Disputed between Texas and Mexico

Early Discussions of Relocating

Joseph Smith and the apostles at Nauvoo begin planning for an expedition to Oregon territory and the Mexican territories of California to find a new home for the Saints.

20 FEBRUARY 1844

Joseph Smith organizes the Council of Fifty in part to seek places of refuge “in Texas or Oregon or somewhere in California.”

11 MARCH 1844

Latter-day Saints at Black River Falls, Wisconsin Territory, write to Joseph Smith, suggesting the “table lands” of the Republic of Texas as an additional gathering place.

15 FEBRUARY 1844

The JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

The Council of Fifty’s Role in Seeking a New Place of Refuge for the Latter-day Saints
The council approves plans for the Wisconsin Saints to settle in the Republic of Texas.

3–6 MAY 1844

Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum are killed in the jail at Carthage, Illinois.

27 JUNE 1844

The council sends Orson Hyde to Washington DC to seek information on potential gathering sites and to seek permission for church leaders to raise a military force to protect American settlers in Oregon and Texas.

4 APRIL 1844

The council sends Lucien Woodworth to Texas to negotiate for a Mormon settlement with Texas president Sam Houston.

14 MARCH 1844
Disputed between Texas and Mexico

OREGON
Joint U.S. and British occupancy

UPPER CALIFORNIA

MEXICO

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

The Council of Fifty’s Role in Seeking a New Place of Refuge for the Latter-day Saints

FEBRUARY–MARCH 1845
The council considers sites for settlement outside the U.S., including the Republic of Texas; Oregon territory; Mexican California; and Monterrey, Mexico; or possibly among the Cherokee or other Indians in the West.

4 FEBRUARY 1845
The council is reorganized, and council members accept Brigham Young, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as Joseph Smith’s successor.

REPUBLIC OF TEXAS

Disputed between Texas and Mexico

WISCONSIN
TERRITORY

MISSOURI

ILLINOIS

MISSOURI

IOWA
TERRITORY
Focus on Upper California

“The Upper California Oh thats the land for me
It lays between the mountains & great pacific sea,
The Saints can be supported there & enjoy sweet liberty
With flocks and herds abounding Oh thats the land for me

“We'll go and lift our Standard, we'll go there and be free
We'll go to California and have our Jubilee
A land that blooms with endless spring
In Upper California Oh thats the land for me.”
— John Taylor, 18 March 1845

11 MARCH 1845
News of the annexation of Texas by the United States reaches Nauvoo, after which Mormons no longer consider Texas a viable gathering place.

18 MARCH 1845
The Council of Fifty focuses its attention on Upper California, particularly near the mouth of the Colorado River (in the Gulf of California).

23 APRIL 1845
Missionaries travel to Indian tribes west of the Missouri River seeking temporary places of refuge for the Saints.
Church leaders meet to discuss the latest intelligence on western North America brought by Parley P. Pratt, who had been living in New York City.

27–31 AUGUST 1845
Church leaders meet to discuss the latest intelligence on western North America brought by Parley P. Pratt, who had been living in New York City.

9 SEPTEMBER 1845
The council reconvenes. Brigham Young announces his intention to settle "somewhere near the Great Salt Lake," and the council begins preparations for a mass exodus from Nauvoo.

EARLY AUGUST 1845
Church leaders receive positive reports of the Great Salt Lake area from Mormons living among fur trappers on the Vermillion River in present-day South Dakota.
The council meets to finalize preparations to move west.

“The Saying of the Prophets would never be verified unless the House of the Lord should be reared in the Tops of the Mountains & the Proud Banner of liberty wave over the valley’s that are within the Mountains & I know where the spot is & I no [know] how to make the Flag.”

— Brigham Young, 13 January 1846

11–19 JANUARY 1846
The first group of Saints crosses the Mississippi River into Iowa Territory.

4 FEBRUARY 1846
The first group of Saints crosses the Mississippi River into Iowa Territory.

27 FEBRUARY 1846
William Clayton crosses the Mississippi River with the records of the Council of Fifty in his possession.