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JEFFERSON HUNT

CALIFORNIA’S FIRST MORMON POLITICIAN

BY

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Many people know Jefferson Hunt as the captain of Company “A” of the Mormon Battalion. Others know him as the guide for the wagon train from which the Death Valley ‘49ers departed. He’s known by some as the founder of Huntsville, Utah and as a pioneer in the upper Cache Valley. But few realize he was also a member of the first Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County and that he served five terms as an Assemblyman in the California Legislature, thus becoming California’s first Mormon politician.

Unfortunately, Hunt did not keep a journal or diary and only a few of his letters remain. Hunt, himself, is reported to have said when asked if he kept a journal: “Hell, I’ve been so busy making history I haven’t had time to write it.”¹ However, journals and documents written by persons associated with Hunt, coupled with records maintained by the LDS Church, the State of California, and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors along with several newspaper

¹ Pauline Udall Smith, *Captain Jefferson Hunt of the Mormon Battalion* (Salt Lake City: Nicholas G. Morgan Foundation, 1958), 217.

articles, give much information about his activities and accomplishments during his California years.

Jefferson Hunt was born on January 20, 1803, in Bracken County, Kentucky.² The Hunt family sold their farm in Kentucky in late 1815 and moved to southeastern Illinois near the present community of Albion. In December, 1823, twenty year old Jefferson married eighteen year old Celia Mounts and their first child, Gilbert, was born in April, 1825.³ In the fall of 1834, Jefferson and Celia were introduced to the teachings of Joseph Smith by Solomon Hancock,⁴ and they were baptized into the LDS Church on March 7, 1835.⁵ In February, 1837, the Jefferson and his family moved to a new home south of Far West in Caldwell County, Missouri. Two of his neighbors were future apostles, Amasa Lyman and Charles Coulson Rich,⁶ who were destined to play important roles in the San Bernardino settlement.

Hunt became a major in the Caldwell County Militia and participated in the Battle of Crooked River.⁷ Following the expulsion of the Mormons from Missouri, the Hunts settled on a farm near Bear Creek, Illinois, about twenty miles southeast of Nauvoo, and closer to the Hancock

² Smith, 1. Some descendants believe his birth name was Charles Jefferson Hunt, and others believe that his date of birth was January 4, 1804. However, I have used the name and date accepted by Pauline Udall Smith, his biographer and descendant.

³ Ibid., 24-25.

⁴ Ibid., 25; Charles Brent Hancock, *Journal of Charles B. Hancock*, microfilm, Historical Department Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. Smith states that Levi Hancock introduced the Hunts to the LDS Church, but Levi's nephew Charles Brent Hancock states that it was his father, Solomon, Levi's brother, who brought the teachings of Joseph Smith to the Hunt family.

⁵ Ibid., 25.

⁶ Caldwell County, Missouri, County Clerk Records.

⁷ Smith, *Captain Jefferson Hunt*, 31-32; For more information about the conflicts in Missouri, see Alexander Baugh, "A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1996).

County seat of Carthage than to Nauvoo.⁸ For the rest of his life, Jefferson tended to settle closer to the fringes of Mormon settlement than in the main Mormon community. This pattern reflected his entrepreneurial spirit and his independence more than anything else. Throughout the rest of his life, he was successful in his personal and commercial ventures and showed no tendency to deviate from the spirit or principles of his religion.

On July 12, 1845, Celia Hunt gave birth to twins, Mary and Parley, and there were now ten children in the family, five of whom were ten or younger.⁹ A family named Nease lived near the Hunts at Bear Creek. Both the father and mother died in late 1845, leaving one married daughter and four minor children. Rhoda Nease, 15, then went to live with her married sister, Mary Ann, and the other three, Matilda, 17, Peter, 11, and Ellen, 9, were taken in by the Hunt family.¹⁰ On January 2, 1846, the day after Matilda Nease's eighteenth birthday, she and Jefferson and Celia Hunt received their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple. On February 7th, Celia and Matilda were sealed to Jefferson in a second Temple ceremony.¹¹ The Hunt family, now consisting of fifteen members, fled Nauvoo on February 15, 1846, and began the trek to Kanesville (Council Bluffs, Iowa).¹²

⁸ Ibid., 36.

⁹ Ibid., 244-245.

¹⁰ Ibid., 44-45.

¹¹ Ibid., 46.

¹² Ibid., 48-49.

Shortly after the start of the Mexican War in 1846, President Polk authorized the recruitment of 500 Mormons to march to the Pacific Coast as part of General Stephen Watts Kearny's Army of the West.¹³ Brigham Young selected Hunt as the Captain of Company A and designated him as the ranking Mormon officer of the Battalion.¹⁴ Hunt's sons, Gilbert and Marshall, were also in Company A, and most of the rest of the family accompanied the Battalion until they separated to go to Pueblo for the winter.¹⁵ The Battalion reached California in January, 1847, and played a major role in securing Southern California. As a result, the Battalion was well received and During the march, Hunt acquired knowledge and skills that he would apply in subsequent travels on Western trails.

Following the Battalion's discharge in July, 1847, one group of men reenlisted for duty in San Diego and two contingents of veterans began traveling to Sutter's Fort at present day Sacramento. Hunt led one of those contingents the El Camino Real, Monterey, and on to Sutter's Fort. At Sutter's Fort, John Sutter successfully hired many of the veterans to help him develop his vast holdings. Some of those men were instrumental in the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in Coloma. Those, including Hunt, who did not stop at Sutter's, continued on over the Sierras and along the Humboldt River Route (The California Trail) to Salt Lake City.

¹³ For more information about the Mormon Battalion see: Norma Baldwin Ricketts, *The Mormon Battalion* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996); David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, eds., *Army of Israel: Mormon Battalion Narratives*, (Spokane: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2000); Sherman L. Fleek, *History May be Searched in Vain*, (Spokane: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2006); Frank Alfred Golder, ed., *The March of the Mormon Battalion*, (New York City: The Century Co., 1928).

¹⁴ Journal History of the Church of Latter Day Saints (chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830-present), July 13, 1846. LDS Church Archives.

¹⁵ Gilbert, a corporal in his father's company, accompanied the family to Pueblo and then on to Salt Lake City. Hunt's infant son, Parley, and his nephew, Milton Kelly, both died in Pueblo.

During his seven months in California, Hunt became known many of the residents of the future state and personally met many of the most influential citizens including key army officers, local leaders, and people such as John Sutter. One of his most important meetings was with Isaac Williams, the American born owner of the strategically located and very productive Rancho Santa Ana del Chino at today's City of Chino. Williams' ranch was located forty miles east of the Pueblo of Los Angeles near Cajon Pass, the Old Spanish Trail entrance from the Mojave Desert into the Los Angeles Basin. During this first visit with Williams in 1848, Hunt and Williams discussed the possible purchase of the ranch by the Mormons.¹⁶ Hunt's friendships and his reputation developed during the Mexican War proved important for his future political activities.

About a month after his arrival in Salt Lake, Hunt and three of his sons became part of a party of packers that traveled the Old Spanish Trail to Williams' ranch at Chino to obtain seeds and cuttings for planting and milk cows.¹⁷ Upon his return to Salt Lake in the late Spring of 1848, Hunt had traveled over 5,000 miles in the American West and was an experienced mountaineer. Then in late July, 1849, Brigham Young presented Hunt to the Gold Rush migration gathering in Salt Lake City and the two urged them to hire Hunt to guide them on the Southern Route from Salt Lake City to Southern California.¹⁸

¹⁶ Letter from Jefferson Hunt to Brigham Young dated May 14, 1847 in: Kenneth N. Owens, *Gold Rush Saints: California Mormons and the Great Rush for Riche*, (Spokane: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2004), 61.

¹⁷ Statement of John Hunt, Jefferson's son, in the *Deseret News*, October 7, 1905.

¹⁸ Church Historian's Office, General Church Minutes, 1839-1877 (CR 100 318), August 19 & 20, 1849, LDS Church Archives, in *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2 vols., DVD (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1:18).

The Jefferson Hunt Wagon Train left Utah Valley on October 1st, but in early November the train had dissolved and nearly 100 of the emigrants headed west and eventually arrived in Death Valley at Christmastime. Hunt and a small group continued on the Old Spanish Trail and arrived at Isaac Williams' Ranch in mid-December.¹⁹ Hunt remained in California, primarily in the Mariposa area, for most of 1850 before returning to his home in early 1851.²⁰

By 1851, Hunt had been in California three times and had spent nearly two years in both the Southern and Northern parts of the state. Hunt was well known to many pre-Gold Rush Californians and was highly regarded in Southern California. The Mormon Battalion, while under his command, treated the Californians compassionately and fairly and dealt with the citizens as equals, not conquered subjects. Military and civil officials recognized the faithful service and competence of the Battalion, and John Sutter was gratified to have been able to hire a number of veterans including those that made James Marshall's discovery of gold possible.²¹ As the Mormon leader of the Battalion, Jefferson Hunt was well respected throughout California.

Jefferson Hunt was the first to demonstrate to Brigham Young and the Church leadership the communication and transportation advantages of the Salt Lake/Southern California route when his party brought the first word of the creation of the Territory of Utah and the appointment of

¹⁹For more information about the Jefferson Hunt Wagon Train see: George S. Ellsworth, ed., *The Journals of Addison Pratt*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990); William Lewis Manly, *Death Valley in '49*, (Berkeley/Santa Clara: Heydey Press, 2001 reprint, LeRoy and Jean Johnson eds.); Michael N. Landon, ed., *The Journals of George Q. Cannon*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Bok Company, 1999).

²⁰ Smith, *Captain Jefferson Hunt*, 160-161.

²¹ In 1847, the military leaders in California encouraged Hunt to recruit another battalion of Mormons for service in California. See Bigler & Bagley for documents regarding this effort.

Brigham Young as Territorial Governor to Salt Lake City in 1851.²² The advantages of a Mormon settlement in Southern California were becoming more obvious; that settlement would provide the western terminus of a Mormon Corridor and would facilitate travel to Utah by freighters and migrating Mormons alike.²³ In 1851, Brigham Young dispatched the first contingent of Mormon settlers to Southern California and Jefferson Hunt was one of those selected to go with the party under the leadership of the apostles, Amasa Lyman and Charles Coulson Rich.²⁴

On March 21, 1851, 150 wagons and nearly 450 people began the journey to California. Twenty-two were members of the Hunt family. With Jefferson were his wives, Celia and Matilda, and all of their children. Three of Jefferson and Celia's adult children - Gilbert, Jane, and Nancy - were with their spouses and children. A fourth, Marshall, brought his fiancée. Four members of the Hunt party were infants or toddlers, including Matilda's first child, Sophronia. Matilda also brought her younger siblings, Peter and Ellen Nease, who had been adopted into the Hunt family. The adult children, particularly Gilbert before his departure to Utah in 1854, provided support for the family and business, which permitted Jefferson to be away from home during his political efforts.

On June 12, 1851, an advance party, which included Lyman, Rich and Hunt, met with Isaac Williams in Chino to finalize the sale of his ranch to the Mormon leaders. They discovered that Williams, who had previously offered to sell his ranch to the Mormons, was no longer willing to

²² Journal History, January 21, 1851.

²³ For a discussion of the Mormon Corridor, see: Edward Leo Lyman, *The Overland Journey from Utah to California* (Reno & Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 87-88.

²⁴ Journal History, February 23, 1851.

sell. The expanding California population had pushed the price of cattle from \$2 to roughly \$50 per head and Williams wanted to capitalize on this price inflation. The Mormon elders searched for a new ranch to purchase. Finally, on September 22nd, they successfully negotiated the purchase of the San Bernardino Rancho from Isaac Williams' in-laws, the prominent Lugo family. Almost immediately, the settlers moved onto their new land and began constructing a new community. The City of San Bernardino was born.²⁵

In this paper, I contend that Jefferson Hunt was chosen by apostles Lyman and/or Rich, and possibly even Brigham Young himself, to be the political voice of the California Mormons. His familiarity with California, his reputation as the senior Mormon in the Mormon Battalion, and his previous contacts with many influential Californians uniquely qualified him as the man to best represent the Mormons' political goals. And most importantly, the time and effort he spent in his political endeavors significantly helped the Mormon cause in California, but did little to further his personal fortunes and caused him to be away from his family about 40% of the time he was in California.

Hunt's first political effort began four weeks after the Mormons purchased the San Bernardino Rancho. On October 20th a convention to discuss the division of the state of California began in Santa Barbara. Jefferson Hunt, one of twelve delegates from Los Angeles County, was among the thirty-one men present.²⁶ He may have also attended a September 12th meeting in Los Angeles to discuss the subject and select convention delegates. Hunt left his large family just

²⁵ For a detailed account of the Mormon history of San Bernardino, see: Edward Leo Lyman, *San Bernardino: The Rise and Fall of a California Community*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996).

²⁶ *Alta California*, October 26, 1851.

three weeks after their new home site had been selected and devoted at least five days to travel the 150 miles to attend the Santa Barbara convention. He put his personal needs aside for the general benefit of his church and community.

The convention was called because Southern Californians correctly believed they were unfairly taxed by the more numerous Northerners and many distrusted their Northern neighbors. A small faction supported the southern states in the battles over slavery and senate representation, hoping a division of California would lead to Southern California being admitted to the Union as a slave state.²⁷ Jefferson Hunt represented the Mormon interest, believing it was possible to eventually secure Southern California as a part of the Territory of Utah and, eventually, a new state of Deseret or Utah. While Hunt was presumably interested in reducing taxes on the San Bernardino Rancho, his main interest was in securing a Mormon Corridor to the sea.

During the four days of meetings, the delegates unanimously called for the southern part of California to revert to federal control and be annexed to an existing territory or become a territory. Because the northern portion of the state controlled the political process, nothing came of this effort, but it addressed a subject that repeatedly surfaced and involved Hunt in subsequent years.

While there is no direct evidence that Hunt attended the Santa Barbara meeting at the request of Lyman, Rich, or any other Mormon official, it stands to reason that he went at their request or as part of his role in a larger assignment to participate in the political affairs of California to benefit

²⁷ Ibid.; For a discussion of this issue, see Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California: Vol. 6 1848-1859* (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1970).

the Mormons and their overall goal of controlling a Mormon corridor to California. It is unlikely that Hunt would have left his family and the San Bernardino settlement in its first month of existence, when homes were being built and an infrastructure created, unless there was a compelling reason to so.

For the first two years of its existence, Los Angeles County was governed locally by a Court of Sessions; however, major decisions were made by the legislature. In 1852, the County was granted more autonomy and the authority to create a Board of Supervisors to govern locally. On June 14, 1852, the citizens of the County went to the polls and elected five members to the first Board of Supervisors. San Bernardino was the second largest city in the County, and Jefferson Hunt was elected to be their representative.

This first board served from July to November, 1852, when a new board and officials were elected in the state's general election. Since San Bernardino was over fifty miles from Los Angeles, Hunt spent at least two days traveling in each direction. A one day board meeting required Hunt's absence from his home for at least five days. During the four months he was on the board, they met for eight sessions. Several sessions were two or three days in length. Hunt attended half, spending nearly one full month on board business versus tending to his family and community obligations in San Bernardino.²⁸ During his brief time on the Board of Supervisors, Hunt introduced ordinances creating two new towns near San Bernardino - San Salvador and Agua Mansa.

²⁸ The proceedings of the board of supervisors are recorded in the Minutes, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, a copy of which is available at the Clerk's Office, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors .

When the fall elections approached in 1852, Jefferson Hunt did not run for re-election, but decided to run for the California Assembly as one of the two members from Los Angeles County. If successful, he would be spending months away from his family while he was 500 miles to the north in Vallejo - the location of the State Capital at that time. He would be away during the spring planting season and when his family most needed his presence to help them become established in the new colony. The question comes up: What was Hunt's motivation to run for election to the Assembly?

No direct evidence has been found to show that Hunt ran at the direction of Lyman or Rich, the local leaders, or at the direction of Brigham Young in Salt Lake City. But there is evidence that Hunt consulted with them and sought their support and approval, and that Lyman and Rich did strongly support his candidacy. Lewis Granger, a former minister and an organizer of Hunt's 1849 wagon train, was now a prominent attorney and Democratic Party leader in Los Angeles. Granger wrote Hunt on September 18, 1852 asking him to accept the party's nomination. Hunt gave the letter to Lyman and Rich and they responded to Granger on September 22nd advising him that they were not going to endorse "either political party" but that if Hunt was nominated they would "cordially give him our undevided (sic) support."²⁹ Once elected, Jefferson Hunt's actions during his first year in the Assembly support the idea that he was there to fulfill an important mission for the Mormon Church and the San Bernardino settlement. His sole accomplishment that year, and a very important one, was to create a new San Bernardino County.

²⁹Letter to Lewis Grangers from Amasa Lyman and Charles Coulson Rich in LeRoy Hafen, *Letters of Lewis Granger* (Los Angeles: Glen Dawson, 1959), 32-33.

Hunt accepted the Democratic Party's nomination and ran for one of the two seats in the Assembly from Los Angeles County. In the election of November 2, 1852, he received 474 votes, the second largest number in the county.³⁰ Along with J.P. McFarland, Hunt was elected to represent Los Angeles County in the Assembly, the first of his five terms in the Assembly. Even though San Bernardino was the second largest city in the county, about half the votes had to come from non-Mormon voters in other parts of the county. Hunt's popularity and experience in Southern California significantly contributed to his first election to the Assembly.

After the election, Hunt left home a few days before Christmas, arriving in San Francisco aboard the steamer *Sea Bird* on December 30th.³¹ On January 3, 1853, the fourth session of the California Legislature began in Vallejo. Jefferson Hunt was not present for the first day nor was he present on the second. Vallejo was only an hour or two by boat from San Francisco, but Hunt was not present until January 5th - the third day of the session. There is no indication why Hunt was absent but he was probably meeting with other Mormons either in San Francisco, Mission San Jose, or possibly in Sacramento or the gold country. Once present on January 5th, Hunt was certified to take his seat as a representative of Los Angeles County.³² Subsequently, the Committee on Mileage reported that Hunt had traveled 1,200 miles (round trip) and was eligible to receive travel expenses of \$480 for travel. He tied with Assemblyman Tilghman of San Diego for most mileage to the capital.³³

³⁰ Voting records are filed by election date and county in the California State Archives.

³¹ Louis J. Rassmussen, *San Francisco Ship Passenger Lists, Volume IV* (Colma: San Francisco Historic Records, 1970), 226.

³² *Journal of the Fourth Session of the Legislature of the State of California* (Assembly Journal, 1853) (San Francisco: George Kerr, State Printer, 1853), 7.

³³ Assembly Journal, 1853, Appendix 3.

The first order of business of the new Assembly was to elect a speaker, and Hunt was present to vote. He voted for the successful candidate, Isaac B. Wall. Wall's first task as speaker was to appoint committees for this session. Some committees were considered more important and politically significant. Among those were the committees dealing with finance, land claims and printing. The latter two were significant because of ongoing scandals involving tidal land sales by the City of San Francisco and excessive printing charges incurred by prior legislatures. A number of Assemblymen clamored for these committee assignments. Jefferson Hunt was not among them.³⁴

Assemblymen could be assigned to more than one committee depending on their preferences, the need for members on some of the less desirable committees, and the desires or whims of the speaker. The speaker undoubtedly exercised considerable power and discretion in making assignments, and members of the more popular committees were decided by political influence. Membership of the lesser committees probably fell to those who were willing to serve or who were not in the favor of the speaker. One of the committees with little to do and not considered significant, was the Committee on Counties and County Boundaries. This was the one, and the only, committee to which Jefferson Hunt was assigned.³⁵

We can assume that the assignment of Hunt to the Committee on Counties and County Boundaries was not an arbitrary act by Speaker Wall. Most likely, Hunt requested that he be

³⁴ For more information regarding the SF land sale and printing issues, see: Theodore H. Hittell, *History of California* (San Francisco: N. J. Stone Co., 1897), 4 vols., Vol.4.

³⁵ Assembly Journal, 1853, 35.

placed on the committee however limited its power and infrequently it met. Placement on this committee put Jefferson Hunt exactly where he needed to be to solidify Mormon control over their new settlement and to exercise Mormon control over the California portion of the road to Salt Lake City – the Mormon Corridor.

The original California constitution created 27 counties. Boundaries conformed to the location of the population in 1849 and often enclosed unoccupied territory and even unexplored areas. The founders of California recognized that California was a work in progress and knew that new counties would be added and boundaries changed as the population increased and new lands were settled. The first legislatures recognized the need to establish a procedure for creating new counties. In the Assembly, this process first called for a petition signed by a large group of citizens from the area wishing to become a new county which was then introduced into the Assembly by their assemblyman. Next, the speaker referred the matter to a subcommittee composed of the Assemblymen from the affected counties and to the Committee on Counties and County Boundaries. These committees discussed issues such as boundary lines, how the new county would be divided from the existing county or counties, and how financial obligations would be divided. The final bill was reported to the full Assembly, which acted on the bill before it was sent to the Senate and Governor for approval.

When Jefferson Hunt arrived for his term in the Assembly, hoping to create a new county that could control California's portion of the Mormon road to Salt Lake City, his first task was to determine the required procedure. Now that Hunt was on the appropriate committee and understood this process, he was ready to organize a new county. It appears his next step was to

arrange for the signed petition from San Bernardino. Most likely, he communicated with Lyman, Rich and others in San Bernardino so they could gather the required signatures. Unfortunately, no copy of that petition can be found in the State of California Archives and no reference to any communication with Lyman or Rich on the matter has come to light. We do know, however, that Hunt had the petition in hand just six weeks after his committee assignment – a period of time consistent with sending a message from the Bay Area to San Bernardino, gathering signatures, and delivering the required document to Vallejo.

On February 24, 1853, Jefferson Hunt presented a petition for the creation of San Bernardino County. The entry in the Assembly Journal for that day reads: “Mr. Hunt presented the petition of citizens of Los Angeles, praying for the erection of a new county out of certain territory now belonging to that County, which was read, and referred to the Committee on Counties and County Boundaries.”³⁶ Hunt had introduced the legislation that would quickly culminate in the creation of a new Mormon-controlled county.

One month later on March 24th, Chairman Ewing of the Committee on Counties and County Boundaries reported on the bill to the full Assembly. It was then read the first and second times, part of the standard procedure for any bill that is moving through the Assembly. Next, it was referred by the Speaker to the members from that county - Hunt and McFarland. Four days later, the bill passed the Assembly. The Assembly Journal states: “Assembly Bill for an Act dividing the County of Los Angeles, and making a new county therefrom, was taken up, read a third time and passed.”³⁷ Having now been passed by the Assembly, the bill moved on to the Senate where

³⁶ Assembly Journal, 1853, 179.

³⁷ Assembly Journal, 1853, 343.

it passed on April 21st. On April 26th, the Governor returned the signed bill to the Assembly, and it was properly enrolled as a law. It took just two months for San Bernardino County to be created and named.

The bill contained rather imprecise boundary lines that referred to mountain ranges, peaks, homes and ranches as reference points. At that time, there were few surveys but the descriptions were no doubt understandable to those familiar with the area. The bill also specified the county officers and provided for an election for those officials during “the fourth week of June next,” and also created a Board of Commissioners to establish precincts and conduct the election. That board consisted of Isaac Williams of the Chino Ranch, John Brown - a mountain man who had met the Mormons in Pueblo in 1846-47 and who had settled in the area, David Seely - one of the leaders on the journey to California, and Henry G. Sherwood - a friend of Amasa Lyman and a surveyor. The bill also called for San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties to each have one assemblyman and to share one senator in the Legislature. A court was created and provision was made for both counties to create a commission to fairly divide the debt of Los Angeles County so that San Bernardino would be responsible for its share. Additional administrative functions were also addressed.³⁸

Two of the four election commissioners were Mormons with considerable stature within the community, and two were non-Mormon residents of the new county who had close ties with the Mormons extending back to 1846-47. Each gave credibility to the election, whether viewed by

³⁸ *Laws of the State of California Fourth Session*, (San Francisco: State Printing Office, 1853), 119-123.

Mormons or non-Mormons. Hunt served as one of the commissioners that divided the county debt.³⁹

Today, San Bernardino County is the largest county in the contiguous 48 states, covering over 20,000 square miles. It is thirteen times the size of Rhode Island, almost three and a half times the size of Connecticut, and larger than the states of Massachusetts and Vermont combined. It is twice as large as Israel, and it is larger than several European countries including Switzerland, The Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Slovakia. In 1853, it was even larger than it is today. The size was reduced when portions of the counties of Inyo, Kern, Riverside and Orange were created from parts of San Bernardino County. The size was also reduced in the 1870's when the boundary with Los Angeles County was moved eastward and the definition of the county boundaries was refined and defined more precisely.

The City of San Bernardino was in the southwest corner of the new county. The southernmost boundary of the county extended nearly 200 miles eastward to the California boundary at the Colorado River. The northern boundary extended in a northeasterly direction nearly 200 miles to what is now the California/Nevada border northeast of Furnace Creek in Death Valley. Inside this boundary were the entire route of the Old Spanish Trail within California, the eastern approaches to Walker Pass, and the entire California portion of the future Mojave Road. The county covered both the known route and possible future roads from Salt Lake to Southern California.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ A accurate 1853 map of California and San Bernardino County that shows the Old Spanish Trail route is: William Eddy, *The Official Map of the State of California by an Act of the Legislature* (New York: J. H. Colton, 1854).

During his first term, Hunt recognized why the legislators did not like meeting in Vallejo. The accommodations were sparse and crude, there was no entertainment, and it was difficult to obtain supplies and goods. In 1852, the year prior to Hunt's first session, the legislature met in Vallejo for one month before moving to Sacramento to finish the session. Again, in 1853, they found conditions in Vallejo deplorable. Hoping they would consider relocating, nearby Benicia offered their City Hall as a capitol building. The Assembly and Senate considered the unsatisfactory conditions in Vallejo and decided to move. On February 4, 1853, the Assembly and Senate began meeting in Benicia and remained for the rest of the session and for the beginning of the next.⁴¹

One bill introduced during his first session undoubtedly caught Hunt's attention. That bill would have determined the punishment for adultery and polygamy, both of which had been outlawed by the state constitution. Jefferson Hunt was a polygamist, a fact known to his Mormon community, and most likely, to others in Southern California. There is no indication that his polygamy was ever an issue, or even mentioned, by his fellow legislators during his five years in the Assembly. This bill was discussed on the floor only once and then tabled. Several days later, it was referred to a special committee of three members and no further action was taken.⁴²

⁴¹ For more information on the moves of the California Capital, see Hittell, Vol. 4.

⁴² While California legislators and newspapers often criticized polygamy in Utah, they seemed to simply ignore the practice in San Bernardino, probably since it was not as evident. For example, Pauline Udall Smith says that Matilda Hunt lived most of the time at Hunt's sawmill in the San Bernardino Mountains.

Hunt's voting record during his first year in the Assembly indicates he tried to avoid appearing to favor one side or the other on contentious matters, such as the controversial San Francisco tidal land sale, the movement of the capital, or the excessive printing costs authorized by the legislature. Perhaps he felt it was best to avoid upsetting other legislators while he had a bill pending. He seemed to be conservative in fiscal matters, often voting to avoid more spending unless it was for infrastructure, such as road construction.

In the 1850's the term of an Assemblyman was only one year and elections were held each fall. In the early 1850's, most Californians, including Hunt and the majority of other Mormons, were members of the Democratic Party. The other major party, the Whigs, had few followers in California and was on the verge of disintegrating nationally and, consequently, was never a major adversary to the Democrats in California.⁴³ In his five campaigns for the Assembly, the Whig Party never challenged Hunt. Hunt ran for reelection four more times and received 224 votes for the 1854 legislative year, 262 votes for 1855, 257 votes for 1856, and 240 votes for 1857.⁴⁴ Hunt faced his first adversary in the 1855 election. His opponent was Valentine "Rube" Herring, a former mountain man living in Pueblo at the same time as the Mormon Battalion sick detachment and who had joined the LDS Church for a short period and was briefly superintendent of schools in San Bernardino.⁴⁵ Hunt continued to gather the loyal Mormon vote in San Bernardino, but Herring received 82 votes reflecting the increasing numbers of Mormon apostates and non-Mormons in the community.

⁴³ See Hittell, Vol. 4 for information on political parties in California.

⁴⁴ Vote data was obtained from the voting records in the California State Archives which are filed on microfilm by year and county.

⁴⁵ Leo Lyman, *San Bernardino*, 152.

In his fifth and final election campaign, Jefferson Hunt faced two opponents. One was Duff Weaver, brother of Pauline (Powell) Weaver who was a former mountain man and scout for the Mormon Battalion, and the other was A. Boren. Prior to the election, a local Independent Party was formed but it could not decide between Weaver and Boren to oppose Hunt. Failing to reach a compromise, both ran in the election, thereby splitting the non-Mormon vote.⁴⁶ Hunt was victorious, while Weaver and Boren received 85 and 70 votes, respectively. The total count reveals that Hunt captured the Mormon vote in San Bernardino but the apostates and non-Mormons were gaining in numbers.

His political activities didn't hinder Hunt's entrepreneurial efforts. By 1854, he was a partner in a sawmill in the San Bernardino Mountains north of the city, and for a year or two, he left his eldest son, Gilbert, in charge of family business affairs. In 1855 Hunt obtained a subcontract for mail service between San Bernardino and Salt Lake City and his son John and son-in-law, Sheldon Stoddard, were two of his mail carriers. While his personal life prospered, his political life became increasingly complicated. In the spring and summer of 1855, opposition against the Mormon hold on political affairs in San Bernardino County began to rise. In April, while Hunt was in Sacramento, elections were scheduled for the newly created county board of supervisors. Some of the non-Mormon residents, including a small group of former mountain men, decided to challenge the Church's practice of picking candidates to run without opposition. One of those mountain men, Louis Rubidoux, was the first of the opposition elected in the County.

Challenges to Hunt followed in the elections of 1855 and 1856.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Leo Lyman, *San Bernardino*, 331

⁴⁷ For a detailed discussion of the political activities in San Bernardino County, see Leo Lyman, *San Bernardino*.

While Hunt's first priority in the legislature was to secure local control for the Mormons and the San Bernardino community, he also participated in the larger issues in California politics.⁴⁸

While the Democratic Party was the dominant party, it was seriously divided between those that supported slavery and the southern states, and those that supported the abolitionists and the northern states. The dominant politician of the former group - the Chivalry Faction of the Democratic Party - was U.S. Senator William M. Gwin from San Francisco, while the dominant leader of the abolitionists was David Broderick – the most powerful political figure in California at the time and a challenger for California's second U.S. Senate seat. During his years in the Assembly, Hunt and all other assemblymen and senators were drawn into the battle between Gwin and Broderick.

The ongoing internal conflict within the state's Democratic Party and party adversaries, United States Senator William Gwin and former California Senator David Broderick, rose to center stage of California politics during the 1854 session. At this time in history, US senators were elected by the state's legislature as opposed to popular vote, and Broderick unsuccessfully attempted to force an early vote to get himself elected as successor to Gwin. With Gwin's term expiring, three major candidates surfaced for Gwin's senate seat in 1855. Fifty-four votes were required to elect a new senator. On the first ballot held by the Senate and Assembly meeting as a convention in joint session, Gwin, had 42 votes. P.L. Edwards, the Whig Party candidate, received 36 and Broderick garnered only 12. Six minor candidates shared the remaining votes. One of the 12 voters for Broderick was Jefferson Hunt, who held abolitionist sentiments. The convention met a number of days, and on the fiftieth ballot the vote was identical to the first.

⁴⁸ For a comprehensive discussion of California politics and legislative issues in the 1850's see Hittell, Vol 4 and Bancroft, Vol. 6.,

Hunt and his 11 associates steadfastly voted against Gwin; consequently, no candidate was elected to fill the Senate seat, which remained vacant for a year. Jefferson Hunt had become a committed politician, no longer content to take a non-adversarial stance during his public service.

Finally, on January 10, 1857, the legislature finally resolved the United States Senator issue that plagued the party and California for years. The agreement, brokered by David Broderick, sent both Gwin and Broderick to Washington. Broderick replaced outgoing Senator John Weller and Gwin was re-elected to his prior seat. Once again, California had two senators in Washington. But as strong as the Democrats hold on California politics was, there was a brief hiatus in the mid-1850's, and the Mormons and Hunt were drawn into this conflict.

The Democratic Party was the dominant political party in California.⁴⁹ Most of those who emigrated to California were Jacksonian Democrats who favored the westward expansion and settlement promulgated by President Andrew Jackson. The Mormons of San Bernardino consistently voted for the Democratic Party ticket, and Hunt, who had frequently moved westward and settled new land, was a fully committed Jacksonian Democrat.⁵⁰ In the first half of the 1850's, the Whig Party, the other major political party in the United States, began to disintegrate and the nativist American Party, or Know Nothing Party, began a brief but influential rise in power.⁵¹ The Know Nothings' anti-Catholic and anti-immigration beliefs attracted a large number of California miners, regardless of their prior political sentiments.

⁴⁹ Hittell, Vol. 4.

⁵⁰ Voting records, California State Archives; Hunt introduced several subsequent bills honoring Andrew Jackson.

⁵¹ See Hittell, Vol. 4, for additional information regarding the Know Nothing Party.

As the 1855 election approached, the importance of the Mormon vote was not lost on the Know-Nothings, who were attempting to win the state senate seat for Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties held by Lewis Granger, the Democratic party leader who first encouraged Jefferson Hunt to run for elected office, and a lawyer who had assisted Lyman and Rich. Apparently, two attempts were made by the Know-Nothings to influence the Mormons; one involved an offer to Lyman of \$7,000.⁵² Lyman and the other Mormons firmly rejected all overtures and remained loyal to the Democratic Party.

In the election held on September 5, 1855, the Mormons of San Bernardino voted for incumbents Senator Lewis Granger, Governor John Bigler, and of course, Jefferson Hunt. Locally, Granger was defeated while Hunt was reelected.

In that election, the Know Nothings swept the ticket for statewide offices and gained significant strength in the legislature. Most of their support came from people who had previously voted with the Democrats. The most upsetting of the results was the defeat of four term governor John Bigler by J. Neely Johnson. Loyal Democrats, including Jefferson Hunt, regarded this defection by party supporters as grave misconduct. In San Bernardino, party loyalty was supreme and the county voted for Bigler by a margin of 332 to 14, the highest ratio of any county in California.⁵³ Seizing the opportunity to remind his colleagues of the foundation of the party, on January 8, 1856, Hunt began the session with the following resolution: “Resolved, that in honor of the ever glorious battle of New Orleans, fought on the eighth of January, and in honor of the ever-

⁵² Leo Lyman, *San Bernardino*, 179-180.

⁵³ Voting Records, California State Archives.

memorable name of Andrew Jackson, the hero of that day, this House do now adjourn until 10 o'clock, A.M., tomorrow."⁵⁴ It lost by a vote of 24 to 51, and the Assembly continued with its business.

Richard Hopkins, branch and stake clerk in San Bernardino authored a critical comment on Hunt's resolution. In a letter to Amasa Lyman, then in Utah, Hopkins wrote on January 30th: "Capt Hunts (sic) patriotism got the better of his discretion and induced him to make a motion on the 8th of January that the assembly adjourn and thereby show their respect for the gallent (sic) Old Hickory. The motion to the opposite party had the appearance of extravagance, the KN [Know Nothings] having the majority compelled the old man to smother his patriotism and return to long speaches (sic) on financial reform. I judge the Capt's influence is not felt as it used to was (sic)."⁵⁵ With Rich, Hunt's long time friend and confidant, also in Utah, Hopkins and others were more outspoken when writing their impressions of Hunt to the absent apostles. Hunt was often solemn and brusque to those around him and Hopkins' comments reflected their feelings.

Nine days before the 1856 session ended, Hunt made one more attempt to honor Andrew Jackson. On April 12th, he introduced a bill to commission the painting of a portrait of Jackson to be hung in the capitol.⁵⁶ The bill was read a first and second time and then referred to a

⁵⁴ *Journal of the seventh Session of the Assembly of the State of California* (Assembly Journal, 1856), (Sacramento: James Allen, State Printer, 1856), 6.

⁵⁵ Amasa Lyman Papers in *Selected Collections from the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 1:37.

⁵⁶ Assembly Journal, 1856, 744-745.

committee of the whole, effectively halting it. In response, Hunt called for a rule change, which failed to reach the two-thirds majority needed for passage. Hunt's repeated attempts to honor Jackson were a not-so-subtle reminder to the defecting Democrats of their political heritage. The following year on January 8th, 1857, the anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans, Hunt once again introduced a resolution to honor Andrew Jackson.⁵⁷ After being tabled briefly, it was soon approved and the Assembly adjourned until the following day. The Know Nothings had significantly declined, the Democrats had regained their prior numbers, and Hunt had successfully recognized Andrew Jackson.

Jefferson Hunt's efforts to secure a Mormon Corridor and to improve transportation between Southern California and Utah did not stop with the creation of San Bernardino County. Hunt addressed the issue by introducing a bill that had little chance of passing but that could substantially benefit the Mormons, and their efforts towards an expanded Utah Territory, if enacted – the division of the State of California. On February 27, 1855, Hunt introduced legislation to “create a new state out of a portion of the territory of California.”⁵⁸ While this legislation was contrary to the interests of those who controlled the legislature and did not move forward, Hunt's bill did create a fire storm of action as he described in a March 7th letter to Rich: “All so (sic) you will see be the with in (sic) a Bill to divide the State. Well that has set every thing (sic) in an uproar and now from thee (sic) look of every thing (sic) I can see it appeare

⁵⁷*Journal of the Eighth Session of the Assembly of the State of California* (Assembly Journal, 1857), (Sacramento: James Allen, State Printer, 1857), 69.

⁵⁸ *Journal of the Sixth Session of the Assembly of the State of California* (Assembly Journal, 1855), (Sacramento: B. B. Redding, State Printer, 1855), 359.

(sic) to me that before we break up we shall divide it in to three parts and make three States of it”.⁵⁹

As Hunt predicted, Assemblyman David F. Douglass, of San Joaquin County introduced a bill for a resolution to Congress to create three states out of California and adjacent territories, which was referred to a special Select Committee for consideration. Hunt was immediately placed on the committee, which eventually totaled thirteen members. The bill would have extended the eastern Boundary of California well into the modern State of Nevada by annexing a significant portion of land within the Territory of Utah, a small portion of the Territory of New Mexico, and would have included much of modern Western and Southern Nevada. The report of the committee noted the rapid growth in California and the prospects for future growth and the fact that California would soon be underrepresented in the Senate when compared to many Eastern states.

But the report also noted that the creation of two new states, in addition to California, would further disrupt the balance of slave versus non-slave states in the Senate, and therefore, Congress was unlikely to take any action on the division of California. The committee reported favorably on the bill but no further action was taken to submit the resolution to Washington.⁶⁰

Hunt also actively pursued road construction legislation that would benefit San Bernardino and the Mormon Corridor. In early California, road construction was performed by those using the roads. Hunt, himself, had been involved in building Cooke’s Wagon Road, (the Mormon

⁵⁹ Smith, *Captain Jefferson Hunt*, 272.

⁶⁰ The full report can be found in *Appendix to the Assembly Journal*, Report, 1855, 4.

Battalion built road from the Rio Grande River to Warner's Ranch in California in 1846), and the wagon road along the Old Spanish Trail from Southern Utah to Williams' Ranch in Chino during 1849.⁶¹ Hunt and many others rightly believed that the role of road construction should be entrusted to the state or federal government.

During Hunt's third legislative session, 1855, his first issue was road construction. A good road system was in the best interests of the San Bernardino community and Southern California in general. Hunt presented a proposal to the Assembly in the second week of the session to "construct a Military Road, to connect with the Government Military Road, at the Eastern Boundary of the State."⁶² Two weeks later, he gave notice of another bill to construct a road from San Bernardino to the Southern Mines at Mariposa. His third bill, presented on March 3rd, would construct a wagon road from Santa Barbara to Stockton via Los Angeles and Tejon Pass. The fourth and final bill - "An Act appropriating Money for the Improvement of the Immigrant Road from the Eastern Boundary of this State, through the Cajon Pass, to San Pedro."⁶³ - was introduced late in session on April 4th.

Of these four bills, the last was the most important for Hunt. It would have improved the California portion of the road that followed the Old Spanish Trail from San Bernardino toward Utah and Salt Lake City. This route was of great importance to the Mormons' internal communications and for moving converts and freight from the Coast to the Mormon heartland.

⁶¹ This "Government Military Road" was probably the Gila Trail, or Southern Route, which for much of the way was the same as Cooke's Wagon Road, or the road built by the Mormon Battalion. For information on the road built by the Mormon Battalion see: Philip St. George Cooke, *The Conquest of New Mexico and California* (Oakland: Biobooks, 1951).

⁶² Assembly Journal, 1855, 98.

⁶³ Assembly Journal, 1855, 608.

Travel along this route was frequent and included mail carriers, freighters, families and individuals.

Hunt was not the only assemblyman proposing legislation for road construction. A number of proposals would extend roads from the northern mining camps to the eastern state boundary. The citizens and towns sponsoring these routes hoped new roads would bring increased business to their communities. Hunt believed he was responsible for the rash of road construction bills, writing in a March 7th letter to Rich: “I have presented a Bill to get in a proposition to open the Rode (sic) from Salt Lake and since I have did that (sic) it has got the hole hose (sic) a fire and they are now trying to get three or four across the mountain and what we shal (sic) do I can’t tell.”⁶⁴

The plethora of road proposals was referred to the Committee on Internal Improvements. In a March 12th report presented after Hunt’s first three bills, Committee Chairman C.T. Ryland stated that each of the road proposals presented both benefits and difficulties, and that cost was a major concern for each proposed route. The report concluded with a recommendation for one central route, at an undetermined cost, from Placerville to the Carson Valley, which approximates today’s Highway 50 and which essentially followed a portion of the road first pioneered by Battalion veterans traveling to Salt Lake City in 1848.⁶⁵ In the end, Jefferson Hunt’s efforts to obtain funding for new roads met opposition and were defeated. While the roads were considered important, the construction costs were beyond the financial means of the

⁶⁴ Smith, *Captain Jefferson Hunt*, 272.

⁶⁵ Assembly Journal, 1855, 426-430.

young state and the political power was centered in the gold fields of the North so Hunt's bills were not passed.

After his freshman year, Hunt was appointed chair of the Military Affairs Committee in each of his four remaining years in the Assembly. He was one of the very few legislators who were present in California during the Mexican War, and he was the most senior officer from that period in the Assembly. This assignment recognized his military leadership and reputation during the Mexican War in California and reflected his stature among those that knew him.

By 1854, there had been several incidents of rebellion involving Indians, and some of the criminal gangs in both Northern and Southern California had been quite active. The need for an organized militia was clear to most Californians and the Military Affairs Committee was actively considering how to best organize the state's military arm. On March 21st, the Committee reported its findings and Hunt introduced a successful bill to establish the militia.⁶⁶ Three days later, the legislature voted to appoint W. C. Kibbe as the quartermaster general of the new California militia. In this capacity, Kibbe would be responsible for supplying and organizing the various militia units in the state.

The following year, 1855, the Military Affairs Committee found it necessary to modify and expand upon the legislation passed during the prior session. California in the 1850's was a long distance from the rest of the United States and there were few federal military units stationed in the state. If needed, it would take months for troops to be summoned and transported to

⁶⁶ *Journal of the Fifth Session of the Legislature of the State of California*, (Assembly Journal, 1854), (Sacramento: B. B. Redding, State Printer, 1854), 268-269.

California. There were real and perceived threats from several Indian tribes, particularly in Southern California. Southern Californians also feared possible incursions across the Mexican border. Of greatest concern were the many bandit groups that freely operated in the less populated regions and often brought terror and chaos to ranches, farms and smaller communities.⁶⁷

Militia units, organized informally by communities within the state, had the authority and responsibility to respond to these threats. As California's population grew, there was a need to better organize the state and federal support for militias. The Military Affairs Committee addressed these concerns by introducing a bill that expanded the previous legislation and more formally organized the militia within the State of California. The bill passed both houses and was approved by the governor on April 23, 1855.

The legislation stated: "All free, able-bodied white citizens, between the ages of eighteen and forty-five years, residing in this State, and not exempt by law, shall be subject to military duty, and shall be enrolled as hereinafter directed."⁶⁸ The law established a process for more formally organizing local units, created six divisions composed of two brigades each, and specified the method of appointment of the general officers. It expanded the role of the Quarter-Master General, who would also serve as Adjutant General and would be responsible for supplying arms and supplies to the units and perform other necessary administrative duties for the militia.

⁶⁷ For a discussion of some the various threats see: Leo Lyman, *San Bernardino*, 60, 193.

⁶⁸ Statutes of California, 1855, 136.

For Jefferson Hunt this legislation was more than a successful military plan; he was appointed a brigadier general in charge of Brigade One, Division One, which comprised the southernmost counties of San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino – his home region. After serving as a major in Nauvoo Legion and as an army captain during the Mexican War, Hunt now became a general officer in the California Militia. With this appointment, he apparently became the first Mormon to be appointed as a general officer of a military unit composed primarily of non-Mormons. Even though this was not a compensated position, it carried significant responsibility and conferred considerable status on Hunt. Due to the volunteer nature of the militia, deployment was rapid and under the field command of local unit officers; therefore, General Hunt’s responsibilities were more administrative than field command. He remained in this position until just before he left San Bernardino in 1857.⁶⁹

Throughout most of the 1800’s a man’s military rank was considered socially important: the higher the rank, the greater respect given to the bearer, and high military rank was so important to some that many men assumed a title they never actually held. Therefore, it was commonplace and appropriate to address a former officer by his highest military rank. Jefferson Hunt was no exception. For the remainder of his life, he was typically addressed as General Hunt by both Mormons and non-Mormons alike.⁷⁰ Today, Hunt is most often referred to as “Captain Jefferson Hunt,” a reference to his rank within the Mormon Battalion. Unless specifically referring to his service in the Mormon Battalion, Jefferson Hunt’s proper military title is “General Jefferson Hunt”.

⁶⁹ The California State Archives hold militia documents prepared by Hunt in the latter half of 1857, after he left the Assembly.

⁷⁰ Multiple references to “General” Hunt exist in newspapers such as the Los Angeles Star and Deseret News following his appointment, as well as in the Journal History of the LDS Church.

Hunt's Military Affairs Committee was involved in matters other than the organization of the militia. In March, 1856, it reported to the Assembly that a bill to prohibit the carrying of concealed weapons in California was "inoperative" in the rural and more desolate parts of the state and that it should be postponed indefinitely.⁷¹ California was considered too hostile and unsettled to prohibit its citizens from carrying weapons for self defense. Hunt's final action of the 1856 session occurred on April 19th, two days before the end of the session, when he introduced a resolution calling on the federal government to give California 3,000 rifles or muskets, and associated equipment, worth \$60,000. This resolution passed the Assembly and the Senate on the final day of the session, April 21st.⁷²

The original California constitution gave all law making authority to the legislature. Cities and counties were severely limited in their authority to collect funds and make expenditures; such decisions were the prerogative of the state government. Compensation or cash awards had to be authorized by the legislature and approved by the governor. During his first term in the Assembly, Hunt introduced two such bills. On February 18th, he introduced a petition from Powell (Pauline) Weaver, asking to be reimbursed for expenses associated with the capture of an Indian outlaw.⁷³ Powell Weaver was Pauline Weaver, a former mountain man who had been a scout for the Mormon Battalion and was well known to Hunt.⁷⁴ When the Mormons arrived in

⁷¹ Assembly Journal, 1856, 498.

⁷² Assembly Journal, 1856, 858.

⁷³ Assembly Journal, 1853, 159.

⁷⁴ For more information about the Mormon Battalion scouts see Cooke, *Conquest*.

San Bernardino, Weaver owned a ranch at San Gorgonio, about 20 miles east. The next day, February 19th, Hunt introduced a similar bill providing relief for Samuel Whiting, presumably for similar actions.⁷⁵ Both bills were read once and then referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs. Neither was acted upon and both were withdrawn by Hunt on April 2nd. It appears that the Committee was not prepared to report favorably on either bill.

In February, 1851, the Oatman family, Mormons from Illinois who were followers of James Brewster (Brewsterites), was heading to California along the Southern (Gila) Trail from New Mexico. They were attacked by either Apache or Yavapai Indians in Arizona, and the father, pregnant mother and three children were killed. One son, Lorenzo, age 14, was left for dead and two girls - Olive, age 16 and Mary Ann, age 10 - were taken captive. The girls were eventually traded as slaves to the Mojave Indians along the Colorado River near present-day Needles, California. Later in the 1850's, Lorenzo searched for his sisters and aroused significant public interest in their plight. After several years, Mary Ann died in captivity, but in early 1856, Olive was rescued when she was "traded" to the army at Fort Yuma. Her story of captivity and survival quickly captured the interest of the public.⁷⁶ In March, Jefferson Hunt introduced a bill to provide relief for Olive Oatman who was raised as a Mormon and was rescued in San Bernardino County.⁷⁷ Hunt had a personal interest in her welfare.

⁷⁵ Assembly Journal, 1853, 163-164.

⁷⁶ For more discussion of the Oatman Massacre see: Olive and Lorenzo D. Oatman, *The Captivity of the Oatman Girls among the Apache and Mohave Indians* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1994).

⁷⁷ Assembly Journal, 1856, 518.

During his time in the legislature, Hunt introduced other bills that would affect his San Bernardino and Southern California constituents. In March, 1853, while he still represented all of Los Angeles County, he introduced a petition to translate California laws into Spanish.⁷⁸ Then during the 1854 session, Hunt introduced several more bills. The first, on January 25th, was “an Act for the government and Protection of Indians.”⁷⁹ This bill reflected both the Mormons’ concern about Indians and Hunt’s interest and care for the many bands that lived near San Bernardino. He felt a moral obligation to protect the Indians and believed well-governed, protected Indians would be a lesser threat to the citizens of Southern California. His bill was referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs, which eventually reported back with a “no support” recommendation, believing the current law was adequate, and the bill did not pass.

On March 28, 1854, Hunt introduced legislation to incorporate the City of San Bernardino, which would bring more autonomy to the Mormon settlement.⁸⁰ The bill passed the following day. One issue that concerned many Californians, especially the Mormons in San Bernardino including Lyman and Rich, was the title to land that had previously been part of grants made during the Spanish and Mexican periods. The issue was contentious because grants were often ill defined and many people were making claims for the same land. The ultimate resolution of the issue depended on the actions of the federal government, not the state. As the San Bernardino representative, Hunt was particularly interested in this issue. On January 20th, he was

⁷⁸ Assembly Journal, 1853, 276.

⁷⁹ Assembly Journal, 1854, January 25.

⁸⁰ Assembly Journal, 1854, 298.

appointed to a select committee to reconsider a resolution to the federal Land Commissioners but the issue was not resolved until well after Hunt left California.⁸¹

In March, 1855, Hunt introduced a resolution to the federal government calling for weekly mail service between San Diego and San Pedro via Los Angeles and San Bernardino.⁸² This was an overland route that would have connected the four cities, and Hunt might have benefited from his subcontract with the primary contractor had the U.S. Post Office instituted such a service.

However, no further action was taken on the resolution. Then in 1856, he introduced legislation that extended the time for collection of taxes in San Bernardino and Los Angeles Counties, and provided relief for the San Bernardino Rangers - a militia unit under his command. These bills passed before the end of the session.⁸³

On February 3, 1857, he introduced a bill to create a Board of Water Commissioners for San Bernardino County. This bill, which was approved and became law on March 2nd, provided a process for allocating, controlling and protecting water rights and the construction and maintenance of ditches within the county. Because of the increase in non-Mormon population, this was an important matter for agricultural and domestic water use in San Bernardino's productive but semi-arid climate.⁸⁴

⁸¹ For a detailed account of the land grant issue see Hittell, Vol. 4.

⁸² Assembly Journal, 1855, March 17.

⁸³ Assembly Journal, 1856, 518.

⁸⁴ Assembly Journal, 1857, 221.

Two weeks later on February 17th, Hunt introduced legislation to redefine the boundary line between Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties. This bill clarified the line and moved a small portion of area back into Los Angeles County. The description of the exact boundary lacked the precision that would have satisfied surveyors of the time, which might explain the introduction of a competing bill backed by a petition from some of the San Bernardino dissidents and introduced by Hunter from Los Angeles. After discussion between Hunt and the Los Angeles delegation, an agreement was reached and a final bill was approved and signed.⁸⁵ The same day Hunt introduced the county boundary bill, he again introduced a bill to commission a portrait of Andrew Jackson to hang at the Capitol. With California's finances in chaos, no further action was taken on this expensive gesture of party loyalty.

During 1857, the criminal activities plaguing Southern California were a concern of Hunt's. On March 6th, he introduced legislation to build a jail in San Bernardino and a week later he introduced a bill to provide funds to Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties "for the arrest and suppression of bands of armed banditti."⁸⁶ The first bill authorized the county to levy a tax and specified how the contract would be awarded and the funds administered. The California constitution and laws did not enable local governments to make such decisions. The "banditti" bill authorized the state to give Los Angeles County \$3,000 and San Bernardino County \$2,000 for the specific purpose of stopping the outlaw gangs. Both bills passed and became law.

Finally, on March 28, 1857, Hunt introduced his final piece of legislation as a California Assemblyman which enabled David Seeley, his friend and fellow lumberman, to collect tolls on

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 334.

⁸⁶ *Assembly Journal*, 1857, 522.

the road into the mountains from San Bernardino that had been built by the Mormons working under Hunt's supervision in 1852.⁸⁷ This bill may have reflected his belief that he and the other Mormons would soon be called to Utah from San Bernardino.

Hunt was involved with other bills and votes during his five terms. In 1853, he introduced a petition from the residents of Yolo and Sacramento counties to protect salmon runs in the Sacramento River. This legislature also adopted the first regulations providing hunting seasons for elk and antelope. Even at this early stage in California history, there was environmental concerns and interest in protecting California's wildlife.⁸⁸

At the start of his second year in the Assembly, 1854, Hunt no longer took a low key approach to avoid controversy – San Bernardino County was a reality. In the opening days of the session, he voted to certify the election of Governor John Bigler, who had received 253 of the 255 votes cast in San Bernardino. Bigler had won the popular vote by less than two percent and his election was unsuccessfully challenged by his opponents. Perhaps the most historically significant decision made during this session was the location of California's capital. Although Hunt voted to keep the capital in Benicia, the legislature voted on February 24th to move to Sacramento, where they resumed the session on March 1st. After five moves in four years, the capital had found its permanent home. The original Benicia Capitol building is the only one of the original capitols remaining – today it is part of the California State Parks System.

⁸⁷ In 1852, Hunt, probably because of his road building experience with the Mormon Battalion, was placed in charge of a volunteer work crew of San Bernardino Mormons who built a road from the city to the summit of the mountains to the north of the city. They used a total of 1,000 man-days of labor. Smith, *Captain Jefferson Hunt*, 170.

⁸⁸ Get cite.....

When the Legislature met on January 2, 1855, (Hunt's third term), the Assembly's first order of business was to elect a speaker. No one received the requisite number of votes on the first two ballots. Initially, Hunt and three others voted for E. Gould Buffum of San Francisco. On the third ballot, this group of four switched their votes to William W. Stow, who was then elected Speaker of the Assembly.⁸⁹ Hunt was beginning to use his seasoned veteran status to exert greater influence in Sacramento.

In addition to his assignment on the Military Affairs Committee, Hunt was placed on the Committee on Printing. While membership to this committee might sound unimportant today, in 1855 it was considered a very significant assignment. During the 1854 legislative session, printing costs were outrageously high and created a major scandal in California. The legislature spent \$202,000 printing bills and laws, exceeding the per diem and expenses of both the Assembly and the Senate. It also exceeded the combined costs of the state's Executive and Judicial branches, and the massive printing expenses undoubtedly lined the pockets of some of the legislators and their friends. But, because of the politics involved, the legislature failed to fully rectify this problem.⁹⁰

By 1856, only four other Assemblymen had greater seniority than Hunt; he was now one of the most senior members of that house and he remained a Democratic Party stalwart in light of the victory of the Know Nothings in the previous election. When the Assembly voted for the Speaker of the Assembly, James T. Farley was elected over T.W. Taliaferro by more than a two

⁸⁹ Assembly Journal, 1855, 9-11.

⁹⁰ For a full discussion of the printing cost issue, see Hittell, Vol. 4.

to one margin. Hunt voted for Taliaferro, and in an apparent show of thanks for his support and party loyalty, Taliaferro himself, cast the only vote for Hunt as speaker.⁹¹

In 1857, his fifth and final session as an Assemblyman, Jefferson Hunt was the second most senior member of that body and one of the more influential members of the Democratic Party. Only Santa Barbara County's Assemblyman Jose Covarrubias, who was also a general officer in the militia, had more seniority. Accordingly, on January 6th, Hunt's first effort of the session was to nominate Elwood T. Beatty of Calaveras County as Speaker of the Assembly. Beatty was elected over two other candidates. Later that day, Hunt and two others were selected by the full Assembly to report to the Governor that they had organized and were ready to conduct business.⁹²

On January 28, 1857, Hunt introduced a joint resolution calling for a constitutional convention. Perhaps his personal motivation was again a division of the state, or perhaps he was selected by his party because of his seniority to raise the issue with the Assembly. While a revision of the constitution was badly needed, the issue was contentious and, as a result, was tabled.⁹³ Over twenty years were to pass before the legislature successfully revised the California constitution.

On March 3, 1857, Hunt introduced, again because of his seniority, a highly controversial bill to bring to trial Edward McGowan for his role in the infamous murder of James King of William in

⁹¹ Assembly Journal, 1856, 7.

⁹² Assembly Journal, 1857, 10-17.

⁹³ Ibid., 189.

San Francisco. McGowan's supporters immediately attempted to sideline the bill, but a trial was eventually held in Napa County where McGowan was acquitted due to insufficient evidence that he participated in the actual planning of the murder. Since Hunt rarely, if ever, introduced legislation that didn't directly involve his specific interests in Southern California or the military, it can be assumed that he was selected by the law and order faction of his party to present this controversial issue because of his seniority and stature in the Assembly, and because he had no connection with politics in San Francisco.⁹⁴

During the summer of 1857, things began to change for Jefferson Hunt and the Mormon residents of San Bernardino. The approach of Johnston's Army to Utah and the possibility of armed conflict probably became known to the more senior Mormon officials in California, including Jefferson Hunt, by August 1st. Certainly, by September 1st, the information had come to all San Bernardino residents and there was general anxiety and confusion about what might happen. While an official recall never arrived from Salt Lake City, most people believed they were being recalled to Utah or wished to go there to assist their friends, family and faith. Many considered a recall to Utah to be in effect and prepared to leave California.⁹⁵

Jefferson Hunt's political life in California was about to end as the fall elections approached. In spite of the possible recall or departure of many of the Saints, the Church officials and residents still felt obliged to settle the debts incurred in buying the ranch and founding the colony. The San Bernardino Rancho had been purchased by apostles Amasa Lyman and Charles Rich, for \$75,000, with money they personally borrowed, much of it from other Mormons in California.

⁹⁴ Assembly Journal, 1857, 468; For further discussion of the death of James King of William, see Hittell, Vol., 4.

⁹⁵ See Leo Lyman, *San Bernardino*, for an account of the demise of the Mormon colony at San Bernardino....

By early 1857, Ebenezer Hanks had become a full partner by investing more than \$25,000 into the ranch, and Lyman and Rich had left for Utah and to prepare for other missions. The colony was in the care of William J. Cox who was the stake president.⁹⁶

Historian Leo Lyman says: “During an August meeting Cox requested that fifty settlers make good on a previous promise that if necessary they would ‘pay for the whole of the ranch.’

Assemblyman Jefferson Hunt, perhaps in a sincere effort to bolster their resolve, made a speech that insulted Brother Gale and number of others, creating a situation serious enough that Cox intervened, saying he had convened the meeting and presumed he could ‘get through it’ without abusing anyone. Hunt thereupon removed his name from the list of those committed to assist as promised, which in turn elicited comment that a half dozen others had made greater pledges than he. The incident clearly alienated a number of participating brethren from the longtime assemblyman, and stake president Cox soon requested that Hunt be reassigned to a Utah location for his own benefit.”⁹⁷ Leo Lyman believes that this incident led many to support those dissident apostates and non-Mormons who wished to replace Hunt in the Assembly.

In addition, the dissidents called for a meeting with the Mormon leaders to agree on a ticket for county officers that both sides could support. Consequently, a meeting was held on August 15th to select a slate of candidates.⁹⁸ It is quite possible that this conference also decided to replace Hunt in the Assembly. In any case, Hunt did not run in the September 1st election. The newly

⁹⁶ See Leo Lyman, *San Bernardino*, for an account of the purchase of the San Bernardino Ranch and the financial implications.

⁹⁷ Leo Lyman, *San Bernardino*, 380.

⁹⁸ George William Beattie & Helen Pruitt Beattie, *Heritage of the Valley: San Bernardino's First Century*, (Pasadena: San Pasqual Press, 1939), 276.

elected Assemblyman for the district was Dr. Isaac Smith, who had previously purchased Pauline Weaver's ranch and who claimed to be a cousin of Joseph Smith.⁹⁹

On September 9th, Richard Hopkins wrote to Rich in Utah about the election and Dr. Smith and included the following comments about Hunt: "The old Captain or I should have said General was considerable discontented and in his way used his influence against us. Though his influence has greatly declined since your departure. But when he found the work did not stop if he was not sent to the legislature he turned around and voted the ticket. Though the old man thinks our influence in the north is gone. (I presume departed with his greatness)."¹⁰⁰

While possible, it is not likely that Hunt's strong-willed and contrarian nature would allow others to force him out of office. More probably, he chose or agreed not to run for re-election. He was probably aware of the pending recall and had already been summoned to return to Utah or had decided to return on his own. Horace Rolfe recorded: "It was thought by many that the reason General Hunt did not run for the assembly at the last preceding election was because he had a foreknowledge of the general breakup that was soon to take place, but which did not seem to be generally known among the church members previous to the actual 'counsel' which came from their headquarters to that effect."¹⁰¹

Hunt's political legacy in California, while often overlooked, was significant. If we are to presume, as the evidence indicates, that he was assigned by Lyman and Rich or even Brigham

⁹⁹ Leo Lyman, *San Bernardino*, 381.

¹⁰⁰ Charles C. Rich Papers in *Special Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1:36. .

¹⁰¹ Beattie and Beattie, *Heritage of the Valley*, 288.

Young to represent the Mormon community in politics, then he was successful. His initial attendance at the division of the state convention, followed by his brief term on the initial Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, established Hunt's and the Mormon community's credibility among the non-Mormon residents of Southern California. In his freshman year in the legislature, he successfully formed the expansive San Bernardino County, which gave local Mormon leaders control over their settlement and the northeastern approaches from the eastern boundary of the state, and established western foothold for a potential Mormon Corridor. His subsequent re-elections and seniority status in the Assembly reinforced his influence during a time of instability in California politics. Hunt's appointment as a brigadier general in the militia responsible for the southernmost and most threatened and lawless section of the state was a tribute to his political prowess and prior military experience. During six years of political service, he was away from his family and business affairs for forty percent of the time, nearly two and a half years, but his personal sacrifice greatly enhanced the cause of the Southern California Mormons and contributed to the family's financial stability.

During the summer of 1857, Hunt remained active in the Democratic Party and served as a delegate to the local convention to select a candidate for state senator.¹⁰² And, on the Fourth of July he delivered an oration at the newly constructed bowery in San Bernardino.¹⁰³ That same day, his son John married Lois Pratt, daughter of the Hunts' good friends, Addison and Lousia Pratt. In August, forest fires plagued the mountains to the north and one fire burned a large amount of timber and threatened Hunt's sawmill.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² *Los Angeles Star*, August 1, 1857.

¹⁰³ *Los Angeles Star*.....

¹⁰⁴ *Los Angeles Star*, August 8, 1857.

Hunt left California for a new home in Utah on January 1, 1858.¹⁰⁵ Like most of those who left San Bernardino for Utah, Hunt sold his property at a significant discount. Pauline Smith, his descendant and biographer, says that he sold his interest in the sawmill worth \$25,000 for a mere \$2,500.¹⁰⁶ Not all of the family left, however. His married daughters, Nancy Daley and Jane Stoddard, and their families, and his twenty year old unmarried daughter, Harriet, remained in San Bernardino and provided a California base for the family for the rest of the spend her last years with her daughters.¹⁰⁷

Because of the threat from the Utah War and the near evacuation of Salt Lake City, the Hunt family remained in Parowan when they reached Utah. Hunt, however, soon traveled north and was in Salt Lake City by May 30th and in the following weeks served on Brigham Young's delegation that met with federal commissioners to resolve the Utah War.¹⁰⁸ In September and October of 1858, Hunt was scouting a new wagon route to California just west of the present day Nevada/Utah border near where those states meet Idaho, and assisted the federal Indian Agent, Dr. Forney, in discussion with Indians along the Humboldt west of present Elko, Nevada.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Edward Leo Lyman, Susan Ward Payne, and S. George Ellsworth, eds., *No Place to Call Home: The 1808-1857 Life Writings of Caroline Barnes Crosby Chronicler of Outlying Mormon Communities*, (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005),

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *Captain Jefferson Hunt*, 176.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 176-177.

¹⁰⁸ *Journal History*, May 30, 1858; *Journal History*, June 11, 1858.

¹⁰⁹ Thompson & West, *History of Nevada*, (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1881), 104-105; *Journal History*, October 31, 1858.

In 1859, Hunt traveled to Washington D.C. where he met with President Buchanan, although the purpose of the meeting is unknown. On October 7th, he returned to Salt Lake City with four or five wagons of merchandise.¹¹⁰ Late that year, he returned to California on a trading trip and returned in early May, 1860.¹¹¹ In the summer of 1860, he settled in the Ogden area and founded the community of Huntsville, Utah, along the Ogden River about fifteen miles east of Ogden. The Hunts also maintained a home in Ogden where Celia lived while her youngest daughter, Mary, attended school. Jefferson Hunt was a forceful speaker and was often called on to speak at celebrations, services and other events. On Pioneer Day, July 24, 1860, Jefferson was the “orator of the day” at the celebration in Ogden.¹¹² Pioneer Day celebrated both American independence and the arrival of the pioneers in Salt Lake City in 1847. During his absence, and on that same day, his wife Matilda gave birth to her sixth child in Huntsville. This newest member of the Hunt family was aptly named Liberty Independence Hunt in honor of the day of his birth.¹¹³

In 1865, Jefferson decided to again relocate, this time to an area in the upper part of the Cache Valley in today’s Southern Idaho. Because Matilda was pregnant and near delivery, she remained with Joseph Hunt and his family in Millville, Utah, just south of present day Logan,

¹¹⁰ Journal History, June 26, 1859; Journal History, October 11, 1859.

¹¹¹ Journal History, May 2, 1860.

¹¹² Journal History, July 24, 1860.

¹¹³ Smith, *Captain Jefferson Hunt*, 256.

while Jefferson and the others went on to Oxford to establish their new home. On October 22, 1865, she delivered twin girls. But the birth did not go well and Matilda died shortly after. One of the twins died very shortly after that.¹¹⁴ Sophronia, Matilda's oldest daughter, now 17, assumed much of the responsibility for raising her seven siblings.

The extended Hunt families soon numbered five married children plus the younger children and grandchildren. The Hunts needed more land to farm and ranch and again relocated their ranch from Oxford to a point about nine miles north called Red Rock Pass, while still maintaining their home in Oxford.¹¹⁵ Jefferson probably didn't understand the full geological significance of the land at his new home. Later geologists determined that this point exactly on the northern rim of the Great Basin was where ancient Lake Bonneville overflowed and discharged a massive amount of water into the Snake/Columbia River Basins about 15,000 years ago. For a brief period of time, this was probably the largest river in the world.

Jefferson Hunt died from cancer at his home on his ranch on May 11, 1879, while Celia was away visiting family in Southern Utah.¹¹⁶ He was buried on his ranch at a site he had selected next to Red Rock Knoll, immediately next to today's Highway 91. Today, Jefferson's grave is well marked and other family members are buried in the same plot. A monument to Jefferson placed by his family rests atop Red Rock Knoll and another sign near the road explains the

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 201.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 203.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 218-219.

geological importance of the area. Celia spent her remaining years with John in Snowflake, Arizona, and with her daughters in San Bernardino. She died in San Bernardino on December 28, 1896, at the age of 91. She is buried in the pioneer cemetery there, not far from her original San Bernardino home.

Some insight into Jefferson Hunt can be gained from excerpts from a letter from Samantha Brimhall Foley to Lois Hunt West, John's daughter and Jefferson's granddaughter, describing her memories of him in Idaho:¹¹⁷

"...Captain was not an old man then. He was tall, stately, with sharp features, a forceful character. The very air and even the earth seemed to move as he went on his way about his work. Stern, kindly hearted, all the elements of a warrior and of a home man, a kindly husband and father were blended in his nature..."

"...He was noble but not proud. He was a natural orator, convincing, with an overflow of well spoken language. As to Church history, he seemed to know every step of Church history from the beginning. His voice was often heard at celebrations of the Fourth and Twenty-fourth of July. He was a high Priest and magnified his office with great dignity..."

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 206-207.