

Utah's Struggle for Statehood Source Summary Chart

Here are the sources for this inquiry at a glance!

Bold: if you only have time for students to analyze a few sources, we recommend starting with the bolded ones below. See our ideas for teaching page for more ways to pare the lesson down.

Name	Source Type	Key Points
1849 Sources		
Document 1: Vermont Newspaper on Deseret's Size	Primary Source newspaper article	The article criticizes the Mormons for claiming a large amount of land without permission. It argues that their request was unfair.
Document 2: Vermont Newspaper on Mormon Beliefs	Primary Source newspaper article	Article expresses concern that allowing the church members to settle near a route to California could give them control over an important passage between the East and West.
Document 3: Vermont Newspaper on The Name Deseret	Primary Source newspaper article	The article objects to the proposed name "Deseret," arguing that recognizing it would wrongly validate the Book of Mormon, which the author considers false.

Document 4: Burlington Free Press Continued	Primary Source newspaper article	Article introduces the church members and their request to become a state, notes public concerns about their beliefs and polygamy while acknowledging uncertainty about the truth of those accusations.
Document 5: Washington DC Newspaper	Primary Source newspaper article	Article criticizes the president for not supporting Deseret's request for statehood, suggesting that his hesitation is due to Deseret's failure to address slavery in its constitution.
Document 6: Virginia Newspaper	Primary Source newspaper article	Author questions whether the church community, whose laws and society are deeply tied to their religion, should be allowed to form a U.S. state.
Document 7: Washington DC newspaper	Primary Source newspaper article	Article argues against allowing the state of Deseret to join the U.S., claiming the Church members lack population and rely too heavily on their religion for governance.
1856 Sources		

Document 1: Constitution Cover Letter	Primary Source formal government letter	The letter from Utah's Constitutional Convention requests that Congress accept Utah's proposed constitution and grant it statehood.
Document 2: The 1856 Constitution	Primary Source legal document	The article defines the boundaries of Utah Territory and officially declares it a free and independent state named Deseret.
Document 3: Minnesota Newspaper	Primary Source newspaper article	Article warns that granting statehood to Utah while it practices polygamy could spark major national conflict, comparing the potential unrest to the violent struggles over slavery in Kansas.
Document 4: Drummond Letter	Primary Source firsthand account	Judge W. W. Drummond accuses church leaders in Utah of corruption and tyranny, claiming that Brigham Young controls the courts and government.

Document 5: Virginia Newspaper	Primary Source newspaper article	Article describes a speech by Heber C. Kimball that showed a strong loyalty to Deseret and Brigham Young while rejecting U.S. authority.
Document 6: Ohio Newspaper	Primary Source newspaper article	Article repeats claims that the church members were not loyal to the U.S. government and were preparing for possible conflict.
Document 7: Buchanan's State of the Union Speech	Primary Source State of the Union speech	Buchanan argues that Brigham Young holds both religious and political power in Utah, claiming that church members obey him over the U.S. government.
1862 Sources		
Document 1: Deseret News Article	Primary Source newspaper article	Article reports that Congress is considering Utah for statehood, but only on the condition that the territory agree to outlaw polygamy.

Document 2: Conner Letter	Primary Source newspaper article	Colonel Conner argues that if church leaders try to block U.S. troops in Utah, it would be an act of rebellion similar to the Confederacy.
Document 3: Wolff Letter	Primary Source newspaper opinion piece	John B. Wolff argues that fears about the church members and polygamy are exaggerated, saying the group is small and not dangerous.
Document 4: An Act Passed by Congress	Primary Source U.S. federal law	This act made polygamy illegal in all U.S. territories, and established punishments of fines and prison time for anyone who married more than one spouse at the same time.
Document 5: Iowa Newspaper	Primary Source newspaper article	The House Committee on Territories planned to allow Utah to become a state, but only if it agreed to ban polygamy. Utah's representative opposed this requirement.

Document 6: New York Newspaper	Primary Source newspaper article	Article reports that the Mormons in Utah have formed their own state called Deseret and have already chosen leaders, including Brigham Young as governor.
Document 7: Massachusetts Newspaper	Primary Source newspaper article	Article explains that Deseret legislature asked Congress to make Deseret a state, arguing it would save the government money. However, they also wanted to keep existing Utah laws.
1876 Sources		
Document 1: 1876 Republican Party Platform	Primary Source political party platform	The platform declares that the Republican Party believes Congress has the power and responsibility to end polygamy in U.S. territories, describing it as un-American and harmful.
Document 2: New York Newspaper	Primary Source newspaper article opinion piece	Article argues that Utah would normally have become a state already because it has enough people and resources, but it has not been admitted due to

		what the writer calls “serious moral problems.”
Document 3: Invasion of New Mexico	Primary Source newspaper article	Article reports on rumors that thousands of church members from Utah may move into New Mexico to start new settlements, noting that some Mormons are already in the area.
Document 4: Invasion of New Mexico Rumors	Primary Source newspaper article	Article responds to rumors printed by <i>The Patriot</i> (a California newspaper) that Brigham Young and most church members planned to leave Utah and move to New Mexico in order to take political control there.
Document 5: Political Cartoon	Primary Source political cartoon	The cartoon depicts Uncle Sam in bed with the country's minorities.
Document 6: A letter from Utah women to Hayes	Primary Source letter/petition	A group of 200 women from Salt Lake City urge the First Lady to help stop polygamy, arguing it deeply harms families and women and that church leaders use their power to protect it.

Document 7: Salt Lake Tribune Article	Primary Source newspaper article	Article warns that Democrats in Congress support Utah's statehood mainly for political gain but argues that the church cannot be trusted to give up polygamy.
1882 Sources		
Document 1: Hayes' Message to Congress	Primary Source presidential message to congress	President explains that church leaders in Utah control the government and the legal system, so they can block federal anti-polygamy laws and prevent justice from being carried out in the territory.
Document 2: Political Attitude Article	Primary Source magazine article	C. C. Goodwin argues that church leaders claim to respect republican government but actually run Utah like a dictatorship.
Document 3: President Arthur's Speech	Primary Source presidential address	President Chester Arthur tells Congress that despite efforts to limit polygamy in Utah, church leaders still dominate local politics and resist federal laws.

Document 4: Congressional Debate	Primary Source congressional debate statement	A U.S. senator argues that while Mormon leaders and polygamy are serious threats that must be stopped, the government must not violate the Constitution in doing so.
Document 5: Political Cartoon	Primary Source political cartoon	Depicts women in Utah as enslaved by polygamy.
Document 6: Quote from Philadelphia Newspaper	Primary Source newspaper article	Article reports that a Republican newspaper warned voters that a Democratic-controlled Congress might allow Utah to become a state.
Document 7: Deseret News Article	Primary Source newspaper article	Article defends Utah's bid for statehood, arguing that polygamy is a private religious matter, not a political one.
1887 Sources		
Document 1: Salt Lake Tribune Article	Primary Source newspaper article	Article suggests that if church leaders John Taylor and George Q. Cannon admitted guilt for practicing polygamy, promised to obey the law, and ended church control over politics, Utah could quickly move toward statehood.

Document 2: Abraham Cannon Journal	Primary Source journal entry	Abraham H. Cannon recorded that national political leaders, especially in the Republican Party, were beginning to recognize the value of gaining church support and votes.
Document 3: State of the State Address	Primary Source political speech	Governor Eli H. Murray urged Utah's leaders to obey federal laws, especially those against polygamy, and to separate church authority from politics to align with national values.
Document 4: Tribune Report of a Secret Speech	Primary Source newspaper article	Article reports an alleged secret speech in which Joseph F. Smith vows never to abandon polygamy, urges deceitful political tactics to gain statehood, and expresses hostility and revenge toward the U.S. government.
Document 5: Salt Lake Herald Article	Primary Source newspaper article	Article predicts that once Utah gains statehood, local divisions between Mormons and non-Mormons will disappear.

Document 6: Salt Lake Tribune Article	Primary Source newspaper article	Article argues that the ongoing conflict between the U.S. government and the church will only end when the church gives up its political ambitions and obeys national laws.
Document 7: United States Congress. House Committee on the Territories	Primary Source U.S. government report	This congressional report argues that polygamy in Utah is rapidly declining and is no longer a widespread issue.
Document 8: Gentile Petition Protesting Statehood	Primary Source letter/petition	This letter, signed by the Liberal Territorial Committee and accompanied by a petition of 13,000 signatures, urges Congress to reject Utah's bid for statehood.
1894 Sources		
Document 1: Elijah Morse Speech Part 1	Primary Source speech by congressman	In this speech, Congressman Elijah Adams Morse argues against granting Utah statehood, expressing deep mistrust of the Mormon Church's claims that it had abandoned polygamy.

Document 2: Elijah Morse Speech Part 2	Primary Source speech by congressman	Congressman Morse argues that many Utah residents are unfit for self-government because they are poor European immigrants brought by church missionaries who remain loyal to the church instead of American ideals.
Document 3: Elijah Morse Speech Part 3	Primary Source speech by congressman	Representative Morse argues strongly against granting Utah statehood. He describes the history of Mormonism as filled with superstition, crime, and immorality, portraying it as harmful to civilization.
Document 4: Congressional Debate	Primary Source congressional debate	Morse argues that polygamy remains a serious issue in Utah and should prevent the territory from gaining statehood. He compares polygamy to slavery.
Document 5: Colorado Newspaper	Primary Source newspaper article	Article discusses Congressman Morse's opposition to Utah's statehood, particularly his criticism of polygamy. The piece notes that Morse faced

		widespread national criticism for his stance.
Document 6: Woman's Exponent Article	Primary Source newspaper article	Article summarizes a speech at a Utah Woman's Suffrage Association convention. Penrose emphasized the importance of organization, persistence, and faith in the movement for women's voting rights.
Document 7: Enabling Act	Primary Source U.S. congressional act	This act formally allows Utah Territory to become the State of Utah, but only if certain conditions are met.