

Written for this Paper

THE ST. JOHNS STAKE.

LUNA VALLEY, Socorro Co., New Mexico, March 16, 1894.

After attending the quarterly Stake conference held at St. Johns on the 4th and 5th inst., I started out in company with Elder Wm. H. Gibbons, counselor in the Stake Presidency, to visit all the settlements of the Saints in the St. Johns Stake except Erastus, which was visited on the journey from Snowflake to St. Johns. Part of the time I was also accompanied by President David K. Udall, Patriarch Henry J. Platt and Sisters Udall, Patterson and Pace, the Stake Presidency of the Relief Societies; also Elder Amencus V. Greer, Brother Marble and others. We held one or more meetings in each of the settlements and had an enjoyable time with the Saints, who appreciated our visits and instructions; this was made manifest by the way in which they turned out to the meetings. I was also successful in obtaining such historical data and information which is needed for Church history; and I found the Stake records in first-class condition, while many of the ward and society records are very imperfectly kept.

The St. Johns Stake of Zion consists of the Saints residing in the eastern part of Apache county, Arizona, and those residing in Valentia and Socorro Counties, New Mexico. There are seven organized wards in the Stake, namely St. Johns, Union, Erastus, Nutrioso and Alpine, in Apache County, Arizona, and Ramah, in Valentia County and Luna Valley or Heber Ward, in Socorro County, New Mexico. The numerical strength of the Stake is 237 families, or 1,467 souls, namely 2 Patriarchs (Henry J. Platt and Jens N. Skousen), 69 High Priests, 60 Seventies (members of the 104th quorum), 86 Elders, 4 Priests, 14 Teachers, 110 Deacons, 619 lay members, and 503 children under eight years old. Elder David K. Udall, a man of much experience in life, and who has passed through very trying ordeals in the interest of God's cause and for his brethren, has presided over the Stake since its first organization in July, 1887. He was formerly Bishop of the St. Johns Ward. Elder John H. Freeman, who performed a mission to Europe several years ago, is first Counselor in the Stake Presidency, and Wm. H. Gibbons, who labored as an Indian missionary for eight years in Arizona and New Mexico, is second Counselor. He now fills the responsible position of treasurer for Apache County, to which office he has been elected repeatedly; the last time his nomination was made by acclamation. President Udall resides in Union Ward (Round Valley), while his Counselors both live at St. Johns.

St. Johns, the county seat of Apache County, is pleasantly situated on the left bank of the Little Colorado river, in the midst of an open, fertile country, which would be capable of sustaining a large population if there was sufficient water wherewith to irrigate the lands. A great deal is being done now to reservoir the water, the facilities for this being very good with the expenditure of considerable labor on dams and ditches, which indeed is being done as fast as possible.

St. Johns was first settled by Mexicans and a few white adventurers about 1873, and the Saints purchased the place in

1879 of Sol. Barth and others, who claimed to own everything in the neighborhood, including water right and all. But after a while complications arose, and the brethren found a number of law suits on their hands, besides having to face a conspiracy on the part of the anti-Mormons, who were determined to drive the Saints away from the county in regular old time Missouri fashion. But the brethren stood their ground nobly, though at a great sacrifice. They were mobbed, robbed, shot at, deprived of their political rights, taxed beyond reason by the unscrupulous demagogues who had been elected to office by the anti-Mormon ring; and one man (Brother Nathan C. Tenney) was shot and killed outright, while acting as a peace maker between his friends and the mob. But the victory at last appeared on the side of the Saints, who, after humbling themselves in fasting and prayer, laid their case before the Almighty. Soon after that the strength of the enemy was broken; the wickedness of some of the anti-Mormon ringleaders came to light. One man was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment in the Yuma penitentiary for forgery, or for raising county warrants; another one was killed by his own kind; some fled the country to escape justice, and others, who had expended their means in fighting the Saints, were reduced to poverty, and are now void of influence. The prospects for the Saints in St. Johns are now better than ever before since they settled the place. The anti-Mormons are confined to a small portion of the town bordering on the river, while the Saints occupy a regularly surveyed townsite, adjoining the original Mexican village, with narrow and crooked streets; and the co-operative store, owned by our brethren, does more business than all the rest of the stores in St. Johns put together. Our people also own the only flouring mill in the town, control three-fifths of the water used for irrigation purposes, and constitute the majority of the population, though the non-Mormons, including of course the Mexicans, still outvote our people at the polls. This, however, does not cut much of a figure now, as the people have divided on national party lines; at the last county election, however, the non-Mormons, or at least many of them, acted treacherously to the Saints; for while our brethren voted their respective party tickets honestly and straight, the non-Mormons scratched off the names of all the Mormon candidates and voted for the Gentile opponents, which resulted in every one of our brethren being ousted at the polls; and consequently the county is still run by political tricksters, most of whom own no property to speak of, and as a matter of course pay no taxes, and are only hanging around the county seat to feed from the public crib. Of course there are a few exceptions to that rule.

In the face of all the abuse, lying, and violence to which our brethren have been subjected in St. Johns during past years, they have acted very wisely and prudently; in fact, an all-wise Providence and the spirit of meekness and forbearance have guided them in the midst of all their difficulties. Instead of retaliating in the shape of punishing their oppressors, which they could, perhaps, have done very successfully on different occasions, they refrained from all overt acts; not one of their persecutors was

killed or even severely punished by any of the brethren, though the provocation to do so was often so great that I doubt very much whether any people except the Saints could have stood the test without rising up in righteous anger to take vengeance upon the evil-doer. But the brethren held the fort, and it is generally understood throughout this Stake of Zion that had not the Saints of St. Johns stood their ground as they did, all the other settlements which now constitute the St. Johns Stake of Zion would have been an impossibility. The present strength of the St. Johns Ward is seventy-five families, or 460 souls, belonging to the Church. A comfortable meeting house (though a log building) and a fine two story titling office, occupying one of the most conspicuous places on the townsite, and a Relief Society hall constitute the public buildings of that part of St. Johns which is controlled by the Saints. Charles P. Anderson, a young man of promise, is the Bishop of the ward.

Erastus, also known as Concho, is situated in a snug little valley, about 16 miles southwest of St. Johns, and 34 miles southeast of Snowflake. The old Mexican town called Concho is situated in the lower end, while most of our people live on the townsite called Erastus, which is in the upper end of the valley. A fine reservoir has been constructed which so far has proven very successful and beneficial to the settlement. At Erastus the finest peaches produced in Apache County, and other fruits are claimed to be raised, and the prospect for a flourishing settlement is promising, though the present Mormon population only consists of eighteen families, or 138 souls. Christopher J. Kempe, extensively known among the Scandinavian Saints from his missionary labors in Norway, presides as Bishop at Erastus. The place was named thus in honor of the late Apostle Erastus Snow. It was first settled by the Saints in 1879.

Union Ward embraces all the Saints residing in Round Valley, which is situated near the so-called white mountains about 35 miles south of St. Johns. The post-office name of the place is Springerville. Formerly there were two wards in this valley, namely Onier and Amity, but in 1886 they were amalgamated and the new organization called Union, and of late years the headquarters of the ward have been built up at a place called Eager about a mile and a half southwest of the valley of Springerville and near the east end of the valley. The townsite of Eager is a most beautiful one, and when more families shall have located upon it, it will present a better appearance than at present, when the houses are somewhat scattered. The altitude of this place is about 6,500 feet, or nearly 800 feet higher than St. Johns. George H. Crosby, formerly Bishop of Hebron and Leed's in Southern Utah, presides over the Union Ward, which at present contains sixty families, or 350 souls, belonging to the Church.

Nutrioso is a fine village situated on Nutrioso Creek, a tributary of the Little Colorado river, in the south end of a beautiful and fertile little valley near the summit of the mountains which form the watershed between the Little Colorado and the Gila rivers. Nutrioso attracts the attention of the visitor at once by its fine frame dwellings, its