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Storytelling Through Brushstrokes: Minerva Teichert's Visualization of the Mormon Pioneer Experience and Messages to Her Audience

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STORYTELLING THROUGH BRUSHSTROKES: MINERVA TEICHERT'S
VISUALIZATION OF THE MORMON PIONEER EXPERIENCE AND MESSAGES
TO HER AUDIENCE

by

Amy L. Williamson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

American Studies

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2009

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ABSTRACT

Telling Stories Through Brushstrokes: Minerva Teichert's Visualization of the Mormon Pioneer Experience and Messages to Her Audience

by

Amy L. Williamson, Master of Arts
Utah State University, 2009

Major Professor: Dr. Melody Graulich
Department: English

“We must paint the great Mormon story of our pioneers in mural decorations so that ‘he who runs may read,’” remarked Minerva Teichert. When she created her pioneer panorama, Teichert attempted to do something different; whereas other Mormon artists had drawn on their personal pioneer experiences or sought inspiration from Church-approved publications regarding the trek, her visual inspiration came from the oral narratives she heard as a child. Because she used these narratives, Teichert portrayed the Mormon pioneer experience from a woman’s perspective and voiced their experiences to male and non-Mormon audiences. Not only did Teichert offer a counterpoint to sanctioned church histories, she coded her paintings with specific messages for different audiences, which allowed her to reach multiple audiences through her paintings.
(129 pages)

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Amy Williamson

□ Teichert's works are copyrighted by members of her family and Cor-Intellectual, the copyright department for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Cor-Intellectual holds the copyright for Zion Ho! and assumes copyright for works held by the family, which I refer to throughout the thesis. I am still waiting for approval from Cor-Intellectual for Zion Ho! and from the Teichert family. Images that I refer to can be found in Marian Wardle's book *Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint*, □ PAGE □iv□.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

“I do not care for bridge or teas or clubs but the story of the building of a mountain empire and the struggles of my people drive me on and unless I can paint a little each day on the great pageant of the West I think the day is lost.” – Minerva Teichert. (qtd. in Wardle, *Minerva Teichert Murals*, 25)

Who Was Minerva Teichert?

Like the stories she painted, Minerva Teichert’s life was a great pageant. She was second of ten children born to Frederick John Kohlhepp and Mary Ellen Hickman, born on August 28, 1888 in Ogden, Utah, where her family lived for a short while before moving to Idaho. Teichert enrolled at the Chicago Art Institute on April 14, 1909 (Wardle, *Minerva Teichert Murals* 10). She studied under John Vanderpoel, the leading figure artist and teacher in America; his book *The Human Figure* was published in 1908 and is still used in art instruction today (askart). Her art instruction was periodically interrupted by teaching in Idaho and Utah to earn money for her tuition (Wardle, *Minerva Teichert Murals* 11). In 1915 Teichert enrolled at the Art Student’s League in New York City, which at that time was the premier art training center in the United States. At the Art Student’s League she studied under George Bridgman and Dimitri Romanoffski, who instructed her in drawing and portraiture, but it was her training under Robert Henri, the great socialist painter, that had the most significant impact on Teichert’s painting.

Henri believed that students should adopt their own style and paint from real life. He encouraged, “Know what the old masters did. Know how they composed their pictures, but do not fall into the conventions they established . . . They made their language. You make yours” (Henri 11). Teichert made her own voice, and today she is

known for her unique style that consists of bold brushstrokes and an almost impressionistic style that did not focus on detail. Her experience with Henri also gave her a purpose to her paintings; before she left New York Henri asked her if “any artist had told the ‘great Mormon story.’ She replied, “Not to suit me.” He then remarked, “Good heavens girl, what a chance. You do it” (Teichert, mss 1947). After this conversation, she moved to Idaho to marry Herman Teichert and begin her artistic career painting Mormon stories and family life.

Herman and Minerva had five children, four boys and a girl, between 1918 and 1928. During the early years of her marriage, Teichert was busy raising a family, assisting her husband on the family ranch, and painting. Because she had no studio, she used the family room to paint. In 1927, the Teichert family was forced to move from their ranch on the Snake River Bottoms in Idaho when the American Falls Reservoir was opened (Wardle, Murals 14). This event had a great impact on Teichert, influencing her to write *A Romance at Old Fort Hall* (1932) and *Drowned Memories* (1926). *A Romance at Old Fort Hall* is a story that chronicles the history of the fort, the Shoshone and Bannock Tribes, and the terrain of the Snake River Bottoms through the eyes of a baby who survives an Indian attack. The child is adopted by a Bannock family whom they name Sam O’Geem. Marian Wardle argued that this story could be categorized as “reverse assimilation” where white children become a member of the tribe (Wardle, Pageants 144). Throughout the book Teichert reveals her mixed emotions about cultural assimilation and encounters, which she would later paint in her pioneer panorama. The family then moved to Cokeville, Wyoming, where they purchased a house that was more suited to Teichert’s painting because the light and walls were an ideal place to hang her mural canvases (Wardle, Murals 14).

Teichert’s painting was not always restricted to her home. In the 1930’s, the United States government sponsored a revival of mural art in response to the Great Depression. In this climate, aided by art dealer Alice Merrill Horne, Teichert was able to place twenty-eight murals in the state of Utah, in addition to being commissioned by the Federal Art Project to paint no fewer than six murals in Wyoming. While her method produced a unique visual voice, it makes it difficult to place her work in the context of American history painting, which I will discuss in Chapter 2. Teichert later quit the Federal Art Project because she did not approve of the artistic techniques that Diego Rivera brought to the United States and WPA artist’s use of them. She felt that the Beaux-Arts movement, a style that focused on one character or event, was the most effective way to tell a story in paint. Rivera's murals featured multiple stories and people, a technique she personally disliked. Furthermore, Teichert was painting her conservative political beliefs and Rivera's socialist views were directly opposite of her political beliefs and agenda. Additionally, she believed the federal government was interfering in private spaces, such as art and taxation (John Teichert). She felt that WPA officials censored artists who did not follow Rivera's style or socialist beliefs. Additionally, she came to view the WPA as a form of welfare, a system she was vehemently opposed to. Teichert believed that the government was too large and stole money from taxpayers. She wrote several articles in the local paper informing the community of Cokeville about the evils of

income tax, which she refused to pay. This refusal almost landed her in jail, until her husband wrote the IRS a check (John Teichert). Teichert painted scene murals after WWII, despite the trend against that genre of painting, but she continued until the 1970s when, according to her granddaughter Marian Wardle, she became “completely senile” (Wardle, Murals 15-16). Minerva Teichert passed away on May 3, 1976, leaving behind a rich legacy of Mormon stories and art.

Sharing Stories and Crossing Boundaries: Pioneer Panoramas

For over 150 years Mormons have been retelling the story of the pioneer trek and experience. Families developed their own epic versions of their ancestors’ pioneer experiences, turning mere mortals into religious saints. These tales were passed down the generations orally until they were collected by children and grandchildren. Teichert’s grandmother Minerva Wade Hickman would recount her experiences on the Mormon pioneer trail, serving as a midwife to Teichert while she was living with her as a young girl (Wardle, Pageants, 4). In addition to hearing these stories, Teichert was a voracious reader and spent many hours each day reading the classics and LDS Church publications (John Teichert). She noticed differences between church accounts and the ones she heard from her grandmother and other pioneers she knew, so she undertook to create a series devoted to the rich stories she heard from her grandmother and other Mormon women. Each pioneer painting then becomes a segment of her panorama of the LDS Pioneer experience.

As I will discuss in Chapter 1, leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints chose to chronicle the pioneer experience in sterilized “official histories,” celebrating the heroics of great Mormon men which were written by members of the Church hierarchy. Many of these histories are filled with short, dry accounts of pioneer life on the trail, often citing the date a man and his family entered the Salt Lake Valley. These narratives were focused on the experiences of men, particularly members of the church hierarchy, such as Brigham Young and other members of the Twelve Apostles. Any mention of women tended to be “so and so’s wife or mother.” Minerva Teichert disapproved of the official versions of the Mormon pioneer trek. When asked if there was any artist who ever told the Mormon story, she replied, “Not to suit me” (Gray vii). So she began creating a pioneer panorama, her series of paintings chronicling the Mormon pioneer experience, in 1920 and continued through the 1950s.

In her paintings Teichert created a different version of Mormon history, a feminist social history based on women’s experiences. Rather than turning to the sanctioned histories of the church hierarchy, Teichert sought her sources from the rich folk narratives of her family and friends and used them for the content of her paintings. She incorporated the folk narratives surrounding the experiences of Mary Fielding Smith in her painting *Not Alone* (1920) and the “Miracle of the Gulls” episode in *Miracle of the Gulls* (1935) to show her audiences that women were able to enjoy the spiritual fruits of angelic visitations and assistance and miraculous results in answer to prayers, not just male

church members who were ordained to the priesthood. In addition to capturing folk narratives, Teichert renders them in a style that promotes the sharing of these narratives.

Minerva Teichert loved telling stories; in fact, her son John Teichert cannot remember a time when she was not telling a story (John Teichert). Her daughter-in-law Dorothy Teichert remembers the dramatic nature in which she told stories, using her whole body and emotions corresponding to the cues in the narratives (Dorothy Teichert). For her the stories were the most important part of a painting, as she often said, “When the story is told the painting is finished” (Davis 9). She chose to render her figures in a way where the story, and not the individual people, were the visual focus. Robert O. Davis and other art historians and docents in museums have heard comments from patrons lamenting the fact that her paintings lack detail (Davis 10). What these patrons fail to realize is that this lack of detail works toward Teichert’s goal in sharing and promoting pioneer stories with her audiences because her pioneer figures, except for Brigham Young and Mary Fielding Smith, are not identified as any person in the title or with any visual detail from the painting; their generic form allows her audience to project their own stories onto the painting, creating a dialogue between the artist and audience as well as amongst the different audience members. As a docent at the Church History Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah I have often witnessed parents and grandparents pointing to a Teichert painting while telling their children or grandchildren about their great-great-great-grandmother who was a pioneer and what her experience was like. This was the desired result of her paintings, a result that could only be achieved with ambiguous forms.

Feminist Revisions: Teichert’s Rendering of Mormon Women

Wallace Stegner, Charles Dickens, and other historians and writers were amazed at the physical and mental strength of Mormon pioneer women. Many women often left the comforts of their homes and families to convert to the LDS Church and move to Utah, often immigrating to the United States by themselves, sometimes crossing the United States without the physical support of husbands. The Willie and Martin Handcart Companies were stranded in the snowy plains of Wyoming, their men were dying in alarming numbers, and the women had to assume responsibility for their families and children while carting their possessions with them (Swinton iv). Not only did women participate in the pioneer trek, they played an integral role in the development of Mormon colonies in the American West, being involved in many pursuits. They were the first women in the country to exercise the right to vote for city, county, and territorial officers, they served as jurors, were mayors and state legislators, managed livestock companies, ranches, and farms, were midwives and doctors, founded and published the first magazine for women in the West, operated telegraph offices, ran businesses, and managed family households and farms (Arrington 4). The Mormon women Teichert knew were independent, enjoyed a strong sense of personal and community identity, and valued their role as mothers while supplementing that role with their business pursuits (Wardle,

Pageants, 53). They were able and capable, leaving Wallace Stegner to remark that they were “incredible” (Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion* 13).

In portraying Mormon women, Teichert was also reminding Mormon men that women played an integral role in the development of Mormon history and Western colonization. Teichert was portraying the Mormon concept of feminism that asserts the equality between men and women. Throughout the history of the church Mormon women have aligned themselves with feminist ideas and people. In the nineteenth century, Mormon women invited Susan B. Anthony to speak in the Tabernacle and accompanied her to events in Washington D.C. Although Anthony and others were concerned about polygamy and its restrictions on women, many Mormon women boldly defended polygamy, declaring it a liberating institution. Susa Young Gates, Brigham Young's daughter, Emmeline B. Wells, Eliza R. Snow, editors of *The Woman's Exponent*, wrote how polygamy gave women the opportunity to pursue interests outside of the home. Not all Mormon women viewed polygamy as totally liberating; in fact, Annie Clark Tanner wrote an exposé on polygamy in her book *A Mormon Mother*. She chronicles the loneliness of her life as a polygamist wife, yet she also writes about her decision to stay in Farmington, Utah instead of moving to Canada with her husband and running her farm. While she viewed certain aspects of polygamy as limiting, her refusal to move illustrates the agency she had in a relationship outsiders viewed as totalitarian and abusive. Eventually polygamy was abandoned by the LDS Church, but the Church continued to encourage women to get as much education as they could, be politically involved in their communities, and pursue personal interests. The compatibility of Mormonism and feminism continued until the 1970s when it came into question from a handful of new LDS feminists.

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, a Mormon scholar, wrote about the seeming contradiction of being a Mormon woman and feminist. In the 1970s a huge debate erupted in the LDS Church over the Equal Rights Amendment, with some LDS women being for it while the church hierarchy was against it. A handful of Mormon women publicly voiced their support for the ERA while denouncing President Spencer W. Kimball and the Quorum of the Twelve. One woman, Sonya Johnson, was excommunicated for her public denunciation of the church through national media outlets and church meetings. Johnson and other radicals labeled themselves as feminists and the word became taboo in Mormon culture. According to Barbara Welter these women broke a cardinal rule in society by publicly trying to change the face of Mormon women; and women like Johnson meant that now all Mormon women did not represent the “true [Mormon] women” (Welter 52). Ulrich commented about the paradoxical situation she faced trying to balance her pro-church feminist views against the anti-church radical feminists in the press. She was so torn between these two seemingly incompatible spheres of her lives that she temporarily labeled herself an “oxymormon” (Ulrich 2). It took her son to make her realize that she was not the lone renegade “shaking the foundation of the Mormon Church” with her feminist ideals, and that she was not alone in her beliefs (Ulrich 2). Following this discussion Ulrich boldly asserted her identity, “I am not an oxymormon. I am a Mormon. And a feminist. As a daughter of God, I claim the right to all my gifts. I am a mother, an

intellectual, a skeptic, a believer, a crafter of cookies and words. I am not a Jack (or Jill) in one box” (Ulrich, 3). Yet Ulrich explains that Mormon doctrine asserts that each person has the freedom to speak, think, and act according to their own conscience as long as they do not endanger anybody or publicly denounce the church (Ulrich 4). In fact, Ulrich later described “Mormon feminism” in humanistic terms, meaning that her definition of feminism is that women should not be denied any opportunity based on their sex or gender. Throughout this paper I will be using Ulrich's definition of feminism. During her research on a pioneer ward album quilt, Carol Nielson noticed that most pioneer women “disappeared into anonymity” (Nielson 205). If a woman did not write her life’s history, it was passed down orally in the family until it was either recorded or forgotten, which depended on the gender of a woman’s posterity. Wells, editor of *The Women’s Exponent*, first noticed this trend and spent the last three years of her editorial career (1911-1914) desperately trying to preserve these stories in print only to have them rest in archives for more than half a century (Madsen 21). Even so, all of these attempts did not introduce the narratives to a broad audience. Teichert believed that telling these narratives in murals would counteract this trend; still in the twenty-first century the belief that “women weren’t important back then” still existed (Nielson 203). Yet, there is a decline in that belief, and as Teichert’s daughter-in-law Dorothy Teichert observed, Teichert was ahead of her time by thirty years. Dorothy has noticed that middle-aged and younger men now know about Teichert’s paintings and Mormon women whereas men from her generation (age seventy and older) have no idea who Teichert is or about the contributions of women in Mormon history, which she claims is a result of Teichert’s works and shifts in Mormon women’s scholarship (Dorothy Teichert). Men were not the only segment of Teichert’s audience that she wanted to address; within her pieces are numerous codes demonstrating proper behavior for modern feminist LDS women focused around her pioneer women.

This thesis examines Teichert’s pioneer panorama and the way she visually communicates her feminist history to multiple audiences through her paintings. Women in all ages have attempted to share their experiences with others in multiple formats—writing, art, storytelling, textiles, and others. Yet, the vast majority of these messages were unable to penetrate into audiences outside their community of women. In the nineteenth century, female artists began to be accepted into fine art academies and taught the traditional techniques that were admired, used, and seen by men. Teichert’s artistic training placed her in a unique position to share a female perspective of the Mormon pioneer trek to male audiences. As mentioned previously she was enrolled at the Chicago Art Institute and the Art Students League in New York, both prestigious art academies in the United States, and was tutored by global artistic celebrities. This training gave Teichert the tools to code her messages for her male and non-member audiences. Joan Radner defines coding in *Feminist Messages: Coding in Women’s Folk Culture* as a covert expression of ideas (Radner vii), meaning that in art a message is hidden in the images, colors, and symbols to those outside an intended audience. Teichert envisioned her art being viewed by multiple audiences and coded her messages toward them. She wanted her paintings to remind audiences, particularly male groups, that women played

an integral role in Mormon history through the artistic techniques to needed to penetrate that audience, such as rendering historical scenes in the art tradition of Jacques-Louis David and others and inverting the male gaze to negate scopophilic artistic undertones to present a dynamic female figure. For LDS audiences, Teichert incorporates Mormon symbols into her works, such as seagulls and the Three Nephites to underscore their religious belief in divine assistance along the pioneer trail and remind them of God's continual aid. This is especially important with Teichert's paintings, because she has multiple layers of code for her different audiences in a single painting. For female audiences, she codes her messages in the visualization of the bold, patterned textiles of their dresses, a coding that many women were already familiar with. Paisley was the fabric of choice for most of Teichert's pioneer women in her paintings; in fact, most women wear paisley in some form. This fabric was bold and colorful which represented powerful women; furthermore, LDS audiences would recognize the paisley as a visual symbol of the Mormon immigration from Europe, since many descendants had the paisley shawls their mothers and grandmothers brought from England and Scotland. Additionally, Teichert included messages to her female LDS audiences about the proper way to dress and act, based on the example of nineteenth century Mormon women. For non-members, Teichert used traditional Christian symbols in her paintings as a way to validate the Mormon Church and highlight theological similarities in an attempt to make Mormons religiously less "other."

Taking Mormon Beliefs to the Mainstream: Religious Messages for Women

One method Teichert used to communicate Mormon beliefs to a non-member audience was to incorporate biblical patterns and Mormon interpretation of the Bible and Book of Mormon in her coded messages for women, which I will discuss in Chapter Four. As early as the fifteenth century, art critics have commented on an artist's rendering of female virtue in their biblical paintings. One critic, Karel van Mander, was impressed with how Hugo van der Goes captured Abigail's generosity, virtue, and modesty in a painting that is now lost. Seeing the potential this image had for female instruction, van Mander suggested that painters should send their wives to the artists' painting so they can learn from its example (Bleyerveld 219). These biblical patterns of proper female behavior provided a precedent of coding in images. Female artists adopted the idea of a pattern, Teichert used paisley, and coded it with their particular messages, which often counteracted the roles men designated for them. There are codes for Mormon men and women and non-members. Each layer provides a message for her audience in an attempt to unify cultural and historical understanding about Mormon women.

Teichert's work is also unique because it fits into many historical, religious and social contexts. Chapter 2, Placing Teichert in the Canon, provides the necessary background information needed to place Teichert's work in proper artistic and historical context. Artistically she is a history painter, WPA artist, feminist, evangelist, social historian, and

muralist. Historical aspects of her paintings incorporate several genres, mainly venerative history, social history, Mormon history, Western American history, women's history, and Native American history. She was also a folklorist who documented oral narratives and material culture in her artwork. In Chapter 3, *Visualizing the Oral*, I examine the ways Teichert weaves folkloric accounts and artifacts such as fabric into her visual stories and feminist messages. Teichert was keenly aware of her audiences and coded her messages to reach them. Chapter 4, "Sharing the Mormon Experience," addresses the messages Teichert intended for her different audiences, member and non-member, male and female, and the ways she attempted to accomplish this. It covers Teichert's attempt to dispel the stereotypical descriptions of women in popular presses, her view on the proper comportment and behavior for LDS women, a powerful assertion of women's importance in the LDS Church, and how she tried to make Mormons seem less "other."

In a span of fifty years Teichert created her works while being a rancher, politician, active church member, wife, mother, and artist. Her work continued to grow quietly, without any recognition from the artistic and even Mormon community. While she envisioned her works being hung in great public places, she suffered the disappointment that she had few patrons most unwilling to purchase her work. Sadly, Teichert passed away before the resurgence of her work being displayed in public and private museums, being used by church leaders in General Conference meetings, and a recent publication about her combined works, *Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint*, by her granddaughter Marian Wardle. All this has happened within the past twenty-five years and her popularity among member and non-member audiences continues to grow. As her works continue to be exhibited, her messages will finally reach the audiences she originally intended.

CHAPTER TWO

Placing Teichert in the Historical Canon

A Brief History of American History Painting

“When the story is told, the picture is finished,” remarked Minerva Teichert about her work (Davis 5). According to her grandson Allan Teichert, Minerva Teichert read an incredible amount of history, especially Church history, and she wanted to visualize the past in a dynamic fashion on a near legendary scale (Allen Teichert 6). Because she created a style that was not replicated by any of her students, art historians have difficulty placing her work in a single tradition. As mentioned in the introduction, this chapter attempts to place her work in the artistic and historical canons.

American history painting was first rooted in two European traditions. The first tradition is an attempt to capture a moment, meaning that all the characters in the narration are present; additionally, there may be several narratives occurring at the same time. Because history paintings were considered the apex of fine painting, they are very elaborate, both in scale and composition, in order to showcase the artists’ talents. Benjamin West, a Pennsylvanian painter (1738-1820), undertook to narrate current American historical events by showing several stories taking place at the same time. For instance, in West’s “The Death of General Wolfe” (date) (Fig. 1), the main story, rendered in the foreground, relates the incident of General Wolfe’s death during the Battle of the

□

(Figure 1). Benjamin West. "The Death of General Wolfe." National Gallery Canada, Ottawa.

Plains of Abraham near Quebec, Canada. Yet, in the background is the narration of the ongoing battle to the left; and on the right, the audience sees the battle on the waterfront. West led the art community in his call for historical accuracy, demonstrated in the detail of the military uniforms and actions on the battlefield (Mitnick 39). West, John Trumbull, and John Singleton Copley painted in this narrative tradition during the late eighteenth century, but this was not the technique Teichert chose to adopt.

While West was painting his grandiose historical works, Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) took a different approach to painting in France, which would come to influence American artists like Minerva Teichert. Unlike his American counterparts, David turned to ancient history for his subject matter. His “Oath of the Horatii” (1784) (Fig. 2) not only demonstrates his return to the ancient world, but shows a change in the history painting genre. His work was intended to “edify and inspire the viewer without recourse to historical fidelity” (Mitnick 39). Instead of filling the background with figures, David chooses to paint the walls of the room. The number of characters in this painting, and other David paintings, are significantly reduced. In “Oath of the Horatii”, there are only six human figures. Reducing the number of figures allowed David to focus on the drama of a singular event. John Vanderlyn (1775-1852), a New York artist, began adapting current events with David’s style. Vanderlyn’s “The Death of Jane McCrea” (1804) (Fig. 3) created a new version of history painting, combining David’s European tradition with American events (Mitnick 42). As in David’s paintings, there are only a scarce number of figures, yet they are posed in dramatic, almost theatrical fashion. Teichert uses this formula in her pioneer paintings as well, with fewer than ten human figures in any painting or sketch.

□

(Figure 2). Jacques-Louis David. “The Oath of the Horatii.” (1784). Louvre, Paris.

□

John Vanderlyn. "The Death of Jane McCrea." 1804. Wadsworth Atheneum.

Vanderlyn's painting is not "historically accurate," as he took liberties with the dress, background, and posing of his figures. Like David, Vanderlyn retains the dramatic accuracy of the event. Likewise, Teichert's paintings do not capture the exact detail of an event; rather, she artistically recreates the folkloric legends of the Mormon past that may not be deemed historically accurate. All of these styles in the genre of historical painting were used throughout the nineteenth century, creating a standard that American artists and audiences used to understand the past. Artists who offered a different perspective were denounced by art critics and their works were not exhibited to general audiences, perpetuating the illusion that there was one method to history painting and interpretation.

In the beginning of American art, paintings focused on founding fathers or other great American men, developing a civil religion. The principle feature of the American civil religion paired historic events with divine approval. For instance, Robert Walter Weir's "Embarkation of the Pilgrims at Delft Haven, Holland, July 22, 1620" (1843) shows the pilgrims reaffirming their faith and devotion to God, a theme Teichert incorporates in her work. In return for their devotion, God will not only lead them to heaven, but to America as well (Greenhouse 50). This trend transformed figures such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and other patriots into saints. Americans sacralized their public heroes in public spaces through sculptures and monuments (Morgan 9). With the emergence of a new nation, a fledgling national-identity, a providential destiny, coupled with Puritan moral thought, a new form of history painting was created. This genre continued throughout the nineteenth century, often used to illustrate Manifest Destiny and the conquering of the US West. Teichert later adapted these techniques in her pioneer panorama.

In addition to portraying recent events, eighteenth century American artists believed that history painting should be coded to communicate moral truths and demonstrate proper conduct. This goal was achieved by rendering biblical or ancient history, or rendering current history as an allegory (Greenhouse 45). For Americans, there was no more perfect figure than General George Washington. John Trumbull's "The Resignation of General Washington" (1824) idolizes President Washington. Instead of remaining President of the United States, he stepped down, thereby curtailing a future monarchy or dictatorship in America. Other artists captured his boldness, ingenuity, and masculinity in similar manners. In folk literature, the story of George Washington and the cherry tree was told to young children to teach honesty and integrity. Similarly, Mormons built on this tradition by telling stories about pioneers to instill values in youth.

Following the American Civil War, American history painting evolved from the glorified descriptions of war and America's military might toward peaceful nostalgia (Mitnick 159). Instead of focusing on President Washington's military careers, artists

created tableaux of his personal life; Washington was not only seen as the father of a country, but as a father of a family (Mitnick 160). Junius Brutus Stearns depicted President Washington's as a family man in "The Marriage of George Washington to Martha Custis" (1849) and as a plantation owner in "Washington as a Farmer at Mount Vernon" (1851).

Likewise, elite and historical women were beginning to appear as the subject of paintings during this era as well. Edwin Deming illustrates Sacajawea's experience with Lewis and Clark in "Bird Woman Sacajawea Meeting Lewis and Clark on the Upper Missouri" in 1906. Sacajawea appears to be a part of the background, as the background and her dress are similar colors. She is placed lower than the two explorers, portraying her as visually less significant than the two explorers yet the title draws attention to her, the lone woman in the painting.

A few years later in 1920, John Ward Dunsmore paints Betsy Ross and her flag in "Betsy Ross and the First Stars and Stripes, 1777". Ross and another woman display Ross's creation across a table for two gentlemen to examine. The women's clothing is bright in pink and blue hues that contrast with the browns and grays of the building, drawing the eye toward them. Dunsmore shades the right side of the painting where the men are, focusing the attention on the flag and Ross. Teichert also uses color to visually anchor pioneer women as the focus of her paintings. It is significant that in Deming's and Dunsmore's paintings, women occupy a space separate from the men, symbolizing their social separation, despite the social contributions they made to American society, which visualizes a socially masculine view toward women, a view Teichert would subvert in her works.

Until the 1860s American female artists were largely ignored. Lilly Martin Spenser, a popular artist whose work was reproduced on a grand scale during the nineteenth century, was relegated to obscurity until feminist scholars rediscovered her in the 1970s (Lubin 159). Art connoisseurs and historians belittled female artists because their works did not reflect the classical art training men could acquire at art academies; since women were largely barred from art classes, particularly nude classes, their works, including Spenser's, were seen as less polished and less desirable (Lubin 159). This trend began to break in the late nineteenth century when women such as Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, and Lilla Cabot Perry began entering European art academies. American art academies soon followed suit, and women were slowly welcomed into art classes taught by progressive painters such as Robert Henri and other members of the Ash Can School.

The Ash Can school abandoned the traditional methods of paintings, creating their own modern style. Wallace Spencer Baldinger, an art critic in 1937, observed this about the evolution of style: "Eakins adhered formally throughout his career to a literal tonal tradition, Weir to an attenuated tonal tradition, Henri to a fragmentary tonal tradition" (Baldinger 285); Henri's group, "The Eight," sought to capture real life and people. "There are moments in our lives . . . when we seem to see beyond the usual. Such are the moments of our greatest happiness. If one could but recall his vision by some sort of sign. It was in this spirit that the arts were invented," remarked Henri on the necessity to paint from real-life experience (Henri 9). Henri, as well as Eakins and William Merritt Chase, began to accept female students in their classrooms, which caused some

controversy. He encouraged his art students to follow his example, writing *The Art Spirit*, a book of compilations about his philosophies on art. As well as focusing on painting from real experiences, a new art philosophy was emerging, that art should be for everyone. One twentieth century American artist, Elizabeth Catlett, shared Teichert's philosophy that art should be hung in public places and celebrate the contributions ordinary people have made to society (Gouma-Peterson 48). So Catlett, Teichert, and others began creating artistic works for the general public.

During the Great Depression history painting, particularly mural history painting, experienced a renewal in production and artistic style through the WPA mural projects from male and female artists. They would be commissioned to paint murals in public spaces, thus providing financial relief for artists as well as beautifying public buildings; Teichert participated in some WPA projects. Artists would be commissioned to paint a particular government building, often outside their communities (Park 37). While most artists had to travel from artistic centers in New York or San Francisco to commissioned projects, Teichert was fortunate because she did not have to relocate from her home in Wyoming. She disapproved of artistic outsiders because they were not familiar with the landscape, history, and people of the area. For instance, she often commented on the lack of browns, muted greens, and blues of the western landscape that were painted by Easterners (John Teichert). She wanted to paint and share what she knew, not learn to paint another person's experience. Because the WPA was government sponsored, many of the murals depicted New Deal themes of economic hope and industry, particularly with murals painted in cities, political ideas Teichert opposed (Kieffer 41). Yet, other artists chose to depict their personal socialist leanings in their public images and interpretations of the American past. Teichert was very conservative and believed that the government was too big and took too much from American citizens. Her works are coded with conservative political messages, but because they closely reflect the political mainstream they have largely been ignored for their political content.

Additionally, Mexican influences had permeated US art instruction, particularly in San Francisco. Ralph Stackpote, an art professor at the California School of Fine Art, returned from his trip to Mexico with pieces created by Diego Rivera in the 1930s. This new style popularized by Rivera was used by many WPA artists; in fact, *Time Magazine* declared that a majority of American artists have been influenced by Rivera (Dobbs 16). Teichert was not enchanted by Rivera's techniques, and her son even observed that he and Vincent Van Gogh were some of her least favorite artists (John Teichert).

In the 1930s and 1940s, mural painting still focused on the genre of history painting, but it was no longer popularly viewed as a mode for visualizing the hierarchy of US society. Not all WPA artists painted a "didactic and ennobling" version of the past, but Teichert would (Thistlethwaite 197). These traditional forms created a framework where she could celebrate the heroics of Mormon pioneers and their politically conservative beliefs. Other techniques such as modernism, cubism, and surrealism made their way into mural and history painting overpowering the traditional techniques. Industry and cities replaced the picturesque rural landscapes and agriculture, thereby creating a more authentic and current American scene. Art of this era also featured political events, social events, and opinions—both liberal and conservative.

Thomas Hart Benton's "New York History" (1925) illustrates this revisionist trend in

history painting during the first half of the twentieth century. In the colonial section, Puritans dominate the foreground. One sole Native American sits almost directly under a gallows, the noose readied for him. Buildings, a windmill, a noose waiting for someone's neck, and smoke are imposed on the natural landscape, illustrating a revisionist history that shows the darker side of colonial history: injustices to Native Americans, religious intolerance, and mob violence. The second section illustrates contemporary times; men industriously constructing a building; concrete and brick buildings dominate the background, concealing the sky behind skyscrapers. Benton's male figures are simple yet strong, exerting great force on inorganic materials, symbolizing the unnatural condition of their lives.

Placing Teichert in the Artistic Canon

These traditions and current trends had a great impact on Minerva Teichert who incorporated many elements from the past to form her own unique style. At the time she entered The Art Institute of Chicago, mural painting was being produced in the Beaux-Art tradition, which infuses allegory into historical paintings designated for public spaces. A significant difference between history painting and Beaux-Art murals is that muralists adapted their work to fit with the harmony of a building.

Teichert painted in the Beaux-Art and traditional method of painting murals; like David and Vanderlyn, she focused her murals on the main figures of the story and painted the authentic drama, or mood, of the event, rather than focusing on the exact details. This is most clearly evidenced in the clothing her pioneer women wear. Her heroines wear fitted clothing; dresses above the ankle, and some even have short sleeves – a definite taboo for Mormon women in the 1840s and 50s.

Teichert internalized the teachings of her teacher, mentor, and friend, Robert Henri, to paint from one's personal experience. At first this may seem paradoxical, because Teichert lived in the twentieth century while painting about nineteenth century themes. In writing about memory and narrative, James Olney quotes Augustine: "A present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future. For these three do exist in the mind (Olney 3). Even today, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormons) have deeply rooted ties to their pioneer past. Jan Shipps, a Mormon historian, has observed, "Today's [Mormons] live out their lives in a corporate community that still stands squarely and securely in the presence of the past" (Shipps, Sojourner 28). For Teichert, the pioneer experience was a key component of her identity, allowing her to paint a historical event while remaining true to Henri's charge of painting from contemporary experience.

In many ways Teichert is a modern painter, yet she rejected the style and work of her contemporaries. Many people have labeled her work as impressionistic, but Teichert disliked that term and never used it to describe her work (John Teichert). Her loose brushwork and style opposed the flat, curvilinear style of Benton and other contemporary artists (Wardle, Pageants 45). Teichert focused on one story in each painting, unlike Diego Rivera who compartmentalized multiple stories in one mural. Whereas most of

her contemporaries choose secular themes or indigenous religious themes as found in Rivera's and other Mexican art for their subject matter, she embraced Mormon religion and painted hundreds of venerable art works. The true difficulty in placing Teichert in the American and Western canon has been in attempting to classify her with a genre when she developed her own unique style. When asked about her new methods of painting she said:

[Latter-day Saint artists] shall develop an art as great as the Egyptians. Theirs is the art of a people, magnificent after millennia. So should our art, rich in story and backed by a great faith be so glorious that future generations may say, "This is the art of a great race." (Teichert, Letters 7)

Because Teichert's style is so unique and because she is a LDS painter, her art and scholarly examinations of her works have cast her art into a separate Mormon niche. The scholarly canon has overlooked LDS contributions in the US West visual landscape. Mary Carroll Nelson and John C. Ewers do not list a single LDS artist in their biographical indexes. By the 1970s, some Mormon artists were getting attention. Mahonri M. Young was highlighted in Daniel Mendelowitz's (1976) *A History of American Art* alongside his non-Mormon neighbor, Cyrus Dallin. Doris Ostrander Dawdy lists several Mormon artists: Mary Teasdale, Mahonri M. Young, Le Conte Stewart, J. Leo Fairbanks, John Fairbanks, John Hafen, Lee Green Richards, Daniel Weggeland, C.C.A. Christensen, and George M. Ottinger. One notable artist is still missing – Minerva Teichert. This is because the artists Dawdy catalogued exhibited their works in fashionable exhibits and galleries in New York and Europe which Teichert did not do (Dawdy 230). If male artists are excluded, female artists were effectively nonexistent in the scholarship. Undoubtedly, Teichert ranks among the most famous of LDS female artists/painters because she was the first woman who was commissioned by the Mormon Church to paint inside an LDS Temple (Oman 3). She also painted a pioneer and Book of Mormon panorama, several civic and religious murals. Yet, despite her accomplishments, Teichert has been ignored by the artistic and Mormon community – until recently.

Female Artists in the United States: A Historical Overview

Prior to the twentieth century, most women were denied the opportunity to study art; therefore their paintings were technically less artistic and were excluded from most galleries (Lubin 164). Even when women received technical training at reputable academies, being a female artist during the first half of the twentieth century posed many challenges. Married women artists were not considered professionals by gallery directors, museum curators, and other artistic professionals (Doss 129). As such, many were discriminated against. Henri, a popular art teacher in the first half of the twentieth century, often warned his female students about the difficulties in having their art showcased because most gallery owners were not sympathetic toward women (Owens 145). Furthermore, there was extreme social pressure for women to abandon their art after marriage (Doss 129). Teichert's husband, Herman, fully supported her in her artistic

pursuits and even encouraged her painting; unfortunately gallery owners were not as supportive as her husband (John Teichert). All of these factors combined to contribute to the absence of women in the artistic canon. Additional challenges also had to be overcome the further an artist was from New York.

Female American artists who captured the US West have only been recognized within the past fifteen years. The “monolithic image” of cowboys and Indians commanded the attention of art patrons and scholars throughout the twentieth century (Trenton x). In recent decades, art historians and other scholars have realized that the popular view is only one slice of life in the American West. Since most women painted from their experience and perspective, which did not include roping cattle and battling Indians, they were ignored almost entirely (Doss 210). As Patricia Nelson Limerick observed, when you take women out of the past, you get unreality (qtd. in Trenton x).

Erika Doss asserts that Teichert was overlooked in the artistic community because she chose to capture the Mormon pioneer and scriptural stories in mural and easel paintings for churches, schools, and private patrons. Basically, Teichert’s devotion to the artistic representation of her religion was the underlying factor for her present obscurity (Doss 209). David E. Morgan and Salley Promey’s book *The Visual Culture of American Religions* (2001), devoted to visual representations of religion, excludes Mormon art. Furthermore, Doss believes that Teichert’s conservative subjects, Mormon women, were out of vogue with her contemporaries, wedging Teichert farther apart from other female artists (Doss 209).

Teichert’s painting was different from that of her contemporaries, making it difficult for art historians to categorize her work because she incorporates techniques from various artistic modes (Sand). Her work is both modern and Victorian, especially in her rendering of Mormon pioneer women. These complications make it understandable that Teichert has been ignored in the artistic community; however, it is less understandable to comprehend why she has been forgotten in Mormon artistic scholarship.

A Historiography of Mormon History

Thomas Alexander, an LDS historian, has divided Mormon historiography into four eras: old Mormon history, turn-of-the-century venerable scholars, progressive scholarship, and new Mormon history. Old Mormon history was written by historical enthusiasts with little or no academic training in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The literature of the period was either pro-Mormon or anti-Mormon; defensive, apologetic, or exposé (Alexander 344). Historical works by LDS writers tended to be faith-promoting, almost bordering on the verge of the mythical. Lavina Fielding Anderson argues that the Church needed epic heroes and heroines as role models for children and church members. Since their religion was so new, they had to reinterpret pioneer experience, making it applicable to current events (Anderson 3). As a result, early Mormon leaders emerged as larger-than-life figures. John Taylor’s description of the prophet Joseph Smith, Jr. is perhaps the greatest example of this principle. A few days after his eye-witness account of Smith’s martyrdom in 1844 he writes:

Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it He lived

great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times has sealed his mission and his works with his blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. (Doctrine and Covenants 135:3)

Although declaring sainthood is still evident in Mormon culture today, it is dwindling in popularity. Eric Eliason observes that many members feel there is a false notion of "superhuman paragons of pious perfection" that accompanies the pioneer past (25). Turn-of-the-century venerable scholars attempted to observe Mormonism scholastically yet retain a pro-Mormon bias, and Teichert falls in this historic tradition. Like historians, Teichert researched the lives and experiences of Mormon pioneer women and presented her findings with celebratory bias. B.H. Roberts is the quintessential venerable scholar; his work is defensive and pro-Mormon (Alexander 344). Roberts compared the ancient saints Peter, Paul, James, and John to modern day LDS figures, as stated in his introduction to his series *History of the Church*:

Owing to our being so far removed from [the ancient apostles] in time, by which many of their defects are obscured] . . . with the exaggerated celebration of their virtues . . . have very generally obtained – inquiry prove they were very human, and men of like passions with ourselves. (Roberts XCIV)

Roberts' entire aim was to portray LDS/Church Presidents Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and other church leaders as the ancient apostles, thereby validating the spiritual authenticity of Mormonism. In publishing his works, Roberts sought approval from LDS Church leaders and followed their advice; LDS/Church President George Albert Smith published and copyrighted his work in 1951 (Roberts, title page). Roberts was also the first LDS historian who was not an apostle, a member of the second highest echelon in church hierarchy, to gain wide renown in Mormon circles. Roberts was followed by Gordon B. Hinckley, an apostle for the LDS Church, later prophet/president, who wrote his venerable text *Truth Restored* in 1947. Like Roberts, Hinckley chronicled the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to prove the theological veracity and divine establishment of the church. Three years after Hinckley's book, Joseph Fielding Smith, another apostle for the LDS Church, published a new venerable text *Essentials in Church History* in 1950, intended to condense Roberts' six-volume history into one book that could be used in conjunction with Church curriculum. Roberts said, "The doctrines and revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith [has] been interwoven with the story of the history [of the Mormon Church] . . . and has been prepared with a desire that the arrangement of the material will stimulate in the reader a zeal for further research" both from historical and theoretical texts (Smith, *Essentials*, preface). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, under the direction of the First Presidency, condensed Joseph Fielding Smith's book further and published *Our Heritage* in 1996. It is intended for the same purpose and is currently used in a historical and theoretical examination of *The Doctrine and Covenants* (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Doctrine and Covenants Manual* ii). During the 1940s, after Teichert had begun painting, LDS literature reflected an increased interest in the pioneers; after all, 1947 marked the centennial year of the first pioneer trek. In 1940, the Presiding Bishopric authorized Preston Nibley to create a compilation of

Pioneer stories. Many of his selections were written by members of the church hierarchy. For example, President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote about his mother; Anthony W. Ivins, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, contributed nine of the forty articles. Nibley's book incorporates some narratives about lay Mormons yet the book remains overwhelmingly masculine. Not only do these works maintain a masculine view of history, they interpret Mormon history through the eyes of church leaders and prominent men and women known as the Mormon elite. Even so in the entire anthology of stories, only one narrative features the story of an elite Mormon woman, Mary Fielding Smith, written by her son, the Prophet. There is one account written by Lucy Mack Smith, mother of Joseph Smith, relating her son's leg operation when he was a young boy. One organization that has remained in this category of scholarship is the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers (DUP), an institution open to descendent's of Mormon pioneers who collect family histories that are then housed in their historical department in Salt Lake City. The organization was founded in 1901 to preserve "the history and achievements of Utah pioneers" (DUP). It still continues to employ the same traditional methods of obtaining family histories today.

About the same time faith-promoting history was being published, other LDS scholars began to examine Mormon history in social and economic terms, creating a new genre of progressive history. The best example of this new history is Leonard J. Arrington's *Great Basin Kingdom* (1958), a thesis he wrote about the economy of Mormons in Utah. Arrington began his academic work in the progressive scholarship era but led the discipline into the era of new Mormon history.

New Mormon history scholarship produced the most academically fruitful works while expanding the discipline to encompass multiple academic fields. During this era, LDS scholars struggled to find a balance between faith and academia in their works. Historian Richard L. Bushman, encourages LDS scholars to "think about the relationship of their faith to their professional practice," at the same time warning them not to make the mistake to set out to prove their hypotheses based on faith alone (Bushman 15). This charge, and others similar to it, revolutionized LDS historical scholarship. Historians now looked at the human side of Mormon life, openly admitting the mistakes and idiosyncrasies of Church leaders and the general membership. Yet, while some scholars continue to focus on members of the Church hierarchy, more scholars began examining the lives of everyday members. Influenced by this new movement, Arrington and Davis Bitton attempted to explore "the lives of those who drive the engines of history... [who were] not considered important" in the past (Arrington vii). As scholars revisited Mormon history, the LDS Church also acknowledged the importance of having a church-produced history written by academic scholars. As a result, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* was written by James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard. As the new Mormon history era is shifting, scholars are examining the importance faith and culture has on the LDS people as well as the important role memory and ritualization of the past has played in Mormon culture, past and present. Anticipating this trend, Teichert would incorporate these themes in her work and alter them to visually capture women's historical impact in nineteenth century Utah.

Writing about the Mormon Elite

Maureen Ursenbach Beecher observed that during the nineteenth century a male and female elite existed in Mormon culture (Beecher 153). These elite members, many of whom were in the Church hierarchy, became authorities in church matters, as well as in daily life. For Mormon women, the first female authority was Emma Smith, wife of the prophet Joseph Smith. Valeen Tippetts Avery and Linda Newell argue that “many women who have become influential in religious and women’s history have been known initially because of their association with prominent men” (Avery and Newell xi). This is very much the case with Emma and Mary Fielding Smith and Eliza R. Snow, who was a wife to both Joseph Smith Jr. and Brigham Young.

Emma Smith and Brigham Young's mildly cordial relationship crumbled over the question of Smith's replacement following his death. Emma, along with her brother-in-law William Smith, believed that her son Joseph Smith III should assume leadership; Young believed the position belonged with the senior apostle, himself. A vote was taken among members and Young was chosen to assume leadership. Emma refused to move west with Brigham Young and Mormon women were left with a void in authority. Furthermore, Emma’s continued disobedience to Church decrees caused her to be stricken from official Mormon histories and her role as Mormonism's first lady (Avery and Newell xii). The question remained, who would be the next first lady of Mormonism. Mary Fielding Smith, Joseph Smith’s sister-in-law, seemed an obvious replacement because she was the only Smith family member in Utah. Unfortunately, she passed away in 1852, leaving the Church looking for a replacement. By 1857, Eliza Roxey Snow, president of the Relief Society, was the “disseminator” of religion and Mormon life to women (Beecher 153).

Joyce Crocheron listed prominent Mormon women in an 1884 publication called *Representative Women of Deseret*, acknowledging Eliza R. Snow, Zina D.H. Young, Mary Isabella Horne, Phoebe Woodruff, Bathsheba W. Smith, Prescendia Kimball, Elizabeth Howard, Elmina S. Taylor, Helen Mar Whitney, Emmeline B. Wells, Romania B. Pratt, and others (Beecher 155). All of these aforementioned women either held high positions in the female branch of the Church hierarchy or was a wife to an apostle, the second echelon of Mormon Church government. If anything was written in Church publications or women’s journals such as *The Woman’s Exponent*, it featured vignettes from the lives of these women.

Jill Mulvay Derr has spent decades researching the life and writings of Eliza R. Snow. Carol Cornwall Madsen found “her life’s work” in the study of the life of Emmeline B. Wells, editor of *The Women’s Exponent*, and in the presidency in the Relief Society (BYU devotional, 2002). Derr's and Madsen's scholarship reflect the trend of early female Mormon scholarship that focused on the lives of prominent Mormon women. Over the past decade this trend has shifted toward a new social history. Currently, new inquiries of research have been extended to examine the lives of everyday Mormon women. Teichert’s entire purpose in her pioneer panorama was to tell the story of the Mormon migration and settlement through a female perspective.

Women in Mormon History

The feminist era had a remarkable effect on Mormon culture and scholarship. Mormon women scholars began writing against the patriarchal system of Mormonism and expressed their views in *Exponent II* (1974 – present), a journal reminiscent of the nineteenth century women's newspaper *The Woman's Exponent* (1872-1914). Both publications vocalized the daily realities of women. *The Woman's Exponent* often published suffragist articles along with advice on how to be a proper Mormon woman. Teichert's paintings echo the sentiments of this publication which advocates women's issues while supporting church leaders. *Exponent II*, an often controversial publication that spoke out against the church hierarchy, examined the multiple roles Mormon women have and argued that a woman could be a "good Mormon" without following the traditional construct. Teichert believed that women should not be denied the same opportunities as men, but did not question or criticize church leaders. These twentieth century feminist beginnings provided a forum where Mormon scholars began to examine the contributions of women in Mormon history. Prior to this feminist era, there may have been an occasional article about Mormon women in scholarly literature; however, these female histories were typically ignored, even by Mormon women historians. They were not, however, forgotten by Teichert.

Many pioneer women kept diaries; some members of the elite female hierarchy even published personal vignettes in *The Woman's Exponent*. Another female publication was *The Relief Society Magazine* (1880-1974), which consisted of interesting articles about women's daily life and stories about prominent historical people, such as Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's piece on Bronson Alcott. As influential as *The Woman's Exponent* and *The Relief Society Magazine* were for women, the publications did not penetrate into male audiences. Prior to Teichert, Annie Taylor Hyde began collecting female histories when in 1901 she formed the Daughters of Utah Pioneers (DUP), a genealogical heritage association which collected feminine stories of the Mormon past but housed them in their private archives, restricting access to these stories to outsiders because they do not pay annual dues. Outside of the DUP, some literature on Mormon women was published, but it focused on the "great" women of the Mormon Church, such as Emma Hale Smith (wife of Joseph Smith), Mary Fielding Smith (wife of Hyrum Smith), and Presidents of the General Relief Society. Other LDS female historians, such as Emma Mar Petersen and Mabel Harmer, were still writing in the tradition of man's greatness into the 1940s, a genre Teichert rejected in 1920.

As early as the 1940s, Mormon women began writing about the pioneer experience. Mabel Harmer published *The Story of the Mormon Pioneers* in 1944, gathering information from pioneer journals with the help of Juanita Brooks, a Mormon historian writing during that time. Harmer's book records the pioneer trek in chronological order, beginning with Nauvoo and ending with the Utah War in 1856. While one might think that a woman would be inclined to include accounts from and about Mormon women, Harmer emphasizes the male experience in this book. If she does use an account a pioneer woman recorded, she documents the experience of men. For instance, Bertha Jensen Eccles wrote of how her father was swindled by a man who had sold him an ox without teeth. Eccles then went on to describe her responsibilities in caring for the animal, such as hand feeding it mush. Although a woman is the narrator of the story, the

theme of the story is how her father's inexperience hindered the economy of the family. Although this story could be interpreted as a feminist critique on her father's inept business skills, it is unlikely that Harmer read this story that way because it is told as a humorous anecdote of what happened when this Mormon man bought an ox from a non-Mormon traveler. Teichert's version would place the woman as the central character and not her father.

Harmer does make an attempt to chronicle the life of everyday women; nevertheless, she relates their experiences through a male lens. In her chapter on pioneer life, she describes the process of making different types of bread, especially the introduction of sourdough starters from Danish women. One pioneer lad recalled the process:

My friend and I decided to bake a cake so we got a lot of service berries, took down a bottle of the sour dough mixture and mixed some flour and water and all the berries together. We baked it in a Dutch oven over a bonfire. It was so hard that we had to soak it for several hours before we could eat it. (Harmer 145)

Although Harmer is one of the first women to publish a book about daily pioneer life and the tasks assigned to women, she cannot disentangle the perspective of the masculine pattern that dominated the Mormon literature genre. Later, female writers would continue to write about the pioneer experience in masculine terms.

In 1952 Emma Mar Petersen published *The Story of Our Church*, her history of the early Church and the pioneer experience. Like Harmer she virtually ignored the female perspective. For example, Petersen includes an account of Phoebe Woodruff being healed by a male priesthood holder, taking the emphasis off the woman and placing it on the men. Likewise, the other female accounts, which consist of events from Mary Fielding Smith's life, are not independent from men. One account, "The Unkind Captain," documents the relationship Smith had with an "unnamed" captain of the company. Although Mary is the protagonist of this narrative, Petersen shifts the focus away from her toward the antagonist, emphasizing, "[The unnamed captain] should have been helpful and kind, for he knew that nearly all of the Saints were poor, and had too little to make the journey in complete safety" (Petersen 251). As a result of his cruelty, the story finishes with Mary beating the captain into the Salt Lake Valley while he was delayed by a thunderstorm in Echo Canyon.

Petersen's story number 80, "A Mother's Faith," recalls the time Joseph Fielding, Mary's brother, and Joseph Fielding Smith, her son, lost their oxen. In the story, Mary Fielding Smith prays to find the oxen and is spiritually guided to them. This is where the story stops in the oral tradition. Petersen concludes her story by having Joseph Fielding Smith describe how he untied the oxen from some willows and took them back to camp.

In the 1980s, Mormon scholarship began focusing on the lives of everyday Mormon women, relating their experiences in their own voices. In *Sunbonnet Sisters*, published in 1984, Arrington and Susan Arrington Madsen, introduce their readers to ordinary women rather than focusing on the elite. Both authors express:

We have wanted to contribute to that trend of increased attention by relating the lives of some of the earlier Latter-day Saint women These seventeen, we feel, not only are intrinsically interesting, but also help to illustrate little-known facts of Latter-day Saint history. (ix)

Other scholars followed and are still writing about the experience of everyday Mormon women, choosing to represent a more accurate depiction of Mormon life. Recently, the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for LDS History compiled some selections from The Women's History Initiative Seminars (2003-2004) in *New Scholarship on Latter-day Saint Women in the Twentieth Century* (2004). Not only does this book contain research on the lives of pioneer women, but scholars are also directing their attention to LDS women in the twentieth century and throughout the world. Additional works include: *Women of Covenant: The Story of the Relief Society* (1992), *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah* (1997), and the *Worth Their Salt Series* (1996 and 2000) and more continue to be published. These recent publications illustrate Teichert's progressive thinking in her painting. She was painting about the experience of ordinary nineteenth century Mormon women fifty years earlier than academic scholars.

Teichert as a Mormon Historian

First and foremost, Teichert celebrated the extraordinary contribution of ordinary pioneer women, as evidenced by her many paintings. For her, they were "tall, strong, capable and in control of their own experiences" (qtd. in Doss 237). Indeed, Teichert personally witnessed this strength in her grandmother, who raised nine children and managed the family farm when her husband contracted tuberculosis (Doss 237). She rejected the male-biased genre of Church-approved and endorsed historical accounts when she told Henri that no one had told the Mormon story to her liking (Gray vii). So she undertook to create a different version of Mormon history, one that celebrated the contributions of ordinary people, particularly women. Teichert began her series in 1920 and continued her work until 1950. Rather than turning to the sanctioned histories of the Church hierarchy, Teichert sought her sources from the rich folk narratives of her family and friends.

Teichert believed in telling stories. Indeed, from her childhood, her life was filled with the stories of her pioneer ancestors. She lived with her grandmother Minerva Wade Hickman, for whom she was named, who would tell her stories about her experiences crossing the plains (Wardle, Murals 8). Teichert believed that her pioneer ancestors, as well as other pioneers, left a legacy that she felt needed to be told and continually retold.

If Teichert had written these narratives instead of painted her feelings about Mormon history, Thomas Alexander would classify her as a venerable historian. Her art reflected her belief in divine approval and assistance for the Mormon pioneers, which echoed the work of John Trumbull's *Signing the Declaration of Independence* (1786-1797) (Fig. 4). Teichert believed in the theological concept of Zion, a place where the righteous saints would gather and build God's kingdom. For her, Zion was in the US West, and its antithesis, Babylon, was the rest of the world. Her paintings echo Brigham Young's assurance that in coming to Utah and gathering with other Latter-day Saints, God delivered them from Babylon (Wardle, Pageants 76). Or, as a LDS hymn states, "in Deseret's sweet, peaceful land – On Zion's mount [meaning Utah] behold it stand!" (LDS Hymnbook 5). Teichert heard these messages throughout her life from her grandmother,

church leaders, and neighbors. She internalized them and captured them on canvas (Wardle, Pageants 77).



Figure 4. John Trumbull, "Signing of the Declaration of Independence." (1786-1797). Capital Rotunda.

CHAPTER 3

VISUALIZING THE ORAL: THE PIONEER TREK ACCORDING TO TEICHERT

We must paint the great Mormon story of our pioneers in mural decorations so that “he who runs may read.” This story thrills me, fills me, drives me on . . . We’ll tell our stories on the walls. – Minerva Teichert, 1948. (Davis, Gallery 5)

“Tradition is most alive by talking about it,” observed William A. Wilson; for Mormons, especially during the early twentieth century, much of their talk consisted of retelling the narratives of their pioneer parents or grandparents (Wilson 307). Teichert noticed that there was an inconsistency with written narratives of the pioneer experience, which did not coincide with the oral stories she heard as a child; most specifically, they omitted the contributions of women, so she created a public dialogue featuring pioneer folk tales in her pioneer panorama. She was a granddaughter of Mormon pioneers who walked from Winter Quarters and a niece of a Mormon Battalion soldier (Oman 55). By the 1930s when Teichert began work on her pioneer panorama, Mormons had celebrated the heroism of its Utah founders for decades through oral stories and church-sanctioned accounts and festivities. In fact, pioneer representations in art, drama, literature, and public display galvanized Teichert’s generation as Mormons celebrated the centennial of the pioneer trek by focusing on moments of great valor and charm while neglecting or forgetting past embarrassing moments (Eliason 18). This tradition of accentuating the positive while omitting the negative is found in the oral narratives of early Mormon pioneers in Teichert’s artwork. For instance, never does she paint the physical strain and death that was part of the pioneer journey.

Davis Bitten observed that “most of us are not historians”; therefore we process our history ritualistically, and Mormons are no exception (Bitten 183). In studying cultures that lived in the American West during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Stegner noted that Mormons did not preserve their history through ballads as did most other U.S. Western groups (Stegner, *Mormon Country* 142). Although there are some ballads, most Mormon folk narratives were passed down orally in families and amongst friends. Narratives that are printed—usually second-hand accounts—were approved by Church leaders who held a monopoly on printing in Salt Lake City and the Deseret Territory.

In order to make her messages accessible to her audiences, Minerva Teichert coded her paintings. Folklorist Joan Radner explains that a code is a symbol that has predetermined meaning for members of a group (5). Teichert leaves visual clues for member and non-member audiences, as well as male and female audiences, specified for the message she is trying to communicate for each group. Often these codes are based on a culture’s folk beliefs and ritual, which can pose challenges in interpretation for outsiders.

“Folklore is a science which is too much neglected—the science of the commonplace . . . It is taken so much for granted that we fail to see its deeper implications,” remarked Austin E. Fife, a folklorist who studied Mormon folklife in the 1940s and 1950s (Fife 1). Teichert felt that the folkloric accounts of Mormon pioneers more accurately reflected a democratic version of the pioneer experience and Church history than church published narratives of the past. She believed there were only two

reasons to paint, to create something beautiful or tell a story, and she wanted to tell the stories her grandmother and other women told her (Davis 3). Her son Fredrick Turner explained that telling the story “governed everything [his mother] did” with a painting (Frederick Teichert). Another son Hamilton confirms this when he explains to Richard Oman that her purpose in painting was to tell a story and not to depict a mood or feeling (Hamilton Teichert). Jan Shippo observed that the ritualized versions concerning the history of the Mormon trek west have been vital to the continuing life of Church members because Mormons simplify their history, allowing the narratives of individual pioneers to be incorporated as their own, creating a powerful bond of group cohesion (Sojourner 225). Teichert's renders these narratives in an accessible way for her audience. Because her paintings lack artistic detail and are free from extraneous figures the eye focuses on the content of the story. Her paintings also echo the ritualized accounts of the Mormon pioneer trail. Thus these narratives create meaning between artifacts and art, past events, and often start in the beginning, which for Mormons living in the West began with the pioneer exodus from Nauvoo or Europe. Telling these narratives, orally or in paint, offers the audience a glimpse into Mormon thought and action.

Unlike the printed accounts of the Mormon pioneer experience, Teichert's work captures the ritualistically processed history that lay Mormons know and celebrate each year on Pioneer Day, July 24th. By visualizing the narratives that Mormons were familiar with, she was perpetuating the shared history among Mormons and later to non-Mormons in her works. Thus her works offer a unique glimpse into the folkloric elements of the Mormon pioneer experience. Teichert captured one experience in the narrative of Mary Fielding Smith, her only elite Mormon woman, in her first pioneer painting “Not Alone.”

Not Alone

For her first pioneer painting Teichert was paid to paint an elite Mormon woman, yet she attempted to render her in such a way to draw attention away from her celebrity status to make the painting accessible to non-members while focusing her visual remarks about the Mormon belief of divine assistance on the pioneer trail. Mary Fielding Smith began the pioneer trek in 1848, traveling in the Heber C. Kimball Company (Corbett 226). Her company consisted of the family of her sister Mercy Fielding Thompson and her brother Joseph Fielding; in total her group had seven wagons, four yoke of oxen, some cows and calves, two women, dozens of children, and one man (Corbett 228). This was hardly the ideal situation for any pioneer family, let alone a single woman; yet Mary refused to wait for her circumstances to change and began moving her family west. Others in her company were concerned about her family and their scarce resources. The company captain, Cornelius Lott, even suggested that she remain behind until she could gather enough resources to support her family for the long, arduous journey-this sensible suggestion would villify him in the oral narratives. According to her son, the prophet Joseph F. Smith, Mary refused and offered the captain a challenge that she would beat him into the Salt Lake Valley, which she did on September 23, 1848.

Mary's journey progressed smoothly until her group reached the midway point

between the Platte and Sweetwater rivers when her best ox, for no apparent reason, fell down sick. Her brother Joseph and other members of the camp believed that the animal would shortly die, leading to a severe delay. Mary retrieved some consecrated oil from her wagon, an ingredient Mormons use to bless their sick, and petitioned her brother and James Lawson to administer the oil to her animal and to bless it. The men were hesitant, this type of priesthood blessing having not been performed on an animal before, and they were unsure if such a request was appropriate; however, Mary convinced them and they blessed the animal, anointing it with the oil asking God to heal the animal. Shortly after they finished, the ox rose, and they continued their journey with the rest of the company (Corbett 236-237). Mary's story is one of hundreds that illustrate the Mormon belief that "[God's] angels shall go up before you, and also my presence, and in time ye shall possess the goodly land" (D&C 103: 20).

In the folkloric versions of this account, the story has Mary healing the oxen by placing her hands on the animal's head and praying to God to heal it. There are two variations of the story; in the first Mary used the oil and blessed the ox herself by placing her hands on its head; in the second Mary just prayed for the ox to be healed and it was (Anderson 3). The latter version was used in the LDS Church's video production *Legacy*, a video that was made to introduce church history and beliefs to visitors at Temple Square. Both versions exclude the men who blessed the ox, highlighting Mary's faith and God's benevolence as the contributing factors in the miraculous healing (Anderson 11). Yet, in reality Mary did not perform this healing action alone.

Although this is a familiar folk narrative, Teichert alters the story in her painting by completely omitting any reference to the sick oxen and miraculous healing. Instead, she highlights the moral of this folk narrative in her work to assure viewers that God can and will help anyone who needs his assistance. This folk narrative has been perpetuated, and continues to be perpetuated; Church education classes, called Seminary, teach Mary's story to teenagers when they are studying about church history because it reinforces the Mormon belief that God will help you under any circumstance. Folk narratives about Mary Fielding Smith are used to assure women and young children that they can receive priesthood blessings and divine help when they cannot find a priesthood holder to administer such a blessing. The Doctrine and Covenants, declares, "The power of the lesser, or Aaronic priesthood, is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels" (D&C 170: 20). Young men are ordained to this priesthood at the age of twelve, with other ordinations happening at age fourteen and sixteen. By rendering Smith and her son totally alone, Teichert is instructing her audiences that God will not refuse needed blessings and help to those without a priesthood holder nearby. This story is not in any printed materials for teachers or any compiled history of the Church, yet Lavina Fielding Anderson and others vividly remember these lessons and interpretations from their seminary days (Anderson 3).

This painting originally hung in a chapel in Montpelier, Idaho and the subject matter was determined by the church members there (Wardle, Thesis appendix). One member, William Hyde, the local priesthood leader, had particular requests for the painting; he wanted Mary to be depicted in her hour of distress (when her oxen were ill) with the Lord's angels assisting her. He further instructed Teichert to "show in one glance the heroism and the faith of the Mormon Women" (Wardle, Pageants 30). Teichert observed

this instruction throughout her painting career and would later create a panorama that celebrates Mormon pioneer women. Hyde insisted Teichert paint Mary with her ox and its miraculous healing; he suggested that Mary have “one hand resting upon the shoulder of the ox, accompanied by her young son Joseph F. Smith” and fewer than ten other people (Corbett 276). A widowed mother and her son would make an emotionally compelling picture by themselves, but Hyde wanted more; he insisted that Teichert portray them not alone but with some type of spiritual host assisting and protecting Mary on her journey as they traveled side by side. This, Hyde exclaimed, would be a visual representation of “the captain of the Lord’s host” (Corbett 276). While Teichert did retain Hyde’s direction of including a visualization of spiritual assistance, she omitted the reference to the ox, which she did not feel should be the focus of the painting; rather, she chose to depict divine help in a more dramatic way that would be accessible to all audiences, despite its initial location. Teichert wanted to educate all audiences about the Mormon pioneer experience. In fact, she was inspired to paint the series from her non-member teacher Robert Henri. Reaching a wide audience could only happen if her paintings were hung in very public places, which was Teichert’s original goal despite her patronage from a church unit for her first pioneer work.

In this painting, Mary Fielding Smith is the dominant character, her dark blue shawl contrasting the muted greens, blues, and browns of the Western landscape. Her arm is placed protectively on her son’s shoulders as they walk together across a desert landscape. In order for Teichert to convey her message, it was imperative that she reduce the number of figures to two or less in her painting. If Teichert had painted the other members of Smith’s company, especially her brother Joseph Fielding Smith, the ethereal protection would not seem as necessary due to the sheer number of other people available to help Smith. Additionally, Mormon audiences would see the man in the picture and assume that the angels are a result of the priesthood-holding brother’s supplications. Teichert faced a particular problem in rendering the heavenly host that assisted Smith. Mormons believe that angels can have resurrected, corporeal bodies or those who have not yet been resurrected and are still spirit (D&C 129: 1, 3). If Teichert painted a physical angel of flesh and bone, non-member audiences would be unable to interpret that code because they may not have the theological background. Teichert would portray angels in this way in paintings intended solely for Mormon audiences in “An Angel Appears to Alma and the Sons of Mosiah” (1950-51) and “Peter, James, and John Restoring the Melchizedek Priesthood” (1934). In rendering her spiritual companions, Teichert makes the angelic host translucent, rendering them the same way photographers captured spirits in their photography during the mid-nineteenth century. Audiences were familiar with spirit photography images that were popular in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They would know to interpret this military force as otherworldly, evidence of that which cannot be seen by the naked eye but must be shown with the help of a photograph, or in this case, artist. Thus in one painting, Minerva Teichert bravely and successfully visualized what Mormons believe and what other artists have not: that spiritual beings literally assisted Mary Fielding Smith and other Mormon pioneers during their trek west based on a common folk belief of The Three Nephites.

Mormons have preserved the record of spiritual assistance pioneers received during the pioneer trek west in the written and oral historical record. Perhaps the most cited

experience was described by President David O. McKay quoted in a magazine article. An old man, tired of listening to Mormon leader's failings with the crossing of the Willie and Martin handcart companies, rose up and said:

"I have pulled my handcart when I was so weak and weary from illness and lack of food that I could hardly put one foot ahead of the other. I have looked ahead and seen a patch of sand or a hill slope and I have said, I can only go that far and there I must give up, for I cannot pull the load through it... I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it, the cart began pushing me. I have looked back many times to see who was pushing my cart, but my eyes saw no one. I knew then that the angels of God were there." (McKay 8)

While there are accounts of unseen physical phenomena such as this one in Mormon folklore, help usually comes in the form of three corporeal personages called The Three Nephites. Like the legend of John the Beloved and the Wandering Jew, The Three Nephites have their roots in scripture (Fife 5). In *The Book of Mormon*, a canonized book in LDS theology, there is an account of Jesus Christ visiting the inhabitants of the American continent and Nephites, the righteous people who lived on the American continent. During his ministry there, Christ asked his American disciples what they desired. Nine of Christ's American disciples responded that they wanted to speedily return to Christ's presence after their mortal ministry (3 Nephi 28: 2). Three kept their desire to remain on the earth until Christ's second coming to themselves; knowing their thoughts, Christ granted them their desire, saying, "Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men . . . [until] I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven" (3 Nephi 28: 7). Wayland D. Hand claimed that the lack of descriptive detail about these three personages allowed the multiplicity of narratives about these characters to develop (Hand 124). Because Mormons could project their personal experiences onto these three figures, there are several descriptions and narratives about them. Hector Lee has observed that The Three Nephites are the Mormon St. Christopher, protecting members from danger and guiding them to their destination (Lee 52). In his research, he has identified five areas where the Three Nephites appear: to save Mormon Elders (missionaries) from physical abuse, to offer protection from Indian molestation, to give directions to lost persons, to rescue a person in physical danger, and to offer physical help (Lee 53).

Teichert draws on this tradition of The Three Nephites in her rendering of angelic assistance in "Not Alone." First, she depicts this unit protecting Mary from physical danger, as evidenced in the wolf that is running out of the frame. Furthermore, these men are dressed in full military uniform with their weapons held upright and ready to use in a moment's notice walking alongside Mary and her young son ready at arms in case someone or something should come and try to molest or hurt them. Teichert references the Book of Mormon Nephite tradition by clothing these soldiers in the same uniforms she creates for her Book of Mormon figures in her Book of Mormon panorama. In comparing this painting to "Moroni and the Title of Liberty" (1930) (Fig. 5), both armies are wearing similar breastplates and helmets and are physically similar to the soldiers in "Not Alone", thereby visually anchoring them to The Three Nephite tradition and Book of Mormon characters. Having characters that resembled Book of Mormon serves two

purposes in Teichert's paintings. First, having a uniquely Mormon angelic host visually asserts God's approval for the LDS Church; if they were rendered in a traditional way Mary could be identified as any Christian woman. Second, having these figures wear Nephite armor allows Teichert to paint them in a way that harmonizes LDS doctrine with the folk narratives of "The Three Nephites." While in this painting

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Figure 5. Minerva Teichert. "Moroni and the Title of Liberty." 1930. Courtesy of the Brigham Young University Museum of Art. Used with permission.

Teichert shows a woman as a recipient heavenly assistance, in another painting “Miracle of the Gulls” (1935) Teichert develops her revisionist history of the Mormon past.

The Miracle of the Gulls

Most church-sanctioned accounts of the pioneer experience feature men as the conduit of God’s blessings, mainly because male members constitute a body of sanctioned and ordained church members. Yet there are accounts both in the oral tradition and in church publications where women have petitioned God for help and their prayers resulted in a miracle. One of these events in Mormon history is when California gulls saved pioneer crops by devouring an infestation of Mormon crickets. Men’s accounts and women’s accounts of this event differ, and Teichert is attempting to present a revisionist account – where male and female petitions are equally recognized by God-in her painting “Miracle of the Gulls” (1935). David B. and Brigham D. Madsen have labeled the “Miracle of the Gulls” event as the most prominent folkloric event in Eastern Great Basin history (Madsen 53). In a survey folklorists William A. Wilson and Jessie Embry found that this tale was the most familiar with college students in the late 1990s, indicating its current vitality and use (Wilson and Embry 93). According to traditional Mormon accounts, in 1848 a plague of black crickets (actually *Anabrus Simplex* or Katydid) swarmed farms and fields and devoured anything in its path; pioneers tried stomping on the crickets, drowning them, and other techniques to exterminate these pests but nothing seemed to work. It seemed as if the pioneers were doomed to starvation. Then, on June 9, 1848, pioneer diaries and stories record that legions of seagulls came and devoured the crickets; legend tells how once the gulls had gorged themselves on these pests, they would regurgitate their food into the Great Salt Lake and return to feast on more. A folk song titled “The Seagulls and the Crickets” written by an anonymous person and sung by L.M. Hilton, captures the essence of these oral accounts.

The winter of '49 had passed,
A winter of haunting fears,
For Famine had knocked at the city gates
And threatened the pioneers.

But spring with its smiling skies lent grace
And cheer to the hosts within,
And they tilled their fields with a new-born trust
And the courage to fight and win.

With the thrill of life, the tender shoots
Burst forth from the virgin plain,
And each day added its ray of hope,
For a blessing of ripened grain.

But lo in the east strange clouds appeared

And dark became the sun,
And down from the mountain sides there swept
A scourge that the boldest shunned.

Black crickets by tens of millions came
Like fog on a British coast,
And the finger of devastation marked
Its course on the Mormon host.

With vigor that desperation fanned
They battled and smote and slew,
But the clouds still gathered and broke afresh
'Til the fields that waved were few.

With visions of famine and want and woe
They prayed from their hearts sincere,
When lo from the west came other clouds
To succor the pioneers.

'Twas sea gulls feathered in angel-white,
And angels they were forsooth.
These sea gulls there by the thousands came
To battle in very truth.

They charged down upon the cricket hordes
And gorging them day and night,
They routed the devastating foe
And the crickets were put to flight.

All heads were bowed as they thanked their god
And the reaped while the devil raved,
The harvest was garnered to songs of praise
And the pioneers were saved. (Fife, Mormon 235)

Historians have argued that this account is inaccurate; William G. Hartley, a Mormon historian, noted that the seagulls were already in the area when the plague of crickets came, and they did not immediately purge the crickets out of Mormon fields (Wilson and Embry 110). David and Brigham Madsen remind readers that these crickets were a vital food source for the Goshutes and Shoshone. Although Madsen proposed that Mormons should have killed the seagulls and ate the crickets, Mormons did not look on the crickets as a means to sustain them through the winter (Madsen 54). Thomas Kaine, a non-Mormon politician who was friendly with Brigham Young, recorded that Mormons called these crickets "black philistines," and Anson Call, a pioneer, described one this way: "it has an eagle-eyed staring appearance that suggests the idea that it may be the habitation of a vindictive little demon" (Madsen 60). Later ornithologists would explain

that the seagulls were regurgitating the undigestible parts of the insects, not emptying their stomachs to create more room (Madsen 62). Yet despite the emerging scientific evidence against this miracle, Mormons continue to believe the legend. Wilson asserts that the legendary narrative of the Miracle of the Gulls is so universal in Mormon belief because it supports LDS theological beliefs in divine assistance and their religious worldview, especially in agricultural communities (Wilson 81). As early as 1848, reports confirmed that the seagulls were in fact preserving crops; that same year Orson Hyde, an apostle, declared the event a miracle in General Conference (Madsen 61; Roberts 333). LDS men acknowledged the miraculous seagull event though they tend to disregard the seagulls or minimalized their impact, but women's accounts of this event transform the seagulls into saviors. Mabel Harmer's recording of the event equates the "black hordes" of crickets with starvation until the "sacred bird" appeared to save [them]. Emma Mar Petersen shares these sentiments in her book as she recalls the "divine deliverance" from starvation (Harmer 124-125; Petersen 258). Although Preston Nibley does not even mention this event in his book *Pioneer Stories*, he does, however, record an account given by Orson F. Whitney, an apostle, in *Faith Promoting Stories*. Whitney's version labels the crickets as an "army of famine and despair" who were defeated by "white gulls," a representation of a battle between the "hosts of heaven and hell" (Whitney 27). Although Whitney uses vivid imagery and dramatic phrases, his account differs from female interpretation because the seagulls did not prevent hunger and want, as he bluntly states that after the gulls came there was "some suffering of hunger" (Whitney 28).

Thanks to the efforts of Austin and Alta Fife, a handful of these oral accounts were preserved. Austin Fife interviewed Mrs. Annie P. Roberts on June 16, 1945, when she was eighty-five years old. Her account of the event of the seagulls follows: There was the grasshoppers (Mormon Crickets) came and stripped their fields. They came and were stripping their fields of all the grain that was ready for harvest. The grasshoppers just alighted overnight – they just made the sky black. Then the seagulls came. They came up and ate the grasshoppers in the fields, and then they would go to the lake and vomit them up, and come back up and eat more until they were all driven away ... [If not for them the pioneers] would have starved. (Fife, Mormon 124)

Note how Mrs. Roberts concludes the event by stating that the pioneers would have starved and possibly died without the assistance of the seagulls. This differs significantly from the male perspective, as one pioneer man named John Smith reported this incident in a letter to Brigham Young in which he stated that it was the efforts of Mormons and seagulls that saved their crops (Madsen 61). Some of these efforts were very creative: one attempt was driving the crickets into ditches and burying them, others tried to keep them airborne by waving sheets in their fields, and others used rollers to smash the insects (Harmer 123). One particular method was to make a pile of straw to attract the crickets; once the pile was covered, a torch was set to it, burning millions of insects (Harmer 124). The Fifes also interviewed Judge Charles J. Scofield, a non-Mormon judge who presided in Utah during the late nineteenth century, on April 22, 1946, when he was ninety-three years old. His account follows: Many people went out there and they scratched the soil and sowed grain. The

grasshoppers came down and was about to eat up everything in sight. Brigham – Brigham Young – called upon the Almighty for help and the Almighty sent those gulls down there, and the gulls filled up on the grasshoppers and then went down and filled up with salt water at the Lake, and threw it all up, and then came back and filled up with grasshoppers again. (Fife 172)

The Fifes noted that “it was evident from Judge Scofield’s manner that he did not believe the story” (Fife, 172). Yet, despite his disbelief, his story provides insights into a male perspective, particularly a non-Mormon one. Note that he credits Brigham Young, the church prophet at the time and male priesthood holder, for the appearance of the seagulls. Men’s accounts of this event retell the event once and tend not to be passed down, but female versions were perpetuated throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In fact, during the Teton Dam Disaster in 1976, a LDS woman connected a modern gull miracle to the one that occurred in the 1840’s. Mrs. H.C. Hansen recorded her experience in *The Herald Journal*, with her account reading:

Each day at dawn I hear the seagulls cry as they come to the fields between River Heights and Providence. I almost feel I should stand at attention and sort of say a little prayer for the safety of these our state birds. I recall my grandparents telling how the many crickets came in swarms which nearly darkened the sun. The gulls saved the crops for the Utah settlers. After the Teton Dam disaster and the flood waters had subsided, there were countless ponds and pools left where the mosquitoes had a holiday. The ponds were full of their larva and epidemics were feared from the mosquitoes. Then the gulls came ... They lighted on ponds and pools and in a week all larva and mosquitoes were gone ... Miracles still happen. (Hansen, p. 3)

Because Mormon women have placed much emphasis on this narrative, it is very appropriate that a female artist should portray the folk tale that was preserved and used by Mormon women both in the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century.

Because Teichert was a Mormon woman with access to the female version of these accounts, she could portray the narrative the way her grandmother and countless other pioneer women told the story. In “Miracle of the Gulls” (Fig. 6), Teichert paints a woman in a pink dress kneeling on the ground looking heavenward; her hands are outstretched in gratitude and supplication. She is surrounded by two women, two men, and one child who are kneeling with heads bowed in prayer; in the distance a never-ending supply of seagulls head toward the group and surround the woman in pink,

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Figure 6. Minerva Teichert. "Miracle of the Gulls." 1935. Courtesy of the Museum of Art, Brigham Young University. Used with permission.

framing her figure. She is not afraid of these birds, and they seem remarkably tame resting next to her, unlike a wild seagull who would be foraging for food. These birds also descend gracefully from the sky, mimicking angelic composure of other paintings. She does not paint the crickets, and she does not need to, because the seagulls, which represent divine assistance, are the central focus of the story. By not painting a plague-like scourge, Teichert highlights the seagull's importance by having the woman point to the answer to her prayers, which are the seagulls landing next to her.

Teichert's painting rejects the predominant view in Mormon culture by members and non-members that male priesthood holders are superior in spiritual matters to women, as in the case of Judge Scofield's account. Instead of painting Brigham Young or another member of the male church hierarchy, Teichert casts a woman in the heroine's role. Placing the woman in the center clearly anchors her as the focus of this painting and source of this miracle. Additionally, her pink dress is the brightest color of the painting, which places visual emphasis on the woman because the other character's brown clothing easily fades into the green grass background. This message was revolutionary, prior to this painting all visualizations for miracles in Mormon history painting featured men as the primary figures. For instance, the illustrations by M.E. Swensen in Emma Mar Petersen's book contain a predominantly male version of this event. Men are in the foreground with their shovels feeding the seagulls the crickets they had gathered while a woman watches their labor in awe; in the background more men are assisting the seagulls in destroying the crickets. Only four women are shown in this image and three of them are in the background, looking rather helpless. Teichert completely inverts this formula in an attempt to permanently replace Swensen's view about the event and Mormon women. By so doing she is claiming that both men and women are equal before God, and a woman's fervent supplications were, and can still be, answered in miraculous ways. Sometimes these prayers were for protection against Indians during uncomfortable cultural encounters.

Torn Between a Dichotomy: Teichert's Portrayal of Native Americans

Minerva Teichert's stories about encounters with Indians came mostly from second hand accounts from an Anglo viewpoint and were embellished with her personal interactions with Shoshone men and women on the reservation near her house (John Teichert). As a result, her paintings represent the Mormon Anglo viewpoint that is found in Mormon oral narratives about their interactions with Indians. "There has been all the time, in the white American soul, a dual feeling about the Indian, . . .The desire to extirpate [him]. And the contradictory desire to glorify him," remarked D.H. Lawrence (Lawrence 40). Angela Cavender Wilson has observed that nineteenth century versions of American Indian history have been composed with Anglo sources to create Anglo interpretations of American Indian history (Wilson 101). This holds true for Mormon accounts of Native Americans; some Mormon writers personally experienced conflict or war with Indians, such as their participation in the Walker War, Black Hawk War, and Bear River Massacre; most Mormon authors wrote about Indians as having distinct,

curious cultures alongside their positive experiences with them, and most folkloric accounts follow this trend (Jones 31). These folk narratives align with Mormon theology. Joseph Smith taught that “The Book of Mormon is a record of the forefathers of our western tribes of Indians . . . and that the land of America is a promised land unto them, and unto it all the tribes of Israel will come, with [many] Gentiles” (Smith 13-14). Based on this revelation, many oral and written narratives conceal the hostile tensions between the two groups while highlighting the successes of pioneer tribal diplomacy, or as B.H. Roberts puts it, “the Latter-day Saint colonists . . . [could] not be otherwise [than] sympathetic towards their red brethren” (Roberts 365).

An underlying influence in most written Mormon narratives is to honor the courage and humanitarianism of pioneer settlers; at least that is the purpose of the archives of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers (Jones 25). There was no prescribed method of promoting pioneer heroes alongside opposing narrative threads that emerged with the handling of native peoples in Mormon territory; in these narratives Indians were either hostile or humorous curiosities (Jones 25). Yet even when Indians were hostile, most narratives record that these cultural encounters left pioneers a little worse for the wear, but not terribly hurt or damaged. For instance, one account has David Patterson Hunter, a pioneer from Scotland, being chased by Shoshone Indians; unable to outrun them, the Indians eventually grabbed him and started harassing him while they are looking for goods to take from him. During this process, his shirt came open and the Indians saw his garments (Mormon underclothing) and immediately apologized for the inconvenience, telling him that they did not know that he was Mormon (Hunter 5). He was shook up, but the only real damage that occurred was to his shirt, which was easily mended. The Hunter family retold this event as a story of Indian curiosity, not Indian hostility; in fact, my grandmother always laughed when she told me this story about her grandfather. These positive narratives of Mormon/Indian interactions later worked to promote Mormon/Indian relations in the twentieth century; during the 1940s the LDS Church revamped their missionary efforts to the “Lamanites” as well as instituting education programs, a trend Teichert personally witnessed (Pageants 157; John Teichert). Taking the advice of Alice Merrill Horne, a Salt Lake City arts dealer, to “make the Indian Noble” in conjunction with the church’s renewed Indian efforts, Teichert omitted hostile narratives from her pioneer series (Davis 8).

Romanticizing the Indian and Anglo-Indian relations is not solely a Mormon phenomena; during the 1930’s when Teichert was painting and Horne was selling art, many artists were depicting the concept of romantic nativism (Melosch 39). Like Maynard Dixon, Teichert depicted “pure” Indians in an “undomesticated” landscape (Pageants 149). Additionally, many WPA section administrators, government employees who were responsible for commissioning artists for WPA projects, considered representations of Indian-white warfare taboo, and some works were even censored or abandoned (Melosch 41). These administrators were leery of socialist, communist, and other revolutionary and revisionist genres of history and politics, and this artistic atmosphere allowed Teichert’s work to be accepted in the cultural mainstream because it followed this trend.

In keeping with the Mormon tradition of Indians as Lamanites, Teichert does not visualize Indian warfare in her pioneer murals and only renders Indians in the “Noble

Savage” or “Curiosities” genres. Later, during the 1950s, when she began painting for non-Mormon patrons, she visualized the stereotypical view of the American West with warring Indians to non-Mormon audiences, but never in a painting that includes Mormon pioneers, and she does not render them fighting against a white population. In “Sighting the Wagon Train” (1947) three Indians on horseback wearing headdresses rest on a bluff looking into the Salt Lake Valley; in the right quarter of the painting is a wagon train; these Indians are not armed with guns or arrows and their demeanor is neutral, neither hostile nor welcoming. The Indian in the front points down at the wagons, but it is not clear if he is merely pointing out the wagons to his companions, or pointing out a threat. By maintaining ambivalence, Teichert captures the uncertainty of both groups at initial encounters while shadowing the violent Mormon and Indian battles that took place in Utah during the nineteenth century.

Teichert does depict some tensions in pioneer-Indian relations, some situations of cultural misunderstandings where no harm is done. Some paintings show pioneers being robbed by Indians, and one even depicts an attack. In all these depictions no bodily injury occurs where pioneer losses are minimal, which keeps with the oral narratives. In “Legend of the Golden Braids” (1940) (Fig. 7) a young girl is frightened when an Indian wearing little clothing touches her long, golden locks; she is startled and drops the buckets of water she was carrying while her face expresses pure panic. Teichert uses the term “legend” to define a classification of stories that relate to a particular group in much the same way people use the term to define an American West filled with cowboys and Indians. This body of this story is found in many pioneer accounts, thus Teichert may also have used the term in reference to other similar accounts. According to the story an Indian confronted this girl and repeated the word “gold”; he could not be distracted from the girl’s braids. Eventually, an adult determined that this Indian was so fascinated with her hair color and wanted her braids; to appease him and prevent any possible hostility, such as a scalping, her braids were cut off and presented to him, and he quietly went away (John Teichert). Although Teichert was unable to simultaneously draw the happy

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Figure 7. Minerva Teichert. “Legend of the Golden Braids.” 1940. Courtesy of the Museum of Art, Brigham Young University. Used with permission.

resolution and initial encounter, the title alerts the reader to the issue of the story – the curiosity with the braids, not naked Indian aggression.

Teichert experienced a similar situation in Idaho when she was driving a wagon through the Shoshone-Bannock Indian reservation on her way home. A drunk Indian noticed the items in the wagon and began pursuing her; not knowing what this Indian was going to do, she determined she should outride him until she reached a safe location on the reservation. Once she reached the middle of a town, other Native American men assisted her pursuer home, eliminating the threat to her safety (John Teichert). Her personal experience, as well as hearing oral stories of frightening encounters that ended happily with the Indian becoming a “wiser and better” person and the Mormon being left unharmed, influenced her depiction of Mormon-Indian relations. Teichert used these narratives to cast Mormons in a positive light, but also to illustrate Mormon beliefs about Native Americans that coincided with the popular view of the Noble Savage and benevolent settlers of the American West, paralleling the Mormon experience with other non-Mormon homesteaders and colonizers while making them less “other.”

When she did visualize disturbances in the Mormon/Indian relationship, she always depicted the Indians as the agitators who meddled with pioneer property. Occasionally in the oral narratives there are documentations of Indian stealing, particularly of livestock, and other petty harassments. In “Night Raid” (1941) (Fig. 8) Teichert depicts a case of robbery. In the foreground are two Indians wearing headdresses herding horses to a new location; wagons are placed in the background on a bluff, showing the audience the actual owners of these animals along with the title which makes it obvious that these horses have been taken. Although the pioneers have suffered a loss, the painting does not depict any human violence, such as a

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Figure 8. Minerva Teichert. Night Raid. 1941. Courtesy of the Museum of Art, Brigham Young University. Used with permission.

Scalping, which could have made this incident much worse. Additionally, neither Indian has a visible weapon and both appear to be unarmed, suggesting that no one was hurt or killed in this round-up. Teichert also depicts Indian harassment in her painting “Indian Attack” (1941), where one Indian in the background is charging two wagons. Each wagon is racing away from their known lone assailant, although other Indian attackers may be cropped out in the distant background. Yet this scene is not as alarming as the title suggests; first, there is only one attacker in the painting and second, he is the smallest figure, illustrating the damaging impact he can have on these two wagons. This Indian is without a gun and alone; the most damage he can do is to steal some livestock or small item from the wagon, or frighten them. The lookout mounted on his horse looks back does not appear to be too concerned because he does not aim his rifle in the assailant’s direction, indicating that this “attack” is more of a nuisance than a threat to physical well-being.

Unfortunately, some Mormon encounters with Indians were much more serious than Teichert paintings or Mormon oral histories. Mormons warred against the Utes in the Walker and Black Hawk War, which ended in a massacre of innocent Piede Utes (Jones 29); they also had a hand in the Bear River Massacre by reporting skirmishes between Mormons and the Shoshone to Colonel Patrick Connor, who ordered his troops to fire on unarmed Shoshone men, women, and children (Jones 28). Yet because these incidents and others did not correlate to the Mormon belief and mission to redeem their Lamanite brethren, these events were omitted in the oral accounts, and hence in Teichert’s paintings (Jones 20). Thus she codes her paintings of Mormon encounters with Indians to share the idealized, if not realistic, view of Indians in Mormon culture and theology. While she was able to incorporate some female perspectives in these paintings, such as “The Legend of the Golden Braids”, she faced similar challenges in visualizing a female perspective when the story revolved around the most legendary figure of the Mormon pioneer past—Brigham Young.

Brigham Young and the Salt Lake Valley

In Mormon folklore, as in any culture, there are stories that focus around the experiences of a famous man since he was or represented the ruling system. In capturing two narratives about Brigham Young, Teichert attempted to create a feminist view of Mormon history, which posed challenges when women were omitted in the narratives. The history books record that Brigham Young spoke with Jim Bridger when the Mormons camped at Fort Bridger. Wilson and Embry recall how they were both taught that during this meeting they discussed the terrain and climate of the Salt Lake Valley and Jim Bridger offered Brigham Young one thousand dollars for the first bushel of corn grown there because the arid valley could not produce any crops (Wilson and Embry 89). This tale is a classic example of an event that has been adapted to fit cultural

expectations; for Mormons, this narrative establishes the Salt Lake Valley as God's appointed destination for the pioneers, because only God could let corn grow in a desolate wasteland. People had lived in Utah before with some success in farming; for instance Miles Goodyear grew corn at Fort Bueneventura in Ogden before the Mormon pioneers (Wilson and Embry 89), and pueblo peoples had irrigated their farms before their arrival as well in much harsher climates.

William Clayton, who was present at that meeting, recorded that Bridger related the success Goodyear had and that the soil was good and could produce corn if the nighttime temperatures were not too cold. In fact, Clayton records Bridger telling Young that Indians south of Utah Lake had success raising corn, wheat, pumpkins, and other vegetables that he raised in Kentucky (Clayton par. 16). Willard Richards remembers the event differently and penned the famous thousand dollar bet in his journal: Met Captain James Bridger, who said he was ashamed of Fremont's map of this country. Bridger considered it imprudent to bring a large population into the Great Basin until it was ascertained that grain could be grown; he said he would give one thousand dollars for a bushel of corn raised in the Basin. (Richards 410)

Brigham Young adopted Richard's version later in talks he gave in 1850 and 1870, which he used to reaffirm the divinely inspired location settlements when problems and agricultural setbacks in Mormon communities arose. Young stated, "God had shown me that this is the spot to locate his people, and here is where they will prosper; he will temper the elements for the good of his saints ... and the land shall become fruitful" (Nibley 45).

In her rendering of this event, Teichert places the prominent mountain man directly across from the Mormon prophet; both men are kneeling down, looking at the ground in discussion. While there is no indication in the title that there is a conflict or challenge, placing these men directly opposite of each other visually pivots them against each other. Looking back at the West and his personal experience with the terrain, Brigham Young is placed on the western hemisphere of the canvas and is looking East; having no experience with the climate, but believing in God, he claims that Mormon settlement will be very successful. A seagull, a motif Teichert uses to show divine assistance, rests near Brigham Young, foreshadowing the final outcome of their discussion. While this painting does not include women or obvious feminist code, it does offer a female perspective into the event. Church leaders and other men knew they were going to settle in the Rocky Mountain area; in fact, Joseph Smith had examined John C. Frémont's map to look for possible settlements (Wilson and Embry 89). Women's accounts and journals do not record having any prior knowledge to where they would eventually settle, thus they completely relied on Brigham Young as a prophet of God to direct them to the promised land. Teichert places a tame seagull in this painting next to Young's finger pointing to the location he drew in the sand, validating pioneer women's faith in their prophet.

Teichert alters another narrative that focuses on Brigham Young and alters it to include women in her sketch "Brigham Young Overlooking the Salt Lake Valley" (1967). Coinciding with President Young's meeting with Jim Bridger is the fabled "This is the place" statement. Most folkloric accounts place Young as the sole figure by relating how

he looked out at the valley, despite being sick with mountain fever, and boldly declared “This is the right place, drive on,” and the pioneers concluded their journey with these words (Wilson and Embry 88). In their study, Wilson and Embry found that ninety percent of the Mormons they surveyed believed Brigham Young had spoken these words upon first seeing the Salt Lake Valley (Wilson and Embry 88). While this statement is debated amongst historians, folklorist Richard C. Poulsen explains that these words complete the “migration myth” which proclaims the Great Basin landscape “holy and therefore habitable” (qtd. in Wilson and Embry 89). Here Brigham Young is situated prominently in the center of the painting, his hand pointing to the barren valley with no water or trees in sight. Above him several seagulls fly, representing that this is the location God has selected for the Mormons. Two men in the background reverently remove their hats and bow their heads in prayer; three women are placed in front of Young on a lower ledge. These women could represent the three women in Young’s vanguard company, namely Clarissa Caroline Decker Young, Harriet Page Wheeler, and Ellen Sanders Kimball who are omitted from the folk narratives (LDS Church). Including them in this sketch, Teichert is reminding her audience that women were present at this historic event. Folk narratives completely omit women and rarely mention Wilford Woodruff or Green Flake who were with Young in the wagon. In the painting two women are weeping, a common reaction of women in later companies in Mormon folk narratives when they saw the lack of trees and lush green vegetation (Wilson and Embry 88), and one is pointing heavenward, demonstrating her faith in God and the prophet. The remaining three figures in the background visually anchor the Mormon belief that Brigham Young was a prophet of God and the Great Basin was where God wanted them to live, despite its unfavorable landscape. In this painting she offers a bold, feminist version that places women next to Young and at the forefront of Mormon achievement.

Throughout her series Teichert attempted to portray a feminist Mormon viewpoint about the Mormon pioneer experience, one that she knew intimately from the first-hand oral accounts others shared with her. While her version is feminist, she also alters the narratives to make her figures and stories more compelling to outside audiences. Thus, she attempted to make Mormons seem less different from mainstream Anglo-Saxon Americans, a task she continued to develop in her paintings, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

SHARING THE MORMON EXPERIENCE WITH OTHERS

Teichert was a modern woman of the 1930's and 40's, a practicing artist, rancher, local politician, and mother; yet, despite her modernity she turned to nineteenth century female role models. For her, pioneer women were everything a good Mormon woman should be: physically and spiritually strong, as well as modest. For Teichert these traditional values were timeless, even though some of these Victorian beliefs were seen as outdated in the twentieth century. While Teichert does not suggest that today's Mormon women start wearing corsets or spend their day creating samplers, she was concerned about modern influences and conveniences that threatened Mormon perceptions of women. Throughout her paintings, Teichert instructs her audience on the unique view of Mormon femininity, both past and present, of strong, religiously devoted, and modest women. She faced particular challenges in portraying strong Mormon women to a diverse audience. Non-Mormon, particularly Eastern audiences had vilified Mormons in the national press in their campaigns against polygamy which Teichert had to work against. In Mormon culture there was a prevailing male view that women's contributions to Mormon history were miniscule or non-existent. To contrast these views, Teichert painted Mormon folk narratives in traditional techniques while adding a feminist touch to make her works appealing and approachable to male and female audiences by removing Mormon women's status as the other. Teichert intended her works to be displayed throughout the United States for multiple audiences. One painting, "Handcart Pioneers 1932", was purchased and moved from an LDS chapel in Cokeville, WY which upset local parishioners, eventually becoming part of the church's collection (Wardle, Pageants 39). Other paintings were sold and displayed in Texas and New York. Her son John Teichert expressed that she wished she could sell her paintings to more patrons outside of the Mormon communities of Utah and Idaho, but because she lived outside a major art center in the United States many of her paintings remained local, much to her disappointment (John Teichert). Undeterred by her geographic location, Teichert continued to paint art for multiple audiences.

Correcting Eastern Views of Mormon Women

Appendix B

Copyright Letter to Museum of Art at Brigham Young University

December 15, 2008

Amy Williamson
9 Aggie Village G
Logan, UT 84341
(801) 505-8266

Trevor Waight
Rights and Reproduction
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Minerva Teichert Images: Washday on the Plains, Legend of the Golden Braids, Moroni and the Title of Liberty, The Miracle of the Gulls, and Night Raid.

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