

TITHING OFFICE DAYS

As he told it, he had been hearing about the law of tithing since he was very small, but the divine economy hadn't quite reached him personally until just before his tenth birthday.

In the spring his mother had given him a dozen brood eggs. He put them under a motherly old setting hen who devotedly cared for them until ten of the dozen hatched. Between the combined fussing of Clem and the old hen, they grew into respectable eating size chickens by late summer.

He found he could sell them at a profit to the Co-op for fifteen cents apiece. He had counted and planned. the expenditure of the dollar and a half over and over again, and that amount was so settled in his thoughts that a last minute reminder by his mother of the tithing principle came as a shattering blow. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. We are merely stewards here and one tenth of all our increase belongs to Him."

After the birds were carefully cleaned and plucked, at Elizabeth's suggestion, he chose the finest of the lot and set it aside for the Lord. It was wrapped separately from the other nine so it could be taken to the tithing office before he delivered the rest to the Co-op in exchange for money.

Now the great moment of decision had arrived. He stood before the gate of the tithing office. Half a block away and across the street on the corner was the Co-op. He could see its doors beckoning to him. He had ten chickens in the bag, but one was intended for his tithing offering. Somehow it just didn't seem fair. He had looked forward so to that dollar and a half. That was a nice round sum and a dollar thirty-five just wasn't the same. Besides the Lord wouldn't miss a piddlin fifteen cent poult.

"Pshaw, I'm goin to do it," he said to himself, and he picked up the bag and trudged on over to the Co-op. When he came out he had four pieces of Co-op paper money in his hands, two in fifty cent denomination and two in twenty-five.

He had his precious dollar and half, but as he walked along towards main street, anxious to get home, he began to ponder seriously what he had done. It was true. the Lord probably didn't mind too much but his folks were almost certain to be disappointed in him. Scoldings, even spankings. he could take when punishment was due. with some defensive justification within himself, for the hurt look he had no built ... in defense, only self reproach.

He retraced his steps back down the block and then over to the tithing office. Maybe they would take Co"op scrip instead of the chicken. At that point the whole enterprise became seriously complicated. He owed fifteen cents tithing but the smallest denomination he had was twenty-five cents. If he gave the tithing clerk one of those, he would have only a dollar and twenty •• five left, not even the dollar, thirty-five that but a few minutes earlier had seemed less than he was willing to settle for. It didn't occur to him that he could specify the amount of his contribution and ask for change. He wrestled with his conscience for another five minutes before finally going in to settle his account with the Lord. Minutes later he was on his way home with a dollar and a quarter and a twenty-five cent tithing receipt

That evening he explained to his father. it seemed like a skimpy thing to give the Lord a little old fifteen cent poult. so he'd decided to sell all the chickens and be able to make a respectable two - bit contribution.

Such was life in the Mormon settlement of Brigham City in 1818.