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TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

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SAN LUIS STAKE, COLORADO.

The Only One in the Centennial State, but There is Room For More.

Correspondence DESERET NEWS.

ZENITH, near Mount Elbert, County, Lake county, Colorado, Dec. 13, 1893.—After finishing my labors in the San Juan stake of Zion, I took train at Durango, La Plata county, Colo., and traveled 111 miles through a mountainous country and in an easterly direction to Alamosa, Costilla county, Colo., where I put up for the night with one of our brethren from the Southern States. About two o'clock in the night we were awakened from our peaceful slumbers by some one calling at the top of his voice from the street, "Mr. Dempsey, the town is on fire!" Of course all hands got up, including the historian, for who could lie idle in such a furious roasting that it was not the very house in which we slept that was ablaze? Our fears in this regard, however, was soon dispelled, as it was ascertained that the fire was confined to the so-called "Opera House," in which a large quantity of corn, ready for market, was stored away. This building was about a quarter of a mile away from our lodging. When we got over the whole incident, a wooden structure, was burning most beautifully, illuminating the surrounding country for miles around. Not of the large crowd which had gathered around dispute in the least I saw with the devouring element so in the right of way. Not a hand was lifted nor a bucket of water thrown to impede the fire in its progress; in fact I never saw a more helpless crowd of men around a fire to all my life than the one I saw that night in Alamosa. The fact was that there wasn't a drop of water in town except such as had been hauled thither in barrels from the Conejos river, several miles distant.

This country being a cold one, all water thrown which are used in the summer for irrigation purposes freeze up in the winter, and there being no wells in town, it leaves the inhabitants with the only resource 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 did watchful 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 roasted by to leave half an hour ahead of us, while the rest of us parcelled the other two hours morning. I, for one, found myself a wiser if not a better man. I has never caught a sunstroke in Colorado, which was intimated to a resident of California in jest, accompanied by a well-known Colorado cough, which is like the skill of all Coloradoans, who are otherwise, until it has run its course.

With the terrible cut prying mercury system I have spoken of in the settlements of the Saints in the San Luis valley, prominent in its different parts and counties and contained the following information that I was allowed the closest was a hard one. Traveling in the open conveyance 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 an night when I should perhaps and have opened my mouth at all, gave me an experience which I do not novel a second time. But by the prayers and good nature of my friends, and particularly through that strength which the Almighty gave me, I filled all my appointments and the one I would in health home, satisfied with my labors.

The San Luis Stake of Zion consists of four Bishop's wards, namely, the Manassa ward, in which is located the mansion of Lee Cottles, Manassa View and Fox Creek Seminary ward, the Eastside branch attached; Blanford ward, including the Lake City and Morgan and Russia, and the Welsh ward, recently organized in New Mexico. The numerical strength of the Stake, according to the last statistical report, is 1,700 souls, of whom two are Patriarchs, fifty-eight Seventies, forty-nine High Priests, twenty-seven Elders, eighteen Priests, fifty-one Teachers, 192 Deacons, 1,130 members and 240 children under eight years of age. Alfred B. Smith, a son of the former Stake president, Elias S. Smith, presides over the Stake, and his counselors are Levi P. Heim and Thomas A. Crowther. With the exception of one, all the bishoprics and wards comprising 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 or eastern range Sangre de Cristo, runs the eastern boundary of the valley, and the Sangre de Cristo range of the west, while the water which falls into the form of Rivers from these ranges unite the most of Conejos through the Conejos river. The Rio Grande del Norte skirts the valley from the southeast on the west, and this river receives its waters 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 sister beyond the Rocky Mountains each 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, adding diversity to the landscape. This is particularly the case with the more elevated mountains which start to the northwest of the valley, and are called one of the Rio Grande del Norte. Looking from the Stake, the 14,000 feet peak in Pike's Peak, which is called Pike's Peak, Antonio and the one on the left the Cochetopa. These two mountains, which stand detached from all the surrounding mountain ranges and ranges, are covered with immense strata of snow and timber, which is utilized by the settlers for fuel and building material. On side the more elevated mountain ranges east and west of the valley are filled in colored. The altitude of the San Luis valley varies from 7,500 to 8,000 feet above the level of the sea, so the spring of the year is not just to start into a condition which, which is not to be seen either in a Rocky mountain. In Conejos county, where most of the Saints live, there are hardly any blizzards. The Mexican population and the railway hands, quite a number of Mexican peasants, such as Los Cottles, Fortunatos, Cruz Rubel, Martin, Los Pinos and others. The principal Mormon towns are Manassa, Sanford and Romanzo, the latter the terminus of the railway, which is located in Conejos county. Romanzo is a small log house about five miles west of Manassa. Rio Salto R. Hall is the president of the branch.

The Fox Creek branch, which the L. D. S. Church and Mormon View branch, located in the Manassa ward, consists of seventeen families of Saints, who reside on Fox creek and the Conejos river, up in the mountains north of the San Luis valley. The center of the branch, or the place where the people have erected a temporary meeting house, is far from the point where Fox creek pale into the Conejos river, is about twelve miles due west of Antonio. David Vance is the president of the branch; meetings are held every Sabbath and Sunday regularly.

The town of Sanford, thus named in honor of Solon Sanford, Stake president, is a most delightfully situated town, the elevated several feet above the surrounding country. Like Manassa, this town obtains its supply of water for irrigation purposes from the Conejos river, but the Sanford valley, which nearly every family in town has one or more, and additional convenience to the river. Sanford was first founded in 1881 with the intention that it should supply the previously located town of Ephraim and Richfield, the sites of which were considered too low and in other regards not desirable. At the people from Ephraim moved into Sanford, some that town is now closed, and only a portion of the inhabitants of Richfield remain there. Some homes in favor of the new location, from that settlement and vicinity. Sanford has a museum of the curiosities, and a large number of the pioneers residing in Utah, which attract visitors, and are the foundation for a new meeting house is lost. Noah C. Hermanson presides as Bishop of the Sanford ward; his counselors are Oscar W. Irwin and Wm. O. Crowther. The ward has a small membership (there are not thousand) of 124 souls of 24 souls.

The Fairview branch, belonging to the Blanford ward, consists of a few families of Saints who are locating a settlement on Cottle creek, in Costilla county, Colo., about 35 miles west of Sanford and across the Rio Grande del Norte. The township of Blanford is about one and a half miles north of the boundary line between Colorado and New Mexico and about four miles northeast of the foot of the mountain. The prosperity of the little settlement depends mainly upon the success of a reservoir under the irrigation laws now being engaged in constructing during the last few years. There is only one well in the whole village, the property of Elder Clarence Jensen, and on this all the people and domestic animals rely for their supply of water. Horses at every turn of the day the villagers are seen with buckets in hand winding their way to and from the well and painful well which so far has not failed in furnishing the requisite quantity of water for man and beast. The buildings, however, are not always literally supplied. Hence all day long horses and mules are lolling around the well anxiously watching their chances for a drink, which only can be entered when some kind hearted neighbor throws more water down the well. The Saints have erected a temporary meeting house, which, when I state that the well is so hot deep, it will readily be seen that the hoisting of water to the surface for so many living beings is no light task. Thirteen families, or seventy souls, constitute the Fairview branch, Jesse Jenkins is the branch president, and Simeon A. Dunn is the presiding Elder.

The Blanford ward, consisting of 41 families, or 205 souls, is presided over by Bishop Ephraim Crosby; his counselors are William F. G. Hetzman and Peter N. Chapman. The village of Blanford is situated three-quarters of a mile east of Los Jara, a railway station. From 1882 to 1888 it ranked as a ward; from that to 1891, owing to the removal of a large proportion of its inhabitants to Sanford, it was reduced to a branch of the Sanford ward; but since 1891 it has again had a full ward organization of its own. The place possesses nearly the same natural advantages as Sanford and Manassa, and its numerous artesian wells afford the people excellent water for culinary purposes.

The Morgan branch consists of seventeen families of Saints, who live in a scattered condition on their respective claims on the of land in a flat and very extensive country lying southwest of Blanford. The meeting house recently started by the Saints of the branch, is situated near the Alamosa river, eight miles from Blanford, and about fifteen miles southwest of the town of Alamosa. Under a ward organized in 1891, and named in Elder John Morgan, who was then a very active part in the valley in building and encouraging the Saints who have immigrated hither from the Southern States. John W. Westbrook is the presiding Elder in Morgan.

The Illinois branch consists of a few Saints residing on and around Francis Ingram in Rogers, situated immediately southwest of the great and mountain range Mount Blanca which rises to such a great height northward to an altitude of 14,464 feet above the level of the sea. It is the second in height in the Rocky Mountains and is rather than Pike's peak by the fact. The Saints residing on the mountain range consist which grain fields from the east base of the mountain are all now engaged, but are as yet not so comfortable as they might desire to be, but the future prospects are very good, and a ward organization is contemplated here at some distant day, when questions as to the ownership of land, water and other rights will have to be properly adjusted. As already the little branch is struggling along as best it can, meetings and Sunday school are now held semi-monthly, and Wiley F. King presides over the branch.

The Beulah ward consists of twenty-two families of Saints, or 112 souls, residing on the Alamosa river, in the Arriba county, New Mexico, about ten miles southwest of Alamosa, and about twelve west of Costilla, the nearest railway station on the D. & R. G. railway. The settlement is only about two years old, the first of the Saints who, brought with the fact that it is located on the eastern coast, makes it a fine fruit country. But the river, which is somewhat similar to the Rio Virgen of Southern Utah, is hard to ranch, the bed of the stream getting so deep, so soon, and finds being of frequent occurrence. Hence the brethren have been struggling hard since 1891 to make a success of the place. The town is built on lands purchased from Mexicans, and a short distance above the town is a short canyon above the Catholic church which was built about three hundred years ago. Andrew L. Fuller is the Bishop of the Beulah ward, being ordained to that position in March, 1891; but the ward was not fully organized till Dec. 11, 1892.

The Saints in the early Stake of Zion in Colorado, but there is room for many more settlements in the same valley, and to speak of other portions of the state. More Saints are wanted here to strengthen the different wards and branches of the Church, but all who come must remember that they are to live over 7000 and feet up in the air as compared to the sea level. Otherwise the facilities are good. Here "no malaria lurks" "clear blue sky," and "pure breezes" as indeed blow, as I am sure anyone would acknowledge who spent a week ago last Saturday here, and the "clear crystals," such as the Conejos, San Antonio, the Rio Grande del Norte and both numerous tributaries flow continually, affording excellent opportunities for extensive irrigation. Yes, let Latter-day Saints who are in search of a home not forget the San Luis Valley, but before deciding to locate here let them come and see for themselves. Then they can claim to one for exaggerating the natural advantages of this extensive, fertile and windy valley.

ANDREW JENSEN.

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