

Utah State University

DigitalCommons@USU

---

All Graduate Plan B and other Reports

Graduate Studies

---

12-2015

## Woman, Wife, Mother-Saint, Scholar, Patriot: LaVon W. Laursen Papers, A Case Study of Utah Women in Politics

Amber A. Laursen  
*Utah State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/gradreports>

---

### Recommended Citation

Laursen, Amber A., "Woman, Wife, Mother-Saint, Scholar, Patriot: LaVon W. Laursen Papers, A Case Study of Utah Women in Politics" (2015). *All Graduate Plan B and other Reports*. 676.

<https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/gradreports/676>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Plan B and other Reports by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@usu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@usu.edu).



WOMAN, WIFE, MOTHER – SAINT, SCHOLAR, PATRIOT  
LAVON W. LAURSEN PAPERS, A CASE STUDY  
OF UTAH WOMEN IN POLITICS

by

Amber A. Laursen

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

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

Approved:

---

Dr. Philip L. Barlow  
Major Professor

---

Dr. Kyle T. Bulthuis  
Committee Member

---

Dr. Ann Berghout Austin  
Committee Member

---

Clint Pumphrey  
Committee Member

---

Dr. Mark McLellan  
Vice President for Research and  
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

2015

Copyright © Amber A. Laursen 2015

All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

Woman, Wife, Mother – Saint, Scholar: Patriot? A Brief Study of

Latter-Day Saint Women in Utah Politics:

LaVon W. Laursen, Case Study

by

Amber A. Laursen, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2015

Major Professor: Dr. Philip L. Barlow  
Department: History

Compared to others of their era, Latter-day Saint women in Utah enjoyed a relative gender equality in voting and politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Utah was one of the first states to have equal voting rights and it had the first female state senator in 1896. Religious doctrine once positively influenced gender equality in politics; but over a century since statehood, that same doctrine has led to the decline in Utah's female representation due to its unchanging nature in a changing society.

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was a resurgence of women elected to state political offices. One woman who was politically active during this time was LaVon W. Laursen. She ran for office and served as the Vice-Chair and Chair of the Utah County Democratic Party. Her papers document her own political activity and that of other

women in Utah. With evidentiary support from the Laursen collection, **this Plan B Thesis - a curating project - accompanied by this paper**, demonstrates that women's evolving roles, the influence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and, according to LaVon, the local (Utah County) social views are the reasons for the fluctuation in women's political activity.

This paper gives pertinent background information and explores the importance of Laursen's political activity to give relevance to her archival collection. Even though it will not give a thorough narrative of the Utah woman's political experience, Laursen's involvement provides context for the current political climate for women in Utah compared with its past.

(69 pages)

## PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Woman, Wife, Mother – Saint, Scholar: Patriot? A Brief Study of

Latter-Day Saint Women in Utah Politics:

LaVon W. Laursen, Case Study

Amber A. Laursen

Following the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment in the late 1970s and into the early 1990s, a type of golden era existed in Utah where many women became politically involved and won elected office. One of these women was the Democratic Chair for Utah County, LaVon W. Laursen. A study of her life and papers illustrates that era from the perspective of her activism and serves as a setting for theories about Utah women in politics. **The purpose of this paper is to support the Plan B thesis project, which is the curating of the Laursen papers.** This paper details the archiving of that collection and briefly explores the history behind women's politics as it pertains to her papers.

Utah political offices lack adequate representation among women. In 2014, the state's ranking was 46<sup>th</sup> in the nation for the number of women holding state legislative office.<sup>1</sup> This fact is difficult to understand when compared with the state's early history of accepting women into politics and the traditional view of gender separation but equality within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Because of the early pro-

---

<sup>1</sup> Susan R. Madsen and D. Candice Backus, "The Status of Women in Utah Politics," *Utah Women and Leadership*, January 8, 2014, [https://www.uvu.edu/uwlp/docs/uwlp\\_brief\\_2014\\_no.\\_1.pdf](https://www.uvu.edu/uwlp/docs/uwlp_brief_2014_no._1.pdf) (accessed December 2015), p. 2.

feminist standing, the state of Utah was one of the first to grant suffrage to women and the first to elect a woman to their state legislature.

Over the next century, the LDS Church's standing gradually appeared outdated compared to the national women's movements. The Church's negative views on abortion, birth control, sexual freedom, and women prioritizing careers over motherhood has led to a current, general misunderstanding<sup>2</sup> that Church leaders may not want women in politics.

After the defeat of the ERA and before the 1990s, a resurgence in women's political involvement culminated in the election of several women to prominent political office. Laursen was in the middle of this transition, and her papers document both her involvement and this brief historical transition back to a gender balance. Laursen's political career waned along with women's decline in activity again in the late 1990s, but they had made their mark on history.

---

<sup>2</sup> Amber A. Laursen, "Brief Utah Politics Poll," August 7, 2015.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank LaVon W. Laursen for allowing me to use her papers and her experiences in the creation of this work, without which this project would not have been possible. I would also like to thank my committee members, Drs. Philip L. Barlow, Kyle T. Bulthuis, Ann Berghout Austin, and Clint Pumphrey; all of whom were very patient and helpful throughout this entire process, and I know that a simple thank you does not adequately express the extent my gratitude.

I want to extend my gratitude to those individuals who were kind enough with their time to help in the review process: Trevor Morris and Michael Shamo. Your insights were invaluable. I also want to thank my parents and the many friends and extended family members who helped me so much during the writing process. I owe much to all of you.

Most especially, a heartfelt thank you goes to my husband, Thomas, and our daughter, Brooklyn. Both have been very forgiving in allowing me to have the many hours necessary to complete this project. I am so grateful for their untiring support.

Amber A. Frampton Laursen

## CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	iii
PUBLIC ABSTRACT .....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	vii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	
Utah Women in Politics, LaVon W. Laursen Papers .....	1
II. VOTES FOR WOMEN AND BEYOND	
Utah Women and Their Politically Active Beginning .....	6
III. FROM RADICAL TO BACKWARD: THE LATTER-DAY SAINT CHURCH'S VIEWS ON WOMEN AND HOW IT INFLUENCES POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT .....	15
IV. LAVON W. LAURSEN PAPERS; PROCESSING THE COLLECTION .....	33
Biographical Sketch .....	34
Scope and Content .....	39
Provenance .....	41
Appraisal and Research Strengths .....	41
Overview of Current State and Original Arrangement .....	42
Conservation Issues .....	43
Work Summary and Proposed Arrangement .....	44
Digitization .....	46
V. POST 1990 AND BEYOND: THE FUTURE OF WOMEN IN UTAH POLITICS, SLIPPING BACKWARD OR MOVING FORWARD? .....	47
Conclusion .....	49
REFERENCES .....	52
APPENDIX .....	56

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Utah Women in Politics, LaVon W. Laursen Papers

Women in Utah, particularly Latter-day Saint women, historically have enjoyed a greater amount of equality in voting and in politics. Latter-day Saint women have been equals in voicing sustaining votes for their ecclesiastical leaders from the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The state of Utah was one of the first states to have equal voting rights and it was the first state to elect a woman to its state senate in 1896. Despite its inclusive history, Utah's female representation is not where it once was.

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was a resurgence of women elected to state political offices. One woman who was politically active during this time was LaVon W. Laursen. She ran for office and served as the Vice-Chair and Chair of the Utah County Democratic Party. Laursen kept much of her political memorabilia from her involvement in politics. **The archiving of her collection is the subject for this Plan B thesis. This paper is a descriptive accompaniment that also gives historical background and perspective.** The import of Laursen's papers is in the documenting of her own political activity and that of other women in Utah.

To understand further the historical significance of the collection, exploration into the background of the political wax and wane of female representation since 1896 in Utah history, Women's Activism, and Latter-day Saint history is necessary. These, coupled

with the historical vignette that the Laursen collection provides illustrates that Utah's female representation is more dependent upon social attitudes and religious doctrine than on national feminist norms.

The state of Utah's political atmosphere differs from most other states in the nation. Its strong religious<sup>3</sup> and pro-business<sup>4</sup> culture helps classify it as one of the more "conservative" states in the Union. Utah is also progressive; outside the sprawling cities across the Wasatch Mountain valleys that bisect the state longitudinally, there are many mining, farming, and ranching families and organizations that depend on positive social programs. Mormons have strong patriotic feelings, many which are rooted in their doctrine about the Americas being a choice or "promised" land.<sup>5</sup> However, they also have a sprinkling of residual distrust in federal encroachment – echoes from a turbulent past of fighting for religious autonomy.

Women's suffrage and other rights since its territorial days encouraged women to assert themselves in the private and public sector. Several Utah women attended schools in Europe<sup>6</sup> and the eastern states in business, medicine, music, and law.<sup>7</sup> When Utah became a State in 1896, the state constitution drafted in 1895 included women's enfranchisement. Soon after, women were elected to the State Legislature and ran for

---

<sup>3</sup> Micah Cohen, "Utah: Very Republican, but Not Quite as Conservative as It Appears," *FiveThirtyEight* blog, *The New York Times*, July 9, 2012, [http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/09/utah-very-republican-but-not-as-conservative-as-it-appears/?\\_r=0](http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/09/utah-very-republican-but-not-as-conservative-as-it-appears/?_r=0) (accessed December 2015).

<sup>4</sup> The University of Utah, "5 Facts About Utah's Strong Pro-Business Climate," *The David Eccles School of Business*, July 22, 2015, <http://www.business.utah.edu/news/5-facts-about-utahs-strong-pro-business-climate/> (accessed December 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Marion G. Romney, "America's Destiny," *Ensign*, November 1975, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1975/11/americas-destiny?lang=eng> (accessed October 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan, eds. *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 2000), 1358.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas G. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2003), 181.

national political offices. Church leaders encouraged women to educate themselves and be politically active.

During the twentieth century, women slowly became less involved in politics. Values and priorities changed nationally, and the original platform for the suffrage movement added new views and ideas. Some of these were in conflict with the religious sector. In the 1960s and 1970s, the sexual freedom movement, abortion, and the debate over the Equal Rights Amendment changed the meaning of feminine equality by bringing in moral topics.<sup>8</sup> Women who valued their roles at home in the domestic sector pulled back from active political participation. The new age feminism did not fit them - or rather, their religious community told them that it did not.

LaVon Laursen was working for the state Developmental Center in American Fork toward the end of the new age feminism of the 1960s and 70s. She worked periodically during her marriage to help make ends meet, and this job brought new opportunities. Like many of the women during the turn of the century, she elected to go to school for a nursing degree. Almost all of her six children were grown and two had married, so she had the time available to pursue a career.

While she was working at the Center, her co-workers approached her and encouraged that she run for AFLCIO Union Chapter president. They elected her, and it began her introduction into politics at the end of the 1970s' female political decline.<sup>9</sup> Her involvement was timely; the end of the 1970s saw a turn in women's activism by proving they could be equal in the job force and in politics.

---

<sup>8</sup> Alexander, 428.

<sup>9</sup> LaVon Maxine (Bonnie) Wilson Laursen, 2015, Interview by Amber A. Laursen, Tape recording, June 24. LaVon W. Laursen Collection, In author's possession.

After ERA's defeat, Utah experienced a resurgence in women's political participation in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1992, the state experienced a "golden year" for women in politics.<sup>10</sup> Women won major offices in the state, including Lieutenant Governor and State Attorney General. This was the first time that a woman held either of these elected posts in the state. LaVon ran for elected office during this period with some successes and a few fails. Her candidacy for the Vice-Chair and later Chair of the Utah County Democratic Party resulted in her election, but she lost in the District 60 State Senator race in 1984.<sup>11</sup> Toward the end of the 1990s and early 2000s, political participation would once again wane. Cries for more women involvement increased in the late 2000s, but this brief period of positive change in the 80s and 90s for women politicians is worthy of study.

Laursen was influential to politicians who ran for office while she chaired the Utah County Democratic Party. Following her political service, she worked as a volunteer for American Fork City's Youth Council and Youth Court. Her papers contain information about both of these and the politicians she worked with.

As with any topic that a historian researches, primary accounts are an invaluable resource in reconstructing past events. Original papers, photographs, letters, cards, audio and video recordings, and other memorabilia are invaluable for historical research. Mrs. Laursen stored many of her political papers in large binders and folders. These folders contain both her experiences and information about a key point in Utah Women's Political History. To preserve these artifacts, she donated her papers to the Utah State

---

<sup>10</sup> Kathryn L. MacKay, "Women in Politics: Power in the Public Sphere," *Women in Utah History, Paradigm or Paradox?* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005), p. 360-393.

<sup>11</sup> LaVon Maxine Wilson Laursen, Interview by Amber A. Laursen, June 24, 2015.

University Merrill-Cazier Library. The author of this paper processed and prepared her collection for archival storage as part of this thesis.

This paper gives essential background information on the subject of women's history in Utah, proving that Mrs. Laursen's papers are a relevant addition to the Merrill-Cazier Library Archives. It also gives a biographical sketch on LaVon Laursen, details the archiving process for the donation, and explains its import as a collection. The collection supports the theme that political climate for women in Utah is fluid: continuously changing based upon religious, social, and political ideological factors.

## CHAPTER 2

### VOTES FOR WOMEN AND BEYOND

#### Utah Women and Their Politically Active Beginning

“In the work of the Kingdom, men and women are not without each other, but do not envy each other, lest by reversals and renunciations of role we make a wasteland of both womanhood and manhood.” –Neal A. Maxwell<sup>12</sup>

“Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God,”<sup>13</sup> From the beginning, Latter-day Saint doctrine on gender roles differed from other groups’ societal and religious views. New England patriots in the 1830s knew what freedom and equality meant in general terms; the American Revolutionary War had only concluded a mere fifty years prior. However, equality and freedom in the sense of gender roles was something different.

The Latter-day Saints<sup>14</sup>, or more commonly called “Mormons,” had a different organization - women were equal to men in membership within its congregation. They each had different roles to play as assigned by their gender, but both men and women counted as equal when it came to voicing a sustaining vote. It is currently rote to unanimously approve appointments to Church offices, but the Church’s Law of Common Consent encourages members to approve or disapprove according to their conscience.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup>Cory H. Maxwell, ed., *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book* (West Valley City: Bookcraft, 1997), 362.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Cor. 11:11-12 (King James Version).

<sup>14</sup> A “Saint,” in the Mormon definition of the word, means a follower of Christ or any member baptized into the LDS Church.

<sup>15</sup> “I Have a Question,” *Ensign*, February 1977, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1977/02/i-have-a-question?lang=eng> (accessed December 2015).

Regardless of the outcome of the sustaining, for women to be invited to participate equally in a vote in church when they were denied in the public sphere was novel. In an essay written by Barbara B. Smith and Shirley W. Thomas, they stated that the “women of the Church have voted side by side with the men on all questions submitted to the Church membership for vote,... an advanced concept in 1830 when no women and few men voted in any church and few women had political franchise.”<sup>16</sup> Women did not have the right to vote in 1830 New England, nor anywhere else in the nascent country. Participation in an ecclesiastical vote of consent may not have changed the position of women in a drastic emancipation form. What it did do was symbolize a sense of equality in that they could participate in a way that was denied to them in politics.

Just as women had a sense of equality in the early Mormon Church, the religion impressed the concept of a divinity in gender differences and specific roles that belonged to each. Women were encouraged to gain an education, participate in gospel classes, service, and even enter some professions typically dominated by men. All were positive for a woman’s growth, but not at the expense of their inherent initial role as a wife and mother. In 1869, Brigham Young penned a letter to his daughter illustrating the advanced view of the equality of women in the Church:

We have sisters here who, if they had the privilege of studying, would make just as good mathematicians or accountants as any man; and we think they ought to have the privilege to study these branches of knowledge that they may develop the powers with which they are endowed. We believe that women are useful, not only to sweep houses, wash dishes, make beds and raise babies, but that they should stand behind the counter, study law or physic, or become good book-keepers and be able to do the business in any counting house, and all this to

---

<sup>16</sup>Barbara B. Smith and Shirley W. Thomas, “History of the Relief Society,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 4, (1992): 1576.

enlarge their sphere of usefulness for the benefit of society at large. *In following these things they but answer the design of their creation.*<sup>17</sup> (Italics added.)

Young not only implied a woman's equality in ability and encouraged the participation in occupational roles traditionally held by men, but stated that it is part of "the design of their creation" to become educated and useful in society beyond the domestic role.

As radical and liberating as this view appeared for its time, there is a dualistic nature to gender roles in Mormon society and doctrine. Men needed to be educated and contribute to society but they also held that as an expectation in fulfilling their roles as providers, husbands and fathers at home. The dualistic feminine side was to be nurturers, wives and mothers. While equally important, education and profession does not marry as well in obviousness as it does with the masculine primary role. In the same expression of equality, yet definition of priority, Brigham Young continued to explain the importance of the familial role as primary in the letter to his daughter, Susa Young Gates. Note that while he is addressing the female side, this quote applies to the male primary role as well:

Use all your gifts to build up righteousness in the earth. Never use them to acquire name or fame. Never rob your home, nor your children. If you were to become the greatest woman in this world, and your name should be known in every land and clime, and you would fail in your duty as wife and mother, you would wake up on the morning of the first resurrection and find you had failed in everything; but anything you can do after you have satisfied the claims of husband and family will redound to your own honor and to the glory of God.<sup>18</sup>

Much like Laursen, Susa Young Gates was an advocate for women's rights. Born in 1856 in Salt Lake City, she expanded her sphere of knowledge through education.

Laursen went back to school to become a nurse; Gates acquired the titles of writer, publisher, educator, and missionary. Laursen was politically active in the unions, the

---

<sup>17</sup> Veneese C. Nelson, "Women, Role of," *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* (2000): 1357.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1357-1358.

Democratic Party, and the Utah Women's political caucus; Gates actively served in the National Council of Women and was the founder of the Utah Woman's Press Club. In addition to her civic and Church related accomplishments, she was a wife and mother of thirteen children; Laursen was a wife and mother of six.<sup>19</sup> Both embodied the dualistic nature of a Mormon woman, as defined by Brigham Young.

The most revealing part of Young's statement to his daughter is where he mentions that failure in the duty as a wife and mother would equate total failure in everything; yet once domestic obligations were fulfilled, the additional accomplishments would "redound...your own honor and to the glory of God." Over the course of time, women in the Church forgot that there was an order, a methodic checkbox to pace oneself and instead began feeling a need to embody all of those traits at once. It caused confusion and a breakdown of the woman when she failed to become "Super Mom." Utah Valley University professor Kris Doty remarked in a 2013 study that LDS women were at risk for depression due to toxic perfectionism from misinterpreting the Church's teaching on striving for eternal perfection.<sup>20</sup> Trying to keep up with everything and be "perfect" all at once rather than taking the methodical life experience track began causing some women to break down mentally.

In the Church's first years, women were not actively involved politically. In fact, many men struggled to be politically active. During the first decade after the Church's founding, there were more pressing matters. Members of the Church were not welcome

---

<sup>19</sup> R. Paul Cracraft, "Susa Young Gates: Her Life and Literary Work," (master's thesis, University of Utah, 1951), quoted in Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan, eds. *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 2000), 413.

<sup>20</sup> Ben Lockhart, "UVU professor's study puts focus on LDS women and depression" *Deseret News*, January 31, 2013, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865571984/UVU-professors-study-puts-focus-on-LDS-women-and-depression.html?pg=all> (accessed August 2015).

in many of the communities they settled in, and with the influx of new converts, space to gather in was an issue. From 1830 to 1847, the Latter-day Saints' relocated from New York to Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and finally the Great Basin where most of their time was spent trying to build homes, farms, and cities. There was barely enough time to try and vote (if they could make it to the ballot box without harassment, as they experienced in Gallatin, Missouri) let alone run for office. During one of the more heated periods in Church history, some of the Saints living in Daviess County, Missouri went to vote at their local precinct in Gallatin. When they attempted to go to the ballot box, a group of angry local citizens, concerned about the Mormons voting as a block and taking control of the county, attempted to stop the Saints from voting. A "riot broke out" and ended with the Mormons leaving without voting.<sup>21</sup>

There was a brief calm to the pioneering chaos in Nauvoo for the Saints. During the four-year respite, the LDS women had time to come together and create the largest women's organization in the world. Founded in 1842, the LDS Female Relief Society promoted the education of women, a place to coordinate their efforts in societal service, and to assist in the building of the kingdom of God. Although ecclesiastically based, it provided an organization that brought women together to serve their community.

In 1844, signs that the Mormons were becoming more politically involved outside their sphere increased. Joseph Smith Jr.'s bid for the United States Presidency was one of these. Although Smith's candidacy was more of an attempt to redress the injustices levied by their neighbors in Missouri and Illinois, it also showed the Saints' realization that they could not completely isolate themselves from society, especially if they wanted

---

<sup>21</sup> Garr, Cannon, and Cowan, eds., 409.

justice.<sup>22</sup> They needed connection with the outside world politically to make a difference in their situation.

Smith's attempt to become involved in national politics would end with his assassination, but it would not close the door to national political involvement. When the Latter-day Saints left Nauvoo and settled in the Great Salt Lake Valley, it was outside the United States boundaries. The irony was that while they were fleeing from a nation that drove them out, the United States was fighting a war with Mexico over land. The U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-47 resulted in the annexation of all the land in between the Mississippi and the Pacific Ocean – which included the Rocky Mountains and the Great Salt Lake Valley. The Latter-day Saints once again found themselves on U.S. soil and needed to barter politically as a territory.

It took time to settle and begin to build their homes again, but the roles of gender equality did not change. In fact, the increasing practice of polygamy among the Mormons gave more women equal opportunities in professions outside the home:

...some women felt plural marriage even tended to “free” them for greater participation in the political and economic affairs of the community, and it is significant that many of those who led out in directing various programs for social improvement in Utah were, in fact, the plural wives of prominent Latter-day Saint priesthood leaders.<sup>23</sup>

Historians James Allen and Glen Leonard noted that Latter-day Saint women (not necessarily polygamous wives) “often worked side-by-side with their husbands taking care of the farm and doing all the tasks necessary for the economic well-being of the

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 419.

<sup>23</sup> James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 389.

family.’<sup>24</sup> This was a concept that did not change as the years passed; in 1958, LaVon Laursen was doing the same thing: working with her husband side-by-side to build their home in American Fork.<sup>25</sup> In 1870, a petition to the Territorial Legislature of Utah granted women the right to vote on February 12; it was an extension of the sustaining vote that LDS women already practiced in their Church meetings. Although the petition did not allow them to hold political office, this stroke of the legislative pen granted women the right to a voice more than forty years before the United States Congress would permanently extend their enfranchisement nationally.

Women’s right to vote in Territorial Utah was brief. In 1887, as part of the Edmunds-Tucker Acts targeting polygamy, they stripped away women’s right to vote in Utah. It was not until the LDS Church changed its practice and abandoned polygamy in 1890 that Utah was granted statehood and the legislated right to vote for women returned as an addition to the state constitution in 1895.<sup>26</sup>

Polygamy seemed to be in exact opposition of women’s rights, especially with the progressive sentiment toward enfranchising women and the Church’s doctrine of gender equality in professional and political pursuits. National Women’s rights groups headed by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton decried polygamy.<sup>27</sup> However, many Mormon women did not see polygamy as the restrictive and slave-like institution that its critics did. In fact, several women’s rights advocates from Territorial Utah spoke out in favor of polygamy and declared it as liberating. Emmeline B. Wells in the *Woman’s*

---

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> LaVon M. Wilson Laursen (Bonnie), Autobiography, unpublished, nd., 8.

<sup>26</sup> Garr, Cannon and Cowan, 1356.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander, 180.

*Exponent* on May 1, 1879 wrote about plural marriage as giving “women the highest opportunities for self-development, exercise of judgment, and arouses latent faculties, making them more truly cultivated in the actual realities of life, more independent in thought and mind, noble and unselfish.”<sup>28</sup>

Women needed to speak out in favor of polygamy about its positive points in order to counter the negative press and as an attempt to keep Congress from declaring it as an illegal institution. It was a major political issue, one that candidates for the presidency addressed and the women’s voice mattered. As early as 1856, the Republican National Convention called for, by resolution that Congress needed to exercise its authority and prohibit the “twin relics of barbarism – polygamy and slavery.”<sup>29</sup> Nationally, the attitude about polygamy was that it equated to the enslavement of women. National women’s groups fought to show its “barbaric” nature, and in contrast, the Latter-day Saint women who lived in polygamous households were arguing the reverse.

In many polygamous households, the women would share the domestic chores and the raising of children. More hands available gave more time for each wife to pursue education and career goals. The cessation of any new plural marriages sanctioned by the LDS Church in 1890 eliminated the anti-polygamy crusade, but not the spirit of activism; there were other women’s issues to address.

When Utah entered the Union as a state in 1896, it held elections for state representation. In the new Utah State Legislature, Sarah A. Anderson and Eurithe LeBarthe won seats as representatives with Martha Hughes Cannon as the first female

---

<sup>28</sup> Garr, Cannon and Cowan, 1356.

<sup>29</sup> John A. Wills, “The Twin Relics of Barbarism,” *Historical Society of Southern California, Los Angeles*, 1, no. 5 (1890): 40-44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41167826> (accessed August 2015).

senator in the state. This was an enormous triumph for women; enfranchisement and the ability to hold political office helped Utah stand out among the nation in suffrage achievements. Even though it came as part of a national campaign for women's rights, Jean Bickmore White places Utah women's progressive sphere into perspective: "Utah women probably succeeded in 1895 where women elsewhere failed because their efforts were approved by leaders of the main political force in the state—the Mormon Church."<sup>30</sup> From then and even now, the Latter-day Saint Church proves to be the hinge, the defining point, upon where many Mormon women decide to run for office.

---

<sup>30</sup>Jean Bickmore White, "Women's Suffrage in Utah," *Utah History Encyclopedia*, nd, [http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah\\_chapters\\_statehood\\_and\\_the\\_progressive\\_era/womenssuffrageinutah.html](http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah_chapters_statehood_and_the_progressive_era/womenssuffrageinutah.html) (accessed August 2015).

## CHAPTER 3

FROM RADICAL TO BACKWARD: THE LATTER-DAY SAINT CHURCH'S  
VIEWS ON WOMEN AND HOW IT INFLUENCES POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

“The place of woman in the Church is to walk beside the man, not in front of him nor behind him. In the Church there is full equality between man and woman.”

–John A. Widtsoe<sup>31</sup>

The preceding chapter explained how the Mormon Church views the role of a woman in her life and career, and explains how LaVon Laursen's life mirrored that role. To better understand the political climate for women in the 1980s and 1990s in the state of Utah when Laursen was politically active and the change from increasing female representation to very few women being elected to office in the 2000s, it is important to explore the Church's doctrine on gender roles. Much of the evidence shows public ignorance of how the Church has an influence in women's roles and what they are.

Questions about how much influence (if any) that the LDS Church has in politics and the base statistics of the gender factor in candidate electability are important. Laursen felt that the Church had a strong influence on whether women ran for office, but in a more indirect way. She expressed in her interview that she felt society had a greater influence on women from their interpretation of Church procedure, especially from the student code of conduct imposed by Brigham Young University (the LDS Church-owned university) on its students that seemed to trickle out to the community.<sup>32</sup> A survey conducted by the author presented some these questions. The survey included a small

---

<sup>31</sup> Garr, Cannon, and Cowan, 1357.

<sup>32</sup> LaVon Maxine (Bonnie) Wilson Laursen, 2015, Interview by Amber A. Laursen.

subset of people who either currently live in the state of Utah, or consider themselves “from” Utah. It was a brief survey – it did not sample a large enough portion to determine broad views, but it gave insight into how the public might consider some of these gender issues. Respondents were asked whether the Latter-day Saint Church encourages women to hold political office. Roughly, 42 percent of respondents said that they did not know and 17 percent responded with “no.” It is also interesting to note that 85 percent considered themselves to be Latter-day Saints.<sup>33</sup> From this small group, it is interesting to note that nearly 60 percent could not confidently say that Mormon women were encouraged to hold political office by their Church.

From Brigham Young’s 1869 statement that women who followed educational and civic pursuits were “answer[ing] the design of their creation” to uncertainty in 2015 of the role women ought to play shows a major shift. Exploring what happened over 150 years is the key in finding the causal source. When analyzing the trend, it is not until the 1970s that a significant change appears. The LDS Church had not changed; in fact, it remained essentially the same in its views of gender roles. Society and the nation changed around the Church, and the change happened to deal squarely with the one institution set in the Church’s highest regard: The family.

Equal Rights legislation and other political hot topics such as abortion caused the Church concern and they proceeded with caution on the subject of women’s rights. The LDS Church had varying degrees of political involvement in the past, as evidenced by

---

<sup>33</sup> Amber A. Laursen, “Brief Utah Politics Poll,” August 8-11, 2015. The survey was conducted by the author via Survey Monkey website ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)). A total of 60 respondents (narrowed down from control questions) comprise the small Snowball Survey results. Most respondents replied via Facebook and have Utah County connections.

Joseph Smith's bid for the presidency. After the founding of Deseret, members of the Church, including high-ranking officials, held most if not all of the elected positions in the territory. Brigham Young was the first Territorial Governor after Congress accepted the territory of Deseret and changed its name to Utah.

Shortly before obtaining statehood and to avoid controversy by showing that its members would not vote for one specific political party or according to ecclesiastical directive, the Church instructed its members to affiliate with the national parties. For equality purposes, the Church instructed its bishops and stake presidents to divide their congregations equally. They gave local leaders discretion on how they encouraged their congregations.<sup>34</sup> Years later, some of the stories remaining from the division included one about the bishop drawing a line down the center of his congregation and telling the members on one side to affiliate Republican and the members on the opposite side to join with the Democrats.<sup>35</sup> Richard L. Bushman mentions this fact in a conference discussion for the Pew Forum's biannual Faith Angle Conference in 2007: "There are Democrats in Utah to this day who are Democrats only because their great-grandfathers were told they should be."<sup>36</sup>

After Utah obtained statehood, the Church showed support for various legislation and occasionally for candidates who backed their religious interests. In the 1960s,

---

<sup>34</sup> *Church History in the Fulness of Times* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1993), 442-443.

<sup>35</sup> This story comes from the author's mother, Sharon Frampton.

<sup>36</sup> Pew Research Center, "Mormonism and Politics: Are They Compatible?" Conference discussion, Pew Forum's biannual Faith Angle Conference, May 14, 2007, [http://www.pewforum.org/2007/05/14/mormonism-and-politics-are-they-compatible/?utm\\_expId=53098246-2.Lly4CFSVQG2lphsg-KopIg.0&utm\\_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F](http://www.pewforum.org/2007/05/14/mormonism-and-politics-are-they-compatible/?utm_expId=53098246-2.Lly4CFSVQG2lphsg-KopIg.0&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F)

precedence changed and the Church backed away from open support in politics.<sup>37</sup> The reasoning for the shift in open support is partly explained by Jan Shipps in her essay, “From Satyr to Saint: American Perceptions of the Mormons, 1860-1960.” She describes the shift in national attitude from malignant to celebratory over a one hundred year period from the analysis of press articles. A marked upward climb in positivity appears around the 1890 mark. Shipps explains, “These results tell us that there were more objections to polygamy and the church’s political activities and control than to Mormon theology.”<sup>38</sup> Concern over polygamy *and* fear that the Church being too involved in political affairs would affect a rapidly expanding voting bloc of Mormons tilted the national attitude on the saints toward the negative side of the scale. However, it is interesting to note that the positive rankings in the press increased following both the cessation of polygamy in 1890 and Utah’s statehood in 1896.

In 1974, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles set up the Special Affairs (later Public Affairs) Committee. Headed by Church hierarchy, it monitored public policy issues. The General Authorities and the Church as a body no longer showed support or opposition for candidates, but reserved that support or opposition for legislative issues of a moral nature.<sup>39</sup> This committee could be seen as a passive approach to political issues that the Church leaders did not want to make an official statement about. As evidenced by political activity connected to the LDS Church

---

<sup>37</sup> Alexander, 418.

<sup>38</sup> Jan Shipps, “From Satyr to Saint: American Perceptions of the Mormons, 1860-1960,” *Sojourner in the Promised Land, Forty Years Among the Mormons* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 71, <https://books.google.com/books?id=XDrIJJ1xCEkC&pg=PA51&lpg=PA51&dq=from+satyr+to+saint&source=bl&ots=RxF8mDvxuM&sig=UVMclqOQe83CHzBFDzm2nkHygZg&hl=n&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwitsaDck-bJAhVD6mMKHbu1DqAQ6AEIKzAC#v=onepage&q=from%20satyr%20to%20saint&f=false> (accessed December 2015).

<sup>39</sup> Alexander, 418.

in the short years following the creation of the Public Affairs Committee, stating that a body is remaining neutral and actually doing so was easier said than done. The Equal Rights Amendment, Proposition 8 in California, and Same-Sex Marriage legislation are all issues that the Church was very vocal in its dissent toward.

In the late twentieth century, society's views on moral issues had reversed from family values to individual expression. The national rallying cry for women suffragettes in the mid to late 1800s was the denunciation of polygamy. In the early 1900s, their topic of reform changed to prohibition, and then in the 1960s and 1970s, sexual freedom, birth control, and abortion. The Church changed its marriage doctrine when it stopped polygamy in 1890 and never supported alcoholic consumption, which placed it in line with national attitudes. It was not until national feelings on morality changed that the break occurred. Anything of a sexual nature outside the bonds of marriage was against doctrine. Abortion was more than abhorrent - the Church gave little sympathy for those who opted for the procedure, except in cases of rape and when the life of the mother was in jeopardy (and here the LDS Church is more progressive than most ecclesiastical groups).<sup>40</sup> It appeared that national society and the Church had reversed their positions as progressives for Women's rights.

The family unit's well-being remained central to the Church's efforts. The "sexual revolution" of the 1960s started an undercurrent for the emergence of the 1970s feminism that clashed with the dualistic role of the Mormon woman. Martha Nibley Beck explains the transition in this quote from her short essay:

---

<sup>40</sup> Harold B. Lee, N. Eldon Tanner, and Marion G. Romney, "Policies and Procedures: Statement on Abortion," *New Era*, April 1973, <https://www.lds.org/new-era/1973/04/policies-and-procedures-statement-on-abortion?lang=eng> (accessed October 2015).

The centrality of the family in LDS culture and doctrine fit easily into the popular nineteenth-century Victorian ideal of a highly, not to say exclusively, domestic role for women...Until the latter half of the twentieth century, the traditional role of women presented few obstacles...As industrialization pushed the sphere of American males ...out of the home, and that of females...into it, most Latter-day Saints simply followed the pattern of secular society...The popularization of feminism in the 1970's presented LDS women with a complex set of expectations and competing priorities. Secular analyses set the attainment of an individual's personal goals or advancement in opposition to dedication to the family; LDS belief defines the two as inextricably intertwined.<sup>41</sup>

Outside of the LDS faith, the feministic movement of the 1960s and 1970s proclaimed that women could not hold to both roles and be emancipated in their feminine form. Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*, implied that to be a wife and a mother, or simply a homemaker, was repressive.<sup>42</sup> The empowered woman was educated, went to work in occupations that were equal in level and pay to that of a man, did not have to shy away from her sexual nature and was not bound to the house as a maid for her husband and children. Friedan's book has received much criticism, but her base theme that women were not fulfilling their potential by merely remaining in the home sets the tone that this new wave of feminism had. The role of the woman evolved from the skirt and gloves to the business suit and briefcase:

Women became more deeply involved in business, law, medicine, and all the other professions, and a larger proportion of mothers than ever before found their way into the working place. Inflation and other financial problems associated with the changing economic structure of the nation made two-income families commonplace, but many married women and mothers worked for personal enrichment and to make meaningful professional contributions.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Martha Nibley Beck, "Women's Roles in the Expansionist Era, (1920-Present)," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 (1992): 1575.

<sup>42</sup> First published in 1963, Friedan's book is credited with sparking the new-age feminism of the 60s and 70s.

<sup>43</sup> Allen and Leonard, 660.

Utah women followed the additional good that existed outside of the domestic role. Laursen was one of these women. She had been part of the workforce since her marriage at various intervals. After she raised her children, she added upon her talents by becoming a nurse and entering into politics. Her family's financial needs were the impetus, but she "worked for personal enrichment and to make meaningful professional contributions."<sup>44</sup> Her ability and acceptability to work outside the home was influenced both by the national women's movements and religious doctrine imbued in the local culture.

Priorities changed from home and family first to the woman's self-fulfillment at the forefront. The woman's personal growth and need to succeed professionally supplanted the inherited traits rather than adding to the repertoire:

All this presented a dilemma to the Church for, in some cases, it seemed to fly in the face of the traditional emphasis on the importance of having mothers in the home. Church leaders became concerned, also, when radical feminists included sexual emancipation, abortion on demand, public sex education, and birth control in their agendas. Such rhetoric, they felt, tended to belittle motherhood, which was considered sacred.<sup>45</sup>

The sexual revolution spilled over from the 1960s and now became part of the platform for women's issues in the 1970s. It gave the fight for equality and Women's Rights a new face. Women did not just want to leave the home and exchange their apron for a paycheck; it was more than that. The national feminist movement had the vision of a woman that included a moral stance that the Church had always been against: sexual freedom, radical agendas, abortion and leaving the rearing of children behind to pursue a career – complete self-fulfillment. This cause was damaging to the soul in the Latter-day

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 660-661.

Saint faith. The complete fracturing of the woman's dualistic role coupled with the loss of a strict moral code caused the Church to object.

For the LDS Church, nothing seemed more culpable in the dissolution of the role of women in the 1970s than the proposed Equal Rights Amendment, or ERA. Its loose construction was of a particular concern. In a lengthy statement published in the *Ensign*, the Church's official magazine, it stated, "The Church is firmly committed to equal rights for women, but opposes the proposed Equal Rights Amendment because of its serious moral implications."<sup>46</sup> Further explaining its concern, the article continues, "Constitutional authorities indicate that passage of the ERA could extend legal protection to same-sex lesbian and homosexual marriages, giving legal sanction to the rearing of children in such homes."<sup>47</sup> Even though the purpose of the amendment did not specifically include these concerns, the Church feared its implications and saw it as a direct attack on the family as a whole. The thought of Congress passing such legislation was unacceptable. The Church explained that they still supported women and that many of the equal rights they were concerned about securing already had protection under the Fourteenth Amendment, thus making the ERA redundant.<sup>48</sup>

In its new role of stated political neutrality, the Church "urge[d] the Saints to participate responsibly in the political process, but it also continue[s] to refuse to support particular political parties or to take sides officially on political issues unless they [are]

---

<sup>46</sup> "The Church and the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment: A Moral Issue," *Ensign* (March 1980), 5. <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1980/03/the-church-and-the-proposed-equal-rights-amendment-a-moral-issue?lang=eng> (accessed August 2015).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 5.

considered to be issues also of morality.”<sup>49</sup> The ERA fell under the heading of a political issue of morality, and the Church’s active stance against the ERA helped defeat its passage in several states. The active campaign against the ERA was anything but neutral, and by the time the 1979 ratification deadline came, the legislation failed becoming an amendment by three states’ votes. By the end of the 1970s, the Church had not changed its doctrinal tone, but the nation had moved past it.

Following the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment, a change in women’s political involvement during the late 1980s and into the 1990s saw 1992 as Utah’s “Year of the Woman” (as Kathryn L. MacKay would term in her article, “Women in Politics: Power in the Public Sphere”). In almost a show of solidarity in their ability to make a difference politically with or without an amendment declaring equality, women entered Utah’s political field in droves. There were strong women candidates that year from all three running parties for the position of Lieutenant Governor. On the Republican ticket was Olene S. Walker (Michael O. Leavitt, Governor), the Democrats had Paula Julander (Stuart Hansen, Governor) and the Independent party elected Frances Hatch Merrill (Merrill Cook, Governor).

The Republicans won the Governorship and Olene S. Walker became the first woman elected to office in Utah’s Executive branch.<sup>50</sup> In fact, it would be more than the “Year of the Woman,” as later elections would prove. Utah elected Jan Graham as its first woman Attorney General in 1993, Karen Shepherd won a seat in the US House of Representatives in 1993, followed by Enid Greene in 1995, and DeeDee Corradini

---

<sup>49</sup> Allen and Leonard, 659.

<sup>50</sup> MacKay, p. 360-393.

captured the Mayoral seat for Salt Lake City in 1992. This was the atmosphere that Laursen was part of when she chaired the Utah County Democratic party. She experienced this dramatic atmosphere first hand; women were making strides in the political sector. It was a positive and exciting time, but not without its challenges.

The LDS Church's concern about the welfare of children, women, the family, and the growing lack of a stable base at home continued into the 1990s. In 1995, the Church issued a document: "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" from the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Latter-day Saint Church. They sent it out to its members and to heads of state and governments throughout the globe. It defined Latter-day Saint doctrine on family and gender roles.

Regarding women, they reiterated, "Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children" while also emphasizing, "In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners."<sup>51</sup> The primary doctrine established in the Church's infancy had not changed – the purpose of the woman was the same. Equal (but different) in standing to the man, with the role as a wife and mother as priority over the educational or professional pursuits in the dual construction. It was a public prioritization of the family's well-being. Women were told to be a wife and mother first and to pursue other positive goals second. Unfortunately, many would understand the doctrinal reiteration to mean that a woman could not work or pursue other opportunities and be a good wife and mother at the same time.

The definition of women's roles in the Proclamation seemed to be an almost knee-jerk reaction to the Church's concern about family role disintegration. Ten years

---

<sup>51</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Family, a Proclamation to the World," 1995.

prior, in the March 1986 *Ensign*, Jan Underwood Pinborough remarked, “For mothers who wonder whether or not they would be justified in working outside the home, the Church has provided no pat answers.”<sup>52</sup> President Gordon B. Hinckley addressed this topic in the LDS Church’s October 1998 General Conference:

I think the nurture and upbringing of children is more than a part-time responsibility. I recognize that some women must work, but I fear that there are far too many who do so only to get the means for a little more luxury and a few fancier toys. If you must work, you have an increased load to bear. You cannot afford to neglect your children.<sup>53</sup>

Church leadership definitely places a preference on women staying in the home, but does allow for contingencies. The idea among some that the Church was pushing women to stay in the home *regardless* of circumstance had further backing twelve years later. In 2007, Julie B. Beck, the General Relief Society President for the LDS Church delivered a conference talk entitled “Mothers Who Know.” In her address, she emphasized that “mothers who know” not only were nurturers, teachers, bearers of children, and leaders, but women who “do less.” They paid less attention to media, spent less time in activities away from home, had less distractions, and allowed less worldly influences on her family while doing more in the rearing of children in the home.<sup>54</sup>

Her comments sparked reactions in women across the spectrum. Some felt she meant that women needed to be more than what they already were. More at home, more involved, and doing more - above and beyond to the point they felt inadequate. On the

---

<sup>52</sup> Jan Underwood Pinborough, “Working Double-Time: The Working Mother’s Dilemma,” *Ensign*, March 1986, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1986/03/working-double-time-the-working-mothers-dilemma?lang=eng> (accessed December 2015).

<sup>53</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, “Walking in the Light of the Lord,” October 1998, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1998/10/walking-in-the-light-of-the-lord?lang=eng> (accessed December 2015).

<sup>54</sup> Julie B. Beck, “Mothers Who Know,” (Address, LDS General Conference, Salt Lake City, UT, October 2007).

opposite end, there were a few who felt that it was an attack on women who needed to work or who, by choice, made other arrangements to pursue educational or professional goals. One of these women was Juliann Reynolds. In her blog, “Fair Mormon,” she bemoaned the perceived attack on the working woman and the seeming attempt to place women solely back in the home.<sup>55</sup> While Beck insisted that her address did not intend any of the above, there were women who felt differently.<sup>56</sup>

Beck’s speech, just like the Proclamation on the Family, was a timely coincidence to the changing national trends. Not long after, court cases would explode across the nation in trying to define “marriage” and what legally constitutes a family.<sup>57</sup> These new addresses from the pulpit were in response to a changing nation, yet doctrine did not forbid women in the pursuit of education or career.

Notwithstanding the Church still encouraging civic, political, educational and career pursuits for women, the tone following the ERA was dramatically different. The change fostered a sense of confusion as to where the Church stood if women felt a desire to enter politics. Entering politics was to pursue an activity outside of the home and whether part-time or full-time in its demands, it was not dissimilar to obtaining a job in the restrictions made to the time a woman had at home. Much like the survey mentioned

---

<sup>55</sup> Juliann Reynolds, “What Women Know” *Fair Mormon*, March 17, 2008, <http://blog.fairmormon.org/2008/03/17/what-women-know/> (accessed August 2015).

<sup>56</sup> Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Mormon women’s leader turns to the past to build brighter future,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, March 31, 2012, <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/home3/53708919-203/women-beck-relief-church.html.csp> (accessed August 2015).

<sup>57</sup> The state of California would authorize domestic partnerships on September 2, 1999, shortly followed by Massachusetts authorizing homosexual marriage on May 5, 2004. Several other states would follow, culminating in the Supreme Court case, *Obergefell v. Hodges* declaring homosexual marriage as legal on June 6, 2015.

above showed, about 60 percent of respondents were either unsure or felt that the LDS Church discouraged women to be active in politics.<sup>58</sup>

In a recent article conducted in 2015, Former Utah House Speaker Rebecca Lockhart made a clouded statement when she mentioned that it was due to “Utah’s cultural focus on family” that so few women in the state of Utah were running for office.<sup>59</sup> “Cultural” was a softer term than stating “religious” to the media. In an earlier 1988 article, the delicate articulation regarding women was vacant: “Political leaders in Utah don’t know what to do with women who run for public office, according to a state legislator who said she has been asked to take minutes and make coffee at legislative meetings just because she is a woman.”<sup>60</sup> The Legislator, Beverly J. White, explained that when she presented her first bill to the Utah House, one she described as an “insignificant housekeeping bill,” it missed passing with a unanimous vote by one. White confronted the male legislator who voted against it and asked why he refused a yeay vote. His response according to her was, “It had your name on it, and I won’t vote for a bill sponsored by a woman.”<sup>61</sup> Despite the difficulty she experienced, she was still positive and said that politics “is the greatest challenge, other than motherhood.”<sup>62</sup>

While there is little actual doctrine or even basic teachings in the LDS Church about whether a woman should enter politics, it does not have ecclesiastical directives

---

<sup>58</sup> Amber Laursen, np.

<sup>59</sup> Annie Knox, “Utah women in politics vastly outnumbered. Fewer than 1 in 5 legislators are female,” via The Associated Press, *Deseret News*, February 17, 2013, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/765622824/Utah-women-in-politics-vastly-outnumbered.html?pg=all> (accessed August 2015).

<sup>60</sup> Brian T. West, “Women Politicians Still Must Play Too many Games, Lawmaker Says,” *Deseret News*, September 15, 1988, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article//16969/WOMEN-POLITICIANS-STILL-MUST-PLAY-TOO-MANY-GAMES-LAWMAKER-SAYS.html?pg=all> (accessed August 2015).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

that instruct a man to treat a woman on a derisive level because she is participating in a political office, as White experienced. Dallin H. Oaks, one of the Mormon Church's apostles, stated: "In the eyes of God, whether in the Church or in the family, women and men are equal, with different responsibilities."<sup>63</sup> Culture, or a society's beliefs or customs must form from something, but the idea that women were less than men in American politics had origins that pre-dated the LDS Church's founding. In an essay by Marylynn Salmon, "The Legal Status of Women, 1776-1830," she addresses the fact that women not only had few legal rights (especially after marriage – prior to marriage they had some rights, but any property they may have owned had to be signed over to the husband once married), but that in politics "gender alone was the basis for women's exclusion from voting or holding office."<sup>64</sup>

Just because culture had a basis to be anti-women in politics does not mean that the LDS Church as an institution was exempt. The Church's structure alone with a male-dominated hierarchy gives the sense that women are second-class. In the congregational and hierarchical structure of the Mormon Church, priesthood leaders hold positions of bishops, stake presidents, apostles, and prophet. These positions are ones of a presiding authority; someone to whom all other callings fit under, including the women's organizations. As only males hold the priesthood, only men can fill these positions. The Church has explained that women play a different role and thus hold different callings, such as Primary, Young Women, and Relief Society presidencies. Some individuals,

---

<sup>63</sup> Dallin H. Oaks, "The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood," *Ensign*, May 2014, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2014/05/priesthood-session/the-keys-and-authority-of-the-priesthood?lang=eng> (accessed December 2015).

<sup>64</sup> MaryLynn Salmon, "The Legal Status of Women, 1776-1830," *History Now*, np, nd, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/womens-history/essays/legal-status-women-1776-1830>, (accessed December 2015).

such as those represented in the Ordain Women group, feel that in the Mormon Church different is not equal, and are fighting for the church to recognize women as candidates for priesthood ordination.<sup>65</sup> Groups like this illustrate that there are those who could infer that the male hierarchical structure of the LDS Church gives a signal (whether correct or incorrect) that only men should be in leading positions, such as politics.

The difficulty for women in politics in Utah was not only “cultural” (or religious) as Lockhart mentioned, but she was correct in assuming that there was difficulty based in culture. LaVon Laursen felt that culture was to blame and she explained briefly her feelings about it in her interview. However, cultural beliefs do not grow out of themselves alone. Historical precedence has a base, and in Utah, religious dogma is part of the mix as well. Culture in Utah is spurred from LDS teachings as well as Mormon doctrine.<sup>66</sup> Because of the doctrinal base that the culture evolves from, many incorrectly attribute it to an ecclesiastical directive.

The difference between doctrine and suggestions are often difficult to discern between. For example, a church leader may state from the pulpit that the ideal place for a woman is in the home and it is something that should be sought after. The leader outlines an “ideal” situation but does not state a specific “thou shalt not.” In some cases, interpretation of this statement is expanded by the listeners to include anything that may take a woman away from that role in the household - including politics. Not only that,

---

<sup>65</sup> Information about the Ordain Women movement is found at [www.ordainwomen.org](http://www.ordainwomen.org).

<sup>66</sup> The LDS Church website (<https://www.lds.org/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-and-church-history-seminary-teacher-manual-2014/section-0/unit-1?lang=eng>) defines doctrine as a “fundamental, unchanging truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ...” “Teachings” often expound upon base doctrine as the speaker understands it. This is why one talk may differ from another on the same subject. The examples of Hinckley and Packer in this chapter show the difference between a lenient and a hardline approach on the same subject.

“cultural” inferences attach a sense of “good” and “bad” to being in the home versus not being in the home (regardless of reason), thus making the ecclesiastical counsel a moral issue to divide the pious from the sinful.

Suddenly, a strong suggestion based on the doctrine of gender roles and the preference to women being in the home with her children has morphed into a sin if they work outside the home. While culture is not the root cause, its basis in religious teachings (and doctrine) becomes a vehicle that drives social pressure to conform into the community. Not all messages from Church officials are indirect and allowing for contingencies. Some are more direct, such as this statement from President Boyd K.

Packer:

The First Presidency counseled that ‘the mother who entrusts her child to the care of others, that she may do non-motherly work, whether for gold, for fame, *or for civic service*, should remember that “a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.” (Prov. 29:15) In our day the Lord has said that unless parents teach their children the doctrines of the Church “the sin be upon the heads of the parents.” (D&C 68:25) ...’ [in Conference Report, Oct. 1942, 12]... (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 23). (Italics added).<sup>67</sup>

Note that the quote refers to civics – a rare reference to public service, especially since the Church has no specific teachings about women serving in politics. In addition, Packer is quoting from an October 1942 Conference Report; he may have felt the quote still relevant, but the language from an earlier time period - when it was less acceptable for women to work outside the home - produced a stronger punch. Packer has a more defined “thou shalt not” in his address. This is where confusion comes into play - both

---

<sup>67</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “Mothers’ Employment Outside the Home,” *Eternal Marriage Student Manual*, 2003, <https://www.lds.org/manual/eternal-marriage-student-manual/mothers-employment-outside-the-home?lang=eng> (accessed December 2015).

Hinckley's and Packer's comments are in basic agreement, but differ enough on latitudes that it leaves room for interpretation.

Culture versus actual Church policy becomes a confusing point for LDS voters in many issues regarding Utah politics. LaVon Laursen referred to this culture phenomenon in an interview she gave with the author. She credited the "culture" of Brigham Young University, the local Church-owned University, as a primary factor in the attitudes in Utah County politics.<sup>68</sup> The University has its own policies and procedures, referred to as a "BYU Standard" that in many cases exceeds Church doctrine on member behavior for the purposes of keeping conduct on campus. This standard or attitude toward ideas and values transferred to the surrounding communities from the many university students and alumni who reside there.

One example of this culture transfer of increased standards is in the available housing in the Provo and Orem area. BYU requires that its students - not just while on campus, but also in their living quarters, observe a certain "standard". Co-ed dwellings are unacceptable, members of the opposite gender must be out of apartments at a certain hour, and the code forbids alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drug consumption.<sup>69</sup> With these regulations applied to the student population, many landlords near the University would rent their buildings out as "BYU approved housing," meaning that their tenants must adhere to BYU standards. They did this to court student tenants and to increase ethical standards in their properties. These standards from the University transferred to the outside public and began to cause problems in the outlying community among non-

---

<sup>68</sup> LaVon M. W. Laursen, Interview, np.

<sup>69</sup> *Honor Code*, Brigham Young University, <https://registrar.byu.edu/catalog/2015-2016ucat/GeneralInfo/HonorCode.php> (accessed October 2015).

member tenants. To combat the increasing tension in the community, the Church changed policy for BYU Students and required them to live within a certain radius of campus or with relatives near the area.<sup>70</sup>

Whether it is misunderstanding of Church doctrine, the Church's stricter attitude in morality than societal trends, or as LaVon felt, a transference of a University's student standards to local populations that is attributing to the rising apathy among women in political involvement, the numbers are the same. Utah is back on the downward dip for female representation. Laursen felt that apathy was the symptom, but the cause is not purely culture. The root is based in religion and how the people in Utah choose to interpret it.

---

<sup>70</sup> Amelia Neilson-Stowell, "BYU Housing Boundaries to Change Dramatically," *The Digital Universe*, December 8, 2003, <http://universe.byu.edu/2003/12/08/byu-housing-boundaries-to-change-dramatically/> (accessed October 2015).

## CHAPTER 4

### LAVON W. LAURSEN PAPERS; PROCESSING THE COLLECTION

Collections housed in archives usually arrive in one of two fashions: either the owner of the collection donates them to an Archive, or they are “harvested” (collected) by an archivist. Regardless of the manner of the collection’s arrival, there is a formula followed in preparing the items. It is important to assess how the donation would fit in with current collections. In the case of the Laursen Papers, the Merrill-Cazier Library Archives at Utah State University already has collections with similar subjects that the Laursen Papers have in common.

After determining that the donation fits well in the archive, the archivist prepares an outline called a processing plan, in which he or she carefully assesses the collection and prepares it for storage and retrieval. Each repository institution has its own specific format followed by their archivists but all share similar elements. The archivist assesses the collection, takes note of items, prepares an arrangement and processing outline, makes recommendations for preservation and digitization, and carefully catalogs and files the items away. Before the collection is complete, the archivist will also include a biographical sketch, notes on scope, content, provenance, appraisal, and research strengths. All of these steps took place with the Laursen Papers. This chapter includes the information found in the Processing Plan for the Laursen papers, with an extended version of the biographical sketch.

## Biographical Sketch

The biographical sketch submitted to an archive is relatively brief. Its intent is to give the researcher contextual information about the subject of the collection without going into a novel length volume. Below is a slightly expanded version of the biographical note submitted with the Laursen collection.<sup>71</sup>

LaVon Maxine (Bonnie) Wilson Laursen was born in American Fork on December 17, 1929 to David John and Bernice Conder Wilson. She was the eldest of seven children and had a difficult childhood.<sup>72</sup> Born in at the beginning of the Great Depression, her father moved her family often, sometimes more than once in a single year's time. One of the moves would take them from Provo to Los Angeles when she was in the first grade. Remembering back, LaVon would remark,

We lived in a "court" which was a bunch of cabins in an area something like a motel. We lived next to the railroad tracks. It was during the depression and I guess times were bad. I remember everyone in the "court" would get together after supper and entertain each other.<sup>73</sup>

Because of the frequent moves, LaVon would change schools many times. Some areas she naturally enjoyed more than others - particularly her eleventh grade year in Wells, Nevada where she was class secretary and worked at the local café.<sup>74</sup> It had to be difficult not to have a stable place of residence. When her father moved her family again, she was naturally disappointed to return to American Fork for her final year of high school. She was popular and involved in her junior year, and had to start over again for

---

<sup>71</sup> The biographical note accompanying Laursen's papers will not have quotes or referencing footnotes. For additional biographical depth to this thesis, they are added.

<sup>72</sup> LaVon M. Wilson Laursen (Bonnie), nd.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 7.

her final year in high school. LaVon did not express in detail about how she felt about the many moves she experienced, but the short phrase describing her senior year at American Fork High School, “[I] was not happy there,”<sup>75</sup> says much more than the brief sentence itself. Despite her unhappiness in returning to American Fork, it was there that she met her husband, Thomas Fred Laursen. They married just before her eighteenth birthday on December 5, 1947.

The Second World War had recently ended and Tom had served in the Navy. Unable to purchase a home immediately, Tom and “Bonnie” moved in with his mother for a short time. They soon rented an apartment in Lehi where their first child, Diane, was born in 1948. The first year after their marriage, Tom was injured in a car accident, making it “a really hard time.” They had to move into a house in American Fork in 1949 where the owner would board with them on the weekends. LaVon describes it as an old home that was cold in the winter. They did not stay there long before moving back in with Tom’s mother.

Tom’s mother’s old home did not have hot water or a bathtub, but it did have a coal stove. In 1950, their second child, Thomas Daniel (Danny) was born. It was a difficult time for LaVon and her growing family; war broke out in Korea and the Navy re-activated Tom just six months after Danny’s birth.<sup>76</sup> She did not stay long at her mother-in-law’s before moving into an apartment in 1951. Once Tom settled in California with the Navy, he moved Bonnie and the children to military housing in Wilmington, California and later to San Pedro after he shipped out to Hawaii. Following

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

his discharge in November of 1951, they returned to Tom's mother's home in American Fork where three more children - David, Steven and Cindy - were born.<sup>77</sup>

LaVon was reserved in talking about her life experiences during her interview. Her handwritten autobiography contains more detail in expressing her feelings and the difficulties she experienced during those first years of her marriage. Living in her in-law's home must have been particularly difficult. She described her time there after Tom's discharge from the Navy:

It was a terrible time. The house was old and cold and [there was] no bath. The Chimney kept plugging up and spewing soot all over the kitchen. We finally moved into a small house on first west where we lived until we got our home built.<sup>78</sup>

They finished their house in 1958 and LaVon quit her job shortly before the birth of their final child, Nancy, in 1960. Her previous activity in the professional world was only the beginning. Soon, she returned to work for "Kay Allen at Allen's store as cashier, pharmacy aide and finally office manager. After 10 years there I began working at the State training School. After some time I went into nurses' training at UVSC. I graduated and continued working until 1984 when I entered into politics."<sup>79</sup> It was in her new position as a Nurse working for the State Training School that she began her activity in the AFLCIO and her co-workers elected her as union chapter President. This office required her to lobby politicians and introduced her to state politics.

With her children growing older and the oldest two married by 1970, LaVon found the time to become more civically active. In an interview recorded on June 24,

---

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> LaVon Maxine (Bonnie) Wilson Laursen, 2015, Interview by Amber A. Laursen.

2015, she states that she had not thought a lot about politics prior to becoming union President. She was active in her community; she enjoyed her job, and did good work while she was there.<sup>80</sup> She expressed that she initially felt shocked when approached to run for union president, as she did not actively seek out the position. However, it was a welcome surprise to her and she agreed.

Gradually, she started becoming more politically involved. She began working with the Republican Party, but soon found that “[I] had seen from the meetings and how people didn’t really realize what was going on.”<sup>81</sup> She felt that the Republican Party was out of touch with current issues and did not address them to her satisfaction. She also felt that the members were snobby and geared toward the wealthy and elite.<sup>82</sup> Because of this, she began attending the Democratic Party meetings and soon changed affiliation. There, she found a bastion of like-minded friends - those who shared the same views on issues that she did, and they welcomed her in and put her to work. “Once you get started, they just keep you going. [I] worked with good people such as Dr. Creer [Kenneth B. Creer], the mayor of Springville... luckily they all liked me...”<sup>83</sup>

Creer was not just the mayor of Springville; he was the Chair for the Democratic Party in Utah and the one who encouraged LaVon to be more involved. She mentions that one day Creer called her “out of the clear blue sky” and asked her if she wanted to chair for the Democratic Party in Utah County.<sup>84</sup> LaVon stated that while she had been

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

involved in various things before starting in about 1970, she had never been that involved.

In her files, LaVon collected many letters, correspondence and campaign memorabilia about her political activity. Messages from representatives and state officials, even letters and cards from the White House show that she was very politically active. Flyers, brochures and buttons kept from when she assisted in campaigns show that she was involved in the elections of several influential people.

Laursen became friends with Sherrie Swensen (who was elected as county clerk for Salt Lake County in 1991), Norma Matheson, and Jan Graham. LaVon stated that she and Graham became good friends, especially while working with her on her domestic violence program.<sup>85</sup> Graham would become Utah's first female Attorney General, and was a Democrat. LaVon spoke highly of Olene Walker, and liked her a great deal. She was on the Republican ticket, but it did not matter:

[Governor Olene Walker] was one of the few [politicians on the hill] that weren't quite so dogmatic. I took my youth council up there one time, they had a legislative open house and I took them in and they went to lunch. And all the other senators, even the ones from our district, wouldn't talk to them. But Olene came and sat down and talked to them. She's one of the best governor's we had.<sup>86</sup>

In addition to working with some influential women, LaVon also worked with Governor Scott Matheson and US Representative Bill Orton.

LaVon's personal political activity outside of party positions came when she ran as the Democratic candidate for State Senate from District 60 in 1984. The bid was

---

<sup>85</sup> LaVon M. W. Laursen, oral interview by Amber A Laursen, June 24, 2015, LaVon W. Laursen Collection, in author's possession.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

unsuccessful, but a defining experience. Concerning the run for State Senate, she said that she never felt she had a chance but “I enjoyed it. I made friends, it was interesting.”<sup>87</sup> Losing in the election seemed to have an effect on her to the extent that she would not again run for herself. Instead, she focused her efforts in helping other fellow Democrats win their elections. At one point in her interview, she proudly spoke of how she helped Bill Orton by taking him around and introducing him to “everyone.” Her assistance would push him into a US Congressman’s seat.<sup>88</sup>

As her involvement in politics began to wane, she filled a valuable role working with the City of American Fork as a volunteer with their Youth Court in the early 1990s. The city began a program to help and educate youths about the court system. Delinquent youths would appear before their peers who served in justice and attorney positions on the newly created Youth Court. The city mayor asked LaVon to help get the program off the ground and serve as a Youth Advisor. She taught them about government, provided opportunities to learn more about its functions, and attended training sessions where she received certificates from Utah State University.<sup>89</sup> Working with the Youth Court was her last official capacity as a civic worker before going into retirement.

### **Scope and Content**

This collection contains the papers of LaVon Maxine Wilson Laursen, spanning the period of 1973 to 2000. The Laursen Papers is a relatively small collection, comprising of approximately one linear foot in size. The collection is contained in 41

---

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> LaVon Maxine Wilson Laursen, “LaVon W. Laursen Papers,” 1970-2000.

folders enclosed in two file boxes. One magazine, *Profiles* (Summer of 1986 edition), was too large to fit in the standard archival boxes. In addition, it does not specifically mention LaVon, so it will be included in the Library's periodical collection.

Organization of the items fell into seven categories: newspaper and magazine articles and clippings about the donor's political activity, campaign materials (pamphlets, stickers, buttons, memorabilia), cards and letters to the donor from personal and political friends, information about her career in nursing, a biographical sketch from birth to approximately 1990, a digital voice recording of her history, and a video recording of a political convention attended by Laursen.

While the Laursen collection is relatively small in scope, it encompasses several historical themes that would be of interest to researchers. Women's history is an overarching subject with sub-themes of women's political history, women's activism in the Utah Democratic Party, women's activism in Utah politics, women in the workplace, and women in domestic and professional roles in post-World War II America. Other minor themes are Nursing, Utah County Politics, the Democratic Party in Utah, City Youth Courts and Councils, and Unions in Utah.

More specifically, researchers of the collection will be introduced to LaVon and who she is. LaVon W. Laursen is a wife, mother, nurse, volunteer and political figure active from 1970s to the 1990s in American Fork, Utah. She was most prominent in the public sphere as the Vice-Chair and Chair of the Utah County Democratic Party and as a candidate for office. She was also prominent in local civics as a volunteer for American Fork City's Youth Council and Court.

Laursen's experiences and her background present an opportunity for researchers to study what it was like for women who were active in politics and/or a profession while also taking care of a family in the late twentieth century Utah. The collection shows some of the difficulties experienced by women in politics and the cultural nuances that spurred some of those difficulties. It is naive to assume that Laursen's experiences equal those of all women in the late twentieth century, but her background and activity in civic and professional matters typifies the dualistic role of a woman found in the teachings of the LDS Church.

The Church's prominent position in the state affected Utah women, regardless of religious affiliation. Laursen's political activity is particularly important as it occurred during that golden era where there was a shift on women's roles, the ERA and women's rights movement was prominent, and more women began to feel comfortable entering politics. The experiences documented in her papers help place the larger historical issues into perspective.

### **Provenance**

Mrs. Laursen signed a deed of gift in 2015 for her papers, which will be donated to the Utah State University Merrill-Cazier Library Special Collections upon her passing.

### **Appraisal and Research Strengths**

The Laursen Collection is unique in that it documents the political activity of a woman during the 1980s and 1990s when women in Utah increased their political activity. It was during this time that several women were elected to prominent positions

in Utah State offices, some of which included Lieutenant Governor and State Attorney. It also contains papers dealing with Laursen's activity as a volunteer with the American Fork City Youth Council and Court in the 1990s. This was an emerging idea in the where youth would act and preside in judicial proceedings for their peers. Utah State University held trainings for Youth Council Advisors, which Laursen attended.

Laursen went back to school and trained as a nurse while working at the State Developmental Center; some of her papers refer to her time there, including her election as the representative for the AFLCIO. Her papers are singular, they document a time when women were returning to school to obtain a better education to get a better job. Serving as a woman representative in her local Union is also of interest. All of these are changes to the social structure in its infancy. It was just becoming acceptable for women in the post-1950's era to be more outspoken and active civically and professionally. While some of the campaign materials in Laursen's collection could be found at other institutions, her original material is specific only to this collection and is not reproduced elsewhere. This collection would enhance Utah State University's holdings on Utah State politics, state history, and women's studies. Some of the collections already housed at the University Archives that are similar in subject are the League of Women Voters of Cache County papers, the Mormons For ERA, the Sonja Johnson papers, and the Maria Ellsworth Papers.

### **Overview of the Current State and Original Arrangement**

Collection of the Laursen papers was not a one-stop affair. Mrs. Laursen had

several items that she gave to the author as she located them; therefore, there was not a particular arrangement to the items. The majority of the items were contained in two binders and in a leather pouch. The pouch contained loose papers, campaign pamphlets, brochures, buttons and stickers, while the binders held various letters, correspondence, photographs, newspaper clippings, cards and other paper memorabilia. The organization of these items were sporadic at best; not all of these items had a particular order.

The items in the zippered leather pouch are in the best condition out of all items in the collection as they were loose, unattached and free from glues, tapes, and other adhesives. The items in the binders were a different matter. One binder is a loose-leaf book bound with string and the items inside were attached to the pages with scotch tape. The second binder contained thick cardboard pages with adhesive. A thin plastic film covered items placed on the adhesive pages. Other items included in the collection were a VHS tape and a digitized voice-recording interview with the donor. The author conducted an interview with Mrs. Laursen following the donation of the papers and added it to the collection.

### **Conservation Issues**

The primary step in processing the Laursen collection was to separate all material from the binders. The loosely bound binder had items attached to the pages with scotch tape that easily released from the pages, but the tape itself was more difficult to remove from the items. For those pieces where tape removal was impossible without permanently damaging the item, the tape was trimmed along the edges of the paper. The binder with the adhesive pages had the items carefully removed. There were several

pages with newspaper clippings attached to the adhesive pages that could not be removed without destroying the items entirely. It is necessary to remove items from the adhesive pages if at all possible. The pages are not acid-free, and the glue is not safe, either. They can eat away at the items, destroying them, and at very least, keep them from being removed to a better preservation environment. As the newspaper clippings have digital reproductions, the archivist felt it was best to keep the clippings on the pages and archive them as a whole. Any additional needed conservation work for the items is minimal. If the repository wants to keep the newspaper clippings attached to the adhesive pages, additional measures are needed to heat the adhesive and release the articles.

### **Work Summary and Proposed Arrangement**

Many times, the most appropriate way to arrange a collection and the rule of thumb used by archivists is original order:

Original order is a fundamental principle of archives. Maintaining records in original order serves two purposes. First, it preserves existing relationships and evidential significance that can be inferred from the context of the records. Second, it exploits the record creator's mechanisms to access the records, saving the archives the work of creating new access tools.<sup>90</sup>

In other words, the order of a collection often has certain nuances that make sense to the donor and aid those who use the collection for research. There are, however, circumstances when a collection's arrangement is "sporadic": there is no particular reason that the donor had the items in the order that they were in and arrangement in a different order will not affect the collection's coherence or research value. Then it may

---

<sup>90</sup> "Original Order," *Society of American Archivists*, nd, <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/o/original-order> (accessed October, 2015)

be beneficial to alter the collection's arrangement to reflect subject, date, or type of items to enhance the collection's ease of research. With the Laursen papers, it was clear that the original order was sporadic and arranging the papers according to subject, material type, and date was preferable for research.

The best approach in categorizing this collection was to divide the papers between personal and professional/political items. This is preferable for researchers interested in the subject of the collection (LaVon) versus those who are interested in researching the subject matter she was involved with (nursing, politics, youth council – for example). Each division then was organized into folders based on media type: newsprint, letters, cards, photographs, reports, certificates, political flyers and stickers, and other memorabilia. Those were organized by date and individual involved (if applicable), and the items were then placed into acid-free folders. Each folder was labeled and had an item count listed. Any items that with staples had them removed and a plastic clip was used in its place to keep order.

One item of interest in the collection was a magazine contained in the leather pouch. It did not mention LaVon, so the archivist at Utah State University felt the best place for the item would be in the Library's Periodical collection.

The purpose in choosing this particular order was to facilitate the ease of research, both in digital hits for subject matter and physical search of the items. Finally, a finding aid listing the contents of the boxes and folders was prepared to accompany the collection. The collection took approximately two months of part-time work to process. The supplies used were archival boxes, folders and plastic paper clips, all of which were provided by the Merrill-Cazier Special Collections.

**Digitization**

Some items in the collection may be of interest for digitization. With the advent of the digital age and demand for online access, archives are progressing toward digitizing collections both for ease of access and to preserve original items. Some of the items that would be good candidates for digitization from the Laursen collection might include the autobiography, letters from political candidates to the donor, and some of the political pamphlets. The VHS tape needs digitization for ease of access by patrons, and a typewritten transcript would be helpful to accompany the digital audio recording of the interview with the donor.

## CHAPTER 5

POST 1990 AND BEYOND: THE FUTURE OF WOMEN IN UTAH POLITICS,  
SLIPPING BACKWARD OR MOVING FORWARD?

“I...would like to see more people get involved, especially in the Democratic Party. But I think people think, what’s the use? I think it’s apathy, and Republicans just overwhelm.” -LaVon W. Laursen<sup>91</sup>

If the “golden days” for women running for political office in Utah happened during the late 1980s and early 1990s, then the present and future of women in politics looks dismal with religious, cultural, and political sentiment seemingly pushing them away from Utah’s Capitol Hill. LaVon Laursen’s papers are an example of those positive years for women in politics, but they are also an example of what can be attained. Having high numbers of politically active women in politics is not a one-time goal, once obtained that can never be repeated. It may be a misunderstanding (or a correct understanding, depending on which LDS Church leader is analyzed) of ecclesiastical doctrine, culture imposed from society, or a general apathy among the public that spurred the change to women’s political inactivity. It is likely a combination of all three. Regardless, information to suggests that there is a feeling - culturally based or otherwise - among many Latter-day Saint women who feel that they cannot run for political office without compromising their position in the home. LaVon Laursen had her own theory on the source of the issue, feeling that in Utah County it stemmed from Brigham Young University, and its rigid code of conduct. She felt that with the University being so

---

<sup>91</sup> LaVon M. W. Laursen, Interview, np.

dominant in Utah Valley, its culture had spread out and into the feelings of the general population.<sup>92</sup>

The bleak future of women running for office has not gone without notice. The *Deseret News* has published several editorials over the past five years about women needing to run for public office. In 2012, there was enough concern among a group of citizens that they created an initiative called “Real Women Run.” The nonpartisan group began holding training sessions for women to become educated in the mechanics of politics and in how to become a candidate. Both major political parties supported it but as one article stated, “Underlying the problem, however, is a political system that, for whatever reason, has been seen by too many women as uninviting.”<sup>93</sup> The article listed the state’s unique caucus system as part of the problem where women generally do not participate as often as men do.

LaVon also mentioned the caucus system as a real problem when talking about Olene Walker. After filling the remainder of Governor Michael Leavitt’s final term in office, Governor Olene Walker tried to run for a full term in the governorship and could not make it past her own party’s primary caucus.<sup>94</sup> In the caucus, delegates elect candidate, rather than popular vote. Walker, a brilliant woman who had served the state of Utah as its Lieutenant Governor and Governor could not beat out the relatively unknown and less qualified billionaire’s son, Jon Huntsman, Jr., for her own party’s nomination.

---

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> “In Our Opinion, Getting women to run,” *Deseret News*, January 17, 2012, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700216068/Getting-women-to-run.html?pg=all> (accessed August 2015).

<sup>94</sup> LaVon M. W. Laursen, Interview, np.

Appearances show that in Utah women are either apathetic, as LaVon Laursen put it, or waiting for outspoken cultural approval to consider running for office. The LDS Church repeatedly issues statements to its members urging them to take part in the political process as they can – and it is not a gender specific statement. This may seem as though the Church is stepping outside of its politically-neutral zone, but the Church’s reiteration that they do not endorse a particular party or person seems to help them feel comfortable that they are within their area of acceptable neutrality.

The concern many have about raising children and attending to family concerns are real, but as children leave the home and priorities change, more time opens up where civic service can fill in. Then, there is that life-changing question of “can I really make a difference?” The question that LaVon Laursen had to have asked herself was the question that Mia Love, Olene Walker, Jan Graham, Martha Hughes Cannon, Emmeline B. Wells and Susa Young Gates had to ask themselves as well. This is one of the most important questions a woman can ask herself, because when she is able to answer, “yes” – that is when change happens.

## **Conclusion**

LaVon W. Laursen was an active female politician during one of the prime periods in Utah’s history for women politicians. She kept papers and memorabilia documenting her political activity, which also preserve that unique period of history for the state. . A large section of her papers are now archived and will soon be housed at Utah State University’s Archives. However, as with many collections in progress, she still has other items in her possession that may be added to the collection. Her papers

show that Utah's political climate for women is fluid, changing based upon cultural views of their importance. Yet the attitudes on political issues are more solid, these being based more on religious doctrine than changing national attitudes.

Both of these attitudes on women and political opinion are influenced by the same source, the Latter-day Saint Church, whose members compose a majority of the voting bloc of the state. The conflict that arises from this conundrum is not just that the two are contradictory, but that the LDS Church does not officially discourage its female members from running for office nor does it encourage them to work outside the home. The Church encourages women to pursue worthwhile educational, professional and civic pursuits, but only as a secondary part of their divine nature as nurturers in the home and family. Laursen's own personal life is an example that a woman can be a wife, have a family, while also continuing personal growth through education, employment and community service.

Unfortunately, confusion about what women should or could do outside their primary nature as a wife and mother has fueled social (or cultural) opinions that have pushed women away from politics. Laursen felt that apathy was the cause, but among Latter-day Saint women, if apathy was present, any notion that the Church discouraged pursuits outside the home only validated their lack of involvement. These cultural attitudes have not been constant, but have come in waves – resurging during periods of change in the national sphere, most often over issues of morality and after Church officials have reiterated doctrine.

Increasing social pressure appeared in different areas of the state, particularly in Utah County where Brigham Young University has a strong influence. Laursen's papers

support these views, as does her interview that is part of her collection. However, this theory acknowledges the vehicle rather than the source. The source of the cultural ideas still resides from statements made by Mormon Church leadership.

Despite the change in national attitudes and a social stoic stance on Church doctrine, the 1980s and 1990s saw a golden era for women elected to state and national offices, an era only paralleled by the 1890s when the state elected the first women in the nation to state house and senate seats. Utah was once a leader for women's rights and in women representation. Laursen and her collection show that it is possible for it to be a leader in women political representation again.

## REFERENCES

- Acumen, Daryl. "Jim Matheson on Obamacare." *The GOP Center for Conservative Policy*. 2012. <http://gopcenter.com/2012/09/27/jim-matheson-on-obamacare/> (accessed August 14, 2015).
- Alexander, Thomas G. *Utah, the Right Place*. Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2003.
- Allen, James B., and Glen M. Leonard. *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*. 2nd. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992.
- Apostles, First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. "The Family, a Proclamation to the World." Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995.
- Beck, Julie B. "Mothers Who Know." LDS General Conference Address. Salt Lake City, UT, October 2007.
- Beck, Martha Nibley. "Women's Roles in the Expansionist Era, (1920-Present)." *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1992.
- Church History in the Fulness of Times*. Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1993.
- Cohen, Micah. "Utah: Very Republican, but Not Quite as Conservative as It Appears." *FiveThirtyEight* blog, *The New York Times*, July 9, 2012. [http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/09/utah-very-republican-but-not-as-conservative-as-it-appears/?\\_r=0](http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/09/utah-very-republican-but-not-as-conservative-as-it-appears/?_r=0) (accessed December 2015).
- Cracroft, R. Paul. "Susa Young Gates: Her Life and Literary Work." Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1951. Quoted in Garr, Cannon, Cowan 2000.
- Deseret News. "In Our Opinion, Getting women to run." January 17, 2012. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700216068/Getting-women-to-run.html?pg=all> (accessed August 2015).
- Garr, Arnold K., Donald Q. Cannon, Richard O. Cowan, eds. *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2000.
- Hinckley, Gordon B. "Walking in the Light of the Lord." October 1998. <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1998/10/walking-in-the-light-of-the-lord?lang=eng> (accessed December 2015).
- Honor Code*, Brigham Young University. <https://registrar.byu.edu/catalog/2015-2016ucat/GeneralInfo/HonorCode.php> (accessed October 2015).

- Knox, Annie. "Utah women in politics vastly outnumbered, fewer than 1 in 5 legislators are female." *Deseret News*, February 17, 2013. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/765622824/Utah-women-in-politics-vastly-outnumbered.html?pg=all> (accessed August 2015).
- Laursen, Amber A. "Brief Utah Politics Poll." August 7, 2015.
- Laursen, LaVon Maxine Wilson (Bonnie). 2015. Interview by Amber A. Laursen. Tape recording. June 24. LaVon W. Laursen Collection. In author's possession.
- . "LaVon Maxine Wilson Laursen (Bonnie)." Autobiography, n.d.
- . "LaVon W. Laursen Papers." Utah, 1970-2000.
- Lee, Harold B., N. Eldon Tanner, and Marion G. Romney. "Policies and Procedures: Statement on Abortion." *New Era*, April 1973. <https://www.lds.org/new-era/1973/04/policies-and-procedures-statement-on-abortion?lang=eng>.
- Lockhart, Ben. "UVU professor's study puts focus on LDS women and depression." *Deseret News*, January 31, 2013. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865571984/UVU-professors-study-puts-focus-on-LDS-women-and-depression.html?pg=all> (accessed August 2015).
- MacKay, Kathryn L. "Women in Politics: Power in the Public Sphere." *Women in Utah History, Paradigm or Paradox*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005.
- Madsen, Susan R. and D. Candice Backus. "The Status of Women in Utah Politics." *Utah Women and Leadership*, January 8, 2014. [https://www.uvu.edu/uwlp/docs/uwlp\\_brief\\_2014\\_no.\\_1.pdf](https://www.uvu.edu/uwlp/docs/uwlp_brief_2014_no._1.pdf) (accessed December 2015).
- Maxwell, Cory H., ed. *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book*. West Valley City: Bookcraft, 1997.
- Neilson-Stowell, Amelia. "BYU Housing Boundaries to Change Dramatically." *The Digital Universe*, December 8, 2003. <http://universe.byu.edu/2003/12/08/byu-housing-boundaries-to-change-dramatically/> (accessed October 2015).
- Nelson, Veneese C. "Women, Role of." *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2000.
- "Original Order." *Society of American Archivists*, nd. <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/o/original-order> (accessed October 2015).
- Packer, Boyd K. "Mothers' Employment Outside the Home." *Eternal Marriage Student Manual*, 2003. <https://www.lds.org/manual/eternal-marriage-student-manual/mothers-employment-outside-the-home?lang=eng> (accessed December 2015).

- Pew Research Center. "Mormonism and Politics: Are They Compatible?" Conference discussion, Pew Forum's biannual Faith Angle Conference, Key West, Florida, May 14, 2007. [http://www.pewforum.org/2007/05/14/mormonism-and-politics-are-they-compatible/?utm\\_expid=53098246-2.Lly4CFSVQG2lphsg-KopIg.0&utm\\_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F](http://www.pewforum.org/2007/05/14/mormonism-and-politics-are-they-compatible/?utm_expid=53098246-2.Lly4CFSVQG2lphsg-KopIg.0&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F) (accessed December 2015).
- Pinborough, Jan Underwood. "Working Double-Time: The Working Mother's Dilemma." *Ensign*, March 1986. <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1986/03/working-double-time-the-working-mothers-dilemma?lang=eng> (accessed December 2015).
- Reynolds, Juliann. *What Women Know*. March 17, 2008. <http://blog.fairmormon.org/2008/03/17/what-women-know/> (accessed August 2015).
- Romney, Marion G. "America's Destiny," *Ensign*, November 1975. <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1975/11/americas-destiny?lang=eng> (accessed October 2015).
- Sahagun, Louis. "Tearful Waldholtz Says She's a victim of Love: Politics: Utah congresswoman blames husband for financial fiasco in 4 1/2 hour press conference, her first public comments on scandal." *Los Angeles Times*, December 12, 1995. <http://www.articles.latimes.com/1995-12-12/news/mn-13047> (accessed August 2015).
- Salmon, MaryLynn. "The Legal Status of Women, 1776-1830." *History Now*. Nd. The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/womens-history/essays/legal-status-women-1776-1830> (accessed December 2015).
- Shippy, Jan. "From Satyr to Saint: American Perceptions of the Mormons, 1860-1960." *Sojourner in the Promised Land, Forty Years Among the Mormons*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000. <https://books.google.com/books?id=XDrIJJ1xCEkC&pg=PA51&lpg=PA51&dq=from+satyr+to+saint&source=bl&ots=RxF8mDvxuM&sig=UVMclqOQe83CHzBFDzm2nkHygZg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0aUKEwitsaDck-bJAhVD6mMKHbu1DqAQ6AEIKzAC#v=onepage&q=from%20satyr%20to%20saint&f=false> (accessed December 2015).
- Smith, Barbara B. and Shirley W. Thomas. "History of the Relief Society." *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 4. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992.
- Stack, Peggy Fletcher. "Mormon women's leader turns to the past to build brighter future." *The Salt Lake Tribune*, March 31, 2012. <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/home3/53708919-203/women-beck-relief-church.html.csp> (accessed August 2015).

- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. "Political Neutrality." *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Newsroom*. n.d. <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/official-statement/political-neutrality> (accessed August 12, 2015).
- "The Church and the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment: A Moral Issue." *Ensign*: March 1980. <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1980/03/the-church-and-the-proposed-equal-rights-amendment-a-moral-issue?lang=eng> (accessed August 2015).
- The University of Utah. "5 Facts About Utah's Strong Pro-Business Climate." *The David Eccles School of Business*. July 22, 2015. <http://www.business.utah.edu/news/5-facts-about-utahs-strong-pro-business-climate/> (accessed December 2015).
- West, Brian T. "Women Politicians Still Must Play Too many Games, Lawmaker Says." *Deseret News*, September 15, 1988. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/16969/WOMEN-POLITICIANS-STILL-MUST-PLAY-TOO-MANY-GAMES-LAWMAKER-SAYS.html?pg=all> (accessed August 2015).
- White, Jean Bickmore. "Women's Suffrage in Utah." *Utah History Encyclopedia*. n.d. [http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah\\_chapters+statehood\\_and\\_the\\_progressive\\_era/womenssuffrageinutah.html](http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah_chapters+statehood_and_the_progressive_era/womenssuffrageinutah.html) (accessed August 2015).
- Wills, John A. "The Twin Relics of Barbarism." *Historical Society of Southern California, Los Angeles* 1, no. 5 (1890): 40-44. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41167826> (accessed August 2015).

Appendix

LaVon Wilson Laursen Papers  
Coll Mss 515  
**Introduction**

Papers: 1973-2000

Collection Processed by: Amber A. Laursen

Register Prepared by: Amber A. Laursen

Date Completed: December 2015

Linear Feet:1

Restrictions: Available following death of donor

Please cite this collection in the following manner:

LaVon Wilson Laursen Papers  
Coll Mss 515, Box #, Fd #  
Special Collections & Archives  
Utah State University  
Merrill-Cazier Library  
Logan, Utah

LaVon Wilson Laursen Papers  
Coll Mss 515  
Biographical Note

LaVon Maxine (Bonnie) Wilson Laursen was born in her maternal grandparent's home in American Fork, Utah, on December 17, 1929 to David John Wilson and Bernice Conder Wilson. She is the eldest of seven children. During her childhood, her family lived in several different homes in Utah, mainly in Provo and American Fork, but also in Midway, and in Los Angeles, California. Her family's final move was back to American Fork in 1947. Here LaVon met her future husband, Thomas Fred Laursen, whom she married on December 5, 1947, just before her eighteenth birthday. Tom had been in the Navy during World War II, and not long after their marriage, he was reactivated for the Korean War. LaVon spent much of her early married life living in different homes in American Fork and in military housing in California while Tom was away. After his discharge, they returned to American Fork and began looking for a permanent home. There they purchased four acres and began work on a house. In 1958, they moved in with their five children and later had a sixth and final child there in 1960.

LaVon was fairly active in her community, working in local shops and eventually at the Utah State Training School. In the early 1970s, she went back to school at the Utah Technical College and worked toward a degree in Nursing. After receiving her certification, she continued her employment with the Training School as a nurse. There, LaVon's co-workers encouraged her to become involved in their local union as President of the school's chapter AFLCIO. Her work in the Union placed her in a unique position to become acquainted with many state politicians. This escalated her involvement in politics, particularly with the Utah Democratic Party, and she left her work as a nurse in 1984 to pursue a career in politics. She was soon elected as the President of the Utah County Democratic Party and assisted in many campaigns, including those of Bill Orton, Jan Graham, Wayne Owens, Scott Matheson, and many others. LaVon attempted her own run for office in 1984, running for state senator on the Democratic ticket. She lost the election, but continued to help others run for office and remained very active in Democratic politics.

In the 1990s, LaVon's political involvement took a different turn when she was appointed as the volunteer supervisor for American Fork City's Youth Court. She worked with the City's youth for several years before finally entering into retirement. LaVon currently resides in American Fork with her husband, Tom.

LaVon Wilson Laursen Papers  
Coll Mss 515  
Provenance Note

The materials in this collection were donated to USU Special Collections in 2015 by LaVon Laursen.

LaVon Wilson Laursen Papers  
Coll Mss 515  
Scope & Content Note

This collection contains the papers of LaVon Laursen, spanning the period of 1973 to 2000. It is organized into categories by material type, using folder headings created by the processor. Items include newspaper and magazine clippings about LaVon's political activity, campaign materials (such as pamphlets, stickers, buttons, and memorabilia), cards and letters to LaVon from personal and political friends, information about her career in nursing, an autobiographical sketch, an oral history interview with LaVon, and a video recording of a political convention she attended.

The LaVon Wilson Laursen papers would be of interest to anyone studying Utah State politics, state history, and women's studies. Some of the collections already housed at the Utah State University Archives that are similar in subject to the Laursen papers are the League of Women Voters of Cache County papers, the Mormons For ERA, the Sonja Johnson papers, and the Maria Ellsworth Papers.

LaVon Wilson Laursen Papers  
Coll Mss 515  
Inventory

**Box 1: Personal and Professional Papers, 1973-2000**

- Fd. 1: Autobiography of LaVon Wilson Laursen, undated, 9 pgs.
- Fd. 2: Photographs, miscellaneous, undated, 5 items
- Fd. 3: Cards given to LaVon Wilson Laursen, Misc. Personal, undated, 33 pcs.
- Fd. 4: Personal Letters written to and from LaVon Wilson Laursen, undated, 1988-1996, 16 pcs.
- Fd. 5: Letters to LaVon Wilson Laursen from American Fork City and Youth Council, 1993-1995, undated, 4 pcs.
- Fd. 6: Letters to LaVon Wilson Laursen from Utah State Training School, AFLCIO, AFSCME, and the American Red Cross, 1975-1988, undated, 6 pgs.
- Fd. 7: Miscellaneous items, 10 pcs.
- Fd. 8: Miscellaneous Memorabilia, undated, 13 pcs.
- Fd. 9: Programs/Agendas, Miscellaneous, undated, 13 pcs.
- Fd. 10: Certificates to LaVon Wilson Laursen, Training for Youth Council, 1993-2000, 5 pgs.
- Fd. 11: Certificates to LaVon Wilson Laursen, Miscellaneous, 1975-2000, 6 pgs.
- Fd. 12: Nursing Report Cards for LaVon Wilson Laursen, 1973-1974, 5 pcs.
- Fd. 13: Employee Performance Reports for LaVon Wilson Laursen, 1976-1980, 3 pgs.
- Fd. 14: Nursing Memorabilia, Licenses for LaVon Wilson Laursen, 11 pcs.
- Fd. 15: Newsletters, Miscellaneous, Nursing, 1975-1983, 5 pgs.
- Fd. 16: Newspaper clippings about LaVon W. Laursen, undated, 42 pcs.
- Fd. 17: Newspaper Articles about LaVon Wilson Laursen from the *American Fork Citizen*, 1989, 1999, 2002, 3 pcs.
- Fd. 18: Newspaper Clippings, Miscellaneous, undated, 16 pcs.
- Fd. 19: Newspaper Clippings: Articles written by LaVon W. Laursen, undated, 11 pcs.
- Fd. 20: Newspaper Clippings, Miscellaneous, undated, 9 pgs.
- Fd. 21: Photocopies of Newspaper Clippings about LaVon Wilson Laursen, Miscellaneous, undated, 13 pgs.

**Box 2: Political Papers, 1984-2000**

- Fd. 1: Cards to LaVon Wilson Laursen, Misc. Political, 29 pcs.
- Fd. 2: Cards to LaVon Wilson Laursen from the White House, 1993-2000, 15 pcs.
- Fd. 3: Letters – Miscellaneous Political Letters written to LaVon Wilson Laursen, 1984-1996, 15 pcs.
- Fd. 4: Letters – Letters written to LaVon Laursen from Bill Orton, 1990-1996, 5 pcs.
- Fd. 5: Programs/Agendas for Utah County/Utah State Democratic Party, 1987-1995, 7 pcs.
- Fd. 6: Ballots, 1984-1997, 3 items

- Fd. 7: Political Campaign Pamphlets for LaVon Wilson Laursen, 1984, 7 pcs.
- Fd. 8: Political Campaign Pamphlets, Presidential, 1988-1996, 6 pcs.
- Fd. 9: Political Campaign Pamphlets, Bill Orton, 9 pcs.
- Fd. 10: Political Campaign Pamphlets, Wayne Owens, 3 pcs.
- Fd. 11: Political Campaign Pamphlets, Misc. #1 State Candidates, 20 pcs.
- Fd. 12: Political Campaign Pamphlets, Misc. #2, 20 pcs.
- Fd. 13: Utah Political Campaign Stickers, Misc. State Candidates, 25 pcs.
- Fd. 14: Political Campaign Stickers, Bill Orton, 7 pcs.
- Fd. 15: National Political Campaign Stickers, Clinton-Gore, 1992-1996, 4 pcs.
- Fd. 16: Political Licenses, Business Cards for LaVon Wilson Laursen, 10 pcs.
- Fd. 17: Action/Vista Volunteer form for LaVon Laursen, 1988, 2 pgs.
- Fd. 18: Photocopy of Article, "Gender of Politics," Utah Business Magazine, Sept./Oct. 1994, 8 pgs.
- Fd. 19: Campaign Buttons, State and National, 16 items
- Fd. 20: VHS Tape, "Mom's Running for office, '92-'93," 1 item
- Fd. 21: Digital voice recording, 2015, 1 item