

# *The Deseret Telegraph—A Church-owned Public Utility*

## I

THE building of the Deseret Telegraph line by the Mormons in early Utah is one of the most interesting chapters in the history of the intermountain West. It is the only known instance in which a major regional telegraph line was constructed and operated by a church. It is also the only case in which a major line was, from the beginning, a completely public enterprise. It is a remarkable example of the agency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) in promoting the economic welfare and cultural unity of its membership in the last third of the nineteenth century.

In 1860, on the eve of hostilities between the North and the South, Congress passed the Pacific Telegraph Act, which granted a ten-year subsidy of \$40,000 per annum to the company completing a telegraph line from the western boundary of the Missouri River to San Francisco, California.<sup>1</sup> Land and rights of way were also included in the subsidy. Hiram Sibley, president of the Western Union Telegraph Company, played the principal role in the organization of two companies to construct the transcontinental telegraph line. These were the Overland Telegraph Company, which ran a line east from Carson City, Nevada (to which point a line had been already built), and the Pacific Telegraph Company, which ran a line west from Omaha (the westernmost point of the Western Union line). Because of the lack of timber for poles along this route, and the necessity of securing transportation for materials and sustenance for workmen, it was essential that the builders of the transcontinental line secure the approval and assistance of the Latter-day Saints Church whose members occupied the strategic (in this instance) Great Basin area. Edward Creighton, contractor for Western Union, was dispatched to Salt Lake City late in 1860 for this purpose. He found Brigham Young and other leading Mormon officials anxious to assist the project in every way.<sup>2</sup> Mormon backing thus

<sup>1</sup> Robert Luther Thompson, *Wiring a Continent: The History of the Telegraph Industry in the United States, 1832-1866* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), pp. 349 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Love Neff, *History of Utah, 1847 to 1869*, edited and annotated by Leland Hargrave Creer (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News Press, 1940), p. 730.

assured, construction got under way in the summer of 1861. Mormons furnished poles for almost a thousand miles of the line as well as a large share of the labor, food, feed, and transportation. The Mormon Church, itself, received \$11,000 in gold for its assistance in the project.<sup>3</sup> This sum apparently came to the Church by virtue of its president (Brigham Young) serving as contractor in supplying materials and labor. The line from Omaha to Salt Lake City was completed October 17, 1861; that from Salt Lake City to Carson City was completed a week later.

The completion of the transcontinental line raised the question of the possibility of a Territorial line which would connect the hundred or more isolated Mormon settlements in the Great Basin with Salt Lake City and the "outside" world. The experience gained by the Mormon "Saints" in the construction of the transcontinental line would certainly facilitate the erection of a "local" line. The "Journal History" of the Mormon Church—a day-by-day account of the activities of the Church leaders and members—records that on the very day communication was opened between Salt Lake City and the East (October 17, 1861) the Church president, Brigham Young, was planning the construction of a North-South Territorial line connecting all Mormon settlements. It is stated that he planned to construct the line "shortly" from Salt Lake City in the north to Santa Clara in the south of Utah. On the basis of experience with the transcontinental line he estimated a probable cost of \$175 per mile.<sup>4</sup>

A few months later Brigham Young expressed his wish publicly in the Salt Lake City Tabernacle as follows: "I want a company raised to stretch a wire through our settlements in this Territory, that information may be communicated to all parts with lightning speed."<sup>5</sup> Telegraphic instruments were sent for soon afterward and arrived in

<sup>3</sup> MS., Latter-day Saints "Journal History" (hereafter referred to as JH), December 15, 1861. This rich mine of historical information consists of several hundred large loose-leaf books of documents, arranged chronologically, from 1830 to the present. It is available in the Historian's Office of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 47 E. South Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>4</sup> JH, October 17, 1861. Costs on the transcontinental line had averaged \$135 per mile for the eastern division.—Thompson, *Wiring a Continent*, p. 370. It is interesting to note that \$1,000,000 in stock was sold for construction of the eastern division of the transcontinental line, and this stock was sold to Western Union for \$2,000,000 in Western Union stock, which was later tripled. Thus, "an original expenditure of \$147,000 (and part of that not honestly spent) came to represent \$6,000,000 of Western Union Telegraph stock"—*Ibid.*, p. 370. This does not count the \$460,000 received from government subsidies.

<sup>5</sup> JH, February 9, 1862.

September of 1862.<sup>6</sup> A telegraphy school was immediately established in which some fifty young men of Salt Lake City received instruction.<sup>7</sup> A few months later a "Church" line was run from the Council House to Brigham Young's office for the use of this school.<sup>8</sup> Construction of the Territorial line was not commenced until 1866, however, five years after plans for it were first discussed. Probably the War Between the States made it impossible for the Mormons to get wire, batteries, insulators, sending and receiving sets, and other equipment.

It may seem unusual that Mormon leaders should have taken action so quickly to make use of the advantages promised by the telegraph. Religious societies commonly looked with suspicion on new ideas and inventions which might lead to internal cultural change; but there seems to have been no fear on the part of Mormon leaders that introduction of the telegraph would weaken the faith or destroy the cultural unity of their followers. Here was a group of religious enthusiasts, generally regarded as "backward," with peculiar beliefs and practices; yet they eagerly accepted and immediately appropriated the art of telegraphy for use in building their commonwealth.

The campaign which finally resulted in the commencement of a Territorial line was launched by an editorial in the *Deseret News*, the Church newspaper, March 15, 1865. Wrote Editor George Q. Cannon:

. . . the query may arise why there is but one wire in Utah and that one stretched across instead of through its main chain of settlements. . . .  
But now the time seems opportune for increasing telegraphic facilities within our borders.

The *News* editorial then urged the completion this season "of a telegraphic line from Logan, Cache County, to St. George, Washington County, connecting the principal settlements on the route between those points, and with a line diverging up the Spanish Fork to the settlements in Sanpete County.

The average cost of this line per mile is estimated at about \$200 in coin. Labor alone can furnish and put up the poles, but it will require money to

<sup>6</sup> JH, September 22, 1862.

<sup>7</sup> JH, January 2, 1863.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* The Council House was used primarily for religious and political meetings, but in this and other instances served as a "seat of learning."

procure the wire and insulators. That the extent of interest in this matter may be known and the ability for carrying it out, all the Bishops on the lines designated, and such others as may wish to join, are requested to learn the feelings of the brethren in their several wards, and hold meetings, and if favorable, forward their reports, as speedily as possible, to President Brigham Young's Office, of how many poles each ward will put up and how much money it will furnish, that, if the reports cover a sufficient amount, steps may forthwith be taken here to put the work in motion and forward orders for importing the wire, &c., that the whole or a goodly part of the line may be put in operation this season.

The two hundred dollars estimated does not include offices, instruments and operators, as they can be provided as the wants of each settlement may require. . . .

If the reports are favorable, then instructions will be given in regard to forming companies, shares, payments, prosecution of the work, the expense of the wire, insulators, and other necessary details.<sup>9</sup>

The replies to this editorial reaching Brigham Young were enthusiastic. During the next few weeks Church officials worked out plans for the early completion of the project.

At the conclusion of the April General Conference of the Church in 1865 a convention of leading men was held for regulating the prices of farm produce. Brigham Young then reported as follows: "After the business was finished, the Convention was adjourned, and was resolved into a Special Conference . . . [for] . . . the transaction of some business connected with the erection of a line of telegraph from St. Charles in the North, to St. George in the South. A motion was made to sustain this measure, and judging by the reports which have already reached here from some of the wards, there will be but little difficulty in carrying it out. . . ." <sup>10</sup>

During succeeding months meetings were held in the various settlements to solicit contributions for the erection of the line. Those were held in April in St. George, according to James G. Bleak, historian of the Southern Utah Mission, who records that Utah's sparsely settled "Dixie" subscribed \$683.33 in cash and \$890 in labor, or a total of \$1,573.33. Bleak indicates that most of the "cash" contributions were promises of poles rather than money.<sup>11</sup>

President Young and other "General Authorities" of the Church

<sup>9</sup> *Deseret News*, March 15, 1865.

<sup>10</sup> Letter of Brigham Young to Daniel H. Wells and Brigham Young, Jr., JH, April 10, 1865.

<sup>11</sup> JH, April 17, 1865.

visited the various settlements in northern Utah in May, and during their visits gave major attention to "the construction of a telegraph line from the Northern to the Southern settlements of our Territory. . . ." <sup>12</sup> The president's message on this and other occasions was probably similar to that he gave at one Cache Valley town in August 1865. He said:

I wish to present before the people the subject of a telegraph wire through our settlements. It is a subject which is worthy of our attention, and an enterprise which, when completed, will be of immense benefit in many ways, to our country. This work we can do almost entirely within ourselves. We can get the poles from the mountains and plant them; the wires and insulators we shall be under the necessity of importing from abroad, and for which we must pay money. The freighting, we can do ourselves. <sup>13</sup>

After the settlements had been canvassed and the fall harvests were in, the Saints were ready to complete plans for the speedy erection of the line. Brigham Young and the First Presidency of the Church <sup>14</sup> issued a "Circular Letter of Instruction," dated November 9, 1865, "To the Bishops and Presiding Elders of the various wards and settlements of Utah Territory, from St. Charles, Richland County [later changed to Rich County], in the north, to St. George, Washington County, in the south. . . ." This document is of considerable interest partly because it helps to explain the Church's policy in regard to the construction of the line and the furnishing of means thereto, and partly for the information it supplies with reference to the working of co-operative enterprises in Mormondom.

Brethren—The proper time has arrived for us to take the necessary steps to build the telegraph line to run north and south through the Territory, according to the plan which has been proposed. The necessity for the speedy construction of this work is pressing itself upon our attention, and scarcely a week passes that we do not feel the want of such a line. Occurrences frequently happen in distant settlements, which require to be known immediately in the other parts of the Territory; and, in many instances, public and private interest suffer through

<sup>12</sup> Letter of Brigham Young to Daniel H. Wells and Brigham Young, Jr., dated May 18, 1865, in *Millennial Star*, XXVII (1865), 414.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Preston Nibley, *Brigham Young: The Man and His Work* (Independence, Missouri: Zion's Printing and Publishing Company, 1936), p. 406.

<sup>14</sup> The First Presidency consists of the Church president, who is "Prophet, Seer, and Revelator," and two "Counselors." It is the highest administrative authority in the Mormon Church. See G. H. Durham, "Administrative Organization of the Mormon Church," *Political Science Quarterly*, LVII (March 1942), 51-71.

not being able to transmit such news by any quicker channel than the ordinary mails. We are rapidly spreading abroad, and our settlements extend to a great distance on every hand. We now require to be united by bonds which will bring us into more speedy and close communication with one another; the center should be in position to communicate at any moment with the extremities, however remote; and the extremities be able, with ease and speed to make their wants and circumstances known to the center. Instead of depending altogether upon the tardy operations of the mails for the transmission of information, we should bring into requisition every improvement which our age affords, to facilitate our intercourse and to render our inter-communication more easy. These requirements the Telegraph will supply and it is well adapted to our position and the progress of the age in which we live.

This Fall and Winter will be a very suitable time to haul and set the poles along the entire line, and to set the wire; and we wish you to take the proper steps *immediately* in your several wards and settlements, to have this part of the labor efficiently and entirely accomplished, so that we may be able to stretch the wire as soon as it can be imported and put up next season. From settlement to settlement let the men of judgment select and mark the route for the line to run, so as to have it as straight as possible, and yet convenient to the road. The poles should be 22 feet long, eight inches at the butt, and five inches at the top; and to be durable, they should be set seventy yards apart, and be put four feet in the ground.

The collecting of the means needed for the purchase of wire has been deferred until the present time, through the representations of many of the Bishops to the effect that after harvest, the people would be in a better position to advance the money. The grain is now harvested, and the time as suggested as being the most convenient for collecting of this means has arrived. We wish each of you to take immediate measures throughout your various wards, to collect the necessary means to purchase your share of the wire, and it should all be paid in by the first of February, 1866, as by that time it will be needed to send east.

Wherever there is a Telegraphic Station established along the line there will be one or two operators needed, and every Settlement, that wishes to have such a Station, should select one or two of its most suitable young men and send them to this city this Winter, with sufficient means, to go to School to learn the art of Telegraphy. There will be a School kept here all the time for this purpose. And every Settlement which expects to have a Station should also make its calculations for purchasing an Instrument for operating with, and the acids and all the materials necessary for an Office.

The wire, insulators, etc., will probably weigh fifty-five tons, or upwards, and to bring these articles from the frontiers, teams will have to be sent down from each settlement this spring, with the teams which we send down for the poor [that is, poor Utah-bound emigrants].<sup>15</sup>

With this pronouncement the building of the Deseret Telegraph line was commenced. No further instructions except the setting of dead-

<sup>15</sup> *Deseret News*, November 9, 1865.

lines were issued; each settlement was expected to do its part; there was no further over-all supervision of the construction. The "instructions" were the orders that set in motion the independent activity of a hundred settlements from Idaho to Arizona. This self-reliant co-operativeness built many similar enterprises in Mormon country.

Wide publicity was given to the enterprise by the Church newspapers, the *Deseret News* and the *Deseret News Weekly*. Within a month of the publication of the "Circular" the *Weekly* reported: "The work is going on cheerily. Poles are being cut and got out, the line surveyed, the means collected, everything betokens its soon being another addition to 'Mormon' enterprise, energy and industry."<sup>16</sup>

One can sense an increase in the spirit of unity and brotherliness among the Mormon people as they were about to stretch the magic wire from settlement to settlement in their promised land. The letter of a prominent Ogden resident to a missionary abroad illustrates in a measure this feeling: "... on [your] return, you may expect to see the Telegraph in full operation throughout the Territory, in the hands of, and *under the direction of the Priesthood of God.*"<sup>17</sup> How different this feeling from that of settlers in other areas, western and southern, in which telegraph lines, railroads, and other utilities were under the control of eastern capitalists who appeared to have no interest in the enterprises save that of making money! In honor of the enterprise one town (Beaver) named the principal street "Telegraph Street."

In regard to the school of telegraphy mentioned in the November circular letter, the official "call" is found in a "card" signed by Brigham Young that appeared in the *Deseret News Weekly*, December 7, 1865, in which he requested bishops to see that their scholars were sent to Salt Lake City in time to commence school on the fifteenth of December. The telegraphy school was first held in Brigham Young's family schoolhouse which was located east of Temple Block near Eagle Gate in Salt Lake City. John C. Clowes, operator in the Salt Lake office of the Western Union Telegraph company, and a Mormon convert, was the instructor. The school contained some thirty pupils from throughout the Territory. These young men and women, most of them between twelve and eighteen years of age, were called to perform this "mission" in much the same manner that thousands of traveling Mormon elders have been "called" by their leaders to "go abroad and

<sup>16</sup> *Deseret News Weekly*, December 7, 1865.

<sup>17</sup> Letter of Chauncey W. West to Elder John Donnellon, JH, November 21, 1865, italics supplied.

preach the Gospel." They seem to have been maintained in Salt Lake City at their own (or their parents') expense.

Upon completion of their training the students were assigned to offices in the various settlements of the Territory. According to one of this group, they were instructed as follows: "The operators are to regard themselves as missionaries who spend their time without compensation."<sup>18</sup> Later, however, all operators appear to have received a token wage from the local tithing office, from city revenues, or from public subscription. For example, Estelle Parks, who operated a Sanpete County office in 1868, received, in addition to her board, fifty bushels of wheat "delivered to her father in Nephi" for six months' service.<sup>19</sup> The operator at Beaver was paid with the voluntary donations of the local Church congregation. One of the duties of the "block teachers"<sup>20</sup> was to collect these donations, which usually consisted of such items as a load of wood, a sack of potatoes, or a can of milk. When the Moroni office was established the people were told that "the wants of the Telegraph Operatress were to be supplied by the people."<sup>21</sup> At a Church meeting in June 1867 the congregation voted to pay the operator fifty dollars a month in produce or stock, valued at tithing-office prices.<sup>22</sup> The money was to be raised by assessments or "taxes" levied by the bishop and approved by the group.<sup>23</sup>

A large number of territorial, state, and Church leaders were among these early "telegraph missionaries"—among them, Anthon H. Lund, later a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, who operated the Mount Pleasant office after its opening, December 28, 1866.<sup>24</sup>

The poles for the "home telegraph line" were set and ready for the

<sup>18</sup> Daughters of Utah Pioneers, *Memories that Live: Utah County Centennial History* (Provo, Utah: Utah County Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1947), p. 354.

<sup>19</sup> JH, October 14, 1866.

<sup>20</sup> "Block teachers," now called "ward teachers," consisted of two men who were asked to visit each family in a "district" at least once a month.

<sup>21</sup> MS., "Moroni Historical Record," April 20, 1868, in the Latter-day Saints Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>22</sup> Tithing-office prices were the values, set by the bishop, at which produce and stock donations were credited on the tithing books of the Church. These values usually set the standard for private barter arrangements.

<sup>23</sup> MS., "Moroni Historical Record," June 16, 1867.

<sup>24</sup> Hilda Madsen Longsdorf, *Mount Pleasant 1859-1939* (Mount Pleasant, Utah: Mount Pleasant Pioneer Historical Association, 1939), p. 115. Another student operator was John Henry Smith, who later became a member of the governing Quorum of Twelve Apostles of the Mormon Church. He was the father of George Albert Smith who until his death, April 4, 1951, was the president of the Mormons.

wire by the fall of 1866. In the meantime 500 miles of wire, the necessary supply of insulators, chemicals, and so on, had been ordered and arrived by Captain Horton D. Haight's "Church train," October 14, 1866. The train consisted of sixty-five ox-drawn wagons. That this number of wagons was necessary for the telegraphic equipment can be gleaned from the fact that only four passengers and their families came with the train.<sup>25</sup> These teams and their drivers were volunteered by local settlements as part of their contribution toward the completion of the project. According to Tullidge, 320 pounds of wire were used per mile, which would have meant eighty tons of wire. The cost of the wire was thirty-five cents per pound, making a total of \$56,000 for the 500-mile line or an average of \$112 per mile.<sup>26</sup> President Young reported that the cash for the equipment was furnished by himself<sup>27</sup>—presumably by the Church, not by Brigham Young personally—and partially by the settlements. For example, in response to President Young's call for cash to buy wire, Cache Valley furnished \$2,000 and seven teams.<sup>28</sup>

By the first of December the line from Salt Lake City to Ogden was complete. It was "dedicated" by President Young with the following message, sent by Operator John C. Clowes as the first communication over the pioneer line:

To President Lorin Farr and Bishop Chauncey W. West, and the Saints in the northern country, who gave up freely when called upon: Greeting. In my heart I dedicate the line which is now completed and being completed, to the Lord God of Israel, whom we serve, for the building up of His Kingdom, praying that this and all other improvements may contribute to our benefit, and the glory of our God; until we can waft ourselves by the power of the Almighty from world to world to our fullest satisfaction.

Brigham Young.

The *Deseret News* issued an extra in honor of the occasion, headlining the issue with an editorial, "A New Era Inaugurated." "There is no people," wrote the editor, "to whom a telegraph brings so many and so great blessings as to the Latter-day Saints . . . it is a

<sup>25</sup> JH, October 14, 1866.

<sup>26</sup> E. W. Tullidge, *Life of Brigham Young*, supp. 67, quoted in H. H. Bancroft, *History of Utah 1540-1886* (San Francisco: The History Company, Publishers, 1889), p. 771, n. 53.

<sup>27</sup> Letter of Brigham Young to Brigham Young, Jr., and John W. Young, JH, August 11, 1866.

<sup>28</sup> W. C. Jenson, "History of Logan" (Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1927), p. 52.

means by which counsel, advice and instructions can be imparted to the people of the various settlements of the Territory.”<sup>29</sup>

The editorial mentions that crews of men were at work extending the wire north from Ogden to Logan and south from Salt Lake City to St. George, with a branch line running from Nephi to principal points in the Sanpete. Telegraphic communication between Logan and St. George was opened by January 15, 1867, and the remainder of the projected line was in operation within thirty days.

The establishment of offices in each settlement on the route of the line and the appointment of operators were placed in the hands of Brother John C. Clowes, who was granted leave from the Western Union Company to supervise the work. The offices were set up in almost every instance in the “tithing house” of the settlement.<sup>30</sup> Clowes’s report to Brigham Young of his work from November 28, 1866, to February 18, 1867, which is a model of brevity and completeness, concluded by commenting: “Not a man on this line ever worked a telegraph line before, the line was strange and put into operation in the middle of winter, it is about five hundred miles in length; taking all into consideration please permit me as an old operator to say that I think the working of the same almost a miracle.”<sup>31</sup>

The manner in which tasks and burdens were divided among the settlements and members illustrates the type of informal co-operative endeavor that characterized most Mormon enterprises. The First Presidency of the Church allocated a certain number of miles to each valley or county. The responsible Church official in each valley, usually an apostle, after consulting with bishops of the various wards and settlements in his jurisdiction, apportioned the work on the basis of the number of laborers. In some areas each settlement was given an allotment of miles. For example, the village of Springville in central Utah was assigned to build six miles of the line. In doing so, it furnished poles, labor, wire, and its prorata share of cash to buy instruments.<sup>32</sup> In other areas the whole length of the line in the valley was constructed by the valley as a whole, with each task being divided among the settlements. For example, when the line was extended from Gunnison to Monroe to tap the Sevier Valley settlements in 1872, the

<sup>29</sup> *Deseret News Extra*, December 1, 1866.

<sup>30</sup> The “tithing house” was usually a combination general store and warehouse. It was under the direction of the bishop of each local settlement. Tithe payers brought their donations “in kind” to this house.

<sup>31</sup> JH, February 18, 1867.

<sup>32</sup> Daughters of Utah Pioneers, *Memories that Live*, p. 354.

requisite number of poles was calculated and an allotment given each town. Salina furnished 90 poles; Monroe, 240; Glenwood, 225; and Richfield, 450.<sup>33</sup> Other burdens were similarly apportioned.

In almost every case, the labor of construction was donated. To the Latter-day Saint, building up the Kingdom of God in his mountain retreat was as important as was dying in grace to a medieval Christian.<sup>34</sup> The bishop of each ward or settlement usually "called" able-bodied men and boys on "missions" to complete the local assignment. These temporal missionaries were expected to serve without pay (except for tithing credit) just as the operators were expected to do. The ladies of each settlement contributed by providing meals to the work gangs. John Hayes, with his pioneer father, helped place the poles in the vicinity of Spanish Fork. He substantiates that the work was done voluntarily by men "called on missions," "as a service to Church and state."<sup>35</sup> In June 1866 the bishop at Smithfield in Cache County named forty-four men to assist in the erection of the line from Logan to St. George. At that time the line was not even scheduled to go through Smithfield; but Smithfield helped anyway. The work was divided so that some would get poles, some would haul them, others would help erect them. In 1867 considerable quantities of grain and butter were given by Smithfield Saints to help feed laborers on the line.<sup>36</sup>

Of course, as in all enterprises of this nature, there were slackers. The little settlement of Moroni raised its "quota" for the wire and other equipment freighted from the East; assigned each able-bodied male a specified number of poles to erect; and voted a special levy to pay men working some distance away. These assessments, on the whole, were cheerfully met, but two men refused to pay the tax, which for one amounted to only \$2.00. The question arose: Did Church leadership have a right to levy this tax? In a Church meeting the Moroni bishop "contended for the rights of the Priesthood to dictate to the people all kinds of duties to perform. The Lord spoke to Brigham, Brigham to the Bishops, and the Bishops to the people. It had been so with regard to putting up telegraph poles." The two delinquents

<sup>33</sup> Sevier County Centennial Committee, *Thru the Years: Sevier County Centennial History* (Richfield, Utah, 1947), p. 40.

<sup>34</sup> A striking parallel to the co-operative action and individual selflessness of Latter-day Saints in the construction and operation of such an enterprise as the telegraph line is furnished by medieval Christians in the building of Chartres Cathedral, as described by Henry Adams in *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (Washington, D.C., 1904).

<sup>35</sup> Daughters of Utah Pioneers, *Heart Throbs of the West*, (11 vols., Salt Lake City, 1936-1950), I, 186.

<sup>36</sup> City of Smithfield, *The History of Smithfield* (Smithfield, Utah, 1927), pp. 32-34.

remained adamant; they refused to "take counsel." Attempts to "reason" with the men were unsuccessful. Finally, the congregation sustained the bishop's decision to "cut them off" from the Church.<sup>37</sup>

The line was extended north from Logan to Franklin, Idaho, by December 18, 1869, and in 1871, on to Paris, Idaho—the northernmost point reached by the Deseret Telegraph line. In the Salt Lake area connection was made with Tooele and Grantsville. During Utah's mining boom of the early 1870's lines were stretched to all important mining districts; that is, from Salt Lake City to Alta and Bingham; from Echo to Coalville; from Payson to the Tintic district; from Beaver to the Star district and Frisco; from St. George to Silver Reef; and from St. George to Pioche, Bullionville, and other mining areas in southeastern Nevada. Lines were also built in the 1870's to establish contact with several outlying agricultural settlements: from Toquerville to Kanab and Rockville, Utah, and Windsor Castle, Arizona (the southernmost point of the line and the first telegraph line in Arizona); from Moroni to Gunnison and on up the Sevier to Monroe; and from Brigham City to Corinne. In some cases the line was also removed to newly constructed railway lines.<sup>38</sup> The 1871 report of Superintendent Musser stated that 600 miles of telegraph line were in operation at that time and that supplies had been ordered to extend the lines, within three months, 400 miles farther in different directions. Musser stated: "It is not generally known that Utah is the only Territory of the United States that has built and owns" so many miles of telegraph.<sup>39</sup> By 1880 there were 955 miles of lines of poles, 1,130 miles of wire, and 68 offices.<sup>40</sup> The whole system was connected with the outside world at Salt Lake City.

## II

Meanwhile, the Territorial Assembly incorporated the Deseret Telegraph Company,<sup>41</sup> January 18, 1867, listing as stockholders Brigham

<sup>37</sup> MS., "Moroni Historical Record," November 15, December 22, 1867.

<sup>38</sup> For example, the line from Ogden to Logan went by way of Wellsville canyon. "After the advent of the Utah Northern Railroad, the line was abandoned through Wellsville Canyon and was built along the railroad track into Logan."—Daughters of Utah Pioneers, *Communication of Early Utah*, compiled by Kate B. Carter (Salt Lake City, 1936), p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, June 28, 1871.

<sup>40</sup> Marcus E. Jones, *Utah* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1890), p. 849.

<sup>41</sup> In the *Deseret News*, January 23, 1867, the line is referred to as the "Deseret State Telegraph." The name "Deseret" came from the *Book of Mormon* and was interpreted to mean "honeybee." The provisional government set up by the Mormons in 1849 to govern their

Young, Edward Hunter, A. M. Musser, E. D. Woolley, A. H. Raleigh, and John Sharp, all of Salt Lake County; William Miller of Utah County; John W. Hess of Davis County; A. J. Moffatt of Sanpete County; and Robert Gardner of Washington County. All of these men appear to have been appointed by Church officials to serve as holders of shares in trust for various localities and auxiliaries of the Church. Upon the completion of the organization of the company, almost all shares reverted to the trustee-in-trust (or president) of the Church.<sup>42</sup> With a capitalization of \$500,000, 5,000 shares of stock were to be issued with par value of \$100 each. When each subscriber had paid 25 per cent of his subscription, or when \$125,000 had been paid in, the company was to organize.<sup>43</sup> The \$125,000 was probably regarded as the cash cost of the original line plus sufficient working capital to operate for the first year or two. The total cost of the initial line was approximately \$150 per mile or \$75,000 for 500 miles.<sup>44</sup>

From the time of the organization of the Deseret Telegraph Company in 1867 until its sale by the Church to Western Union in 1900 the president of the company was also the president of the Church. Brigham Young was succeeded as president, in succession, by John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Lorenzo Snow, all of whom were at the same time titular heads of Mormondom. The first superintendent of the Deseret Telegraph Company, A. Milton Musser, "Brigham's Travelling Bishop," had been connected with the general tithing office of the Church as a clerk for a term of years under President Young. In 1858 he was appointed traveling bishop of the Church. In this capacity he visited wards and settlements to supervise accounts, to collect tithings and donations, and in general to tend to Church business matters. He served as traveling bishop from 1858 to 1876, as

vast Western domain was called "State of Deseret." The beehive became a symbol of co-operative industry in Mormondom and the designation "Deseret" was attached to the title of a large number of Church economic enterprises.

<sup>42</sup> Of the 5,000 shares originally issued, only 268 shares were in private hands in 1887.—*Deseret News*, October 5, 1889. The number of shares in the hands of the Church was probably even greater before 1887.

<sup>43</sup> The initial meeting of the company was held February 20, 1867, after the completion of the line. Books were opened for the receipt of stock subscriptions on March 14, and the company was formally organized, March 21, 1867, with the following officers: Brigham Young, president; Daniel H. Wells, vice-president; William Clayton, secretary; George Q. Cannon, treasurer; Edward Hunter, George A. Smith, A. O. Smoot, A. H. Raleigh, John Sharp, Joseph A. Young, A. Milton Musser, Erastus Snow, and E. T. Benson, directors.—*Deseret News*, April 3, 1867.

<sup>44</sup> JH, December 1, 1896.

assistant trustee-in-trust of the Church from 1873 to 1876, and as superintendent of the Deseret Telegraph Company from 1867 to 1876. After his retirement from the Telegraph Company he "introduced the telephone into Salt Lake City and established several short circuits. . . ." <sup>45</sup> The connection between the Church and the Telegraph Company was particularly intimate during the period of Musser's superintendency. Musser was succeeded in this position by W. B. Dougall, Brigham Young's son-in-law, who had been connected with the company as an operator since its inception. Dougall served until the company went out of existence in 1900. The treasurer of the Deseret Telegraph Company was at first George Q. Cannon and later James Jack, both of whom were at the same time financial agents of the Church. All officers except the superintendent and his staff seem to have served without pay during the entire life of the company.

Since the Deseret Telegraph line was virtually completed before the company was incorporated, it may be safely assumed that the Deseret Telegraph Company was organized for the purpose of giving business direction to the operation of the line. Its construction was a function of the Church alone. This is rare in Utah history, for the usual procedure was to organize such a semipublic company for construction as well as for operation. This was true in the case of the "Church" railroad, woolen mills, road companies, and almost every other enterprise in which the Church was involved. <sup>46</sup>

The financial history of the Deseret Telegraph Company shows that the company was never intended to serve as a revenue producer or as a source of profit. In fact, the company operated in the red during many of its thirty-three years (1867-1900). George Q. Cannon reported that "the telegraph line was built by the people, out of funds contributed by them; but . . . that undertaking never paid expenses." <sup>47</sup> Before the coming of the transcontinental railroad and the subsequent mining boom, receipts were nominal. In 1868, for example, the gross receipts from tolls amounted to only \$8,462.23. By 1873, however, they

<sup>45</sup> Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: The Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901), I, 382.

<sup>46</sup> On Mormon co-operative enterprises see Gustive O. Larson, *Prelude to the Kingdom—Mormon Desert Conquest: A Chapter in American Cooperative Experience* (Francestown, New Hampshire: Marshall Jones Company, 1947); and Hamilton Gardner, "Cooperation Among the Mormons," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, XXXI (May 1917), 461-99.

<sup>47</sup> *Deseret News*, October 20, 1891.

had increased to \$75,620.62.<sup>48</sup> Competition from Western Union, exhaustion of mining deposits, and Mormon business stagnation provoked by the Edmunds Act caused receipts to drop to \$14,737.76 by 1885. In that year operating expenses were \$16,679.18, making an operating loss of \$1,941.37.<sup>49</sup> These figures remained relatively the same until the final disposal of the company in 1900.

The large increase in company revenues in 1873 can be attributed to the construction, in 1871, of a lucrative hundred-mile branch line from St. George to Pioche, Nevada, via Pine Valley, Hebron, Panacca, and Bullionville. In 1871 Pioche was running full blast, and eleven stamp mills were in operation in Bullionville.<sup>50</sup> Heavy commercial traffic was predicted when this branch was completed. Various "Dixie" settlements were given quotas of poles to get out and set. Tithing scrip<sup>51</sup> was given as payment for this work, indicating that the Church financed this branch out of tithing resources. Orson Huntsman wrote: "I put up seven miles of poles west of . . . Terry's ranch [on the Pioche line] for which I received tithing scrip \$275.00."<sup>52</sup> At this rate the one-hundred-mile line would have cost almost \$5,000 out of tithing funds for poles alone. But the investment was well worth while. For two years the Pioche office took in \$2,000 to \$3,000 per month.<sup>53</sup> The Pioche branch undoubtedly kept the line from financial failure during the panic of 1873. The Pioche office receipts for the year 1873 were \$33,478.83, almost half the total receipts of the whole Deseret system in that year.<sup>54</sup> Such profits induced Western Union to set up a rival line to Pioche.

Despite the profitability of the Pioche and other branch lines, the Deseret Telegraph Company was never a profit-making institution. At no time during its thirty-three-year existence did the company declare dividends. In all cases where losses were sustained, they seem to have been made up out of the tithing funds of the Church,<sup>55</sup> a

<sup>48</sup> Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1899), IV, 275.

<sup>49</sup> *Deseret News*, June 15, 1889.

<sup>50</sup> Juanita Brooks, *Dudley Leavitt: Pioneer to Southern Utah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1945), p. 69.

<sup>51</sup> Tithing scrip was a Church-printed currency which entitled the holder to the face value in stock or produce in the tithing house.

<sup>52</sup> Nels Anderson, *Desert Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 387n.

<sup>53</sup> S. A. Kenner, *Utah As It Is Today* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1904), p. 216.

<sup>54</sup> Whitney, *History of Utah*, IV, 275.

<sup>55</sup> JH, March 28, 1900.

practice justified by the carrying of Church business over the line free of charge. Abuse of this privilege was effectively prohibited by the requirement that Church business be certified by "Church business permits," signed by the president of the company (who was also the president of the Church).<sup>56</sup> A large share of the company's business at all times was "Church" business. This fact indicates the economic importance of the Church in early Utah.

The co-operative nature of the telegraph enterprise is borne out by the rate structure. Whereas rates of Western Union were based on a charge of so much per word per mile, the Deseret Company charged "community rates" except in the areas where "commercial" traffic was heavy. Nels Anderson reports that in 1879 a community could "receive 800 words of news daily at a rate ranging from \$8.00 to \$10.00 per month. . . ." <sup>57</sup> Traffic between Salt Lake City and Ogden, however, was handled on a commercial basis. For example, in 1870 the charge for that thirty-six miles was two cents per word <sup>58</sup>—a rate that compared favorably with Western Union rates at the time.<sup>59</sup> Rates from mining areas were on the same basis. Evidence seems to indicate that during the first few years when operators were "missionaries," serving partially or wholly without pay, and lines were maintained out of "labor tithing" by bishops, no charge was made for "local," "territorial," or Church intercommunication. The frequent charge made against Western Union, that throughout its history it charged such high rates that the use of the telegraph was limited, for all practical purposes, to commercial use, could not have been made against this "home line."<sup>60</sup> Personal and community social correspondence appears to have been common, and for many years went over the lines free of charge.

Although a failure from a strictly financial point of view, the Deseret Telegraph system was indispensable to the effective administration of the expanding temporal and spiritual affairs of the Mormon Church by the general offices of the Church in Salt Lake City.

<sup>56</sup> See "Book of Rules and Instructions" for 1896 on file in L.D.S. Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>57</sup> Anderson, *Desert Saints*, p. 365.

<sup>58</sup> *Deseret News*, November 8, 1870.

<sup>59</sup> That average Western Union rates were higher than average commercial rates on the Deseret line is evident from such sources as Gardiner G. Hubbard, "The Proposed Changes in the Telegraphic System," *The North American Review*, CXVII (July 1873), 91, 97.

<sup>60</sup> See H. H. Goldin, "Government Policy and the Domestic Telegraph Industry," *THE JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC HISTORY*, VII (May 1947), 57-58.

After the construction of the line it was possible for President Brigham Young to direct the affairs of the Church from St. George, and for that reason he spent almost all of the succeeding winters of his life in Utah's Dixie. The longer religious messages from St. George to Salt Lake City were sent after midnight when the wires were clear.<sup>61</sup> The Deseret Telegraph saved many lives during the latter half of the Black Hawk Indian War (1865-1868) when the movements of the Indians in the central and southern part of the Territory were relayed from settlement to settlement.<sup>62</sup> It is indeed probable that the outbreak of Indian hostilities was one of the factors which prompted Church officials to revive the project in 1865. George Q. Cannon, a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles of the Church, stated later that the Deseret Telegraph was necessary "in consequence of Indian troubles. . . . It was afterwards put to the purposes of an ordinary telegraph [that is, it was later used primarily for commercial purposes]."<sup>63</sup> The Black Hawk depredations made it necessary for the Church to erect in 1867, at a cost of \$25,000, Cove Creek Fort, 200 miles south of Salt Lake City, for use as a protection to the telegraph line.<sup>64</sup> The fort was situated in the middle of a sixty-mile stretch through the desert between Fillmore and Beaver. Cove Creek Fort, which served also as a convenient way place, supply station, and cattle ranch, is still preserved and is a popular tourist attraction.

In a similar way the line was of some value to the United States Army. The first news of General Custer's defeat by the Sioux on the Little Big Horn reached the world through the agency of the Deseret Telegraph. A horseman rode all the way from the Army command post at Fort Hall to Franklin, Idaho, in 1876, and the Mormon operator relayed the news of "Custer's Last Stand" to the Federal authorities and newsmen in the East.<sup>65</sup>

The Deseret Telegraph line is also said to have been used by Mormons to keep polygamists throughout the settlements informed on the movements of the Federal deputies during the antipolygamy raids in the eight years after the passage of the Edmunds Act of 1882. The operators, most of them even at this time teen-age Mormon boys and

<sup>61</sup> Daughters of Utah Pioneers, *Communication of Early Utah*, p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> Levi Edgar Young, *The Founding of Utah* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), p. 407.

<sup>63</sup> *Deseret News*, October 20, 1891.

<sup>64</sup> Letter of George A. Smith to J. S. Harris, Washington, D.C., JH, May 2, 1870.

<sup>65</sup> Marie Danielson, *The Trail Blazer* (Preston, Idaho: Daughters of Pioneers, 1930), p. 35.

girls, allegedly used code messages to warn nearby settlements that deputies were "on the loose."<sup>66</sup> This, of course, is a speculative rumor which cannot be positively confirmed or denied. The activity was regarded by some Federal officers as traitorous and is probably one reason why the United States marshal was anxious to take possession of the line under the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887 even though it was never a money-making proposition. It is of incidental interest that during this period of "the raid," when almost all leading Mormons were in jail or in hiding, the death of President John Taylor in July 1887 made necessary a special meeting of the stockholders to elect a new board and officers. Wilford Woodruff's journal records a dramatic secret meeting in Salt Lake City early in the morning, "before daylight," December 16, 1887, at which Brother Woodruff was elected president of the company. The bonds for the new directors were made out and signed by the men while in hiding, December 22, 1887.

### III

The final phase of the company's history is concerned with the confiscation of the property of the Deseret Telegraph by the United States Government in 1888, its return to the Church for six years, and its sale to Western Union in 1900.

The lengths to which the United States Government went in the last part of the nineteenth century to disband the Mormon Church and stamp out polygamy are not generally known. After repeated efforts to stop the practice of polygamy, Congress finally passed in February 1887 the Edmunds-Tucker Act, which, among other things, provided: (1) That the Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was dissolved. (2) That religious corporations in the Territories (obviously meaning Utah) were prohibited from holding properties in excess of \$50,000—churches, parsonages, and burial

<sup>66</sup> "In the late 1870's [that is, early 1880's, L.J.A.] when Silver Reef was at its peak, Federal Officers began coming into town on their way to St. George to arrest polygamists. Silver Reef was a non-Mormon settlement, and the officers usually stopped there, but the telegraph operator was a Mormon. The St. George telegraph office was in a furniture store, and the Silver Reef operator would warn the town by wiring for 'two chairs' when the officers appeared. St. George 'polyg hunts' were never very successful, and the officers usually left town to the tune of derisive songs."—Utah Works Project Administration, *Utah: A Guide to the State* (New York: Hastings House, 1945), p. 301. Also see Anderson, *Desert Saints*, p. 365; and the diary of Operator Joseph Bentley, now in the possession of Dr. Harold Bentley, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

grounds excepted. (3) That all such property in excess of \$50,000 held by the Church be escheated to the United States Government.

It was hoped, under this law, to destroy the Mormon Church as a temporal power and force abandonment of the practice of polygamy. Of course, the Deseret Telegraph Company was one of the properties of the Church that was involved in this confiscation.

Although the Edmunds-Tucker Act was passed February 22, 1887, it did not take effect until March 3, 1887. In an attempt to comply with the law without forfeiting such useful properties as the Deseret Telegraph lines, Church leaders transferred on or about March 1, 1887, all its holdings in the Deseret Telegraph Company and various other pieces of real estate and personal property to seventeen "stake" (or district) ecclesiastical associations, giving not more than \$50,000 to each one.<sup>67</sup> The Church owned, at the time, 4,732 shares of stock in the Telegraph Company, which, it will be remembered, had 5,000 shares outstanding. Private individuals—all Mormons—held 268 shares.<sup>68</sup> The 4,732 shares held by the Church were distributed among various stake corporations in northern Utah.<sup>69</sup>

The United States marshal, Frank H. Dyer, who was appointed receiver of the Church property by the Territorial Supreme Court, contended that this disposal of Church property after the Act was passed was illegal and demanded all Church property so disposed.<sup>70</sup> To accomplish his purpose he instituted a number of recovery suits in the district court. These suits were extremely harassing to Church officials at this time when they were fighting to preserve the Church from spoliation and its members from imprisonment. In an effort to concentrate all their energies on a single appeal to the United States Supreme Court, Mormon leaders agreed to give Dyer possession of all Church property for which suit had been instituted. On the tenth of July 1888, J. R. Winder of the presiding bishop's office of the Church, who had charge of this property, and Le Grand Young, Church attorney, signed a statement that they would turn over the 4,732 shares of Deseret Telegraph stock within thirty days, together with

<sup>67</sup> *Deseret News*, July 11, 1888.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, October 5, 1889.

<sup>69</sup> For example, 1,081 shares were transferred to the Church Association of Salt Lake Stake, and 300 shares were distributed to the Church Association of Cache Stake. *Deseret News*, February 29, 1888; "Cache Association Record Book," L.D.S. Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>70</sup> *Deseret News*, July 11, 1888.

all offices and appurtenances of the company. As the company had never yielded dividends the stock was listed at a nominal value of \$22,000.<sup>71</sup>

After the "Manifesto" of 1890 by which polygamy was disavowed by Wilford Woodruff, president of the Church, agitation began for the Federal Government to restore escheated properties to the Church. This was finally accomplished January 10, 1894, when the Territorial Supreme Court ordered that certain escheated personal property be returned to the presidency of the Mormon Church. In the returned property were the 4,732 shares of the Deseret Telegraph Company stock.<sup>72</sup>

The line was operated only six years after this restoration. In January 1900 the First Presidency of the Church issued \$1,000,000 in Church bonds, and some idea of the extent of Church indebtedness became a matter of public knowledge. At the same time the Rocky Mountain Telephone Company (bought out by Bell Telephone Company in 1911) was spreading its network throughout the intermountain area, and the Western Union Telegraph Company was attempting to improve its own competitive position in the area. Both companies made overtures to the Church in regard to purchasing the Deseret Telegraph system. George Y. Wallace, manager of the Rocky Mountain Telephone Company, met with the First Presidency, January 26 and 27, 1900; to negotiate the purchase of the Deseret Telegraph Company and its properties. His first propositions were to give the Church credit on the purchase of stipulated sums of stock in the Rocky Mountain Company. President Lorenzo Snow rejected these proposals with the statement that "the Church was not investing any means, but on the contrary was getting out of debt as fast as possible."<sup>73</sup> Upon consultation with his board, Mr. Wallace finally offered \$5,000 in Telephone Company stock with the request that the First Presidency dispose of another \$5,000 of Telephone stock in \$100 certificates among Church members.<sup>74</sup>

W. B. Dougall, who had been superintendent and manager of the Deseret Company since 1876, then established contact with Western

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* Dyer finally obtained possession of the disputed stock on October 6, 1888, according to a receipt on file in the Church Historian's Office. The delay was due to a special settlement which Church leaders had negotiated with Dyer.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, January 10, 1894.

<sup>73</sup> JH, January 27, 1900.

<sup>74</sup> JH, February 24, 1900.

Union representatives. A deal was concluded February 20, 1900, by which Western Union agreed to pay the Church \$10,000 in cash for the Deseret Telegraph Company and its properties.<sup>75</sup> For the benefit of the few minor shareholders the Church offered to purchase their 200 shares at \$2.00 a share—the prorata price paid by Western Union for the property.<sup>76</sup>

At the time of the sale the Deseret Telegraph Company was found to be owing the Church \$28,000. This sum represents the subsidy by the Church to the company over its lifetime to take care of annual operating losses. As part payment of this indebtedness, the company's safe and accounts receivable were turned over to the Church.<sup>77</sup> The Church seems to have made no effort to recover the sums listed in the company's accounts receivable. The line was finally turned over to Western Union on April 4, 1900.<sup>78</sup>

It will be remembered that the original line had cost at least \$75,000. The doubling of the mileage in succeeding years must have increased the outlay to at least \$150,000. The question then arises, why should a \$150,000 line be worth only \$10,000 in 1900? Considering the fact that the population had greatly increased and potential traffic greatly enlarged, the \$10,000 was a small sum indeed. The circumstances surrounding the selling of the property do not lead one to believe that \$10,000 was a "distress price." Indeed, the extremely low offer by the Rocky Mountain Telephone Company, and their hesitancy in offering anything for it, indicate that the \$10,000 offer by Western Union was based largely upon the good will and "going-concern-value" Western Union hoped to obtain in the area. Evidently the company possessed no franchise rights that could be sold. The physical property was undoubtedly obsolescent, with little salvage value. The realized earning power of the company was, of course, negligible, and the potential earning power was dependent upon extensive outlays for improvement of the property as well as upon the extent of Western Union competition, which was considerable, and growing stronger. Maintenance over the thirty-three-year period seems to have been sufficient to keep the line in operation but insufficient to improve it.

The negligible earnings of the company would seem to be a reflection on the wisdom of the original installation of the line. This leads to

<sup>75</sup> JH, February 20, 1900.

<sup>76</sup> JH, March 28, 1900.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> JH, April 4, 1900.

a consideration of the basic motives of the Church leaders. In terms of the usual capitalistic profit calculus, the enterprise would have been unwarranted. It was not without advantages, however, in terms of the social aims of the Church. The line facilitated the administration of Church and State; it increased the security of the outlying settlements from attacks of Indians and helped them to escape certain imprisonment by Federal authorities for a principle in which, at that time, they sincerely believed; it helped pioneers in scattered settlements to overcome the feeling of isolation, which must have overwhelmed them with loneliness before the line was built. In these and other ways it must have improved the *morale* of the settlers—a factor that increased the permanency of many otherwise doubtful colonization projects. The project unquestionably raised *esprit de corps* in the settlements by providing colonists with a modern convenience at a comparatively early date. Like the Moscow subway, it no doubt made them proud of themselves, their religion, and their “Zion,” knowing that, at that time, even New York City had nothing better.

Finally, and in general, it was a venture by an organized theocratic society to build up the social and economic organization of the region. The enterprise can be justified on the same grounds that justify government subsidies for rural free delivery and the construction of country roads. As with such investments, the Church-subsidized Deseret Telegraph, in terms of the money calculus, was uneconomic, or at least vastly overextended. Like them also, however, it made a definite contribution to welfare which provided sufficient justification for its existence. The enterprise is proof that Mormon leaders, long noted for their business acumen, thought primarily in terms of welfare.

The Deseret Telegraph Company is an illustration of Mormon “institutional inventiveness.” It is a remarkable example of the co-operation of individual, village, and church in the introduction and operation of a useful invention. The Deseret Telegraph line, at least in its early years, was something like the American public highway: it was built by the public (through a public agency) out of common funds and resources, and, being regarded as public property, was available for the use of the public upon the payment of nominal charge for upkeep. The analogy is not exact, of course, but the usual heavy tribute to private monopolists, so characteristic of public utilities between 1870 and 1900, was noticeably absent. Utah’s Mormons had none of the psychology of the exploited consumer and investor; they considered themselves as participants in the creation and operation of the

Deseret Telegraph Company. They accepted and approved the arrangement that gave ownership of their "home line" to the Church. The contributions of the Latter-day Saints toward the erection, operation, and maintenance of this line were, as most of them thought, unconstrained "payments for civilization."

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