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McKall Erin Ruell

Utah State University, mckall.ruell@usu.edu

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FROM THE PEN OF THE SECRETARY: LATTER-DAY SAINT WOMEN AND
RELIEF SOCIETY MINUTE BOOKS,

1868–1889

by

McKall Erin Ruell

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

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

Approved:

Patrick Mason, Ph.D.
Major Professor

Rebecca Andersen, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Julia Gossard, Ph.D.
Committee Member

D. Richard Cutler, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Graduate
Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Logan, Utah

2023

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ABSTRACT

From the Pen of the Secretary: Latter-day Saint Women and
Relief Society Minute Books, 1868–1889

by

McKall Erin Ruell, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2023

Major Professor: Dr. Patrick Q. Mason
Department: History

While there has been an increase in scholarship on nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint (also known as Mormon) women, a large group of sources that have yet to be largely utilized are the Relief Society organization minute books. Following the Relief Society's official reorganization in Utah by Brigham Young in 1868, women were called as Relief Society secretaries, and they created and kept minute books spanning the latter half of the nineteenth century and several decades into the twentieth century. Hundreds of these minute books have been preserved and still survive today. This thesis attempts to demonstrate how the minute books are a vital source in understanding the lived religious and social experiences of Latter-day Saint women in Utah during the years 1868 to 1889 by examining three categories: discourse, testimony, and relationships. Eight different Relief Societies in Utah were analyzed: Cedar City, Fillmore, Holden, Meadow, Spring Lake, Provo, Salt Lake City, and Millville. This thesis addresses the process by which

women learned to stand and speak publicly, what they spoke about as well as what they did not, how they bore testimony of their beliefs, struggled with some church teachings such as the United Order and polygamy, and finally how they navigated relationships with their male leaders in Relief Society meetings. The minute books show that ultimately the Relief Society was where women learned what it meant to be a Latter-day Saint woman.

(119 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

From the Pen of the Secretary: Latter-day Saint Women and
Relief Society Minute Books, 1868–1889

McKall Erin Ruell

In 1868, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also known as the Mormon church) re-organized their women's organization, the Relief Society. The secretaries of each local ward or congregation of the Relief Society in Utah kept a record of their meetings in their own minute books. These records have largely been neglected by scholars and much can be learned about nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint women through their pages. This thesis examines Relief Society minute books from Cedar City, Fillmore, Meadow, Holden, Spring Lake, Provo, Salt Lake City, and Millville, Utah, looking specifically at Latter-day Saint women's discourse, testimonies, and relationships with their male leaders. Ultimately, the minute books reveal that the Relief Society was where women learned what it meant to be a Latter-day Saint woman in Utah.

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There are so many people who made this thesis possible and so many to whom I owe my gratitude. Beginning the research for this thesis during the COVID-19 pandemic was a struggle for me to say the least, and I could not have done it without the encouragement of so many friends and family members.

I am so grateful for the support and patience of my wonderful committee members Dr. Rebecca Andersen, Dr. Julia Gossard, and especially my major professor Dr. Patrick Mason. I have learned so much from his mentorship and I am so grateful for his help with my many, many drafts. Also a thank you to the rest of the wonderful professors and faculty in the Utah State University history department, especially to the GPC Dr. James Sanders who answered my many questions. Thank you to my fellow grad students, especially Brooke LeFevre who listened to all of my ideas and inspired me with her own work.

I am grateful to Jennifer Reeder and many others at the Church History Library who introduced me to the Relief Society minute books, encouraged me to pursue a graduate degree, and taught me so much. A special thank you to Emily Crumpton also at the CHL who assisted me in having access to minute books I needed by digitizing two of them that had not yet been digitized.

I am so thankful for my professors at Brigham Young University who encouraged me to continue on in my education and helped me apply to USU, especially Dr. Amy Harris, Dr. Karen Auman, and Dr. Sarah Loose Guerrero (along with many others).

Above all I am grateful to my mother who was my diligent research assistant, my editor, my encourager who handed me the tissues when I struggled, and who would not let me quit even though I said I would a hundred times. I could not have done this without you Mom. Thank you!

Last but not least, I will be forever grateful to all of the secretaries who kept and preserved minute books so that historians for generations to come can have a glimpse into the lived religious experiences of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint women. They are what made this process worth it.

McKall Erin Ruell

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Introduction: Secretaries and Minute Books

A book, covered with beautiful floral wallpaper, shows clear signs of age. Over its one hundred and sixty-six years of existence, the wallpaper has faded and now only the slight traces of green stems and leaves with red and blue flowers remain. On the front of the book resides a label identifying it as the Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book during the years 1856 to 1875.¹ Inside, the pages have yellowed, and even the small smears of ink left here and there are not as dark as they once were. The cursive handwriting is surprisingly even on paper with no lines, and it is small, trying to get as much on one page as possible. In the front of the book is found a piece of paper unlike all the other pages and a closer examination shows that it is not actually attached to the book itself. The first sentence intreats the reader “Please use this book carefully, it is a ‘pearl of great price,’ not only because of the writings herein, but also because of its physical make-up.”²

This page, likely inserted in 1931, and written by Iron County, Utah, recorder Emily Crane Watson, describes the book’s creation in the old Cedar City Fort. The women living there gathered together on a cold November day and donated what paper they could to create the book. For some, it was only one page, for others two pages, and one woman, who was either more privileged or especially sacrificing, donated a total of six pages. Watson goes on to explain that “Sister Ellen Lunt... made the book, covered the pasteboard covers with wall paper she had brot from Eng[land] binding the back and

¹ Though the Cedar City women were organized as a benevolent society in 1856, they were reorganized as a Relief Society in 1868.

² Cedar City Ward, Parowan Stake, *Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, 1856-1875 and 1892*, Call No. LR 1514 22, digital copy, Church History Library, image 1.

corners with cured buckskin. Every line is filled, even the inside of the covers, with the exquisite penmanship of the secretary Ellen Lunt.”³

Watson’s special regard for the book and its creator-secretary Ellen Lunt is clear. In writing about Lunt’s care in creating the book and of her “exquisite penmanship” Watson signifies the importance women had as secretaries and what they left for the following generations. Ellen Lunt did not just create the Relief Society minute book, she and many Relief Society secretaries like her created the historical narrative of both Relief Societies and the communities of women throughout Utah.

Through their pens, we can gain a greater understanding of what Latter-day Saint women spoke and testified of, their struggles in living church practices, and the relationships with male authority they had to learn to navigate within the society. It is through their stories that many of these forgotten women’s voices are known. Eliza R. Snow, general president of the Relief Societies, instructed all the secretaries that they “are, or should be, historians of their respective Branches. One Book (or when one Book is full another succeeds it) should contain the whole history—all records of the Branch; and those records should comprise everything worthy of preservation.”⁴ While the dedication of each secretary and the quality of what they wrote varies, hundreds of minute books still exist today, providing a wealth of insight and information about nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint women.

³ *Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, 1856-1875 and 1892*, image 1. All quotes from the minute books used in this thesis are the original spelling and punctuation unless otherwise indicated. For some quotes such as this one, I have expanded words or added words in brackets, as well as added some simple punctuation for clarity.

⁴ Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds., “Eliza R. Snow, ‘Instructions to the Secretaries of the Relief Society,’ January 1882,” in *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* (The Church Historian's Press, 2016), online, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/the-first-fifty-years-of-relief-society/part-4/4-9?lang=eng>.

While the scholarship on Latter-day Saint women is increasing with the larger focus on American religious women, scholarship focused specifically on Relief Society minute books of the mid to late nineteenth century is scarce.⁵ However, the minute books are vital lenses needed to truly understand the religious and social experiences of Latter-day Saint women in early Utah. This thesis seeks to address this gap by examining what the minute books between 1868 and 1889 reveal to us about the attitudes of the women speaking, what they spoke about, and how they interacted with their local male leaders.

Minutes of Relief Society meetings exist before 1868 and after 1889, however, I have chosen these years primarily for two reasons. First, as the Relief Society was officially reorganized in Utah in 1868, a larger number of minutes are available after 1868 than there are before that year. It was also a period of great growth for the church in numbers as well as in church practices. Second, 1889 in large degree was an end of an era. In 1890 church president Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto declaring the end of the practice of plural marriage. This changed many things for church members, especially for women. What they spoke about, aspects of their religion, as well as their family and social networks all began to change.⁶ Therefore ending my research at the end of 1889 denotes the end of an era that many women experienced.

⁵ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has made some effort to publish (through The Church Historian's Press) some of the discourse from the minute books. First, *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses By Latter-day Saint Women* in 2017, and *The Discourses of Eliza R. Snow* (<https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/eliza-r-snow?lang=eng>). However, of the 54 discourses in *At the Pulpit*, only five are from Relief Society minute books created during 1850-1889. Many of *The Discourses of Eliza R. Snow* come from the minute books this thesis is focused on, but they of course only include the meetings where Snow spoke, and they do not look at other women in the minute books, or at themes found in the minutes over time.

⁶ Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 139.

Origins of the Relief Society

Keeping minutes of Relief Society meetings has been a practice since its founding in 1842. Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also known as the Mormons), met in Nauvoo, Illinois, with twenty-two women to organize “The Nauvoo Female Relief Society.”⁷ The women in this initial organization elected their own leaders and followed the teachings of Smith by establishing a pattern of female theological discussion, assistance to the poor, and secretarial record keeping with the first secretary Eliza R. Snow creating and keeping the first Relief Society minute book.⁸

This original Relief Society in Nauvoo lasted for only two years. After Smith’s death in 1844, his successor, Brigham Young, disbanded the Relief Society. But this did not stop women from gathering together. During the journey to Utah, then during its settlement in 1847 and afterward, women came together to talk, work, and assist each other. It was not until 1868 that Young saw a need to officially reorganize the Relief Society and he encouraged bishops to establish them in their wards (smaller and more localized congregations of the church). Eliza R. Snow, with her Nauvoo minute book and knowledge of the former society, assisted them in doing so.⁹ Women all over the territory

⁷ Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds, “1.2.1 March 17, 1842,” in *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*, (The Church Historian's Press, 2016), online, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/the-first-fifty-years-of-relief-society/part-1/1-2/1-2-1?lang=eng>.

⁸ “1.2.1 March 17, 1842,” in *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*.

⁹ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women’s Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2018), 372.

met together in their local communities and became part of “The Female Relief Society.”¹⁰

The Minute Books

Each Relief Society minute book is a compilation of meeting notes taken by the secretary of each local Relief Society organization. These vary in both detail and usefulness, depending on the secretary. Many minute books are detailed in recording the names and speeches of those who spoke in the meeting word for word, while others give simple and short summaries of the meetings.

Some challenges that need to be recognized with these minute books is that while sometimes the secretary wrote in the book directly during meetings, other times they would record their notes on pieces of paper and then record the minutes in the book at a later date. Some secretaries note when this happened by recording who the secretary was and who recorded the minutes into the book, but most often they do not indicate if this was done. Sometimes they will record in the book that minutes from a meeting were lost, but it is also possible that minutes were lost, and they did not indicate it.

There are several types of meetings recorded in the minutes. The most common are the regular meetings where women met together to discuss business and to discourse together. The two other most common meetings mentioned are teachers’ meetings where women designated as “teachers” met together to discuss the needs of the women in their districts, and sewing or working meetings where women worked together to clothe and

¹⁰ The word “Female” was officially dropped from the title by a vote in 1872. Because of this, I have chosen hereafter to refer to it only as the “Relief Society” to avoid confusion.

fill the needs of the poor in their communities. This thesis focuses primarily on the first type of meetings in an effort to analyze the majority of women who participated in the Relief Society, though occasionally teachers' minutes were also used. Other records that the minute books contain are rolls or member attendance, member lists, treasury accounts, donation lists, and annual reports. While I have chosen to focus on the minutes of meetings, these other records within the minute books are sources that will be beneficial to the future scholarship of Latter-day Saint women.

This thesis focuses on the minute books of eight different Relief Societies: Cedar City, Meadow, Fillmore, Holden, Spring Lake, Provo 2nd, Salt Lake Twentieth, and Millville. These minutes are varied in location, number of volumes, pages, quality of the minutes, and the differences between the secretaries who wrote them. I specifically chose

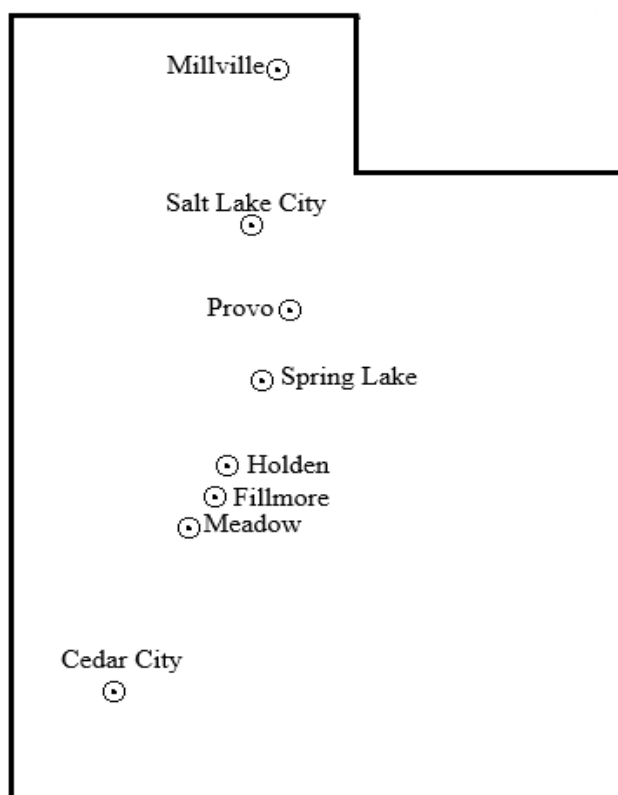


Figure 1. Map of Relief Society Locations

more prominent areas such as Salt Lake City and Provo, as well as small unknown towns such as Meadow and Millville in order to have a broader spectrum of information and to be able to see a broader picture of women throughout the Utah territory. While the focus of my research was on these eight minute books, occasionally quotes or additional context from other societies' minute books have been used as well. For instance, in Chapter Three, I examine examples of minutes from the Vernon Relief Society as well because they add to the greater understanding of the relationships between men and women within the Relief Society. As my research primarily was done during and shortly after the Covid-19 pandemic, digital copies from the website of the Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah were my primary sources.

Methodology

Discrepancies in examining these eight specific minute books include that I have only used two Relief Societies that cover the entire time period of my research. The following chart demonstrates the periods of time each minute book covers in the dark gray.

Years	Cedar City	Meadow	Fillmore	Holden	Spring Lake	Provo 2nd	Salt Lake 20th	Millville
1868								
1869								
1870								
1871								
1872								
1873								
1874								
1875								
1876								
1877								
1878								
1879								
1880								
1881								
1882								
1883								
1884								
1885								
1886								
1887								
1888								
1889								

Figure 2. Timeline of the Eight Principal Minute Books of this Thesis

Though not every minute book covers the entire time period, I did not find that this affected the results overall. These minute books still all discussed similar topics and had similar patterns.

My primary method of research was reading each minute book page by page and noting topics that were spoken of in each meeting. In my initial research, I took notes on approximately eighty different topics and specific words or phrases. The quantity of these notes clearly cannot all be analyzed one by one in a master's thesis, so I have grouped many of these topics and words into similar groups, and specifically chosen to focus on certain themes. Even with this grouping, there are many topics the women spoke of that are not discussed in this thesis as I have chosen to focus on those that were more common or that were significant in the lack of being spoken about. Though the minutes are through the eyes—or rather the pens—of the individual secretaries, generally the minutes were read in the meeting and accepted by all the women attending the meeting. This makes the minutes a form of public discourse that is both individual and communal.

My thesis chapters fall within the framework of three categories: discourse, testimony, and relationships with male leaders. Chapter One discusses why women spoke together, what they spoke about, or what they did not, and what that tells us about Latter-Saint women's public discourse. Chapter Two explains what it meant for women to bear testimony and some of the language used to do so. It also demonstrates that by analyzing what women bore testimony of, as well as what they did not, church principles that women struggled with are revealed, specifically the United Order and Plural Marriage. Lastly, Chapter Three examines situations and relationships in the minute books that display the large influence and impact men had on the Female Relief Society, despite it

being a women's organization. By examining these different categories, this thesis will demonstrate the important contributions within the Relief Society minute books that are integral to understanding Latter-day Saint women's lived religious lives and communities.

Ultimately, the minute books reveal that the Relief Society organization was a catalyst for Utah women to learn to speak of what they felt and to do so publicly. The minute books show that Latter-day Saint women did this within the purview of their male leaders, or in a few cases in spite of them. The Relief Society was where women learned what it meant to be a Latter-day Saint woman and how to negotiate the relationships they had with their male leaders.

Utah Relief Society Women

While thousands of women participated in the Relief Society throughout Utah from 1868 to 1889 it is important to remember that not every woman did. Membership in the church did not automatically mean women were also members of the Relief Society in their wards. Before women could join their local society, others had to vouch for their respectability and worthiness. When this was done, their names were brought before the women of the society and their membership was voted on.

Even among those who did participate, their participation could be limited compared to others. In many meetings, leaders exhorted the women to attend meetings more, and in other cases, women lamented that their duties at home kept them from attending meetings as often as they wished. However, whether they attended or not, the

culture of the Relief Society permeated both their religious and local communities. The women who did attend Relief Society meetings were from different countries, social classes, educational backgrounds, families, and economic situations yet they tied themselves together through both the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Relief Society organization.

Historian Ann Braude has argued that “Women’s History *Is* American Religious History.”¹¹ Though Latter-day Saint women were only a small percentage of American religious women during the nineteenth century, their story is also part of American religious history. Like other American women they prayed, they bore testimony of what they believed, they took care of the poor, they had children, they had husbands, they were widows, they never married, they cried together, they laughed together, and created a place for themselves within their religious communities. Examining Latter-day Saint women’s history is another step toward understanding women within the larger scope of American religious history, and these minute books are necessary for doing so.

¹¹ Ann Braude, “Women’s History *Is* American Religious History,” in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas A. Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 87-102.

Chapter One: “This is the place to talk to each other”:

Discourse in the Relief Society Minute Books

“I feel that we ought to be one in theas meetings And this is the place to talk to each other,” said Jane Miller of the Salt Lake City Twentieth Ward Relief Society in 1878 to a group of gathered women.¹² This meeting was similar to many in the ten years since Eliza R. Snow had been appointed by church president Brigham Young to reorganize the Female Relief Society. In the society’s beginnings Snow had told the Salt Lake City women, “We get more of the Spirit of our religion in coming together & expressing our feelings one to another, we see, we have the same faith & hopes & are here to prepare ourselves for the pure & holy.”¹³ The Relief Society minute books are evidence that Latter-day Saint women in Relief Societies across Utah followed this pattern of coming together to express their feelings, desires, and ideas, creating a discourse that was unique to their local societies while at the same time was connected to other Relief Societies throughout the territory.

Historian Jennifer Reeder notes that “The recovery of LDS women's discourses reveals a long, deep history of expounding in a variety of formats. In and of themselves, these exhortations provide historical and rhetorical details about doctrine, people, and events that are not found in more traditional histories.”¹⁴ While the study of Latter-day Saint women is increasing, scholarship focused specifically on discourse found in Relief

¹² Twentieth Ward, Ensign Stake, *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Call No. LR 9455 14, Vol. 2, digital copy, Church History Library, 40 (image 45).

¹³ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 26-27 (images 38-39).

¹⁴ Jennifer Reeder, “‘To Expound Scriptures, and to Exhort the Church’: Nineteenth-Century Mormon Women and Public Discourse,” *Mormon Historical Studies*, 18:1 (2017), 9.

Society minute books of the mid to late nineteenth century is scarce.¹⁵ Examining the words of women, written by the Relief Society secretaries, reveals insight into the lives of individual and unknown women in nineteenth-century Utah, as well as the larger picture of communities of women in the territory.

Discourse

This chapter uses the word “discourse” as both a noun and a verb, which allows the use of the word discourse to refer not only to what is said but also “as an act.”¹⁶ But what is crucial to understand for this chapter is that “The theory of discourse proposes that individuality itself is the site, as it were, on which socially produced and historically established discourses are reproduced and regulated.”¹⁷ This definition is true of the discourse found in Relief Society minute books where both the individual and the social and religious community play an integral role in how discourse was created and regulated. Latter-day Saint women used discourse to both assert their individual voices and to integrate themselves into the voice of their religious hierarchy.

¹⁵ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has made some effort to publish (through The Church Historian’s Press) some of the discourse from the minute books. These collections include *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses By Latter-day Saint Women*, *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*, and *The Discourses of Eliza R. Snow*. However, of the 54 discourses in *At the Pulpit* only five are from Relief Society minute books created during 1850-1889. *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* uses minutes from various Relief Societies of the time period amongst other sources, but their view is broader, and their focus is not on the minute books themselves. Similarly, many of *The Discourses of Eliza R. Snow* come from the minute books, including some that this thesis is focused on, but they of course only include the meetings where Snow spoke and they do not look at other women in the minute books, or at specific themes found in the minutes over time.

¹⁶ Tim O’Sullivan et al., *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1994), 93.

¹⁷ O’Sullivan et al, *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies*, 94.

In looking at minutes page by page from eight different Relief Societies, created between the years 1868 and 1889, I have tried to discover themes of what these organizations talked about most, what was common to the organizations as a whole, and what might have been unique to a specific Relief Society. I have also tried to bring attention to what they did not speak about that would be expected, because reading between the lines of women's discourse and looking at what they did not say will often tell you just as much about the women as examining what they did say.

To Do Good and to Save Souls

When church president Brigham Young called upon Eliza R. Snow and bishops to reorganize the Female Relief Societies in December of 1867, and again in April of 1868, it is not surprising that he did not mention the importance of talking together. For Young, the work the Female Relief Society would do was quite literal. They would “work at sewing,” “relieve the wants of the poor,” “enter into the cultivation of silk,” and assist their husbands in working the land and raising animals.¹⁸ Even Eliza R. Snow in her more official instruction printed in the *Deseret Evening News* article entitled “Female Relief Society” did not mention the importance of speaking in meetings, but rather states that the object of the society was “to do good—to bring into requisition every capacity we possess for doing good, not only in relieving the poor but in saving souls.” In the article,

¹⁸ Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds., “3.1 Brigham Young, Discourse, December 8, 1867 (Excerpt)” and “3.4 Brigham Young, Discourse, April 8, 1868 (Excerpt),” in *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* (The Church Historian's Press, 2016), online, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/the-first-fifty-years-of-relief-society/?lang=eng>.

she does not explicitly explain what is meant by saving souls but discusses in detail the work of caring for both the sick and the poor.¹⁹

Despite these instructions (or perhaps because of the lack of detail within the instructions) women still did not entirely understand how to act within the organization. This is evidenced by the letters some societies sent to Snow. One such letter is recorded in the Fillmore Relief Society minute book. Organized on May 7, 1868, the society's minutes describe the confusion women felt as they tried to organize themselves, even though it is recorded that they read Snow's *Deseret Evening News* article at their first meeting.²⁰ On the third meeting, they regretted the absence of the bishop and said that they "did not feel like doing much on account of the disorganized state of the society."²¹ One woman, Augusta Bowen Cleveland Smith wrote a letter to Eliza R. Snow. Precisely what Smith wrote is not known, but presumably, she asked for advice. Snow's response was read at the June 16, 1868, Fillmore Relief Society meeting as well as being recorded into the minute book. In the letter, Snow discusses a variety of questions and topics, such as whether brethren should always attend meetings, the reading of the minutes at meetings, the duties of the presidency, and how members should be admitted to the society. She also describes how meetings should be conducted and what should happen during the meetings.

If your meeting is not designed for working, it is well to proceed immediately to business... After the business is done, arise and express your feelings—give instruction &c, call on your Counselors to speak, and if possible get all to speak,

¹⁹ Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds., "3.6 Eliza R. Snow, 'Female Relief Society,' April 18 and 20, 1868," in *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*. Doing good, caring for the poor, and saving souls were also stated as the objects of the Relief Society at its first meetings which took place in Nauvoo Illinois during March and June of 1842.

²⁰ Fillmore Ward, Millard Stake, *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, Call No. LR 2858 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, 1 (image 2).

²¹ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 2 (image 3).

if it is no more than five words, in this way you will overcome embarrassment and learn to speak words of wisdom and comfort, and the Holy Spirit will rest upon you.²²

Speaking in public and in Relief Society meetings was new for most women. In most of their church meetings, it was only male leaders who spoke.²³ However, that all should learn to speak, and not just to speak but express their feelings, and to “overcome embarrassment” was an important purpose of the organization’s meetings according to Snow. Her direction in the postscript of the letter expands on the importance of what they spoke about in meetings:

I think the [Female Relief] Societies will have a great tendency to check the habit of idle talk by presenting topics of usefulness and interest, for it is calculated to bring into exercise all the powers of reflection, every species of ingenuity and calculation—for it embraces every means of doing good both temporally and spiritually. It is calculated to very much elevate the Female character. Each one should strive to make the meetings useful, interesting and attractive, and so managed that it will be an honor to any one to become a member.²⁴

By speaking together on “topics of usefulness” women could “elevate” their own character which would aid in saving their souls. But speaking in meetings fulfilled a two-fold mission. Not only could they help themselves, but by making meetings interesting they could encourage more women in joining and therefore help elevate others as well. In doing these two things they ultimately fulfilled the purpose of the society “to do good” and to save souls.²⁵

²² *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 7 (image 8). Punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are the same as in the original except for where “F.S.” has been expanded to Female Relief in brackets for clarification.

²³ Jennifer Reeder and Kate Holbrook, eds., *At The Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-Day Saint Women* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church Historian's Press, 2017), xix.

²⁴ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 8 (image 9).

²⁵ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 8 (image 9); Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds., “3.6 Eliza R. Snow, ‘Female Relief Society,’ April 18 and 20, 1868,” in *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*.

“Confered upon the sisters the power of speech”

Fillmore was not the only Relief Society to receive similar advice from Snow. During her visits to societies around the territory, she encouraged women to speak. Snow told the women of the Salt Lake City Twentieth Ward Relief Society that getting up to speak was just as much a duty for them as it was for the men. She explained, “The Lord has confered upon the sisters the power of speech as much as upon the brethren... we must cultivate our faculties and inasmuch as we do move forward we shall be blessed. If we are officially called upon to speak, never refuse, if you do, you will not feel so well.”²⁶

Though women across the Utah territory began organizing themselves into societies, trying to follow the patterns set for them by both Young and Snow, it was not easy. Public speaking for women in the latter half of the nineteenth century, while becoming more common, was still a work in progress. In the broader American context, creating societies of women was certainly not unique to Latter-day Saint women. Reform, mutual improvement, charitable, and benevolent societies had existed since the 1790s and increased during the 1800s, creating a space for women to learn to speak more in public settings.²⁷ American women were learning to speak out, but it was not just on topics of reform that women were learning to speak of in the nineteenth century.²⁸ Organizations of women were created for the purpose of seeking knowledge.

²⁶ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 42 (image 54).

²⁷ Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak. Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 136-137; Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 15.

²⁸ Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 34.

In 1839 Margaret Fuller began her “Conversations” gatherings in Boston.²⁹ She led discussions with other women by asking questions about the purpose of life, as well as their place in the world. Mary Kelley states that “Fuller’s ‘Conversations,’ rather than being an exception, represented a culmination of long-established collaborations in both the production and reproduction of knowledge.”³⁰ Nineteenth-century women began to take their learning and their speaking into their own hands. Among this history of women finding their voices, Latter-day Saint women had their own history of being instructed to speak. Not long after The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ founding, Emma Smith received what she believed to be a revelation from God through the voice of her husband (and prophet) Joseph Smith. Included in her responsibilities, the revelation said that she was “to expound Scriptures & exhort the Church.”³¹ However, at the end of the revelation, it stated “this is my voice unto all” implying that other women were to follow her example in doing so.³² This idea was also taught by Joseph Smith, who at the first meeting of the Relief Society in 1842, after reading the revelation, said that Emma was to “expound the scriptures” and “to teach the female part of [the] community; and that not she alone, but others.”³³ Jennifer Reeder states that from the time of Smith’s direction in the meeting, Latter-day Saint women “developed a robust tradition of public speaking.”³⁴ While Smith’s directive to speak is never discussed in the Utah minute books, because

²⁹ Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak*, 136-137; Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 112-114.

³⁰ Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak*, 136-137; Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 114.

³¹ Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds., “1.1 Revelation, July 1830 (Doctrine and Covenants 25)” in *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*.

³² Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds., “1.1 Revelation, July 1830 (Doctrine and Covenants 25)” in *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*.

³³ Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds., “1.2.1 March 17, 1842” in *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*.

³⁴ Jennifer Reeder, “‘To Expound Scriptures, and to Exhort the Church’: Nineteenth-Century Mormon Women and Public Discourse,” *Mormon Historical Studies*, 18:1 (2017), 1.

Eliza R. Snow was present at that first meeting, it is very likely that it was this that inspired her to urge the Utah women to also “exhort” and “expound.”

However, learning to get up and speak was not always an easy process. Relief Society women in leadership positions in Utah, as well as the bishops of the wards to which the Relief Societies belonged, followed Snow’s counsel throughout the years of 1868 to 1889 by encouraging the women to stand and speak. At the first meeting of the Millville Relief Society President Sarah Ann Pitkin “advised the Sisters present to throw off all Timidness, and not to feel Embarrassed, but all Speak their feellings and advance any Idea's that will benift the Society. She felt the nescesity of being humble, and trusting God for Strength.”³⁵ Words such as “weakness,” “backward,” “timid,” “trial,” and “embarrassed” were often used by women when they stood to speak. One woman in Millville simply “said she did not feel much like talking.”³⁶ Fear was a factor for Sarah Ann Scott who “could think of a great deal she could think to say when she was on her seat, but when she arose to speak it all but left her.”³⁷ The same seems true for “Sister Livingston” who “said that although she did not speak often it was not because she had no testimony to bear, but because she felt timid in rising to speak.”³⁸ Because of remarks like these, as well as the fact that it was difficult to get more women to speak in meetings, both leaders and lay members of the Relief Society encouraged women to speak through various means. They spoke of the duty for each to speak, emphasized promised blessings

³⁵ Millville Ward, Providence Stake, *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, Call No. LR 5589 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, 104 (image 64).

³⁶ *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 209 (image 169).

³⁷ Provo 2nd Ward, Utah Stake, *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Call No. LR 7222 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, 44 (image 48).

³⁸ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 16 (image 28).

for those who did so, and even in one case, referenced their similarity to men in how they felt.

In response to Sister Livingston speaking of timidity, Sister Mitchell said that “the sisters were not the only ones who felt timid in addressing a meeting of saints, for the brethren had to contend with the same spirit.”³⁹ Speaking in Relief Society meetings not only meant learning to speak in front of a group of women but also often meant learning to speak in front of men. The “brethren” mentioned in many minute books as being present at meetings (for some wards often and for others only occasionally) usually meant bishops and their counselors, however, it also could include stake presidents, visiting authorities, and even sometimes the women’s husbands. In the Fillmore Relief Society, Mary McBride stated that she would speak if she was called upon, “but felt her weakness in speaking before the Bishop.”⁴⁰ Though Latter-day Saint women did not usually speak in Sacrament meetings (the weekly Sunday meeting), in addition to some of their Relief Society meetings they also spoke in the church’s fast and testimony meetings.⁴¹ Despite the nervousness Latter-day Saint women felt in speaking before church leaders, they still began to do so more frequently. Over time many women learned to speak more and even become influential in the public sphere in many aspects (women’s suffrage being one of them), however, some women continued to reference their weakness and inadequacies to speak. The Spring Lake president said in 1878, that she “felt worse when she got up to speak now than she did at first.”⁴² In 1889 Johanna Eggertson declared “Let us rise and bear our testimony and overcome the timidity of

³⁹ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 2, 16 (image 28).

⁴⁰ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 12 (image 13).

⁴¹ Reeder and Holbrook, eds., *At The Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-Day Saint Women*, xix.

⁴² Spring Lake Branch, Utah Stake, *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, Call no. LR 8640 14, Book 1876-1881, digital copy, Church History Library, 19 (image 21).

feeling, and we shall have strength.”⁴³ Some believed “that a lack of faith was the cause” of timidity, or that it was “from some evil influence or a source that had a tendency to weaken our faith” and encouraged all that if they would rise to the occasion the Lord would bless and strengthen them.⁴⁴ Speaking became a way to demonstrate faith and fulfill their duty, but at the same time not speaking could be a way to be singled out as one woman demonstrated when she said that she did not want to be the only one who did not speak.⁴⁵ By speaking despite their timidness, women asserted their place within the society and within their religious community.

“Express their feelings”

While the act of discourse within Relief Society meetings became an essential part of women’s networks and community, it was also a personal and individual experience. In each Relief Society but one (the Holden Relief Society), the phrases “speak their feelings” or “express their feelings” was used to ask women to speak in meetings. The word “feelings” is often linked to femininity, as well as to religion.

In the nineteenth century, women were considered the heart of the home and the church. Historian Ann Braude argues that Harriet Beecher Stowe in her novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* demonstrates that “The book’s female characters, dominated by feelings rather than intellect, become the true teachers of Christian faith.”⁴⁶ Emotion was considered one of the primary characteristics that separated women from men. Nancy M.

⁴³ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 3, 94 (image 92).

⁴⁴ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 1, 168 and 92 (images 172 and 96),

⁴⁵ *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 24 (image 26).

⁴⁶ Ann Braude, *Sisters and Saints; Women and American Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 50.

Theriot explains that this “new feminine script” began in the early nineteenth century. Where masculinity implied “aggression, competitiveness, and market-related skills,” being female meant exuding “nurturance, emotion, and altruism.”⁴⁷ It was in this realm that women could find their place within the nineteenth-century context. Therefore, in using the word feelings, Latter-day Saint women asserted their authority to speak within their sphere. When women spoke of their feelings, they spoke about something they knew about intimately and in this way, they asserted authority and agency. Catherine Brekus has said that “agency should always be seen as relational and social” as well as individual.⁴⁸ She also explains that “Historians sometimes write about famous religious leaders as if they were autonomous individuals who bent history to their will, but in fact, their leadership was dependent on the recognition of others.”⁴⁹ This aspect of agency is demonstrated well in the minute books where women expressed their feelings while also supporting the patriarchal structure and teachings of the church.

This is exemplified in a meeting of the Fillmore Relief Society. Secretary Eliza Partridge Lyman recorded the names of nineteen women and summarized their words as a group by saying they “each spoke a few words expressive of their feelings, said they intended to do what they were required to by the authorities in this Church, they wanted to keep the Word of Wisdom, but some thought it very hard to do they were so weak &c.” At the next meeting Ann Walker stated that though “she wanted to do all the good she could, she did not keep the Word of Wisdom, neither did she pay her Tithing.” Though

⁴⁷ Nancy M. Theriot, *Mothers & Daughters in Nineteenth-Century America: The Biosocial Construction of Femininity*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 18.

⁴⁸ Catherine A. Brekus, “Tanner Lecture: Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 2 (January 2011): pp. 58-87, <https://doi.org/10.2307/23291637>, 81.

⁴⁹ Brekus, “Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency,” 81-82.

women did not directly speak against church doctrine in meetings, they could state how they felt and what was going on in their own lives.⁵⁰

“Prove our selves deserving and faithful”

The topics of the minute book discourses were related not only to the religious lives but also to the day-to-day lives of these women. In fact, in most cases, what they spoke about and how they spoke of it indicates that the religious and the everyday were interconnected. One of the overarching themes of all the minute book conversations was duty. That these women felt a keen duty to their religion, and that women were taught strongly to remember and to do their duty is found frequently in the minutes. Along with duty, they also “exhorted” each other “to be faithful.”⁵¹ While testifying was a personal statement of belief, exhorting meant to urge fellow women to live church commandments. Exhortation among members of many religious sects is common. Vicki Tolar Burton explains that in Methodism “While most women might testify, fewer women would move to the next levels of discourse: exhorting, expounding, and preaching.”⁵² However, this was not the case for Latter-day Saint women. Their exhortations to faithfulness cover the pages of their minute books. The commission as well as what it meant to be faithful was clearly at the forefront of their minds.

For Latter-day Saint women being faithful was not just faith or belief in God but it was based on works. Being loyal to the church in word and deed by being obedient to

⁵⁰ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 17 and 19 (images 18 and 20).

⁵¹ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 235 (image 249).

⁵² Vicki Tolar Burton, “Preaching from the Pulpit Steps: Mary Bosanquet Fletcher and Women’s Preaching in Early Methodism,” in *Renovating Rhetoric in Christian Tradition*, ed. Elizabeth Vander Lei et al. (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 33.

church leaders as well as doing their duty at home and in their community spheres were required to be faithful women. To the Salt Lake City Twentieth Ward Eliza R. Snow said, “Our religion embraces a great deal. It not only extends through time but all eternity, & sisters, we will be rewarded according to our works, not according to our faith, & good feelings.”⁵³ They must do their best to show their faithfulness and many women throughout the minutes speak of their “desire” to do so. However, they did believe that this faithfulness could be assisted by both the help of the Lord and the prayers of others. Margaret Spainhower in Spring Lake said that she “hoped the Lord would help her to remain faithful,” and Sarah Goodman in Provo prayed “the Lord to enable us to prove our selves deserving and faithful.”⁵⁴ In order to receive the Lord’s help women exhorted each other on the importance of prayer, and in meetings they also asked for prayers in their behalf. In Holden, Letta Stevens asked for “an interest in the faith and prayers of the sis[ters] that She may hold out faithful to her calling.”⁵⁵ In asking for the prayers of the women in their religious communities, Latter-day Saint women not only asked for support but in doing so they also solicited a connection within that community. In Provo, this was particularly evident when Lena Barraman said she “felt to accuse her self in neglecting her meetings but had a living witness within her self of the truth of this work knew she stood in need of the prayers of her sisters and their counsel also.”⁵⁶ Connection to each other and counseling together was indeed a purpose of the Relief Society and

⁵³ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 26 (image 38). Snow also says at this meeting that God judges the “motive of the heart,” and therefore if they have the desire to do good but cannot that God will “accept the will for the deed,” but this seems to be only used in dire circumstances and was not to be used as an excuse.

⁵⁴ *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 110 (image 112); *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, 107 (image 111).

⁵⁵ Holden Ward, Millard Stake, *Holden Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1870-1972*, Call no. LR 3838 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, 48 (image 50).

⁵⁶ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 1, 108 (image 112).

among the exhortations to be faithful, to be faithful mothers was a subject that women both gave and received much counsel on.

“Good counsel on bringing up children”

In Fillmore, Bishop Edward Partridge told the women of the Relief Society “There is much depending on the sisters in regards to the bringing up of their children, the fathers are called away more or less and the children are left to the care of their mothers.”⁵⁷ Both men and women taught in Relief Society meetings that mothers were also doctors, educators, disciplinarians, friends, and religious instructors. Women were the primary caretakers of children throughout nineteenth-century America, but even more so among Latter-day Saint women whose husbands were gone on church proselyting missions, busy serving in church leadership, or in the case of polygamous families living with and visiting other wives. A woman identified as “Sister Toone” in the Salt Lake Twentieth Ward said “many a woman had to be husband, father, and mother, so it was necessary for her to have the spirit of God always with her to guide and direct all her actions.”⁵⁸ Motherhood was one of the most important characteristics as well as duties for nineteenth-century women and was not unique to Latter-day Saint women. Theriot explains, “Motherhood became the most important symbol of true womanhood, the major cultural metaphor for femininity; the moral mother seemed to encompass all the characteristics newly assigned to the female sex.”⁵⁹ True womanhood being intertwined with motherhood was an ideology that held true for Latter-day Saint women. However,

⁵⁷ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 20 (image 21).

⁵⁸ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 2, 3 (image 8).

⁵⁹ Theriot, *Mothers & Daughters in Nineteenth-Century America*, 18.

additionally being a good Latter-day Saint woman also meant raising children who would become good Latter-day Saints.

To raise good Latter-day Saint children, they then must be good Latter-day Saints themselves. Sarah Ann Scott “spoke on the training of our children, should set them good examples, and teach them the principles of the Gospel,” and in Holden and Millville they were to teach their children “in the ways of life and salvation.”⁶⁰ These “principles of the Gospel” included teaching their “children to pray, be clean, tidy and truthful” and to impress upon the minds of the youth “the imbounded love of God and how needful it was for all to walk in obedience to his laws.”⁶¹ After the Primary Association was organized in 1878, women all over the territory were encouraged to establish them in their own wards in order to instruct children in church teachings.⁶² President Thomas Callister told the women of Fillmore that he wanted “the sisters to preside in their houses with dignity and see that no false doctrines are taught to their families.”⁶³ By teaching their children the principles of the church, sending them to their meetings and teaching them “good manners” Latter-day Saint women could thereby fulfill their duties as mothers.⁶⁴

As well as being reminded of the importance of caring for their children in meetings they were also given advice on how to do so. Rebecca Campbell in Millville told the women “to take care of their daughters, and to know [where] they were and

⁶⁰ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 1, 66 (image 70); *Holden Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1870-1972*, 8 (image 12); *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 198-199 (images 158-159).

⁶¹ *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 294 (image 252); *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 1, 66 (image 70); *Holden Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1870-1972*, 111 (image 115).

⁶² Carol Cornwall Madsen and Susan Staker Oman, *Sisters and Little Saints: One Hundred Years of Primary*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1979) 8; *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 132-133 and 159-161 (images 134-135 and 161-163)

⁶³ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 96 (image 100).

⁶⁴ *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 357 (image 307).

whose company they kept while under their parents control.”⁶⁵ In Provo, Jane Jones “wished mothers to exercise strict control of their children for their mutual improvement.”⁶⁶ Interestingly the word “control” in referencing children is only found in the Millville and Provo minutes. Even when they used the word, however, it was still true that love should motivate them in their interactions with their children. President Sarah Ann Scott “knew more could be done to control our children by love than in any other way.”⁶⁷

In contrast, President Caroline Callister of Fillmore told her Relief Society that “Some feel they have trouble in their families, that they cannot control their families but let them live faithful unto God and attend to their prayers and they can exercise and influence over their children.”⁶⁸ While some felt they could not control, they did feel they could influence their children and in order to do so they were encouraged to “make home attractive to” their children.⁶⁹ This rhetoric is not exclusive to Latter-day Saint women. Regarding Victorian American Protestantism, Colleen McDannell argues that “In the maternal model of religion the significant relationship is the mother-child bond... This model calls on love and not authority to define both religion and earthly society.”⁷⁰ In the Relief Society of Spring Lake, a visiting “Sister Kimball” had much to say on this subject. She said that they “ought to be” patient with their children. Mothers should:

talk and reason with them and not get angry with them & whip them. If their hearts could not be touched the rod would do no good. Said that mothers

⁶⁵ *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 34 (image 64).

⁶⁶ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 1, 159 (image 163).

⁶⁷ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 3, 50 (image 48).

⁶⁸ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 66 (image 72).

⁶⁹ Cedar City Ward, Parowan Stake, *Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, 1856-1875 and 1892*, Call No. LR 1514 22, digital copy, Church History Library, 66 (image 70).

⁷⁰ Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 127.

should never punish a child while she was angry. That they should not allow themselves to become angry and fretful - if they did their children would be cross and fretful.⁷¹

Whether or not women appreciated counsel like this is never mentioned in the minutes. Within this space of Relief Society, women of all walks of life and experience participated. Younger women and mothers could lean on the experience of older women. In fact, in Holden, J. C. Teeple's "said young mothers have a better chance to raise their children now than they used to as they [hear] instructions in regards how to teach them the principals of life."⁷²

Women were not only in charge of children's social and religious well-being, they were also taught to take care of their physical needs. Mothers were to be doctors and healers. They were to "harken to President Young's counsel and make themselves acquainted with the diseases of their children, that they may be their own doctors, our Pres had told us no doctor should practice medicine without the spirit of revelation that they may know what to administer."⁷³ In Cedar City, they were told to "learn to doctor themselves and their children."⁷⁴ Whether or not all Relief Society women specifically spoke of being "doctors," whatever language they used it was clear they felt that they had a responsibility to take care of the physical and spiritual needs of their children. It was a topic at the forefront of all discussions on motherhood.

But fulfilling the duties of motherhood was clearly not easy in their minds and the Relief Society was also a place where women could share their struggles with

⁷¹ *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 92 (image 94).

⁷² *Holden Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1870-1972*, 56 (image 58).

⁷³ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 65 (image 77).

⁷⁴ *Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, 1856-1875 and 1892*, 36 (image 40).

each other. E. A. Wilson said “she desired to teach her children principles of truth. Said she realized the necessity of being kind to them, but that she could not always control herself.”⁷⁵ The difficulties of motherhood were known to many in the circle of Relief Society, and there they could talk together and find purpose in their duties as mothers of families, as well as mothers of the community. Women found a direct connection of the duty of motherhood to their religious duty. “Sister Yates” from Scipio told the Holden Relief Society “it was an important mission to teach the young the will of God,” that “the women of ancient Israel... in their day they were made priestess[es] and prophetess[es] but in our day there is greater responsibilities as we ~~are~~ have to instruct the children.”⁷⁶ For Yates, teaching children, the rising generation of church members, was the highest calling one could have as a Latter-day Saint woman. As women came together to speak of what was important to them, what they struggled with, and what they felt a duty towards, it is not surprising that motherhood was a topic discussed by women across the territory. However, it was only one of many things women felt they had a duty to do, and church leaders, especially bishops, reminded them of other duties they had as well.

“To relieve the poor”

Though Bishop Partridge of Fillmore spoke of the importance women had in their role as mothers, he also spoke of the responsibility women had to attend to the poor. According to Partridge, this was indeed an important role for “You can do good

⁷⁵ *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973, 95 (image 97).*

⁷⁶ *Holden Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1870-1972, 86 (image 82).* Letters within brackets added for clarity.

and administer comfort in places many times where the Brethren can not go.”⁷⁷ Many bishops taught that the primary purpose of the Relief Society organization was to assist them in helping the poor. Though this was only one of several purposes of the organization of the Relief Society, taught both by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo as well as by Eliza R. Snow in Utah.⁷⁸ The Millville bishop, spoke of the burden the women had taken “from the brethrens shoulders” by looking after the sick and the poor, and the bishop in Cedar City told the women “ the object of this society was to do good, administer to the poor and lighten the labors of the Bishop.”⁷⁹

Not only was this the purpose and duty of the Relief Society, but for many, it was considered a duty suited primarily to women. Historian Lori Ginzberg explains that in the 1830s a plethora of benevolent societies were organized in America, influenced by the idea that women were the “moral organ” of humanity and society.⁸⁰ She states that “The ideology of benevolent femininity suggested, indeed demanded, that women act to heal or transform the world.”⁸¹ This ideology was heavily supported by Latter-day Saint bishops who often spoke of the relationship of the Relief Society and the poor. As Bishop Partridge inferred, many bishops felt that taking care of the poor was a duty that women could do better than men. The bishop in Spring Lake said, “the society is womans work to look after the really poor ignorant & redeem all in their power that is the mission of the heart—man in his

⁷⁷ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 19-20 (image 20-21).

⁷⁸ Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds., “1.2.12, June 9, 1842, Thursday” in *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*; “14 August 1868, Salt Lake City Sixth Ward Relief Society; Salt Lake City, Utah Territory,” in *The Discourses of Eliza R. Snow*, Church Historian’s Press, accessed 10 June 2023, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/eliza-r-snow>.

⁷⁹ *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 159 (image 119); *Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, 1856-1875 and 1892*, 79, (image 83).

⁸⁰ Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 11.

⁸¹ Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 34.

coldness is not touched like woman—man may sympathize but not like woman.”⁸²

Many women rose to this call throughout the Utah territory. They held “working meetings” where clothes and quilts were made. They gathered donations and sometimes even organized the building of houses for the less fortunate in their communities. However, even with the work women participated in to take care of the poor, the frequency of speaking about their duty to care for the poor in meetings was not high for most of the societies within this survey.

Perhaps many women felt as Eliza R. Snow did who told a Relief Society in St. George, Utah: “We have met together; and what for? Why do we have these meetings? One says ‘to look after the poor.’ Yes, that is one reason, but ~~is~~ *<it>* is the smallest.”⁸³ Taking care of the poor was just one among many other duties of the Relief Society. Similarly, President Scott of the Provo 2nd Ward said, “these societies are not alone to gather donations but to comfort the sick and those who mourn and help each other to live faithful.”⁸⁴ Another theme spoken of in meetings was that the Relief Society was a catalyst to help each other and a place where they could learn to improve themselves. President Margaret Smoot told the Salt Lake City Twentieth Ward that “This Society is not formed expressly for the benefit of the poor, but for our own good also, We all have a mission to perform.”⁸⁵ Unlike what some male leaders thought and spoke of, some women felt that the Relief Society was much more than a society meant to take care of the poor. Rather it was a place to join with other religious-minded women to work on themselves, as well as to help each other.

⁸² *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 114 (image 116).

⁸³ “17 March 1881, St. George Stake Relief Society and Young Ladies; St. George, Utah Territory,” in *The Discourses of Eliza R. Snow*.

⁸⁴ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 1, 216 (image 216).

⁸⁵ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 20 (image 32).

The following chart shows how often the words “poor,” “poverty,” or “in need” were mentioned. While this chart is helpful in seeing an overall view of Relief Society meetings and the subject of the poor, it is important to remember that it is difficult to compare the societies to each other because each society met a different number of times each year. Some could meet twice a month for a whole year while others may only have met five or six times that same year, or even just once in a year. Also, this is a list of how many meetings in a year where these words were mentioned, not how many times the word was used in that year. The darker gray sections indicate times when that society had not yet been organized, or that there are no existing minutes for that year.

Year	Cedar City	Fillmore	Holden	Meadow	Spring Lake	Provo 2nd	SLC 20th	Millville
1868	2	1					8 ⁸⁶	3
1869	0	5				0	5	7
1870	0	4	2	0		0	5	4
1871	0	4	2	0		0	2	3
1872	0	6	1	0		1	3	3
1873	1	1	0	0		1	5	3
1874	0	1	1	0		1	6	2
1875	1	1	0			3	4	2
1876		3	1		2	4	3	2

⁸⁶ During this year there were often several meetings per month and in general they had more meetings than many Relief Societies had in a year which is likely why this number is much higher than most.

Year	Cedar City	Fillmore	Holden	Meadow	Spring Lake	Provo 2nd	SLC 20th	Millville
1877		0	0	0	1	2	7	1
1878		2	1	0	2	3	7	5
1879		2	0	0	3	0	6	2
1880		2	1	0	1	0	9	3
1881		0	0	0	0	3	7	3
1882		0	1	0		1	9	3
1883		0	0	0		0	11	0
1884		2	3	1		4	6	3
1885		1	0	0		1		2
1886		4	0	2		4		3
1887		1	0	0		2		2
1888		0	0	0		1		3
1889		0	2	0		1		2

Figure 3. Frequency the Poor was Spoken of in Meetings

Within the selected minute books, the Relief Societies that spoke the most about the poor were the two located closest to the north of the territory: Salt Lake City and Millville. This is not very surprising for Salt Lake City, considering the number of people located in the church's center. More people often can increase the needs in a community and the Salt Lake Twentieth Ward minutes declare the fact that "Many of the people are

poor.”⁸⁷ Sickness in the community was another factor that may have contributed to an increase in speaking about the poor for some Relief Societies. Out of the eight minute books, both the Salt Lake Twentieth and Millville minute books mention sickness in their wards the most often. Where there was more poor there was more sickness and a greater need for assistance. It is not surprising therefore that assisting the sick and the poor was on the forefront of many of the women’s minds in these two Relief Societies.

In Millville, it was the personal experiences of one woman in particular which made the subject of the poor a focus in many of their meetings. Jane Cummings told her fellow Relief Society women that she “wished to speak in behalf of the poor in Millville.”⁸⁸ Her desire to be a voice for the poor stemmed from her own experience. As an early member of the church living in Nauvoo, Illinois, Cummings had experienced much hardship including having her home burned down by a mob. As she journeyed toward Utah, she and her children lived in a covered wagon during some of the winter months in the Mormon settlement of Winter Quarters, Iowa, until other church members built them a sod hut.⁸⁹ This experience seemed to weigh heavily on her mind when she “spoke in behalf of the poor and of the times at winter quarters and compared them with those of to day.”⁹⁰ Because of Cummings’ personal experience and her influence, others in Millville also spoke of their duty of helping the poor and the society gathered donations for them.

⁸⁷ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 30 (image 42).

⁸⁸ *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 119 (image 79).

⁸⁹ “Concerning Mrs. Cummings,” *Logan Republican*, 2 January 1903, Vol. 1, pg. 2, digital copy on Familysearch.org, under “Memories” of Phebe “Jane” Ferguson (KWVP-3D8).

⁹⁰ *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 152 (image 112).

Similar to the belief of many bishops, Cummings believed that “this Society was organized Expressly for the poor and they ought to receive help when the[y] needed it.”⁹¹ However, not very many women expressed this same opinion. Though women acted to help the poor, they did not often speak of it amongst themselves as their main purpose as an organization, nor as women. Perhaps this was because they did not feel they needed to as actions spoke louder than words. Or perhaps they felt they had more pressing and important things to discuss. Sometimes the case was simply that they felt they had “no poor in [their] ward.”⁹² Whatever the case, this is just one example of how Relief Societies, though taught the same things by their local leaders, followed and acted in their own way. Though each society was connected to each other throughout the territory, the individuals within each society had a great impact on what was said and done in meetings.

“Heard the Prophet Joseph’s voice”

This individual impact on the discourse of Relief Society meetings can also be seen in the infrequency of church founder Joseph Smith being mentioned. As more immigrants came to Utah, fewer of the members had known Smith personally. This may be one reason that Smith was not often mentioned in Relief Society meetings. When he was mentioned, it was frequently by someone who had known him personally. However, at the same time having more of those who knew Smith as members of the Relief Society was not a factor that increased the number of times Smith was mentioned in meetings.

⁹¹ *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 119 (image 79).

⁹² *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 135 (image 137).

Neither does the number of meetings seem to have very much effect on the number. For example, three societies that met frequently and had detailed minutes were Provo, Salt Lake City, and Millville. While Provo and Salt Lake mention Smith much more frequently than other societies, fifteen and sixteen respectively, in Millville there were only two mentions of Smith recorded during the entire time period.

The most frequent way that Smith was mentioned was in relation to the creation of the Relief Society, especially by those who were present at its organization. President Caroline Callister of Fillmore told her fellow members that she “was present at the first female relief society,” and “heard the Prophet Joseph’s voice.”⁹³ Some newly appointed Relief Society presidents referenced what Smith taught in the first Relief Society meetings in Nauvoo as they tried to understand the roles of their new societies. President Margaret Smoot told her Relief Society at their first meeting that “she presumed the instructions which had been read from the book of Records of the [Female Relief Society] of Nauvoo which were given by the Prophet Joseph would be sufficient for them to understand the order of the organization of these societies.” By speaking of knowing Smith, and in organizing their Relief Societies by what he taught in the first Relief Society, the few women who did speak of him gave themselves and their Societies authority and a connection to the early organization in Nauvoo.

Encouraging members to follow certain practices was sometimes a purpose for mentioning Smith’s name in some meetings. Eliza Ann Haight, at a meeting to protest the Cullom Bill, related to her fellow Cedar City Relief Society members some of her

⁹³ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 70 (image 76).

“experiences in the early history of the church in the days of the Prophet Joseph.”⁹⁴ She then told them that she “remembered hearing him say to church members ‘That whatever you say never say anything against the authorities of this church nor the principles of this Kingdom.’”⁹⁵ Using Smith’s name could remind long-time members, or teach new members the importance of church teachings. Louisa Park in the Provo 2nd Ward “aluded to the prophesys of the prophet Joseph [and said] how diligent we should be in keeping and obeying them.”⁹⁶ While what these “prophesys” refer to is not explained, women at other meetings spoke of the “sayings” or “principles” of Joseph Smith, which could be any of the various church beliefs originally taught by Smith.⁹⁷ While secretaries might record that people spoke of Smith’s teachings, they usually did not record the specific teachings that might have been mentioned in the meeting. Two occasions when they did however, were when two of Smith’s former polygamous wives spoke of him. Eliza R. Snow told the Salt Lake Twentieth Ward that “Joseph Smith once said the people had gained their Salvation only so far as they had overcome and gained the victory.”⁹⁸ Zina D. Young told the same society at a different meeting that according to Smith “the sin of ingratitude was next to murder.”⁹⁹ Overall the specific teachings of Smith were not a large part of Relief Society meetings.

Bearing testimony of Smith’s role as God’s prophet was the least frequent way women spoke of Smith in the minutes. President Caroline Callister in Fillmore “bore her

⁹⁴ More information on the Cullom Bill discussed in Chapter Two on page 22; *Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, 1856-1875 and 1892*, 54 (image 58).

⁹⁵ *Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, 1856-1875 and 1892*, 54 (image 58).

⁹⁶ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, 82 (image 86). Words in brackets have been added for clarity.

⁹⁷ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 1, 55 & 107 (images 59 & 111).

⁹⁸ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 252 (image 268).

⁹⁹ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 281 (image 303).

Testimony to the truth of the work. Knew that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of the Lord and was called to lay down his life for the truth.”¹⁰⁰ While bearing testimony of Smith was not common in most Relief Societies, the Salt Lake Twentieth Ward Relief Society was the exception. In that Relief Society testimony was what made up one-third of the mentions of Smith. According to the secretary, in five different meetings, multiple women used the phrase, “I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God” or words very similar.¹⁰¹ The Salt Lake Twentieth Ward Relief Society’s mentions of Smith were also more frequent than most of the other Societies in general. This is likely due to the fact that many high-profile members such as Eliza R. Snow and Zina D. Young were members of the society. However, some of the women in Salt Lake City who bore testimony of Smith were immigrants to Utah who had never met him. Two of these were Ann Arnett and her mother Elizabeth Sellers.¹⁰² After joining the church in Scotland, they came to Utah with their family in 1866 and settled in Salt Lake City.¹⁰³ Being in a society where many knew Smith likely brought his name closer to the forefront of their religious discussions for some of the immigrant women. However, both Eliza Snow and Zina Young visited many other societies in the territory, but this did not seem to have the same effect on others in speaking of Smith. Snow, Young, nor any other leaders ever encouraged women in Relief Societies to speak or bear testimony of Smith. While other

¹⁰⁰ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 106 (image 110).

¹⁰¹ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 2, 105, 110, 123, 147, 224 (images 112, 119, 136, 160, 237).

¹⁰² *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 2, 123 and 224 (images 136 and 160)

¹⁰³ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Ann Muir Sellers Airmet,” *Utah Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel Database, 1847-1868*, (<https://history.lds.org/overlandtravels>); “United States Census, 1880,” database with images, *FamilySearch*, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah Territory, United States; citing enumeration district ED 50, sheet 168D.

topics spoken of in Relief Society meetings are seen throughout all the eight societies, speaking of Smith appears to have been more of an individual choice made by women.

“Visited a number of societies”

This individual choice is highlighted by the fact that women were aware of what other Relief Societies in the territory were saying and doing and were encouraged to visit other societies. In Millville, President Sarah H. Weaver said “she'd like to visit other settlements and be visited in return.”¹⁰⁴ In Spring Lake, President Sarah Johnson used stronger language when she said that they “should attend other society meetings and learn more about them.”¹⁰⁵ This was also taught by the stake president in Fillmore, Thomas Callister, who said “He thought it would be well for the sisters of the Relief Society to visit other settlements and talk with the sisters of their Relief Societies, that we may be a mutual help to each other.”¹⁰⁶ Meeting minutes show that women did visit various societies, though there were many reasons that they did so, such as visiting family or traveling with husbands who went to various settlements to complete church duties. On their return home, women might share what the other society had spoken about or what they were doing. Annabella Haight told the Cedar City Relief Society her “very interesting account of her visit to Beaver and the doings of the society there.”¹⁰⁷ Because of this, women were conscious of what other women throughout the territory said and did.

¹⁰⁴ *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 194 (image 154).

¹⁰⁵ *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 122 (image 124).

¹⁰⁶ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 96 (image 100).

¹⁰⁷ *Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, 1856-1875 and 1892*, 40 (image 44).

In their visits to societies other than their own, they often encouraged the women of the society they were visiting and spoke of the bond they shared as church members no matter where they resided. In Holden, a “Sister Pratt of Fillmore” told the Holden women that they “enjoyed a good spirit here” and “were blessed because we did not have the spirit of opposition that is experienced in some places.”¹⁰⁸ In the Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society “Sister Holden” visiting from the 4th Ward said she “felt great satisfaction in meeting with her sisters, although of a different Ward, we were sheep of the same fold, enjoying the privileges of one Gospel.”¹⁰⁹ Despite being “sheep of the same fold,” they were very aware of the differences that existed from society to society. Myria Henrie spoke to the Millville Society “of attending other society meetings and told how they conducted their meetings, which somewhat different from ours.”¹¹⁰

Being aware of differences led to comparison. Not long after the Relief Society’s reorganization in 1868, President Margaret Smoot in the Salt Lake Twentieth Ward Society said “She had visited a number of societies and felt we had just as good a society as any.”¹¹¹ For other women the wish to visit different society meetings was because they felt that they were “behind” other societies in the work they were doing. This was certainly the case for the Spring Lake Society. In one meeting in 1877, Elizabeth Broadbent, the former Relief Society president of that society “Spoke of a meeting held in Provo in which silk culture was the principle subject treated upon... said that other societies were rolling on and doing a great work, knew that all desired ours to increase also and to receive all encouragement necessary for its advancement.” In the same

¹⁰⁸ *Holden Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1870-1972*, 108 (image 104).

¹⁰⁹ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 1, 180 (image 184).

¹¹⁰ *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 131 (image 91).

¹¹¹ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 49 (image 61).

meeting the current president, Sarah Johnson said she regretted “that we were so far behind other societies, but thought that if we were earnest and zealous the Lord would bless us accordingly.” Despite some feeling their society was lacking compared to others, over time and after visiting other societies, some in Spring Lake felt they had improved. Around two years after the meeting where Johnson said they “were so far behind,” Melissa Babbitt “said our society is not so far behind others as she thought it was.”¹¹²

When the *Woman's Exponent* began in 1872, the newspaper became a catalyst for women to both express themselves and to know what other societies were doing. Secretaries would send in reports of meetings making any woman who subscribed to and read the paper aware of what the other societies were doing. One woman in Fillmore read from the *Woman's Exponent* and then “advised the sisters to subscribe for the Paper as it contained a great deal of information about other societies and much good reading matter.”¹¹³ Similarly “Sister Biglar” visiting Holden from the settlement of Nephi, after reading a selection from the *Exponent* “spoke of the way the societies were carried on in different places and gave some of her ideas.”¹¹⁴ Women were concerned how their societies compared with each other and openly spoke to each other about their concerns, ideas, and differences between the Relief Society organizations creating and overarching sisterhood throughout the territory.

¹¹² *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 63-66, 134 (images 65-68, 136).

¹¹³ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 74 (image 80).

¹¹⁴ *Holden Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1870-1972*, 100 (image 96).

Conclusion

Not all of the Latter-day Saint women in Utah were present when Jane Miller said the Relief Society was “the place to talk to each other,” yet their active participation in the discussions found in the Relief Society minutes demonstrate that many felt the same way.¹¹⁵ Though it is impossible to discuss every topic Latter-day Saint women spoke of in their meetings in one thesis chapter, further research of this discourse is important to understanding the greater historical narrative and lived religious experience of these women.¹¹⁶ These women were initially reticent to speak in public but over time many learned to do so. Through their words they demonstrated agency and took an active role within their sphere. They spoke of their beliefs, thoughts, and feelings that both connected them to the larger church community and gave them an individual voice in their local societies.

¹¹⁵ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 2, 40, (image 45).

¹¹⁶ Other topics such as creating their own fashions, participating in home manufacture, cooperation, and saving grain, for example, are frequently spoken of in the minutes. However, these are subjects other scholars have examined, so I have chosen not to include them here. Two works that cover these topics well are *In Union is Strength Mormon Women and Cooperation, 1867-1900* by Kathleen C. Haggard, and *Woman of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* by Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher. For the topic of women’s rights and suffrage See bibliography for full references.

Chapter Two: “Come to meeting sisters and beare your testimony”:

United Orders, Polygamy, and Absence of Testimony

In Murray, Utah, during the spring of 1880, the sisters of the Cottonwood Relief Society gathered to hear the words of Eliza R. Snow, their beloved presidentess. This meeting was not unusual for Snow often spoke to many groups of gathered Relief Society women throughout the territory. “Sister Snow is not well to day,” Presendia Kimball explained, “but if you give hir your faith and prayers she will be able to talk to us.” When Snow stood, she attested to having a “severe Cold” but continued to address the gathered women. Among her remarks on the functions of the society, Snow stated “if we can bare a faithful testimony to day we want to live so as to bare one tomorrow...come to meeting sisters and beare your testimony.”¹¹⁷

From 1868 to 1889, Latter-day Saint women used the act of bearing testimony as a means both of religious expression and to create a place for themselves within their religious communities. However, an examination of recorded women’s testimonies in the minute books (or in some cases the lack thereof) also reveals some of their religious struggles. Two religious teachings and movements that greatly impacted testimonies in the minute books were the United Order and plural marriage. This is seen in multiple ways and could vary between the different locations. It is demonstrated in a lack of testimonies on the subject, or in the case of the United Order a lack of testimonies in general during the time it was taught and practiced. Another example of the impact was

¹¹⁷ “17 May 1880, South Cottonwood Relief Society,” *The Discourses of Eliza R. Snow* (The Church Historian's Press), <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/eliza-r-snow/1880s/1880/05/1880-05-17?lang=eng>, 401. Original spelling and punctuation kept.

the struggle for some Relief Societies to get along and be unified. In speaking of polygamy, some women bore testimony of it, and occasionally both male and female leaders taught about it, however, women were largely silent on the subject.

These silences are both intriguing and revealing. Though the individual experiences of these women were unique to them, this examination of testimonies shows that women were ultimately in control of what they personally spoke and bore testimony about and that both the United Order and plural marriage failed to capture the full support of women at least in their meetings.

A History of Testimony Bearing

The bearing of testimony, in the sense of speaking of or declaring belief, had become a practice for church members long before Snow's exhortation in 1880. Janiece Johnson argues that even for women belonging to the church in the 1830s, "two central features of the religious experience" were "testimony and belief."¹¹⁸ This is evident in the way that bearing testimony was also a part of the Relief Society organization's earliest meetings in Nauvoo. In the meeting in March of 1842 (as well as in later meetings) members testified of their belief in the church, its leaders, and its teachings.¹¹⁹

Bearing testimony could serve a variety of purposes in the eyes of the bearer and the listener. Declaring beliefs was a sign of faithfulness and could signify one's standing in the church. Bearing testimony was also a form of exhortation and teaching in meetings,

¹¹⁸ Janiece Johnson, "'Give Up All and Follow Your Lord': Testimony and Exhortation in Early Mormon Women's Letters, 1831–1839," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 41 (2002): 80.

¹¹⁹ "Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book," *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/nauvoo-relief-society-minute-book/45>, 22.

coming together with those who believed similarly and perhaps influencing those who did not. From the historical perspective, testimonies are a lens through which a glimpse of what an individual or even a community may have been thinking, or at least a sense of the religious rhetoric of the public meetings. By what they testified of, as well as by what they did not, women created a space where both the private spiritual experience and the communal religious experience came together.

Bearing testimony was not unique to Latter-day Saint women. Women of many religious sects participated in testimony bearing. Vicki Tolar Burton states that for Methodist women in the 18th century, prayer was the first way women began to use their voice in public settings, but it was testimony that was “the most common of women’s public discourse.”¹²⁰ Methodist women would “stand and tell... about her private spiritual experience” to groups of women as well as to mixed groups of men and women. Burton explains that through the act of bearing testimony “women learned to identify their own spiritual stories, to tell them aloud before others, and, most important, to value their own spiritual experience.” Like Methodist women, bearing testimony was an individual experience for Latter-day Saint women. However, it was also a way they could demonstrate obedience to church leaders and principles, as well as signify their place amongst the believers in their local Relief Societies and communities.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Vicki Tolar Burton, “Preaching from the Pulpit Steps: Mary Bosanquet Fletcher and Women’s Preaching in Early Methodism,” in *Renovating Rhetoric in Christian Tradition*, ed. Elizabeth Vander Lei et al. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 33.

¹²¹ Burton, “Preaching from the Pulpit Steps,” 33.

Testimony in Utah Relief Societies

That bearing testimony was an outward sign of the faithfulness of the bearer is shown by how secretaries throughout the territory connected the two terms. Only one minute book out of the eight did not use the phrase “bore a faithful testimony” at least once, and most used the phrase multiple times.

The words and phrases used in testimonies had various forms but were similar across the eight minute books. Words such as desire, testify, and knew, were used to denote the same meaning that the word testimony infers, and phrases such as “felt well in the gospel,” “bore testimony to the truth of the work,” “bore testimony to the truth of Mormonism” “felt to rejoice in the work,” were common to the women who spoke in meetings. The fact that these words and phrases are found throughout the minutes is important to note considering that many different secretaries are writing them. This is evidence that even though secretaries could take liberties in recording notes, they also wrote down what they heard. This is also evidence that women from different parts of the territory were using similar language, showing that they were a part of the larger church culture that regulated not only what they did but also what they said.

Women bearing testimony would sometimes speak of their duty to bear their testimony as well as the privilege it was to do so. Others, just as with speaking in their meetings in general, spoke of timidity or fear in bearing testimony. That women were afraid to get up and bear testimony in the Spring Lake Relief Society is evidenced by a line from Sister Jensen. She encouraged them by saying “they didn't need to fear to arise

and bear their testimony to the truth of the work.”¹²² For some Relief Societies, it took time for the women to bear their testimony frequently. For the Fillmore and Provo 2nd Ward Relief Societies two years passed before the word testify or testimony was found in the minutes. However, as time went on women seemed to become more accustomed to doing it. In looking at the data from all eight minute books there is a general increase in the bearing of testimonies with the passage of time, with more testimonies being recorded in the 1880s than in the 1860s and 1870s. But even within this general increase, patterns can be seen for when testimonies are born more or less frequently, and that they are often influenced by either inward or outward influences.

“Not exactly to bear testimony”

The Cedar City Relief Society’s lack of testimonies was clearly influenced by their bishop who, after reorganizing the Relief Society in June of 1868, said, “I want you to talk to each other, not exactly to bear your testimony, for we all should know that this work is true, but more on temporal things.”¹²³ No testimonies are recorded after this instruction for over a year. It wasn’t until the meeting of September 29, 1869, “Sisters Alice Bennet, Ellen Lunt and Eliza Root bore their testimony.”¹²⁴ What caused this change is never explicitly stated, however, it is interesting that several months previously in June, it was recorded that the secretary “read a letter of Instruction just received from

¹²² Spring Lake Branch, Utah Stake, *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, Call no. LR 8640 14, Book 1876-1881, digital copy, Church History Library, 549-50 (images 51-52).

¹²³ Cedar City Ward, Parowan Stake, *Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, 1856-1875 and 1892*, Call No. LR 1514 22, digital copy, Church History Library, 35 (image 39).

¹²⁴ *Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, 1856-1875 and 1892*, 44 (image 49).

Sister E. R. Snow.”¹²⁵ The contents of the letter of instruction were not written in the minute book and there is no knowledge of exactly what was in that letter. If it was anything like what Snow wrote to the Fillmore Relief Society a year earlier, however, it is very possible that the women of Cedar City received similar instructions to “express your feelings” and “speak words of wisdom and comfort” and that they took it to include testimony bearing.¹²⁶ Whatever it was that first encouraged the sisters to give testimonies in Cedar City, it did not inspire them to share testimony frequently. During the years included in the minute book following 1868, only three or four meetings a year recorded women bearing their testimonies. In 1874, no testimonies were recorded for the entire year and after one meeting in 1875, the minute book ends and there are no existing minutes until 1892.

If this infrequent and ultimate silence of testimony was because the bishop reiterated his personal sentiments to the women is not known, but the year 1874 brought changes from church President Brigham Young that affected many men and women throughout the territory.

“Reorganization of the Relief Society according to the united order”

On the opposite side of the territory, in northern Utah, the Millville Relief Society experienced a great change within its organization. On June 9, 1874, the bishop opened the Relief Society meeting by saying that the “object of this meeting was for the

¹²⁵ *Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, 1856-1875 and 1892*, 41 (image 45).

¹²⁶ Fillmore Ward, Millard Stake, *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, Call No. LR 2858 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, 7 (image 8). Punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are the same as in the original text.

reorganization of the Relief Society, according to the united order.”¹²⁷ He also informed them that instead of a President and Counselors (which all Relief Societies had) they would have a President and a Vice President, along with the other positions of Secretary and Treasurer already in place. However, he stipulated that “he wished it be understood that only those that had joined and intended to join the united order would be expected to make nominations and vote” and “that only those who were willing to join the order could be elected to office.”¹²⁸ As former President Sarah Ann Pitkin said she needed more time to consider before committing herself wholly to the order because she was still grieving the loss of her husband, Sarah H. Weaver was then nominated by the women and chosen as the new president.

Earlier in 1874, President Brigham Young established a “United Order” in St. George, Utah. Then in the Church’s General Conference held in May, he explained the purpose of that order was “to labor for the benefit of the whole, to retrench in our expenditures; to be prudent and economical; to study well the necessities of the community, and to pass by its many useless wants; to study to secure life, health, wealth, and union, which is power and influence to any community.”¹²⁹ United Orders were eventually organized throughout the Utah territory, but how they looked could vary from community to community. Historian Leonard Arrington explains that there were different versions of the order that followed different patterns. The first involved members giving “all of their economic property” and they were given “wages” in return. The second version was tied heavily to the cooperative movement which began six years earlier.

¹²⁷ Millville Ward, Providence Stake, *Millville Ward Relief Society Minutes and Records, 1868-1970*, Call No LR 5589 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, 187 (image 147).

¹²⁸ *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 187 (image 147).

¹²⁹ Brigham Young, “The United Order—A System of Oneness—Economy and Wisdom in Becoming Self-Sustaining,” *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 17, No. 8.

Members contributed to cooperative stores, herds, flocks, and other community enterprises. The third type of Order was similar to the second but was more focused on a single cooperative store in each ward. All members were expected to contribute to funding it as well as creating the means to fill the store with products instead of importing them. These kinds of orders were practiced more often in the bigger cities. The last version of the United Order is perhaps the most commonly known. In this style of the Order, members gave all of their property and “lived and ate as a well-regulated family.” They worked together and sometimes even dressed alike. Likely the most well-known of these types of Orders existed in Orderville, Utah. Arrington explains that this kind of order existed until the 1880s. However, these were the exception as most types of orders and members’ enthusiasm for them had died out by 1877.¹³⁰

Women in Relief Society experienced the effects of the United Order in a variety of ways, however, their experiences seem to be a subject that has been largely ignored. In fact, *Women of Covenant*, a history of Relief Society does not mention the United Order in Utah at all. But that it did impact them in both positive and negative ways is clear. While some women of the time spoke of the “advantages” of the order, others spoke more about enduring trials.¹³¹ Annabella Haight in Cedar City “prayed that we might all see the necessity of doing our best in the United Order.”¹³² Through the words of Haight, it seems women were indeed struggling to find “the necessity” of this new movement. Though the purpose of the United Order was to unify church members both temporally

¹³⁰ Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: Economic History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1830-1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), 294-322, 330-333; James Cleith Phillips, “‘AS SISTERS IN ZION’: Mormon Women and the United Order in Arizona’s Little Colorado Colonies,” *The Journal of Arizona History* 51, No. 2, (Summer 2010): 157.

¹³¹ Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay. Derr, *Women’s Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1830-1900* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982), 286.

¹³² *Cedar City Ward Relief Society minute book, 1856-1875 and 1892*, 78 (image 82).

and spiritually, some Relief Societies struggled to get along. While some women bore testimony of the order, others did not, and in some cases, the number of testimonies in the minutes begins to be fewer or completely disappear.

Before 1874, many sisters in the Millville community actively spoke and bore testimony in Relief Society meetings. The secretaries (there were two before 1874) recorded many sisters bearing “faithful testimony,” sometimes including that they bore testimony “to the work of God,” that they “desired to do good,” “felt to trust in the Lord,” or even that “their desires were to do all in their power to assist the Society.”¹³³ Since its original establishment on May 30, 1868, bearing testimony had been a part of their meetings, which for this specific society normally took place twice a month. The importance these women placed upon bearing testimony is described by Belinda Edwards, who spoke on May 3, 1873. The minutes state that she “spoke on bearing testimony she knew it was right to speak our feeling we would gain confidence & strength by so doing.”¹³⁴ Ironically, this was the last time the word “testimony” was written in the minute book for years.

From the time of the Millville Relief Society’s reorganization in 1874 and the focus on the United Order, the language in the meetings changed and they also met less often. While women would still sometimes get up and speak in meetings, it was more common for the President or Vice President to be the only recorded speaker in a meeting. Though they had discussed the poor and sick in meetings before, now it was more common for the president to speak *only* on that topic and the other members would report

¹³³ *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 111, 128, 169, & 177 (images 71, 88, 129, & 137).

¹³⁴ *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 183 (image 143).

on the well-being of their assigned districts. At one meeting the president was even recorded as saying “there was not much to talk about.”¹³⁵

As time passed and when members occasionally did speak in meetings, some of the previously used phrases such as “felt well in the gospel,” began to come back into the record, though it was still very minimal as the poor still occupied much of the meeting. In 1875 more women began to speak in meetings again, though gradually. Strikingly though, the word “testimony,” used so frequently before, does not reappear in the records until the meeting where President Weaver resigned in June of 1876. By this point, many of the United Orders throughout Utah were declining. It is not clear whether the former President, Sarah Ann Pitkin, ever joined the United Order of Millville or not. In the two years after her release from being President, she is recorded as attending the meetings occasionally, and at a couple of those meetings, she was even asked to speak to the Society. When she was reinstated as President in 1876, no mention of the United Order was made. Significantly, the secretary who, for the past two years, had never used the word testimony suddenly began to use it frequently. By 1877, the women were again meeting consistently, and testimonies spoken on many different subjects were also consistently included within the record.

The Millville Relief Society is unique in the fact that it was reorganized specifically because of the United Order, and that this society changed its form of leadership. However, while it is unique in some respects, the change during the time of the United Order is a pattern that is found in other Relief Societies as well. These changes are evident in multiple ways. During this time some women spoke of not getting along

¹³⁵ *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, 192 (image 142).

and of a wish for more unity. Others spoke more of their trials. In some wards there was a general decrease in interest in the Relief Society. Though each society demonstrated the effects of the United Order differently, the fact that all were affected is clear. For some, the Relief Society became a catalyst for the United Order. With more focus on business and finances in meetings and less on being a place where women could share personal feelings and experiences, the desire to participate slackened.

“The true Church of God”

Like the Millville Relief Society, the Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society was also reorganized in 1874. However, there is no mention in the minutes that the United Order is the cause of the reorganization. Unlike Millville, the presidency kept the form of a president and two counselors. Also different from Millville was that Provo’s testimonies did not stop. Instead, what they said in their testimonies began to change. In April of that year, Relief Society President, Sarah Ann Baker, spoke about how difficult it would be for those who grumbled “to become reconciled [and] to put their all [in] this new order.” From this point on, the language of their testimonies reflects the idea that if one knows something to be true, one must act accordingly. At the following “Teacher’s Meeting” (meetings only meant for those who held positions), Johana Exerson said she “knew if one [principle] was true all were, but it would not do to believe them true and not live up to them.” Along with the emphasis on living true principles, many women at this time

also began to talk about principles that were harder for them to understand or to live, but always with the caveat that they must live them anyway.¹³⁶

In May 1874, Matilda Loveless “did not profess to understand much of the new order, but would [endeavor] to obey and live up to its teachings.” In recognizing there were things they did not understand, a great focus on testifying not just about the gospel, but of the church came about. Matilda Nelson said that “she knew this to be the true Church of God,” making it the first time in the Provo minute book that someone used the phrase “true church.” It was used again, this time at the second meeting in May when Keturah Vincent declared she “knew this to be the true church of God.” After this statement, she directly speaks of the United Order saying that parents felt anxious “about their children obeying and entering into the united order.” This language implies that with the struggle of the “new order” many women’s testimonies took on new meaning. Instead of the minute book recording several women giving “faithful testimonies” as it had done before, the minutes in and after April 1874 display a shift of recording the same few sisters bearing testimony about things more specific than “the work of the gospel,” while most of the remaining women were silent.¹³⁷

From June of 1874, “brethren” (this almost always meant male church leaders) from the Provo 2nd ward frequently began to attend meetings, though they rarely had before. In some instances, they spoke of the women’s concerns about the United Order. Another time in November of 1874, male church leaders encouraged the women to bear their testimonies, further supporting the fact that fewer women were currently bearing

¹³⁶ Provo 2nd Ward, Utah Stake, *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Call No. LR 7222 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, 83-85 (images 87-89). Words are added in brackets for clarity.

¹³⁷ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 1, 83, 85, & 88 (images 87, 89, & 92).

testimony. In August of that year, some remarked that there was a “coolness that existed” among the sisters, which was noted by members of the Society to continue into 1875. No clear explanation is given for what was meant by “coolness,” but it may have very well been connected to the lack of testimonies women were giving, as well as a decrease in attendance.¹³⁸

It was not until 1876 that the minute book records multiple women bearing “faithful testimonies” again. The similarity this has to Millville provides further evidence that these changes in testimony in both geographical areas were not isolated and unconnected, in fact in the Meadow Relief Society the minutes just stop after the meeting in May 1874 and don’t start again until February 1877. The impact of the United Order on testimonies, and even more so on the lives of these women, was taking place throughout Utah. The struggle they had to either accept or live this teaching was spreading to other areas of their Relief Society, participation.

“We should not be afraid of each other but speak of the goodness of God”

The city of Fillmore was located only a little more than seven miles from Meadow. Like Millville and Provo, the Relief Society in Fillmore had many women bearing testimony before 1874. But in the entire year of 1874, the word testimony was never used, and their meetings became less frequent. At one of these rare meetings, in June 1874, the President “said she would like to hear from the sisters was well aware that they felt [diffident], thought we should not be afraid of each other but speak of the

¹³⁸ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 1, 89, 96-97, 100-101 (images 93, 100-101, 104-105).

goodness of God.” Like Provo, the women of Fillmore lacked any desire to speak. Only Matilda King responded to the President’s urging, and what she said related to the United Order. King said she “was thankful that she had lived until the united order had been established on the earth,” and that “our trials here was nothing when compared with the blessing of eternal life.” Again, the United Order was spoken of alongside the word “trials.”¹³⁹

Not only did women not bear their testimonies at that meeting, but from September 1874 to February 1875 they did not meet at all, and in 1875 only three meetings were recorded for the entire year. When they resumed meetings, male leaders often joined them, and some sisters considered dropping out of the Society. Finally, by 1876, the women again are recorded as “bearing faithful testimonies,” following the pattern of both Provo and Millville.¹⁴⁰

“Testified to truth of the Gospel and the teachings of the servants of God”

To say that all Relief Societies decreased in the giving of testimonies in 1874 because of the United Order would be inaccurate. A ward in which the bearing of testimonies did not lessen was the Salt Lake City Twentieth ward. The fact that the women of that Relief Society continued to bear testimony as they had before 1874, may not be too surprising considering its location in the heart of Salt Lake City, and because of prominent women belonging to it including Eliza R. Snow.

¹³⁹ Fillmore Ward, Millard Stake, *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, Call No. LR 2858 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, 89 (image 95). Some spelling was corrected for easier reading.

¹⁴⁰ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 107 (image 111).

In April of 1874, Eliza R. Snow spoke to the women of this Relief Society about the United Order, saying that “the idea was for us as a people to be self sustaining” and that those “who went into it would be happier than those who did not.” Eliza’s assurance on the blessings of the order would have likely influenced those who listened. However, in case there were any who were not convinced, “she advised those who did not like it, not to say anything against it, no matter what cause.” Such a directive may explain no real decrease in the number of testimonies given, but to say there was no change in the atmosphere of the Twentieth Ward Relief Society would be incorrect.¹⁴¹

During 1874, women speaking in the Twentieth Ward Relief Society meetings would frequently mention that they were sorry there were fewer women present and that there was a lack of satisfaction among the women. In August 1874, Anna Savage, a counselor in the Relief Society presidency said, “she did not think it right to hoard things up and the poor suffering at the same time, bore her testimony and desired to do right in all things.” Directly after her, Sister Miller bore her testimony and then said, “everywhere you went there was grumbling and dissatisfaction.” What exactly was being hoarded and why “everywhere” there was “grumbling and dissatisfaction” is never explicitly stated in the minutes, but it is very likely that it was connected to the United Order. Historian Dean May explains that while the rural communities in Utah had more direction on how to practice the order, Salt Lake City members were less clear on what it would mean for them and were more reluctant.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Twentieth Ward, Ensign Stake, *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Call No. LR 9455 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, 314-315 (images 338-339).

¹⁴² *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 322-323 (images 346-347); Dean L. May, “Brigham Young and the Bishops: The United Order in the City,” in *New Views of Mormon History: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington*, Davis Bitton and Maureen Uresenbach Beecher, eds., (Salt Lake City, UT: Univ. of Utah Press, 1987), 122-123.

Four months before hoarding is mentioned in the minutes, the ward's bishop, John Sharp, "compared the love and confidence of the saints in the old country when they first came in the church with the way they acted here, there they were willing and anxious to help one another, here it was every man for himself. It was time the Lord gave us something that would stop this." For Bishop Sharp, that "something" was the United Order. He told the Relief Society that the new order would re-establish the "confidence" of the people. While in August the Relief Society women of the ward were still struggling to capture this sentiment, testimonies in the months following seemed to have a more cheerful tone, and it was recorded that "all felt well and a general good feeling prevailed." This did not, of course, mean that everyone suddenly understood and supported the order. This was implied by Zina Young's words in July 1875 when she said, "we should stop faultfinding either of the Priesthood or our sisters, it was the root of apostasy we must overcome it and cultivate the spirit of God." Despite the struggle, duty and obedience to God and his leaders was the overriding feeling that seemed to prevail and overcome other feelings for many Relief Society women.¹⁴³

In the Relief Society of Holden, the United Order was mentioned in four of their six meetings in 1874.¹⁴⁴ Starting in that year women began including two things in their testimonies, first, they bore testimony to the "truth of work they are engaged in," and "testified to truth of the Gospel and the teachings of the servants of God."¹⁴⁵ The effect of the United Order on the Latter-day Saint women of Holden was not a decrease in

¹⁴³ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 315, 323-325 & 351 (images 339, 347-349, & 373).

¹⁴⁴ The Holden Relief Society met sporadically and infrequently. From their organization in 1870, the only recorded meetings are 4 to 6 times a year until 1884 when they met once a month. In 1874 they met three times in March, once in April, once in November, and once in December. This includes Teacher's Meetings.

¹⁴⁵ Holden Ward, Millard Stake, *Holden Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1870-1972*, Call no. LR 3838 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, 29 (image 31).

testimony bearing, but rather a focus on the truth of the work they must do and a wish “to sustain [their] authorities.”¹⁴⁶

Leonard Arrington points out that, unlike some teachings of the church, the United Order did not create an “opposition movement within the church” and that “Many Mormons saw it as a longed-for attempt to eliminate the profit motives and institute a more perfect Christian society.”¹⁴⁷ While that may have been true for some, the Relief Society minute books show that even though Latter-day Saint women spoke of and likely tried to support their leaders in this new movement, they also struggled in both their spiritual rhetoric and communal unity during the greatest push for the United Order. The fact that most implementations of the United Order did not last to a large degree past 1877 was likely at least partially due to the struggle women had in either living or accepting it.

“Teach the doctrine of polygamy”

The United Order took up very little space in the Spring Lake Relief Society minute book. This is primarily because it was not created until May of 1876 when the United Order had already started to fizzle out in some areas of Utah. The only mention of the order was in July of that year when the bishop “spoke upon the subject of the United Order” as well as “a great many things that would be very good for us to reflect upon.”¹⁴⁸ That no details of this “subject” were written down implies that this subject did not make as big of an impact on the secretary as other things the bishop said. Or perhaps the bishop

¹⁴⁶ *Holden Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1870-1972*, 33 (image 35).

¹⁴⁷ Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 330.

¹⁴⁸ *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 10 (image 14).

himself felt there were more pressing things that the women should discuss and on which to bear testimony. On the day he organized the Relief Society in Spring Lake, he told them to “teach the doctrine of polygamy.”¹⁴⁹

Polygamy, also referred to as plural marriage, is perhaps what the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was most known for in the latter half of the 19th century. It was first taught and practiced quietly by church founder Joseph Smith and some of his close associates in the early 1840s. After coming to Utah, the church officially made it a public practice in 1852 until Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president of the church, ended it with his 1890 Manifesto.¹⁵⁰

The connection between plural marriage and the Relief Society was conflicted from its beginnings. The Female Relief Society in Nauvoo had been disbanded by Brigham Young in part because of President Emma Smith’s speaking against plural marriage.¹⁵¹ Smith had used the Relief Society meetings as a way to unite some women against the cause leading Young to say “When I want Sisters or the Wives of the members of this church to get up Relief Society I will summon them to my aid but until that time let them stay at home.”¹⁵² By the time Young reorganized the Relief Society again in Utah, plural marriage had been officially accepted by the church for sixteen years.

¹⁴⁹ *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 3 (image 7).

¹⁵⁰ Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840-1910* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women’s Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2018); Lola Van Wagenen, “Sister-Wives and Suffragists: Polygamy and the Politics of Woman Suffrage, 1870–1896” (PhD diss., New York University, 1994). These are some of the significant works on plural marriage.

¹⁵¹ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women’s Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2018), 127-128.

¹⁵² Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds., “1.13 Brigham Young, Discourses, March 9, 1845 (Excerpts)” *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* (The Church Historian's Press, 2016), online, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/the-first-fifty-years-of-relief-society/?lang=eng>.

Kathryn Daynes explains that for the Latter-day Saints in the second half of the 19th century, “marriage was considered a religious, not a civil, rite” and so it could take different forms.¹⁵³ For some, it was only marriage during life on earth, for others only the life after death, and for others, it was both.¹⁵⁴ Not just the forms of plural marriage varied, the experience of men and women who practiced plural marriage in Utah was varied and is still being widely studied as is shown by the scholarship currently being produced by historians. Scholarship has made a great impact on understanding plural marriage in the 19th-century Mormon context. However, for various reasons, the use of Relief Society minute books in research for much of the scholarship has been minimal. That the practice was taught in Relief Society meetings is evidenced by the minute books. However, what little polygamy is spoken of at least in the eight minute books focused on here seems surprising considering how much it was a part of the rhetoric of many prominent church leaders in other church meetings. In fact, speaking of husbands or marriage at all was lower compared to the amount of time motherhood was discussed in the minutes. When it was spoken of, supporting and being obedient to husbands was the usual way of speaking about it.

Though the percentage of members practicing polygamy was lower than those who did not, Kathryn Daynes explains that “plural marriage affected the entire Mormon community, not simply those who practiced it.”¹⁵⁵ Not only did it affect the community, but it bonded the community together. While every member did not have to live plural

¹⁵³ Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840-1910* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 56.

¹⁵⁴ Daynes, *More Wives Than One*, 57.

¹⁵⁵ Kathryn M. Daynes, “Celestial Marriage (Eternal and Plural),” *The Oxford Handbook of Mormonism* Terry L. Givens and Philip L. Barlow, eds., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 338.

marriage, they needed to at least *believe* in it in order to be saved.¹⁵⁶ Though Matilda King lived in a monogamous marriage for her entire life, she exclaimed “I believe in Plurality and always have.”¹⁵⁷ This instruction to at least believe in plural marriage if not living it explains why some leaders specifically told their Relief Societies to speak on plural marriage. Mary Isabella Horne, while on a journey to visit her children in the south of Utah, spoke to the Fillmore Relief Society at the request of Eliza R. Snow. Among her various remarks, she said of polygamy that “with the understanding she had of that principle she would not feel satisfied to live with her husband unless he had more wives for it is one great step towards our exaltation.”¹⁵⁸ Many leaders such as stake presidents, bishops or bishops counselors, Relief Society presidents, as well as Eliza R. Snow, spoke on the blessings of living the practice as well as the importance of believing in it.

President Margaret Smoot told her Relief Society in September 1872 that she:

Felt that polygamy was one of the fundamental principles felt she would like to impress it upon the sisters as a principle coming from God and to exhort them to accept it as such and to treasure it up and hold it as something sacred, we could all practice it if we would only try. Had seen many fall through opposing polygamy and did not want to see her sisters of the relief society swell the number.¹⁵⁹

Her comment that she “had seen many *fall* through opposing polygamy” denotes the belief in the consequences of not supporting polygamy. More frequent than the exhortation to speak about polygamy, therefore, was the directive not to speak or fight against it.

¹⁵⁶ Daynes, *More Wives Than One*, 74.

¹⁵⁷ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 13 (image 14).

¹⁵⁸ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society*, 110 (image 114).

¹⁵⁹ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 266-267 (images 282-283).

“Do not preach against Polygamy”

The Relief Society president from Santaquin on her visit to the Spring Lake society said she “hoped that none of the young sisters would raise their voices against polygamy.”¹⁶⁰ Her focus on the young sisters implies that at least in the Spring Lake and Santaquin areas, younger women were struggling with the principle. A remark from the bishop at the next meeting about three weeks later makes this even more probable. He explained, “that it was very necessary for mothers to teach daughters to respect & love the principles of polygamy instead of despising them.”¹⁶¹ Seemingly in response, President Elizabeth Broadbent said she “felt to rejoice that she had the privilege of standing up & speaking her mind on the principle of polygamy for she had lived where she could not do so.”¹⁶² Similarly in Provo, Bishop Abraham O. Smoot (the husband of President Margaret Smoot) entreated “do not preach against Polygamy to your husbands nor to your daughters, but teach them the principles of our gospel.”¹⁶³ This emphasized the moral duty as well as the influence women had within the home.

While some women bore a faithful testimony of their experience as President Elizabeth Broadbent did, others spoke of it as a trial. During a teacher’s meeting in April 1874, Louisa Park “spoke of the opposition some had to poligamy.”¹⁶⁴ Later on in that same meeting Johana Exerson said she “knew poligamy to be the greatest trial for the

¹⁶⁰ *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 6 (image 10).

¹⁶¹ *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 9-10 (images 13-14).

¹⁶² *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 10 (image 14).

¹⁶³ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 1, 50 (image 54).

¹⁶⁴ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 1, 84 (image 87).

sisters but prayed the Lord to enable us to [understand] and carry out every desire of his great will.”¹⁶⁵

While a few women spoke on and bore testimony of plural marriage and fewer spoke of it as a trial, most did not speak of it at all. All of the eight Relief Societies went through long periods of time when polygamy, plural marriage, or celestial marriage are not mentioned in their minutes. This includes the Spring Lake and Fillmore wards where the bishops and others told them to speak of it. In examining the minutes there are no clear patterns for when it was spoken of more than other times.

The following chart shows the number of meetings where the words polygamy, plural marriage, and plurality were spoken of in that year by both men and women. Though “celestial marriage” could refer to both monogamous and plural marriages, I have included the meetings where the phrase was used in the chart. I explain in footnotes some of the times when I believe there is enough evidence to suppose they were speaking of Celestial marriage in terms of polygamy.

This chart does not include every time marriage or husbands were mentioned. The people using these terms in the meetings below include persons both male and female and some leaders visiting the societies. As in chapter one, the dark gray sections of this chart indicate times when that society had not yet been organized, or if there are no minutes for that year. Also like the chart in chapter one, in examining this chart it is important to remember two things. First, each society did not meet the same number of times each month or each year. Some societies met once or twice a month, while some only met a few times a year and occasionally only once a year. Therefore, it is impossible to compare

¹⁶⁵ *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Vol. 85 (image 88). Spelling was changed in brackets for clarity.

the societies to each other in the number of times they spoke of polygamy in a year.

Second, this is a list of meetings, not how many people spoke of it. There were times when several people spoke of it in one meeting. This chart is mainly for the purpose of showing how many meetings in which it was spoken of overall for each society, as well as to show the lack of overall patterns.

Year	Cedar City ¹⁶⁶	Fillmore	Holden ¹⁶⁷	Meadow	Spring Lake	Provo 2nd	SLC 20th	Millville ¹⁶⁸
1868	0	2					1	1
1869	1	2				2	2	2
1870	1	1	1	0		0	2	0
1871	0	0	0	0		0	2	0
1872	0	0	0	0		3	1	0
1873	0	1	0	0		2	1	0
1874	0	1	0	0		1	0	0
1875	0	0	0	0		1	0	0
1876		1	1	0	3	0	0	0
1877		0	0	0	1	1	0	1
1878		0	0	0	3	1	1	1
1879		0	2	0	1	0	0	0
1880		0	0	0	0	0	0	0

¹⁶⁶ It is important to note that for the Cedar City minutes, between the years of 1856 and 1859 when it was the Cedar City Benevolent Society, plural marriage was spoken of very frequently, especially by their male church leaders.

¹⁶⁷ Holden was a society that seems to use the term “celestial marriage” to refer to plural marriage most frequently. At one meeting a sister “Warned the sisters against saying aught against [celestial marriage].” *Holden Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1870-1972, 177-178* (images 172-173).

¹⁶⁸ The Millville Society was one that met frequently, at least once a month, sometimes twice a month. The exception to this was during the years 1873-1875, due to the death of the president’s husband and then likely the struggle with the United Order as was discussed earlier in this chapter.

Year	Cedar City ¹⁶⁶	Fillmore	Holden ¹⁶⁷	Meadow	Spring Lake	Provo 2nd	SLC 20th	Millville ¹⁶⁸
1868	0	2					1	1
1881		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1882		0	1	0		0	0	0
1883		0	2	0			0	1
1884		1 ¹⁶⁹	2	0		0	0	3
1885		0	0	1		1		1
1886		0	2	2 ¹⁷⁰		0		1
1887		1	0	1		1		1
1888		0	0	0		0		1 ¹⁷¹
1889		0	0	0		0		0

Figure 4. Frequency of Mentions of Plural Marriage in Meetings

There could be many reasons for the lack of speaking on the subject. The first one is that there were so many things for the Relief Society to be doing and discussing.

Between silk cultivation, the co-operation movement, taking care of the poor, the duties of motherhood, and many other subjects, Latter-day Saint women had many

¹⁶⁹ In this meeting in Fillmore the secretary records that the Stake President spoke on “the principle of Celestial Marriage!” While there is no indication that this was explicitly referring to plural marriage the “!” denotes emphasis which could imply that it was referring to plural marriage. *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 113 (image 86).

¹⁷⁰ At this meeting in Meadow one sister is recorded to have spoken very strongly on “Celestial Marriage,” and directly following her sisters are recorded as bearing their testimonies on “Celestial Marriage.” While this is not clear evidence, it could imply that they were referring to plural marriage. At a different meeting in 1886, and another in 1887, the terms “sacred laws of marriage” are used. While there is no certain evidence that this phrase meant plural marriage, at the meeting in 1887 the phrase “gave the young ladies very good advice in regard to the sacred laws of marriage” could indicate that it referred to plural marriage. As it was more common to instruct young women on plural marriage, I have decided to include the phrase in this chart. Meadow Ward, Millard Stake, *Meadow Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1870-1973*, Call No. LR 5389 14, Vol. 1s, digital copy, Church History Library, 75, 77, & 88 (images 77, 79 & 88).

¹⁷¹ There are three additional meetings in this year where women speak of their husbands in prison or exile.

responsibilities and different shoes to fill. As discussed in chapter one, not only did women sometimes speak about helping the poor, but they also dedicated their meetings to work, in order to provide for the poor. The second possible reason is that the women did not want to talk about it in their meetings. While many women strove to obey the counsels of their leaders, ultimately the meetings were theirs, and they chose what and what not to talk about. What is most likely is a mixture of the two, because in other settings both private and public women did speak strongly of polygamy when they felt the need.¹⁷²

When the anti-polygamy Cullom Bill passed the House of Representatives, women gathered in January of 1870 to speak for polygamy. If the bill passed in the Senate, the government would have the power to put men practicing polygamy into prison and their wives would have no immunity to being witnesses. It also provided authority for the government to seize property owned by the Latter-day Saints and for the US President to send the military to Utah territory.¹⁷³ Women throughout the territory joined their voices together to fight the bill in mass meetings. At a public meeting held in the Fifteenth Ward Relief Society Hall, Eliza R. Snow said she “felt that the Ladies of Utah had too long remained silent while they were being so falsely represented to the world, felt it was high time that we should rise up in the Dignity of our calling and speak

¹⁷² Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2018); Paula Kelly Harline, *The Polygamous Wives Writing Club: From The Diaries of Mormon Pioneer Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). There are many examples of women writing about polygamy in both their correspondence and diaries. Ulrich and Harline are just two of many scholars who have addressed these personal writings.

¹⁷³ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2018), xi; Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 357.

for ourselves.”¹⁷⁴ Despite this statement from their leader, few minute books within this scope of research mention both the indignation meetings and polygamy in 1870. Only three of the seven Relief Societies (as Spring Lake wasn’t organized until 1876) mention the Cullom Bill or indignation meetings.¹⁷⁵ It is unknown whether this is an oversight of the secretary, or if they just did not speak about it in their meetings. What seems most likely is that while Latter-day Saint women joined together to publicly voice their belief in polygamy to outsiders, amongst themselves they were not very enthusiastic about speaking about the topic.

Conclusion

As was discussed in chapter one, women filled the minutes of their meetings by speaking of their duties. Helping the poor, home manufacturing, cooperative efforts, and their roles as mothers took up not only their meetings but much of their lives. Even despite some of their leaders telling them to speak and bear testimony of plural marriage the majority of women did not. Whether they chose not to because they had a plethora of other things to speak of, or because they did not want to talk about it, two things are clear. First, though they were influenced and instructed on what they should say in their meetings, Latter-day Saint women ultimately chose what they spoke about in their meetings. Second, speaking of plural marriage was not a priority for them.

¹⁷⁴ Eliza R. Snow, Discourse, Salt Lake City Fifteenth Ward Relief Society, 6 January 1870, *The Discourses of Eliza R. Snow*, Church Historian’s Press, accessed 26 March 2023, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/eliza-r-snow/1870s/1870/01/1870-01-06?lang=eng>.

¹⁷⁵ The three Relief Societies that did mention it were Fillmore, Cedar City, and the Salt Lake City Twentieth Relief Societies. However, while Fillmore and Cedar City mention the Cullom Bill and the mass meeting, in the Salt Lake Twentieth Ward President Smoot only speaks “of plurality” in June of the year, and it is the only mention of it for the entire year.

Though the individual experiences of these women were varied, many of these women lived in both the United Order and plural marriage. Even more of them were instructed to at least believe in them. However, the impact that can be seen through the recorded testimonies in the minute books reveals that at least in the context of the Relief Societies, these two institutions failed to capture the full support and religious fervor of the Latter-day Saint women.

Chapter Three: “To work in union”: Men and Conflict within the

Relief Society Minute Books

In September 1877, the Spring Lake Relief Society met together as usual as the local Relief Society president, Elizabeth Broadbent arose and spoke of some society business. Then her husband, who was present at the meeting, asked to speak. Being granted the floor he went on to request “that his wives should be left out entirely,” of any reorganization of the Relief Society presidency.¹⁷⁶ What followed involved not only the Broadbents but also the bishop and the rest of the women in the Spring Lake Relief Society displaying the drama that could ensue amongst wives and husbands as well as between the Relief Society and its leaders.

While only some women had to navigate the relationships within polygamous households, all Relief Society members had to navigate the relationships with priesthood leaders, (especially bishops), with each other, and ultimately the relationship between their home life and their participation in the society. While church leaders taught about the significance of all of these relationships, it was the women themselves who learned how to balance these relationships in their day-to-day lives. The Relief Society minute books demonstrate that though the Relief Society was a women’s organization, the influence of male leaders was still very present. Therefore, women had to learn to both uphold the authority of their leaders and at the same time find their voices and play active roles within their own spheres.

¹⁷⁶ Spring Lake Branch, Utah Stake, *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, Call no. LR 8640 14, Book 1876-1881, digital copy, Church History Library, 53 (image 55).

“To relieve the Brethren”

August 1873, about five years after the beginnings of the Relief Society’s official reorganizations in Utah, Eliza R. Snow told a group of Weber County Relief Societies that:

We, my sisters, have as much to do as our brethren have. We are to work in union with them. Every woman who fills her position as a wife, honorably, stands as a counselor to her husband. Not a dictator, a counselor. And what a life it is to live my sisters! What a noble life, to live, so as to fill this position, in which we are blessed, and are honorable as women of God.¹⁷⁷

Just as husbands and wives were to work together “in union” so also were the Relief Society women to work with their bishops. However, this union usually did not necessarily mean equality but rather the role of assistant. According to Snow, “the design of these societies was to aid and assist the Bishop in providing for the poor,” and church President Brigham Young stated that “under the direction of the brethren” women should “establish yourselves for doing business.”¹⁷⁸ This “business” primarily took the form of home manufacture, silk cultivation, saving grain as well as setting up and sustaining co-operative stores. But it took time for both bishops and women to understand what that meant and how it would look. As time passed how it played out varied from society to society.

This was not only a new place for women to gather, but it was a new role women could take in the church organization. Both men and women did not always understand

¹⁷⁷ James Taylor, “An Address by Miss Eliza R. Snow,” *Woman’s Exponent*, Vol. 2, no. 8 (15 Sept. 1873): 62–63.

¹⁷⁸ Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “30 January 1868, Salt Lake City Nineteenth Ward Relief Society,” *The Discourses of Eliza R. Snow*, The Church Historian’s Press, accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/eliza-r-snow/1860s/1868/01/1868-01-30?lang=eng>; Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds., “3.4 Brigham Young, Discourse, April 8, 1868 (Excerpt),” *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* (The Church Historian’s Press, 2016), online, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/the-first-fifty-years-of-relief-society/?lang=eng>.

how this mutual relationship of work and leadership, with the additional focuses of helping the poor and establishing home manufacture and co-operative efforts, would move forward. Specifically, how much time the bishops and men in general would spend in the meetings was also a subject of some confusion. In Snow's 1868 instructive letter to the Fillmore Relief Society, she touches on this subject. "I will in the first place answer your question with regard to the necessity of having the Brethren present at your meetings. No. The object of the Society is to relieve the Brethren."¹⁷⁹ Despite this counsel, a survey of the eight Relief Society minutes shows that in most of these societies, "brethren" were recorded as present quite often until the 1880s when they began to visit the Relief Society less frequently. The exceptions to this were Cedar City and Holden. While in Cedar City men rarely attended, in Holden they attended frequently.

Almost always, whenever men were present at meetings they also spoke. Often the Relief Society president or one of her counselors would invite them to do so. However, it was likely that many bishops felt it was their duty or even their right to do so. The Spring Lake bishop demonstrated this when he said after his invitation to speak "that he didn't wish to obtrude in coming to the sisters' meeting uninvited, but he felt some right to visit when he desired to do so."¹⁸⁰ Male leaders would instruct the women, praise them, "encourage" them, and would even sometimes come to "see how the sisters felt."¹⁸¹ While some women spoke of nervousness in speaking before the "brethren," more

¹⁷⁹ Fillmore Ward, Millard Stake, *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, Call No. LR 2858 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, 6 (image 7). Punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are the same as in the original including the underlined words.

¹⁸⁰ *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 48-51, (images 50-53).

¹⁸¹ Holden Ward, Millard Stake, *Holden Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1870-1972*, Call no. LR 3838 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, 155 (image 149).

frequently the minutes record how the women were grateful to them for coming. They “felt well to have the brethren instruct them,” “wished they would meet with [them] oftener,” and even “Extended an invitation for the brethren to visit the Society's meeting whenever they felt so disposed.”¹⁸² President Margaret Smoot of the Salt Lake City Twentieth Ward went so far as to say that “she always wished to have some of the Brethren present at the General meetings but if they could not come we must try and make it interesting ourselves.”¹⁸³

Society members showed leaders, especially male leaders, deference and respect, but that did not mean there was never conflict. In a master's thesis, Kathleen C. Haggard examines women's and men's participation in the cooperative movement in Utah from 1867 to 1900. She explains that “many relief society presidencies faced the challenge of dealing with male leaders who did not support the women's efforts or credit them with success. At times the desires of the local male leaders were in direct opposition to those envisioned by the women.”¹⁸⁴ Haggard's research focuses on the Relief Societies of St. George, Manti, and Ogden, but her argument is true of other Relief Societies throughout the territory.

¹⁸² Millville Ward, Providence Stake, *Millville Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1970*, Call No. LR 5589 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, 117 (image 77); *Holden Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1870-1972*, 138 (image 132). While these quotes come from the Millville and Holden minutes, similar phrases are found in all the minute books. Words in brackets are added for clarity.

¹⁸³ Twentieth Ward, Ensign Stake, *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Call No. LR 9455 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, 182-183 (images 196-197).

¹⁸⁴ Kathleen C. Haggard, “In Union is Strength Mormon Women and Cooperation, 1867-1900,” (Utah State University, 1998), 68.

“Foot on the neck of others”

“Presidentess” Eunice Dunning Holbrook led the Fillmore Relief Society for the first three years of its existence. Then-Bishop Thomas Callister had recommended her for the position and the women of society voted on and accepted it.¹⁸⁵ Holbrook joined the church in the spring of 1833, only three years after its founding. About a year later she and her husband Chandler joined “Zion’s Camp” with church founder Joseph Smith and others, where Eunice survived a severe bout of cholera.¹⁸⁶ By the time she became the Fillmore Relief Society president in May 1868 at age fifty-eight, Holbrook was not only an experienced woman but a seasoned veteran of the church. Perhaps it was this experience that influenced her and gave her some confidence to raise her voice.

On March 6, 1869, the meeting of the Society proceeded as usual. The choir sang, prayers were said, the minutes of the previous meeting were read and accepted, and the Society accepted two women as new members of the society. The president made some remarks on raising children and other women followed by expressions of encouragement to each other and a willingness to personally “live by the law of God.” This meeting was not out of the ordinary even with some closing remarks from President Holbrook when she “said she thought it was not best to continue our meeting much longer as we were so uncomfortably situated, thought it would be a good plan to build a house so that we could have a better place to meet in.” This statement was not unusual as many societies wished to have their own space for their meetings. They often funded the building of Relief Society houses or halls that would house their meetings as well as sometimes the

¹⁸⁵ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 1 (image 2).

¹⁸⁶ Andrea G. Radke, “We Also Marched: The Women and Children of Zion’s Camp, 1834,” *BYU Studies* 39, no. 1 (2000): 153-154.

cooperative stores that President Brigham Young and Eliza Snow were pushing for. However, the mention of being uncomfortable seemed to be a foreshadowing of the meetings to come.¹⁸⁷

At the next meeting on March 24, the minutes state that they met at the request of President Holbrook, but from the beginning, she turned the meeting over to her counselor Matilda King's "care." King began by saying "she hoped the Sisters would listen to the counsel of those who are placed in authority over them." This was well-timed for the next speaker was Bishop Edward Partridge Jr. who was ordained the new bishop fifteen days earlier when Thomas Callister was called as the stake president. Bishop Partridge said the society "seems to be a very important institution and gives the sisters a chance to do more good than they could otherwise do." Following Partridge, the only other man mentioned as present at the meeting was Joseph V. Robison, who echoed the bishop's words as well as mentioned the importance of women creating fashions. After the bishop reaffirmed Robison's remarks on fashion Matilda King then spoke again and her words were directly in response to the remarks of the men. She first says that the women should go "to work immediately at straw hats and bonnets," and that they "may do more good than [they] have ever done" before. Her words demonstrate her willingness to follow the counsel of her male leaders.¹⁸⁸

When Presidentess Holbrook finally spoke, she was much less supportive of the men's remarks. The minutes state that according to Holbrook,

¹⁸⁷ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 19 (image 20); Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Woman of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society*, Salt Lake City, Deseret Book Company, 1992, 97-99.

¹⁸⁸ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 21 (image 22).

the reason she had been silent was on account of the prejudice that was against her, she felt that her hands were tied, and she did not want to say much. Spoke of some having their foot on the neck of others and thought it was not best to have any more meetings until after President Young should visit us and we could have the matter investigated and then we would meet for work.¹⁸⁹

There are no mentions in previous minutes of why Holbrook would say that there is prejudice against her, nor what matter she wishes President Brigham Young to investigate. Thankfully, a note directly following the meeting from the pen of the secretary, Eliza Partridge Lyman (a sister to Bishop Partridge), sheds some light on the subject:

Perhaps it would not be amiss to state the reason of our Presidentess's dissatisfaction, she wanted the sisters to have a cooperative store, carried on in the same manner as the Brethren's Store, which was not approved of by Pres[ide]nt Collister, and she was not willing to have any thing to do with the society unless she could have that and has said repeatedly that if she could have nothing to work with but the rags that were in the Society she would have nothing to do with it.¹⁹⁰

Fillmore was not unfamiliar with cooperative stores. Earlier that month a ZCMI cooperative store had been organized with Thomas Callister as president and Chandler Holbrook, President Holbrook's husband, among the directors.¹⁹¹ Following Young's directive may not have been the only reason Holbrook wished the Relief Society to have its own store. Carol Cornwall Madsen explains that:

For Mormons, community transcended the individualism characteristic of many western frontier ventures. Their cooperative pattern emerged from a strongly internalized group identity and shared mission which defined and

¹⁸⁹ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 21 (image 22).

¹⁹⁰ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 21-22 (images 22-23). Spelling and punctuation are left the same as the original text except where the abbreviated "Presnt" has been expanded in brackets. It is also interesting to note that Eliza Lyman always spells Thomas Callister's surname in the minutes as Collister. This is likely due to phonetic spelling as the surname is pronounced like it is spelled with an o.

¹⁹¹ Edward Leo Lyman and Linda King Newell, *A History of Millard County* (Utah: Utah State Historical Society, Millard County Commission, 1999), 140.

linked the concepts of stewardship and community in a creative partnership.¹⁹²

However, throughout the territory, there was confusion from male church leaders about how much women should participate in the cooperative stores. When some asked Young for more guidance on the subject he responded that “He had asked his brethren to open cooperative stores in their wards, and as they did not do it, he turned around and asked the sisters knowing that they would do it.”¹⁹³ Perhaps the difficulty in Fillmore lay in the fact that the men *had* opened a cooperative store and that a Relief Society cooperative store would come in direct competition with it. Holbrook was very willing to follow Young’s directive but seemed to feel pressure from her leaders to do otherwise. This position of trying to follow counsel from the general church leaders without support from local leaders was not unique just to Holbrook, it was a struggle for women in other settlements as well.

“It belonged to the brethren's work”

Some bishops had not caught a grasp of Young’s vision. In 1868, Young had directed the men to “lay up grain and flour, and save it against a day of scarcity.”¹⁹⁴ And to the women he had said “Sisters, do not ask your husbands to sell the last bushel of grain... but aid your husbands in storing it up against a day of want, and always have a

¹⁹² Carol Cornwall Madsen, “Creating Female Community: Relief Society in Cache Valley, Utah, 1868-1900,” *Journal of Mormon History*, 21:2 (1995), 128-129.

¹⁹³ Presiding Bishopric, “Minutes 1862-1879,” in the *Presiding Bishopric bishops meeting minutes, 1851-1884*, Call No. CR 4 2, digital copy, Church History Library, 174 (image 224).

¹⁹⁴ Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds., “3.4 Brigham Young, Discourse, April 8, 1868 (Excerpt),” *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* (The Church Historian's Press, 2016), online.

year or two's provision on hand.”¹⁹⁵ Many responded to this injunction and Relief Societies began storing up grain. In *Women of Covenant*, a history of the Relief Society, it mentions in passing that the Salt Lake Twentieth Ward Relief Society along with their young women's Retrenchment Society began a fund for grain.¹⁹⁶ However, it does not mention that storing up grain was difficult for the women of the Twentieth Ward. *Women of Covenant* does not specify a date for when women of the Twentieth Ward Relief Society began their fund for grain and in the minutes there is no mention of grain or wheat until October 1876. It is not until then that it says there were remarks made on “the storing of grain.”¹⁹⁷

During 1877, grain or wheat was only mentioned in three of their meetings. The first was during the meeting where the society was “reorganized” with a new presidency and both Eliza R. Snow and Bishop John Sharp were present. Eliza R. Snow spoke on “the wheat question” among other things. Two months later they spoke of getting “up a party to raise means to buy wheat” and five months after that two sisters were “appointed” to do the purchasing. However, in 1878 and for most of the year after, there was silence on the subject until October 1879. Whether what transpired in the October meeting contributed to this silence cannot be known for certain from the minutes, however, it is evidence that the storing of grain was not fully supported by their bishop.¹⁹⁸

On October 18, 1879, President Annie Savage said that she “expected the Bishop would be with us, before the close of the meeting, to give us some instruction and advice

¹⁹⁵ Jill Mulvay Derr et al., “3.4 Brigham Young, Discourse, April 8, 1868 (Excerpt),” *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*.

¹⁹⁶ Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Woman of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society*, Salt Lake City, Deseret Book Company, 1992, 103.

¹⁹⁷ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 385 (image 407).

¹⁹⁸ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 395, 402, & 418 (images 417, 424, & 442).

concerning our grain.” After several women’s remarks, Bishop John Sharp finally arrived and spoke. Though he got right to the point, his remarks on the subject were rather lengthy and his opinions were many. He thought that gathering grain was “entirely too laborious for our sisters, it called for too much time and hard work, together with an expense of store room and bins, which the society could not afford.” Not only did he doubt the women’s participation in the storing of grain wise, but he also viewed the thinking that there would be a famine any time soon “as a species of speculation.” Even if there were a famine, “if we had the money we could just as easily buy our grain then, as save it now and have half of it go to waste with mice and weavels.” He attempted to bring authority to some of these views by using scripture. He shared with the women the story of Joseph in Egypt from the bible. He said that when Joseph stored grain “it was not the sisters upon whom this task devolved, but able bodied men.”¹⁹⁹

Then, seemingly aware that he was advancing ideas not aligned with the head of the church, he said carefully that “He did not want to throw cold water on any thing that the central committee advanced, but he really could not see the necessity of the sisters gathering grain. It belonged to the brethrens work.” In regard to the work they had already done in both gathering grain and the money to buy grain, Bishop Sharp said he “was perfectly willing to take our grain and store it in his barn, and give us a receipt for the number of bushels, to be delivered to us when called for.” He advised them to put the grain in his barn “immediately” and to keep the money they had already saved for a future time when they could buy the grain for themselves if they needed it. If the society members did as he advised is not known, and whatever the women of the Salt Lake

¹⁹⁹ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973, Vol. 2, 84-85 (images 89-90).*

Twentieth ward may have thought personally about Bishop Sharp's remarks, according to the minutes, they did not make any public rebuttals. But there was a change within the meetings. After the October meeting, there was no mention of grain, or anything connected to home manufacture or cooperation in the minutes. The minutes of the two meetings following in November and December are very short, and after those meetings, there are none recorded until March 1880 when a new Relief Society presidency was chosen.²⁰⁰

Whether the secretary, Annie J. Mackay, meant it this way or not it is hard not to hear the irony in the way the bishop's final remarks in the October meeting were penned. According to Mackay, Bishop Sharp closed the meeting by blessing them and exhorting them "to go on in the good work of relieving those in distress. He would come to see us whenever he could spare time, and always was ready to counsel or give advice in any matter."²⁰¹ His counsel to not store grain, whether or not the women followed it, clearly affected the discussion of storing grain in meetings. What is perhaps even more striking is that in Salt Lake City, the center of the church and its leadership, a ward was more influenced by its local leaders than the church president. Being able to follow the direction of leaders on both a local and higher level could cause conflict for women. While there were similarities between this situation in Salt Lake to what happened in Fillmore ten years before, Fillmore demonstrates that not only did women have to balance the influences between local and general leaders, but also the influences of their male family members as well.

²⁰⁰ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973, Vol. 2, 85 (image 90).*

²⁰¹ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973, Vol. 2, 85 (image 90).*

“Nor do I want any man to have any thing to do with it”

Though at the onset it might have seemed like President Holbrook and her male leaders were only at odds with each other, a deeper examination of the minutes shows that it was also a family affair that led to the conflict about the cooperative store. At the meeting following the one where President Holbrook spoke of feeling “her hands were tied,” the minutes state that the meeting was called “by request” of the Stake President Thomas Callister. Secretary Eliza Lyman, however, gives an important note about the following minutes: “as the Presidentess would not allow the minutes of the meeting to be read in the society they have never been accepted nor rejected.”²⁰² Whether President Holbrook was unhappy with how Lyman recorded the minutes or displeased with the meeting in general is not clear. While Lyman notes what both President Holbrook and President Callister say, as well as others, she is much more precise and gives a more detailed account of Callister's words, even going so far as to put quotation marks around his speeches. However, there are no quotation marks around the speeches of anyone else denoting Lyman’s clear deference to male authority.

That President Callister had heard of what had been said at the previous meeting is not only evident by his calling the meeting to take place, but also by what he says at the start of the meeting.

It is not often that I meet with this society. I have called this meeting on account of some remarks made by your Pres[idente]ss and put on your records, saying that her hands were tied and many other things which I consider very much out of place and an insult to the man ^who^ ~~that~~ organized you into a society, and I wish her to explain what she means by her hands being tied and how any one’s foot is on her neck &c. In organizing this society I selected those to take the lead that I thought were the best fitted for

²⁰² *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947, 22 (image 23).*

the place, and I would be glad to see them fill those places as they should be filled.²⁰³

Instead of President Holbrook responding directly after this speech, however, John L. Smith, presumably a man who accompanied President Callister, spoke. After making some “good remarks,” Lyman writes that Smith “did not think any person had a right to go past their Pres[iden]t to some higher power but should submit to the authority that is over them.” This likely was referencing President Holbrook’s statement that she wished President Young to investigate the situation when he came. Even with this very pointed remark Holbrook still either did not choose to speak or was not given the opportunity, for directly after Smith, Callister spoke again. He relayed his respect for Holbrook and that he had originally made her the president of the society because he had believed “her age and experience in the church had fitted her for the place.”²⁰⁴

After this Holbrook finally spoke and offered “a few words by way of explanation,” saying that she only wanted to see Brigham Young “about having a cooperative store in our society,” and “had no intention of going past the Pres[iden]t of this place.” Perhaps this response should have seemed fairly reasonable considering that Young had indeed asked the wards with the help of the Relief Societies to get up stores. However, this response was not satisfactory enough for Callister who said the record of the meeting showed that she had said her hands were tied and he wanted to know “who has tied them?” But apparently, the answer to him was already obvious because instead of letting Holbrook answer the question he said “Why it is the one who organized you of course, for no one else could do it; and I want to know how it is.” He went on to say that

²⁰³ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947, 22 (image 23)*. The quote is given here exactly as it is written in the minutes except for the abbreviation of Pres’ss being expanded in the brackets.

²⁰⁴ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947, 22 (image 23)*.

he wished Holbrook to continue to be the president and that there was no one else he wished to fill the role. As far as not approving a cooperative store, Callister replied that “if you want one I am willing you should have one, and you shall have my influence and help in any way that I can help you.” By way of explaining what the difficulty had been about the store he said that he only “did not want Br G. Huntsman to have any thing to do with it, nor do I want any man to have any thing to do with it.”²⁰⁵

Here seems to lie the crux of the story. “G. Huntsman” was Gabriel Huntsman, Eunice Holbrook’s son-in-law, making the issue of the cooperative store a family affair not only a community and a religious one. The actions of husbands, sons, and even sons-in-law had their toll on what women could or could not do within the society. Such seems to be the case for Holbrook.

Gabriel Huntsman was a known figure in the town of Fillmore. In fact, the men of Fillmore had bought their cooperative store from Huntsman and T.R. King.²⁰⁶ However, the journal of Bishop Edward Partridge Jr. sheds light on what was going on in the congregation of Fillmore. In June of 1869 (only several months after the Relief Society meetings discussed here) Huntsman had been charged with “unchristianlike conduct in taking liberties with some of the sisters.” Bishop Partridge disfellowshipped Huntsman from the church for a time. But after an intervention by leading church figure and apostle Erastus Snow, Huntsman was brought back into fellowship despite the disapproval of Partridge.²⁰⁷ That the rumors of Huntsman’s conduct had existed in March before the official accusation in June is probable considering Callister’s statement. This certainly

²⁰⁵ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 22-23 (images 23-24).

²⁰⁶ Edward Partridge Jr., *Edward Partridge Jr. journals, 1854-1899*, Call No. MS 1124, Vol. 1 1854 May-1872 November, digital copy, Church History Library, 338 (image 344).

²⁰⁷ *Edward Partridge Jr. journals, 1854-1899*, 339-341 (images 345-347).

influenced both his suspicion of Huntsman's family members, including Holbrook, as well as what he said at the March Relief Society meeting with Holbrook. For he spoke for some time on the proper channels and roles of the church hierarchy, saying “I tell you if men are brought before the High Council, we shall decide in righteousness and according to the best wisdo[m] that we have, and we will not cover up iniquity, so help me God.” He finally ended with the remark that “Some may think that a woman’s place is not much, but there are as great responsibilities resting on her as on any one, we have to stand or fall for ourselves.”²⁰⁸

Despite Callister saying the society could have a store, President Holbrook was not appeased. Perhaps with all the talk of not going against authority, Holbrook felt Callister and Smith had implicated her in doing so, and perhaps also tied her to her son-in-law’s rumored improprieties. Secretary Lyman records that after Callister’s long speech had ended “Pres[idente]ss Holbrook said she was willing to speak of what she was guilty of, but thought it hard to confess what she was not guilty of, she would like to see the society prosper, and if she was in the way of their prosperity there were those over her that could remove her.”²⁰⁹ In this, Holbrook managed to do what many women did and likely had no choice but to do so. While asserting their opinion and making their voice heard, they also deferred to a higher authority. Callister had said that people must “stand or fall for ourselves” and Holbrook showed that she was willing to do so.

The remarks of Holbrook’s two counselors, Matilda King and Mary McBride, had a different tone and do not show very strong signs of being supportive of Holbrook. King “was very sorry that any thing of an unpleasant nature should have occurred, thought we

²⁰⁸ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947, 23-24 (image 25).*

²⁰⁹ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947, 24 (image 25).*

should... not be too hard on our Brethren and Sisters on account of their failings for we all have them.” McBride thought that when President Callister was “talking it seemed as if the gates of Heaven were opened unto us.” She added that “I want to uphold the authorities that are placed over me.” These sorts of remarks were generally the rule in the minute books. With only the occasional voices of concern or question, most women asserted their faithfulness publicly by speaking of obedience, duty, and faith.²¹⁰

Whether or not Callister felt he had made his point by the end of the meeting or not, he only said in closing that “it was his wish that sister Holbrook should be upheld by the society and he wanted her to fill her place as she should.”²¹¹ That he felt Holbrook had not been filling her place as she should is heavily implied in this statement. How Holbrook felt at the end of the meeting is also not known for certain, however, is it recorded that she only said, “a few words about hats” and then she gave the closing prayer.²¹² Perhaps her silence is more telling. Instead of being penitent and saying something to that effect, her saying nothing about it and speaking of hats was her way of saying she was not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting. It seems likely that President Callister was not entirely satisfied with the outcome of the meeting as two weeks later at the meeting on April 27, 1869, he was again present.

At this meeting, however, it was Holbrook not Callister who called the meeting to order. Holbrook began by speaking about following the counsel of the bishop and giving what they could to help those emigrating to Utah from England.²¹³ Not surprisingly she spoke again on “getting up a cooperative store, which she thought would be a great help

²¹⁰ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947, 23-24 (image 25-26).*

²¹¹ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947, 25 (image 26).*

²¹² *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947, 25 (image 26).*

²¹³ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947, 25-26 (image 26-27).*

to the society.” Holbrook’s two counselors spoke following her remarks. King spoke of wanting to help the Society and McBride was “ready to help carry out the counsels of those who are placed over us to dictate for us.” For whatever reason Holbrook spoke yet “again on the subject of cooperation” before President Callister rose to speak. First, he expressed his pleasure in meeting with them again, “thought they manifested a good spirit” and “believed they were determined to do all the good they could.” He seconded Holbrook’s words on emigration, then said again that in regard to the store he did “not see any harm” in the Society having one. He advised them to gather money to purchase “sewing machines” and “knitting machines,” and that they should “try to make work for the poor.” After speaking on how they should instruct each other in the society meetings, reminding them again to “listen to the cou[n]sel of those who are placed over you,” he went back to advising about the store. He said that church president Brigham Young had said that “the stores should belong to the poor,” and that the women should “commence on a small scale, and progress gradually, and in time you will be able to do much good.”²¹⁴ That Callister points out that “the store should belong to the poor” and not the Relief Society women is significant. As Relief Society women were to assist the bishop in looking after the poor, saying that the store “belonged to the poor” not only put the responsibility of the store back under the bishop but also put the store within what he felt the original purpose of the Relief Society organization itself was.

Bishop Partridge, who spoke next, said he endorsed the remarks on taking care of the poor and the store. More significantly, however, he said that he “was glad to hear Sister Holbrook speak her mind and to see that she was united in her feelings with the

²¹⁴ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947, 26-27 (image 27-28).*

Bishop and those who are in authority over her.”²¹⁵ Here, the fact that she was able to speak her mind, but also listen to the counsel of her leaders is commended. Relief Society women were encouraged to cultivate their minds, enabling them to speak well, and they could speak what they thought as long as they did not disparage their male leaders and their leader’s counsel in the process.

At the end of the meeting, it was finally motioned and seconded that they would “have a cooperative store.”²¹⁶ Despite this, the effect the conflict of these meetings had on the Relief Society, and especially Eunice Holbrook, was not small. It seems to have taken away much of the enthusiasm women had for their organization. The minutes of the meetings after this are short and tend to mostly discuss annual reports, the donations from the women, and the work they did in their meetings. In June, Holbrook “proposed that we carry out the counsel of Pres[ide]nt T Collister, in regard to building a house,” and some sisters pledged to donate money for that purpose.²¹⁷ Whether this “house” was meant just for meeting in, or also to house their store is never specified in the minutes. Though the house was eventually built, the cooperative store did not come to fruition during Holbrook’s’ presidency and despite Holbrook speaking about the house for the next few meetings, the minutes became shorter and less frequent. There were no meetings recorded between July and October, and by December a note in the minutes relays that: “Thomas Collister... said in a public meeting to day that sister Eunice Holbrook, the Presidentess of the Female Relief Society of Fillmore, had verbally resigned that office.”²¹⁸

²¹⁵ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947, 27 (image 28).*

²¹⁶ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947, 27 (image 28).*

²¹⁷ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947, 29 (image 30).*

²¹⁸ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947, 31 (image 32).*

In 1870, the only meeting at the beginning of the year was an indignation meeting in response to the Cullom Bill where Holbrook was one of the speakers. The next recorded meeting was in July 1870. President Callister was present at this meeting as the presidency of the Society was to be reorganized. Also present was Bathsheba Smith (likely the same Bathsheba Smith who later became the fourth general president of the Relief Society), who says “I am sorry you were broken up... I will nominate Sister Caroline Collister for Presidentess.” This “Caroline Collister” was President Callister’s first wife and she with her new two counselors were unanimously voted to be in the new presidency.²¹⁹

That they did not create a cooperative store at this time is evident by the minutes of a meeting two years later in November 1872. Counselor Delia Olsen “mentioned the propriety of having a cooperative store for the sisters.”²²⁰ The next year a store was mentioned again in May and in June. At the May meeting the Presidentess, Caroline Callister said:

she supposed all the sisters understood that it was the intention to form a Ladies Cooperative Store. Spoke of the necessity of its being organized and of the plan upon which it was to be founded, said like all other Cooperative Institutions it would require a unity of effort on the part of those who were interested therein.²²¹

Thomas Callister seems to be fully supportive of creating this store in Fillmore considering he gave the dedicatory prayer for it. He also was supportive and encouraging in the neighboring Relief Society of Holden. In the minutes of the Holden December

²¹⁹ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 32-33, 35 (image 33-35). Page 34 is missing from the scanned images available online and it is not noted whether this is an accident in the scanning, or if the page was damaged or missing. While it is very possible that there were some minutes on this page, considering that there was only a page between January and July, it is not likely there were very many meetings, or that the minutes were very detailed. Interestingly, Eliza Partridge Lyman was kept as the secretary despite a new president and counselors.

²²⁰ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 74 (image 80).

²²¹ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 80 (image 86).

1873 meeting Presidentess Abigail Stevens “said if we as sisters could be united it would be her mind to start a relief society store here as it [was] the mind of our president Collister.”²²² This time around the Fillmore Relief Society did establish their cooperative store. However, what is striking is that while both Holbrook’s daughter and son-in-law Gabriel Huntsman are mentioned in the record as contributing and participating in the new store, Holbrook is not.²²³

The relationship between Thomas Callister and Eunice Holbrook, and thereafter Holbrook to the Relief Society had clearly been strained though Callister still spoke highly of Holbrook and her two counselors after the fact. In the meeting held a year after Holbrook’s resignation he told the gathered women that “he had never called on [the former presidency] to do any thing, but they had it done according to his request.”²²⁴ However, in the following few years despite Holbrook’s two counselors and two of her daughters-in-law, her daughter Eunice and Gabriel Huntsman being mentioned, Holbrook is not. There is no evidence that she attended Relief Society ever again. This example of conflict demonstrates pressures felt from different directions Relief Society women, especially Relief Society leaders, had to navigate. Not only did they face pressures from general leaders, and local male leaders, the actions and relationships they had with their own families directly impacted their association with the Relief Society.

²²² *Holden Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1870-1972*, 21 (image 25).

²²³ “Fillmore Relief Society record book, 1873-1876,” in the *Joseph A. Lyman family collection, 1873-1931, 1950-1960*, Call No. MS 31265, digital copy, Church History Library, 8, 11, and 16 (images 12, 15, and 20). This book seems to have been created specifically to document the creation of the cooperative store. Eliza Lyman is the secretary for the minutes for this book as well. Eunice Holbrook Huntsman is listed as being on the board of directors and a shareholder in the new cooperative store, and the minutes state that the board “agreed to pay G. Huntsman ten (10) dollars pr month for the use of a room in which to put the goods.”

²²⁴ *Fillmore Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1947*, 48 (image 48).

“Not fit to be a Member”

On April 1, 1877, in Vernon, Utah, the Relief Society organization met together. Brother John C. Sharp, the presiding elder in Vernon and ironically the nephew of Bishop John Sharp from the Salt Lake City Twentieth Ward, opened the meeting.²²⁵ After a few speeches made by others, he stood to make some remarks. Among other things, he discussed a dance that the Relief Society had recently held. He stated that “there had been a good deal of mismanagement, and he advised them... to appoint a committee to make suitable arrangements, and conduct things in proper order.”²²⁶ What he meant by “mismanagement” is never clarified in the minutes, however, this statement brought Sarah Durrant, a teacher in the society, to her feet. She said she believed there was some “blame” attributed to her regarding the dance. She also felt that:

what she had done was only what the President had directed her to do... If she had exceeded her duty, she asked to be excused, for she had no desire to step beyond the President. If she attempted to get up the ladder too quickly, her descent would be equally rapid. She did not wish to lose her standing, to run the risk of losing her salvation... and knew that it was the legitimate object of the devil to prevent her accomplishing the work she had to do. He had tried hard for many years to overthrow her, and she had been repeatedly in trials, among false brethren and sisters.²²⁷

Apparently, this speech did not agree with Brother Sharp for he got up again stating that he had not planned on saying more about the dance, but since Sister Durrant had, he would say more. Though he did not blame President Sharp (genealogical records show that she was very likely a relation to him), “he did blame Sister [Durrant],” for he thought

²²⁵ Sharp is called a presiding elder at this first meeting likely because Vernon was still a branch at this time. Soon after he is addressed as Bishop Sharp.

²²⁶ Vernon Branch, Tooele Stake, *Vernon Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1877-1973*, Call no. LR 9752 14, book 1877-1914, digital copy, Church History Library, 11 (image 15). The spelling of Sarah and Ada’s last name is usually spelled as “Durant” in the minute books; however, family records spell it as “Durrant,” so I have chosen to spell it Durrant in brackets in the quotes for consistency.

²²⁷ *Vernon Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1877-1973*, 11 (image 15).

“she had greatly exceeded her authority, and did not consider that she had any right to give any counsel to Sister Sharp.”²²⁸ This speech is confusing considering that Durrant had just stated that she had no wish to “step beyond the President,” though her speaking of being among “false brethren and sisters” likely did not aid her in her cause.

What Sharp said next, however, implies that there was much more to this confrontation than just a dance. He said that on the basis that no woman of “doubtful character ought to be a Member” of the Relief Society, therefore Durrant “was not fit to be a Member.” Sharp had heard reports of her conduct and he motioned that she “be dropped from her office of Teacher till these reports had been investigated” and “He suggested that a Committee of the Sisters be appointed to go to Sisters Lavinia and Charlotte [Durrant] to enquire about the matter.” His accusations of “doubtful character” came down to two things. First, “that she neglected prayer,” and second that she “was not a clean woman.” Lastly, “He thought the charges he had heard could be substantiated, but he hoped not. He intended to investigate the matter thoroughly, if he had to go to Fairfield to do it.” Though Ada Durrant, who was both the Relief Society secretary and Sarah Durrant’s polygamist sister-wife stood and publicly defended Sarah’s character, women were still selected to form a committee to see into the matter and the meeting was adjourned.²²⁹

This meeting draws attention to two points about belonging to Relief Society networks in the 19th century. First, is the process of and requirements to become a member of the Relief Society. Only women who were considered by others as worthy and in good standing could be accepted into the society by the votes of the members. Second

²²⁸ *Vernon Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1877-1973*, 11-12 (images 15-16).

²²⁹ *Vernon Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1877-1973*, 9-14 (images 13-18).

is the impact of polygamist sister-wives' relationships within the Relief Society communities. In her article "Creating Female Community: Relief Society in Cache Valley, Utah, 1868-1900," Carol Cornwall Madsen states that "The story of the Relief Society... demonstrates the strength of religious commitment in women's lives and the social power of organized womanhood."²³⁰ While women did not have much outward power in terms of leadership within the church hierarchy, among themselves in the Relief Society women theoretically had the power to control who was and was not a part of it, ultimately deciding the worthiness of would-be members. However, male leaders sometimes heavily influenced not only who held positions within the Relief Society, but also who could participate in it.

"Hold each other's characters sacred"

Since the beginning of the Relief Society, only women who were of good reputation and usually with a recommendation from someone who was already a member could join. Eliza R. Snow taught that church founder Joseph Smith directed the Relief Society in Nauvoo "to be very careful in admitting members, that none be received but those of strictly virtuous character... and then they should sustain, and hold each other's characters sacred."²³¹ This instruction was echoed by Bishop John Sharp of Salt Lake City when he told the Twentieth Ward Relief Society at the organizational first meeting:

²³⁰ Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Creating Female Community: Relief Society in Cache Valley, Utah, 1868-1900," *Journal of Mormon History* 21, No. 2 (Fall 1995): 129.

²³¹ Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds., "3.6 Eliza R. Snow, 'Female Relief Society,' April 18 and 20, 1868," *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* (The Church Historian's Press, 2016), online, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/the-first-fifty-years-of-relief-society/?lang=eng>.

Those who applied for membership must be of your moral character & if they have against any member of the society... have their names presented to a meeting of the society and be received by a vote of that meeting if no reasonable objections are made. It will require great wisdom and care, on the part of those who object. Character is a very sacred thing, & must not be trifled with.²³²

Though the minute books show that the strictness with which this was followed varied from Relief Society to Relief Society, generally this pattern of recommendations, nominations, and voting in new members was kept.

While women had the choice or agency to vote to accept new members into the society, there were many things to take into consideration. Historian Catherine Brekus explains “that agency is always shaped by cultural norms and structural constraints... the way that humans use their agency is always shaped by the multiple structures that exist at a particular historical moment.”²³³ For 19th-century women in Utah, polygamy had become a Mormon “cultural norm.” It touched many parts of their society and relationships, creating structural constraints and complicated familial and community dynamics. These different variables were very much at play in the Durrant story.

“Moved that she be expelled from the Society”

While secretary Ada Durrant recorded the minutes of the meeting with the exchange between Sharp and Sarah Durrant, at the next meeting she resigned, and another woman is noted as being the secretary of those minutes. So, at the meeting where Ada did take minutes, when she “requested permission to speak” in order to defend

²³² *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 2 (image 12).

²³³ Catherine A. Brekus, “Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency,” *Journal of Mormon History*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Spring 2011), 83.

Sarah, either someone else contributed to the minutes, or she is writing them from memory.²³⁴ It is also important to keep in mind the various biases that are likely a part of her record.

Ada “testified to having lived with Sister Sarah for more than four years,” and could say “from personal experience... what little she had heard of the charges against her, they were untrue.” She then “reminded Brother Sharp that Sister [Durrant] had never sought to recommend herself as an exemplary character, but had brought written recommendations with her.” For whatever reason, this speech held no weight with Sharp or apparently the rest of the Relief Society women, and a committee to investigate was created. The mention of “written recommendations” is significant because it implies that Sarah was new to the area as bringing written recommendations was common for women who moved from one settlement to another. Ada saying that she had lived with Sarah for the last four years implies that she too was new to Vernon which was probably why her voice, and her word did not have much impact on the situation.²³⁵

A family history of the William Durrant family confirms that both Sarah and Ada were new to the settlement of Vernon. It explains that Ada had been living in Sarah’s boarding house in Fairfield, Utah when she met and was courted by William Durrant. When she became his third wife, the family story says that he married Sarah as well, though she was significantly older than him, so that Ada would not feel so alone when he was with his other two wives. By March 1877, however, William Durrant’s first two wives Lavinia and Charlotte (his paternal aunt and first cousin respectively) had divorced him for unknown reasons, leaving Ada and Sarah as the only wives. The tensions in the

²³⁴ *Vernon Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1877-1973* 12 (image 16).

²³⁵ *Vernon Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1877-1973*, 9-14 (images 13-18).

Durrant family because of this can be imagined, making John Sharp's directive to send a committee to the recently divorced Lavinia and Charlotte intriguing. The minute book shows that neither Lavinia nor Charlotte was ever present at Vernon Relief Society meetings, but it is not known if they attended another Relief Society.²³⁶

Two weeks after the meeting where the committee was formed, the Relief Society again gathered, sewing together for the majority of the meeting. However, near the end, John Sharp spoke, and after mentioning several things concerning the work of the Relief Society he said:

A committee had been appointed [which] as directed, had met at Sister Lavinia [Durrant's] house on Thursday 6th of April to examine the charges made and being [referred] to Fairfield for proofs, letters had been sent to the President of the settlement and of the Relief Society there. Replies had [today] been received, stating that she was a woman of bad character and unfit to be a Member of the Society. He therefore moved that she be expelled from the Society till such time as her character should be cleared. The motion was seconded by Mary A Bennion and being put to the vote about half of the sisters united in wishing Sister [Sarah Durrant] dismissed signifying this by the usual motion.²³⁷

Again, while women were supposed to be the ones to choose who could and could not be in the society, male presence led the way in deciding that Sarah Durrant should be dropped from the society. However, the fact that "about half of the sisters" voted in favor of Sharp's motion is intriguing considering that means that the other half either voted to keep her or chose not to vote at all. Despite the half that did not vote to dismiss Durrant, Sharp appears to have had the deciding vote between the divided women although this is never directly stated.

²³⁶ Verna Durrant Humphries, *The Story of William Wendon Dewey Durrant (1842-1926)*, a digital pdf of a typed manuscript, located in memories of William Wendon Dewey Durrant (KWJD-16D) on familysearch.org, 6-7.

²³⁷ *Vernon Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1877-1973*, 13 (image 17). Brackets used in this quote to fix spelling, making it easier to read.

After this, Ada again asked to speak, saying that “as the one charge in [which] she had been implicated with Sister [Sarah Durrant] could neither be proved nor disproved either in Fairfield or this place she still considered herself under suspicion.” She then declared she would resign “herself from the Society as long as Sister Sarah [Durrant] was excluded from it. She felt in her heart that no more charge could be honestly and truthfully brought against Sister Sarah [Durrant] than against herself.” It is not clear if the “charge” referenced here is the lack of prayer and cleanliness that was before mentioned, or something else not written in the minutes. Ada’s resignation, not asked for by either the Bishop or the Relief Society President, was a very public act of support. It demonstrates a way that women had agency within their religious and social circles, but also that in some Relief Societies, this agency could be limited and was sometimes overshadowed by the authority of their leaders.²³⁸

“Sorry she had held up her hand to drop sister Durrant from the society”

Despite being dropped from it, the connection to the Vernon Relief Society was not over for these two Durrant women. The minutes of the meeting in August of 1877 are a prime example of the discrepancies that are possible between the minute books and reality. The minutes now written by secretary Elizabeth Bennion, record that John C. Sharp, now the bishop, asked the President “to have Sister Durrant correct the minutes...where she said he had charged her for not being a cleanly and a praying woman, also... where she said about half the sisters voted for her dismissal from the society before she should have her name enrolled with the sisters.” Why the bishop asks

²³⁸ *Vernon Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1877-1973*, 13 (image 17).

this is never clarified. Whether the minutes were recorded incorrectly, either deliberately or because of misunderstanding, or if the bishop just did not want the record to read that way, will likely never be known. Also not known is what happened between the April meeting to August that made it so that Sarah Durrant was present at the society meeting. But present she was, and when the President asked her if she was willing for the minutes to be corrected she responded that “she was satisfied that the bishop had been influenced by others to make those charges against her [but] she said she was willing to do anything so as to have her name enrolled with the sisters and for peace and unity.” Whoever it was that “influenced” the bishop against Sarah Durrant is never specified. Perhaps it was Lavina and Charlotte, disgruntled by polygamy and the divorce, or perhaps it was general gossip that often occurs in small towns. Whatever the case, the Relief Society president Jennie Sharp in that meeting asked the women “to try and do better to stop backbitting and evil speaking about each other for she knew the blessings of the Lord would not attend us if we done so.” Another woman in the meeting spoke up and shared her thoughts on the matter. Esther A Bennion said “she was sorry she had held up her hand to drop sister Durrant from the society and that she had regreted it ever since. she thought it was right that sister durrant should have her name restored honorably.”²³⁹

From that point on both Sarah and Ada participated in the Relief Society meetings frequently, though neither were reinstated in their leadership positions. Throughout the minute book Sarah gives prayers and speaks in the meeting, sometimes with Ada joining her. At a meeting in October 1878, where Bishop Sharp was also present, the minutes state that “Sisters Ada and Sarah Durrant spoke a few minutes, the [latter] gave us some

²³⁹ *Vernon Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1877-1973*, 15-16 (images 19-20). Brackets used here to correct capitalization and spelling.

of the council Sister E.R. Snow had been giving the sisters in Tooele.” At the next meeting both spoke again and Sarah “spoke on celestial marriage, exhorted the sisters not to speak light of it.” The fact that Sarah chose to speak about Celestial or plural marriage is significant not only because she has experienced it herself, but also because by choosing to speak on it (though perhaps unconsciously) she established herself as a faithful Latter-day Saint woman despite what had occurred previously.²⁴⁰

The story of the Durrants illustrates how some women navigated the religious and social constructs of their communities and leaders. It was not only the male leaders of a congregation that made demands upon the Relief Society women but also the male leaders at home (in the form of husbands) who had expectations for their wives. This could supersede the obligations of a religious organization.

“Did not wish them to act in any office whatever”

Around the same time the dispute in Vernon was going on, English immigrant Elizabeth Gledhill Broadbent was made the President of the Relief Society in Spring Lake, a community about fifty miles southwest of Vernon. She was the first president of the Spring Lake Relief Society and the minutes show that the women not only greatly respected her but the bishop did as well. However, she was not president very long before her husband Thomas Broadbent came to that September meeting and asked that none of his two wives hold leadership positions in the Relief Society.²⁴¹ Broadbent said that he

²⁴⁰ *Vernon Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1877-1973*, 27 (image 31).

²⁴¹ While this took place Broadbent only had two wives, but by the end of the year he married his third polygamist wife and she is listed in his household in the 1880 United States Census; U.S. Census Bureau, “United States Census, 1880,” database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org>; 5 May 2023),

“did not object to them becoming members, but did not wish them to act in any office whatever.” Bishop B.F. Johnson who was also present “said he did not comprehend what was meant in the request just made.” Brother Broadbent said he “had reasons of his own for making the request” and did not elaborate further. There is nothing in the minutes to hint at what these reasons might have been. Perhaps he was afraid of the time such leadership would need therefore taking his wives away from home. But whatever the reason he used his influence and right as their husband to make not just a request, but quite possibly a demand.²⁴²

Elizabeth, though earlier in the meeting (and in other recorded meetings) had seemed eager to be part of the Relief Society leadership, but after her husband spoke she changed her tone. She said that she also wanted to be “released” from her role as President. Another man present, Samuel Openshaw, said Broadbent had a right to object to his wives acting in the Society provided his objections were reasonable,” but that he had not noticed any objection from Broadbent when Elizabeth had first taken the role months ago. Bishop Johnson acknowledged that “it was a wifes duty to obey her husband,” however, “he was not disposed to make any hasty move” because he had appreciated Elizabeth’s work. It was decided time would be given to consider the situation and the meeting was adjourned.²⁴³

Two months later the Bishop opened the Relief Society meeting by saying that “he was pleased and satisfied with the Society as it existed, said that were he to look around for the purpose of determining who was best qualified for the position of

Utah, Utah, Spring Lake, ED 86, image 3 of 4; citing NARA microfilm publication T9, (National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., n.d.)

²⁴² *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973y*, 53 (image 55).

²⁴³ *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973*, 53 (image 55).

President, the individual who at present held that office would be the one.” However, when Elizabeth Broadbent spoke, she “said that it was necessary that she should be released as the same course still existed that had appeared at our last meeting.” The bishop then replied “that if Sister Broadbent was released it would be because it was her own wish, or the wish of others, not that it was in accordance with his own feelings” He then thanked her for her service, and the members of the society raised their hands to signify their thanks as well. Elizabeth Broadbent then asked to address the sisters, thanked them, and then said:

[She] was sorry that anything unpleasant had ever occurred in the society, had many times enjoyed her meetings with the sisters... said that in one respect she was thankful for her release, not that there were any feelings on her part with regard to the Society but that she felt to give way to the wishes of her husband, as it was written that obedience was better than sacrifice, desired an interest in the faith and prayers of the sisters that she might always stand firm and do good while she lived. Felt to return thanks to the members of the society and others who had presented her with a quilt as a testimonial of their regard, would strive as long as she lived in Spring Lake to do all that she could in the Society as a worker.

Broadbent also briefly mentions because “she anticipated” leaving to take care of her ill mother she would be gone for a while and “wished the sisters to pray for her while gone.” However, she does not give this as the reason for her release. Rather her emphasis on “the wishes of her husband,” saying that “obedience was better than sacrifice” is striking as well as consistent with rhetoric in 19th-century Relief Societies. Even more importantly it illustrates the push and pull women felt between the duties of home and the duties of participating in the society.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁴ *Spring Lake Branch Relief Society minutes and records, 1876-1973, 57-59 (images 59-61).*

As demonstrated by both Samuel Openshaw and Bishop Johnson, leaders taught throughout Relief Society minutes that it was a duty for women to obey their husbands. Bishop John Sharp in the Salt Lake City Twentieth Ward taught “But you must not undertake to lead your husbands, for if you do you will be sure to lead him of[f] the road, like Mother Eve.”²⁴⁵ Eliza R. Snow often taught about the curse of Eve and was a strong voice for women obeying their husbands. She taught that “by being obedient, we will remove the curse placed upon woman, which was to obey her husband.”²⁴⁶ While many women accepted the command to obey their husbands as truth, they would now and again comment about their husbands' effect on their Relief Society work. Margaret Smoot once said that perhaps she did take a lot upon herself in regards to Relief Society, however, “She could not have taken so much upon herself if br. Smoot had been at home.”²⁴⁷ Precisely because her husband was not living in the same home with her (he lived in Provo with several of his other wives at the time), Smoot had more liberty and time to devote to the Relief Society. Even Snow, in speaking of life's trials to a Relief Society in 1869, said that “Sometimes our husbands try us. Who could try us as our husbands, or who could try a husband like a wife. That which will try us the most is the very thing to prove our integrity.”²⁴⁸ Though it was sometimes considered a trial, the commandment to obey husbands was still in force, and in the case of Elizabeth Broadbent, that duty surpassed the duty of Relief Society service.

²⁴⁵ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol.1, 14 (image 26).

²⁴⁶ Eighth Ward, Liberty Stake, *Eighth Ward Relief Society Minutes and Records 1867-1969*, Call No. LR 2525 14, Vol. 1, digital copy, Church History Library, no page number, date: 22 June 1868.

²⁴⁷ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 42 (image 54).

²⁴⁸ *Twentieth Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1868-1973*, Vol. 1, 79 (image 91).

Conclusion: Agency and Reproducing Structures

While the examples from the minute books shared in this chapter are perhaps more dramatic than what many or even most Relief Society members experienced, they still illustrate the pressures and relationships women dealt with as members of these societies, families, and communities from the men in their lives. Although some women raised their voices, others did not. Ultimately, they all upheld their familial, social, and religious structures and the men who advised and led them. Women, and Latter-day Saint women especially, have been seen in the past as not being active participants in the making of history because they generally upheld patriarchal structures. However, Catherine Brekus points out that “Although we must ask hard questions about *why* women have acted in certain ways, there is no doubt that the choice to reproduce structures – such as male headship in the church and home in the case of Mormon women – is, in fact, a form of agency.”²⁴⁹ Women in Relief Society were heavily influenced by the men in their church and their lives and therefore were not always able to be in complete control of the Society. However, they still made choices within their spheres of what they could control.

What is found in the Relief Society minute books demonstrates how the common and generally unknown women of 19th-century Utah did this, as well as some of the ways doing so affected them. In some cases, they were torn between counsel from different church leaders, kept from participating in leadership positions, implicated in the disgrace of family members, and sometimes even ostracized from being part of the Relief Society. Despite these difficulties, ultimately most chose and worked to obey church

²⁴⁹ Brekus, “Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency,” 80.

leaders, be faithful members of the Relief Society, and fulfill their roles in the home as dutiful wives and mothers.

Conclusion: The End of an Era and the Future of the Relief Society Minute Books

Through the Relief Society minute books, we see that many women in early Utah gathered together and formed local and religious communities. They discoursed together, learning to speak publicly, and they bore testimony of their religious beliefs, or in some cases stayed silent when they struggled. They shared a sisterhood though it was under the direction and influence of their male church leadership. As the years passed, perhaps many learned to feel as Johanna Eggertson did when she said in 1889 that she “thought it a great privilege to meet together and talk of the blessing of the Lord to us.”²⁵⁰

On September 25, 1890, the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued an “Official Declaration” also known as the Manifesto, ending the church practice of plural marriage. In many ways, this marked the end of an era for the church, and the lives of its members. Leonard Arrington argues that “The decade of the 1890’s” was a time of “transition.”²⁵¹ Latter-day Saint women were especially affected by this as *Women of Covenant* explains: “For Mormon women, the Manifesto led to a reshaping of network alliances... By 1890, however, a new generation of leaders had arisen.”²⁵² Just as there are hundreds of minute books for the years 1868 to 1889, there are numerous minute books that record the experiences of Relief Society women during this new era of transition. These minute books have yet to be explored in depth and their stories still need to be told.

²⁵⁰ Provo 2nd Ward, Utah Stake, *Provo 2nd Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1869-1973*, Call No. LR 7222 14, Vol. 3, digital copy, Church History Library, 89 (image 87).

²⁵¹ Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: Economic History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1830-1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), 380.

²⁵² Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 139.

While this thesis has attempted to demonstrate the value of these sources, it has only skimmed the surface of what can be discovered about early Latter-day Saint women through their pages. Besides the many topics of discourse that still need to be analyzed, donation and money records kept may add to Mormon economic history. Records of sickness in communities may have much to add to understanding the demographics of communities throughout Utah. Lastly, for public and family historians, these minutes are a wealth of information in terms of birth and death records and personal words and stories about individual women.

Historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich once wrote that “Well-behaved women make history when they do the unexpected, when they create and preserve records, and when later generations care.”²⁵³ In most cases, nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint women could be considered “well-behaved.” They followed their leaders' counsel and did their duties as wives, mothers, and religious women. But they also did the unexpected by speaking in public at a time when it was not expected for women to do so. They intentionally created and preserved their Relief Society meeting minute books that are full of their history. Now, future scholars can continue to help these women “make history” by using these sources that have been largely ignored to help us understand their lived religious and communal experiences.

²⁵³ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 229.

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