

American Janus: John Doyle Lee and His Complex West

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For many, the history of the American West is fairly uncomplicated, almost simple. If you have seen a Western film, then you understand “it” — the region, its people, its conflicts. Countless movies and television shows have trained generations of viewers to see the West’s history from a certain perspective — a perspective that is both limited and inaccurate. For a large number of these viewers, the American West is a place where self-reliance, rugged individualism, and pioneer know-how transformed a wilderness into civilization—a noble and glorious march of manifest destiny. And although the region was populated by a large cast of diverse characters, the good guys always wore white hats, and the bad guys, black hats or Indian headdresses. Problems were just as clear-cut and could be resolved mostly by a quick draw, a sure shot, or a well-timed punch. Hollywood and popular culture, in general, fed audiences a conqueror’s fantasy — a guilt-free conflict in which Euro-American civilization heroically triumphs over the savagery of Indian nations and the banditry of a corrupt and withering Mexican empire. Within this formula, the U.S. conquest of the West was inevitable and its people (i.e., white settlers) were worthy of claiming the prize represented by the region: control of its land, resources, and inhabitants.

But the West was not quite “won” in this fashion. The American West is a much more complicated and interesting subject matter — one that is as vast and diverse as its geography. The region’s history is full of stories of individuals, groups, and their various movements into, around, and out of the region. It’s an evolving epic tale of ongoing

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conflict, compromise, construction, and destruction.

One way to better understand the West and escape its cartoon-like caricature is to explore those subjects that have been either ignored or misrepresented by Hollywood and the formulaic Westerns of the small screen. John Doyle Lee, a nineteenth-century Mormon migrant, is one such individual who has mostly disappeared from the national consciousness but provides some valuable insight into the complexities of Western history. Relegated to a footnote in many textbooks, if mentioned at all, the story of John D. Lee and his involvement in the Mountain Meadows Massacre reveals some interesting aspects of the Western experience: the Mormons' impetus for western migration, the volatile relationship of the Church with the U.S. government, the problem of violence and vigilante "justice," and the complicated alliances forged between native tribes and Mormon settlers.

At the time of John D. Lee's conviction and execution in 1877, the Mountain Meadows Massacre captured newspaper headlines across the country. For more than 20 years, the perpetrators of the massacre had gone unpunished, and previous trials in Utah proved that justice there was neither blind nor held a balanced scale—rather the scales were weighted heavily in favor of the Mormon cause and its version of events. Eventually, increased pressure from the federal government, a growing disdain of Mormonism from around the nation, and irrefutable evidence caused Brigham Young, head of the Mormon Church, to offer up John D. Lee as a sacrificial lamb. Feeling abandoned and betrayed by his spiritual leader, Lee wrote a confession while in prison awaiting his execution. *Mormonism Unveiled or Life and Confession of John D. Lee*, published a few months after his death, presented a limited and skewed mea culpa; in it, he minimizes his own role in the killings and shows little remorse. Lee's intention for writing the confession was to dethrone Brigham Young, a man that Lee came to believe was a false prophet bringing ruin to the Mormon Church.

Lee's account of Mormonism as well as the reprinted court transcripts in the book stirred much controversy. Its publication revealed secret doctrines of the church from an insider's perspective, and it brought to light some of the heinous crimes committed by Mormon zealots over the years. Recent historians investigating the issues and events surrounding the massacre have found Lee's whistle-

blowing account highly suspect, for his is a book written with an obvious agenda and vendetta. However, there are several aspects of Lee's confession that are useful in comprehending the Mormon mindset of the time and in piecing together the events that led to the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

To understand John D. Lee, one must begin with Lee's religious fervor and his single-minded devotion to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or the Mormon Church. Born in Kaskaskia, Illinois, in 1812, and raised a Catholic, Lee struggled with his faith: "I was not a member of any church, and considered the religion of the day as merely the opinions of men who preached for hire and worldly gain. I believed in God and in Christ, but I did not see any denomination that taught the apostolic doctrines as set forth in the New Testament...I wanted to belong to the *true* Church or none."¹ In 1837, Lee converted to Mormonism after meeting a missionary and reading the *Book of Mormon*. His conversion changed everything. "I had a small fortune, a nice home, kind neighbors, and numerous friends, but nothing could shake the determination I then formed, to break up, sell out and leave Illinois and go to the Saints at Far West, Missouri," Lee recounted.² But Far West was no Canaan. Over the next few years, Lee and the Mormons were violently expelled from Missouri and eventually forced out of Nauvoo, Illinois, before heading west to Utah.

As an ever-expanding group dedicated to communal living as well as a powerful voting bloc, the Mormons sparked conflict and hatred among the "Gentiles" (non-believers) of Missouri and Illinois. Although the Mormons and Gentiles shared a common belief in the superiority and righteousness of Christianity, the Mormons differed from the Gentiles in their interpretation of the Bible and its application to everyday life. According to Lee:

Joseph Smith declared that he was called of God and given power and authority from heaven to do God's will; that he has received the keys of the holy priesthood from the apostles Peter, James, and John, and had been dedicated, set apart, and anointed as the Prophet, seer, and revelator, sent to open the dispensation of the fullness of time, according to the words of the apostles; that he was charged with the restoration of

the house of Israel, and to gather the Saints from the four corners of the earth to the land of promise, Zion, the Holy Land (Jackson County) [present-day Kansas City and Independence, Missouri], and setting up the kingdom of God preparatory to the second coming of Christ in the last days.³

The Gentiles did not share this high opinion of Smith's divine insight. The tension between the two groups, explains historian Wallace Stegner, stemmed from the Mormons' "closed society" practices, for they "had a tendency to attract outlaws looking for asylum, to breed fearful rumors, and to infuriate the Gentiles with their smug assumption that they alone held the keys of truth, they alone were the chosen of the Lord."⁴

Violence initially erupted in 1838 between a group of Mormons and inebriated Whig supporters, who were trying to keep the Mormons from voting for a Democratic candidate in a local election in Gallatin, Missouri. From that moment forward, common ground between Gentile and Mormon quickly receded, as county residents foresaw the Mormon faction growing in number and, therefore, power.

Conflict between the two groups soon became commonplace. After the assassination of Joseph Smith in 1844 by an angry mob of Gentiles, Brigham Young, who eventually assumed the Church's mantle of authority, issued the controversial "Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles," a call to all peoples that Armageddon had arrived and that Mormon believers must seek vengeance against Smith's murderers. The proclamation did little good for easing the tensions between the two groups; rather, it fanned the flames and intensified the violence. In historian Sally Denton's estimation, "the arrogance of the proclamation, the alienating practice of polygamy, the whisperings of vengeance, the beatings and murders of Gentiles, the influx of converts, and the increasingly caustic sermons all led to renewed conflict."⁵ By the winter of 1845–1846, the escalating violence between the Gentiles and Mormons impelled Brigham Young to make the difficult decision to leave Illinois, a place of relative prosperity for the Mormons, and go west.

While most westward migrants of this time period were departing for Oregon in search of improved land opportunities or later to

California in search of quick fortune, the Mormons' reasoning for movement was more in tune with those that drove the Pilgrims to abandon the Old World for the New. Religious persecution and the flight to a land of religious freedom is one of the mythic cornerstones of American tradition, specifically in the nation's history along the Eastern seaboard. Like Massachusetts or Virginia in the seventeenth century, Utah appeared a promised land for the Mormons of the nineteenth century. In the case of the Mormons, the chance to cut ties, to separate from the secular Christians in the Midwest, and to create a Mormon-inspired Utopia was a compelling pull for migration. As Lee indicated in his autobiography, relocating, while an inconvenience, was not something to despair because the "salvation for my never dying soul was of far more importance to me than all other earthly considerations."⁶ In February 1846, the first Mormon migrant caravans began heading west.

But popular culture has instead elevated the Euro-American emigrant seeking personal gain as the archetypal pioneer rather than the Mormon who was seeking sanctuary. The romantic figure of a stalwart Euro-American, with hearty family in tow, permeates American mythology even today. But in reality, according to Stegner,

[the Mormons] were the most systematic, organized, disciplined, and successful pioneers in our history; and their advantage over the random individualists who preceded them and paralleled them and followed them up the valley of the Platte came directly from their "un-American" social and religious organization.⁷

By December 1848, more than 6,000 Mormons had reached Utah's Great Basin, and the following year, another 4,000 migrants arrived.⁸ After John D. Lee migrated to Salt Lake City, Brigham Young ordered him, like many others, "to go out into the interior and aid in forming new settlements, and opening up the country."⁹ The church leaders and "these emigrants were convinced that they went not merely to a new country and a new life, but to a new Dispensation, to the literal Kingdom of God on earth."¹⁰ Like the American government and its desire for a continental empire, the Mormon Church also wished to

expand its network of communities — and thus its control — over as wide an area as possible. They wasted little time in making their “new Dispensation” flourish across the vast desert.

John D. Lee dutifully followed his instructions and became a pioneer/founder of several communities in southern Utah, such as Parowan, Cedar City, Harmony, and other settlements in present-day Iron and Washington Counties. Lee's life represents an interesting antithesis to the rugged individualists celebrated in American works of art, especially in the fiction of acclaimed Western writers Zane Grey and Bret Harte. While Lee may have shared the same fortitude that characterized Grey's ranchers and cowboys of the purple sage or the resilience and frontier acumen found in Harte's miners, gamblers, and horse thieves, Lee did not ultimately share their desire for personal gain or make decisions based on self-interest. His commitment to the Church and his belief in the Church's authority were absolute: “I would have suffered death rather than have disobeyed any command of his [Brigham Young's].”¹¹ Lee felt that “we, as members of the Church, had no right to question any act of our superiors; to do so wounded the Spirit of God, and lead to our own loss and confusion.”¹² Lee's and others' ironclad dedication to the Mormon Church and their belief in its infallibility provided not only the means for a rapid colonization of the territory, but also the means for the Mountain Meadows Massacre to occur.

The circumstances surrounding the Mountain Meadows Massacre highlight the volatile relationship between the Mormon Church and the U.S. government in the mid-nineteenth century. At the root of conflict was the issue of loyalty. Mormons did not see themselves as Americans, but pledged their allegiance to the Church and its hierarchical authority. In fact, many of the Mormon population, especially its leadership, wanted to separate themselves completely from the United States, forming the “dominion” of Deseret (comprised of Utah, Nevada, and parts of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Wyoming, and New Mexico).¹³ During the early years of the Mormon exodus to the West, church leaders forged an uneasy alliance with Washington officials, for the Mormons were playing on American fears that they would aid the British, who were then vying for control of the Oregon territory as well as California. In an effort to gain valuable

political capital with the U.S. government, which was then preparing for war, the Mormons supplied a battalion to serve with U.S. forces in the War with Mexico.¹⁴ In return, President Millard Fillmore appointed Brigham Young the territorial governor of Utah in 1850, which had been acquired by the United States after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

However, these years were in reality more a period of tentative appeasement, as both the Mormons and the U.S. government carefully tested each other's strengths and weaknesses in hopes of bettering their positions for control of the region. By 1857, numerous accounts of Mormon life had been published, and citizens across the nation were deeply offended by the religion's advocacy of polygamy and blood atonement. Blood atonement follows the same logic advocated by some modern-day followers of jihad: it is better to end an unbeliever's life than to let that person live without enlightenment. In his introduction to Lee's *Mormonism Unveiled*, William W. Bishop, Lee's final attorney and compiler of his confessional book, quotes a sermon by Brigham Young explaining the "compassion" behind blood atonement:

Now, when you hear my brethren telling about cutting people off from the earth [the Mormon euphemism for executing non-believers and apostates, or Mormons who have abandoned their faith], that you consider is strong doctrine; but it is to save them, not to destroy them. . . . Will you love your brothers and sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood? That is what Jesus Christ meant. He never told a man or woman to love their enemies in their wickedness. He never intended any such thing. I have known scores and hundreds of people for whom there would have been a chance in the last resurrection if their lives had been taken and their blood spilled upon the ground as a smoking incense to the Almighty, but who are now angels to the devil.¹⁵

With the revelations of such beliefs, the U.S. government perceived

an opportunity to flex its military muscles and provide an example to would-be rebels. Attempting to lead a nation quickly deteriorating over the issue of slavery, President James Buchanan took a page out of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and turned the country's attention to an enemy that both camps, abolitionists and slaveholders, could agree upon: the Mormons, for the "unpopular Mormons offered a target politically much safer than the rival armies waging bloody guerilla war in Kansas."¹⁶

With the knowledge that U.S. forces would be marching to Utah, Mormon leaders prepared their flocks for both fight and flight in the summer and fall of 1857. Many of the Mormon settlers remembered the bloodshed and destruction they had suffered in Missouri and Illinois. Still fresh in their minds were friends and relatives killed, homes burned, crops destroyed. This new conflict could be the final test of their faith. Brigham Young played on this theme and preached that "the godless American government's moving against them signaled the beginning of their Armageddon scenario."¹⁷ Mormon chronicler Juanita Brooks captured the excitement and emotion building in 1857:

Word now went out declaring that "Utah is about to be invaded by a hostile force," and a full muster was called to resist such invasion. People must not dispose of a kernel of grain to any Gentile, nor should they use grain to feed their own cattle. War with the United States of America could be a sudden, devastating affair or a long siege. Yet Brother Brigham had said that "with the help of God, they shall not come here," and every man was ready to support him.¹⁸

John D. Lee, a major in the Nauvoo Legion (the Mormon militia) and a member of the Sons of Dan (a highly secretive and militant order within the church used to assassinate, or "cut off," church enemies), readied himself for war. Like many religious fanatics, Lee did not discern a difference between soldier and citizen—a Gentile was a Gentile. He believed that "It has always been a well understood doctrine of the Church that it was right and praiseworthy to kill every person who spoke evil of the Prophet."¹⁹ And an opportunity to practice that bloody doctrine appeared in the Fancher/Baker party of Arkansas.

In the late summer of 1857, the California-bound Fancher/Baker party was making its way across Utah. It was a “wealthy train with good wagons and ox teams and horses; with a large herd of cattle; and with loads of household goods and necessities.”²⁰ Brigham Young’s mandate to not supply Gentile wagon trains created a great deal of suffering for this party. Overland travelers had depended on Mormon settlements for trading and purchasing provisions and refreshing supplies and livestock as they made their way to California. Historians differ somewhat on the conduct of the Fancher/Baker party in the face of this adversity. According to Juanita Brooks, there was a “rough and ready set of fellows who called themselves the ‘Missouri Wildcats’” traveling with the Fanchers and Bakers.²¹ Brooks noted that “when people would not sell provisions, the emigrants would sometimes use their long whips to pop off the heads of chickens in the streets; they would call their oxen ‘Brigham’ or ‘Heber’ or ‘Joe Smith’ and berate and curse them through the streets, just to annoy the people.”²² Historian Sally Denton disputes this view of the rowdy party; she writes that “the slander [against the Fancher/Baker party] was carefully crafted, well placed, and oft-repeated, the claims exaggerated with each retelling.”²³ No matter whether the Fancher/Baker party was rude, courteous, or somewhere in between, frustration and antagonism obviously existed, which were exacerbated by the embargo placed upon the travelers. In this tense atmosphere, neither group endeared themselves to the other.

What occurred next became known as the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Approximately 140 men, women, and children were murdered under the direction of a Mormon militia, and 17 “innocents” (children under the age of 8) were distributed among Mormon families in southern Utah. John D. Lee was inextricably linked to the event. In his confession, Lee revealed the Mormon motivation and rationalization behind this brand of collective violence. Lee quotes John Higbee, the major of the Iron Militia (the Mormon militia in that county), who offered this explanation for the attack:

Why, brethren, there is not a drop of innocent blood in that entire camp of Gentile outlaws; they are a set of cutthroats, robbers, and assassins; they are a part of the people who drove

the Saints from Missouri, and who aided to shed the blood of our Prophet Joseph and Hyrum, and it is our orders from all in authority, to get the emigrants from their stronghold, and help the Indians kill them.²⁴

According to Lee, the emigrants discovered the Mormons' assistance in the initial Indian attack on the party, so Higbee instructed his men that "We must kill them all" or "the emigrants will report these facts in California if we let them go."²⁵ After five days of fighting, Lee came to the encircled Fancher/Baker wagon train under a flag of truce. He then convinced the party to give up their weapons, guaranteeing that the Mormons would escort them to safety from the Indians. With their ammunition running low and in desperate need of food and water, the Fancher/Baker party accepted Lee's promise of protection. The party was then divided into two groups: one made up of the men and another of the women and children. Lee remembers Major Higbee giving the order, "Do your duty," and "at this the troops were to shoot down the men; the Indians were to kill all of the women and larger children, and the drivers of the wagons and I were to kill the wounded and sick men that were in the wagons."²⁶ Up until his death, Lee contended that he did his best to stop the killing. But, as Mormon historian Ronald Parker points out, "Lee was a man of action, but far too certain of himself. He deceived others but first deceived himself."²⁷ Perhaps Lee could deceive himself that he had done everything in his power to save the emigrants, but he also confesses his attempt to cover up the crime:

After the dead were searched . . . the brethren were called up, and Higbee and Klingensmith [Philip K. Smith, a.k.a. Klingensmith, was the bishop of Cedar City], as well as myself, made speeches and *ordered* the people to keep the matter a secret from the *entire* world. . . . We also took the most binding oaths to stand by each other, and to always insist that the massacre was committed by Indians alone.²⁸

The insistence by the Mormon participants of laying the blame on the Indians so soon after the atrocity begs the question of the massacre's

morality even within the Mormon concept of blood atonement. Many zealots of the Church, including Brigham Young, believed that blood atonement actually saved souls. Lee freely discusses the commonly held view of blood atonement in southern Utah: “The killing of Gentiles was considered a means of grace and a virtuous deed.”³⁰ So why in this culture of prevalent violence against apostates and Gentiles did church leaders now choose to shirk responsibility? Lee never suitably addressed this question in his confession, but he and his superiors probably understood the imaginations and prejudices of everyday Americans. For many race-conscious U.S. citizens, Indians represented savagery, a culture benighted and bedeviled, and a people capable of cold-blooded, senseless killing. The Mormons had an easy and plausible scapegoat—one that would allow the Mormon people to escape the ire of the American population and perhaps keep future Gentile travelers from crossing Utah.

The relationship between the Mormons and Utah’s Indian tribes is fairly representative of the tenuous and complicated relationships forged between white settlers and Indian tribes across the nation. Although both sides attempted to gain advantage over the other, whites ultimately succeeded in wresting control of trade and land, and a drama of exploitation unfolded in each Indian village and settlement in every corner of the West. The Mormons were no exception to this trend. Historian Will Bagley states that Brigham Young’s Indian policy “gave the Indians the choice of becoming enemies or dependent clients of the Mormons”³¹—and to become enemies of the Mormons or any white group meant extermination or removal. However, the Mormons did view the “Lamanites,” as they were called in the *Book of Mormon*, differently than did Gentile settlers. “In their struggle to establish the Kingdom of God,” Bagley writes, “the Mormons believed that the America’s Indian peoples, whom they called ‘Cousin Lemuel’ and the ‘stick of Joseph,’ would be their most powerful allies and fearsome weapons—the battle-ax of the Lord.”³² Thus, the Indians played a key role in the Mormon’s conception of Armageddon, especially as the End Days seemed to be fast approaching with the movement of the U.S. Army toward Utah in late 1857. This belief explains why the Mormons coordinated the Indian attacks on the Fancher/Baker party. But Armageddon was again avoided, or at least postponed. With the

U.S. Army nearing Utah in the early spring of 1858, Brigham Young reversed his militant posturing and accepted peace terms—“a compromise . . . [that] ended by becoming a good business proposition for the people it was supposed to discipline.”³³

But the Mountain Meadows Massacre, unlike the Mormons' other secessionist actions, would not be so easily forgotten or forgiven. Reminiscent of the guilt-ridden narrator in Edgar Allan Poe's “The Tell-Tale Heart,” Mormon participants in the massacre soon broke their solemn vows of silence and secrecy, and rumors of Mormon involvement traveled with the speed of a desert flashflood. Up until his death, John D. Lee continued to lay much of the blame with the Indians:

When I reached the camp I found the Indians in a frenzy of excitement. They threatened to kill me unless I agreed to lead them against the emigrants, and help them kill them. . . and unless they could kill all the “Mericans,” as they called them, they would declare war against the Mormons and kill every one in the settlements. I did as well as I could under the circumstances. I was the only white man there, with a wild and excited band of several hundred Indians. . . . I intended to put a stop to the carnage if I had the power, for I believed that the emigrants had been sufficiently punished for what they had done, and I felt then, and always have felt that such wholesale murdering was wrong.³⁴

But who is to blame for their “frenzy of excitement”? Earlier in his confession, Lee bears testimony to that role: “These Indians wanted me to go with them and command their forces. I told them that I could not go with them that evening, that I had orders from Haight, the *Big Captain*, to send other Indians on the warpath to help them kill the emigrants.”³⁵ One moment in his confession, Lee is a reluctant leader; the next, he is an instigator. Historian Sally Denton cites Judge John Cradlebaugh's early investigation of the massacre in 1859: “His interviews with local Paiutes and Mormon witnesses would confirm his investigative conclusions that church leaders under both ecclesiastical and military orders had conducted the entire operation.”³⁶

Indians were Lee's scapegoat, and Lee was the Mormon Church's. The only person formally punished for his role in the massacre, Lee was executed by a firing squad at Mountain Meadows on March 23, 1877.

Like his desert home, John Doyle Lee had many faces—contradictory faces that simultaneously ran the gamut from the serene to the demonic. As a devout Mormon, he was a builder and a destroyer, a gifted leader and an unquestioning follower, a loyal supporter of Brigham Young and his determined opponent, a martyr and a murderer. While the figure of Lee refutes the traditional American mythic qualities of self-reliance, nationalism, and democratic ideals, he reaffirms the notion of mobility and redefines the pioneer stereotype.³⁷ Many Western stories are often told in terms of black and white, right and wrong, but Lee's story reveals the diversity and complexity of the frontier experience and emphasizes the gray areas where good and evil coexisted—just as they did in much of the history of the West.

Notes

¹ John Doyle Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Fierra Blanca Publications, 2001), pp. 53–54.

² Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 55.

³ Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 80.

⁴ Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964), p. 5.

⁵ Sally Denton, *American Massacre: The Tragedy at Mountain Meadows, September 1857* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), p. 38.

⁶ Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 54.

⁷ Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion*, p. 6.

⁸ Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), pp. 22–23.

⁹ Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 223.

¹⁰ Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion*, p. 2.

¹¹ Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 223.

¹² Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 80.

¹³ Denton, *American Massacre*, p. 62.

¹⁴ Denton, *American Massacre*, pp. 48–49.

¹⁵ Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, pp. 16–17.

¹⁶ Donald Parks, "The Army of the Mormon War, 1857–1858," *Journal of America's Military Past* 29 (2002), pp. 74-89. p. 74.

¹⁷ Denton, *American Massacre*, p. 113.

¹⁸ Juanita Brooks, *John Doyle Lee: Zealot, Pioneer Builder, Scapegoat* (Utah State University Press, 1992), p. 201.

¹⁹ Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 290.

²⁰ Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, p. 208.

²¹ Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, p. 202.

²² Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, p. 203.

²³ Denton, *American Massacre*, p. 155.

²⁴ Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 239.

²⁵ Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 242.

²⁶ Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 243.

²⁷ Ronald W. Walker, "Part of Each One of Us," *Journal of Mormon History* 28 (2002), pp. 19-22. p. 22.

²⁸ Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 251.

²⁹ Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, p. 51.

³⁰ Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 278.

³¹ Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, p. 25.

³² Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, p. 26.

³³ Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion*, p. 275.

³⁴ Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 234.

³⁵ Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 233.

³⁶ Denton, *American Massacre*, p. 200.

³⁷ Rodman W. Paul and Michael P. Malone, "Tradition and Challenge in Western Historiography," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 16 (1985), pp. 27-53. p. 31.

Other articles where John Doyle Lee is discussed: Mountain Meadows Massacre: "some Mormon settlers led by John Doyle Lee. The attackers, promising safe conduct, persuaded the emigrants to lay down their arms. Then, as the band of 137 proceeded southward toward Cedar City, they were ambushed, and all except the young children were massacred. Details of the atrocity leaked out, but some Mormon settlers led by John Doyle Lee. The attackers, promising safe conduct, persuaded the emigrants to lay down their arms. Then, as the band of 137 proceeded southward toward Cedar City, they were ambushed, and all except the young children were massacred. Details of the atrocity leaked out, but Read More. John Doyle Lee (September 6, 1812 " March 23, 1877) was an American pioneer and prominent early member of the Latter Day Saint Movement in Utah. Lee was later convicted as a mass murderer for his complicity in the Mountain Meadows massacre, sentenced to death and was executed in 1877. John Doyle Lee was born on September 6, 1812, in Kaskaskia, Illinois Territory, and joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in 1838. He was a friend of Joseph Smith, founder of the Latter Day Saint John D. Lee is most often remembered as the only man executed for his role in the infamous 1857 massacre by Mormons of a California-bound emigrant train at Mountain Meadows in southern Utah. This classic biography examines the circumstances and events which brought Lee to that end. He was given an opportunity to travel to the east and speak about his experiences and make a fortune but refused and faced a sham trial. This man was guilty but so were many others. Lee was not some renegade Danite chieftain. Raised on the American frontier, he joined the Mormons and became a pillar of the southern Utah community -- a church leader, the federal government's Indian farmer, and an officer in the militia.