

wells in town, it leaves the inhabitants with the only recourse left—to haul the water needed for domestic use from the river.

But the fire! The night was cold and chilly. The crowd which gathered and watched the consuming flames as the timbers of the elevator gradually disappeared, got close to the fire to warm themselves, myself included. And when at length common sense suggested to some of us that we might just as well return to our lodging, as the fire might proceed just as fast without us, our bodies had already been thoroughly tested by intense heat on one side while the cold night air penetrated the other. The next morning I, for one, found myself a wiser if not a better man. I had indeed caught a genuine Colorado cold, which soon terminated in a regular Colorado la grippe, accompanied by a well-known Colorado cough, which baffles the skill of all Coloradans, wise and otherwise, until it has run its course.

With this terrific cold preying upon my system I have visited all the settlements of the Saints in the San Luis valley, preached in its different wards and branches and obtained the historical information that I was after. But the ordeal was a hard one. Traveling in the cold sometimes from twenty to forty miles a day, when I ought to have been in bed; and speaking to the people from one to two hours at night when I should perhaps not have opened my mouth at all, gave me an experience which I do not covet a second time. But by the prayers, faith and good nursing of my friends, and particularly through that strength which the Almighty gave me, I filled all my appointments and am now about to return home, satisfied with my labors.

The San Luis Stake of Zion consists of four Bishop's wards, namely, the Manassa ward, to which belong the branches of Los Cerritos, Mountain View and Fox Creek; Sanford ward with Eastdale branch attached; Richfield ward, including the branch of Morgan and Blanca, and the Beulah ward, recently organized in New Mexico. The numerical strength of the Stake, according to the last statistical report, is 501 families or 2,294 souls, of whom two are Patriarchs, fifty-eight Seventies, forty-nine High Priests, ninety-seven Elders, eighteen Priests, fifty-one Teachers, 102 Deacons, 1,168 members and 749 children under eight years of age. Alfred R. Smith, a son of the former Stake president, Silas S. Smith, presides over the Stake, and his counselors are Levi P. Helm and Thomas A. Crowther. With the exception of one, all the branches and wards composing the San Luis Stake of Zion are situated in the San Luis valley and principally in Conejos county. The San Luis valley is undoubtedly the largest valley in Colorado, as it extends north and south for about one hundred and fifty miles, the south end reaching far into New Mexico; its average width is nearly fifty miles. The north mountain range Singre de Christo form the eastern boundary of the valley, and the Conejos mountains on the west divide the waters which fall into the Gulf of Mexico from those which reach the Gulf of California through

the Colorado river. The Rio Grande del Norte enters the valley from the mountains on the west, and then changes its course to a southerly direction receiving a number of tributaries on its way, among which are the Conejos and San Antonio rivers from the west, and a number of smaller streams both from the east and west.

The San Luis valley puts one in mind of the plains beyond the Rocky Mountains east; for miles and miles the surface of the valley is level as a floor; a few hills and low mountain ranges, however, rise at different points in the valley, lending diversity to the landscape. This is particularly the case with two dome-shaped mountains which stand in the south end of the valley, one on either side of the Rio Grande del Norte. Looking south the one to the right is called the San Antonio and the one on the left the Ute mountain. These two mountains, which stand detached from all the surrounding mountain systems and ranges, are covered with immense growths of cedar and timber, which is utilized by the settlers for fuel and building material. Of course the more extensive mountain slopes east and west of the valley are likewise covered. The altitude of the San Luis valley varies from 7,500 to 7,800 feet above the level of the sea; in the spring of the year it is subject to hard and continuous winds, which at least to new settlers are a little annoying. In Conejos county, where most of the Saints are located, there are besides the Mormon settlements and the railway towns, quite a number of Mexican piazzas, such as Los Cerritos, Fuertecitos, San Rafael, Macetos, Los Pinos and others. The principal Mormon towns are Manassa, Sanford and Richfield; the more important railway towns are Alamosa, Antonito and La Jara. The Mexicans compose nearly half of the entire population of the county, and live in their rather odd-looking flat-roofed dwellings, the same as they did two hundred years ago; they are nearly all Catholics, and are still very superstitious. On penitence day many of them will subject themselves to almost barbarous torture, generally self-inflicted, and in a few instances they even select individuals to be crucified in imitation of the Savior—not a sham crucifixion either, but the actual sacrifice of life by that most agonizing ordeal.

The Manassa ward is the headquarters of the San Luis Stake of Zion. The town of Manassa is beautifully situated on a level tract of land; but immediately north of some low hills which stand between the townsite and the Conejos river; it is three miles due east from the railway where there is a switch but no station, ten miles northeast of Antonito, eight miles south southeast of La Jara, twenty-two miles south of Alamosa, the largest town in the valley, and 608 miles by nearest railway from Salt Lake City. Manassa was founded by Latter-day Saints in 1879, and is now a prosperous town. The new Stake house, not yet fully completed, a fine two-story brick schoolhouse, several stores and a large number of fine private residences draw the attention of the stranger as he enters the town, and on becoming acquainted with the

people, he finds himself enjoying that free and full-hearted hospitality which is so characteristic of the people in the Southern States; a majority of the Saints residing here hail from that part of our great country. There are 279 families of Latter-day Saints in the Manassa ward, or 1039 souls. John C. Dalton is the Bishop; he acts with Martin Christensen as his first and Joseph F. Thomas as his second counselor.

The Los Cerritos branch (rather disorganized at present) consists of a few families of Saints residing in the immediate vicinity of the Mexican town called Los Cerritos (the meaning of which is The Hills), situated on the Conejos river, three miles southeast of Manassa. It was at this place where the first Latter-day Saint emigrants first found temporary shelter in 1875, and until Manassa was founded the next year. For many years Brother L. M. Peterson, the probate judge of Conejos county, was the presiding Elder of the Los Cerritos branch.

The Mountain View branch consists of the Saints living in a scattered condition west of Manassa, across the railway track, and also those of our people living in and around the towns of Antonito and Conejos. The latter town is the county seat and is situated one mile northwest of Antonito. Meetings and Sunday schools are held in a small log house about five miles west of Manassa. Bro. Elihu K. Ball is the president of the branch.

The Fox Creek branch, which like Los Cerritos and Mountain View belong to the Manassa ward, consists of seventeen families of Saints, who reside on Fox creek and the Conejos river, up in the mountains west of the San Luis valley. The center of the branch, or the place where the people have erected a nice, respectable log meeting house, not far from the point where Fox creek puts into the Conejos river, is about twelve miles due west of Antonito. David Vance is the president of the branch; meetings and Sunday schools are held regularly.

The town of Sanford, thus named in honor of Silas Sanford Smith, the former president of the San Luis stake, has a most delightful location on a bench elevated several feet above the surrounding country. Like Manassa, this town obtains its supply of water for irrigation purposes from the Conejos river; but its fine artesian wells, of which nearly every family in town has one or more, add additional convenience to the place. Sanford was first founded in 1885 with the intention that it should absorb the previously located towns of Ephraim and Richfield, the sites of which were considered too low and in other respects less desirable. All the people from Ephraim moved into Sanford; hence that town is now defunct; but only a portion of the inhabitants of Richfield vacated their former homes in favor of the new location, thus that settlement still exists. Sanford has a number of fine residences, and a two-story brick school house; and the foundation for a new meeting house is laid. Soren C. Berthelson presides as Bishop of the Sanford ward; his counselors are Geo. W. Irwin and Wm. O. Crowther. The ward has a total membership (Eastdale not included) of 124 families or 687 souls.