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"Christmas always had a strong appeal to the pioneers and was observed by them no matter what their conditions were.

During the autumn of 1847, the harvest was so meager in Salt Lake Valley that no special Thanksgiving service was held, yet the pioneers did not fail to remember Christmas. Though food supplies were scarce, and their reasons for merriment were limited, Lorenzo D. Young wrote of that first Christmas the pioneers spent in the Salt Lake Valley:

I gave a Christmas dinner. Father John Smith, Brother John Young, Brother Pierce, and their wives, and also Brother Jedediah M. Grant, Sister Snow and Harriet and Martha took dinner with us. After dinner Father Smith blessed our little Lorenzo. The occasion was a most pleasant one and the day was spent in social chat, singing, etc. A prayer was offered up by Brother Grant. Brother Brigham and his quorum were remembered in particular. My house was dedicated to the Lord.

During the Christmastide in 1847, it was written in the Journal History concerning the Church members in Iowa:

Friday, December 24, President Young and party proceeded to Miller's Hollow [now Council Bluffs, Iowa] where the brethren had built a log house, forty by sixty feet, capable of seating about one thousand persons. The house was dedicated by Elder Orson Pratt as a house of prayer and thanksgiving. The congregation was addressed by Elders Wilford Woodruff and Orson Pratt, and in the afternoon by Elders Amasa M. Lyman, Geo. A. Smith, and President Young. Elder Wm. I. Appleby preached during the evening service.

On Christmas Day, 1849, a gay party was held in President Brigham Young's home. One hundred and fifty persons had been invited for the occasion. "The tables were twice filled by the company," we read, "and all were feasted with the good things of the valley. When the tables were removed, dancing commenced, which was continued with energy and without interruption, except for supper, till a late hour."

On December 25, 1851, Captain Pitt's band, consisting of twenty-six members, promenaded the streets of Salt Lake City "and played before the houses of the First Presidency, the Twelve Apostles and others, while riding on horseback."

The Journal History contains a complete and interesting account of the celebration at Christmastime in 1851, from which we quote:

Christmas Day. Fine weather prevailed in Great Salt Lake City. all the hands engaged on the public works attended a picnic party in the Carpenter's Shop on the 'Temple Block which was cleared and decorated for the occasion. Several hundred persons attended and enjoyed themselves in both dance and song. President Brigham Young was also present. The enjoyments were varied with songs and addresses. The brethren of the band serenaded the inhabitants of the City from midnight till daylight which was quite a treat.

Elder George D. Watt gives the following account of the Christmas festivities:

Early on Christmas Morning, Thursday, December 25, several companies of serenaders, with brass instruments made the sleeping mountains echo with the sound of rejoicing. Our attention was drawn more particularly to the Governor's mansion, in the front of which was drawn up in military order a troop of horsemen. This was the brass band, giving his Excellency a good wish in sweet strains.

At ten o'clock a.m., the committee of management was in respectful waiting to receive those who were invited to the party. The carpenter's hall, one hundred feet long and thirty-two feet wide, is admirably adapted for a mammoth party, which was comfortable, and suitably decorated for the occasion. Now the merry workmen, with their happy wives, and smiling daughters, clad in genteel apparel, came pouring in from every quarter, loaded with an abundance of luxuries of every description which were deposited in an adjoining hall, called the machine room, which is forty feet square, in which also was situated the ladies' dressing room.

At 11 o'clock the house was called to order, and a suitable prayer and thanksgiving was offered up to the Donor of all good by Bishop N.H. Felt.

The band then struck up a merry tune, and his Excellency, Governor Young, and Hon. H.C. Kimball and other distinguished personages led off the first dance.

The excellent order, the quick succession of dances do great honor to the mangers. We counted from ninety-six persons to one hundred forty-four persons upon the floor at once. These were set in order to the same time that we have seen four cotillions in other parties. There was no confusion, no dissatisfied looks, no complaining, but the day passed in peace and happy merriment, with thanksgiving to the Father of all our mercies....

The atmosphere of our hall was not polluted with tobacco fumes, or the stench of the drunkard's breath. No! We breathed the pure mountain air, drank of the mountain stream, and ate of the produce of the mountains' valleys, we thought on the gloomy past, and the glorious present, and perspective future, every heart beat high with gratitude and gladness, and every countenance was lit up with the bright fire of enduring friendship.

About seven p.m. a few songs were sung by sundry individuals; one in particular called up feelings not strange to us was sung by Phineas H. Young, entitled "Farewell to Nauvoo." This song gave the company ample opportunity of comparing the present with the past.

Governor Young arose to address the meeting, and congratulated the assembly on their present situation and blessings as a people.

On Friday evening, December 26, the "public hands" again met in the Carpenters' Shop where "dancing was kept up with great spirit until midnight when all separated highly delighted with their Christmas festivities. In the course of the evening Willard Richards spoke of the difference between this evening and the 27th of June, 1844, when the tragedy at Carthage, Illinois, took place."

Elder George D. Watt gives the following account of this festival:

The seats in the Carpenters' Hall were filled by the not to be surpassed fair daughters of Zion, and the brave hearted sons of God.

The company was called to order, and prayer was offered up by A. H. Raleigh. The dancing was conducted as on the previous day, and the same good order, joy and hilarity was manifested.

After the Hall was illuminated, the company was treated to a feast in the shape of vocal and instrumental music by Mr. John Kay, his lady and two daughters, the one performed well on the Guitar, and the other on the Tambourine, at the same time accompanying their instruments with their voices, this with the sweet voice of Mrs. Kay, and the deep bass of Mr. Kay produced a species of harmony highly delightful to the ear. The performance was much applauded. Brother Kay sang the seer, in his usual pathos and sweetness, which drew from President Richards, a few touching remarks. Elder George A. Smith also addressed the meeting for a short time, after which the dance was resumed, and continued until 10 o'clock p.m. A vote of thanks was moved for the mangers, which was responded to by 500 voices. after the benediction from Father Cahoon, the assembly retired, much gratified with their Christmas festival, which was the best they had ever witnessed.

In some of the communities of the Saints there were not enough food supplies to furnish the tables. Despite this shortage there was always a determined effort to celebrate Christmas in a suitable mannner and make it the outstanding festival of the year. Such a spirit was manifested by the first settlers in Rockport Ward in Summit Stake.

The few families who moved to that region had taken but few cattle with them that season. At Christmastime they prepared a cooperative or community dinner. In the Church record we read that "the men jointly purchased a piece of beef for which they agreed to pay in grain after the following harvest.

Thus was the spirit of christmas kept alive by the pioneers, no matter how limited thier resources were."