

SOUTHERN IDAHO TOUR.

In company with Apostle Francis M. Lyman, I left Salt Lake City, Thursday, the 17th inst., for the purpose of visiting the Saints in the Cassia Stake of Zion. At Richmond, Cache County, Utah, we were joined by Apostle Mariner W. Merrill, and continuing the journey by rail we arrived at Pocatello, Bingham Co., Idaho, at 4 o'clock the next morning. In this railway town of 3000 inhabitants, situated on Fortneuf Creek, there is a branch of the Church presided over by Elder Wm. Willison, which appears to be in a thriving condition. About 150 Saints are temporarily located here, most of whom are in the employ of the railway company; they belong to the Onelda Stake. Pocatello is 76 miles north of Franklin.

Leaving Pocatello in the afternoon of Friday, the 18th, with an Oregon Short Line train, we soon entered the famous Snake River Valley, which at this point is about one hundred miles wide. A run of twenty-six miles brought us to the American Falls, where the Snake River takes a leap of about twelve feet over a ledge of rock. As the railroad bridge spans the river immediately over the falls, the traveler has the opportunity of getting a fine view of the very interesting scenery presented at this point. After traveling thirty-three miles farther through a most barren and desolate country full of chasms, gulches and all kinds of volcanic rock formations, we arrived at the little railway station Minidoka at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Here we looked in vain for a team to bring us to Albion, and had to content ourselves with stopping in the sectionhouse over night. We were comfortable, however, the section boss and his obliging daughter endeavoring to treat us to the best of such fare as the house afforded.

On Friday morning early the team, which had been despatched by our friends at Albion for our conveyance thither, was on hand, and at 7:30 o'clock a.m. we started on our journey southward toward Snake River, arriving at a ferry owned by our teamster, Mr. Geo. Montgomery, after having traveled ten miles. It took us some time to cross the river (which here is about 800 feet wide) in a skiff, and we were astonished at this point and at other places in this extensive valley to see a number of dead carcasses of animals which had starved and frozen to death during the past winter. The banks of the river were literally strewn with these, and we were informed that many cattle owners lost, during the severe winter, from 60 to 75 per cent of their stock.

On the south side of the river another and better conveyance was in waiting, and we continued our journey over a new road which Mr. Montgomery is making in order to shorten the distance between the railway station and the settlements in Goose Creek valley. We were almost the first persons who traveled over the new road, which we christened Montgomery's cut off. It was

very rough as yet, but our teamster informed us that he had several men employed working on it every day, and that it would soon become as smooth and even as the old road by way of Story ferry further east.

Arriving at Albion, the county seat of Cassia County, which is situated in the so-called Marsh Basin and is separated from the lower Goose Creek valley by a low spur of mountains, we were met by Elder William F. Brim, who took us in his carriage to Oakley, twenty-five miles to the southwest, where we arrived in the evening, after having traveled that day by team fifty-five miles.

We met a hearty welcome from President Horton D. Haight and family and the leading men of the Stake, who were exceedingly pleased to see the Apostles and listen to their instructions and teachings during the following two days (Sunday and Monday, April 20th and 21st) on which the Stake Conference was held at Oakley. Five spirited and profitable meetings (including a priesthood meeting) were held and the meeting-house was crowded on every occasion.

The Cassia Stake of Zion embraces all the Saints living in Cassia County, Idaho, and also about a dozen families residing on St. George's Creek, Box Elder Co., Utah. It consists of six organized wards, with a total membership of 1391 souls, distributed among 244 families.

Oakley, the largest of the six wards, embraces all the Saints living in the south end of Goose Creek valley, on Goose Creek and Birch Creek. John L. Smith is Bishop. The families in this and all the other wards in the Cassia Stake live in a very scattered condition, mostly on their quarter sections, and have had a pretty hard time of it ever since they first located in the country, a little more than ten years ago. There have been grasshoppers and rabbits to fight without number, expensive litigations over complicated water questions, and many other difficulties; but the Saints have stuck to it and have now very good prospects before them. There would be room for many more people in this valley were it not for the unsettled state of the water claims.

The Goose Creek valley is an offshoot of the great Snake River valley, extending about twenty-five miles from north to south, and tapering off from a width of about forty miles at the north end to a mere canyon on the south. There are tens of thousands of as level and fertile land as any Latter-day Saint would desire to locate on, if there was only water wherewith to irrigate it. Timber for building purposes and fuel is plentiful in the mountains both east and west, and there is an abundance of good building rock. Most of the houses in Oakley and the other settlements are log dwellings with dirt roofs, but a number of the brethren are preparing to erect houses of more durable material.

Marion, named in honor of Apostle Frances Marion Lyman is one of the smaller wards of the

Stake. It consists of 32 families who live in a scattered condition north of Oakley, principally on the west side of Goose Creek, in a string extending a distance of five miles north and south. There are a number of comfortable dwellings. The ward house is pleasantly situated on rising ground at a point four miles northwest of the centre of Oakley. Adam G. Smith is Bishop of this ward.

Spring Basin ward, presided over by Bishop Enoch R. Dayley, consists of 26 families who reside in a beautiful little valley or basin, the centre of which is about five miles east of the Oakley meeting house, a low spur of mountains, through which there is a natural gap, separating this little valley from the Goose Creek country below.

Besides these three settlements there are a few scattered families of Saints living at the so-called Thatcher's Ranch, about eighteen miles north of Oakley, and at different other points in the valley.

On Tuesday morning, April 22nd, Apostles Lyman and Merrill returned to Minidoka, expecting to hold a meeting with the Saints at Pocatello, as they passed through, and I started east over the mountains for the purpose of visiting the other settlements in the Stake. Bishop Dayley, of Spring Basin, with whom I had spent the night, took me in his wagon to a point on Birch Creek, where I met Bishop Thos. O. King, of Almo, and Brother Durfee, with whom I traveled over the mountains, by way of Emery Canyon and the "City of Rocks," to Almo, twenty-five miles southeast of Oakley.

Almo Ward, named after the Almo Creek, a tributary of Raft River, embraces all the Saints who live at different points on the numerous mountain streams in Upper Raft River valley. This valley is about twenty miles long from north to south, and from four to twelve miles wide; the south end of it, where about a dozen families of Saints are located on George Creek, extends into Utah. The whole ward consists of about forty families, besides a number who do not belong to the Church. If water was more plentiful in this valley, there would be land and all other facilities to sustain a large population.

On Wednesday, after speaking to the Saints of Almo at a funeral held in their log meeting-house in the afternoon, Elder Chas. R. Ward took me to Elba, or Cassia Creek, twelve miles to the north, where I was joined by Andrew Kimball of Salt Lake City, and according to previous arrangement we addressed the Saints in the evening. The pioneer log schoolhouse was crowded and we had a good time.

Elba Ward embraces all the Saints who live on the headwaters of Cassia Creek. They numbered about forty-three families, the majority of whom are young and middle aged people who have mostly come from Willard and Box Elder Counties, Utah. Bishop Thomas Taylor presides over this ward and gives the members a very good character for integrity and faithful-