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### **Beehive Archive**

Welcome to the Beehive Archive—your weekly bite-sized look at some of the most pivotal—and peculiar—events in Utah history. With all of the history and none of the dust, the Beehive Archive is a fun way to catch up on Utah’s past. Beehive Archive is a production of the Utah Humanities Council, provided to local papers as a weekly feature article focusing on Utah history topics drawn from our award-winning radio series, which can be heard each week on [KCPW](#) and [Utah Public Radio](#).

### **“This Is the Right Place”: Mormon Migration to Utah**

**The belief that there was no future for the LDS Church in the East motivated the Mormon exodus West, to the far side of the Rocky Mountains. But how did the Mormons know where they were going?**

The Mormon migration that began in 1847 has distinctly shaped Utah’s history. But how did LDS Church leaders choose this place as their ultimate destination?

As early as 1832, church founder Joseph Smith predicted that Mormons would settle in the Rocky Mountains. Conflicts with their neighbors had already forced them to relocate from New York to Ohio, to Missouri, and to Illinois. When Smith died in 1844, the Mormons faced yet another exit.

Brigham Young, who assumed leadership after Smith, aimed to move the church far away from its detractors. But where? Church leaders studied several potential sites – including Oregon, Texas, Vancouver Island, California – and focused on locations in the West where Mormons could govern themselves in isolation. They relied heavily on John Frémont’s 1843 Western expedition report, which included information about the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Another resource was Lansford Hastings’ 1845 Emigrants’ Guide to Oregon and California, which promoted a new route through that same valley.

As more information became available, Mormon leaders had to rethink their options. Oregon might be too far north – both Frémont and Hastings noted the trouble of planting above the 42nd parallel. And by 1846, Texas had been annexed by the United States and was embroiled in a war with Mexico. Although the valley of the Great Salt Lake was claimed by Mexico and inhabited by Indians, church leaders decided to establish a new settlement there and use it to stage further colonization.

Young led the migration West, and along the way continued to seek the latest maps and information from other travelers. Still, Mormon leaders remained uncertain about the ideal location for their community until Young entered the Salt Lake Valley in July 1847 and famously declared, “This is the right place.” The pronouncement echoed the prediction of Joseph Smith fifteen years earlier. Even so, it wasn’t until they vetted the site over winter that they finally decided to stay.

*Beehive Archive is a production of the Utah Humanities Council. Sources consulted in the creation of the Beehive Archive and past episodes may be found at [www.utahhumanities.org](http://www.utahhumanities.org) © Utah Humanities Council 2015.*

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