listed Kuttuhsipgeh as residing in the Uintah Valley Reservation.⁸³

During Powell's time with the Kuttuhsipgeh he estimated that only 460 Kuttuhsipgeh people were left alive—256 in so-called Utah and 204 in so-called Nevada. Powell's population count of 256 in so-called Utah was repeated in every annual report from 1873 through 1895, "after which the Gosiutes disappeared completely from these statistical summaries."⁸⁴

Because the Skull Valley Kuttuhsipgeh consistently refused to leave their lands U.S. President Wilson eventually just designated their reservation to be the lands in which they were already living. In 1912, Wilson established a tiny 80 acre reservation in Skull Valley. Even after this the Bureau of Indian Affairs still tried to force the Skull Valley band from their home and into the Deep Creek reservation in 1936 and again in 1942.

Today, Skull Valley is a clear example of environmental racism. The U.S. used the land rights they'd claimed at the end of the Goshute War to develop in some of the most toxic ways possible. The Skull Valley reservation is surrounded by a hazardous waste landfill, two hazardous waste incinerators,⁸⁵ a nerve gas storage facility, a U.S. military biological and chemical weapons testing site,⁸⁶ a magnesium plant that contributes significant amounts of chlorine gas, and the Intermountain Power Project that releases airborne toxic chemicals.⁸⁷

Scholar Randel D. Hanson ties this contemporary environmental violence to historic examples, like the leper colonies Mormon settler-colonists established in Kuttuhsipgeh lands.

Though it isn't as much of a spectacle, I also tie these environmental violences to the land theft my ancestors enacted against the Kuttuhsipgeh Peoples. Though Alma and Aroet didn't test biochemical weapons on their 160 acres, they did steal Kuttuhsipgeh land and water which also directly impeded the ability of Kuttuhsipgeh People to live well in their own home/land. Genocide is genocide regardless of the cause or justification.

⁸³ ["People of Snowy Mountain, People of the River" by Douglas Deur, Ph.D and Deborah Confer. U.S. Dept of Interior](#)

⁸⁴ ["Skull Valley Crossroads: Reconciling Native Sovereignty and the Federal Trust" by Lincoln L. Davies. Maryland Law Review](#)

⁸⁵ ["From wasteland to waste site: the role of discourse in nuclear power's environmental injustices" by Danielle Endres. The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability](#)

⁸⁶ ["Negotiating Eternity: Energy Policy, Environmental Justice, and the Politics of Nuclear Waste," by Steven M. Hoffman, Sage Journals](#)

⁸⁷ ["An Experiment in \(Toxic\) Indian Capitalism?: The Skull Valley Goshutes, New Capitalism, and Nuclear Waste." by Randel D. Hanson. Political and Legal Anthropology Review](#)

Back in the Mormon settlement of Grantsville Sarah Annie Clark Hale, was caring for her step kids Alma Jr. and Olive when the Mormon Church called Alma away again. During the April 1862 Mormon General Conference men were called to join the “Down and Back” wagon trains assisting the ongoing flood⁸⁸ of settler-colonists pouring out from Northern Europe and into the Great Basin. At their own expense these men were asked to take wagons back along the Mormon Pioneer Trail to the Missouri river to help bring poor migrants to Salt Lake.

Alma H. Hale was called to the Joseph Horne Company. But at that time Sarah Annie was “sick unto death.” Alma went to his bishop with concerns about leaving his deathly-ill wife to care for their farm and two young children. His bishop told him “Brother Alma, if you will go and perform your duty faithfully, your wife shall get well.” As an obedient Mormon Alma began to prepare to leave for the Missouri river.

Alma owned “two yoke of oxen” and had to sell one yoke to be able to afford his “Down and Back” mission.

In his diary Alma wrote:

“I never heard from my family from the time I left in April until my return again the 13th of September. The pen is too weak to portray to you the joy I felt (after those five or six months of hard worry and suffering of mind wondering if my wife had died or was getting better as had been promised me upon the eve of my departure) when I drove into the yards at home and found my wife well and hearty and everything in general in a good and prosperous condition. I felt to thank my Father in Heaven for the blessings that had been showered down upon my family through my performing my duty although surrounded with adverse circumstances and conditions.”

Three years after Alma had returned from his “Down and Back” mission he was called back into military service as Captain’s Adjunct in the Nauvoo Legion to again fight Timpanogos for dominion over their own home/lands during Utah’s Black Hawk War (1865-1872).

Utah’s Black Hawk War was a continuation of the war of extermination against the Timpanogos Nation Mormons started nearly two decades earlier. Black Hawk, a Timpanogos Chief, was still a young man when the Nauvoo Legion attacked his village in the Fort Utah Massacre. He was witness to this massacre, watching his kin be slaughtered by Mormons. Black Hawk simply “could never understand why the white men had shot his people. It put bitterness in his heart; and though he lived for some time with the white people, his mind was ever set on avenging the wrong.”⁸⁹ Black Hawk lost his father, Chief Sanpitch, (the namesake of Utah’s SanPete valley) and uncle, Chief Wakara, to Mormon violences.

Fifteen years later, Black Hawk had been made War Chief and worked to organize about 1,000 warriors from Timpanogos, Colorado Utes, Lakota, Diné, and Apache Peoples. Together

⁸⁸ Mormon / settler population in Utah territory more than septupled from 1860 to 1880, from 20,000 to 143,963

⁸⁹ [Timpanogos Town by Howard R. Driggs](#)

they managed to hold back Mormon expansion in their lands for some time. They undermined the Mormon economy by flooding the market with stolen Mormon beef and horses, which caused cattle markets to collapse and Mormons to abandon around 70 villages.⁹⁰

Black Hawk was shot in battle while attempting to rescue one of his kin. Four-years later, on September 26, 1870, he died. Black was buried at Spring Lake, near where he was born.

Within the next two years, with the help of the United States, Mormon colonists were able to forcibly remove Timpanogos from their home/lands and inter them on the Uintah Reservation over 100 miles away from the lands their families have been living in since time immemorial.

But his subterranean rest was disrupted when, in 1919, Mormons robbed his grave. Black Hawk's bones were exhumed and displayed in the window of a hardware store in the so-called Utah Valley. After this public display of genocidal cruelty, his remains were taken to this Church's museum on Temple Square and put on display for about 60 years.

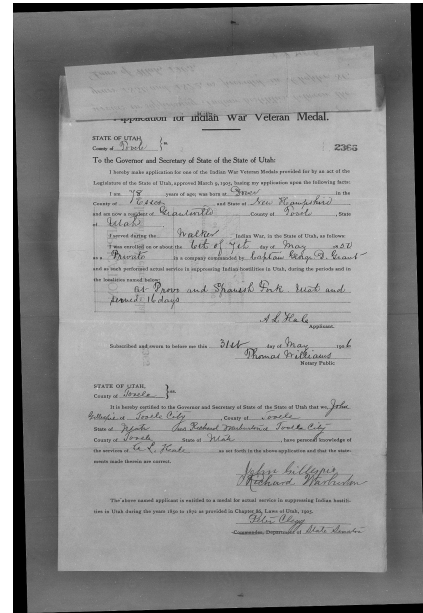
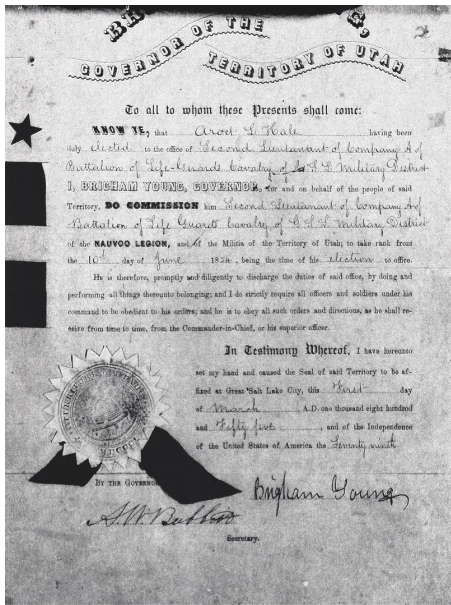
Black Hawk wasn't reburied until 1996. "It took an act of Congress, the help of National Forest Service archeologist Charmain Thompson, and the humanitarian efforts of a boy scout Shane Armstrong to find and rebury the remains of Black Hawk at Spring Lake."⁹¹

Both Alma and Aroet served in this part of war through which Mormon and other U.S. settler-colonists displaced Timpanogos People from their home/land and destroyed 90% of their people and then forced the survivors onto the Uintah Valley reservation in 1872. Before the Mormon occupation, Timpanogos population was about 70,000. By 1909 it was 1,300. Today, after another century of neglect and colonial abuses, Timpanogos population is about 900.⁹²

⁹⁰ ["Timpanogos Tribe Biography: The Utah Black Hawk War," by Phillip Gottfredson, *Black Hawk Productions*](#)

⁹¹ ["Chief Antonga Black Hawk's Grave" by Phillip Gottfredson, *Black Hawk Productions*](#)

⁹² [The Timpanogos Nation website](#)



Aroet L. Hale's Certificate appointing him Second Lieutenant (left), Aroet's "Utah Indian War Veteran" medal (center), and his application for that medal (right).

For his service in these wars and massacres, Aroet received a medal. Or in the words of the State of Utah he received the medal "for services in suppressing Indian hostilities between the years 1850 and 1872, as provided in Chapter 86, Laws of Utah, 1905" The medal features the Utah state seal surrounded by the words "UTAH INDIAN WAR VETERAN". This part hangs from a red, white, and blue striped ribbon extending from another piece of metal with an Indigenish figure in a full war bonnet surrounded by "1850, 1872". It seems that Alma did not apply to receive this medal.

Also in 1865, Alma married his third wife (second surviving), Ellen Victoria Clark in the Mormon practice of polygyny. Later that year Aroet married his fourth wife (three living), Charlotte Cooke. Ellen was the younger sister of Alma's other wife Sarah Annie Clark and Charlotte was the younger sister of Louisa Cooke, one of Aroet's other wives. Ellen birthed eight more of Alma's children giving him 17 adult children between his three wives.

In Grantsville, Alma served as marshal, city councilor, and constable. He co-owned the general merchandise store, was superintendent of the Tooele County Co-op Grist Mill, and held stock in several local mills. He was a member of the Tooele County "School of the Prophets" and attended their secret meetings in which the men would discuss ways to fight against the persecutions they believed they were experiencing from the non-Mormon or "gentile" population of Utah Territory. Given that Mormons far outnumbered any other population in the territory at that time, I assume the "persecutions" they experienced were more like challenges to their complete dominance of the region, much as their supposed-persecutions were west of the Missouri river.

Alma also helped to organize Grantsville's first Sunday School, served as its teacher, and served as Stake superintendent of Sunday Schools. He was later ordained to a Quorum of the Seventy, acted as president of the 31st Quorum of Seventies until August 1901 when he was ordained a High Priest and set apart as a High Councilor. He also served as a member of the State of Utah Legislature.

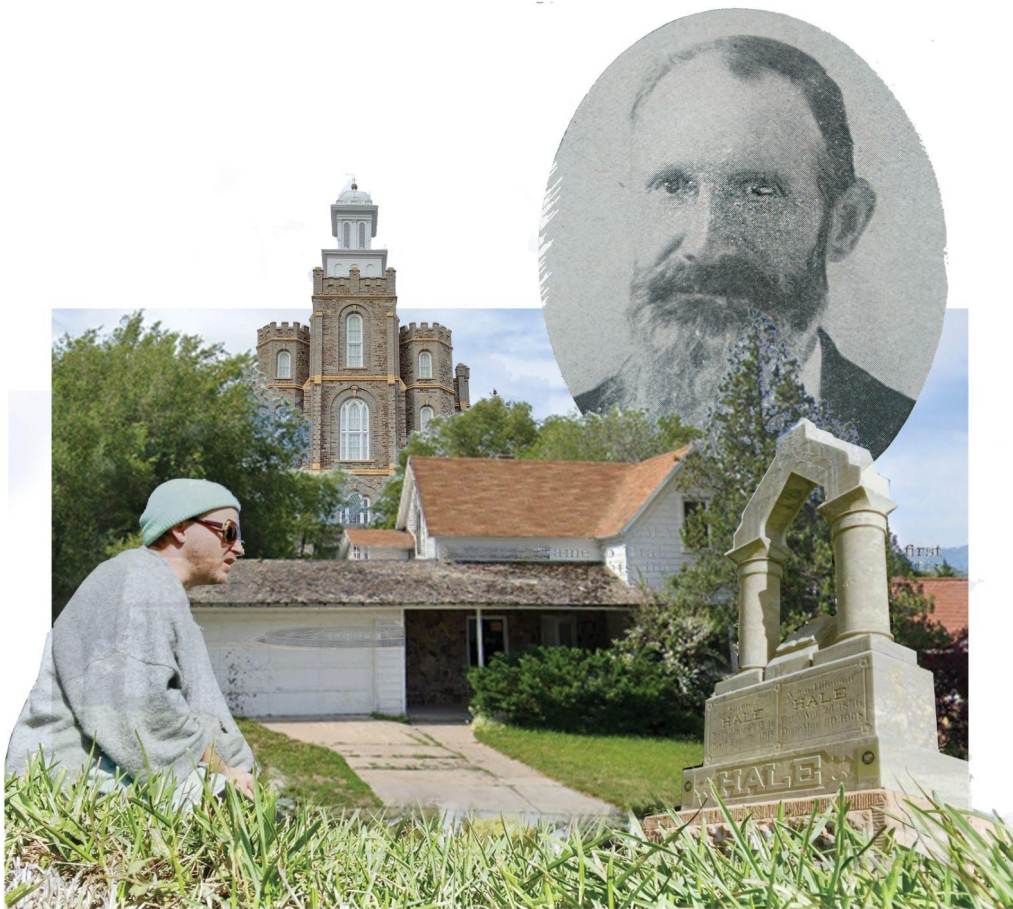
Throughout his life, Alma served at every level of the Mormon settler colonial project from the religious, to the militant, to the agricultural, to the legislative. His life story is the story of Mormon settler-colonialism and genocide against the Peoples Indigenous to the lands I and my family call home.

Logan, Utah and Temple work

Shoshone-Bannock and Eastern Shoshone land

“Our fathers cannot be made perfect without us; we cannot be made perfect without them ... There must be this chain in the Holy Priesthood; It must be welded together from the latest generation that lives on earth back to Father Adam.”

- Brigham Young⁹³



Collage featuring Alma Helaman Hale in his elder years from Mormon Church Records (upper right), still from a video of me talking to Alma's grave in October 2022 in Shoshone-Bannock lands (lower), one of Alma's Logan, Utah homes in 2022 (background), and Logan Temple in 2022 (upper left) in Eastern Shoshone and Shoshone Bannock lands.

At the mid-point of Alma's life he began to shift his focus toward his afterlife.

⁹³ [Quoted in "Genealogy: A Personal Responsibility," by Elder Theodore M. Burton, LDS General Conference Oct 1972](#)

Mormonism teaches that families can be together eternally if the proper rituals are performed by and for those family members within Mormon temples. But because Mormonism didn't exist until 1830 and "this chain" must go "back to Father Adam," they had to find a way to do these rituals for their dead ancestors. So, these temple rituals are performed not only among the living, but also by proxy for the dead. Thus, genealogy is a central practice in Mormonism through which living-Mormons do the paperwork needed to perform these eternally binding rituals for their dead ancestors. When Brigham Young said, "Our fathers cannot be made perfect without us," he was referring to this practice of vicarious temple work for dead ancestors.

Just as these Mormons needed to build their Zion in order to sanctify and prepare the earth for the second coming, they likewise needed to perfect their family line through these proxy baptism, endowments, and sealings (Mormon temple rituals). As Brigham Young taught *"The ordinance of sealing must be performed (on earth) until the chain of generation is made perfect in the sealing ordinances back to father Adam; ... until the earth is sanctified and prepared for the residence of God and angels."*⁹⁴

This "chain of generation is made perfect" when one has performed these rituals for every person in their family until you eventually seal yourself to "father Adam."

The importance of this Adamic connection is further explained in Doctrine and Covenants Section 132. This scripture contains a "revelation given through Joseph Smith" in 1843⁹⁵ "relating to the new and everlasting covenant." This covenant is said to eternally bind human families eternally through plural marriage. This was the first public declaration of the Mormon "principle of plural marriage," but "evidence indicates that some of the principles involved in this revelation were known by the Prophet as early as 1831,"⁹⁶ like when Joseph Smith is reported to have commanded his fellow Mormon leaders to marry Indigenous women in order to turn their children "white and delightsome."⁹⁷

Doctrine and Covenants 132 claims to be a conversation between Joseph Smith and his God in which Joseph Smith asks why God allowed "Abraham, Issac, and Jacob" to have "many wives and concubines," when He had also commanded "thou shalt not commit adultery."

Addressing the commandment against adultery, Joseph said God said that He often asks His Chosen ones to break His commandments, like when He commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Issac, even though He'd also commanded, "Thou shalt not kill."
"The Joseph Smith Revelations: Texts & Commentary" by H. Michael Marquardt

Joseph's God explains that because He had made a promise with Abraham to make his "seed to multiply as the stars of heaven"⁹⁸ Abraham had to have multiple wives through which to

⁹⁴ ["Object of the Gathering—Necessity of a Temple—Trail of the Saints—Sealing—Visit to Provo,"](#)
[Joseph Smith Foundation](#)

⁹⁵ This scripture wasn't publicly released until 1852.

⁹⁶ ["Chapter 132," Doctrine and Covenants, by Joseph Smith](#)

⁹⁷ ["Origin of Latter Day Saint polygamy. Possible revelation in 1831," Wikipedia](#)

⁹⁸ [Genesis 26:4](#)

bear that much seed. “This promise,” Joseph said God said to him, “is yours also, because ye are of Abraham.”

This part points to the supersessionist Mormon teaching that Mormons, especially British Mormons, are of the Birthright Tribe of Ephraim and thus have superseded Jews as God’s Chosen People after they did not accept Jesus as Christ.⁹⁹ Thus, it is important for Mormons to create a genealogical connection to Adam in order to prove they are of this supersessionist Birthright lineage.¹⁰⁰

In addition to this Birthright inheritance of seed as abundant as “the stars in heaven,” Joseph also shows how this proliferation of posterity is the path to Godhood, the ultimate Mormon Birthright. Joseph writes that it is through this “new and everlasting covenant” of polygyny that Mormon men will be able to continue to multiply seed in heaven with his eternally bound wives. This eternal perpetuation of progeny will create a “continuation of (his) seeds forever & ever,” and all men whose seed continues forever “shall they be gods, because they have no end.” Men become Gods through accumulation of infinite children born through their eternally bound polygynously wives is the path through which a mortal man becomes infinite and thus becomes a God.¹⁰¹

As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be.

— Lorenzo Snow, 1840¹⁰²

This promise is for men alone though as verse 63 demonstrates. In this verse, Joseph’s God explains that women exist to be “given unto (men) to multiply and replenish the earth...that they might bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified.” Women are so that men might have eternal Glory.

Alma Hale’s Granddaughter, my Great Grandmother, Nancy Ethel Hale, expands a little more on the patriarchal bent of this “new and everlasting covenant”:

“When this earth becomes a celestial kingdom the order of government here will be patriarchal, that is a fatherly government. Each father who is raised from the dead and made partaker of the Celestial Kingdom will hold lawful jurisdiction over his own children and over all the families which spring down from them to the very last child born. We belong to our father’s family, he and we to his father’s family to the first generation even back to Adam.”

⁹⁹ [2 Nephi 30](#)

¹⁰⁰ Mormonism also teaches that Indigenous Peoples are of the brother tribe of Ephraim, Manasseh. Grandma Nancy Hale quotes from a book on British-Israelism, *Heritage of the Anglo-Saxon Races*, writing that “Ephraim (White Mormons) and Manasseh (Peoples Indigenous to this continent) (are) the leaders of the whole Anglo-Saxon Race.”

¹⁰¹ Note that women and children were legally considered property during Joseph’s life which gives this Mormon path to Godhood a distinctly classist bent.

¹⁰² [“Chapter 5: The Grand Desinty of the Faithful” *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow*](#)

Next in Doctrine and Covenants 132, “the Lord” shifts his attention to Joseph Smith’s first wife, Emma Smith. Here Joseph/God commanded Emma to “stay herself and partake not of” plural marriage.¹⁰³ Emma can not marry another man because, as Grandma Nancy explains above, Mormonism is a strictly patriarchal structure. Emma “belongs” to Joseph and to his father and his father and his father, “even back to Adam.” This patriarchal ownership is so absolute in Mormonism that in verse 54 of this “revelation” “the Lord” reiterates:

*“I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else. **But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law.**”*¹⁰⁴

Ten verses later, “the Lord your God,” makes this same threat against all women of Mormonism saying:

“if any (Mormon) man have a wife...and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood (plural marriage) ... then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord your God; for I will destroy her.”

Mormon God and His Prophet Joseph Smith openly write that femicide is a worthy punishment for any woman who doesn’t fall in line with this new law. The Mormon doctrine of eternal families, one of the main selling points this church uses, also openly advocates for the murder of all wives who refuse to be polygynous.

Alma, who had already been practicing the “new and everlasting covenant,” began working to ensure his eternal glory and potential Godhood as he began doing temple work for his dead ancestors’ in 1871.

Before he could start the actual proxy temple work, he needed two things: to gather his genealogy and access to a temple. To gather his genealogy he attended a mission for his church in Massachusetts where he worked with his uncle, John Farnham Boynton,¹⁰⁵ to gather genealogy on his mother’s side. For his father’s side’s genealogy he worked with a relative in the U.S. senate to compile those records. After having collected the names of over 4,000 of his ancestors, Alma needed a Temple.

By 1877, the first Mormon temple west of the Rocky Mountains was completed in Nuwu lands occupied by Saint George, Utah. The Hale brothers were anxious to begin doing temple work for their ancestors with their large collection of genealogical records. Aroet and Alma discussed moving to St. George to begin their ancestral temple work, but “found it would be too far and as a result so expensive that (they) were compelled to abandon the idea.”

¹⁰³ This is why I use the term “polygyny,” rather than the more commonly used “polygamy” as Mormon women were explicitly banned from marrying another husband.

¹⁰⁴ Note that just a few verses ago “the Lord” had just explained to Joseph that murder is righteous when commanded by God.

¹⁰⁵ John F. Boynton was one of Joseph Smith’s original Twelve Apostles. Boynton apostatized along with about 1/3 of Mormons after the failure of this church’s bank.

Seven years later, in 1884, the second Mormon temple in Shoshone Bannock lands occupied by Logan, Utah was completed. This temple was significantly closer, “So (the Hales) decided that we would remove to a place near the Logan Temple and do our work there.”

The Logan temple occupies So-So-Goi (Shoshone) land, or the Cache Valley, as colonists call it. Like the rest of these stories of Mormon and Indigenous relations, Mormons quickly occupied the most fertile parts of So-So-Goi land driving the People toward starvation and forcing them to steal Mormon cattle to survive their own genocide.

When Mormons first arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, So-So-Goi Chief Sagwitch greeted Brigham and his group. Heber C. Kimball told Sagwitch, “The land belongs to our father in heaven, and we calculate to plow and plant it; and no man shall have the power to sell his inheritance for he can not remove it; it belongs to the Lord.”¹⁰⁶ Or in other words, Mormons were manifesting their divine destiny in So-So-Goi home/land according to the doctrines of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine of Discovery—and nothing will stop us.

On Jan. 29, 1863, the U.S. Army massacred a group of So-So-Goi (Shoshone), in their home/land at Boa Ogoi (Bear River). Up to 500 So-So-Goi were murdered on this freezing winter morning—likely the most massive massacre in U.S. history. It was celebrated openly by Mormon colonists.¹⁰⁷

By 1856, Mormon colonists moved to occupy So-So-Goi land and decimated Indigenous foodways and relationships they’d cultivated over millennia. So-So-Goi tried to charge Mormons rent, but they refused. So they began to eat what food was left on their lands—Mormon cattle. And even though Mormons had stolen So-So-Goi lands, animals, fishes, and grasses, they claimed So-So-Goi taking Mormon cattle was a crime punishable by death.

Mormons called on the U.S. Union Army to “wipe them out.”¹⁰⁸ And so, early in the Morning on January 29th 1863, the Union Army did just that. Mormon assassin, Porter Rockwell, led them to the So-So-Goi camp where the U.S. Army spent hours murdering these Indigenous families. They then destroyed what remained of the So-So-Goi camp and along with all of their winter food storage. This massacre became known as the The Bear River Massacre, or the Engagement on the Bear River, or the Battle of Bear River, or Massacre at Boa Ogoi.

Mormons in Cache Valley celebrated the massacre. In the official minutes of a Logan Bishop’s meeting is recorded: “We, the people of Cache Valley, looked upon the movement of Colonel Connor as an intervention of the Almighty, as the Indians had been a source of great annoyance to us for a long time.” They also blamed So-So-Goi for their own massacre, saying

¹⁰⁶ [Heber C. Kimball, Journal History of the Church, August 1, 1847](#)

¹⁰⁷ [“Voice from the Dust: A Shoshone Perspective on the Bear River Massacre” by Darren Perry, *BYU Studies Quarterly*](#)

¹⁰⁸ *Deseret News*, January 28, 1863, reported in [B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century One*](#)

that this happened because they'd rejected Mormonism—a reflection of their belief in the Lamanite curse.¹⁰⁹

Chief Sagwitch and a few others survived the massacre. About ten-years later, Sagwitch had a vision which led to his People seeking baptism from the Mormons. In 1873, one-hundred-and-two surviving So-So-Goi were baptized by the same group who sought their destruction in the same river where they were nearly exterminated.

Out of the limited options for survival under colonial occupation, they chose assimilation over a reservation. They now mostly live among the settler population along the Wasatch Front. As So-So-Goi leader Darren Parry says, "We are your neighbors."¹¹⁰

Three generations and 59 years after Sagwitch's People were baptized, the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers erected a monument which frames this massacre as a noble deed done against "Indians guilty of hostile attacks" to protect innocent settlers attempting to erase the genocidal actions of both Mormons and the U.S. from public memory.¹¹¹

It was through this settler-colonial violence that the Logan Temple was constructed with and on So-So-Goi land, as well as with So-So-Goi labor.¹¹²

"Bear River Massacre Monument: Pioneer Women" by *Daughters of Utah Pioneers*

¹⁰⁹ ["Voice from the Dust: A Shoshone Perspective on the Bear River Massacre" by Darren Perry, *BYU Studies Quarterly*](#)

¹¹⁰ ["Voice from the Dust: A Shoshone Perspective on the Bear River Massacre" by Darren Perry, *BYU Studies Quarterly*](#)

¹¹¹ ["Bear River Massacre Monument: Pioneer Women" by *Daughters of Utah Pioneers*](#)

¹¹² ["Sagwitch" *Church History Topics*.lds.org](#)



Hale Brothers Aroet, Alma, and Solomon (right) Logan Temple, constructed between 1877-1884 (left) placed over *The Battle of Bear River* mural by Edmond J. Fitzgerald as displayed at the Preston, Idaho Post Office (2022).

Twenty years after the Massacre at Boa Ogoi, in April of 1883, “President Wilford Woodruff called together the three Hale brothers and requested that they perfect a family organization for temple work.” Twenty-two years after that, the Hale family finally completed their last baptism, endowment, and sealing in the Logan Temple for all 4,000 of their ancestors. That very night as temple president, Apostle Marriner W. Merrill, was riding home from the temple he thought he saw the building on fire. On a second look he saw no flames, yet the temple “filled with light, and the outside of the building shone with a pale pink glow.”¹¹³ The locals also noted this glow and claimed they had heard a heavenly choir singing for about two hours.

Merrill told *Deseret News* that he “viewed the occurrence with some concern,” as he couldn’t figure out how the temple would glow.

The phenomenon is said to have happened again the next night, angelic choirs and all. Temple President Merrill told the Prophet Willford Woodruff of these events. Woodruff asked

¹¹³ As happens when a clouded sky clears only at the horizon line during sunset.

what kind of work had been done in the temple recently and Merrill told him of the massive ancestral project recently finished by the Hale family. Woodruff declared that the phenomenon must have been “an assembly of the great Hale family from the spirit world who had gathered within those sacred walls in exultation over their liberation through the beneficent ministrations in their behalf.”¹¹⁴

I wonder if these Mormons ever hear the cries of So-So-Goi, Kuttuhsippeh, Nuwu, or Timpanogos ancestors buried in the soils in which Mormons planted their seeds, built their homes, and buried their loved ones. Perhaps miracles are only remembered in Mormon history when they support the Mormon settler-colonial project rather than contend with it.

Written 1901, seven years before his death, Alma’s unfinished autobiography ends with these words:

“I am now sixty-five years of age, on the declining side of life. As I approach my goal and crown which is waiting for me, I do it with these words on my lips to call my sons and daughters and their posterity, ‘Keep the faith for it is worth the fight of life and every sacrifice that can be made for it. It will unite us in eternity and cause a mighty rejoicing at the glad reunions. Let not one of my children be missing from it, is my constant prayer.’ More will be added as my life progresses, until I am called to lay it down and meet my Father.”

I wonder if he now regrets some of the sacrifices he made for his faith, specifically his part in the attempted genocide of Timpanogos and Kuttuhsippeh Peoples. I wonder how he feels about the work I do in unsettling the Zion which he sacrificed so much to settle. I wondered this aloud as I sat on his grave and spoke to the Indigenous stone from which he grave marker was carved, and any remnant of him who may be listening.

Alma died suddenly around 5:35 a.m. on March 30th, 1908. He was 71-years, eleven months, and six days old. He was survived by his wives, Sarah Annie and Ellen Victoria Clark Hale and fifteen children: Alma Helaman Jr., Olive Elizabeth, Ernest Frederick, Albert Henry, Edgar Daniel, Aroet Clinton, Arthur Willard, Franklin George, Grace Emma, Jonathan Harriman, Solomon William, Aroetta Louisa, Alvin Wilfred, Rebeca Viola, Eugene Clark, and Zina Emeline.

Seventy-six years and five generations later I was born on Pahvant Ute, Nuwu, Timpanogos, and Kuttuhsippeh land in so-called Delta, Utah. Alma’s youngest daughter, my Great-Great-Grand aunt Zina Emeline Hale, had just died a little more than two years before I was born. These histories, of which I am an heir, are not so long ago.

¹¹⁴ [Logan Temple First 100 Years by Nolan P. Olsen](#)

The End: “May we go forward in repentance”

“Our nation was born in genocide when it embraced the doctrine that the original American, the Indian, was an inferior race. Even before there were large numbers of Negroes on our shore, the scar of racial hatred had already disfigured colonial society. From the sixteenth century forward, blood flowed in battles over racial supremacy. We are perhaps the only nation which tried as a matter of national policy to wipe out its Indigenous population. Moreover, we elevated that tragic experience into a noble crusade. Indeed, even today we have not permitted ourselves to reject or feel remorse for this shameful episode. Our literature, our films, our drama, our folklore all exalt it. Our children are still taught to respect the violence...”

— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Collage of my ancestors' portraits with Logan temple faded into the background (2022).

To prepare to write this story I visited the places in it. I sought to unlearn the respect I was taught to give my pioneer ancestors for their invisibilized homemaking violences. I wanted to listen to the land and any ghosts that met me there, my ancestors' or the ghosts of the land's Peoples. I hope telling these stories works toward relieving those ghosts of their task to remind us of what we so diligently forget.

I visited Alma Helaman Hale's grave in So-So-Goi land occupied by Smithfield, Utah. I asked if he now regrets the choices he made to make our home in someone else's home/land. I sat with the abandoned quarries in Timpanogos, Kuttuhsippeh, and So-So-Goi lands from which my ancestors built temples and asked them if they felt more sacred as land or as a temple. I visited the museums of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers (DUP) and noted how everyone had a display about the Mormon Extermination Order in Missouri of 1838, but not one had any information about the Timpanogos Extermination Order agreed on by Brigham Young, his first and second councilor, and all twelve of his apostles in 1850. Not even the Fort Ephraim DUP Museum where a Black Hawk War treaty was signed in 1868. I visited the DUP Historic Markers and asked the Indigenous stones cut to hold these histories if the accounts written on them was the version of this story they had witnessed those few years ago.

My life and the lifeways of my ancestors exist today specifically because of and through the genocide of Timpanogos, Kuttuhsippeh, Nuwu, So-So-Goi, Pahvant Ute, and Diné (Navajo) Peoples, along with all Indigenous Peoples whose lives and lands are occupied by the United States. This is most directly illustrated in the 160 acres of Kuttuhsippeh land Greatuncle Aroet received for his "service" in militantly forcing Timpanogos People from their lands under threat of death. From this Kuttuhsippeh land and water the Hales were able to grow food to feed themselves and their fellow Mormons and build an economic and material foundation from which my family line grew.

Yet, my family, my neighbors, my fellow Mormons and ex-Mormons and Utahns for the most part do not know or tell these stories. We attempted to make ghosts of their Peoples as we colonized and desiccated the lands and waters. And then we attempted to make ghosts of those stories and memories. We will be haunted by these ghosts individually and collectively if we don't, as a community, reckon with these horrors present from the past.

Patrick Wolfe writes that settler-colonialism destroys to replace.¹¹⁵ My family and I exist in Indigenous lands today because our ancestors destroyed Indigenous Peoples in order to replace them. We destroyed Indigenous land-based farming, hunting, and gathering practices (skills shared with Mormons when they first arrived and were starving) and replaced them with agricultural monocultures, toxic weapons test sites, and extractive capitalism and pollution. Indigenous animals are driven to extinction and replaced with European cattle. Indigenous land is stolen and appropriated into Mormon temples and settler-sprawl. Indigenous networks of kinship were destroyed and replaced with settler-genealogies. Indigenous histories were erased and replaced with the myths of the Book of Mormon. Indigenous emphasis on adaptation and

¹¹⁵ ["Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native" by Patrick Wolfe *Journal of Genocide Research*](#)

change was destroyed and replaced with Mormon settler-colonial emphasis on permanence and eternal life.

We, descendants of Mormon pioneers (and all other settler-colonists) are heirs of an ancestral responsibility to reckon and work to repair for the horrors through which our ancestors ensured our future. This was not a divine cleansing, but a horrific destruction that haunts our collective unconscious as a society. My ancestors arrived and were mostly welcomed to this land as refugees. As soon as their population grew they shifted from refugees to a militant occupying force taking over lands and destroying lives until they could force the land's Indigenous caretakers onto reservations where “white men [do not] dwell.”

Today as we're living in a nesting doll of existential crises of climate collapse, biological annihilation, and the sixth extinction, the mythologized “West” is in a twenty-plus year drought. Historians tend to praise Mormon irrigation and damming for making the desert blossom as the rose. Yet, those same writers ignore that Mormon pioneers desiccated Sevier Lake by 1880, Lake Powell has been in a mega-drought for over a decade, Utah Lake is filled with toxic sludge, the Virgin River is a top ten most threatened ecosystem, and the overdrawn Great Salt Lake is threatening to release “decades worth of pesticides, arsenic, and industry chemicals” from the dried lake bed.

Indigenous peoples managed these lands and water since time immemorial, their more than ten thousand year old footprints still embedded in the Salt Flat desert. Within less than two centuries Mormons and their fellow colonists and capitalists have self-fulfilled Latter-day extinction-level prophecies. And these destroyers of Indigenous life and land continue to be in denial about our past, present, and future in these lands.¹¹⁶

Even under the heavy weight of colonization, Indigenous Peoples continue to be at the front of land, water, and air health defense, and are heavily targeted for their protection of the earth's life-support systems.¹¹⁷ It's time we are responsible for our inheritances—the land, the secrets, the genocides, the ignorance, and our intentional amnesia.

Reckoning with and being responsible to our generational genocidal past and the extinction-level present and future we've collectively created is not only a path toward an ecologically sustainable and socially just future, but also a way to address our own ancestral trauma. As Martin Luther King Jr., and so many leaders of justice throughout the U.S. have pointed out we as a nation are haunted by our genocidal foundation which we predominantly ignore, white-wash, or outright deny.¹¹⁸ Being responsible to our history is a way for us to honor our ancestors and heal our collective and personal generational traumas.

¹¹⁶ [“Latter-day Saints among the least worried about climate change. Does that really match their religion?” by Tamarra Kemsley, *The Salt Lake Tribune*](#)

¹¹⁷ [“Latin American environmentalists most at risk of murder, report finds.” by Diego Oré, *Reuters*](#)

¹¹⁸ [“From slavery to socialism, new legislation restricts what teachers can discuss,” by Terry Gross, *Fresh Air*](#)

