Historical Background

On nine eleven of 1857 a few Indians helped a bunch of Temple Worthy Mormons murder approximately 130 fellow American citizens at Mountain Meadows in Southern Utah. In the spring of 1859, **two years** **after** the Mountain Meadows Massacre, Federal troops arrived at the Meadows to investigate the atrocity. Army Major James Carlton was sickened to discover that nearly two years after the event, the valley was littered with skulls, bones, clumps of women’s hair, and scraps of children’s clothing bleaching in the sun. Their army surgeon reported that many of the skulls bore “marks of violence, being pierced with bullet holes, or shattered with heavy blows, or cleft with some sharp-edged instrument.” The nature of the wounds, he concluded, “showed that fire-arms had been discharged close to the head.” They gathered all the bones they could find and carried rocks from the surrounding hills to cover the common grave. The rock pile was twelve feet high and fifty feet in circumference. At the top they put a cross with the words, “Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord.”

In May of 1861, Brigham Young and his traveling companions happened upon this memorial as he was passing through the meadow. According to Apostle Wilford Woodruff, who was accompanying the prophet, when Brigham read the inscription on the cross, he pondered for a short while and then stated, **“Vengeance is *mine* and *I* have taken a little.”** Before leaving the meadow, his companions pulled down the cross and scattered all the stones, destroying the monument with Brigham’s approval.

The Federal government had issues with Brigham Young’s control of Utah and his suspected involvement in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. At that time Utah was almost 100% Mormon. The Federal government replaced Brigham as governor and in 1862; congress passed a new law against polygamy. In 1863, a small federal force from California came to Salt Lake City and stayed during the rest of the civil war. By 1867 the government was threatening to send more troops to Utah and “clean house.” These issues caused the Mormons to be pretty skittish and distrusting of anyone not Mormon. The Mormon leaders were inciting their members to mistrust non-Mormons. In their temple ceremony they swore an oath of vengeance to avenge the blood of Joseph Smith.

The first explorer to go down the Grand Canyon in a boat was the John Wesley Powell exploration expedition. This distrust was stirred up prior to the end of the Powell exploration expedition with a circuit visit to the cities in southern Utah by Apostle George A. Smith, and a southern Utah tour by Brigham Young in the late summer of 1869. The Powell expedition started in the green River in May of 1869 and ended in September. Just before the last rapids, on August 28th, three members of the expedition decided to hike out of the Grand Canyon and go north to get help from the Mormons. Their names were William Dunn and two brothers Oramel and Seneca Howland. They were never reunited. The rest of the expedition made it through and traveled to St George, Utah. Powell asked about his missing three explorers on August 7th and on August 8th an anonymous telegraph was published in the local news papers claiming that the Indians killed them in retaliation for killing an Indian squaw. Powell didn’t believe it because he knew the integrity of his men and that none of them would have done anything like this. He immediately stated that the story was a lie. Returning a year later to investigate the mysterious deaths, he was told by an Indian Chief that they killed them and were really sorry. Powell believed the story and nothing more was done. History records that they were killed by Shivwitz Indians.

However, a few rumors surfaces from time to time that blamed the Mormons for the murder of the three explorers. Most historians discounted the stories. But in 1980, a former college dean, Wesley P. Larsen discovered a letter in an old trunk dated Feb. 17, 1883. The letter was written to John Steele a highly respected judge, doctor and leader by his friend, William Leany. William stated that the Mormons had killed three innocent people. Larsen was able to deduce that William Leany was talking about the missing explorers William Dunn and the Howland brothers. According to Leany’s letter, three had been killed by a Mormon in a Mormon Church building in Toquerville, Utah. Seneca Howland, Oramel Howland and William Dunn separated from the group at what is now called “Separation Canyon. At the top of Mount Dellenbaugh, William Dunn carved his initials on a large rock with an arrow pointing north and headed north. What the letter revealed was, Leany accused his fellow saints of, “Thieving whoredom, murder and Suicide & like abominations.” He reminded Steele, moreover, that “you are far from ignorant of these deeds of blood from the day the picket fence was broke on my head to the day those three were murdered in our ward & the murderer killed to stop the shedding of more blood.” Five paragraphs later, Leany made another allusion to “the killing the three in one room of our ward.” With this letter from respectable sources, it is more likely that the Mormons really did kill the three explorers after all. The rumors now appear to have some truth to them.

**Summary**

**T**wo things have been learned from Jon Krakauer’s book “Under the Banner of Heaven”: Brigham Young is recorded by Apostle Wilford Wodruff, a future Mormon Prophet as stating after some thought, “Vengeance is ***mine***, and ***I*** have taken a little” indicating his responsibility and involvement in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Then he watched as the cross was taken down and the monument was dismantled by his men and the monument thus destroyed. Brigham certainly approved of the murders.

Rather than believe the stories of the three Powell Explorers, or pray and ask God if they were who they claimed to be, the Mormons killed them anyway and then lied about what happened to them blaming the deed on the local Indians. It was very dangerous to be non-Mormon in Brigham’s Utah because Brigham was not the man of God the Mormons claim he is. Brigham is responsible for many more murders in Utah. Mormons still believe that Brigham is a prophet and therefore can’t admit the truth about Brigham’s gross sins and don’t admit or deal with his dastardly deeds.

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(Unauthorized Duplication **Encouraged**)**Mountain Meadows Massacre**

**Was Brigham Young Responsible?**

Brigham Young – Mormon Hero

* Did the Mormons ever give back any of the riches that they stole from those they murdered in the Mountain Meadows?
* Did Mormon leadership and their members in southern Utah lie blaming the Indians for their involvement in the murders of 130 fellow Americans in Southern Utah and about killing the three Powell explorers of the Grand Canyon River Expedition?