

Teacher Resource Information: **Work Bees and Community Cooperation**

For early Mormon pioneers in the settlement of Utah and Cache Valley, working together was essential for both survival and building up communities. People would work together to build defenses, to build irrigation systems, and construct religious temples. These projects aided in the development of communities, and this cooperative tradition extended to aspects of agriculture and farming.

In 1917 a lot of the work was labor intensive—that is, jobs took a lot of work before they were finished. Around the turn of the century, the development of new machines and technology helped to make time saving changes in both agriculture and domestic tasks. There were still major jobs that would take a lot of time to finish and communities would gather to finish those tasks.

Family, friends and neighbors would gather to complete the following jobs:

- Barn raising
- Making quilts
- Threshing grain
- Husking corn

As communities came together to get these jobs done, they became a way for people to socialize as well as get the work done. Dances were often part of a barn raising in particular, huge threshing meals were a big part of the threshing season, and quilting bees were the perfect time for women to get together and socialize with each other.

Red Cross Efforts for WWI

By November of 1917, members of the Red Cross were hard at work across Cache Valley, just as they were throughout the country, making necessary items for the war effort. Members included men and women, children, teenagers and adults. The work done at these work bees included bandage making and sewing and knitting of hospital supplies.

As winter approached, the Red Cross called for more and more knitted supplies for the soldiers, because there was not enough warm clothing for all of them. Red Cross members made great efforts to meet those needs. Many worked in every spare minute, as well as meeting together in work bees. Men at Brigham Young College made wooden knitting needles in their manual training classes because the supply of knitting needles had run out. School children also helped making the simpler items such as squares for afghans, washcloths, and handkerchiefs. The greatest amount of work was done by the women, who attended classes to learn to make surgical dressings and other specialized items. Most were already skilled in sewing and knitting, and were eager to help in every way they could.

Source: Research Files and Volunteer Manual—American West Heritage Center

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Educational Outreach Program

Harvest Time
Teacher Resource Information

