

# ARCHAEOLOGY SOUTHWEST *magazine*

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**Archaeology Southwest** (formerly the Center for Desert Archaeology) is a private 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization that explores and protects the places of our past across the American Southwest and Mexican Northwest. We have developed an integrated, conservation-based approach known as Preservation Archaeology.

Although Preservation Archaeology begins with the active protection of archaeological sites, it doesn't end there. We utilize holistic, low-impact investigation methods in order to pursue big-picture questions about what life was like long ago. As a part of our mission to help foster advocacy and appreciation for the special places of our past, we share our discoveries with the public. This free back issue of *Archaeology Southwest Magazine* is one of many ways we connect people with the Southwest's rich past. **Enjoy!**

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# Archaeology Southwest

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## Mormon History and Archaeology in Northern Arizona

Alan Ferg, Arizona State Museum

**I**N EARLY 1876, Brigham Young, president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, called a meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, to select men and their families to travel south and establish several Mormon colonies in the Little Colorado River Valley of northern Arizona. Two earlier attempts had been unsuccessful, but a recent scouting report had described the Little Colorado as full of clear water, with rich soil and plentiful pasture.

Young stated that the purpose of this venture was fourfold: to take possession of the land for the State of Deseret; to establish and develop the United Order; to proselytize among the Hopis, Navajos, and Apaches; and to create settlements that would serve as havens for polygamous families who were being persecuted by the United States government in Utah.

“Deseret” is from the Book of Mormon and is generally said to refer to honeybees and industriousness, with a beehive having long been associated with the

Mormon Church and appearing on the Utah state seal; the State of Deseret was to be an independent Mormon homeland in the West. The United Order was an experiment in social organization, with cooperation, rather than competition, as its basis, in which all community members shared resources.

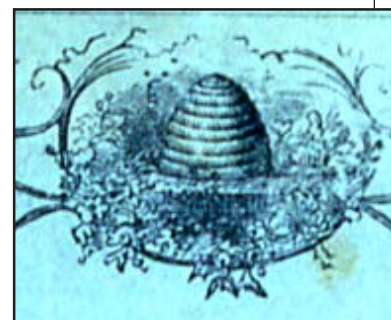
In response to Young’s call, more than 200 men, women, and children headed south in the middle of winter, crossing the “Big” Colorado River at Lee’s Ferry. In March, the lead members of the wagon train reached Sunset Crossing on the Little Colorado (roughly where Interstate 10 crosses the river east of Winslow). Lot Smith and

his company established Sunset, on the northeast side of the river (see page 9). George Lake and William C. Allen went farther upstream and started Obed (see page 8) and Joseph City (see page 4) on opposite sides of the river. Jesse O. Ballenger arrived in April and began the fort opposite Sunset that would become Brigham City (see page 6). By June, all four settlements were building forts to protect themselves from Indian attacks that never came, and building dams on the river to irrigate crops.

In this issue of *Archaeology Southwest*, we celebrate the perseverance, industriousness, and vision of these Mormon colonists. Various authors explore the historical and archaeological heritage of Mormonism in northern Arizona, including excavations at three of the original four Little Colorado colonies;

the short-lived Mormon occupation of the Forestdale area; the Mormon Lake sawmill, dairy, and tannery; historic petroglyphs near Joseph City; the colonies’ lime kiln; Fort Moroni near Flagstaff; and the history and meaning of Mormon town plans. In addition, Benjamin Pykles and Karen Wilhelm discuss the significance of these sites to Mormons themselves.

For this issue, the Center for Desert Archaeology has become, temporarily, the Center for Deseret Archaeology!



*Beehive from the cover of a Mormon text published in 1869.*



*Mormon sites and modern towns mentioned in this issue of Archaeology Southwest.*

Richard W. Lord

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and Karen Wilhelm*

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